

FRANCE
AND THE FRENCH

OR

Bilingualism and Its Advantages



An Address by

Mr. DONALD DOWNIE, B.C.L.,

before the Literary Society of "Vagabonds"

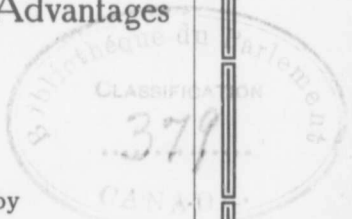
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France and the French.



Mr. Donald Downie gave the conference last week at the Wednesday night meeting on this live topic, of timely interest. It has been much discussed and appreciated for the boldness and the warmth of its treatment. The lecturer spoke as follows:—

Messieurs les Vagabonds : 'Philosophy speaks freely of all things. So do Vagabonds. Ergo (this was asked in our committee), Why should we not discuss some live and even burning topic? Is it because such topic might arouse some ardor, or awaken a little passion, or create enthusiasm. Are Vagabonds afraid of such feelings? Why not, for instance, discuss next meeting, the civic reforms needed in Vancouver. And let every member have a reform to advocate; and see how many would be original.

Or Woman Suffrage, or Prohibition, or real temperance. Everything is open to us. It was once discussed, you know, in Europe, by learn-

ed bishops, "Whether Women had souls." That was, I think, at the Diet of Worms. They would probably have decided better on a diet of roast beef and beer. Let us discuss the Continental, versus the Puritan Sunday; National Service in War; The Management of a City; of a School Board; of a Patriotic Fund; of our Returned Soldiers; or the Fiscal Policy. Or what shall we do with our nephews. Or "How to be happy though married." Or what privilege or recognition should the citizen have over the obstinate alien in our Empire; if any. Or whether our weakened City Council should have been bluffed or bullied into refusing such special recognition by threats from the consuls to mobilise the Japanese army and the Swiss navy.

A TIMELY TOPIC

So I select a topic that is timely; and an issue that is alive. This is a word for old Quebec. And the French. It is only a brief, imperfect, but an affectionate defence of French Canada and her language. And I might dedicate it to that distinguished son of our old Mother Province, Sir Lomer Gouin—who, without once

mentioning this issue, has recently carried the people of his Province with him, of both creeds and races, by ten to one. When one has the honor to be "Un Enfant du Sol;" from that romantic old Province on the St. Lawrence; one may say this by way of defence—and to her critics by way of warning. We hear some words of reproach addressed to you these days in other Provinces. And we do not hear them patiently nor in silence. They come sometimes from public men, with a political purpose. These may be negligible. And from some ill-informed and parrot-like people with a deep racial and religious prejudice. These are pardonable. They do after their kind. But there are others who cannot be so dismissed. For they are not altogether unenlightened. And they believe sincerely what they say themselves. Alas, that they should say these things when our democracy is on trial. When susceptibilities should be spared; when the Empire is in the cementing pot of conciliation.

And what say they? In this English-speaking part of Canada?

In clubs; in the barristers rooms; in a judge's chambers; in the officers' mess; on the street

corners, as the military parade swings past on its march to the front in Flanders — I am button-holed lately with this remark — Well, sir, you are always the champion of the French race. What have you to say for their special privileges when only a few thousand of them have gone forward — despite all their Norman race and blood, to join in the great Anglo-French crusade, and to save at the same time the country of their ancestors and the country of their allegiance. It was only a robing-room controversy. But it seemed to indicate a dangerous and deep-seated internecine prejudice that did not augur well for the spirit of the next election. And it seemed to me so general as to proceed from some sort of dangerous racial, or political *mot d'ordre*. One amiable member of the bench — with that fair judicial mind (which is sometimes found there), asked me if a sympathetic and successful appeal could not be made to them. And as my sympathies were well known, would I not undertake to launch it.

I answered at once that it could well be done. And that a whole division of 20 regiments could still be raised from that virile and forceful population. But the task must not be undertaken

in this way. But by one of themselves. Or by some one having authority. It must not be approached in the rude style of the recruiting sergeant. Kitchener did not raise his army by abuse. The factional and tendacious legislation in Ontario was not calculated to enthuse a proud race, that must no longer be treated as a conquered one.

His honor asked me seriously if it were not possible that that race had degenerated in the new world. Unhesitatingly I answered—No. That on the contrary it had really and physically improved. And that the same spirit of the defenders of Verdun would be found among these French-speaking-British-Canadians whose names, strange to say, we see so often these days in the lists of casualties, as dead or wounded on the field of honor.

Now, Your Honor, my reply was, instead of simply giving our French compatriots of Quebec the good advice that you suggest, and which might—no doubt be done quite acceptably, and in good taste—I think that as Your Honor also has an honest and receptive mind, one might also, quite respectfully, give you a little advice, and for your own benefit, mention a few useful

and important facts about the people of that Terra Incognita, which learned men in the other Provinces have seemed quite content to ignore.

And to my fault-finding brother barristers — former Montrealers and Torontorians, with a persistent anti-French grievance, and perhaps in search of a slogan for the next election like—*A bas les Canadiens-Français*—I answer this :—

THE WRONG TONE

My learned friends :

This tone of yours (and of all the Ontario lodges) is the same tactless, offensive, ineffective and contemptuous tone we already heard from you before ever the Empire was in danger, more than a quarter of a century ago, in regard to that simple fine old Norman race, when a generation was still living who remembered their little rebellion of 1837, which brought some political liberties to all of us. For they were the pioneers of the New World. That good old Gallic stock to whom we owe at least two small debts of gratitude, you will admit — one is the planting of Canada, and of an old and a supe-

rior civilization in North America. And the other is their retention for us, and for our flag, of this half of that continent, in the critical moment of Britain's need. For when the New England colonies rebelled, these recent subjects of ours in Canada, when she was even more beset by enemies than she is now, were masters of the situation, and of their own destiny—exactly as the Boers are today. And, like the followers of Botha, they were then guided, as you would say, in their loyalty to their new allegiance by an intelligent and an enlightened self-interest. Had they not been so led and so guided, then the Stars and Stripes should today be floating from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic circle. That is one debt we owe the much abused habitant and his leaders. That race whose intellectual methods, language and mentality most of us have never even attempted to appreciate or to understand.

FRENCH - CANADIAN SUPERIORITY OVER OUR COMPOSITE NOMADIC RACE

A people who were always to most of us (superior English-speaking Canadians) in spite

of all their amiable virtues, and their still more amiable follies—at school or the bar or in politics or society—always as foreign and even antipathetic, as the old Norman was to the Saxon; or as the Frank to the Hun of today. A race that from long isolation on its own virgin soil, has been no doubt less favored than ours by commercial prosperity and material fortune. But superior, I dare affirm, in every quality of artistic temperament, in every aptitude for scholarship, for good manners and polite learning; in all the social accomplishments; in music, in letters, in oratory; and in the graces of parliamentary life. As superior, in short to all the composite and the roving races that now people this mixed continent of ours — as superior in all the arts of peace and law-abiding citizenship to the Swedes, the Bulgars, Magyars, Bohemians, Austrians, Poles and Greeks — as their Gallo-Latin ancestors were always superior to the other races of Europe in every refinement that most distinguishes civilized from savage man. It is argued illogically that if we perpetuate their tongue, all those other incoming races shall demand the same. And we shall have another Austrian Empire. No.

WHAT WE OWE THEM

We owe them something more than we owe to those other elements in the body politic. For they obtained for Canada this free government we enjoy. Nay, more. They were not only the dominant race — they were Canada; at the most critical periods in British colonial history. They are the children of the soil; attached to it firmly for 380 years. The present always has its roots deep in the past. They are a sedentary race. They are not nomadic. Their romantic traditions, their old customs, their laws, their tongue, their lands, their parish villages, their self-government, local and provincial, their simple social life, their strong family affections, their domestic virtues, their fecundity, their general frugality, and contentment — these and their religion set them and their province altogether apart. But is there one mean or dangerous characteristic in all that to the safety of the state? They would rise like a nation in arms to defend that soil of theirs and ours. The exceptions would not be a corporal's guard.

LOYAL TO THE SOIL AND CROWN

And yet my learned Anglo-Canadian friends, confreres and judges, are illogical enough to compare their case, or their language, or their special brand of patriotism, with that of those new-fledged, or unnaturalized refugees from Hungary, Galicia, Calabria, or Bohemia. And they ask me—without a thought of our British tolerance and linguistic encouragement to the Boer, and the Welsh, the Maltese, the Hindu, the Brahmin, the Parsee, and every other cherished tongue, and law, and custom, and religion—why, they ask, should we have French and English statutory languages and not separate schools for all those alien nomads. The answer is so obvious that one fears he is breaking in an open door.

BRITISH LIBERALITY VS. PREJUDICE

And British precedent and British statesmanship, as usual furnish the reason and the reply. You would have but one language in Canada, you say. And you propose with a light heart to

compel two million people to forget the polished French and speak our rude and forceful tongue. Well, sirs, they are learning it—for practical reasons—far more readily and effectively than if you applied force. How did the Kaiser succeed by coercion, in Poland and in Alsace? A fine hornet's nest of loving subjects he has around his troops in those two crown provinces. But still you prefer his method to the British under which we are spending millions today to teach French to Belgian immigrants, so that they may preserve their tongue and nation.

THE LORD MAYOR'S PLAN

See what the Lord Mayor of London at the Mansion House said the other day about the duty of learning French; and then see if this is the moment to cry out against the spread of that polished language of heroic France in the world, or the moment to propagate it. His lordship said to the distinguished French assembly there present, that hereafter every child in England should be taught to speak French; as in France, today everyone was learning English. That the two nations leading the world in civili-

zation should be nations of dual-language. Their history and their literature touched each other at so many points.

Now my learned friends drag in the case of these western colonies and metropolitan communities of the grey, grim races of Europe, in order to bind them into a stick to beat Quebec with. But I have not yet heard them put forward any statistics of enlistment from these alien immigrants whose champions they are. Why not carry the analogy to its logical conclusion? Let us have real statistics from the native-born population also. And let us see if in enlistment the French-speaking native of Quebec is so far behind the native of the other Eastern Provinces.

For our system, you know, is voluntary and not provincial. So, if the half million men we have agreed to contribute to our Imperial defence, or to France and Britain, in the war, be not soon found, let us do something orderly and logical and French-like for once. Let us have national registration. Then we shall see where the available timber is to be found out of which soldiers can be made. We do not wish to deplete the useful glebe. The overcrowded urban centres have not been half recruited.

THE TYPE

Now the French-Canadian is perhaps one quarter of this population of Canada. And there is not, in all this wide dominion, an easier element to govern, nor one more devoted to home and law, and order than the French—the oldest and earliest of all Canadians. And in the criminal statistics he is not the worst.

He asks little of his government, but to be let alone. He is a healthful and a cheerful optimist, with an alert intelligence, and a vivid imagination. He has initiative and hardy self-reliance, inherited with an excellent physique, through generations of rude contact with frontier life, and simple primitive natural conditions. They are the same qualities which have made the thrifty and intelligent peasantry of France, along the Seine, the Marne, the Loire and the Rhone, the very finest and most prosperous peasantry in the world. These sterling and lasting qualities are all inherent in their vigorous Breton and Norman, and Angevin cousins scattered along the rich valley of the Saint Lawrence, and now rapidly along its many tributary valleys,

pushing back their horizons and the frontiers of Canadian civilization. But the vividness of a picture depends greatly upon the frame. So there is only one way to know our French-speaking fellow Canadian of Quebec—and that is to learn his language and to go there.

PICTURE OF PROVINCIAL LIFE

I wish I could sketch for you here the peaceful homespun farmer, with all his friendly bonhomie ; the loquacious villager and his easy badinage ; the notary, dignified and learned repository of the confidence and the title-deeds for generations ; the country doctor, bon vivant and every body's friend ; the political meeting after mass ; the breathless attention of the speakers ; the endless processions of children to communion — all costumed for the occasion — of boys well behaved from their college ; of girls so graceful, in charge of the devoted sisters so demure. And, lastly, the Bon Curé de Campagne, fatherly, benign, beloved ; confessing, exhorting, baptising, marrying, burying, levying, building ; highly educated—speaking Greek and Latin better than English. But ignoring much

of the great world's affairs beyond his own province, or even beyond his parish; the good Pastor who generally spends his revenues for the glory of the Church; and his days in feeding his flock with the bread of life. And often with the poor pioneers on the far off frontier parishes he may truly say like Wolsey :

“My robe and my integrity to Heaven
Are all I dare now call my own.”

SOMETHING BETTER TO DO

No. There is something grander and better we could be doing for the Empire today in this supreme moment of its needs—than quarrelling with our inoffensive fellow Britons (speaking French), as to how they should train their children. But the population of Canada is about eight millions. Not all Francophobes. And, I hope not, as Carlyle would have said, “mostly fools.” And yet, in half a century, in spite of the most extravagant immigration schemes, and with unlimited natural resources, that population has only doubled. It is of every race, and tongue, of every creed and clime, of every “color and previous condition of servitude.”

OUR MIXED POPULATION

They come from the ends of the earth these other and composite races with all their physical and moral virtues and imperfections thick upon them—natural, hereditary and acquired.

And we encourage them. It is well. The rich soil must be tilled. But here we have a pure old Latin race growing up in our midst. Of the best and cleanest stock. And it is agricultural. Racy of the soil. Without a taint of foreign or ignoble blood; if they might use in that connection the proud boast of the Athenian, and his Attic purity.

Shall we encourage it?

And yet such is the persistent unreasoning fanaticism of a little coterie of our endarkened protestant friends, that from devoted subjects they would turn this precious race of loyal friends into bitter foes. Let us not help them. It is not good Imperialism. It is not British. Civil and religious liberty—that has been the battle cry of France and England for ages. It is that which has enabled them to govern old nations of every race and creed, and to civilise new peoples of every kind and clime.

A VAST, ABSORBING SUBJECT

Now I know that I have as yet only touched on the fringe of my theme. One accepts to speak on so vast a subject always with some trepidation. He is only impelled by l'Amour de la Patrie; or by l'amour de l'art. There is so much to say. And yet when his mind is filled with his souvenirs and his audience is so friendly and receptive, he can trust to the inspiration of the moment, and give them the thoughts that are uppermost. Although I had, before coming here, prepared in my mind, from my far too voluminous French notes, a little selection for you, yet the secret of what I should say or select was only known to the Almighty and myself; and now one of us has forgotten it; and God alone knows.

Furthermore, I perceive I have a sympathetic audience, and a subject on which their interest has not to be aroused. For it is already awake, and glows at this moment with an ardor equal to and possibly surpassing my own.

THE ROLE AND THE RIGHTS OF NEW FRANCE

I had intended, in my plea for bilingualism—lest the matter should be considered too political or controversial—to speak, not altogether of that old French Canada, and her language and inspirations; but also of the role that France has played as the founder of civilisation in this half of North America. Of her colonising and refining influence; of her planting her hardy race for centuries along the then unbroken wilderness, the fertile valley of the Saint Lawrence; of the forcible abandonment of her children there at the end of the seven years war, to the honorable care of a chivalrous conqueror; of the stipulations and capitulations accepted and recommended by the military governor in their favor—ratified four years later by his government, conserving to them their laws and customs, their language and religion. How “New France” was thus made more loyal than “New England.” How those few towns and settlements of 60,000 peasants, then constituting all of this Canada, as far as Lake Nipissing, Machilimac-

kinac and Detroit, and the extremities of what is now Ontario, have grown into two million of loyal French-British subjects, still speaking their ancient tongue (which we should all be able to speak here tonight) and now in great part using both languages—the graceful one and the forceful one—much more fluently than any of us can do. How they have shown their devotion to British institutions effectively on occasion; and have furnished their little proof, in the present trial by fire; earning from the very highest quarters, the very highest praise. How with an *entente cordiale* all their own, they are proving worthy at once of the country of their race, and of the country of their allegiance; to both of which they have long shown by their amiable law-abiding spirit of tolerance and consideration how two tongues and two mentalities and two religions may exist in harmony, and with mutual benefit in a mixed community.

EARLY SOUVENIRS

I might have recounted to you from the enchantment of my early souvenirs, of a boyhood spent among a sympathetic people, speaking this

French tongue of theirs (of which so many people seem so strangely afraid) how the best characteristics of our allies, from the valley of the Seine and the Marne, remain with their descendants in the valley of the Saint Lawrence. For it is a duty to one's country to remove misunderstandings, when one can advocate conciliation and tolerance—*en connaissance de cause*.

BILINGUAL ADVANTAGES

And there has been a great misconception in Ontario—and elsewhere—as to the character and purpose of our Quebec compatriots, and the danger to the state of the teaching of two modern languages in the schools of their communities and in adjoining Provinces. *Ignorantia facta excusat*.

But he who knows these two statutory languages of our country has assuredly the intellectual pleasure, if not the usefulness, of two men. Ask our Royal governor; our English men of letters; our statesmen; our jurists. And since they are statutory; and since French is admittedly a sort of masonic sign of culture, by which since many centuries, people of education

and of good taste in every part of the world recognize each other—why should our excellent friends, the Ontario loyal drangemen, out of pure religious or racial prejudice, desire to deprive his own children, and ours of that distinct advantage, and so leave all that mental pleasure and all that public usefulness to the more liberal, and bilingualistic French-Canadian, children of the soil.

For, being a child of the soil—and not an alien—we may feel satisfied with his loyalty and his devotion to its protection. He is simply an older Canadian, if not a better one; and at least as ardent a patriot as we are.

THE BRITISH WAY

And when, with true British liberality, the school commissioners in England are making provision for the teaching of French to the thousands of Belgian refugees there, in order that they may be perfected in their own tongue, and preserve their own religion, and race and nation, need the people of any overseas province fear the spread of that polished vehicle of expression without which no liberal education is now complete.

And as to that greater patriotism of ours (which is often the last resort of an American contractor), there are always some loud and flag-waving patriots who would be more loyal than the King—as there are some Churchmen more Catholic than the Pope. But there is no monopoly of loyalty. And the attachment of our citizens of French and British Canada to the Imperial cause and interest in the moment of need, has always been the same, no matter which Prime Minister, of the French or of the British race, was in power at Ottawa.

For it was one of that much-abused race, one of the fathers of Confederation, who said that the last cannon to be fired in defence of the British flag in North America should be fired by a French Canadian.

THE GENIUS OF FRANCE

But let us speak now of France and her language; and her genius. For the language of a country is the concrete expression of its genius and its race and its soul. Great nations are not merely geographical divisions of mankind, with such and such ocean boundaries. Physical geo-

graphy and situation, it is true, may play a part in their evolution. But they are great by reason of their position and importance on the spiritual map of the world.

It is with countries as with individuals. They have souls, they have faces; they have traits; they have character and features. But it is the soul of the individual or the nation that determines its importance. Greece and Rome geographically have passed away. But their souls go marching on. There where the human intellect flourished with most exceptional luxuriance—there amid the imposing ruins of the Parthenon we have looked down on the classic little harbor of the Piraeus where the fleet of Themistocles rode at anchor before it sailed to break the proud power of Philip. And we see Greece only through the dream of things that were. And we blush for the rabble who call themselves now by that name. But when shall Athens cease to influence the course of human thought and destiny? I have stood within the vast arena which was once the Coliseum, and tried to re-people it. And yet old Rome is not dead. Do we not traverse Europe on the roads which she built in every direction? Is not her spirit ani-

mating Italy ? And are not Gaul and Britannia in some sort the product of her genius ? And are they not fighting today the fight which Rome fought against the same Barbarian hordes from Germania, who would pillage Paris and London as they plundered Rome ?

THE SOUL AND SUCCESSORS OF GREECE AND ROME

That Greece and that Rome, were they not, to the rude barbarians of their day—to the Bulgars of Alexander, to the Huns and the Vandals—just what Paris is to the modern Alaric or Attila—at once the wonder and the envy, the jealousy, the temptation, and the despair. So is France superior to Central Europe. And yet do you think that the old Province which she has left us is the worst part of our great Dominion ?

In modern times France and Britain are pre-eminently such nations as were Greece and Rome. France has the soul of Greece. Britain has the Imperial spirit of Rome. They are the heirs and successors of the ancients. No merely physical decline (which please Heaven is

far off) can ever impair their unmatched importance to humanity. Every nation — but one — wishes well to France. All nations are her debtors. She is worth knowing. But to know her you must know her tongue. And her place in the story of the nations. What the rest of the world owes her is a commonplace of historians.

OUR DEBT TO FRANCE

In the enfranchisement of the intellect; in the growth of the arts and sciences; in the evolution of democracy and of political liberty, she has been the fountainhead at which all other nations have drawn. And even that envious and powerful and implacable nation now in arms against her, is confessedly inspired by the military genius of one of the greatest of her sons.

Par Excellence, the nation of noble enthusiasms and of spiritual battlecries, it was France who first taught us the meaning of her words—chivalry, romance, glory, liberty and humanity.

We mean all of these when we say France. And paradoxical as it may seem, she is the first land always to receive new ideas, and the last to abandon old traditions. Her valor has never

been tairted on the field by ferocity—this race of gentlemen, of men of honor and of cavaliers. At the battle of Fontenoy, in the age of chivalry, which is not yet gone (in spite of Burke's pessimistic prediction) it was the French archers, you know, who sent word across the field, "Messieurs les Anglais, tirez les premiers." And the English, naturally, would not be outdone by them in politeness. And I trust they said, "After you, gentlemen."

THE POLITICAL CRUCIBLE

Is not France the crucible in which the political and philosophical experiment of the modern world has been tried again and again as with fire ?

Diverse were the materials thrown into that crucible—that mysterious chemistry of races out of which comes the inspiring history of France, which, like our own, is absolutely inseparable from the history of modern civilisation.

For the transition from the Gaul of Caesar to this third Republic has been the most amazing national adventure and the most romantique, in all the history of the world. Geographically,

she is still the same old Gaul or Gallia. And, strange to say, after twenty centuries her frontier difficulties and her troublesome neighbors are the same. Racially, she remains, for all the Frankish and Germanic infiltrations, what Rome left her—Latinized Celt. Before the Romans, the Greek called her Celtica, and her people were cousins of the Celts of Britain.

HISTORY OF THAT LANGUAGE

But the old Celtic language died gradually out because the Gauls took kindly to their humane and cultured conquerors with a written tongue.

And the slow growth of that Latinized-Celtic tongue we are advocating here tonight is the result of 2,000 years of progress of the language of Caesar's legions, combined with that of the tribes that swept over Gaul, as they swept over other parts of Europe, like waves of the sea, and sank into the sands of time.

It would be interesting to recall how one of those chiefs, in the year 500, Clovis, made Gaul a united country and Paris his capital. And that it was only about the year 800 of our era that

this spoken tongue we are using now in France and Canada, was first used instead of the Latin in a public document, to wit, at a coronation.

So it would be also interesting to study (if time permitted) the changes and vicissitudes by which the rude France of Clovis became the cultured France of Poincaré; just as it would be to study the steps by which the barbarous Saxons became the civilized Englishmen of today (or partly civilised Canadian). I use that last phrase not altogether humorously, but advisedly lest there should be some Canadians still opposed to the teaching of the French tongue in this fair Province. Then it might apply. I asked a French lady once how many sons she had, and she said she had two living, and one in Toronto.

HER STORY TO RETROSPECT

We might recall how feudalism there gave place to stable monarchy. How monarchy and corruption and extravagance gave rise to revolution. How republicanism through military necessity gave way to Europe-conquering Imperialism. How the restoration of the Bourbons was unwisely imposed on the French by us and

the rest of Europe, after Waterloo. How all conservative Europe combined could not keep France back to its own feudal mediaeval pace that it preferred to plod along in. For Blucher and Wellington had been, as Byron wrote : "Called Saviours of the Nations—(not yet saved) "And Europe's liberators — (still enslaved)."

This we might profitably study as a warning against all national suppression, or racial coercion. For every nation should have the form of government it deserves. Then we have seen how those bayonet-propped Bourbons went down in 1830, and the more democratic Orleans reigned in their places. How in 1848 the people set up again for four years a second republic, whose president in 1852 (named also Bonaparte) seized again by force the imperial sceptre in the night of the 2nd December. How Europe recognized, but could not popularise him. How Bismarck rose beyond the Rhine the most forceful statesman of our age, and, overthrowing this little imitation Napoleon, created the German Empire one day in 1871, in the palace at Versailles. How the third republic wisely, patiently, peacefully, submitted to that dismemberment,

which we and Russia standing by should never have allowed.

OUR PART AND RESPONSIBILITY

And finally how, with the guiding hand of the old pilot gone from the German ship of state, it has been steered upon the diplomatic rocks of a powerful, an irresistible, an unbreakable combination that Theophile Delcasse and King Edward practically forged for its obstruction, under the eyes of those of us who had the happiness, for those long preparatory years, to live in the centre and the birthplace of the Entente Cordiale. ("All of which we saw and part of which we were.")

OUR FAULT

But we obstinate British have our share of responsibility for the present situation in Europe—if one may venture here his oft-expressed opinion. It is due to our Germanophile faults and lack of foresight in our own British statesmen. In our contempt for foreign, and especially for Latin culture, we have been Saxons. We have been Teutons. There has been a prejudice in

high places, due to our long continued Germanophile blindness; to our weak, traditional and unintelligent Francophobia. To our proverbial British blunders. We have had a traditional misconception of Frenchmen — in Europe and America.

We might as well admit it. Though few political writers do. But an open confession is good for the soul. And we created this Frankenstein ourselves. We refused the hand of France which was more than once extended. For the French, whether in Europe or America, are a people with whom it is always easy to agree.

But I promised you to speak, especially of contemporary France and her idiom and her character and her genius. The France where we spent the best years of our existence. To speak of their beneficent influence as a people, on Britain, on Europe, on our own country here, and on mankind.

Therefore, I may proceed, in conclusion, to speak of the French people, who are, according to ancient superstitions and popular fallacies, an "excitable" and a "volatile" race. So I suppose they are. They have taught their lessons to the World, no doubt, with much waving of

hands and shrugging of shoulders and flashing of eyes. I admit that. But what are the lessons they have taught? Lessons distinctively, of common sense, of taste, of reason, of science and of art.

In what fields of art, for instance, let me ask, has French influence been strongest? In precisely those in which a feeling for proportion, for form, for restraint, is most necessary. In architecture, for instance, and in painting and in statuary and in prose style.

HER SUPERIORITY

French influence is absolutely not an influence to excite the Englishman or the German, but rather to steady him. In the two most genuinely emotional of the arts the Frenchman has been overwhelmed by his rivals—in poetry by the conservative, inexpressive Englishman; and in music, by the stolid, inexpressive German. The mental Empire of France has been precisely in those things that are most capable of exact mental measurement.

And this is the reason why France, after all, is the centre, the unique collector and conveyor,

of the world's whole culture. She is not only supremely influential today in many of the arts, but has achieved a mental mastery of all of them. And if all European nations had to perish except one, and that one were to be chosen for being best fitted to continue civilization as a whole, why, that one would be France.

HER CULTURE

If you ponder this comment and conclusion, which is not mine alone, you will begin to see why it is that, from the Middle Ages down, the grasp of France on the culture of the World has been so steady and commanding. France assembles all culture and lives it. Read the novels of Anatole France. He is not the greatest novelist that ever lived. But in the works of what English and German or Russian novelists will you find so full a transmission to future times of all the culture that the world has lived so far ?

Rightly, therefore, did Henry de Bornier boast "Every man has two countries—his own and France."

But how does this intellectuality, this reasonableness, show in the greatest event of the history of France, its greatest external contribution to Europe and to America—the French Revolution ?

It shows magnificently.

Two things have obscured the real influence of the French Revolution. The guillotine and Napoleon.

But look at the results.

On October 9th, 1807, the King of Prussia decreed : “From Martinmas, 1810, ceases all serfdom in our entire states. There shall only be free persons.”

Why ? By what influence did he so decree ? Because, happily, Prussia had just been trodden under foot by France—to her advantage. France, under Napoleon, just as under the Republic which came before him, had what the old French monarchy did not have—a free peasantry, created by the Revolution, cultivating their own lands robustly and cheerfully and prosperously. It was a lesson of the most simple and reasonable common sense, like all of the main lessons of the Revolution. Napoleon was its messenger boy. That was his mission. And, with all his faults, he carried liberty, equality and order and

good government on his victorious eagles, against all our reactionaries, to the enfranchisement of feudal Europe.

Thus it is that France has led the world's efforts to mix knowledge, and art, and science and daily life, in the cup of reason, and to make that intimate blend which, in moments of peace, is culture, and in moments of revolution, as in 1789, is intoxicated idealism. That is her contribution. That is her character. That is France. Those people are the heroic defenders of Verdun, and of our modern civilization which is at stake there.

And that is the race whose language, literature and influence we fear to spread or to teach our nephews here in Canada. And that the tongue over which we would give German the precedence in our universities.

WHAT FRANCE STANDS FOR

But France that has today again the leading role in world politics; France the cradle of all culture, the school of all science, the home of all art; France, peaceful and warlike, but always at last the unknown, uncertain quantity in Eu-

rope; France, that for forty years has held hard and fast behind the Vosges at Verdun, the grim barrier against inordinate Teutonic ambition; France, in peace the playground and resort of the world; the favorite rendezvous of kings; France, the indispensable element in our intellectual life, and in our modern civilization, the Athens and the Rome of our age; so indispensable to the culture of our race, that it has been well said that if she did not exist, Europe should be obliged to create her.

One of her ardent admirers has remarked, "Chaque homme a deux patries : la sienne, et puis, la France." And an eminent and travelled Frenchman has aptly observed in his own poetic fashion—Every man has two countries—his own and France.

INTELLECTUAL LIFE

And no one seems to visit France for the first time; as has been well said by Edmondo de Ammici — One always seems to be returning to France. It is so much a part of our intellectual life. And if you were let down, for the first visit from an aeroplane on the Champs Elysées,

you would look about you and recognise the arch and the avenue and say, surely I have been here before. France to all of us is so much a part of our intellectual life and so closely responds to our early enchantments. But France — you may be surprised to hear from me — is the principal cause of the present imbroglio in Europe.

Her wealth, her prosperity, her independence, her colonies, her friendships and her progress, have made her, as we have said before, what Rome was in her splendor, to the rude barbarians of the North—at once the eternal envy and the despair.

But that is not the only way in which France has perhaps unconsciously contributed to bring about the present conflict of the nations.

Another reason against her is this. That she, with England, her ally, so leads the world in civilization, wealth, and culture, in liberty and in democracy, that whenever the powers of darkness and of reaction wish to strike England—they must begin by striking France. Why? Simply because to reach England the walking is not good. The route is humid. They must pass by France. They must reach Calais.

Hence France and her British ally across the Channel are today, as ever, the world's protectors and the centre of the world's interest, as they have long been the centre of civilization. Everything that interests human progress and liberty interests France. And, *Amicus humani generis*—as usual, she is fighting the cause of the human race.

And it shall be said of her truthfully by history, as Pitt said in his last words of England—“She has saved herself by her energy, and she shall save Europe by her example.”

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