

Other People's Business

One day, some years ago, I went to the office of the *Herald* at so late and unusual an hour as to provoke inquiries. I explained that I had been around to the Monument National to hear a lecture by a French public man, an intimate of Mr Waldeck-Rousseau, then Prime Minister, who had quite casually given us the news of that statesman's approaching retirement. It was a very interesting afternoon; but I was suddenly aware that the man might just as well have been speaking in Paris as east of Bleury street, for all English-speaking Montreal knew or cared to the contrary. I rather liked the idea.

A street car ticket costs much less than an ocean passage, and there, across an unmarked boundary, were to be found, on occasion, the public men, the workers, the preachers one would like to see if he were in Paris.

Players from the French Conservatories were to be seen and heard in little theatres. No English was to be heard. No familiar west end faces were to be seen, unless, once in a while, a McGill professor or two appeared, giving one just the feeling experienced when one meets a friend from home in the Louvre, say, or Westminster Abbey. I have tried to make friends of mine share this fancy, tried to get them to see that across the language line there is another city here in Montreal that is well worth exploring, that the people who dwell in it are well worth knowing and that there are many whose society it is an honor to share. I must say, though, that I do not find many willing to give rein to the imagination. They find the shops on St. Lawrence Street inferior in attractiveness to those on St. Catherine street West; beyond that it is not worth their while to examine.

On the other hand, there is no scarcity of that very human passion, curiosity. People who do not read French confess they do not understand how an obviously intelligent person like Mr Bourassa reaches the curious opinions popular legend identifies with his name, but if he will only speak in English they will crowd to hear him; and when he writes in English they permit themselves the agreeable sensation of placing their minds alongside his, generally with the result of pronouncing him a quite commendably reasonable being.

I do not think it is too much to say that the series of articles here reproduced have been read with intense interest; nor that the state of mind of the normal French-speaking population, revealed by the articles, was entirely unsuspected. I do not find any who complain; the majority merely wonder.

There may be sections of the English-speaking community in Montreal with whom, because of their being steeped in certain opinions which have become difficult to differentiate from prejudices, the speaking of French is assumed to cover a set of tendencies so vicious that the whole is set down as reprehensible, and therefore not to be