

CONVENTION OF U. C. M.—(Continued).

the *bonne entente* between the people of different races and creeds and it may have been to give a practical demonstration of this noble sentiment that the French delegate of a Quebec city has been offered to speak in the name of the municipalities of the East.

I boast of being of the most genuine French-Canadian descent. My father was a shoemaker and my grandfather a water-carrier, two trades that have been considered almost as national. This is the reason why I have been on the water-waggon long before there was any question of prohibition in British Columbia; my first joy-rides were gained in selling water at the "six sous la tonne" or five cents the barrel.

These happy, but somewhat slow, rides I enjoyed some thirty-two years ago in the streets of the same city of which I now happen to be the chief magistrate. This fact may be cited as a peculiar instance of the accuracy of the old saying: "Slow but sure."

My grandfather has disappeared; so has his trade of peddling water by the barrel. But his grandson, being a true French-Canadian, is a traditionalist, and he is still selling water to his fellow-citizens as head of one of the finest municipal water-works plant of the country. As I wanted to be consistent with my family mission, I had to find a position in which I could have something to say in the quenching of the public thirst. My fellow-citizens found my motive so imperative that they twice elected me by acclamation, mayor, in which capacity, as I have said before, having the supreme authority over the water-works department I can consider myself as the great municipal cup-bearer.

I am thus fulfilling my mission; I have proven a good traditionalist. I say good, because to my mind there is a great difference between a good traditionalist and a simple one.

A good traditionalist is a man that has kept from the past, only what has been found consistent with modern thought; the simple traditionalist will, in his blind love of past uses, completely set aside the findings of new speculation.

The good traditionalist is, in fact, the progressive; the simple traditionalist is nothing but the reactionary. If my grandfather had not been a traditionalist of the right kind he would have left the town swearing that the modern pumping systems were designed only to take from the mouth of the poor water-carrier his daily bread. He would have receded before progress and gone back toward the wilderness where the diabolical steam pumps would not have disturbed him in his primitive work, consisting in the perpetual filling of his tub-cart at the river and monotonous carting of it to the vat standing on the back porch of his customer's house. And his grandson would not have been here to-night to tell you about the national necessity of having closer relations between the eastern and western municipalities. In my efforts to speak a tongue which is far from being familiar to me, I show that mentality of the good traditionalist. Of the past I keep the thoughts that are from French tradition but, thank God, thoughts that have followed the evolution of modern times are not stained by narrow provincialism or bigoted nationalism, these corruptions of patriotism, these two curses of the nations of which every cheap politician has made use, to promote his selfish interests at the cost of public peace and welfare. For the present, I take the form of expressing them in the language that every Canadian should know, and will eventually know in some years, as its teaching has been recently made a part of the program of all our Quebec schools. For the future I will try to grasp the spirit that will tend to make this Dominion worthy of the two great races whose sturdy sons have conquered from wilderness, brought to civilization and kept to democracy a land large and rich enough to be a self-sustaining empire.

I am glad to have seen my city chosen to deliver the message of the eastern municipalities to the western ones. I say glad, because the events of the recent years have shown to me that we could not hope to have a truly prosperous Canada unless the same spirit with which the founders and builders of St.-Hyacinthe have impregnated our civic life would spread itself over all the municipalities of the Dominion.

Our city is to some extent a minute replica of our great country. It is a half-manufacturing town and a half-agricultural centre; we have, in small, the conflicting economic interests of the east and the west. We have

also a very restricted number of Protestant and English-speaking citizens; the same religious and lingual cleavages exist, but on a much vaster proportion and in opposite direction in our country.

How have we succeeded in solving the problems in which those conflicting interests were concerned? We succeeded in solving them to the satisfaction of the great majority of the French Catholic population and of the English Protestant minority by adhering to the golden rule: Do unto others as you would be done unto you. We remembered that our neighbour has a right, as we have in this free country, to his own opinions on religious matters as long as these opinions were not a restriction to our own liberty. We remembered that everybody had a right to speak his mother tongue as we ourselves, and that there was no law to prevent anybody from receiving a piece of bread, even if he could not ask for it in French. We also remembered that he who wants to be understood, by both English and French-speaking Canadians had only to learn both languages as there was and there should be no law in a free country to force a man to speak a particular language if he does not want to. If a man is satisfied that he has enough of the English language that is his business; if a man thinks that he needs nothing but the French language in Quebec that is also his business. For my part I am convinced that the English language is a necessity on this continent on which there are more than one hundred millions of English-speaking people, but that is a matter of individual opinion and it does not necessarily follow that I would be right in blaming any one of those one hundred million English people for not going into the trouble of learning the French language if his personal calling is not to put him some day in close contact with the three million French-speaking population of this continent or if he has no literary taste. Both languages are official, but the speaking of either the one or the other is not compulsory and in our city we do not quarrel with those that have not the opportunity, even the wish of having received a bi-lingual education. We leave these petty quarrels to those who find in them personal advantages rather than public interest, satisfaction of their individual pride rather than national glory, food for their stomach rather than for their brains.

We, the French-Canadians and Catholics, a minority in this country have always asked to be treated as regards our civil or political rights on the same level with the English and the Protestants. We do not want to suffer any "capitis diminutio" or restriction of prerogatives because of our religious beliefs or of our different language. But, sirs, in St. Hyacinthe, the city of true French mentality, we do not confine ourselves in asking the other to be governed by those principles when they have to deal with us, but we have them enshrined in our hearts and at every page of our municipal history for these last thirty years are related events that show that we have ourselves always been cheerfully guided by them. This French city has always been animated by the sentiment in the minds of the leaders of public opinion. This sentiment is nobler than one of tolerance; it is good-will towards those that do not believe and do not speak as we do.

Tolerance is a right idea, but it is as dry as the season that approves of it; good-will is a sentiment proceeding the heart and warm enough to generate that sympathy we need so badly in new countries where people of different races and different customs have congregated to build new nations. In St. Hyacinthe this good-will has been the cause of the fact that if a stranger would go over the municipal records of the last thirty years at any meeting he would find the name of one or two Protestants representing as aldermen a city in which ninety-five per cent. of the electors are French-Catholics. He would even see the report of an election in which the mayor elected by one of the largest majorities ever given a candidate was a Protestant. What we are demanding for ourselves we are cheerfully granting to others.

And how did we come to find out that the Protestant and the English were no worse than ourselves? It is by the close relations we had with them. Close relations are the best breeder of good understanding, good-will and sympathy. By them quarrels that seem to have the character of eternity are settled in no time; barriers of insuperable appearance between groups of men are thrown down, and facts that have been grossly distorted are brought back to their proper shape.

There is nothing like the actual meeting of men to set things to their proper level. I have had this experience