

issue of the volume such a welcome event to all earnest students. In fact, Mr. Brymner's work (as well as that of his colleague, Mr. J. Marmette) has won the praise of experts in the technique of archæological research and classification in both the old world and the new. We have prepared a more adequate notice of the Report, which has been kept over through press of matter, but will appear in our next issue.

THE LANGUAGE QUESTION.

The controversy which has of late been agitating Parliament and the country is not a new one in Canada, but we had been flattering ourselves that the subject had been exhausted, a settlement reached, and that it should trouble us no more. When in September, 1760, Canada finally passed into the possession of Great Britain, all the inhabitants, save the officers and soldiers of the victorious army, spoke a single language. French had been the speech of the country for nearly a century and a half. The first legislative act adopted under British domination recognized it as the language of Canada. That was General Amherst's *placart* of September 22, 1760. But it was not long till a rival disputed its ascendancy and tried to oust it from its vantage ground of official recognition. While the military régime lasted, no serious conflict seems to have arisen. But civil government had hardly been established when the French, or "new subjects" of the king, found occasion to protest against certain inconveniences due to the exclusive use in public documents of a language which they did not understand. The presentation of the first Grand Jury for the district of Quebec was followed by a protest on the part of the Canadian jurors against the tenor of a paper which they had themselves been induced to sign. Governor Murray cordially sympathized with them in their complaint, and provided against any repetition of the guile that had been practised on them, by insisting that in future all such documents should be drawn up in both languages. All through his administration Governor Murray showed himself disposed to deal fairly with the French section of the community, and strongly opposed the attempts of certain persons who would have treated them with injustice. He complained to the Lords of Trade that the Chief Justice and other officials were ignorant of French, and it was at his suggestion that the Lords of the Committee of Plantation affairs advised that the judges should have the assistance of French-Canadian lawyers.

The British Government, indeed, in the early years of its domination, appears to have taken it for granted that French should maintain its place. The opinion also seems to have prevailed that there was a considerable number of French Protestants in the colony. In his Report, dated June 5, 1762, Governor Murray himself who, by that time, must have known something about Canada and its inhabitants, writes: "There are some few French Protestants in the country who no doubt will be willing to remain." From a document published in the last volume of Archives Reports on the state of religion in Canada in 1790, it is evident that the estimate of the extent of the French Protestant population was far in excess of anything that Governor Murray's words justified. It is there stated that in the year 1762 "it was represented to Government that there were a vast number of French Protestants in Canada, for whose benefit it would be well to send out clergy-

men who could preach in that language." Three such clergymen were sent out—Messrs. De Montmollin, Vizière or de Veyssière, and De Lisle, for Quebec, Three Rivers and Montreal, respectively. This mission proved in every way disappointing, the French services having gradually ceased for lack of hearers. It shows, however, that whatever may have prompted the choice of French-speaking ministers, the policy of the British Government was not adverse to the use of the French language, and the choice of lay officials tends to the same conclusion. Nor, in any of the petitions or addresses of the period between the conquest and the coming into force of the Quebec Act, is there any expression implying that the king's new subjects in Canada felt themselves hindered or embarrassed in the use of their mother tongue. In the correspondence between leading representatives of the two sections of the population on the subject of an Assembly, we find that the English secretaries generally accommodated themselves to the convenience of the French committees by writing in French. M Cugnet, moreover, in laying before Mr. Fraser a petition, which he deemed adapted to the circumstances and wants of both portions of the community, suggested that it should be presented in French alone, "puisque tous les anciens sujets l'entendent."

In the interval between 1774 and 1791 there was a good deal of agitation. In the early part of that period the two races were drawn together by the ties of common danger, common interest and common loyalty. Then came a season of crisis, of temptation, of much discussion, of Loyalist settlement and the division of the province. By that time England had learned that the French-Canadians could neither be drawn nor driven into abandonment of their faith or of their language. The French Revolution had but a slight and transient effect on the province, though it quickened the pulse of some of the younger men. But in the struggle for constitutional liberty they found a wholesome outlet for their intellectual energies. The dual language question was the theme of the first spirited debate in the Assembly of Lower Canada. It was moved that the journals of the House should be kept in two registers, French and English. Mr. John Richardson, one of the members for Montreal East, proposed to amend the motion by a declaration that English was the legal language. Thereupon followed a conflict of opinion which resulted in the defeat of the amendment by a vote of 26 to 13. The original motion was then carried unanimously, and a few days later a thorough understanding was reached. It was resolved that every bill presented should be read in each language, and that every member had a right to use his mother tongue. "Thus," says an English historian, "this matter, which at one moment threatened to disturb the equanimity of the House and kindle national animosities among the members, was compromised and settled down in the resolution cited, which, being made a rule of the House, was ever afterwards cheerfully observed, and worked to the satisfaction of all." It is still more noteworthy that (as pointed out by Sir John Macdonald in his speech on the McCarthy bill) in the Upper Canadian Legislature it was agreed by a motion passed in June, 1793, that, for the benefit of the French people of Western Ontario, the resolutions of the House should be translated into French, Mr. W. A. Macdonald, of Glengarry, being the first to

undertake the task. This concession was all the more gracious as it was entirely voluntary on the part of the chamber.

For fifty years—the half century between the passage of the Constitutional Act and the union of the Canadas in 1841—the *modus vivendi* was observed to the satisfaction of both elements. Lord Durham had, however, in the famous Report that bears his name, commended the official use of the English language alone, as one of the conditions on which the two provinces should be reunited. Consequently the Union Act abolished the employment of the French language "in all documents having to do with the new Legislature and its proceedings." It did not, however, prohibit translations being made so long as they were not kept among the records of the Council or Assembly. Practically, this clause of the Act was from the beginning a dead letter, so far as the proceedings in the chambers were concerned, the French members speaking their mother tongue when they chose to do so—many of them adhering to it for the sake of principle rather than because they found any difficulty in the use of English. In fact, during the years of interdict, the French language was heard far more frequently in the debates than it has been under the régime of equality. In 1845 an address was presented to the Queen in favour of its restoration, and by an act passed in 1848 the obnoxious clauses were repealed.

The British North America Act, being practically a Canadian measure, avoided the mistake of the Union Act. It made the two languages equal under the Government of the Dominion, and in the Province of Quebec. In the North-West, when Manitoba was organized into a province, the French tongue had the numerical preponderance, and it was, moreover, deemed in harmony with the historical associations of a region which had been so largely explored, opened up and settled by Frenchmen as well as Englishmen, that the languages of both should be placed on the same footing under the new administration. That such should be the case was certainly one of the demands in the "bill of rights" which formed the basis of the compromise of 1870. In the same document, it is true, the utmost freedom was asked for the local legislatures, and it is one of the strongest planks in our federal platform that provincial independence should be strictly observed. Ultimately, therefore, this question would have been dealt with by those specially concerned, in every instance where it is a local or provincial question, and whatever may have been the motive for thrusting it upon the arena of parliament, such action can only have been taken at the risk of reviving or intensifying passions and prejudices most detrimental to the well-being of the nation. Happily, the moderation of our leading public men has triumphed, and the question has been settled in the manner best calculated to satisfy the claims of justice and to promote peace and good will.

TRIOLET.

O, Triolet, when thou wast young
Would any dare to call thee light?
Thy voice was as a Mass-bell rung,
O Triolet, when thou wast young,
But, falling idle hands among,
Thou wast in laughing measures dight.
O Triolet, when thou wast young
Would any dare to call thee light?

WILLIAM CARMAN ROBERTS.

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