

Quebec and the War --- A Widening Breach

French and British in Canada Farther Apart Than When France and Britain Became Allies—
Something to Be Deplored—Inconsistent Criticism—How One Toronto Lady
Secured Co-Operation—French Ladies Join Daughters of the Empire.

Special to The Star by Arthur Hawkes
Montreal, June 22.—There is much interesting talk about Quebec's relation to the war and to other Provinces. In Ontario we do not seem to understand Quebec very well. It is no doubt true that Quebec doesn't understand us. But, even if Quebec does not want to understand us, the necessity for our appreciating the peculiarities of Quebec is all the greater. We owe it to ourselves not to be ignorant of conditions we seek to direct.

What a Frenchman Hears.
Try for a minute to put yourself in the skin of a Canadian of the seventh generation who happens to speak French as well as he speaks English, has been a Minister of the Crown, has represented his country in foreign capitals, and whose knowledge of British and Canadian constitutional history transcends that of ninety-nine and nine-tenths per cent. of his compatriots who only speak the language. Imagine yourself reading a report of a sermon by a Toronto divine, which says that the only rights which the French have in Canada are the rights of a conquered nation. Then imagine yourself reading a report of another deliverance which complains that Quebec has not gone to the help of France as speedily or as strongly as certain inhabitants of Canada have gone to the help of Britain. As you read, remember that two years ago there was regret in Ontario that the Canadians of Quebec were too French—that they showed an affection for France which should be cultivated for Britain. What would you say? You might soliloquise something like this, "What wonderful people my English-speaking fellow-Canadians are! They tell us that we must regard ourselves as a conquered nation, which means that we are really in our native country on sufferance. Then they tell us that we ought to fight just as they do to maintain their dominance because one conqueror is better than another. And, to make the position all more entertaining, my compatriots who told us two years ago that, being a conquered nation, we were altogether too French, now mourn over us because we are not French enough. What is it possible for me to do to please my brother Canadians in the highlands of Ontario?" The French mind is a very quick mind. It expresses itself often in terms which are like a rapier, when the rest of

us would use language which cleaves like a meat-axe.

French Who Are Fighting.

There is another class of Canadians to whom it is worth while to give a passing thought. Fourteen thousand French-Canadians are under arms. Thousands of them have fought and are fighting in Europe. There are thousands of people in the Province of Quebec whose relatives and friends have been named in the casualties. They hold exactly the same view about Canada's duty to the war as we do. They have had exactly the same realization that we have, that so large a proportion of the Canadian army was not of Canadian birth. They, through their kindred, did what they could to make that balance less remarkable. How much ought their view as to the war relations of Ontario and Quebec to be worth?

Their ideas may be all wrong, of course, but at least they have a right to be heard respectfully, even patiently. By all to whom Canadian unity is exceeding dear, they may be heard sympathetically. You don't expect a man to be kind to your point of view until you have convinced him that you know what his amounts to. We owe it to ourselves to find out what our fellow-patriots say—to ascertain where their grief resides, as to why more of their compatriots have not done as they have done, and what they would like to do to dissipate their own regret.

For all we know, these relatives of fighting Quebec men may be as ready to criticize those French who are not fighting as we are in Ontario. Perhaps they could do it more effectively than we can, if we will hold our superior gifts in check long enough to find out what they really think about the whole situation. They may even desire our help, if we will be as willing to give it in their way.

They may have something illuminating to tell us as to how it feels to go into battle with that conquered feeling which is so often expressed in certain Ontario cities. We do right to yearn over Quebec. Only, sometimes, that provoking statesman who smiles so benignly, as, with such perfect English, he allows us to understand how amazingly he divines our thoughts, tells us we are perhaps yearning in the wrong place, because racial yearning is really a science. If he used the meat-axe instead of the rapier he would be positively annoying; but, as it is, he just opens your ears to things that

are wonderfully interesting as soon as you are willing to hear them.

What a Montreal Lady Found.

Listen, for example, to a Montreal lady with a Scotch name, who is one of the most Imperial of the Daughters of the Empire—she is a native Torontonion, and therefore not prejudiced the wrong way.

"When the war started I was asked to go out to a Quebec small town to address a patriotic meeting. I thought it would be in a drawing-room, for I had never appeared anywhere else. At the station I saw my name in big letters as the speaker at the Town Hall. I would have caught the train if possible, so scared was I. But I decided to face it. Soon I learned that the French women had not been invited to the meeting—my English friends had not thought of asking them to take part in the work for the war. The Anglican clergyman happened to come along, and he agreed with me. He went to the cure and got him to encourage as many French as possible to join us.

"When I reached the hall I got the priest to introduce me to his people, and as I speak French pretty well, we got along splendidly, and I had the French miller's wife on one side of me on the platform and the French milliner on the other. They had never before been invited to co-operate with the English women in their own town, and were overjoyed at the turn things had taken. They were chary about joining a chapter of the Daughters of the Empire, but came in after they had had time to consult about such an innovation. We have a chapter of seventy members in that little place now, and half of them are French. We are getting Red Cross work from their neighborhood as plentifully as we ever did—three hundred pairs of socks at the time."

A Breach That Is Widening.

Is it strange that when you look for a place from which to start on a search for opportunities for unification you find a woman in it? Not at all. Everybody you meet regrets that the English and French are farther apart in Canada than they were when the war was a month old. We deplore it. The French deplore it. It is no use trying to allocate blame, if blame there be. If you can find provocations to unity, and try to make the most of them, the idea of blame may vanish. Mists usually do when light and warmth are given a chance.