

tional disintegration will be in Canada the wages of the neglect of French studies. Learning French and teaching it to others constitute for us a lofty, patriotic duty. And not least, a knowledge of French is of supreme importance in acquiring a correct mastery of English. Since Norman times French and English have touched at so many points, in such a variety of ways, that in the thorough understanding of either a knowledge of both is essential. To the English student an acquaintance with the clarity and dignity of French is a constant corrective of obscurity and commonplaceness. The elegant phrasing of French is for the English mind a healthy stimulus in overcoming a certain proneness to clumsiness and looseness of style. There is great need to-day in English Canada in the midst of noisy, vague, inaccurate, illogical utterance, private and public, of French sanity and clearness. The movements of French literature, too, for three centuries have so dominated English, as well as all other literature, that there can be no proper grasp of the phenomena of literary development without a thorough grounding in the history of French letters.

OUR DELINQUENCY

But hitherto we have not risen to the full height of our duties and privileges. Far too small a number of our English-speaking citizens have been able to speak, or even read, the language of France. In this we have been content with small achievement, so small indeed that the French of Ontario has become a byword. Let us hope that the hour of awakening has come. A half million of our sons rushed to save France and England, the mothers of civilisation, from the attack of barbarous invaders, and some fifty thousand of them sleep over there in the soil of France which they died to defend. No more shall we be indifferent to France. No longer can she be a thing remote. Her smiling fields, her cities, her churches, her people, her institutions, her language, her literature, will become the objects of our affectionate contemplation. We will investigate the defects of our systems and methods, and having discovered where we have fallen short, we shall apply the remedy.

BETTER OPPORTUNITIES NEEDED

No better material for making scholars exists in the world than we find in the youth of Canada. But we have failed to give our students sufficient opportunity to learn French well. We have not permitted it to have a place in our primary schools, and a stiff, formal Entrance Examination has long forbidden ready access to our secondary schools, and has raised the age of entrants beyond the point at which they should have begun their study of that language. And in these secondary schools a crowded curriculum has made it difficult to get sufficient time

to do more than acquire a knowledge of elementary grammar and a limited vocabulary. The number of hours per week devoted to French is often ridiculously low. Correct pronunciation and the elements of a speaking knowledge, always slow to acquire, have been much neglected. Naturally, too, the introduction of the high school student into the rich fields of French history, geography, institutions, literature, the fine arts, and so on, has been impossible, and he has come to regard the subject of French, despite its breadth and richness, as narrow and jejune. The teacher has been generally overworked. He has had all his teaching time taken up with elementary drill; and extra time, which should have been given to widening his own knowledge and to renewing his enthusiasm, has been spent in correcting endless exercises. The discouraging circumstances felt by all students have been accentuated for boys by the fact that they saw very few men, as teachers or otherwise, who were occupied with the subject. They came, not infrequently, to feel that, whatever it might be for girls, it had no particular interest for them. Often, too, the teachers have not had the training to give them firm footing amidst the many difficulties of practical French, nor the breadth and depth of culture necessary to enable them to give their pupils inspiring glimpses of the rich fields in the upper reaches of their subject. For the teacher must aim high. While teaching elementary things like grammar, pronunciation and the first beginnings of conversation, he must ever realise that fullness of power in French will come only after much knowledge has been acquired and many enthusiasms experienced. The silly person who imagines that French conversation is something that can be learned in a few lessons detached from all other studies has had a pernicious influence. The narrow outlook is fatal to high achievement.

THE CHANGES NEEDED

The hour has come for two great changes without which progress is impossible: French must have more time devoted to it in our secondary schools, and there must be an elevation of the standard of teaching. Extra time should be got by beginning the subject at least a couple of years sooner, by securing more frequent lessons during the week, and by teaching smaller classes. The aimless years often spent in our primary schools could well be shortened to provide this extra time. An impetus would also be given by the distribution of more prizes to worthy pupils. The standard of teaching should be raised by increasing the knowledge of the subject on the part of the teacher rather than by exacting knowledge of pedagogical methods. Each teacher should spend a sufficient time amongst French-speaking people to become familiar with the spoken language and with French ways of thought and life. Lower Canada should be much more utilised than it has been hitherto.