

schools, in France, for instance, had produced a people of illiterates and atheists. He will likely be disposed to recognize that he has been led into error. In France there are very few atheists; there are a good many free-thinkers—

Mr. SPROULE. I was not expressing an opinion on that at all. I referred to what a French gentleman had told me was the result of that system. I was using his language, not my own, because I am not competent to express an opinion of that kind, never having visited the country and knowing little about it.

Mr. BELAND. That is exactly what I say, that the hon. gentleman had been led into error.

Mr. SPROULE. I understood the hon. gentleman to say that I had said that of France.

Mr. BELAND. No, Mr. Speaker, I said that by some information he had gathered the hon. gentleman had been led into error when he stated that in France there was a large number of atheists. For my part, Mr. Speaker, I am not discussing this question from the point of view of an advocate of separate schools, nor from the point of view of an advocate of public schools. We are not called upon in this House to say whether we favour the one or the other. We are discussing a Bill which provides for religious instruction in the schools in the Northwest, a system which has been adopted by the Northwest and which is in force now. Our country is a British country, our institutions are modelled after the institutions of Great Britain, and I am very sorry, I deeply regret—I say it sincerely—that the great lines, the illuminated paths which have been set for us in the mother country, are in this debate willingly ignored. Unshakable attachment to all things British, be they military, be they political, be they social, has been boasted of here, especially by hon. gentlemen opposite. It is but a few days since the echoes of this chamber were disturbed by the imperialistic eloquence of my hon. friend from Victoria and Haliburton (Mr. Sam. Hughes). In his footsteps we have seen the hon. member from South York (Mr. W. F. Maclean) and the hon. member from East Grey (Mr. Sproule), earnestly and honestly, we believe, preaching the rapprochement, closer relations between England and Canada. It is their contention that British institutions are the climax of perfection for a constitutional country. Why in the name of common sense was the British school system not good enough for them? The French Canadian is very devoted to British institutions, and I make bold to say here that if my countrymen, my compatriots in the province of Quebec, were offered to-day the opportunity to sever their connection

Mr. BELAND.

from Great Britain, if they were offered independence, if they were offered annexation, if they were offered French allegiance, I have not the slightest hesitancy to say they would squarely refuse and remain faithful to Great Britain. And why, Mr. Speaker? Because as was said so eloquently by one of the hon. gentlemen opposite in a debate a few years ago, Great Britain has distinguished herself at home and abroad for that broad spirit of good faith and toleration, for those sacred principles of religious equality and self-government. In England an education Act was recently introduced providing for religious instruction in the schools, according to the wishes of the parents. By whom was it introduced? By men like Chamberlain, by men like Balfour, and that legislation was assailed, and I think encountered as bitter an opposition as this legislation is encountering to-day. Ministers of the gospel went as far as to say that the state was in danger, that the primary and elementary rights were threatened, that the birth right of the British citizen was at stake, that it was a battle for life. The Solicitor General (Hon. Mr. Lemieux) the other night, in the course of a very able speech, read to this House quotations from speeches that have been delivered in England by Mr. Chamberlain and by Mr. Balfour. I shall not trouble the House by reading any more of those speeches. I think the House will permit me to make an allusion to a reverend gentleman in England, a minister of the Presbyterian denomination, Rev. Archibald Lamont, of St. Paul's Presbyterian Chapel. Here is what that gentleman said:

I have high hopes for education and for Presbyterianism and for future Christianity as the result of the advent of this imperfect, but substantially good, Education Bill, and, in spite of an unreasoning and undignified agitation against it, an agitation to which, as I deeply deplore, my own beloved church has thoughtlessly, but I hope temporarily, committed herself. I fear that in most of our Protestant churches, eloquence of speech is often more a hindrance than help to the practical solution of far-reaching and complex questions. It often puts men unwittingly in a false pre-eminence, so that the rank and file—the common people—are misled and become martyrs by mistake.

This should be read to some of the reverend gentlemen of Ottawa and Toronto who have thought it proper to speak from the pulpit against the educational clauses of this Bill. But, Mr. Speaker, this Bill has been adopted in England, and has been in force for a couple of years, and it has given entire satisfaction. The impression that must prevail in the end is that some people want more religious instruction and some people want less religious instruction than this Bill provides; but, Mr. Speaker, standing here as a representative in parliament of a country of 43,000 souls, I think it is my duty to uphold the constitution, and by it to confirm the privileges, be they large or be they