

uate. Were the French Canadians to be guarded against the influx of any other population, their condition in a few years would be similar to that of the poorest of the Irish peasantry.

There can hardly be conceived a nationality more destitute of all that can invigorate and elevate a people, than that which is exhibited by the descendants of the French in Lower Canada, owing to their retaining their peculiar language and manners. They are a people with no history, and no literature. The literature of England is written in a language which is not theirs, and the only literature which their language renders familiar to them, is that of a nation from which they have been separated by 80 years of a foreign rule, and still more by those changes which the revolution and its consequences have wrought in the whole political, moral, and social state of France. Yet it is on a people whom recent history, manners, and modes of thought, so entirely separate from them, that the French Canadians are wholly dependent for almost all the instruction and amusement derived from books; it is on this essentially foreign literature, which is conversant about events, opinions, and habits of life, perfectly strange and unintelligible to them, that they are compelled to be dependent. Their newspapers are mostly written by natives of France, who have either come to try their fortunes in the province, or been brought into it by the party leaders, in order to supply the dearth of literary talent available for the political press. In the same way their nationality operates to deprive them of the enjoyments and civilizing influence of the arts. Though descended from the people in the world that most generally love, and have most successfully cultivated the drama; though living on a continent in which almost every town, great or small, has an English theatre, the French population of Lower Canada, cut off from every people that speaks its own language, can support no national stage.

In these circumstances I should be indeed surprised, if the more reflecting part of the French Canadians entertained at present any hope of continuing to preserve their nationality. Much as they struggle against it, it is obvious that the process of assimilation to English habits is already commencing. The English language is gaining ground, as the language of the rich and of the employers of labour naturally will. It appeared by some of the few returns which had been received by the commissioner of inquiry into the state of education, that there are about ten times the number of French children in Quebec learning English, as compared with English children who learn French. A considerable time must, of course elapse, before the change of a language can spread over a whole people; and justice and policy alike require that while the people continue to use the French language their government should take no such means to force the English language upon them as would, in fact, deprive the great mass of the community of the protection of the laws. But I repeat, that the alteration of the character of the province ought to be immediately entered on, and firmly, though cautiously, followed up; that in any plan which may be adopted for the future management of Lower Canada, the first object ought to be that of making it an English province; and that, with this end in view, the ascendancy should never again be placed in any hands but those of an English population. Indeed, at the present moment this is obviously necessary; in the state of mind in which I have described the French Canadian population, as not only now being, but as likely for a long while to remain, the trusting them with an entire control over this province would be, in fact, only facilitating a rebellion. Lower Canada must be governed now, as it must be hereafter, by an English population; and thus the policy which the necessities of the moment force on us is in accordance with that suggested by a comprehensive view of the future and permanent improvement of the province.

The greater part of the plans which have been proposed for the future government of Lower Canada suggest, either as a lasting or as a temporary and intermediate scheme, that the government of that province should be constituted on an entirely despotic footing, or on one that would vest it entirely in the hands of the British minority. It is proposed either to place the legislative authority in a Governor, with a council formed of the heads of the British party, or to contrive some scheme of representation, by which a minority, with the forms of representation, is to deprive a majority of all voice in the management of its own affairs.

The maintenance of an absolute form of government on any part of the North American continent can never continue for any long time, without exciting a general feeling in the United States against a power of which the existence is secured by means so odious to the people; and as I rate the preservation of the present general sympathy of the United States with the policy of our government in Lower Canada as a matter of the greatest importance, I should be sorry that the feeling should be changed for one which, if prevalent among that people, must extend over the surrounding provinces. The influence of such an opinion would not only act very strongly on the entire French population, and keep up among them a sense