

FRENCH-CANADIAN PATRIOTISM.

A REVIEW BY "BOUX."

As we are within measurable distance of the annual celebration of the St. Jean Baptiste, the national day of our French-Canadian fellow-citizens, and as it is proposed, this year, to make a new departure on that occasion and, leaving aside the old-time procession, concentrate all energies in making the day one of high intellectual circumstance and display, I may be pardoned if I take note of and publish something about the patriotism of the French-Canadians. I have remarked one thing in particular in the expressions of opinion regarding the French-Canadian people that we occasionally find in the English press; there is no medium, it is either all praise, too often of a fulsome kind, or else all censure, that is as unfair as it is undeserved. There is nothing perfect under the sun, and in common with all other races, the French-Canadians have their shortcomings, as well as their fine qualities and characteristics. It can serve no good purpose to constantly harp upon some one or other of these imperfections; and to pour out a torrent of unqualified praise savors too much of insincerity and time-serving. However, if they have faults decidedly we cannot number amongst them either a lack of Faith, of Patriotism, of Loyalty, of Hospitality, or of Generosity.

It would require far more space than I have at my disposal to deal with these various characteristics. Faith, Patriotism and Loyalty seem to me to go hand in hand, and can almost be treated under one heading. These three qualities we find exemplified in every grade of society; the clergy, the professions, the commercial and industrial world, the agricultural and the laboring classes. The evidences of that Faith are so numerous and so ubiquitous that it is needless to search for or enumerate them. The same stands good in the matter of Patriotism; and as to Loyalty, from the days of Mgr. Briand to those of the last French-Canadian buried upon the veldts of South Africa, the evidence of its disinterested presence amongst the whole race, is as clear as the sun at noon day of a cloudless sky.

What has led me in a particular manner to touch this subject, is the perusal of two masterly efforts from two most prominent French-Canadians. The first is the funeral oration of the late Mgr. Moreau, by His Grace Archbishop Bruchesi; the second is Dr. Louis Frechette's address, on "Our National Faith," before the Royal Society at Ottawa. I styled these two addresses — for addresses they both are, though of very different kinds — masterly efforts; and possibly have called them masterpieces. From our college days we have been so accustomed to go back to the classic productions of the seventeenth century for models of French — either in verse, or in prose — that we are tempted to imagine that nothing new can be produced to equal the great orations and great poems of the "great century." Again, we are so trained to seek examples of perfection amongst the orators, poets and litterateurs of old France, that we never think of applying the same measure to the productions of our own French-Canadian speakers and writers. In this we err; and, though it may be considered presumption on my part to make the broad assertion, still it is my sincere conviction that Canada, proportionately speaking, has furnished more models of pure and faultless French than has the old land. Of course, I take into consideration that I am comparing a couple of centuries with six or seven centuries, and a couple of million people with thirty-six or thirty-seven million.

As the best and purest English is spoken, not by the Londoner, but by the educated Irishman from Dublin; so I will venture to say that the educated French-Canadian speaks a purer French than the Parisian, or than any of the old France people from Rouen to Marseilles. If our French-Canadian "habitant" has an accent and a form of speech peculiar to himself, the peasants of every department of France have their particular "patois," which, in many cases, are more pronounced and less French than that of the Canadian. In fact, I would not be surprised if, in a couple of generations hence, French-Canada would possess a language of its own — a French language I mean, that would be entirely national, of the soil, Canadian. And, if such should come to pass, it will be said by the historians of that day, that while a Babe of conflicting stylisms had been tearing the language of France into shreds, while a handful of "immortals" had been putting forth every effort to preserve and perpetuate the glories of the tongue, and while provincialisms were multiplying and invading the domain of legitimate letters, in Canada a number of eminent educationalists, litterateurs, orators, poets, historians, novelists, and "chroniqueurs" had laid the basis — large and solid — of a permanent and glorious language, destined to rival in its prolific production of masterpieces, the language that still embalms the soaring thoughts of a Bossuet or a Racine. And, each in his own sphere, prominent amongst those builders of a national literature, must be ranked the names of Bruchesi and Frechette.

Mr. Harrington met his death in a most tragic manner on Wednesday of last week. The freight handlers at the Anchor Line Docks in this city have been on strike ever since the opening of the season. The company this year introduced the contract system, and the contract was let to Messrs. Kane and Coyle, the former a life-long resident of this city and fellow-employee with the freight handlers. Mr. Coyle recently came to Erie. The contractors made several attempts to bring workmen here from outside, but each time a gang of men was imported, the strikers were successful in inducing them to return. They were usually escorted out of town with a band and a large turnout of union men.

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"Reviewer," and who is not accustomed to narrow down his composition to any limits that the strictest rules would ordain. I would even like, were it possible, to now analyze and give an appreciation of the two beautiful productions to which I have made allusion; but such is out of the question; however, while I have not space to quote from either, I will venture a few remarks on both. I would not have it understood that I am instituting any comparison between Mgr. Bruchesi's sermon and Dr. Frechette's lecture; the occasions, the circumstances, the positions of the speakers, the subjects, the forms, the styles are all different — each a model in its own sphere, they both tend to prove the majestic heights to which French-Canadian sentiment and expression have attained. While I would not dare a comparison between Flechier and Lally Tolendal, yet I may point to both to illustrate how French was spoken in their day.

Did I say that Mgr. Bruchesi's funeral oration over Mgr. Moreau was a masterly effort? It was more; it was, under the circumstances, a "tour de force," of which we have but rare examples in the annals of our country. A style pure, elegant, careful; a form in accord with the acknowledged rules of rhetoric; a spirit at once depressed and exalted, saddened by the loss sustained, buoyed up with a knowledge of the crown won, and a confidence in the prelate called upon to "take up the mantle of the departed Elias;" touching the minor keys of grief, until the strings of every heart are made to vibrate in sympathy with the occasion; rising into the more elevated atmosphere of supernatural trust and hope; treading, at times, the very peaks of sublimity, then gradually descending the slopes of sentiment to walk the familiar pathways of genuine simplicity, where the mass of the people congregated; such the funeral oration over the Bishop of St. Hyacinthe.

Why do I call it a "tour-de-force?" Because Mgr. Bruchesi was, and had been for some time travelling on his pastoral visitations, speaking to various congregations once, sometimes twice each day, because he had, within a short space of time, pronounced almost a dozen funeral sermons — no two under like circumstances — for example, over Mgr. Lafleche, of Three Rivers, the pastor of Lachine, the pastor of St. Joseph's in Montreal, and only the other day, the late lamented Abbe Vereau, Principal of the Normal School. Considering all these circumstances, the lack of time for preparation amongst others, it is evident that such a masterpiece can simply be the outcome of a perfect mastery of the language.

In the case of Dr. Frechette's address before the Royal Society, it is different. It must have been carefully prepared, each sentence well weighed, and each idea studiously set in the mosaic of his composition. Yet, it is nonetheless a marvellous production, a wonderful gathering together of great sentiments couched in crystal words. Would that every sentiment of that admirable expression of Faith, Patriotism and Loyalty could be stereotyped upon the hearts of all Canadians — irrespective of race or creed. There is a ring of hopefulness about it that is as refreshing as the balmy air of these June mornings, "as is ever on the side of hope!" and it is thus that Frechette amplifies that thought.

"Yes," he says, "the future is all consolation. This twentieth century, of which men of my age can only expect to witness the dawn, reserves for our children fruitful and wonderful realizations. The way is broad, the horizon is immense. To work, then, scientist, speaker, thinker! To work, then, financier, clerk, builder! To work, then, laborer, artist, every class! To work, even, the poet! The poet's voice is not as useless as may be imagined in the grand general concert, in this great collective effort!"

Mr. Harrington styled "society a vessel in movement." The kings, the statesmen, the merchants, the learned in every branch of science, are under the flag, at the helm, at the compass. These grasp the cordage to climb the masts and to spread the sails, those others load the cannon — all are of the crew. Not one is useless on-board that grand vessel. The poet, for his part, seeks amongst the stars the track that the finger of God has traced for us."

I have strained my allowance of space for this week; but I feel that the subject, and the occasion, justify me in an extra effort. If the many addresses that are to be delivered on the 24th June instant, are in accord with the character of the two just mentioned, the St. Jean Baptiste celebration of 1901 will certainly create an impetus that will serve to be accentuated in the annals of Canadian history.

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HUMAN CHRONOMETER.—A man who was popularly known as "the human chronometer" died the other day at Anvers. His name was J. Richter, and for many years he had been a money broker. The peculiar thing about him was his extraordinary regularity and his defiance of custom. His whole life, indeed, seemed to be regulated by a chronometer. So far as his neighbors could judge he never showed the slightest emotion, but invariably preserved his natural imperturbable indifference.

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A famous old set of vestments now in the Cathedral sacristy, was a gift to the late Archbishop Hughes. On these vestments, which are of the finest gold cloth, is worked the Archbishop's coat of arms. They are embroidered in gold and encrusted with jewels. The set comprises vestments for twelve priests, besides the Archbishop. It is valued at \$20,000 and was imported from Lyons. Archbishop Corrigan has worn these vestments occasionally.

Still another set of vestments that has attracted general attention from admirers of artistic embroidery, was presented to Archbishop Corrigan. They are rose color, and are worn on only two days in the year, and are permitted to cathedrals and collegiate churches only throughout the world. They are embroidered in fine gold and artistic needlework. On the chasuble is the usual cross, and the figures on the cross and designs on the frontispiece are worked in silk of different colors, gold and silver on gold.

A very handsome set of vestments is one worn for Pontifical Requiem Masses. It is of black moire antique silk. A set of vestments for Nuptial Mass was prepared especially for Archbishop Corrigan's use. It is made of white satin and around the outer edge is worked a vine of forget-me-nots in colors that blend. Around the cross in the back of the chasuble are worked gold sprays of marguerites in vine shape. In the centre of each vestment is inserted a pearl. The cross is richly ornamented in pearls and pink sea shell embroidery.

Hundreds of persons who desire to examine the vestments visit the Cathedral annually. Permission to see them is granted to very few persons.

MISSIONS IN CHINA.—In an article to the May number of the "Fortnightly Review," Sir Robert Hart, who has spent almost a lifetime in China, thus speaks of the Catholic missions in that troublous country: He says:—

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