

persons in authority in her own colonies—then surely the time has arrived for coercion of the most vigorous type. Twelve months ago coercion might have meant nothing more than a Land Bill and a Local Government Bill, now it means policemen's batons: it would be a terrible thing if some day it came to mean fixed bayonets and ball cartridge; but, in the words of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, "The law must be enforced at any cost." The longer coercion is delayed, the harsher ultimately will it be. In the incipient stages of a disease, mild remedies may be exhibited; when the disease has gathered force and permeates the entire system, nothing but the most vigorous treatment is of avail. If a Crimes Bill is found to be inefficacious, few people would be surprised to see resort being made to disenfranchisement and martial law.

T. ARNOLD HAULTAIN.

### THE HABITANS OF LOWER CANADA.—I.

THOUGH a large proportion of the population of Canada is French, though the French language is greatly used in Law Courts, in Parliament, and in official documents, it is surprising how little among the English-speaking part of the community the French are known, or their language understood and cultivated. It is quite the exception among the English residents of such a city as Montreal to find one who can converse equally in French or English, and by no means rare to find those who have as little knowledge of the language as though they had never heard it spoken or seen it written. This anomaly is in great degree, doubtless, the result of pre-determination. The English do not speak French, because they do not want to speak it, and look rather askance at those of their compatriots who are bi-lingual. As a natural consequence, the manners and customs of the French portion of a city's population are but little known or understood by the English; while the *habitans* dwelling in the country round about, and leading the lives of farmers, are still more an unknown people. To know a people it is before all things necessary to know their language, and after that to live among them and associate with them.

The *habitan* of Lower Canada affords interesting matter for study sociologically, and the fact that he is a factor of ever-increasing value in Canadian politics gives that study some importance. He differs from almost every other nation of the soil of this great cis-atlantic civilisation in the facts of his contentment, his strong attachment to the particular corner of the globe in which he dwells, and his satisfaction with the condition of things as he actually finds them. He is not ever striving to better his surroundings by introducing new methods of tilling the soil or reaping the grain, by improved schemes of draining, or scientific systems of manuring. The land that yielded support for his grandfather continues to yield support for him, and why should he need more? His imagination is not fired by wonderful tales of far-off Western lands that produce sixty bushels to the acre, nor is he tempted (except when pressed by increase of population) to seek his fortune in a richer country. The house that has served his father suits him; the furniture to which he was accustomed as a child still satisfies. He is untouched by the modern craving for things new and better. He is, in a word, content. "Contentment is great gain," as the old copy-book line of our boyhood informed us; but contentment is not the cause of progress nor the companion of that restless striving for improvement which is perhaps the most marked feature of modern life on this continent. The key to the character of the French-Canadian is that he is thoroughly contented with his lot, and withal, happy therein. But it is a contentment that springs, not from a philosophical determination to limit his desires to his means, but from a poverty of desire that is satisfied by his means. He is satisfied, for he knows not what to wish for; and he is happy, because he is satisfied. Truly a most blessed individual! one is almost tempted to exclaim.

When living among the French in those parts of Lower Canada where one can see them *au naturel*, one is certain to be struck, at a first glance, by the extreme simplicity of their surroundings when mentally compared with the farmers of Ontario. The clothing of the *habitan* is usually made of the plainest fabrics; nor are the garments of the gentler sex less coarse than those of the men. "Homespun" is the rule, and in every house the spinning-wheel is the most familiar sight, while many boast of the hand loom. The furnishings of the house, too, are in strict keeping with the clothing of its owner. Chairs and tables of the plainest and coarsest description, unrelieved by any attempts at upholstery or ornamentation, stand nakedly about a bare and uncarpeted floor. The walls and ceiling are usually boards whitened, and sometimes, it may be, papered with old wrapping papers, or other patchwork contrivance. If there may be an attempt at a carpet, it is to be found in the "best bedroom," an apartment set aside for the use of chance visitors, where a species of rag matting covers the floor. The table furnishings, too, are of the commonest delf, unrelieved by any coloured pattern or ornament. And such a house as this is not the dwelling of an inferior member of the community. He is probably a man of much importance, a leader in politics, a fellow of weight in village intrigue. In Ontario he would have his parlour organ, his horse-hair sets, his tapestry carpets, and lace curtains in the sitting room; while in the driving shed there would be a light-running top buggy of newest design. The *habitan* has none of these, and as a means of locomotion he still frequently uses the old reliable ox, in single harness, and driven with a bit in his mouth. A pair of oxen tandem is not an impossible, though a highly curious, sight in Lower Canada.

It is not, however, amid surroundings such as these that one would look for a people completely abreast with modern thought and modern progress, even in their own sphere of life. As a rule, the *habitan* never reads, and the majority cannot, even if the inclination were not wanting.

Not in one house in a hundred will there be found a newspaper of any kind, or any books—except prayer books—or reading matter. The little knowledge that is possessed of what is going on around them is gathered from fireside or roadside gossip, or talk at the church door. The "church door" plays a most important part in the social life. It is at once a medium for advertising, and a vehicle for spreading news. If a man loses a coat or a bag on the road, it is "called" at the church door; if he wants to employ men or to buy timber, or to build houses, a "call" is made at the church door. Perhaps no one fact, more than this, brings so forcibly before us the very primitive manner of life of this people. The "church door" is the important agent it is, because it offers the only means of reaching the people. It is the one channel of communication from the outer world to the country side. As the people do not read, and do not gather *en masse* except on Sunday, there is no other means of getting at them. And it is for this reason that the political speech, after mass, on Sunday, still obtains in Lower Canada, to the great scandal of Protestant Ontario. Though the speech at the church door seems to savour of clerical influence, such is not necessarily the case. The church door is used in this instance, as in the others, merely as the most convenient and natural means of reaching the people. It is not to be denied, however, that the door of the church is not far from the altar rails, and on occasions, the extreme ease with which influence may be exerted from the latter proves too convenient to be altogether lost sight of. A hint from M. le Curé has more influence than a whole oration from M. le Candidat.

The influence of the parish priest over the French-Canadian people is enormous, and indeed can scarcely be over-estimated. All the most intimate and private relations of social and domestic life are laid bare before him—they lie in the hollow of his hand, as it were, and can be moulded as he pleases. The parish priest holds a position in regard to his flock far different from that of a Protestant clergyman. The most that the latter can hope for, and what he aims at, is to gain the confidence and affection of his congregation; to attract them by his eloquence or devotion, and hold them by blended feelings of admiration and respect. The priest claims his people as of right: he commands, and they must obey. It is a matter of indifference to him whether or not they admire his eloquence; to criticise his doctrine they dare not. It is not necessary for him to ingratiate himself with them; he enters their homes as one having authority, and dictates how their domestic concerns shall be arranged. No man may marry, or even court a girl with a view to marriage, without his leave. He needs not to beg—and beg fruitlessly as do so many Protestant ministers—for the necessary funds to carry on his work: he claims his tithes under solemn treaty obligations, and can enforce his claim in the law courts of the Province. With powers such as these, backed by spiritual terrors held over an ignorant and unlearned people, it would be surprising if the parish priest were not a man of boundless influence in the parish. His flock, on the other hand, look to him as their safe guide and adviser in all matters of difficulty and trouble. His advice, if asked, has a weight and influence such as the advice of none other can have.

G. C. C.

### PROHIBITIONIST INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS.

THE article on Alcohol, in the Manual of Hygiene, lately issued by the Provincial Board of Health, and authorised by the Department of Education, is an unfair statement of the case, and is not in accordance with the best medical evidence. The writer is evidently a teetotaler of the extreme type—one of those who think any torturing of scientific evidence permissible in the interest of his idea of temperance. There can be no objection to the teaching of sound Christian temperance in our schools; but we surely ought not to allow our text-books to be used for the teaching of the peculiar views of those who seek to force their opinions as a rule of conduct upon others. What is to be thought of the morality taught in section 518 of this manual, which says: "To set an example of abstinence from the use of all intoxicating liquors is the only way to avoid the responsibility of leading others into habits of intemperance," in view of the facts that Christ Himself drank wine and made it for the use of others, and that His Church has used it for centuries in the Sacrament of the Eucharist?

The whole article would lead one, unacquainted with the subject, to suppose that medical evidence concurred in condemning even the moderate use of alcoholic beverages, whereas the facts are entirely the other way. Sir James Paget has pointed out that the opinions of the medical profession are, by a vast majority, in favour of moderation as opposed to abstinence, and Prof. Bernays says that for every medical man of distinction in favour of total abstinence, he can point to twenty against it. Paget says that the moderate use of alcoholic drinks is generally beneficial, and that in the question between temperance and abstinence the verdict should be in favour of temperance. He points out that its habitual use has been for centuries the custom of a large majority of civilised nations—that there is a natural disposition among civilised men to use alcoholic stimulants, and to believe that such a natural taste has a purpose for good rather than for evil. A comparison of the races that do not with those that do use alcoholic drinks bears out this belief. The eastern races are not longer-lived nor healthier than the western, and certainly a comparison of their working and thinking power is overwhelmingly in favour of the westerns. The experience of mankind is better than individual experience, and the alcohol question must be viewed from a broad standpoint if we wish to arrive at the truth. The question is not whether alcohol is a necessary article of food, but whether many persons can live in better health and comfort with than without its use.