

Quebec and its People

by
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I consider it a great pleasure and honour to have been asked to read a paper this afternoon before the Catholic Historical Association. I have chosen as a topic "Quebec and its People," because it is my belief that this City of ours recalls memories of historical interest and also that its citizens in their intercourse together, give to the world today a salutary lesson.

Some 340 years ago, when Samuel de Champlain sailed up the Saint Lawrence River and founded a city on the majestic Cape Diamond, little could he imagine that this establishment would take root and grow through a succession of trials and tribulations into the fine city which we have today. Since its foundation in 1608, Quebec has witnessed siege and war, victory and defeat, famine and abundance. It has witnessed the gradual evolution of our parliamentary system to the present responsible government which watches over our destinies today. Through all these years, it has always been the bastion of defence of minority rights and a sanctuary for the oppressed people of the world. This proud city, girded by walls and defended by a citadel which standing high on Cape Diamond overlooks the surrounding region and keeps constant watch, is in itself not only a thing of beauty due to its parks and beautiful buildings, but also a strong redoubtable natural fortress. It has withstood siege from the Kirks, Admiral Phipps and General Arnold. These three saw their ambitions broken at the foot of its walls. After 150 years of French domination, when General Wolfe defeated General Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham in 1759, although France had been defeated and this city taken, she remained unbowed.

The victors were so impressed by the formidable exploits of 60,000 Frenchmen devoid of help from their motherland, they were so amazed by the glorious feats of these defenders of New France at the famous battles of Carillon and Monogahella, that they guaranteed to these vanquished people those things that are sacred to any people: religion, language and ethnical characteristics, all of which form the essential basis of a race. It was only after the repeal of the Test Act in England that the citizens of Quebec were admitted to taking a share of the government and administration of justice of their homeland.

Since that day, English, French, Irish and Scotch have lived in a friendly brotherhood within the walls of this city. They have worked together and they have through common effort built what is today a very fine city which contains all those things which physically and intellectually can give

something to the world. Her industries and business are thriving, she owns a great port, she has been chosen not only as the seat of government of our Province but also as the center of religious activity. This Quebec of ours has within her walls a world-renowned University and a famous Seminary.

Everywhere about this city we find spots of historical interest, the whole general aspect is one of artistic beauty. Everywhere we may note the cachet of old France and also the hubbub of a busy people in a modern age.

This great city has been built through the joint efforts of people of different languages, different religious tenets and different characteristics. Nevertheless there is one thing which they had in common; they were resolved to treat each other as brothers in a Christian way and to work together in a common cause.

Now these differences which do exist amongst the four great races which have given their sweat and toil to the accomplishment of this great task, have given to their common effort more strength and more intelligence, more latitude than could have been obtained from the common efforts of one race alone, and in concluding, I would like to say that each ethnical group which inhabits this city, should in every way endeavour to maintain its characteristics, for the trouble with the world today is not that people have too much nationalism but that they have not enough internationalism.