

in Lower Canada. In Canada, they already form a mere minority. In the British American Provinces, those who do not speak their language outnumber them, two to one :—and on the continent of North America, their handful of less than half a million stands opposed to some sixteen or seventeen millions who speak English. To say nothing, then, of the mere impossibility of ever making the French the common tongue of Canada, or even of Lower Canada, how can they really so much as hope to preserve it for themselves, for any length of time? And what could they gain by it, were this impossible achievement ever so easy? Who, in fact, are so deeply interested as themselves, in the speedy accomplishment of the opposite change,—the universal diffusion of the English language amongst their own body?—Cut off, as they now are, by their use of a foreign language, from the literature, intercourse and sympathies of the continent on which they live, and rendered almost aliens within the empire of which they are subjects and citizens, what greater boon can be conferred on them, than the language which alone can remove the galling disabilities they at present labour under?

We are far from meaning, then, to deny the inevitable tendency of the Union in this respect. On the contrary, the firm belief we entertain, that it will render the spread of the English language among the French Canadian population much more rapid than it otherwise would be, is to our mind among the strongest reasons in its favour. The change is not one that a politician can prevent or cause at pleasure. It is going on already, and that not slowly. All that can be done is to hasten or retard it, and the sooner it can be got quietly over, the better. At the same time, let it not be forgotten, how very little positive interference is contemplated by the Union Act, with the natural progress of events. The language of the future legislature is to be English; but beyond this, everything is to be left to its own course. In the Provincial Parliament, the French representatives will be more than numerous enough to take good care of the feelings, no less than of the substantial interests of their constituents.

To proceed then. The peculiar "laws and institutions" of Lower Canada,—how far can these be said to be endangered by the Union? No more endangered, most assuredly, than

they deserve to be. We presume no one will venture quite so far as to claim for them anything like perfection, and assert the impossibility of improving them. In the strife of party, we are aware, their indiscriminate condemnation by disputants of the one race, has called forth disputants of the other, who have as indiscriminately defended them,—and *vice versa*. But for all this, no one, we repeat, can in sober earnest believe them to be so good as not to stand in need of very material changes, of one sort or another. Half French, half English in their origin,—the two halves never fitted to each other,—what can they be but what they are, a matter of complaint with all, with French, if truth be told, hardly less than with English? The complaints of the two may not precisely square; but for all that, both do complain, and with good reason. France has revised her civil code, long ago, and England is every day amending her old criminal law. In Lower Canada, the two still co-exist, as ill-fitted to work together, as on the day when the mistake was made of introducing them to each other's company. Look to the laws as they exist on paper, or to the country as its sad state shews the working of those laws, and who shall say it is not more than time essential changes were made in them, to repair as far as may be, the evil consequences of past folly and neglect? Such changes Union or no Union, we are sure to have; and the question, therefore, is merely this, whether or not, under the Union, the wishes of the French population are likely to be unfairly disregarded in making them, or even less regarded than they otherwise would be? On this point, we can see no shade of doubt. The United House will contain some thirty representatives of French Canadian constituencies. Is it not preposterous to suppose, that their opposition to any unreasonable change that may be proposed, can ever be ineffectual? The Upper Canadian delegation will necessarily be divided in opinion and feeling on most subjects, and there is no chance of their ever being so united on any mere question of Lower Canadian law, as to vote in solid phalanx for any unfair demand made by the British party. Nine to ten Upper Canadians voting at any time with the French, will suffice to turn the scale. What danger can there be, of innovation taking place under such a system, too rapidly for the well-being of the French race themselves?