

The difference of language produces misconceptions yet more fatal even than those which it occasions with respect to opinions: it aggravates the national animosities, by representing all the events of the day in utterly different lights. The political misrepresentation of facts is one of the incidents of a free press in every free country; but in nations in which all speak the same language, those who receive a misrepresentation from one side, have generally some means of learning the truth from the other. In Lower Canada, however, where the French and English papers represent adverse opinions, and where no large portion of the community can read both languages with ease, those who receive the misrepresentation are rarely able to avail themselves of the means of correction. It is difficult to conceive the perversity with which misrepresentations are habitually made, and the gross delusions which find currency among the people; they thus live in a world of misconceptions—in which each party is set against the other, not only by diversity of feelings and opinions, but by an actual belief in an utterly different set of facts.

The differences thus early occasioned by education and language, are in nowise softened by the intercourse of after-life; their business and occupations do not bring the two races into friendly contact and co-operation, but only present them to each other in occasional rivalry. A laudable emulation has of late induced the French to enter on the field previously occupied by the English, and to attempt to compete with them in commerce; but it is much to be lamented, that this did not commence until the national animosities had arrived almost at the highest pitch—and that the competition has been carried on in such a manner as to widen the pre-existing differences. The establishment of the "Banque du Peuple," by French capitalists, is an event which may be regarded as a satisfactory indication of an awakening commercial energy among the French; and it is, therefore, very much to be regretted, that the success of the new enterprise was uniformly promoted by direct and illiberal appeals to the national feelings of the race. Some of the French have lately established steam-boats, to compete with the monopoly which a combination of English capitalists had for some time enjoyed on the St. Lawrence; and small and somewhat uncomfortable as they were, they were regarded with favour on account of their superiority in the essential qualities of certainty and celerity. But this was not considered sufficient to insure their success; an appeal was constantly made to the national feelings of the French for an exclusive preference of the "French" line, and I have known a French newspaper to announce with satisfaction the fact, that on the previous day the French steamers to Quebec and LaPrairie had arrived at Montreal with a great many passengers, and the English with very few. The English, on the other hand, appealed to exactly the same kind of feelings, and used to apply to the French steamboats the epithets of "Radical," "Rebel," and "Disloyal." The introduction of this kind of national preference into this department of business, produced a particularly mischievous effect, inasmuch as it separated the two races on some of the few occasions on which they had been previously thrown into each other's society. They rarely meet at the inns in the cities; the principal hotels are almost exclusively filled with English, and with foreign travellers; and the French are, for the most part, received at each other's houses, or in boarding-houses, in which they meet with few English.

Nor do their amusements bring them more in contact. Social intercourse never existed between the two races in any but the higher classes, and it is now almost destroyed. I heard of but one house in Quebec, in which both races met on pretty equal and amicable terms—and this was mentioned as a singular instance of good sense on the part of the gentleman to whom it belongs. At the commencement of Lord Aylmer's administration, an entertainment was given to his Lordship by Mr. Papineau, the Speaker of the House of Assembly. It was generally understood to be intended as a mark of confidence and good-will towards the Governor, and of a conciliatory disposition. It was given on a very large scale; a very great number of persons were present—and of that number, I was informed by a gentleman who was present, that he and one other were the only English, except the Governor and his suite. Indeed, the difference of manners in the two races, renders a general social intercourse almost impossible.

A singular instance of national incompatibility was brought before my notice, in an attempt which I made to promote an undertaking, in which the French were said to take a great deal of interest. I accepted the office of President of the Agricultural association of the District of Quebec, and attended the Show previous to the distribution of the prizes. I then found that the French farmers would not compete, even on this neutral ground, with the English. Distinct prizes were given, in almost every department, to the two races; and the national ploughing matches were carried on in separate and distant fields.