

CORRESPONDENCE.

St. Johns, N.B.,
January 12th, 1919.

The Editor,
"Knots and Lashings".
Sir:—

In your last edition the major portion of your back page printing space was devoted to a poem entitled "Now and Then" by a "Looker On", with which same I decidedly disagree as to sentiment, though acknowledging the writer's successful attempt to put into verse an impression which is all too common around our Depot. In refutation of this sentiment I would be obliged if you will print the following.

Briefly my own case:—

I reached St. Johns in March last, just at the time of the Quebec riots and when feeling ran the highest, when soldiers scarcely stirred from the barracks except in pairs and we turned in at nights never knowing what the morning would bring forth, when we fed on the wildest rumours and the whisper of Civil War and when, if ever, according to "On Looker", we should have found ourselves ostracised and outcast so far as girls were concerned. And yet right in the middle of the difficulty we held a dance (the first of the season in the Oddfellows Hall) at which at least half of the approximately fifty ladies present were French Canadian, and I can commit myself as stating that never in my life did I meet a more congenial or ready-to-become-acquainted assembly, while all through the trouble and the months following, Summer, Autumn and the winter-time now with us, I have found them the same—girls just as dear and just as sweet and ready to be friendly as our own Darlings back home: this in spite of the fact that I am unable to speak French.

I hold no brief for the French Canadian shopkeeper who has sometimes tried to fleece our men or for the class of French Canadian male civilian which has always maintained an attitude aloof, aye, or for the very occasional French Canadian housewife whom prejudice and lack of acquaintance have swayed to regard us as something evil, but I do emphatically rise in the defence of French Canada's Young Womanhood (at least in the city of St. Johns, Quebec) than which I declare there is none more charming, hospitable and altogether delightful to be found in

all the length and breadth of this continent of ours and our cousins to the South.

There may be some still left in our Depot who agree with a "Looker On", but I am thankful to say that there are also those who know what I speak the truth, while many a lad still overseas or perhaps back again in his home town can yet remember with pleasure his sojourn in the heart of much-maligned Quebec, whose shortcomings were due to misinformation or ignorance, rather than outright disloyalty, of a people accustomed to have their path marked for them.

"Onlooker" apparently complains that the ladies adopted the 'wink and nod' policy too late in the game, but I must confess surprise to learn that it is even now in vogue. We have gentlewomen in Quebec as elsewhere and to obtain their acquaintance it is hardly to be expected that the same system as that employed for the fascination of the hapless little professional flirt will succeed with girls who have graduated from among the most select finishing schools in Canada and whose home life is one of refinement: which same does not indicate them as prudish, for they are essentially good sports. In any case one perhaps better informed than either "Onlooker" or myself commits himself as follows:

"Oh, she's chic and she's smart
An' she's got plenty heart
If you know corree' way go about,
An' if you not know she will soon
told you so,
Den tak' de firs' chance an' get
out;
But if she loof you (I spik it for
true)
She will mak' it more beautiful
den,
An' de sun on de sky can't shine
lak de eye
Of de Nice Leetle Canadienne."

And so I had better rest my case, the defence of the Darlings who were always ready to take a fellow for what he was, not what he had, who in some cases ran the gauntlet of parental disapproval for the sake of our friendship, and who could be counted on to stick when treated fairly—the laughingly vivacious, daintily chic, sweetly sympathetic and wholly adorable French Canadian daughters of old St. Jean.

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