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FRENCH CANADA.

FOUR or five years ago it was one of the two party organs in Toronto that undertook a systematic attack on French Canada and its institutions. The paper was fully answered by the writer of these lines, among others, and his reply went the rounds. A couple of years later the supposed organ of the other party launched into similar polemics. That, too, was met by authorised pens at Montreal and elsewhere. At present there seems to be a combined movement in the same direction, and whenever opportunity or pretext offers, certain organs in Toronto, backed by some congenial papers in Ontario, make onslaughts on the French province, and its political standing, while a few aim their hostility directly against its church. Now these tactics will also be confronted. There is no intention whatever to stand quiescent under these imputations—to admit that superiority which these writers quietly assume, and a rejoinder must be made every time that any such charges are uttered—the result of ignorance, on the one hand, or of bigotry, on the other.

No one has the pretension that the French people of Quebec should be sheltered from criticism, even as a class, having a province all to themselves, and cherishing a language and institutions quite different from those of the majority of their fellow Canadians. That circumstance is a source of strength to them, although it is likewise an element of weakness, precisely because it presents a broadside to the assaults of their enemies. But taking them altogether, they do not deserve this treatment at the hands of responsible political writers, whose wisdom and patriotism may be questioned in this concerted attempt to array one-fourth of our population against the other three-quarters, and brand one whole province as ignorant, unprogressive, church-ridden, and a dead weight on the remainder of the Dominion.

From a material or business point of view it is false that the French Canadians are so backward as represented. Their ways are different from those of the English-speaking people, but it is gratuitous to conclude that they are inferior. They have contributed and are contributing their full share toward the development of their province. While others supply the capital, they furnish the labour. While others establish factories, banks, insurance companies, railways, steamship and steamboat lines, importing houses, and open other channels of industry, they provide a vast portion of the brains, handiwork, skill, painstaking, and fidelity which crown these ventures with success. By common consent, there is no brighter, apter, honester, or harder-working mechanic, artisan, clerk, salesman, bookkeeper, and business man generally than the French Canadian. To depreciate him in any of these capacities is simply wilful calumny. It is doubtless true that the *habitant* is backward in farming; but while there is steady improvement even in this respect, account should be taken of the poverty and hardship with which this class has had to struggle, being the descendants of the original peasantry, who are always the poorest of the land. In the towns and cities, while there is not that tendency to speculation which is the modern accompaniment of the spirit of enterprise, there is a great deal of hoarded wealth among these people, safely invested or laid out in

works of modest but indubitable profit. Much more than one-half of the real estate of Montreal—ground and buildings—is in the hands of the French people, and it is further worthy of note that a large amount of their capital is placed in banks, trust and loan companies, building societies, and large benevolent guilds, exclusively under their control.

Politically the Province of Quebec is divided, and there are many who do not agree with a certain line of policy, at which the whole English section are feeling much concern. The present is not the place to discuss this side issue, which, let us hope, will not lead to lasting complications; but it may be said generally and emphatically, that with neither of the French political parties is there the slightest disposition to deal unjustly by the English people, and it is specially untrue that any existing or prospective legislation has had or will have a tendency to injure the latter in the least in the exercise of their inalienable civic rights. And herein lies the sharpest sting of the charges brought against French Canada, that it is gradually making English residence and citizenship intolerable in Quebec, and this through the overshadowing influence of its church.

The reader will judge of the character of these attacks on seeing the following proposition laid down, about a year since, in a Toronto paper: "The church in Quebec is, without doubt, the most unique and the most oppressive institution on the face of the earth." After this stupendous accusation one stands prepared for anything, and is not surprised to read in a series of articles how that the Church keeps its poor subjects in mental and moral bondage, shirking their social training, grinding them down with tithes, absorbing the whole system of elementary, academic, and university education within itself, interfering unjustifiably in political contests, and practically ruling the Provincial Government and Legislature. Then the changes are rung upon the "mountainous burden" of ecclesiastical mortmain which has accrued for two centuries, crushing parishes and counties, and actually grown to such an extent as to be the virtual power behind the throne. Finally, the Quebec Church is still more directly attacked as rebellious in that she ignores and condemns civil marriages which are recognised by the Dominion. As if she were not right and logical in doing so; marriage, with her, being a sacrament, matrimony a religious institution. She admits the legal validity of such civil unions, but strives by spiritual warnings and penalties to prevent her children from contracting them. In this she is not "unique" or peculiar, but only enforces the law of the Church from the beginning and all over the world. Surely she ought not to be blamed for doing her best to maintain the sanctity of the marriage tie in an age when it is fast becoming a mere plaything. The Guibord case is brought up as another instance of rebellion, which is the more unfortunate in that the Church, after maintaining the authority always hitherto exercised by her, offered no further resistance when once the decision of the Privy Council was enforced. The fact is that there are several things in the ecclesiastical system of Quebec, modified or abandoned in other countries, in consequence of changed principles in the great problem of Church and State, which might be and perhaps soon will be altered here; but, in the meantime, they give rise to no such evils or abuses as is pretended. These changes or reforms should be left to the French people themselves; they should come *ab intra* and not *ab extra*; certainly not through the violent onslaught of outsiders. It is to be hoped that this species of attack will be foregone, inasmuch as it is unjust, serves no good purpose, and fosters that wretched spirit of mistrust and animosity, sprung from difference of race and creed, which, in wild hands, may yet become the curse of this fair country.

Montreal.

J. L.

SOME SAYINGS OF LORD BEACONSFIELD.—II.

AGAIN, Lothair yields us the following sentence: "Mr. Pinto would sometimes remark that when a man fell into his *anecdote*, it was a sign for him to retire from the world." For this slight *jeu de mot* Lord Beaconsfield has duly obtained credit, and it figures among the samples of his "Wit and Wisdom" published by Longmans. Turning, however, to Archbishop Trench's "Four Lectures on Plutarch" we read as follows: "It is true that the treasurers and retailers of anecdotes are not always the wisest of men; often, indeed, very far from such. With allusion to this fact, Samuel Rogers was wont, as I remember, in the latest years of his life, to say of himself that he was in his *anecdote*." Lord Beaconsfield in all probability borrowed the joke from Rogers; but it is older still than Rogers. Among the facetious sayings of Lord Robertson, a well-known Scotch judge, I find the following: "With most men there are only *three* ages—non-age, dot-age, and, worst of all, anecdote-age." The late Edmund Len-