

customs are uncouth to the refinement of twenty-five hundred and eighty-four. That we will have a literature long before such things happen I do not question; but he is doomed to awake unsatisfied who dreams of a *distinctive* literature from the hands of a genius, who, at a single bound, has leaped from chaos to cosmos across the evolution of ages.

Your contributor points out the want of "A common centre, political, literary, social, and commercial," as the great gulf fixed in the way of achieving a national literature, and he is right as far as he goes; but does he not overlook the fact, that the centralization he speaks of would only be a means, a method or process of development that would fail of its end without the material to work upon? It would encourage literature; but how a "distinctive literature," without the protoplasm of a remote national infancy? Had the Normans overrun England, obliterating almost every trace of the Saxon, as we have the North American Indian, the England of to-day might be but a differing branch of a Continental race and language.

The Saxon, though overpowered in war, had an intellectual vitality that in time equalled and overpowered the conqueror, so that, as centuries passed, the two were knit into an indissoluble whole, forming a distinctive nationality with, finally, a distinctive literature.

Such, I think, has been the history of nations with distinctive literatures; if subjugated, their conquerors have not been so far superior as to utterly destroy all traces of the original race, and have merely left an ineffaceable impress, or have amalgamated to form a new race and language from the fittest part of both.

Take such a land. It has grown in the lapse of ages from an infancy of barbarism to a manhood of civilization. A history abounding with tradition; a religion whose precursor was a mythology; whose mountains, rivers and forests were the homes of gods and heroes, to whom thunder was the voice and lightning the "red right hand" of offended and avenging deity. Such an origin will develop a national literature.

It is different with us in Canada. We have had no barbarous infancy moulded by the natural features of our land. No divinities have sanctified to us our mountains and streams. No fabled heroes have left us immortal memories. We have not amalgamated with the native and woven the woof of our refinement in the strong sinuous web of an aboriginal tradition and religion. In our civilized arrogance we swept away that coarser fabric, knowing not that we destroyed that which we would now, as a garment, be proud to wear. We have come almost full grown into the world, not unlike some unbred specimens of the canine race. We are hardly healthier for that. A strain of native blood, though seemingly retarding us at first, might have proved a blessing in the future. But we are here now and they are gone.

An ever increasing difficulty in forming a distinctive literature is the facility of communication between the utmost ends of the earth. We are more familiar with and probably more influenced by the doings in Australia to-day than neighbouring states in Europe were by each other a thousand years ago. We are gaining the whole world and losing our own soul. Individuality, almost nationality, is being lost, and could one of us be granted the days of a Methuselah his aged blood might fire and his heart beat stronger, listening, in a later civilization, not to a patriot, but to a *terraot* launching his philippics against the overbearing and belligerent inhabitants of the moon. But jesting aside, is not this the course of things?

Yet again there is an influence on this very continent from which we cannot escape, and which must mould our features to a family likeness. I doubt not but the day will come when there shall arise the right man in the walks of literature. That is to say, we will produce a great writer, or even great writers; but will they be founders of a "distinctive literature?" I think not, unless they write in Anglo-Ojibbeway, and educate a nation to look upon Nana-bo-johu as a Lancelot or a Guy of Warwick.

BARRY DANE.

### THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNORSHIP OF QUEBEC.

NEWSPAPERS which may be looked upon as fairly representing the opinions of the English-speaking population of the Province of Quebec are considerably agitated just now over the question of the Lieutenant-Governorship of that Province. The present position of these journalists is not unlike a very little dog watching a very big one gnawing a bone, and when the latter has almost picked it bare, then the little one says "please give me the bone." The attitude of the English journalists doubtless affords the true interpretation of the *Chein D'or* which flourishes in Quebec history. But whether or not, while we can enter into the feelings of the English-speaking people, we are very far from sharing the enthusiasm of their confrères in the press, and that for reasons which we shall presently

explain. We are clearly of opinion that Confederation on the existing lines of "Provincial Autonomy," as it is termed, is doomed to an early and possibly ignominious death. Assuming that we are correct in this surmise, and we are prepared to say in advance that the party organs will denounce it in every mood and tense—what then? Why it follows inevitably that the really important question which the English-speaking people of the Province of Quebec have got to decide is this: Are we justified in making any effort to stay dissolution? To obtain sufficient data for a satisfactory answer they have but to cast their eyes around them and see what is transpiring now, and what has taken place since "Confederation." It is sheer folly, or downright dishonesty, to talk of anything like real community of interest or feeling as existing between the French and English-speaking portion of the population. It does not exist. Still worse, it can not exist, and the French Canadians of the Province of Quebec have never lost an opportunity of declaring their determined antipathy to the idea of amalgamation in any shape or form. We don't blame them for this, but we strongly condemn the political charlatanism which has given birth to this hybrid thing called Confederation, and enthroned it as the highest effort of political sagacity. Do the Canadians of Montreal, Three Rivers, or Quebec take any interest in "Dominion Day"? Not the slightest; and possibly there is not one *habitant* in every five thousand who knows "Dominion Day" even by name, and not one in twenty who feels the slightest interest in it under any circumstances. Those few who, in one or at most two places, make a pretence of enthusiasm for English connection are political hangers-on whose prejudices are, for the moment, made subservient to their interests, but even in their case the veneer is too thin to deceive. Real political cohesion there is none, and the intervention of religion and language at all points would effectually check such tendencies even if they did exist. But it is only doing the French Canadians of the Province of Quebec, an act of bare justice to say that so far as they are concerned such tendencies are absolutely non-existent. Is it wise then or patriotic for the English-speaking population to act and speak as if the two nationalities were in process of fusion? We think not. Moreover, we are of opinion that such a course is eminently prejudicial to their best political interests, inasmuch as it diverts their attention from their true natural allies, and therefore the sooner these political illusions are dispelled the better hope is there for the progress of the country.

The position of the French Canadian in our political system may be stated in familiar language: he looks out upon the inviting field of Dominion patronage, and he says to the English-speaking tax-payers, and says with delightful effusiveness, "We are one grand confederation, and therefore 'what's yours is mine.' but in the Province of Quebec what's mine is my own." Who will pretend to say that this does not fairly represent the situation at the present. "Jean Baptiste" has a well-founded dislike against paying taxes, but he has not, it must be admitted, any objection to other people paying them so long as he is accorded the privilege of spending them. Confederation was heralded with so many promises that the English-speaking people were quite content to accept the situation on these terms, and with commendable generosity they have hitherto permitted their ill-assorted ally to spend their money. Well, what is the result? Look at the Province of Quebec itself, and there you see the English-speaking population being steadily and persistently driven out. No Englishman need apply for any office under the Provincial Government at the present moment, and as a matter of fact they get none. Of the few offices held by English-speaking persons some have been forced to resign to make way for French Canadians, and the few who remain are there upon sufferance. The whole business life of the Province of Quebec centres to-day chiefly in the English-speaking population of Montreal, who contribute perhaps three-fourths of the municipal taxes, as they unquestionably do the greater part of the funds necessary to keep the Provincial machinery going, and yet observe how they have been treated in the matter of the mayoralty. Again and again their wishes have been set at naught and good faith violated in the interests of French national prejudice; and the same state of things will occur in every instance where the French Canadian can freely exercise his will. The only privilege he will allow his English-speaking co-resident in the Province is the privilege of paying the taxes. Precisely the same thing has occurred as to the lieutenant-governorship of Quebec. Since Confederation the position of Lieutenant-Governor has been held by needy politicians, and the present occupant is no exception to the rule. This disposition on the part of the French Canadian to grasp everything, and having got it to hold it with obstinate tenacity, is easily understood. It is carrying out the idea, absurd if you will, of creating a French nationality upon this continent. Besides, it is a good thing to exclude the hated, and to the average French Canadian, easy-going conqueror, who threw away his blood and treasure apparently