

# DIFFERENCES WITH QUEBEC HAVE BEEN EXAGGERATED

Even the Racial Cleavage Is Less Serious Than It Has Been Represented, for We are Not Far Removed From Our French-Canadian Compatriots.

By ARTHUR HAWKES.

W. T. Stead liked to tell of expounding the equality of women with men to dignitaries at the Vatican. Cardinals and secretaries listened generously, as they always do, and were non-committal, as they generally are—except one. He smiled and said: "You make one mistake. You think women are good; we know them to be bad." Stead used to say that the sentiment did not tally with the Madonna on the wall, and that it illustrated how mighty a point of view is—especially if it is mistaken.

One who is trying to learn what their temper is towards one another has to shuttle between Ontario and Quebec to obtain a sort of inter-correction of focus. To go back home after ten days in Franco-Saxon Canada is to be brought up sharply against the differences in attitude of mind, not only between the English in Ontario and the French in Quebec, but between the English in Ontario and the English in Quebec. There is in Ontario a mind towards the French which is kin to the mind of the cardinal towards the sex which the Madonna glorifies.

The cardinal judged women according to their confession of their faults. Being a calamitous bachelor he knew too little of their virtues. Heaven forbid that one should suggest the least shortcoming in the apprehensions of any Ontario compatriot about his French fellow-Canadian. A few of them are set down here solely for the purpose of affording to those who follow this correspondence a glimpse into some of the considerations which affect one's thinking as he searches for promise of a common constructive Canadianism between Franco-Saxon Quebec and Anglo-Saxon Ontario.

## Distinction is Racial.

"I don't believe it is possible to fuse the differences between the English and French races in Canada into a cohesive mentality," said one well-known Ontario publicist. "They are infinitely deeper than those which existed between the North and South of the United States. There the separation came through industrial and sociological dissimilarity. With us the distinctions are racial, and therefore irremovable. We must assuage their dangers by promoting mutual good feeling, but we can't eliminate them. Go on with that excellent work, but the racial cleavage will remain, whatever is attempted, whatever is done."

Listen to another: "No, sir, this country has been made great by our race—the English, Scotch, and Irish. The French have some good qualities, but they are an inferior race. They are not doing their duty in the war, and when we get our soldiers back, we shall have to show them what we think."

A third: "I believe the French are acting unpatriotically in this war. They have got too much in this Province now. When I see in a train in Ontario 'Defendu de Cracher' I don't like it. This is an English Province. If the French are allowed to grow into a majority here I suppose it will be 'Defendu de Cracher' everywhere. If this is to be a bilingual Province I don't think I shall want to live in it."

A financier with an open mind: "I haven't any prejudices against the French. All I have seen of them is admirable. They were the first in this country. Their industry and thrift are essential to its prosperity, and we ought to do everything we can to get along in the most friendly way. But I can't make out why they should make so much fuss over such an intangible thing as speech."

And finally: "Go down to Quebec to get acquainted with the people? Not by a jug-full. When I go to Quebec it will be with my gun."

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These five points of view could be matched by inharmonious French conceptions about Ontario, which conspire to tempt you to think that the Key to Amity has been hurled into the St. Lawrence. "Les boches de Toronto" is a terrible phrase, which appears too frequently in print. The imputation of a calculated desire in Ontario to oppress a minority and to rob it of its most cherished spiritualities irritates, even if it does not wound. The excessive partizanship which, in discussion, ignores context, and magnifies divergence, misleads the half-informed and inflames the learned. It is all very pitiful and very human, and sometimes very childlike. Would it not be lovely to go off to a lake and the mountainside and forget that an appalling war is putting two Canadian people's nerves on edge? Let them have their wrangle out. Let one hug his grievance and the other foolishly contemplate his gun. Scrapping is in the air, anyway, so why deplore a scrap?

But that won't do. We have got to find our way to nationhood through the war. Suppose you find that you have been so fortunate as to pass safely by some of the rocks of which your friends are still afraid—will you not be willing to put experience where it may have a chance, how-

ever small, to lighten fear? If there is anchorage in the roadstead of Hope ought not its location to be proclaimed, whatever the discomfort, however menacing the storm cloud?

## What is Race?

It is true that the deepest feeling in humanity is race consciousness. But what is race? At school they taught us that there were five races. The English and French are not two of them, but are included in the Canadian. What are the differences between English and French?—or, if you like it better, the British and French? There are English, Welsh, Scotch, Irish in the United Kingdom. The differences between them are many and glorious. Why do we in Canada talk about "our race" when we mean the four races from the United Kingdom who speak English? Why do we merge the differences between us in a more obvious difference from the French-speaking Canadian?

Think over that a minute, and then come to a broker's office in Montreal, to a house in Sherbrooke, and to a wedding party. Watching the New York prices as they are put on the board is a man who starts a conversation—a bright, perfectly-spoken business man, who knows his way through the figures on the wall as easily as you know the characteristics of King and Yonge. He might be a Torontonion; he might be a New Yorker. He is a French-Canadian, though you might live a month with him and not find it out from his speech. You are not conscious of any more difference from him than you are of a "foreignership" in the occupant of the next office at Toronto. Why? Because, not being of essentially different races, the barrier of diversity in accent is not raised. The Tower of Babel has a great deal of political trouble to answer for.

## A Sherbrooke Frenchman.

In Sherbrooke you talk for an hour with a man whose English is Bostonian, because he learned to speak it in Boston. To you he is not French—he cannot be, for his speech has no suggestion of a French accent about it. He is not an Englishman. Neither is Mayor Church, nor Alderman McBride. He is M. Therrien, member for Sherbrooke in the Quebec Legislature, but try as you will, you cannot think of him as Monsieur.

At the station a wedding party, waiting for a belated train. They are gay and garrulous. It was an English-speaking ceremony, but many of the company chat in French, because some of the guests are French. Line up the whole crowd against the ticket office, and you'd be sure puzzled to divide the English from the French.

There are types and types. The darker, more Latin quality of the French of France is superabundant in Quebec. If the English run more to fairness it is because of our Saxon quality, which (tell it not) is Teutonic. Ontario patricians who boast of Norman blood—the intense Imperialists, of course, who go back to Great William's day—can't find fault with the Norman blood of the lower St. Lawrence. They, at least, are Catholic in their ethnology, and know that the more we know of each other the less vigorously the idea of racial rivalry, to say nothing of racial antagonism, survives. In a country where Protestants boast of printing the Bible in nearly a hundred languages, as part of the process of making good Canadians out of all flesh, the minimizing tendencies ought to be maximized by the racial elements to which national leadership belongs to whatever degree they will worthily assume it. There may be variety in unity. You are not wicked merely because you are different. If the initial repellency which we attribute to "race" is not detected when there is no discernible disparity in "something so intangible as speech," is it possible that the "racial" impossibility is only accent deep? Is there, after all, any insuperable obstacle between two peoples whom Providence hath ordained to dwell together, in one country, under one flag, to achieve one destiny?

## Little Real Antagonism.

There have been, and there are, racial wars, as there have been religious wars. We have come to see that the religious wars were essentially irreligious, because men exalted non-essential differences into matters of life and death, and dared to assume towards their fellows the functions of an avenging God. The temper of theologians has changed because they saw their differences were comparatively trivial, and that a few things may be left over for the Almighty to decide.

In its own way the racial factor is moderating in answer to corresponding enlightenment. In England we used to think always of the French as a foreigner and a foe. My father used to repeat a scare-saying of his youth when he said, "Bony will get you." It is foe and foreigner no more, on opposite sides of the Channel, but friend and neighbor. Despite everything that seems contrariwise, the true tendency

in Canada is similar—it must be, for the men of good-will are surely in the big battalion. The man who wants to go down to Quebec with his gun will laugh at himself five years hence.