

own included, has its defects, I suppose, and this speech certainly had its defects as well as its beauties. As I listened to that speech, whilst many thoughts coursed through my brain, two or three might be mentioned this afternoon. The first one was this: what a mild and erudite and tactful pleader for toleration and national unity the hon. member proved himself yesterday! How helpful it is, when we come to the decision of a constitutional question in the twentieth century, to have a very fine, a very learned discourse offered to us as to the wonderful, enduring and preservative power of the church in the far gone centuries in keeping the light of knowledge and science burning! But we live in the 20th century; we cannot decide now as to the merits of a common school system on what were the excellencies of the repositories of learning two, or three, or four centuries ago; we have to take the conditions as they are to-day and by weighing these conditions come to our own best conclusion.

One other thing came to my mind. I could not help but look alternately from the hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Bourassa) to the member for Brandon (Mr. Sifton); the member for Labelle chock full of religious fervour and enthusiasm, a fervour and enthusiasm that does him infinite credit, declaring, as the culmination of his argument, that it was impossible for Catholics to thoroughly enjoy their religion unless they have complete control of their education. If that is the belief of the member for Labelle, or of any other good Catholic, I quarrel with no man's belief. It has been the fashion during this debate, and it follows from good feeling, to disclaim any personal bias when we speak of each other as Protestants or Catholics. I do not want to enter upon that apology, or to even affirm it is necessary, but I want to say this in justice to myself. I have been in public life since 1882, I have been on the back benches and on the front benches, I have spoken considerably often in this House (gentlemen opposite think quite too often), I have spoken a good deal through the country, and my speeches have been reported; if any man can put his finger on one single sentence spoken here or spoken elsewhere in which I have uttered one illiberal or bigoted thought with reference to my Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen, I would be thankful for him to do it. I don't think any man can. There is one circle which envelops every man that is sacred ground, it is the circle in which his God and his conscience meet. Against what occurs in that inner circle I have absolutely no right to intrude, and I claim the same treatment for myself. But this is what I mean: If these were the opinions of the member for Labelle, and undoubtedly they were, what kind of education does he want in these provinces? What else can he want

but one that will do him good from his point of view, a thing that is absolutely essential if he is not going to have a mere sham. The half hour privilege at the end of the school day to permit a priest in the school room to teach the dogmas of the church—will that satisfy him? Is that the culmination of his depth of belief and his power of argument all verging towards the one conclusion? Evidently not. Beside the member for Labelle sat the ex-Minister of the Interior, who, the other day, whittled it all down to the one half hour of religious teaching; whittled it down to only that and nothing more. There, near the member for Labelle, sat the Prime Minister, who, in 1896, had the opportunity to prevent what the member for Labelle deplored as the robbery of the rights of the minority in the province of Manitoba. Never before in the history of confederation had such an opportunity arrived; it is very probable it will never arrive again. The Prime Minister told us, with a convenient forgetfulness of the whole clause 93: I was opposed to remedial legislation in 1896, because the law of the province of Manitoba had been declared to be a valid law, and I was against forcing Manitoba to relinquish what Manitoba had the right to enact. Is that the worship of the constitution that my right hon. friend has; is that the only part of the constitution he reads? There were two things in the Manitoba case in 1896. They had a right to their law and it was valid on one count, and that count was, that before Manitoba became a province there was no system of sectarian or denominational schools by law or practice. But there was another point which was covered by the British North America Act, and for which most especially the British North America Act was framed to cover. When Manitoba became a province it enacted a separate school law, and in 1890 it repealed that separate school law, and, under such circumstances the British North America Act, section 93, came in, and it is the only way in which it possibly could come in. Does my right hon. friend deny the fact; does he deny the constitution?

Then, Sir, the Roman Catholic minority came to him in 1896 and said: True, we were thrown down on the bad drafting or the insufficiency of the law, whichever you choose, but the Privy Council have declared that we have the right to get to the federal parliament through the federal government and to appeal as a last resort, if parliament considers it best to give us remedial legislation in order to restore, as far as possible, the rights of the minority. When that appeal was made to the hon. gentleman, could he take a part of section 93 and relieve himself from the duty, because that particular part of the section did not apply, whilst right before him was the other and pertinent part of the constitution which absolutely did apply?

Mr. FOSTER.