

to understand that among the clergy, as among the people, there may be a great many persons who, having always had confidence in the Lower Canada Ministers, and having been accustomed to look upon them as the natural protectors of religion and of our national institutions—are ready to accept the declarations and explanations made in this House by our Ministers. Now, these explanations simply stated that the legislation of the Federal Government would merely go the length of declaring the validity of marriages contracted in any one of the provinces of the Confederation when the parties entered Lower Canada; but it is evident that if they accept such explanations, those members of the clergy who have always had confidence in the present Ministers are not easily susceptible of alarm. But if we take the trouble of interpreting that clause of the resolution in its true sense, it must be admitted that the legislation of the Federal Government on marriage and divorce may in many ways run counter to our sentiments as Catholics, since it may declare that marriage is nothing more than a civil contract, and that religious marriages contracted either by Protestants or Catholics, and not ratified by a magistrate, shall not be valid. Let us now see what will be the effect of these provisions as regards our laws. The Honorable Attorney General for Lower Canada gave us a pompous eulogy of our civil code; he went so far as to state that it was infinitely superior to the French code, and to any code he was acquainted with. We are told that our institutions and our civil laws will be fully protected, and that the Federal Legislature can only legislate on the laws of the other provinces, our civil laws being placed beyond its reach. If this provision relating to marriage and divorce be adopted, what will be the effect on our civil laws? The Hon. Solicitor General for Lower Canada told us that the object of that resolution was to render valid throughout the Confederation a marriage contracted in any one of the provinces. It seems to me very extraordinary, Mr. SPEAKER, that a gentleman in the position of the hon. member for Dorchester, and who, in virtue of that position, may aspire to a seat on the bench, and who already enjoys precedence over the majority of the Bar of Lower Canada, should evince such deplorable ignorance of our civil law. In article 19, title 5 of the *Civil Code*, relative to marriage, I find the following:—"A marriage celebrated out of Lower Canada between two persons, either or both of whom are subject to its laws, is valid, if celebrated

according to the formalities of the place of celebration, provided that the parties did not go there with the intention of evading the law." Thus, Mr. SPEAKER, since the marriage of a Lower Canadian contracted in another country in accordance with its laws, is valid in this country, the explanation and interpretation given by the Honorable the Solicitor General, of the clause relating to marriage and divorce, has no force whatsoever, and the clause may as well be struck out of the resolutions. (Hear, hear.) If I rightly understand that clause, the legislature will have power to deal with a host of matters relating to marriage; thus it may change that part of the civil code which defines the age at which a child may marry without the consent of parents; it may alter the mode of contracting marriage, change the mutual rights and duties of married persons; it will also have power to modify our civil code in the matter of our obligations arising from marriage, in the matter of tutorship, paternal authority, &c., &c., in fact in a multitude of its provisions. If that be the great protection afforded by the new Constitution to our laws, to our religious and civil institutions, there is every reason to fear that they may one day receive a fatal blow. I will now call the attention of the House, and particularly of the French-Canadian members, to the forty-sixth resolution, which relates to the use of the French language in the Federal Legislature. It is as follows:—"The English and French languages may be used simultaneously in the proceedings of the Federal Legislature as well as in the Legislature of Lower Canada, and also in the Federal courts and in the courts of Lower Canada." A close examination of this resolution shews at once that it does not declare that the French language is to be on the same footing as the English language in the Federal and Local Legislatures; in place of the word "shall," which ought to have been inserted in the resolution, the word used is "may," so that if the British majority decide that the *Votes and Proceedings* and Bills of the House shall be printed only in English, nothing can prevent the enactment taking effect. Of course we shall be allowed to use the French language in debate, but on the other hand, it is evident that the majority may, whenever they choose, enact that the bills and proceedings of the House shall not be printed in French, and consequently the clause affords no security whatever to us French-Canadians. I take it for granted that as regards all the bills or resolutions of this House, the meaning to