

# THE 'VARSITY:

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## A BALLADE OF COMMENCEMENT DAY.

TO-DAY the maiden Spring doth smile again,  
After her tears; to-day the roses blow  
All glistening from a sun-lit fall of rain,  
As eke the crocuses in flaming  
And violets, and lilies white as snow,  
And all the sweet spring flowers of beauty rare;  
But there be other flowers of grace, I trow,  
The sweet girl graduates with their golden hair.

Now to the Hall their way they all have ta'en;  
And cap and gown in due procession go,  
And chant a mystic chant, with weird refrain.  
And blare of trumpets. Ceremonies slow  
There are, with pomp and solemn state enow:  
Thereafter doth McKim, with gentle care,  
Bestow the 'swansdown' tenderly,—and lo!  
The sweet girl graduates with their golden hair!

A day in leafy June, and one is fain  
To watch the sunbeams playing to and fro,  
Thro' the tall elms! From which, as his domain  
Ancestral, undisturbed, the aged crow  
Peers sagely down upon the folk below,  
The murmuring lawns, and all the gladness there,—  
The happy faces, and the voices low,  
The sweet girl graduates with their golden hair.

### ENVOY.

Prince, take heed of the blinded boy, with bow,  
And fluttering darts to smite thee! Prince, beware;  
His darts are glances from their eyes, I trow;  
The sweet girl graduates with their golden hair.

W. J. HEALY.

## THE FRENCH OF CANADA.

EVERY reader of Canadian history is familiar with the facts concerning the early settlement of New France, and with the history of its colonists till the date of the British conquest. From that time onward they have gradually sunk below the horizon, until to-day little more is known of them, their daily life, their aspirations and their prospects, by most residents of Ontario and others who have not come into immediate contact with them, than of their brethren in Normandy.

It is true there are certain vague impressions abroad regarding them, and these mainly to the effect that the French element is being gradually assimilated to the British; and that in a few decades, or a century at most, the French will have become one with those of British extraction in their language, their sympathies and their aims. But how erroneous such conceptions are must be evident to every one who takes the trouble to place himself in possession of the facts by a few weeks' intercourse with the *habitants* as we find them in their own homes.

The French population of the Province of Quebec alone is placed at nearly one million. These and about one hundred thousand in Eastern Ontario form one great colony, and it is of this colony I wish to treat here. To what extent assimilation of the French element may have proceeded, or may be actually in progress in the smaller colonies of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward, and in the small and sparse colonies of the United States, varying in extent from a few families to twelve or

fifteen thousand souls, I cannot say; but Quebec was certainly never more worthy of the name of New France than it is to-day, and the assimilation, where there has been assimilation, had undoubtedly proceeded in the opposite direction. In all rural districts where the two nationalities have come into contact, the English has been forced to become one with the French or retire before it. Many a parish may be pointed out where a single Frenchman could hardly be found fifteen or twenty years ago, but whose inhabitants to-day are almost without exception French. The well-known Eastern Townships are being gradually depopulated of their English colonists as the *habitants* close in upon them. The French, in short, are, as they themselves explicitly state it, reconquering Canada\*; and however thoughtlessly the average English-Canadian may dismiss the subject, there is scarcely a doubt that the great political question of the future, not for Canadians only, but for Americans at large, will be the destiny of the French race in America. Even now they hold the balance of power in Canadian politics; and at their extraordinary rate of increase numerically, their influence must in a few years be supreme. Of all the European races represented in America they are the most prolific. One needs not seek far for families of fourteen, sixteen and eighteen; in rare instances, indeed, the twenties will barely suffice to number noses, and the parents of such families are regarded as the greatest benefactors of their church and of their Province, providing only that the children are carefully kept in the faith and traditions of their fathers and do not learn to love the English tongue or aught else English.

Frenchmen as a rule recognize little in other nationalities to be desired. With their conception of honor, personal and national, any such recognition would be almost treasonable; therefore when they find themselves in a foreign land, surrounded by other than French influence, which they feel themselves powerless to overcome, they naturally enough become most exclusive and conservative, when their best interests demands a liberalism which regards not nationality or tongue or creed in those with whom their lot is cast.

The French of Quebec strikingly illustrate this. Though they are British subjects by birth and have lived their whole lives under British rule and beyond the immediate influence of France, they are still most decidedly French in their sympathies; and in the event of trouble again arising between France and England it is not hard to guess on which side the French leaders in Canada would range themselves.

They freely admit that they enjoy the utmost liberty under British rule; but they would regard it as a personal insult to be called Englishmen. France is still *la Patrie*, and will continue to be such as long as they preserve their language and the associations which are inseparable from that language, as jealously as they have done in the past. When the French of Canada can call the English their mother-tongue we may expect them to have lost their French sympathies, but not a day before.

It is difficult to estimate or realize in any adequate measure the influence of the mother-tongue in the development of individual and national characteristics. Language is not a something exterior to ourselves—a mantle which we can throw off or exchange for another, if need be, without suffering change in our own inner being. Our mother-tongue is as much a constituent part of our-

\* The old Quebec law, by which the entire real estate in rural parishes, irrespective of the creed of the owner, has been taxed to defray the building expenses of a costly church edifice, so soon as the number of Roman Catholics in the parish made such a building necessary or desirable, has undoubtedly done much to drive out the English Protestants, for no one but a Catholic of the strongest faith would submit to the exaction of taxes amounting to a respectable rent on the property, when it is possible to shake off the burden and move elsewhere. The rural churches of Quebec, it is needless to add, are exceptionally costly structures.