

THE WEEK.

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TEUTONS AND CELTS.—I.

OF all the problems which present themselves for solution to the practical politician of to-day, those arising from race prejudice would appear to be the most intricate and the most hopelessly insoluble. Were there any foundation of reason in the views which men take up with regard to their nationality, there might be some means of meeting the difficulty; but there is really no subject on which men adopt such strong views without any basis of fact to support them. It was only the other day, for instance, that Lord Rosebery, speaking in Edinburgh, warned Scotsmen upon no account to forget their nationality; and even a learned man like Buckle wrote many abstruse chapters with a view to pointing out the difference between the English and Scotch intellects. And yet such men as Hume, Latham, Green, and other reliable authorities all tell us that the inhabitants of the Lowlands of Scotland are undoubtedly descended from the Angles who gave their name to England, that the name of Scot belongs by right to a band of Irish freebooters, and that Scotsmen are quite as English as the English themselves. Even the man of blood and iron cannot persuade the men of Alsace and Lorraine that their forefathers were Germans, and there are many thousands of Irishmen to-day who pride themselves upon nothing so much as their nationality, and who yet are the unmistakeable descendants of the Saxon whom they now so bitterly detest. Instances of the same description might be multiplied to almost any extent, and the only conclusion to be drawn from them is that race, like religion, has become simply a question of faith—that it is almost impossible to deal with it logically.

And yet this same race prejudice forms one of the most important factors in modern politics, and it is one of the most useful of all tools in the hands of the self-seeking professional politician. As a source of danger to our modern political institutions its influence can hardly be exaggerated. Under the old monarchical form of government it was comparatively easy to hold mixed races together, but our modern popular government is singularly ill-adapted to cope with the difficulty. To quote from Sir H. Maine: "Of all modern irreconcilables, the nationalists appear to be the most impracticable, and of all governments, popular governments seem least likely to cope with them successfully. Nobody can say exactly what Nationalists are, and indeed the dangerousness of the theory arises from its vagueness. It seems full of the seeds of future civil convulsion. As it is sometimes put, it appears to assume that men of one particular race suffer injustice if they are placed under the same political institutions with men of another race. But Race is just as ambiguous a term as Nationality. The earlier philologists had certainly supposed that the branches of mankind speaking languages of the same stock were somehow connected by blood; but no scholar now believes that this is more than approximately true; for conquest, contact, and the ascendancy of a particular literate class

have quite as much to do with community of language as common descent. Moreover, several of the communities claiming the benefit of the new theory are certainly not entitled to it. The Irish are an extremely mixed race, and it is only by a perversion of language that the Italians can be called a race at all. The fact is that any portion of a political society which has had a somewhat different history from the rest of the parts can take advantage of the theory and claim independence, and can thus threaten the entire society with dismemberment. Democracies are quite paralyzed by the plea of nationality. There is no more effective way of attacking them than by admitting the right of the majority to govern but denying that the majority so entitled is the particular majority which claims the right."

When examined from this point of view, the attempt to establish what is called a "parti national" in the Province of Quebec, is both interesting and instructive, inasmuch as it is an instance of race prejudice, pure and simple, without a single solid grievance behind it. Sir H. Maine says that it is only by a perversion of language that the Italians can be called a race at all, and the same remark is equally applicable to the French-Canadian. Apart from the Jews, who constitute one of the few existing races which can lay claim to purity of descent, there are only two races which enter largely into the composition of the people which now occupy the greater part of the Continent of Europe and the British Colonies in the East and West. The one is the Scandinavian-Teutonic or Indo-German, and the other is the Celtic*; the former still existing on the shores of the Baltic, and the latter still to be found on the West Coast of Ireland, where they preserve not only their race but its traditions in such perfect purity that they probably differ but slightly from their ancestors of a thousand years ago. But the rest of Europe has been the battle ground of the Races for centuries, and they have now become so mixed up that it is almost impossible to unravel the tangled skein. That the early settlers in France were Celtic is of course beyond doubt, but the very name of France is German, and the population had already received a strong infusion of the German element from their Frankish conqueror, when Rollo and his Normans took peaceable possession of the city of Rouen. It was from Normandy that the early settlers in New France principally came, as is most distinctly proved by the fact that the *patois* of the Canadian *habitant* is precisely similar at the present day to that of the Normandy peasant, and the hardy Norse sailor whom he left behind. When the French settler landed on the shores of Canada, he was already partly Scandinavian and partly Teutonic, although, to a large extent Celtic. But even since then he has received a fresh admixture of the Scandinavian element. The Gaspé district, for instance, derives its population largely from the Channel Islands, and the names of these islands—Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, and Sark—are distinctly Norse. Along the shores of the St. Lawrence, too, it is a constant occurrence to meet with French-Canadians, whose names are characteristically Scotch, and who still speak French with a broad Scotch accent. How then can the French-Canadian claim to belong to a distinct race? The Englishman, like himself, is a mixture of Scandinavian, Teuton, and Celt, and, although considerably less Celtic than the Frenchman, it is merely a question of degree.† The one point which is quite clear is this—that if the French Canadian wishes to claim a distinct nationality of his own, he must base his claim on language and religion; certainly not on race.

* That the Celts and Indo-Germans are remotely connected is no doubt true; but Latham points out that the Celts must have broken away from the parent stock previous to the evolution of the declension of nouns, and this throws us back to such a remote period that practically we may look upon the races as distinct.

† A little glossary of French-Canadian words, compiled by the late M. Oscar Dunn, gives much valuable information on this subject.

‡ Mr. Nicholas, in his "Pedigree of the English People," proves beyond a doubt that there is a considerable admixture of Celtic blood in the Englishman; but the mere fact that the English and Scotch (the latter more especially) have preserved to a large extent the mental characteristics of the Teuton is proof positive that Mr. Nicholas has somewhat overstated his case. It would seem probable that the Englishman is descended from a Teutonic father and a Celtic mother. The Saxon may have exterminated the British men, but he would probably select a wife from the women. It has often been asserted that the race was improved by the admixture, but even this is open to question, and the practical success of the Englishman may be attributed to his insular position and the mineral wealth of the island. The writer speaks from experience when he asserts that the Norwegian sailor is vastly superior in every respect to the English sailor. He is more intelligent, better educated, soberer, more industrious, and more reliable, and his pluck is undoubted.