

# MONTREAL LIFE.

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## LIFE IN A LOOKING-GLASS.

THE late, lamented P. T. Barnum believed that people like to be humbugged. I do not know whether Mr. Barnum's magnificent aggregation of fakes met with more pronounced success in Great Britain than in the United States but, if not, it should have done so—for of all people John Bull is the most easily humbugged and clings the most tenaciously to his pet illusions. John has lately been hugging a varied assortment of these interesting articles with almost savage fondness, nor will he suffer friend or foe to slacken by a hair's breadth his embrace. One of these illusions is that the majority of the people of the United States entertain feelings of cordial friendship—not to say affection—for Great Britain. While there has undoubtedly been some improvement in American public opinion with regard to the Old Country, we who live, as it were, in the next house to Uncle Sam's and can see from our windows every day what goes on in his back yard, are fully aware that a large number of that worthy's children are quietly heaving rocks at their grandfather's conservatory. But John Bull will not believe that such a thing is possible. How could his own flesh and blood be so basely ungrateful, after all he has done to establish a good family feeling? No, no, he will not believe it—and is, in fact, resolved never to believe it, even should it be true a hundred times over. And so, the American attempt at interference in the South-African squabble, instead of meeting with a curt snub that would have greeted a similar attempt from any of John Bull's near neighbors, is graciously declined with honeyed words that smack suspiciously (in American ears) of a cringing desire to purchase friendship at any price—even at the price of national dignity.

THEN, there is another of John Bull's pet illusions—the illusion that Canada is four-fifths inhabited by Frenchmen, unable to speak or understand English, but more loyal to the British flag than the Queen herself, and ruled by a French Premier who cannot sleep at night for thinking how he can strengthen the Empire. This is an especially sacred article of John Bull's faith at present—and he will suffer no sacrilegious hand to disturb it. I am not writing a political paragraph of the "old flag" variety, for the miserable attempts of both the parties in this country to monopolize all the loyalty in sight, and incidentally to convict the other party of veiled treason, are unspeakably contemptible in my eyes, as in the eyes of most plain men. But it is sheer rot for anyone to say that the French-speaking population of Canada is as anxious or as willing as the English-speaking population to rush to the aid of Britain in her hour of need. We could not expect them to be, nor would any representative French-Canadian claim so much for his compatriots. Yet we have highly-colored descriptions in the English papers of whole companies of Canadian troops in South Africa in which the commands are given solely in French. And such miracles are held up to the gaze of an astonished world as proofs of the beneficence of British rule and of the intense loyalty and adamant unity of all the heterogeneous elements living under the Union Jack.

NO Empire in the world's history has been characterized by such a large measure of local self-government and so wide a recognition of sectional institutions as the British Empire. The French language has been preserved in Canada under the sacred guarantee and protection of the law. The

French-Canadians have their own laws, their religion, and their educational system intact. Similarly, in Cape Colony, the Dutch have been treated with the largest measure of liberality. The fact that Canada has a French Premier and the Cape a Dutch Premier is pointed to with pride as a proof of British liberty. Even in India, the prejudices of an insanely superstitious population are respected, and the rights and prerogatives of the local rajahs are, outwardly at least, maintained. John Bull nurses the idea that this is the best way to build and hold together an Empire. Thinking men are commencing to ask themselves, is he right?

CANADA is contented and, it is safe to assume, will never be the scene of internecine strife. But are the Dutch in South Africa loyal to Britain because of her beneficent rule? The very reverse seems to be the case. Give a man an ell and he wants a yard. The Dutch, instead of being assimilated, have remained a separate and peculiar people, nursing the dream of a great Dutch African republic—disloyal at the very heart to the flag in whose shadow they live. Small wonder if it is easy to convince the people of Europe and the United States that Britain is a tyrannical oppressor, when the very people whom she claims to have nurtured in kindness rise up against her. We who live under the flag know that the cause of their defection is not oppression, but, on the contrary, that very kindness which is at once Britain's virtue and her weakness. But foreign nations do not know the facts as we know them, and are only too likely to ask sneeringly how it is that well-treated subjects are also disloyal subjects. John Bull, with characteristic sang froid, pays no heed to such signs and portents, nor does the idea so much as occur to him that his methods may be wrong. It is one of his many pet illusions that a conquered people should preserve not only their liberty but their language, and, in fact, everything else they have the cheek to demand. That he will soon give up this illusion is as unlikely as that the St. Lawrence will flow into Hudson Bay. After all, wrong though he may be, we cannot but admire the old fellow for the pertinacity with which he sticks to his opinions.

IF, as some people believe, a general Dominion election will be sprung in a few weeks—and certain proceedings in the House assuredly point that way—it is remarkable that the Government should have sent both Mr. Sifton and Mr. Tarte out of the country. As everyone knows, these are the two most abused men in the Administration. Can it be possible that the Government is heaving all the Jonahs overboard until the storm be past and the political waters are once more untroubled? Either there is going to be no election for some moons to come, or the Liberals do not want Messrs. Tarte and Sifton to the fore in the fight.

PROBABLY in no other country in the world would it be possible to even discuss such a project as the wilful destruction of so historic a place as the Plains of Abraham. It is not to our credit that the move should have been contemplated; and still less creditable is it that there should be any hesitancy about taking steps to prevent so monstrous a sacrilege. Unquestionably, the Government ought to acquire the great battlefield, even should a high price be demanded. Fancy our neighbors allowing one of the memorable fields of the Revolution or of the Civil War to be cut up into building lots and sold!