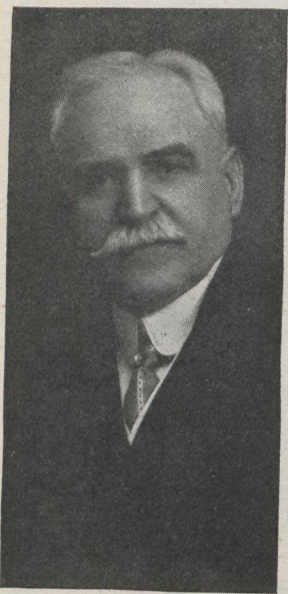


THE FRENCH CANADIAN IN BUSINESS

An Analysis of the Commercial Qualities of a portion of our people by one who has been for thirty-one years in control of a French trade paper in Montreal, "Le Moniteur Du Commerce."

By F. D. SHALLOW.

THE very persons who have most keenly felt the awful stress of present-day life and are loudest in their outcry against its intensity, are those who in actual practice treat with contempt the simple life and scorn the apparent stagnation of philosophic ease. The standard of success is still undefined. Some maintain that its indices are the leading of men, the accumulation of wealth and contribution to the science of man, while others maintain as firmly that success is personal and, that he is most successful who, by whatsoever means, has attained the greatest sum of individual happiness.



MR. F. D. SHALLOW

If this resentment results in a change of his ideals, the French-Canadian will show qualities that were never credited to him.

The French-Canadian is far removed from the stage Frenchman. He is in fact almost an Englishman. The English call themselves Saxons, but their poets sing of their Norman blood and call it their bluest strain. The French-Canadian is a Norman and this ethnological relation to the Englishman has been rendered more intimate by a long association with him in this country. The individual French-Canadian hardly realizes this affinity, but when he travels, while he loves Paris, as in fact we all do, he is more at home in London.

The Norman is by nature a barterer, a bargainer and a haggler. He is canny, close-fisted and sharp in business, sharp even more or less in the worst sense of the word. His "dit et son dedit" are proverbial. By force of conditions in his original country, his peculiar talents are confined to small affairs, but these talents exist in his French-Canadian descendant and they will influence big affairs when he has the handling of them.

Much in modern business depends on exposition, reasoning, solicitation and persuasion; and anyone who knows the French-Canadian will recall his natural eloquence and plausibility, which can be adapted to these purposes.

If success in business depends on willingness and courage to take a chance, it must be remembered that the French-Canadian comes of a race of splendid adventurers who conquered England and of pioneers who settled Canada. He still has a gambler's instinct, he is a fighter and he is no quitter. Physiologically his blood is clean and cool and his nerves are good. As a consequence he is good tempered and enthusiastic.

As a rule the French-Canadian is broad-minded and appreciative. He has been forced to study and admire people who neither studied nor admired him. He likes an Englishman more than an Englishman likes him, but this fact implies no inferiority on his part. The same necessity has forced him to learn two languages, and this implies some superiority.

The observer finds so many of the requisites of business success in the French-Canadian that he becomes interested in the problem of the latter's apparent oversight of many opportunities.

In studying the question, one should recall that this race has its own peculiar ideals and these ideals are not sordid. The French-Canadian has been accused of living from hand to mouth, and the charge is more or less true. He is satisfied with

a competence and a quiet life. These ideals result from his education. He is taught to look up at the sunlight rather than down at the earth. His instruction is Aristotelian rather than Baconian. Confessedly his schools attempt to form the mind and to make the acquisition of concrete knowledge secondary. They distinguish between formation and information, and they look after the former, leaving the latter to the individual. The course is one of mental gymnastics, and solid facts are laid aside till perhaps a little too late in life. The system quite naturally tends to produce priests, lawyers, doctors, statesmen and cultured gentlemen, and the race is perhaps a little over-represented in all these categories.

Besides his ideals which lead him in a different direction, it must be recalled that the French-Canadian had a bad start. He was sent off with a kick instead of a blessing. Under French government his conditions were made for him and he had to submit to them. He came to a land of promise, but only to draw water and hew wood. A change of allegiance followed to which again he had to submit. He saw on this occasion all his fellow settlers,

who could afford it, leave for the mother country, and he was left on his own resources under a strange government, to which again he had to submit. All these forced submissions should have broken his spirit, but they did not, though they did leave in him a trace of fatalism which still makes it difficult for him to rise above conditions.

Of late, however, there are many indications that he is prepared for a compromise of ideals and that he is determined to shake off the tyranny of conditions. He has business qualities, and when he finally turns to business with all the enthusiasm of his nature, he will certainly take in its circles, the same notable place he has taken in the public life of the country. What he has already achieved, while not great, is notable and may be accepted as typical rather than accidental. He is, for example, unquestionably pre-eminent in the grocery trade of Canada. The greatest, the second greatest, the third greatest and the fourth greatest wholesale grocery houses in Canada are French-Canadian, and no theory can attribute this pre-eminence to accident or good fortune.

The French language is an element of French-Canadian business, and is destined with the growth of this branch to be an element of all Canadian business. The use of this language is not a privilege, but a constitutional right, and the French-Canadian would be contemptible if he waived this right. Some may consider the dual language system an economic waste, but the discussion is now only academical, and the French language in Canada must be faced as a fact. As a consolation, its adversaries may trace the good this language has done for our country in helping to define a distinct Canadian nationality by giving it a tinge of old world idealism.

OUR RECIPROCITY CONTEST

THE CANADIAN COURIER is offering a prize for the best 100-word letter on reciprocity. Cleverness will be the chief feature for which the judges will award the prize. Each letter must begin, "I shall vote Conservative, or 'I shall vote Liberal.'" Several letters were published two weeks ago. The following are some of the letters received since then:

I shall vote Conservative because I have always been a straight Conservative, and that from the two political sides I always considered the Conservative party as the best and the most loyal. Had I always been a Liberal I could not help, as many honest electors already have, but decide to vote against a Government from which so many scandals have recently been brought to light by fearless Conservatives. If I had ten votes to give I would dispose of them all against Laurier, whose main object is to sacrifice our national resources for the benefit of the Americans.

"QUEBEC CONSERVATIVE."

Quebec City.

* * *

I shall vote Conservative because I am a loyal British subject and anything that tends towards commercial union with the U. S. A. is to my mind unfair to the Mother Country and to the Britishers that have helped to place Canada where she is to-day. Also in the event of a Liberal Government being returned to power it would only be a matter of time before the American manufacturer would swoop down on the Canadian market, causing less work for our factories which would mean more unemployed on our streets. If the Yankee wants to share the Canadian market let him build his factories and manufacture his goods in Canada. Add to this the recent disclosures of graft practiced by members of the late Government, it seems to me that it is quite time we had a change, and give the Conservatives a chance to prove at least that they are sincere, honest, upright men, and not merely there to rob and plunder as opportunities occur.

BLADE.

Toronto.

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I vote Liberal because there is consolation in the fact that if they are elected we can reciprocate with our neighbours across the border, in a free exchange of the natural products of both countries, we consummate an ideal system whereby the producers and labouring masses may expect a just equivalent for the products of our labour, and a reasonable policy of justice to the masses of both countries by doing so.

NEMO.

Selkirk, Man.

* * *

I will vote Conservative because I think that Canada will develop a better nationality apart from the United States. A contrast by one of our foremost university presidents of our ideals and national life, with that of the United States, shows ours to be of a much higher order: another statement describes the United States citizen as one who "where business is concerned will sink all differences."

These statements are so largely true, that under

present conditions closer trade relations with the United States will mean a domination that will be detrimental to our moral strength and homogeneity; and the concentrated business ability of our neighbour, which subverts all else to a business end, will succeed in diverting to the south of the line a prosperity that would otherwise be ours.

St. Mary's.

C. F. C.

* * *

I shall vote Conservative because I have asked myself the following questions, and in seeking the answers I have arrived at the above conclusion:

Is the farmer of the State of Maine, with his ninety million market, more prosperous than the farmer in New Brunswick?

Does the farmer in New Brunswick curtail cultivation on account of limited markets?

Even if reciprocity would enchant the price of eggs, butter and other farm products, has the farmer the right to demand this at the expense of the workingman?

If we had but waited, would not the United States have taken the duty off farm products, thus giving us any advantage there might be in reciprocity, without robbing the farmer of his protection?

St. John, N.B.

LOYALIST.

* * *

I shall vote Liberal because I believe the policy of that party is suited to the best interests of Canada. We are fast growing as a nation, our immense territory yet sparsely settled, and our vast natural resources still in the infancy of development, already amply demonstrate the great possibilities of the next ten years, when we shall in all probability have become one of the world's greatest producers of food.

Commercially, we ask for a fair field and no favour, and want neither more or less. We desire to help firmly establish peace among nations, especially with the great English-speaking nation south of us, and in no better way can this be accomplished than by the ratification of the reciprocity agreement.

Halifax, N.S.

OBSERVER.

* * *

I shall vote Liberal because of the reciprocity agreement now before the electorate for their approval and ratification.

While reciprocity has been included in the platforms of both political parties in past years, now that it is within practicable attainment through the efforts of Messrs. Fielding and Paterson on behalf of the Canadian Government, it is strenuously opposed by the Conservative party. In doing this they have gone back on their former leaders and policy, altogether taking a retrograde stand on the question which should forfeit the support of all independent and right-thinking men.

Reciprocal trade in natural products will afford larger markets and enhanced values for the farmers. This in turn will mean a greater measure of prosperity for the whole people as Canada is an agricultural country, the prosperity of which is only in proportion to that of the farming community.

Toronto.

"IAN MACLAREN."