

or Roman Catholic minority in any province where denominational schools then existed. Provincial autonomy, in the sense in which it was recognized in regard to other local questions, certainly was not regarded at all in respect to education. There was no difficulty, I say, in settling the question as to the protection of rights then enjoyed. The resolutions adopted by the intercolonial conferences included the restrictive clause I have mentioned, and the parliament of Canada promptly ratified it, notwithstanding that it involved so great a surrender of the theory of provincial autonomy.

The other question, however—one that was of interest to the Protestants of Quebec alone—was destined to be attended with no little difficulty before it reached a solution. The safeguarding of the existing rights of Quebec Protestants was a boon so far as it went, but it by no means met the demands. The privileges they enjoyed in respect of their separate schools under the existing laws were, as I have said, wholly unsatisfactory. Such as they were these privileges had been granted by a parliament in which Protestants were in a large majority; and even from such a parliament they had been for years demanding, and demanding in vain, a better law that would place the Protestant separate schools on a proper footing. But now their educational interests were to be placed under the control of a French Catholic legislature. How were they to secure from such a legislature the larger rights that they had so long demanded in vain, even from a parliament controlled by Protestants? And if once obtained how were those rights to be protected from violation by that legislature in the future? The position, as I have said, was a critical one, and the cry that resounded throughout Quebec found voice in the old Canadian parliament, when the confederation scheme came to be discussed in 1865. The Protestants of Quebec were at that time represented by men of great distinction in public life. Sir John Rose, Sir Alexander Galt, L. H. Holton, Christopher Dunkin and Senator Sanborn were amongst the number. Sir Alex. Galt was a member of the government that introduced the scheme. In 1864 at a public meeting in his province, he had announced that the government would, before the union took place, introduce and pass through the old parliament, an act granting to the Protestants of the province the reforms they de-

manded. The object in having the law perfected before the union was as Mr. Laurier well expressed it, "before the scheme of confederation came into operation to perfect the laws with regard to separate schools so that the Protestant majority would be beyond the caprice or ill will of the local legislature." Because of the limitation of its powers the legislature would never deprive them of the powers then to be secured.

When parliament met in 1865 the government was called upon to make good the promise. Delay taking place in doing so, feeling waxed hot on the question, Mr. Holton, one of the Liberal leaders of Quebec, speaking of the changes in the system of government, that were contemplated in the union, said that "amongst the Protestant population of Lower Canada there was no feature of the proposed changes which excited so much alarm as this question." The government was repeatedly pressed to introduce the promised legislation and repeatedly gave the assurance that it would. Owing to occurrences that need not be now explained, it was found impossible to do so, and the session closed with the government's undertaking unfulfilled. Another session was to be held, however, before the union would be consummated; and once more the government undertook that the promised amendments would, during the following session, be placed on the statute book. The session of 1866 came and the law was introduced. Because of occurrences again, that I need not detail, the measure had to be withdrawn, and the last opportunity to grant the increased privileges demanded by the Protestant minority, before entering the union, had gone.

The situation had now become so critical that Sir Alex. Galt, having failed to get justice for the Protestants of his province, and to place their rights beyond the power of the provincial legislature to take away, sent in his resignation as a minister. Sir John Macdonald, fearful lest the agitation would block the scheme of union, pleaded with the Protestants of Quebec to trust to the fair mindedness of the French Catholic majority in their own legislature to do them justice. "The minority in each section," said he, "would have to throw themselves on the justice and generosity of the majority." But Sir John's assurances failed to assure. The Quebec Protestants were not satisfied to trust their privileges to the protection of a Catholic legislature. As Mr. Laurier again stated it: "The Pro-