

Bonne Entente.

ONE of the greatest problems that occupy the minds of our public men of today is the establishing of a "bonne entente" between the two great races of Canada. If we are to build up a great nation, all the elements of the population must be welded together by a deep and sincere devotion to a common land. The English majority and the French minority must live side by side, neither assimilating the other, but preserving in all its purity the blood of the two great races that have written the most glorious pages of our history.

That the dream of the Murrays, the Carletons, the Lafontaines, the Cartiers, the MacDonalds and the Lauriers may be realized, it is necessary to lay bare the underlying cause of all this antagonism that has kept the two races apart. From the very beginning of British suzerainty in Canada, the rights of the French Canadian minority have been the occasion of a great deal of controversy and ill-feeling. At various times they considered that their natural and granted rights were being violated, in spite of their manifest loyalty and devotion to the British flag.

At the present time, the struggle centers around the right of the French to speak and teach their language. There are some who question this right, and assert that English should be the only language of Canada. Unable to understand the sacred character of a language with all its hallowed traditions, they fail to realize that any attempt to suppress it will not promote friendship and unity but enmity and discord.

A conflict of this kind, originating as it does in misunderstanding and misrepresentation of motives is more liable to occur in a country where there are two races having different customs and speaking different languages. Some would suggest as a simple solution the assimilation of one race by the other, but when we realize, that to ask a people to abandon their traditions and their language is almost to ask them to give up life itself, we see the impossibility of such a proposal. The only practical solution, therefore, is a mutual understanding and this can be effected only by an interchange of ideas drawn from their very source. And as ideas can be so exchanged and grasped in their fullest significance only by the use of idioms which are at

the same time their embodiment and their vehicle, the English-speaking Canadian should learn French as the French-Canadian, English.

Nothing favors intellectual culture more than the study of a language. One who is not familiar with other languages, has only an imperfect knowledge of his own. In our own tongue to which we are so accustomed, how many words remain vague and indefinite, until we are forced to determine their exact meaning for translation into another language. Many expressions become clear to us only when compared with those of another language, and thus we acquire greater precision and clearness of thought.

The incomparable beauty of the French language is undeniable, it is a diamond of inestimable value, a work of art perfected by centuries of usage in the expression of high thoughts and noble sentiments. It is the language of diplomacy and the second tongue taught in the schools of more than a third of the nations of the world. It is not a language foreign to Canada, it is official in federal affairs and spoken by over three millions of her people. It was spoken by the first masters of these immense territories. It was the language of those brave explorers and devoted missionaries who saved Canada in the hour of her greatest peril, and whose memories are perpetuated in the names of our great lakes and noble rivers.

A Canadian bi-lingual people would have all these advantages and many more. Each one of our ethnical groups contains special qualities and aptitudes, which merged together would be purified and fortified. French idealism would be modified by English positivism, while the Anglo-Saxon with his cold and utilitarian temperament would benefit greatly from an intimate association with a race inflamed with love for art and principles. What a golden heritage would be theirs also in the moral value and civilizing influence of two great currents of literature—the euphonious tongue of Bossuet blended with the lucid language of Newman.

Some of our francophobes say that it is impossible to form a united nation with two peoples speaking different languages and with distinct literature and traditions. They should

realize that the moral unity of a people does not consist in uniformity of language and religion. The moral unity of a people consists in the belief and devotedness of that people to their country. Yes, when everyone is ready at the call of duty to sacrifice his dearest interests, when his love for her does not stop even at the supreme holocaust, when this idea is deeply rooted in the minds of all and this profound sentiment deeply anchored in their hearts, they can speak in any language they wish, they have moral unity, they form a nation.

The French Canadians admire England and are attached to the British institutions through which they obtained their liberty. But they love also the sweet tongue of romance, their mothers sang over their cradles, as they were being lulled to sleep to the sound of the spindle and the spinning-wheel, while the imagination of the singer pictured a happy home for her children in her dear land of Canada.

One of their poets has said :

“Français de caractère, ils sont anglais de cœur,
Et doublent leur patriotisme, en doublant leur bonheur.”

How greatly indeed would a knowledge of French add to the accomplishments of English speaking Canadians! What a field of intellectual enjoyment would be open to them in that rich treasure house of French literature? How conducive also to harmony and good will would be a true knowledge of the sentiments and patriotic feelings of the French-Canadians drawn from their own literature?

Who can read without a thrill of pleasure the sweet poetry of French-Canadian poets like Cremazie, Frechette, Poisson, Lemay and Bl. Lamontagne?

Every line is a patriotic chant often dedicated to England as in “Le Drapeau Anglais” by Laroche.

“Regarde! me disait mon père
Ce drapeau vaillamment porté
Il a fait ton pays prospère,
Et respecte ta liberté.
C'est le drapeau de l'Angleterre
Presque à tous les points de la terre,
Il flotte glorieusement.
Oui sur un huitième du globe

C'est l'étendard officiel
 Mais le coin d'azur qu'il dérobe
 Nulle part n'obscureit le ciel."

At other times it is a souvenir or an "Elan d'amour pour la belle France" as in those lines of Gonz. Desaulniers, written during the war :

"Ce serait la nuit sur l'humanité, si la France périssait
 O mon Jean, s'il faillait, dans la rude mêlée
 Que la France déjà meurtrie et mutilée.
 Tombât comme est tombée ce printemps le grand pin
 Que l'orage a couché sur le flanc du ravin,
 Il ferait noir ainsi sur nous et sur la terre.
 Oui, le monde a besoin de sa douce lumière,
 Et grandmère tá dit souvent, au coin du feu
 Que la France, c'était un sourire de Dieu.
 Va donc! pour la France et pense a moi."

Generally, however, it is of our own dear Canada, its rivers and its plains, the beauty of its heights and the charm of its valleys, that the French Canadian poet sings :

"Visage du Pays dans l'aube je te chante,
 Je vous aime o caps bleus, qui semblez dans l'attente,
 Du baiser du jour clair et des reflets de l'eau,
 Vers vous bords endormis, vole ce chant nouveau.
 O fleuve, un héron bleu rase tot flot rêveur,
 Dans l'air vif tes varechs me glissent leur odeur;
 Et tandis que tu vas baisant les bords d'ardoise
 Je songe que ces lieux ont vu l'Ame iroquoise . . .
 Va donc, Fleuve éternel, vers nos clochers d'argent,
 Vers le golfe, où sourit le jour rose émergeant.
 Avec toi je m'en vais saluant le Pays,
 Tandis que l'Angelus sur tes bords endormis.
 M'annonce le salut de son âme mystique;
 Na, beau Fleuve à ce bruit de l'hommage angélique,
 C'est l'heure où dans nos ciels avec des rythmes doux
 La Foi latine chante aux clochers de chex nous."

Oh! let no one doubt any longer the spirit of invention, the generosity, the grace, the delicacy and precision of argument, and artistic taste of the French. When all these qualities are combined with the practical temperament of the English, who will not say that in our dear Canada can be produced one of the greatest nations that the world has ever know.

That this may soon be realized, let the English-Canadian learn the language of the "fleur de-lys" that he may come to regard his neighbor in a whiter light, while the French-Canadian, learning the language of the "rose" will come to see things more "en rose". Then will the inscription on the common monument of Wolfe and Montcalm be forever true.

"Mortem virtus communem
Famam Historia
Monumentum Posteritas
Dedit."

A. Gagnon '21

Heap on more wood? the wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.

—Scott.
