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## The Journal of Commerce

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By J. W. Macmillan.

### Supporting the Victory Bonds.

By H. M. P. Eckardt.

### Conditions in the West.

By E. Cora Hind.

### Book Reviews.

By H. S. Ross.

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## The Quebec Problem

HERE really is no new problem in Quebec, although some of our writers and speakers treat the situation as a new one. Recent events have made it particularly acute, but the problem is older than the Confederation itself. Indeed one of the reasons for the Confederation Act of 1867 was an expectation that it would create new conditions in which the old problem would disappear. The foundation of the problem was the fact that a very large part of the population of the Province of Canada was of French origin, a people of many high virtues, yet of a different mentality from that of the English majority. That difference brought about frequent conflict of opinion and policy between what were then spoken of as Upper and Lower Canada. The union of the two Provinces, as recommended by Lord Durham's Report, while beneficial in some respects, had not brought all the happiness hoped for. The difference in thought between the English and French manifested itself in the affairs of government of the United Province and was the main cause of a condition of little less than political chaos that existed in Canada in the period immediately preceding the formation of the Confederation. It was, as we have said, the hope of ending this unhappy condition that led many of the public men of the time to unite in the Confederation movement. In the Maritime Provinces the situation was not entirely unseen. Keen observers there pointed out the difficulties existing in Canada and used them as arguments against the proposed union. Why, it was asked, should the Maritime Provinces, enjoying peace and prosperity, be made the make-weights to balance the machinery of a doubtful expedient, devised to provide relief for a Canada which seemed incapable of managing its own affairs?

Confederation was, however, accomplished, and perhaps some people fancied that the old problem had been disposed of. It had not. The different mentalities of English and French remained. In the larger arena the English majority became greater, but the French minority was still large and powerful enough to exercise much influence on the affairs of the whole Dominion. In the second largest Province the minority formed an overwhelming Provincial majority. Quebec became, in a way, a French Province under the British flag. Happily most of the questions arising in our political affairs, in Quebec and in the Dominion, were of such a character that English and French were able to unite heartily for the promotion of the common good. This union of hearts was a source of great pleasure to the people of both races and great benefit to the country. Once in a while a question arose on which something like racial lines were drawn and then for a little while

some bitterness existed, intensified, unfortunately, by the utterances of extremists on both sides. But time is a wonderful healer, especially when aided by the wisdom of man. Under the leadership of men of both races who understood the problem and the necessity of handling it prudently, asperities were softened, peace maintained and French and English united in service for the welfare of the country.

So it has been in the past. So it will be in the future if wisdom now prevails, if the folly of extremists can be checked and the people made to understand that men on either side who use inflammatory language are not responsible representatives of the class for whom they undertake to speak. The problem is still with us. It will always be with us. Nothing that has been proposed by anybody would, if adopted, bring an end to the difficulties. The problem is too large, too wide in its branches, too deep in its roots, to be easily removed. The French were here before we of English blood came. They will remain and multiply.

There is talk of Quebec withdrawing from the Dominion. Inconvenient and embarrassing though such a course would be, we do not believe the people of the other Provinces would offer resistance to it if there were clear evidence that such was the general desire of their fellow citizens of Quebec. But there will be no such desire. Irritation there is; rash words may be spoken by those who see only the unpleasantness of the moment; but there is no reason to believe that the people of Quebec will feel that, as residents of a Province separate from the Canadian Dominion, they could enjoy a greater measure of prosperity and happiness than is open to them as citizens of the Confederation. That suggested solution of the problem may therefore be dismissed.

What then can be done with the Quebec problem? The best thing is, so far as any formal action is concerned, to let it alone, wait until the present clouds roll by, and trust to the healing power of time to bring happier conditions as it has done in the past. In the meantime, since the problem is to be always with us, the English majority might well endeavor to make a more careful survey of the attitude of their fellow-citizens of French origin, to ascertain the causes of it, and be ready to do whatever is possible to bring about better relations. Questionings of the loyalty of the French are both mischievous and unwarranted in fact. There is no national flag other than the Union Jack to which they bow. They have a sentimental regard for the tricolor of France, but never as a rival to the British flag. They have no thought of union with any other nation. In almost everything that the English majority regard as the elements of good citizenship the French Canadians are admittedly their equal. If the Canadianism of the French is more intense and