

INFLUX OF FOREIGNERS.

Grave Problems Created by Their Settlement in Canada.

WESTERN RUSH.

Balance of Power in Alien Hands.

ASSIMILATION NECESSARY.

Otherwise the Dominion Will be in Danger in Time of Stress — Rev. Dr. Robertson's Views.

In past years the constant demand of the great west has been for population, and emigration agents scoured Europe in order to try and attract settlers to these shores. For a long time the demand remained unanswered. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants came yearly to the United States, but Canada received a small number only, and of the latter many stopped in this country but a brief period, and then moved to the other side. Now, however, the tide has turned. Immigrants are swarming in their thousands to Canada and clustering like hives of bees on the fertile plains of Manitoba and the Northwest. Most of these settlers, however, are foreigners, and not British people, and this fact is likely to create problems which must be solved in future, and wisely solved, if the destiny of the Canadian people is to proceed along the lines laid down by the present rulers of the country. In the Province of Manitoba there are now settled over 50,000 foreigners, including Mennonites, and among the children attending the schools of Winnipeg no less than seventeen different languages are spoken. In the Northwest Territories there is a foreign population of several thousands, and the proceedings of the Legislature have to be translated into thirteen different languages in order that those acts may be understood by the people. The ranks of these foreigners are now being augmented very rapidly until it would seem that the advent of the day when the vast plains of the west shall be completely occupied and the reign of solitude and silence shall have disappeared before the stir and hum of busy multitudes is almost within measurable distance.

A Great Problem.

In the hope of throwing light upon some phases of the foreign immigration question, The Globe on Saturday interviewed Rev. Dr. Robertson, Superintendent of Presbyterian missions in

the Northwest, and asked for his opinion concerning the characteristics of the alien races now settling in Canada, the likelihood of the foreigners proving satisfactory additions to the population of the Dominion and the best means, in his opinion, for promoting their assimilation with the native-born and the people from the British Isles. Rev. Dr. Robertson knows the west thoroughly and has closely watched the tide of immigration which has been pouring into it. He has mixed with the foreign settlers of all races and has noted with the eye of a keen observer their manners and customs. In his opinion the foreign immigrants, coming as many of them do from colder climates, are well adapted for life in this country and are making good settlers. The process of assimilation is going to prove a difficult matter, but it must be satisfactorily met, if Canada is to remain a united people and British in sentiment. The best means of accomplishing this result, he thinks, is to teach the foreigners as speedily as possible the English tongue; to promote inter-marriage with British peoples, and to get them to understand our system of responsible government, the value of British institutions, and the freedom which Canadians, in common with other British peoples, enjoy. The franchise should not be extended to the foreign population until they have shown their fitness for that great privilege.

Interview With Dr. Robertson.

"What is your opinion of the foreign immigrants who have been settling in Manitoba and the Northwest?" Dr. Robertson was asked.

"They are mostly all excellent settlers. They have come to this country from colder climates, and hence they suffer no inconvenience and make no complaint on the score of cold. In the lands they left they were not too well off. Here their prospects are altogether brighter, and they are able to earn a much better living. The foreigners rejoice very much in the large measure of freedom which they enjoy in their new home, at the absence of militarism and in the light taxes imposed. Doubtless some of them were restless in their native land, but you cannot wonder at that, in view of the tyranny and despotism from which they there suffered. Here they are in a free atmosphere and they may be expected to observe our laws, which are not rigorous in character."

"What is your opinion of the Galicians?"

"The Galicians are coming to this country in very considerable numbers. There must be quite 20,000 or 25,000 located in Manitoba and the Territories. So far as Manitoba is concerned, there are 400 families located east of Dominion City, 200 families north of Stonewall, and 600 families in the Dauphin country. In regard to the Territories, there are 400 families settled south of Yorkton, Assa., 200 families near Edna, Ala., and it is expected that this spring 1,000 families will be located in the Moose country, Assa."

"Are the Galicians cleanly in their habits? Eastern people suspect them of the practice of keeping their poultry and live stock within their living apartments."

"They have been criticized for that, but the Mennonites act very much the same way. I have stopped in Mennonite houses and seen the cattle and the horses coming under the same roof. Now, however, they are getting past that. They are building comfortable homes for themselves and providing separate places for the live stock. The Mennonites are cleanly in their habits. I have frequently ate at their houses, and been served in a way that the most fastidious person could not take offence at. The Galicians are not as cleanly as the Mennonites, but I believe they will get over that. They have followed the customs which are so repugnant to Canadians in their own country, but now they are in another land and have better examples continually before their eyes. I believe they will be quick to imitate and to adapt themselves to the habits of our people. Two young men of the Galician race, studying at our college, and by their manner of conducting themselves and their rapidity in acquiring a knowledge of English have shown they are very apt pupils. Where you get such aptitude in a new situation you may expect the best results. Their ideas in many questions are, it is true, very primitive."

Marriage Customs.

"Their customs in regard to marriage are not the same as ours. For example, in a Galician settlement recently one man sold his wife to another, and the latter appeared before the Magistrate to complain because the goods were not delivered. Recently, too, there have been atrocious murders among the Galicians east of Dominion City. Still you can understand that our horror of murder is not shared by people who are not of Anglo-Saxon or Celtic origin. There is not that regard for life in many European countries that there should be, but it is to be wondered at, in view of the manner in which the people have been hunted down and slaughtered? I believe that before long the Galicians will come to understand our laws and customs better, and such things will be of very rare occurrence. Lately I have seen several young Galician women in homes, here and there in Manitoba, and they make good servants, being clean, neat and tidy. They are helping very much to solve the servant-girl problem. If the Galician girls adopt themselves to Canadian customs and become cleanly in their habits they are sure to be selected as wives by the settlers and settle down in homes of their own. Of that there is no doubt at all. And this is to be said to their credit: On going into service the very first thing they do after providing themselves with suitable clothing is to send their wages home to father and mother, so as to help in building up a home that will be a refuge and a shelter to them and the rest of the family in case of trouble. The ordinary Canadian girl, in similar circumstances, would, I am afraid, be apt to spend all she earned upon herself."

The Doukhobors.

"What do you think of the Doukhobors?"

"These people have been, as you know, in the country but a short time. I went to see them, and apparently they are a class of people who are likely to get on. The Doukhobors are very illiterate. I am told that only four or five per cent. of them can read or write. Seeing, however, that they have been hunted like partridges in their native land, one is not surprised at their illiteracy. They seem to be a thrifty, intelligent, very industrious and very hardworking people, and will be, I think, obedient to law."

"The Icelanders have proven very satisfactory settlers. When they first arrived some doubts were expressed as to their suitability, on account of their non-acquaintance with agricultural pursuits, but they have turned out to be a valuable acquisition. They adapted themselves very readily to the new conditions, and are a sober, industrious, hardworking people. The Swedes and Norwegians in these respects resemble them very much. The C.P.R. and other companies employ large numbers of these people to manage their works, and to keep the line in order."

"Are the foreign settlers scattered through the country, or massed together in communities?"

"Each nationality is placed together, in blocks of land. I do not like the hiving system myself, but I can sympathize with the desire of these foreigners to be placed together where they could have the same language spoken. The future of our country would be better assured if there was a liberal sprinkling of Canadian and British people among the foreigners. We are creating conditions in the west somewhat similar to those which pre-

vail in the Western States. Whereas we should try, if possible, to get a good, healthy, intelligent, loyal Canadian element distributed amongst these people. Then the tide of thinking will be set in a certain direction, and you may expect good results. If, on the other hand, they are left to themselves, it will take a long time for them to be assimilated."

To Promote Assimilation.

"What would you suggest as the best means of promoting assimilation?"

"I have already spoken to Mr. Sifton, the Minister of the Interior, and Mr. Smart, his deputy, about that. The three elements which, in my opinion, will best promote settlement are these: In the first place, the text books and the language of instruction should be English. You will see the need of that when I tell you that in Manitoba to-day there are over 50,000 foreigners, while the attendance at the Winnipeg schools is made up of children speaking seventeen different languages. English, of course, is the language of instruction. In the Northwest Territories there is also a large foreign population, and in order that the people may understand the transactions of the Council a synopsis of the legislation has to be prepared and translated into thirteen different languages. In the second place it would greatly help if, among these people, there were ministers who were loyal in sentiment and anxious to have their flock become Canadians as rapidly as possible. Thirdly, intermarriage will have a strong effect in inspiring these people with a Canadian sentiment."

"When would you admit them to the exercise of the full rights of citizenship?"

"I think we should move slowly in the matter of conferring full rights upon them. They have not been accustomed to responsible government, and until they have learned our language and can understand the genius of our institutions it would be well to keep them as they are. If you confer the franchise upon them too soon they may get into the hands of demagogues who will use them for purposes of their own. It is a very serious question, because the west is going to fill up rapidly if these people continue coming, and that will greatly change the present representation. The population of the lower Provinces, remember, is almost at a standstill. In Quebec it is increasing less than 1 per cent. per annum. In Ontario it is increasing a little more than 1 per cent. per annum, but if the statistical reports of the Government of Ontario are true your birth rate is as low as that of France. In the west, however, this incongruous population is rapidly increasing."

Growth of the West.

"Manitoba in 1871 had a population of 25,000 people. It has to-day 260,000. Winnipeg in that year had 241 people. She has now a population of from 45,000 to 50,000. All over the western plains, towns are springing up, and the volume of business is expanding rapidly. For example you will notice that the business of the clearing-house in Winnipeg is the third largest in the country, Montreal and Toronto alone being in excess. That shows, you see, that the centre of political influence and of trade also, will shift westward, and the question to be answered is, What is to be done with all these people—Mormons, Galicians, Croats, Wallacians, Finns—and, by the bye, the Finns are first-rate settlers—Icelanders, Swedes, Norwegians, Germans, Belgians, Austrians, Hungarians and others, pouring into the country. Are you going to trust a mixed multitude, a composite people, a hotch-potch of races like this with the balance of power? I think before you do that you ought to make sure that you are doing the right thing. A number of these people are intelligent. Very well, give them the franchise if you are assured they are patriotic and what-not. But the attitude of the Germans in the western States towards the Federal Government because of the trouble with Germany shows what may be expected in this country unless a thorough process of assimilation takes place."

Danger of a Break.

"I have been trying to impress upon your people here the danger that unless there is a thorough assimilation the Dominion, speaking nationally, may break at Lake Superior in case of any strain or stress. The Dominion is like a huge dumb-bell with two big ends on it, the east and the west end. There is a thousand miles in rear of Lake Superior that never can be settled, that is your hand. Now, suppose any trouble were to come with the United States, how would the strain result in western Canada? People say: 'What is the use of talking about trouble with the United States; there is no danger of that?' But my opinion is that the best way to avoid trouble is to be prepared for it. If the Americans know that on the north side of the boundary we are united and prepared to defend our country—six, eight or ten millions ready to give them a warm reception should they come—they would not think of such a thing. But supposing they knew that a number of our people are unaffiliated, that a great many are foreigners and not loyal to the British flag at all, you can easily see that the conditions are changed. Bear in mind another fact, that hundreds and thousands of Americans are coming in and locating where these foreigners are settled, and you can readily understand that the conditions are aggravated. Mind you, I think that the people coming from the other side are loyal, and will yield obedience to our laws, and will yield to think otherwise; but it is not difficult to see where their sympathies would go in case of international difficulty unless there has been a real assimilation. Hence the Government should strive to create the conditions under which assimilation can go on most quickly and rapidly. When the foreigners come to understand the

rights and the privileges which the constitution confers, the large amount of liberty they will enjoy and the fact that they are going to govern themselves—that will help them very much and tend to increase their desire to understand English. To show you the feeling that some of these foreigners already entertain, I may mention a little incident that came under my notice. Some time ago during a visit to the Dauphin country I came across a group of Galician girls. They were at play, and chattering to each other in their own tongue. Pausing, I said to them, 'You are Galicians, are you not?' 'No, sir,' was the response, 'we Canadians.' It gratified me very much to hear them talk that way. Such a spirit as that ought to be encouraged. I would make it an object to encourage the foreign people to hope that as soon as they understand the language and acquire a knowledge of the institutions of the country, and prove themselves patriotic, they will be admitted to a full enjoyment of the rights of citizenship. To a certain extent intermarriage has already begun, several British settlers having chosen Galician women as wives. In some cases neither the man nor the woman could understand each other's language, and I do not know how they arranged the match. It must have been altogether a matter of signs."

The Ontario Settlers.

"How do the settlers from Ontario succeed?"

"The trouble in the past has been that the settlers from Ontario came out expecting to begin where their fathers had left off, instead of starting in at the very commencement. Then they came from a warm to a colder climate. Further, the homes they had left were surrounded with apples and fruits of all kinds, while in their new home were none of these things. Consequently many of the Ontario people became greatly dissatisfied, and moved elsewhere. Now, however, they are beginning to understand the situation a great deal better. In a number of cases Ontario folks began at the very bottom of the ladder, and have succeeded remarkably well. I could enumerate whole districts where the success of the farmers has been simply marvellous. So far as Ontario women are concerned, my opinion is that if in the past many of them had gone west and become servants in households instead of crowding into the large cities and towns in Ontario as milliners, shop girls and typewriters, they would to-day have had comfortable homes of their own. It is a great pity a number of the best of their did not go west. I know myself women who have comfortable homes and intelligent and enterprising husbands, and are rearing respectable families, who were once servants in Winnipeg households. You get them with their fine farms, and their carriages to drive out in whenever they please, inviting to their homes in summer—and the invitations are accepted—the very people in whose houses they were formerly employed when those good folks feel in need of an outing."