

hear.) If we cannot suppose a body without a form, so we cannot suppose society without its formula, and in destroying its formula you destroy society. That is the reason why the marriage tie should be indissoluble; it is it which constitutes the family, and in breaking that tie you destroy the family, in breaking that tie you strike a mortal blow at society, because family ties are its only base, its only foundation. Its only element of composition (Hear.) It is from those fundamental truths that spring the rights, duties and civil laws which prove their existence and at the same time protect them. (Hear.) I have heard in another place than in this House, men who, forgetting the natural law and the principles of society, become affected at the recital of the domestic miseries of one of their fellow-beings, and even invoke the Divine word to justify them in granting a divorce for cause of adultery. Let us see if the language of the Saviour of the world, who taught here upon earth a social doctrine, by preserving the inviolability of domestic ties and surrounding them with duties which rendered them still more sacred, justifies such an interpretation—"I say unto you, that he who putteth away his wife, except for adultery, and marrieth another, committeth adultery, and he who marrieth her who hath been put away also committeth adultery." Are not these words as clear as day, and do they not expressly forbid divorce, since they declare an adulterer the man who shall marry the woman separated from her husband. (Hear, hear.) These words permit the sending away, the separation of the body, but they expressly forbid divorce—that is, the rupture of family ties. (Applause.) I have said that those Divine words had a social object; in fact what other object could they have but to preserve intact the social formula for the transmission of property; and if they surround that formula with a supernatural sanction, accompanied by a prospect of reward or punishment, it is to protect it still more. It is for this reason that, in Catholicism, marriage, a natural contract, is elevated to the dignity of a sacrament, but it was inviolable and indissoluble before that sanction. (Hear, hear.) Now, if we drop the consideration of these great philosophical Christian ideas, we come to the region of material facts, and we are forcibly led to distinguish between force and right, between power and duty. The sovereign legislative authority,

as a superior power everywhere, in spite of right and duty, has ruled with a high hand questions in the social order, among which may be found divorce; everywhere, in ancient Rome, in France, in England, in the United States, and in Canada, has this authority acted, and the judiciary was bound to execute its commands. (Hear, hear.) This power is inherent to Parliament, and is exercised without opposition. Our present Parliament possessed that power, as did those of '74 and '91, and several of us have had, at some time or other, to give our vote on a bill of divorce. Catholics invariably voted against those bills, denying the right, but unable to deny the power, of Parliament, thus reconciling their consciences with their principles. (Hear, hear.) This scheme of the Conference does not ask us to-day to proclaim a principle, but simply the transposition of the exercise of a power which exists in spite of us. Now, in weighing the advantages and inconveniences, I, for my part, say—and I believe, in so speaking I express the general sentiment of Catholics—that, since the evil is a necessary one, and cannot be got rid of, I would rather see it where its consequences would be less serious, because they would be more cramped in their development, and consequently less demoralizing and less fatal in their influence. (Hear, hear.) Marriage presents itself to us here under another aspect—that is, marriage with regard to its civil effects. This project attributes the civil laws and legislation as to property to the local legislatures. Now, marriage, considered as a civil contract, becomes necessarily a part of these laws, and, I might even say, it affects the entire civil code, containing in its broadest sense all the marriage acts, all the qualities and conditions required to allow marriage to be contracted, all the formalities relative to its celebration, all its nullifying causes, all its obligations, its dissolution, the separation of the body, its causes and effects; in a word, all the possible consequences that can result from marriage to the contracting parties, their children and their estates. (Hear, hear.) If such had been the intention of the delegates, we might as well say that the civil laws will not be one of the attributes of our Local Legislature, and that these words, "Property and civil rights," have been placed ironically in the fifteenth section of the forty-third clause of the scheme. But I was sure beforehand that such could not be the case, when the Honorable Solicitor General for Lower Canada declared the other day, in the