

French Canadians and Modern Language Teachers in Ontario.

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Upon my mantel shelf there stands a photograph which, though remarkable in itself, is valuable to me rather because of the way in which it came into my hands. A summer vacation, almost the whole of which had been spent in exploring every curious-looking place I could see or hear of in and about the town of Quebec, was drawing to a close. One rainy Saturday morning I sallied forth to purchase photographs to serve as mementoes of the happy months.

The proprietor of the shop waited on me himself, and, though I spoke French, he insisted upon speaking to me in English which was none too good. At last, impressed perhaps by my persistence, he said "Are you a Canadian?" To this I replied, "Yes", forgetting for a moment that my answer was misleading. Then again he asked, "Where do you live?" and "If you are a Canadian, how does it come that you live in Toronto?" Then I remembered that they are "the Canadians" and we are "English", although our forebears for two or three generations back may never have seen Great Britain at all, or only upon a visit at best. I tried to set the matter right by saying that I was an Anglo-Canadian, but that led only to another question,—"If you are an Anglo-Canadian, how is it that you speak French?" The "Mail" (it was the days of the Equal Rights agitation) says that you Toronto people want to abolish our language." Assuring him that the "Mail" did not represent the majority of the inhabitants of Toronto and of Ontario, I explained that I for one admired his language and its literature, and that I had nothing but the kindest feelings for his people.

No more English was heard in the shop throughout the rest of the morning. I saw the best pictures it contained, I bought a large number of them, and at last I was making ready to go to my lodgings. "We have spent a very pleasant morning together" said Monsieur, "will you honour me by accepting a photograph of your own choice as a souvenir?"

There are difficulties in such a situation, for one may choose too valuable a gift. Divining, perhaps, the difficulty which caused me to hesitate to accept his offer, he picked up several pictures of cabinet size and asked me to make my selection from them. Thus it was that I became possessed of the picture of a handsome old Indian from the village of Lorette—said to have been the last full-blooded Huron chief.

With his rags, his dirt, and his George III. medal, the picturesque old figure speaks to me not only of the holiday of ten years ago but also of two men who by a little plain speaking came to understand each other. And each came to think better, I hope, of the other's province and of the inhabitants thereof, so different in origin, in language, in manners, and in religion.

A man cannot help his birth; he may change his religion, though in so doing he makes a great break with his past and with his own people. His language he may likewise discard, but in so doing he becomes to a certain extent a new man, for the more one studies languages the more impressed he must be with the fact that the character of a people is indelibly stamped into the language it speaks. In making this change the man may become better, and he may not.

Even with change of language and of religion, manners and habits of thought cannot be changed all at once. Nor is it desirable that they should be changed unless we are all to come down to the wearisome dead level of uniformity.

Human nature, by whatever name it