

# Castes in Canada

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**The following is an address delivered before the Canadian Club of Montreal a few days ago, and now published in full for the first time. Mr. Monk represents Jacques-Cartier in the House of Commons and has been for many years a prominent figure in political life.**

**A** MAN who has been more than a decade in Canadian public life, face to face with the problems which our country presents, must have endeavored to gauge at times the mental condition of his fellow countrymen; he must have sought to fully understand what I might call the Canadian idiosyncrasy. A special study is necessary and there is knowledge to be gained which cannot be found in books; there is no analogy between the situation of the Canadian people and the conditions which prevail in older countries. In Europe, material resources have been measured, counted, valued; conditions are more or less stable and settled. In the social, political, economic, racial and religious spheres, centuries of strife and bitter struggles have rendered the peaceful settlement of momentous questions well nigh impossible. But a Canadian who looks at his country is like a child who looks upon the ocean for the first time. It is a new world without him and it awakens a new world within him. Questions rush upon the mind. Many are beyond answering. The sight alone satisfies.

That great outstretched dominion, with its resources, possibilities, wealth, and a free people! The child is a different child because it has seen the sea and we must be different men when we realize all that we have, what we are, what we should be and what we must become, if only we are true to ourselves. Surely with our matchless inheritance, with the patrimony which Providence has carved out for with such a prodigal hand upon this continent, we have a mission, there is a design. A destiny lies before us! But what is it? Have we that unity of purpose, that rugged faith, that unalterable patriotism required to build up a commonwealth such as ours ought to be?

Perhaps I may open the way to its solution by laying down the proposition that we are sectional, provincial, inclined to maintain distinctions between races and creeds and that unless we rid ourselves of this tendency and cultivate a very broad and liberal Canadian citizenship, we will surely never achieve anything worth recording.

Do you adhere to the shibboleth that the 45th parallel of latitude which separates us from our powerful neighbours to the south is an imaginary line? That inevitably a common destiny must in the end envelope all communities living on this continent?

I for one have a different creed; there is a kind of effusive loyalty that some people are always parading and which amuses Englishmen when they visit us because it is not just the thing at home. I cannot say I was ever moved to it but I am proud of my flag, my King and my position as a British subject. We are ready to work out our own destiny, in our own way, under our own flag and with the political institutions with which we are blest to-day.

Again I say: Are we ready and fully equipped for this noble and important task?

I suppose we will all admit that no people can be really great, can truly prosper, unless they are united; a strong national feeling is the very ground-work and corner-stone upon which to lay power, strength and happiness. This is the teaching of History. Canadians appear to me to lack that broad national feeling, so necessary, as all admit, to future greatness, to rapid progress. Between ourselves be it said, we are still a little provincial, a little sectional, and our people are too divided in classes. Those of us who have travelled the country from ocean to ocean must have noticed it; it has often so appeared to me and I do not wonder at it, nor despair, for we are young. The confederation is relatively new and I have discerned in every province, a most encouraging awakening of what may be called the Canadian feeling.



Do not think that politicians are soulless like corporations; I am prepared to say you are doing better work than we are; when I read of Canadian club meetings anywhere, but here particularly, I feel that a great work is being proceeded with under the direction of unselfish men whose object is the country's uplifting and its good.

Leaving aside the provincialisms, which are found from province to province and are often commented upon by the most superficial observer, we find in this Eastern part of our Dominion, especially in our own province, markedly in this great city, two races, differing in origin, in creed and language, in past history and traditions; perhaps there is a degree of difference in aims. Yet all Canadians are agreed that whatever may be these ethnical divergencies, we should, we must find some common ground upon which, as upon a rock, we must stand unalterably together, hand in hand, strong, working out the arduous and noble problem of our destiny. That this starting point has been conceded generally is already an invaluable factor in the solution of the question we are considering.

We can affirm that the platform upon which Canadians of every race, shade and hue of opinion wish to meet is not a changing political one but the very platform adopted by your association, namely that of common citizenship, of men brought together by mysterious and providential agencies, owing allegiance to one flag, blessed with freedom, and manifestly called, in a land of incomparable wealth, to build up one of the most prosperous communities of the twentieth century.

The importance of this unanimity cannot surely be overestimated, but it does not dispose of the whole question. If we are agreed about the end, we must be prepared to adopt the means. If we want the Canadian feeling to thrive and grow, that basic feeling which supports the whole work and structure, we should learn and know more of each other, of our history, of our feelings good and bad, of our trials, of the elements, in a word, which have made us what we are to-day.

A great French thinker has said: "Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner." To understand all is to forgive everything. If the two great races knew each other and their history since they first landed in this country, I venture to say that racial difficulties in Canada would be eliminated forever.

Years ago, when I was a young man and a barrister without briefs, I was associated in the profession with an older confrere who, like myself, was privileged or handicapped by being half English and half French. He used to say: "When I hear people referred to as 'ces maudits Anglais,' I immediately call to mind the admirable qualities of the Anglo-Saxon race; when allusion is made to 'the d—d French-Canadians,' I think of the mother who nursed my infancy and of all the sterling fellows of French origin whom I have known. This is no doubt the feeling and experience of many here, irrespective of questions of race, creed or environment. Perfection is not to be found. Nihil ex omni parte beatum. 'We must live and let live,' said one of the many distinguished men who have represented the