

THROUGH A MONOCLE

DEFENDING THE FRENCH-CANADIANS.

WHEN the young and joyous Armand Lavergne began his address to the Toronto students the other evening by introducing to them the French-Canadian, he was not performing a work of supererogation. If there be any particular person whom the English-Canadian does not know, as a rule, it is his French-Canadian fellow-countryman. The cultured English-Canadian knows the Frenchman of France better, for he has read his literature and has usually visited his country. But he would be hard put to it to tell you anything of the purely French literature of Quebec; and it is ten to one that he has seen nothing of the country of the French-Canadian beyond making some superior comparisons between the French and English sections of Montreal, and looking scornfully out of his car window at an "unprogressive" French-Canadian village as he sweeps past on his way to a Maine coast or Maritime Province resort. Yet I venture the assertion that there is more "joy of life" to the square inch of French Montreal than to the square foot of its stately English neighbour; and one has but to pause for a while in an "unprogressive" French village to feel himself back somewhere on the confines of Arcadie, where men have time to live and sweet womanhood has not harnessed itself to the mad treadmill of society.

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I WAS glad that Mr. Lavergne brushed aside with his scholarly hand the hoary fiction that French-Canadians do not speak "French." Personally, I am very tired of hearing Englishmen, who cannot travel ten miles in any direction in their own country without coming into a dialect which they can hardly comprehend, talk of the French-Canadian "patois" as if it were something quite different and quite inferior to the French of France. And they look rather askance at you—as if your Canadian patriotism had outrun your veracity—when you insist that the educated Quebecker talks as good French as the educated Parisian, and that the "dialect" of Quebec is no more distinct than the "dialect" of parts of France, or, indeed, of England. "But they use different words," insists your Englishman. "So do we," you reply. "We say 'drygoods store' for 'draper's shop,' and 'druggist' for 'chemist,' and 'street car' for 'tram,' and 'baggage' for 'luggage,' and dozens of other things. Yet we think that we speak English."

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THEN there is the libel of "priest-ridden Quebec." I did think that that would never be heard again after 1896, but prejudices die hard. You remember 1896? The entire power of the clergy, organised to its utmost, vitalised by so important an issue as the safety of the Manitoba separate schools, fighting for what it regarded as the life of the Church in the whole West, led by a formidable council of bishops held at Three Rivers and called to duty by a formal "mandement," was thrown against the Laurier candidates. The Conservative Government was preparing to force separate schools on Manitoba, under the orders of the Imperial Privy Council. Mr. Laurier had moved the six months hoist of this remedial bill and had helped to talk it out in alliance with Dalton McCarthy and Clarke Wallace. A vote against Laurier meant separate schools in the West; a vote for him seemed to mean their abolition. Could the issue have been clearer? Could the "priest" have been more anxious to keep in the saddle? Yet what was the result? Quebec went for Laurier by an overwhelming majority. Obviously, on a Church issue, the "priest" was not in the saddle. The voters of Quebec were their own mas-

ters; and it so happened that, in this case, their desires did not coincide with the requirements of the Church.

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OF course, they generally vote with the Church because they want to. They are Roman Catholics, and are proud of it. When no other question calls them away, Protestants also generally vote in support of their Church policies and leaders. It is not the priest or the preacher alone who wishes his particular Church to succeed. The people wish it; and it is usually one of the things that they wish most. No one imagined for a moment that the French-Canadians did not desire to see Church schools re-established in Manitoba. If they could have got at that issue nakedly, they would have voted "en masse" for the remedial bill. But the personality of Wilfrid Laurier was mixed up with the issue: and they preferred a premier of their own race to the success of a religious programme. But the point I want you to get is that they did this—that they followed their own judgment—in spite of the most strenuous efforts of their priesthood to persuade them to accept at that crisis the leadership of the Church. The truth is that the French-Canadian loves his "cure" more than anyone else in the world—except himself. And he has reason to; for the priests of Quebec were the teachers and the inspirers and the champions and the physicians of her people through their dark hour.

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THEN as to toleration. Show me a minority in the world as little interfered with by the majority as the Protestant minority of Quebec, and I will journey thither to see the marvel. We are always having a great time in Ontario over whether we will permit French to be the language of instruction in French districts. Imagine an agitation to prevent English being used as the language of instruction in English Montreal! Just now you are sending an English Protestant inspector to settle the bi-lingual question in the Catholic schools of Essex. How I would like to see Sir Lomer Gouin send a French Catholic inspector to investigate the conditions in the English Protestant schools in the Eastern Townships! Toleration! Let me tell you a story. A number of us were bicycling one night in Quebec, through a country strange to us, where French and English villages were intermixed. We did not have lanterns as the law required, and we wanted to build a camp-fire. So there were two points of danger. We might be arrested for lack of lanterns, and the authorities might object to a fire on the outskirts of a village. What should we do? After some discussion, one of the party—the son of an Ontario Presbyterian minister, by the way—who knew Quebec well, said: "We'll find out whether the village is French or English. If it is English, we'd better ride on. If the French are running it, it will be all right. They won't interfere with us." Toleration is in the very blood of the French-Canadian.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

Fruit and Flowers

FRUIT and flower exhibits attract less attention from the public than might reasonably be expected. This is a busy age, but it does seem as if people might pay a little more attention to the beauties of nature as modified and systematised by the hand of man. The Ontario Horticultural exhibit, held in Toronto last week, was not a great success. The fruit display was excellent, but the flower show did not possess the variety nor the attractiveness of some previous shows. The attendance was larger than last year, but it is still insignificant for a city the size of Toronto. It should be possible to have one whole day devoted to school children, and have the teachers in all the city schools take their children through the show and give them a practical lesson in flower culture and fruit growing.



At the Ontario Horticultural Exhibition in Toronto, last week, the display of Chrysanthemums and Orchids was excellent, although not so extensive as the display of Fruit.