

representative of the Manitoba government and tries to get something for his people there? Why all this heated denial, this hedging, this twisting, this turning, in respect of a province which is able to defend itself, which has the absolute legislative power confirmed by the highest judicial authority in the British empire, which is able to stand up like a man and defend itself, if it wants to or which is able like a free man to give what it pleases if it gives it out of its own generosity and good will? Why all this fuss about such a thing as that, whilst, when it comes to a question of infants in arms, the wards of my right hon. friend, when their manhood and their rights for ever are to be given to them or abridged from them, my right hon. friend ignores the Minister of the Interior, ignores other members of his cabinet, but consults the Papal ablegate. Now, Sir, despite the fiery and incendiary speech of my hon. friend from Labelle (Mr. Bourassa) which may be repeated here to-day—I do not know—my position is simply this that if there was a high representative of the Methodist church, of the Anglican church, of the Presbyterian church or of any other church in this country who was here in such a position as the Papal ablegate, and if he were consulted in the same way I should make exactly the same objection. This country is not going to have any semblance of alliance between church and state. The people of this country come from a stock who absolutely denied that doctrine years ago, who fought for its overthrow and enthroned the opposite one in the constitution and laws of their country, and the people of Canada are born and bred to the same idea and they will stand by it. The right hon. leader of the government may be as valiant as he pleases but I tell him that he has raised by his tortuous course a question in this country which far transcends the Manitoba controversy. Why is Monseigneur Sbarretti here? My hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) gave what he considered he could fairly gather from what he knew of the circumstances that led to the coming here of Monseigneur Sbarretti: What were they? Dare I analyze them for a moment? I think we may take the risk even though the hon. member for Labelle may frown against it. I ask this first question in order to clear matters: Were there any spiritual difficulties between the bishops and clergy and the church Catholic of this country which made it necessary primarily that the Papal ablegate should be sent to this country? There were no such. It has so been stated. It has not been denied. That gentleman would never have been asked for as he was asked for in his own handwriting by the right hon. gentleman who leads this government if it had not been that there was trouble in the Reform camp, that there was very deep seated trouble and the right

Mr. FOSTER.

hon. gentleman conceived that it would be a good stroke of party policy to bring a very celebrated, distinguished and high dignitary of the church—to minister to his spiritual consolation? To minister to the spiritual needs of my devout friend the Minister of Justice? To minister even to the clear white conscience of my hon. friend from Labelle? Oh, no, it was not spiritual consolation they wanted. It was party political consolation. That and that alone was the prime motive of the movement for bringing the Papal ablegate to this country. Who brought him? Here is a letter.

Ottawa, 30th October, 1897.

Eminence,—I made known to you in the month of August last, when Your Eminence did me the honour to grant me an audience, the happy result which the mission of Monseigneur Merry Del Val had accomplished among the Catholics of Canada, and the profound impression which his high Christian virtues and his talents as a statesman—I say statesman, and the expression is not too strong—

Not spiritual comforts, but statesmanship you see!

—had created in all classes of our population. Having now returned to my country for several months, I wish to make known to Your Eminence that if these happy results are to remain permanent and efficacious, it is desirable, if not necessary, that the mission of Monseigneur Merry Del Val should be renewed, or rather continued, and that he should be present in the midst of us for a more or less prolonged time as the accredited representative of the Holy See.

I have established, since my return, that there is among a certain class of Catholics an underhand agitation against the work accomplished by Monseigneur Merry Del Val, a work of pacification, concord and union.

The same reason of state which inspired His Holiness in the affairs of France, and which caused him to prescribe to the Catholics of this country the duty of abandoning the old strifes of the past—

In matters of religion? In matters of church polity? Nothing of the kind.

—and to accept the state of things agreed upon, has quite as much force in Canada as in France.

What state of things? A spiritual concordat between the bishops or settlement of dissensions amongst the lesser clergy? Nothing of the kind. Everybody knows what it refers to. It does not require any interpretation at all.

Such is the opinion of a great number of the Catholics amongst us. I admit that it is not the unanimous opinion; this very divergence of opinion only renders more necessary among us the presence of a man at once firm and conciliatory like Monseigneur Merry Del Val, and of one who above all would understand all the danger there is of exasperating the men who are sincere, convinced, and who wish to be faithful to their duty as Catholics, while remaining faithful to what they believe to be their duties as citizens.

May I be permitted to ask Your Eminence to be good enough to lay these conditions be-