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# Acadians of Louisiana and their Dialect

BY

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## THE ACADIANS OF LOUISIANA AND THEIR DIALECT.

Everything concerning French Louisiana seems at this time to possess an interest for the public ; and it has been my purpose in some measure, to give an account of its language, its literature, its dialects, its folklore and its inhabitants. My papers published in the *Transactions* of our MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION have been so kindly received that I feel encouraged to continue my labors in a field vast and fertile but difficult to explore. The work to be done is, to a great extent, one of original research and of patient investigation, and it will require several years to present a tolerably complete tableau of picturesque French Louisiana. I now desire to present another feature of the picture by giving a brief sketch of the Acadians and their dialect. It may not be amiss to begin this study by taking a bird's-eye view of the history of Acadia, from the settlement of the colony to the dispersion of the inhabitants. We shall then accompany Evangeline to the beautiful banks of the Tèche and follow her canoe and that of Gabriel as they glide along its placid waters, leaving scarcely a ripple on the gentle stream which the names of the unhappy lovers have rendered immortal.

### I.<sup>1</sup>

Even before the time of John Cabot the Normans, the Bretons and the Basques are said to have known Newfoundland, and the first description of the shores of our United States was made in 1524 to a French King, Francis the First, by the Florentine Verrazano. Ten years later we see the bold son of St. Malo sailing on the broad St. Lawrence, which was to be the scene of so many conflicts for the possession of its rugged shores. In 1535 Jacques Cartier saw the future site of Quebec and Montreal and became acquainted with the Indian tribes, the future allies of the French in their contest with the English. New France was

<sup>1</sup> For this sketch of the history of Acadia I have taken as my chief guide PARKMAN'S admirable "Narratives," although I do not always share his opinions and arrive at the same conclusions. For a complete bibliography of the subject see "Critical and Narrative History of America," edited by JUSTIN WINSOR.

discovered, but who was to establish the first settlement in the name of the most Christian King? In vain did Jean François de la Roque, Sieur de Roberval, in 1542, brave the terrors of the Isle of Demons and attempt to plant a colony in New France. Of his ill-fated expedition nothing remained but the name of Île de la Demoiselle, where the stern Roberval abandoned to the demons his niece Marguerite to punish her for an unhallowed love. The Marquis de la Roche with his ship load of convicts was not more successful in 1598 than Roberval half a century before. Champlain and de Monts were to be the fathers of Canada and Acadia. The former had been sent on an expedition to the new world by the Commander de Chastes, and on his return to France associated his fortunes with those of de Monts, who had just been made Lieutenant-General of Acadia.

"The word Acadia," says PARKMAN, "is said to be derived from the Indian *Aquoddianke*, or *Aquoddie*, meaning the fish called a pollock. The Bay of Passamaquoddy 'great pollock water,' derives its name from the same origin."

The region designated by this name comprised a large territory, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Maine, but was later considered to embrace the peninsula of Nova Scotia only. The climate was much milder than that of Canada, and all travellers describe the country as beautiful. The tide in the Bay of Fundy is grand, and there are excellent ports along the coast. We need not then be astonished that Poutrincourt, one of de Monts' companions, was so pleased with the Port Royal that he obtained a grant from de Monts, and in 1605, established a colony which, after many vicissitudes, was destined to be celebrated in history and in romance. De Monts himself with Poutrincourt, Champlain and Pontgravé had, in 1604, founded a settlement at St. Croix, but the place was badly chosen and after a winter of misery the colony was transferred to Port Royal. De Monts was a Calvinist and he had taken with him to the New World both Catholic priests and Protestant ministers who, it can well be imagined, were not on very good terms. Such were their quarrels that the sailors buried in the same grave a priest and a minister "to see if they would lie peaceably together." De Monts returned to France to protect his fur trade monopoly and left Pontgravé in command at Port Royal. He was absent many months, and Pontgravé had abandoned the colony, leaving only



two men in charge, when Poutrincourt arrived with supplies. Pontgravé returned, and another attempt was made to establish Port Royal on a solid foundation. The poet Lescarbot gives an interesting account of the winter passed without very great sufferings, and already the colonists were beginning to hope, when in the summer of 1607, news was received that de Monts' charter had been rescinded and that the colony must be abandoned. The settlers departed with heavy hearts, leaving the Indians full of sorrow. The French had been humane and friendly to the savages.

The settlement in Acadia had apparently failed, but Poutrincourt was not discouraged. He obtained from the King a confirmation of his grant, formed a partnership with the sieur Robin, and in 1610 returned to Port Royal with other settlers. Unhappily, however, the year 1610 was as fatal to Acadia as to France: the great King, Henry IV, was murdered, and soon afterward Madame la Marquise de Guercheville obtained from Marie de Médicis a grant of all Acadia. The pious Marquise was associated with the Jesuits and wished to convert the Indians. Her agents and priests, especially the able and energetic Father Biard, did not agree with Poutrincourt and his son Biencourt, and discord was supreme in the colony, when in 1613, a heavy blow fell on the rising settlement. Samuel Argall, already noted for having abducted Pocahontas, heard of French Port Royal, captured a part of the inhabitants and dispersed the others. Father Biard and Madame de Guercheville's commander, Saussaye, finally reached France, and the good lady's plans for saving the souls of the Indians were frustrated.

Biencourt had escaped during the destruction of Port Royal and was roaming in the woods with a few followers, when Poutrincourt arrived with supplies. At the sight of his son's misery, the Baron lost all hope for his colony and returned to France, where, in 1615, he died a soldier's death. Biencourt, however, rebuilt Port Royal and kept the colony alive. Little progress was made, as in 1686 the whole population of Acadia was only 915. There had been troublous times in the colony from 1613 to 1686, and several masters had ruled the country. In 1621, Sir William Alexander obtained from James I. a grant of New Scotland and tried to establish baronetcies in Acadia. His plans were but short-lived, as the English surrendered the province to

the French in 1632 by the treaty of St. Germain. Louis XIII appointed M. de Razilly Governor of Acadia, and the latter named as his lieutenants, Charles de la Tour and the Sieur d'Aulnay. Here comes a romantic episode : the two lieutenants, as in duty bound, quarrelled and made war upon each other. La Tour went to Boston to obtain aid against his rival, and in his absence d'Aulnay attacked his fort. The place was most bravely defended by Madame de la Tour, but she was defeated and died of mortification. Her husband struggled for some time with little success against d'Aulnay, but the latter died, and La Tour settled all difficulties by marrying his rival's widow, a queer but not unwise proceeding.

Acadia had become once more peaceful in 1653 by la Tour's marriage, when one year later the English took possession of the colony. Cromwell was ruling England at that time, and he understood how important it was for the English settlements on the Atlantic that Acadia should not belong to the French. By his orders Major Robert Sedgwick, of Charlestown, and Captain John Leverett, of Boston, subjugated Acadia, which was kept by the English until 1668, when by the treaty of Breda, it was restored to the French.

For twenty-two years the colony enjoyed peace under French rule, and the inhabitants led comparatively quiet lives, enlivened by some adventures with the Indians and the English. A very romantic character is the Baron de St. Castin, the son-in-law of Matakando, the most powerful Indian chief of that region. In the company of his Indian relatives the bold Baron waged incessant war against the English.

In 1690, Frontenac was for a second time governor of New France, and by his energy and courage he saved the colony from ruin. He repulsed the attacks of Phips against Quebec and of Schuyler against Montreal, carried war into the English possessions and nearly broke the power of the Iroquois. He was not, however, able to save Acadia from the enemy. This settlement was too remote from Quebec to be effectually protected and fell again into the hands of the English. In 1690 William Phips sailed from Boston with a small fleet and reduced the principal Acadian settlements. He obtained great booty and was well received on his return to Massachusetts, although his expedition seems to us more like a piratical raid than legitimate warfare.

Acadia was again restored to the French in 1697 by the treaty of Ryswick, and when Frontenac died in 1698 Louis XIV was still master of all New France. Frontenac is a most interesting and heroic character; he was proud and stern, but at the same time most brave, skillful and shrewd. His name and that of Montcalm are the greatest in the history of New France.

Nearly one hundred years had passed since de Monts had landed in Acadia, and the unfortunate colony had been thrown about like a shuttlecock from the French to the English and from the English to the French. In the beginning of the eighteenth century three expeditions sailed from Boston to conquer Acadia. The first two were not successful, but the third commanded by Governor Nicholson and composed of thirty-six vessels, took Port Royal and subdued the country. The whole number of inhabitants in 1710 was twenty-five hundred. Three years later, by the treaty of Utrecht, Acadia was formally ceded to England, and France, in order to compensate for the loss of Port Royal, called by the English Annapolis, had to build on Cape Breton the celebrated fortress of Louisbourg. The Acadians had fought bravely for their independence, and it was only after a gallant resistance that Subercase had surrendered Port Royal. The English imposed their domination upon Acadia by force, and it is not surprising that the inhabitants refused to become Englishmen and did all in their power to remain faithful to their king, their religion and their language!

L'abbé CASGRAIN in his charming book, 'Un Pèlerinage au Pays d'Évangéline,' has given a beautiful description of Acadia and calls attention to the poetical and expressive names of some parts of the country: Beaubassin, Beauséjour, le Port Royal, la Grand-Prée, names characteristic of the simple and peaceful disposition of a people who, if left to themselves, would have been satisfied with praying to their God and attending to their numerous children. In 1885 l'abbé CASGRAIN visited all Acadia and manifests his delight on seeing a land of quiet and happiness, a land of which a great part has again become French. What a contrast between the Acadia of our days and that of 1755! The descendants of the exiles have prospered once more in the land of their ancestors, but their present state of contentment does not make us forget the misery of the past. The field that was once the scene of a bloody battle may now be covered

with green turf and variegated flowers, but still there will rise before us the faces of the dying and we shall hear the thunder of the cannon. La Grand-Prée and Beaubassin may present an attractive sight, but the names recall to our minds the scene of a dreadful tragedy.

By the treaty of Utrecht it had been stipulated that the Acadians might withdraw to the French possessions if they chose. There is no doubt that the English governors did all in their power to prevent the emigration to Cape Breton or to Canada, and, as they were not harsh, as a rule, to the inhabitants, the latter preferred to remain in the country of their ancestors. They refused, however, for a long time to take the oath of allegiance to the English sovereign, and when a part of the men took the oath, it was with the tacit if not expressed understanding that they would never be compelled to bear arms against the French. That the priests in Acadia and even the Governor of Canada tried to keep the inhabitants faithful to the French King, in spite of their being English subjects, there is no reasonable doubt. We can hardly blame this feeling, if we consider what great rivalry there was at the time between the English and the French in America, and also the spirit of intolerance then everywhere prevalent. The priests must have considered it a duty on their part to try to harm the English heretics, and although we may not approve the act of some of them nor the duplicity of some of the French agents, we do not find in their conduct any excuse for the cruelty of the English.

Seeing how disaffected the Acadians were with their new masters, the Marquis of Cornwallis, in 1749, laid the foundations of Halifax as a protection against Louisbourg. A number of the inhabitants had escaped from the colony at the instigation of l'abbé LeLoutre, says PARKMAN, and had gone to the adjoining French settlements. Their lot was a sad one, as the French were not able to provide for them and the English would only receive them as English subjects. It is not astonishing that they should make a kind of guerilla war with their Indian allies against the English and that they should attempt to excite their countrymen against the conquerors. It must be admitted that the English were in great peril in the midst of men openly or secretly hostile to them, but no necessity of war can justify the measures taken to rid English Nova Scotia of her French Acadians. Let us now relate briefly the terrible event which has made the word Acadia sadly celebrated.

In 1755 the Governor of Acadia was Charles Lawrence, a name destined to obtain an unenviable notoriety. He resolved to expel the French from the posts which they still held in the colony. A force of eighteen hundred men commanded by Colonel Monkton started from New England and captured fort Beauséjour, which the cowardly and vile commandant, Vergor, surrendered at the first attack. On the plains of Abraham he was also to be the first to yield to Wolfe and to cause the defeat and death of the brave Montcalm, the fall of Quebec, and the loss of Canada.

After the capture of Beauséjour, fort Gaspereau surrendered also, and there was no longer any obstacle to prevent Lawrence from accomplishing a design which he must have been cherishing for some time. The Governor determined to remove from the province all the French Acadians. He required from the inhabitants an oath of unqualified allegiance, and on their refusal he resolved to proceed to extreme measures. PARKMAN says that

“The Acadians, though calling themselves neutrals, were an enemy encamped in the heart of the province,” and adds: “These are the reasons which explain and palliate a measure too harsh and indiscriminate to be wholly justified.”

It is impossible to justify the measure in any way; fear of an enemy does not justify his murder, and the expulsion of the Acadians was the cause of untold misery both physical and moral and of the death of a number of men, women and children. If the harsh removal of the Acadians is justifiable so is Bonaparte's massacre of the prisoners of Jaffa. He could not provide for them as prisoners, and if he released them they would immediately attack him again.

Governor Lawrence was so much the more inexcusable, because the only Acadians that gave him any cause of anxiety were those of Beauséjour, and they had been defeated. The inhabitants of the Basin of Mines and of Annapolis were peaceful, prosperous and contented, and although they might have sided with the French in an invasion of the province, they never would have thought of revolting against the English. They were an ignorant and simple people, but laborious, chaste and religious. Their chief defect seems to have been an inordinate love for litigation, a trait which they inherited from their Norman ancestors.

Lawrence took away the guns of many of the inhabitants by an unworthy stratagem, and then he ordered the ruthless work to be done. Monkton seized the men of Beauséjour, and Winslow, Handfield and Murray did the same at la Grand-Prée, at Annapolis and at Fort Edward. Let us picture the scene at la Grand-Prée.

Winslow issued a proclamation calling upon all the men to meet him at the village church on Sunday. There he was at the appointed hour with his two hundred and ninety men fully armed to meet the intended victims. Four hundred and eighteen men answered the call and assembled in the church. What was their consternation on hearing that they were prisoners, that all their property was confiscated, and that they were to be torn from their homes with their families. No resistance was possible as the men were unarmed. They were put for safe keeping on board four ships, and on the 8th of October the men, women and children were embarked. This was *le grand dérangement* of which their descendants, says l'abbé CASGRAIN, speak to this day. Winslow completed his work in December and shipped 2510 persons. Murray, Monkton and Handfield were equally successful and more than 6000 persons were violently expelled from the colony. A few managed to escape, although they were tracked like wild beasts. In order to compel them to surrender, the dwellings and even the churches were burnt and the crops were destroyed. The fugitives suffered frightfully and many women and children died of misery. In this scene of persecution we are glad to see the brave officer Boishébert defeat a party of English who were burning a church at Peticodiac. Unhappily, as already stated, no resistance could be made, and the unfortunates were huddled together like sheep on board the transports, to be scattered about all along the Atlantic coast among a hostile people speaking a language unknown to them and having a creed different from their own.

Who can imagine the feelings of these men and women when the ships started on the fatal journey and they threw a last glance at their once beautiful country, now made "desolate and bare!" How many ties of kindred and of love were rudely torn asunder! The families were not always on the same ship, and the father and mother were separated from their children, and many Évangelines never met their Gabriels. The order of expulsion was harsh and cruel, and it was executed with little regard for the most sacred feelings of the human heart.



We shall not follow the Acadians in their wanderings. Let us only state that their lot in the English colonies was generally a hard one. Very few remained where they had been transported. Many returned to their country after incredible sufferings, to be again expelled in 1762; some went to France, where they formed a settlement at Belle Isle; some went to the Antilles, and some at last found a true home in hospitable Louisiana. At the peace of 1763 a number of Acadians returned to Nova Scotia, and their descendants together with those of the inhabitants who had escaped from the persecution number now, according to l'abbé CASGRAIN, more than 130,000 souls. This fecundity is wonderful, and if we consider the tenacity of those people, their attachment to their families, to their country, to their religion, we may indeed say with the warm-hearted Canadian abbé: "The Acadians are as astonishing for their virtues as for their misfortunes." We now close this brief sketch of the ancestors, and proceed to a study of their descendants living in Louisiana.

## II.

MR. GAYARRÉ in his 'History of Louisiana,' says:

"Between the 1st of January and the 13th of May, 1765, about 650 Acadians had arrived at New Orleans, and from that town had been sent to form settlements in Attakapas and Opelousas under the command of Andry."

Many others of the unfortunate exiles came to Louisiana, some from the Antilles, but the greater part, in rude boats built by themselves, floated down the streams flowing into the Mississippi and reached New Orleans, where they expected to find the white banner of France. Two years before, however, the infamous treaty of Paris had been signed, and Louisiana now belonged to Spain. The Spaniards had not yet taken possession of the colony, and the French officials received most kindly the unhappy strangers. There they were on the levee of New Orleans with their wives and children, helpless, destitute, possessing only a few articles of wearing apparel, they who a few years before were prosperous farmers with comfortable homes and fertile fields. But at last their journey was ended and they were again to find a home and lands much more fertile than those which they had left. About fifty miles above New Orleans the Acadians gave their name to one of the parishes of Louisi-

ana, and the Acadian coast, now called St. James, was one of the first settlements made by the exiles. Later they spread all along the Mississippi River and the adjoining bayous, and their descendants are to be found in every parish of lower Louisiana. They form an important and useful part of our population, although many of them are as simple and ignorant as their ancestors of 1755. They are, however, generally honest and laborious, deeply religious and very much attached to the idiom of their fathers. Many rose to the highest position in the State and we have among us to-day elegant ladies and cultivated gentlemen belonging to the Acadian race. They are proud of their ancestors, and justly so, because if the latter were peasants, they were, at the same time, martyrs to their religious and patriotic feelings. If there ever was any prejudice against the Acadians among the descendants of the early colonists, it existed only among narrow-minded people and was not manifest.

Having thought of the Acadians and their dialect as an interesting subject to study, I determined to pay a visit to the Attakapas country made classic by the genius of LONGFELLOW. In the beginning of last September I left New Orleans at 7.30 a. m. by the Southern Pacific Railroad and arrived at St. Mary's Parish after a journey of five hours. Along the route the train passed through fields of tall sugar cane, yellow corn and golden rice. Every now and then we crossed a bayou, or a marsh or a forest. Shortly after leaving the city we reached "Bayou des Allemands" named for the German settlers who had been sent to America by the famous John Law. In the middle of the bayou is an island covered with trees and briers, on which is a hut which serves as a hunting lodge for the sportsmen, whose canoes for duck-shooting are to be seen everywhere. Trees grow to the edge of the water of all our bayous and render the smallest stream picturesque.

After passing another beautiful stream, Bayou Boeuf, we see a few of the Indian mounds which are so interesting to the archæologist and the ethnologist, and at Morgan City we cross the wide and turbid Atchafalaya, the rival of the Mississippi, and which threatens, if not curbed by artificial means, to divert the waters of the great river from its present channel.

A few miles after passing Morgan City I leave the train and am soon on a plantation situated on both sides of the Tèche.



After dinner I take my little nephews with me and we go to the Bayou. There is in front of the house a drawbridge which is opened every time a boat or raft passes. We sit on the bridge and I look on the waters flowing beneath and I can hardly see the direction of the current. A few months before the Bayou had been a torrent overflowing its left bank. St. Mary's Parish is one of the most prosperous in Louisiana and everywhere there are central sugar factories with the most modern appliances, the powerful mills, or the diffusion process, and through this busy scene of progress flow the tranquil waters of the Tèche, its banks covered with moss grown live oaks. Here is the same spectacle which the poet has so admirably described. It is civilization now, but side by side with the primeval forest. Under the stately oaks the children run and play while I lie upon the grass and meditate. My thoughts return to the past and I imagine what must have been the feelings of the Acadians when they saw for the first time in 1765 the beautiful Attakapas country.

Not far from the plantation where I visited, is a village called Charenton. It is but a hamlet, but it possesses a church and a convent of nuns. The good sisters of St. Joseph have established a school for girls which does great good to the neighborhood. The mother superior, a very agreeable and intelligent lady, is a descendant of the Acadians. Very near the village is a settlement of Indians. I observed them with curiosity, as they are the sole remnant of the Attakapas tribe, the fierce man-eaters. Some of the squaws are handsome, and the men have the real Indian type, although I am told that the tribe is rapidly disappearing and mingling with the negroes. The women make very pretty reed cane baskets, quite different in design from those which the Choctaws sell at the French market in New Orleans; the men cultivate a little patch of ground and sell fish and game. One hundred years ago the Indians were numerous on the Tèche; they seem to have melted away without being molested. The mere contact of civilization was sufficient to cause them to vanish. It seems to have been an inevitable destiny and we may say in the words of VICTOR HUGO:

“ La chose simplement d'elle-même arriva  
Comme la nuit se fait lorsque le jour s'en va.”

Two miles from Charenton is the Grand Lac which I desired very much to see, so one morning at day break I started in a

light buggy with the oldest of my nephews, a Sophomore of Tulane University. There is in reality no route leading to the lake; we had to pass for several miles through a forest on the bank of the Tèche and it gave me great pleasure to see the bayou where it appeared most wild. After a ride of two hours we left the shore of the Tèche and turning toward the interior we soon arrived at the lake. I felt delighted at the sight: before us stretched the blue waters, which a light breeze caused to undulate gently, and in the distance could be seen the sails of two schooners which seemed to be the wings of marine birds skimming the surface of the waves. All around the lake is a forest and on the trees we could see the cardinal bird with his scarlet robe, the jay bird with his silver and blue jacket, the black bird with his golden epaulets, and what pleased me most, numberless mocking birds, those admirable songsters, which the impudent English sparrow is rapidly driving away from our Southern land.

Being so near the Atchafalaya, the Grand Lac is liable to overflows and, last spring, its waters inundated a large extent of country. A levee made in great part with shells has been erected by the owner of the plantation immediately adjoining the lake, and as there are large oak trees on the bank, the place is a favorite resort in summer for pleasure seekers. While we were crossing a little bayou by means of a tree which the wind had thrown down and which served as a suspended bridge, we saw an old Indian on the other side. He appeared to us as the spirit of the lake summoned to protect it from the pale face, and already our imagination was taking its flight toward fairy land when we were suddenly brought back to reality by the voice of the red man who was speaking to us in English. Never did our national idiom appear to me more prosaic than in the mouth of this descendant of the Attakapas. We hastened to leave him and turned our eyes again towards the lake. Here my mind reverted to another scene and events long past presented themselves to me. In the year 1862, after the fall of New Orleans, our plantation, being on the Mississippi, fifty-seven miles from the city, my father thought that it would be more prudent to put his family out of the reach of the invading army and he sent us to St. Mary's parish where there was a Confederate army to protect the Attakapas country. After a few months, however, the

Federals spread over the country and it was thought advisable that we should return home. My brother, aged seventeen, enlisted as a Confederate soldier in the Trans-Mississippi department, and my father started with the younger children on the return journey. We embarked in two large skiffs, with two Indians in each one as oarsmen, and we went down the Tèche. The trip was most pleasant to me as we passed through numberless bayous, stopping at night at the houses of friends, and taking our meals during the day under the shade of some large tree. I have no recollection of the route, which ended only at the mouth of Bayou Plaquemines, in Iberville Parish, where there were carriages to take us home, but although only six years old at the time, I shall never forget the anxiety of my father, when on entering the Grand Lac, the booming of a cannon was heard. It was thought to be a Federal gun-boat and our Indians were ordered to row most diligently. Twenty-eight years had passed since I had crossed the Grand Lac as a fugitive, but yet on that September morning of 1890 I thought I heard still the voice of our devoted father encouraging his little children with his tender words of love.

While in St. Mary I had occasion to visit a number of planters who received me very kindly and who did all in their power to help me in my work. They introduced me to some Acadians and communicated to me a few characteristic expressions of the Acadian language. I was, however, anxious to see St. Martinville, and after promising to return to St. Mary, I took the train and went to the oldest town on the Tèche. It was with real pleasure that I started on my journey; I had never gone to that part of Louisiana before and everything was new to me. I passed on my way Jeanerette and New Iberia in Iberia Parish. They are both thriving towns, the latter especially, on account of its proximity to the celebrated salt mines on Avery's Island. It has a handsome Catholic church, an elegant public high school and some beautiful private residences. The following extract from Judge MARTIN'S 'History of Louisiana' gives a very good idea of the geography of the Tèche country:

"The Tèche has its source in the prairies, in the upper part of the settlements of Opelousas, and during the season of high water, flows partially into the Courtableau. As it enters the settlements of Attakapas, it receives from the right side bayou Fuselier, which bayou Bourbeux connects with Vermilion river.

A little more than twenty miles farther, it passes before the town of St. Martinsville and reaches, fifteen miles after, the spot on which the Spaniards, soon after the cession, made a vain attempt to establish a city, to which the name of New Iberia was destined: twenty miles from the mouth of the Tèche, is the town of Franklin."

I may add here that the Tèche becomes a noble river shortly before mingling its waters with those of the rapid Atchafalaya. From Jeanerette to New Iberia the fields presented the same beautiful crops of cane, rice and corn which I had seen along the route from New Orleans, but after passing New Iberia, cotton begins to be seen, and I noticed in one patch of ground the curious fact of our four great staples growing side by side, cane, cotton, rice and corn. Such is the wonderful fertility of our soil.

St. Martinsville does not lie on the Southern Pacific Railroad and it is only lately that it has been connected with the main line by a branch leading to the Tèche. This may account for the stagnation of business in the town, which before the war was very prosperous. I had letters of introduction to several distinguished gentlemen, but I saw on arriving in that Creole town that a Creole needed no credentials to be well-received. I found myself among friends, I may say, among relations, as all the persons I met knew my family and I knew theirs. French is essentially the language of the inhabitants and it is well spoken by the educated class. The latter speak English also, but the lower class speak the Acadian French mixed with the Creole patois and a little English. In the interior settlements (*au large*) little or no English at all is spoken, and at Breaux Bridge, in St. Martin Parish, and in the adjoining parish of Lafayette, French is taught together with English in the public schools. Although we desire to see every child in Louisiana speak English we wish every one to speak French also, and I was very glad to see how the people of St. Martin are attached to their French. Among those who have done the most to encourage the study of French in his parish is MR. FÉLIX VOORHIES, a descendant on his mother's side, of an old Acadian family. He has established a dramatic society for which he has written several charming comedies, and although he writes elegant French he is perfectly familiar with the Acadian dialect. I am deeply indebted to him for the interest he took in my work and the help he kindly gave me.

There is but one hotel in St. Martinsville; it is a large house with a wide gallery and massive brick columns. Everything is as in ante-bellum days; no register awaits the names of the guests, and the owner seems to have implicit confidence in the honesty of his boarders. As the criminal court was in session the members of the jury were taking their dinner at the hotel when I arrived. There being no place at the table for me I was given a comfortable rocking chair and I sat in the dining room during the dinner of the jurors. As several of them were Acadians I listened very attentively to their conversation and took notes while they were speaking. All of them spoke French, but the influence of English on their French was sometimes apparent. One of them speaking of an important criminal case said to the others: *vous serez tous lockés (locked up) ce soir.* Another, to express his contempt of the argument of a lawyer, said: *ça, ç'a n'a pas grand'fin avé moué,* that does not produce much effect on me, and his friend replied: *il aura un bon bout (pronounced *boute*) encore avec cette affaire.* Although I was very hungry I was sorry to see the jurors leave the table to go to the court house to be *lockés*.

After dinner I took a walk over the town and never have I seen a more quiet and orderly place and one where there are so few bar-rooms. The life in that old Creole town reminded me of *autrefois*, as depicted to me many times by my aged friends. There was not much animation in business, but order and decency prevailed everywhere and the people were uniformly affable and polite. I spent the evening very pleasantly with my host, his wife and his grandmother, conversing with the old lady about the past.

I awoke very early the next morning, and on opening the window of my room I saw a pretty sight: the bayou was just beneath, its waters green with water plants and rushes and in the distance, a prairie above which was rising resplendent a September sun. A knock was heard at the door, and answering it I found a little negro girl bringing me a cup of real Creole coffee.

At a short distance from the hotel is the church, on the green before which stands the statue of the last curate, Father Jan who died an octogenarian, beloved by his parishioners. The present priest, Father Langlois, is a botanist of great merit who

has made important discoveries in the flora of Louisiana. He is a corresponding member of l'Athénée Louisianais, and I determined to pay him a visit. He received me very kindly and showed me his admirable botanical collections. I asked his permission to look over the church register, and on turning to the year 1765 I saw the record of the first child born of Acadian parents in St. Martin, probably the first born in Louisiana. I give here the exact copy, with the original spelling and punctuation as per certified copy kindly made for me by l'abbé Langlois:

1  
 obiit  
 16 ejusdem  
 mensis  
 f. jean  
 françois  
 /

“ Lan mille Sept cent soixante cinq le onze may je <sup>père</sup> capucin Missionnaire apostolique curé de la nelle accadie soussigné, ay Baptisé avec les les ceremonies ordinaires de léglise marguerite anne née la veille de légitime Mariage d'olivier thibaudaut et de magdelaine Broussard ses pere et mere le parrain a esté René trahan, et la Mairaine Marie thibaudaut qui ont déclaré ne savoir signer de ce requis selon l'ordonnance aux attakapas les jours et an que dessus

(signé) f. jean françois c. curé  
 Masse  
 Anôyu ”

Olivier Thibaudaut, the father of the little girl born in 1765, was a descendant of the celebrated meunier Thibaudaux, seigneur de Chipody in Acadia in Poutrincourt's time. The family is exceedingly numerous in Louisiana and they have given their name to one of our towns on Bayou Lafourche. One of the Thibodaux was President of the Senate in 1824 and was acting Governor for a few weeks, after the resignation of Governor Robertson. The Broussards, the family of Olivier Thibodaut's wife, are also very numerous in the State. Thibodaux, Broussard, Landry, Leblanc and Bourgeois are the largest families in Louisiana of Acadian descent.

In the register of St. Martin church I saw also the name of a distinguished Louisianian, a professor in the Oratorian order in France and curate of St. Martin for many years. ETIENNE VIEL translated in beautiful Latin verse, the twenty-four books of FÉNELON'S 'Télémaque.' Louisiana may well be proud of a writer of whom BARTHÉLEMY, the author of the 'Némésis,' has said:

“ Viel, qui de Fénelon virgilisa la prose.”

There being such vast prairies in the Attakapas the Acadian settlers compared them with the wide expanse of the Ocean and



applied to them many nautical terms. They say *aller au large*, or *mettre à la voile* when they start to cross the prairie, and an island is, in their language, a piece of wooded ground in the prairie. I was shown *l'île des Cyprès* while in St. Martin. It is in a prairie which is not far from the Grand Bois, an immense forest which begins in the Attakapas country and extends as far as the Arkansas line. In the Grand Bois, near St. Martinsville, are a number of lakes of which one, lake Catahoulou, is two and a-half miles long and three-fourths of a mile wide. It is one hundred and ten feet deep and is said to be beautiful. It is a great place for hunting and fishing but is full of alligators and gar fish. I was shown an Acadian who, being in a canoe on a fishing excursion, was followed by a gar fish about twelve feet long. He seized an opportunity and jumped on the back of the fish which dived with him to the bottom of the lake. On arising from the water our hero said to his terrified companions: "now, he will not return." This individual was a real type and his conversation was very instructive in its quaintness.

St. Martinsville was the home of a true hero, Alcibiade De Blanc, ex-justice of our Supreme Court. It was he who started the White League movement which was to save Louisiana from carpet-bag and negro rule. Not far from the town in Lafayette Parish lived another true and chivalric Louisianian, Alexandre Mouton, ex-Governor and United States Senator, who was the son of an Acadian exile. He died lately at a very advanced age, and Louisiana could but bless the English for sending her a race that could produce such men as the Governor and his son, the valiant general who fell a victor at Mansfield.

The eminent men that have arisen among the Acadians in Louisiana show what good elements there are in that race, but unfortunately, they are, as a rule, lacking in ambition. They are laborious, but they appear to be satisfied, if by cultivating their patch of ground with their sons, they manage to live with a little comfort. The mother and daughters attend to the household duties and weave that excellent fabric called the *cotonnade*. The greatest defect of the Acadians is the little interest they take in education; a great many are completely illiterate. As the public school system progresses, education will spread gradually among them, and being an intelligent race they will produce many men like Alexandre Mouton. Education will, of course, destroy their dialect, so that the work of studying their peculiar customs and language must not be long delayed.

On Sunday, September 21st, I went to church where I saw the whole population of the town and after bidding adieu to my newly-made friends, I left St. Martinsville where I had met kind gentlemen and fair ladies, taking with me a good stock of Acadian expressions. A few hours later I was again in St. Mary's Parish. I wished this time to live in the prairie where I thought there would be a better chance of observing the Acadians. The prairie is now entirely cultivated around Jeanerette and is dotted everywhere with the cottages of the small farmers and with the comfortable houses of the large planters. For a week I roamed all over the country with some friends who were kind enough to take me to the places of interest and to the persons who might help me in my work.

Having heard that every Saturday evening there was a ball in the prairie, I requested one of my friends to take me to see one. We arrived at eight o'clock, but already the ball had begun. In the yard were vehicles of all sorts, but three-mule carts were most numerous. The ball room was a large hall with galleries all around it. When we entered it was crowded with persons dancing to the music of three fiddles. I was astonished to see that nothing was asked for entrance, but I was told that any white person decently dressed could come in. The man giving the entertainment derived his profits from the sale of refreshments. My friend, a wealthy young planter, born in the neighborhood, introduced me to many persons and I had a good chance to hear the Acadian dialect, as everybody there belonged to the Acadian race. I asked a pleasant looking man: "Votre fille est-elle ici?" He corrected me by replying: "Oui, ma *demoiselle* est là." However, he did not say *mes messieurs* for his sons but spoke of them as *mes garçons*, although he showed me me his *dame*. We went together to the refreshment room where were beer and lemonade, but I observed that the favorite drink was black coffee, which indeed was excellent. At midnight supper was served; it was chicken gombo with rice, the national Creole dish.

Most of the men appeared uncouth and awkward, but the young girls were really charming. They were elegant, well-dressed and exceedingly handsome. They had large and soft black eyes and beautiful black hair. Seeing how well they looked I was astonished and grieved to hear that probably very



few of them could read or write. On listening to the conversation I could easily see that they had no education. French was spoken by all, but occasionally English was heard.

After supper my friend asked me if I wanted to see *le parc aux petits*. I followed him without knowing what he meant and he took me to a room adjoining the dancing hall, where I saw a number of little children thrown on a bed and sleeping. The mothers who accompanied their daughters had left the little ones in the *parc aux petits* before passing to the dancing room, where I saw them the whole evening assembled together in one corner of the hall and watching over their daughters. *Le parc aux petits* interested me very much, but I found the gambling room stranger still. There were about a dozen men at a table playing cards. One lamp suspended from the ceiling threw a dim light upon the players who appeared at first sight very wild, with their broad brimmed felt hats on their heads and their long untrimmed sun burnt faces. There was, however, a kindly expression on every face, and everything was so quiet that I saw that the men were not professional gamblers. I saw the latter a little later, in a barn near by where they had taken refuge. About half a dozen men, playing on a rough board by the light of two candles. I understood that these were the black sheep of the crowd and we merely cast a glance at them.

I was desirous to see the end of the ball, but having been told that the break-up would only take place at four or five o'clock in the morning, we went away at one o'clock. I was well-pleased with my evening and I admired the perfect order that reigned, considering that it was a public affair and open to all who wished to come, without any entrance fee. My friend told me that when the dance was over the musicians would rise, and going out in the yard would fire several pistol shots in the air, crying out at the same time: *le bal est fini*.

The names of the children in Acadian families are quite as strange as the old biblical names among the early puritans, but much more harmonious. For instance, in one family the boy was called Duradon, and his five sisters answered to the names of Elfige, Enyoné, Méridié, Ozéina and Fronie. A father who had a musical ear called his sons, Valmir, Valmore, Valsin, Valcour and Valérien, while another, with a tincture of the classics, called his boy Deus, and his daughter Déussa.

All the Acadians are great riders and they and their little ponies never seem to be tired. They often have exciting races. Living is very cheap in the prairie and the small farmers produce on their farms almost everything they use. At the stores they exchange eggs and hens for city goods.

Several farmers in the prairie still have sugar houses with the old-fashioned mill, three perpendicular rollers turned by mules or horses. They have some means, but are so much attached to the old ways that they will not change. It will not be long, however, before the younger generation replaces the antiquated mill with the wonderful modern inventions. The Acadians are an intelligent, peaceful and honest population; they are beginning to improve, indeed many of them, as already stated, have been distinguished, but as yet too many are without education. Let all Louisianians take to heart the cause of education and make a crusade against ignorance in our country parishes!

Before leaving the prairie I took advantage of my proximity to the Gulf to pay a visit to Côte Blanche. The coast of Louisiana is flat, but in the Attakapas country five islands or elevations break the monotony. These are rugged and abrupt and present some beautiful scenes. A few miles from the prairie is a forest called Cypremort; it is being cleared, and the land is admirably adapted to sugar cane. The road leading to Côte Blanche passes for three miles through the forest and along Cypremort Bayou, which is so shallow that large trees grow in it and the water merely trickles around them. On leaving the wood we enter on a trembling prairie over which a road has been built, and we soon reach Côte Blanche. It is called an island, because on one side is the gulf and on the others is the trembling prairie. We ascended a bluff about one hundred feet high and beheld an enchanting scene. In the rear was the wood which we had just left, stretching like a curtain around the prairie, to the right and to the left were a number of hills, one of which was one hundred and fifty-seven feet high, covered with tall cane waving its green lances in the air, while in front of us stood the sugar house with large brick chimneys, the white house of the owner of the place, the small cottages of the negroes on both sides of a wide road, and a little farther the blue waters of the Gulf. I approached the edge of the bluff, and as I looked at the waves dashing against the shore and at the

sun slowly setting in a cloudless sky, I exclaimed: "Lawrence, destroyer of the Acadian homes, your cruelty has failed. This beautiful country was awaiting your victims. We have here no Bay of Fundy with its immense tides, no rocks, no snow, but we have a land picturesque and wonderfully fertile, a land where men are free, *our* Louisiana is better than *your* Acadia!"

## III.

I am indebted in part for the list of proverbs and curious sayings I shall offer to the Hon. FELIX VOORHIES, of St. Martinsville, who made the following interesting remarks to me about the Acadian dialect:

"Each locality has its peculiar patois, thus at the upper limit of our parish, one uses expressions which are never heard at the lower limit. The dialect in Lafourche differs essentially from that which is in use in St. Martin, at Avoyelles or on the Vermillion Bayou."

The remarks of Mr. VOORHIES are correct as I have myself observed, and they may apply with equal truth to the patois in France, where differences are found in the speech of the peasants living within the same dialect boundaries. Local influences have always modified the language of uneducated people, even when they belonged to the same race; political influences have also been very powerful, for instance, the more or less complete subjugation of the conquered by the conquerors. The difference of races, however, is the greatest cause of the different dialects.

Just as the Latin gave rise to the eight Romance tongues, the *langue d'oïl* was divided into different dialects, due in great part to the difference of races in the provinces of the north of France. In the same way we may account for some of the variations in the Acadian dialect of Louisiana. Canada and Acadia were settled mainly by emigrants from Normandy, Poitou, Anis, Brittany and Picardy, with a few from Paris. The dialectical peculiarities of the ancestors may still be found, to a certain extent, among the descendants, although they must have been very much weakened by long residence in America. The constant intermarriage of people whose fathers were from different provinces tended certainly to erase the peculiarities of speech, and at the time of the dispersion of the Acadians in 1755, their

language must have been nearly uniform. I should, therefore, arrive at the conclusion that the differences in the Acadian dialect in Louisiana are due more to local influences than to the provincial peculiarities of speech of the Norman or West France ancestors. The English language has naturally exerted a great influence on the Louisiana Acadian patois, and so have the Spanish and Creole patois, producing thus a very interesting speech mixture. The dialect by contact with foreign languages has lost somewhat of its simplicity, observes Mr. VOORHIES, but it has gained in originality. The following expressions, of which some are very quaint and picturesque, bear out the truth of the above assertion. As I intend to continue my studies of the Acadian dialect in the different localities, so as to be able, by a study of the peculiarities, to arrive at a better understanding of the whole subject, I shall indicate from what parish the different specimens are taken.

I. *From the Parish of St. Martin.*

*Roupiller*, *sommeiller*, from *roupille*, Spanish *ropilla*, diminutive of *ropa*. In connection with this word it is proper to state that the Acadians sometimes use expressions which are in reality good French, but not in common use.

*Se galancer*, corruption of *se balancer*.

*Pionter*, *ronfler par saccades*. Probably a corruption of *pioncer* in the argot.

*Un homme veulé*, un homme faible. *Veule* like *roupiller* is found in LITTRÉ but is seldom used.

*Un chemin méchant*, un chemin boueux. A curious use of *méchant*, but which any one can understand who has seen the hard, sticky mud in the prairies.

*Dans les Fordoches*, dans la misère, dans l'embarras. Les *Fordoches*, a remote settlement.

*Rifler la mort*, to be in danger of death. *Rifler*, to pass very near something.

*Viretappe*, a slap with the back of the hand.

*Blêmezir*, corruption of *blémir*.

*Tripe épurée*, a very lean person. Vulgar but expressive.

*Je te garde un p'lit de ma chienne*, tu me payeras cela, you will answer for that.

*Un plein de soupe*, a greedy man.

*Un carenero*, a great meat eater.

*Poser la chique et faire le mort*, *demeurer coi*. A man must be quite disconcerted to stop chewing and lay down his tobacco without saying a word.

*Charrer*, to converse. Very much used. See 'Mircio,' vi:

"Et tout en faisant la charrado."

*Fendre son garganna*, to beat some one. *Garganna* from Spanish *garganta*.

*Un bengale*, a man to be feared. From *tigre du Bengale*.

The Acadians use the following expressions borrowed from the Creole patois :

*Mon gardemanger*, the stomach.

*Mon tendé*, the ear.

*Mon senti*, the nose.

*Mon oi clair*, the eye.

*Faire chiquer potcau*, to prevent a young man from dancing with a young girl.

*Y a pas passé tantôt*, there must be no delay, let the matter be settled immediately.

*Un candi*, a man without energy, as soft as candy.

*Un guinc*, a young cock from the Eng. *game*.

*Garion*, a stallion. (See Eng. and Scotch *garran* and *garron* a gelding, a work horse.)

*Badjeuler*, to speak loud, from *gucule*, pronounced *djeule*.

*Mariocher*, to live in concubinage.

*Cheval des chemins*, a horse which ambles.

*Virer de Paül*, to die. The word *virer*, to turn, is very common. It is used in many compounds : *vire-mouches*, the tail, *vire-chiens*, the horns of a cow.

*Un beau Tchoc*, a fine fellow (ironically). *Tchoc* probably from *coq*.

*four pour clair*, *Zherbe*, to flee. Used as an order.

*Une romaine*, a fine dress.

*Flanquer un veux-tu couri*, to give a good beating, to make him run.

*Dans les poux de bois*, same as *dans les Fordoches*, to be in distress.

*Failler dans le gingas*, to lie.

*Couper la peau chaloü*, to exaggerate. *Chaloü*, the raccoon.

*Des racalchas*, long spurs. (Fr. *raca*, Provençal *racca*, a worthless horse. DIEZ, 'Etymologisches Wörterbuch.')

*Déchirer la couverture en deux*, to fall out with some one, corresponding to *rompre la paille*.

*Un gros dos*, a rich man.

*Faire la djéule douce*, to play the hypocrite.

*Un grand linguélingue*, a tall, awkward fellow.

*Une calin*, a doll; as in the Creole patois.

*Mettre au parc* or *parquer des animaux*, to take them from the prairie and place them within enclosures. *Mettre au corail*, is also frequent, from Spanish *corral*.

*Une châline*, a woman with light hair (cheveux châtain).

*Une germaine*, a first cousin.

*Tonner les moutons*, corruption of *tondre*.

*Crier pour la pirogue*, to call for help. Often used while playing cards. From the language of hunters.

*Fendre son biscuit*, *Graisser sa caloquinte*, to beat.

*Claion*, a gate, probably from French *claire*, "old French *cloie*, Provençal *clada*, Middle Lat. *clida* and *clia*, diminutive *clotella*. Of Celtic origin." (DIEZ, 'Etymologisches Wörterbuch.')

*Hucher*, to call in a loud voice, from "*hucar*, Provençal *ucar* and *uchar*, Picard *huquer*, piem. *uchè*. From *hucher* comes *huchel*, hunter's horn. Norman *houter*, English *hoot*." (DIEZ, 'Etymologisches Wörterbuch.')

*Monte sur le claion et huche-les*, is often heard.

*Une galline*, a game cock, from Spanish *gallina*.

*Une bocotte*, a small woman, fat and not elegant.

*Etre sans réserve*, to be ready for the fight.

*Le passer au carlet*, to beat him.

With regard to the fondness of the Acadians for nautical terms referred to above, the following lines sent me by Mr. VOORHIES on the subject are very interesting :

“Ils vous diront : En *gagnant le large*, vous aurez à votre gauche une *île* que vous *côtierez*. Vous verrez un grand bois dans le lointain—quand vous aurez *navigué* une bonne partie de la journée, vous arriverez à ce bois dans *l'anse* x, y, ou z. Il y a là une maison ; vous n'aurez qu'à *héler*, et un tel viendra vous recevoir. Si vous pouvez continuer, il vous *pilotera* dans ce bois, autrement vous n'aurez qu'à *virer* de bord et revenir ici.”

11. *From the Parish of St. Mary.*

*L'anse* is the prairie advancing in the wood like a small bay.

*Il a plongé*, he gave way (he 'dived') through fear.

*Haler*, to pull. Much more common than *tirer*.

*Chapoter*, to whittle a piece of wood ; corruption of Eng. chip.

*Jabloroc*, a lantern.

*Claion*, not only in meaning of gate, as in St. Martin, but synonymous with *parc* explained above.

*Mialer*, to weep, from *miauler*. *L'enfant miale*.

*Mon cachembau*, my pipe. From Provençal Cachimbau. (See 'Mirêio,' xii.)

*Avoir le respire court et le discours égaré*, to be dying.

*Fortoyer*, to swim.

*Comportement d'un cheval*, the gait of a horse.

*Faire chaudière ensemble*, to marry.

*Patcharac ici, patcharac là* to strike right and left, probably from *patatras*.

*Tchicadence*, mèche de fouet.

*Se pimper*, to dress oneself well, from adj., *pimpant*.

*Ah! la guinche*, Ah! the disagreeable woman, from *grincheux*.

*Du fard*, for *la farce*.

*Les agrès*, the harness. Another nautical term.

*Un fouyon*, a finger sore, probably from *fouiller*, the sore being deep enough to be dug into.

*Grémir la terre*, to pulverise the ground.

*Tertiboucher*, to laugh.

*Les éclèzes*, lightning.

*Cailler*, to back out in a fight, to shrink, as the milk on becoming clabber.

*Une lionèse*, a lioness, from the English.

*Garoche*, to whip, probably another nautical word, from *garchoir*, cordage.

*La routine*, the road. The expression, *Prends ta routine à volonté*, is to dismiss some one.

*Une ballense*, a dancer, from *bal*, but reminds us of old French *baler*.

*Faire sa crévéson*, to die.

*Desselle-toi que je te monte*, *Enlève ta soutadère que je te monte*, prepare for a fight.

*Cela fait zir!* It makes one shiver, it is astonishing. A common exclamation.

*Une berce*, a rocking chair. } Both words may perhaps be curious  
*Un morce*, a piece. } examples of the shortening of words so  
 common in a patois. Or are they from  
 (O. Fr. *bars* and Lat. *mors-us*?)

*Embancher*, to sit together on a bench.

*Ça quine*, it is progressing : from *quine* in a game.



- Macorne*, marriage. An Acadian called Charles, going to the marriage of the daughter of another Charles, said: *J' vas à la macorne à la fille à tocaille.*
- Chu*, in common use for *tombé*. The following expression was heard at the house of an Acadian: *Qu'a qu'alle a qu'a erie?—Alle a qu'alle a chu.*
- Un branle*, a cradle. A good word, as the cradle used to hang from the ceiling of the room.
- Contre-ceinture*, a ditch.
- Des cigales*, corn shucks; a corruption from *cigars*, as the shucks have somewhat the shape of a cigar.
- Barrière en péline*, a fence with palings.

## PHONETICS.\*

- a*—pronounced generally A and a as in French, but the tendency is to lay much stress upon the A and to make it á. The a is often changed into o, as in the Creole patois, *poça, moman.*
- e*—the é is generally lost; the E often becomes a: *chare* for *chère*, *alle* for *elle*; *Noël*; e remains; é becomes u: *mesure*, becomes *musure*.
- i*—remains, or has the sound of iL in *fiote, tion, pion.*
- o*—the O hardly exists, *chose* and *côte*, being both pronounced *chöse* and *cöte*.
- u*—pronounced ə: *une* becomes əne.
- y*—has the sound of L in *pays, maïs.*
- ai*—has the long sound in *vrai* (vré).
- oi*—has kept in many words the Norman WE in *moi, Illinois, toi*, etc. pronounced also e: *froid* becomes *fred*; *refroidir* becomes *fredir*.  
becomes sometimes UAN: *moi* often pronounced mUAN.
- au*—pronounced ə, pəvre.
- eu*—becomes u: *Eugène, Europe* become *tugène turope.*
- ou*—becomes sometimes o: *où est-ce?* pronounced *o est-ce?*
- un*—the n of the nasal is heard and the *un* often becomes æN.
- c*—pronounced very often tch: *curé* (tchuré).
- d*—becomes dj: *Dieu* (Djeu). At end of word sounds like *t* as in *quand* followed by a consonant: *quand* (quante le ferez-vous?).
- f*—always pronounced at end of word *nerfs, oeufs*, etc.
- h*—The *h* aspirate hardly exists: *des zharicots, des zhéros*, etc.
- j*—sometimes z, *Zozé* for *Joseph*.
- t*—often dropped: *i va for il va*; the L always pronounced like y.
- n*—sometimes ñ: *mañière.*
- q*—always pronounced in *cing*.
- r*—very often dropped: *pou* for *pour, jou* for *jour*, etc.; by a curious transformation *recette* becomes *arcette, prenez* becomes *pernez*.
- s*—pronounced at end of word: *alors* becomes *alorse*; changed into *r*: *tant pis* becomes *tant pire*.
- t*—often not pronounced: *piasse* for *piastre*.
- r*—pronounced like *s* at end of word: *eusse, ceuse, deusse, sisse, disse* for *eux, ceux, deux, six, dix*.
- z*—is sometimes replaced by *j*: *Jénon* for *Zénon*.

With regard to the parts of speech there is little to observe in the Acadian dialect; there is, of course, a great deal of contrac-

\* The Phonetic signs are from PASSY'S 'Les Sons du Français.'

tion, of abbreviation, as in the language of all uneducated people: *j'va*, *j't'vois*, *c'te femme*, etc. The *liaison* with the *s* and *t* is generally incorrect; the *t* being pronounced like *z*, and the *s*, though more rarely, like *t*: *un gros-t-homme*. On account of the *liaison* which is much more frequent in the dialect than in the French, the hiatus is almost unknown in the former.

The peculiar part of the syntax of the Acadian is the use of the pronoun of the first person singular with a plural verb: *j'étion*, *j'avions* and often that same form of the verb used with the pronouns of the third person: *il étions*, *ils étions*. Instead of *j'avons* the contracted form *j'ons* is frequent. The neuter verbs such as *aller*, *partir*, *sortir*, etc., are usually conjugated with *avoir*. The reflexive verbs have generally dropped the auxiliary *être*.

The formation of nouns from verbs is common as in French. Mr. VOORHIES calls my attention to two interesting words: *Une pèse* from *pèser*, *une trompe* (*une erreur*) from *se tromper*. I refer briefly here to the peculiarities of the dialect, as in the longer specimens given below the points of interest will be fully explained.

The two following letters are interesting not only as specimens of the dialect, but also with regard to folklore, as the customs and manners of the Acadians are described. I am indebted principally for the subject matter to Mr. ZÉNON DE MORUELLE, formerly of Pointe Coupée Parish, whose valuable suggestions with regard to writing the dialect I also desire to acknowledge.

PREMIÈRE LETTRE.

*Bayou Choupique, le 5 Novembre 1890.*

MON CHER MUSSIEU PHILOLOGUE,

D'abord l'public s'a intéressé à connaitre notre histoire, monan<sup>1</sup> j'va dire tout ça j'connais et pi<sup>2</sup> les autres vont conter ça ils savions.<sup>3</sup> Pou ça je connais, j'ai toujours attendu<sup>4</sup> dire que les premiers Cadiens qu'a venu icite étions arrivés du Nord par le Missipi. Ils venions des Illinoués et s'étions éparpillés tout le long du fleuve et ceuze<sup>5</sup> qu'a quitté la grand bande avions arrêté côté nous autres. Ils étions tous des chasseurs et des coureurs des bois. La beauté des chauvageses les avions tentés; ça fait y en a plein dans eux autres qui s'avions marié avec ces filles des bois. Mouan j'en connais plein des familles icite qu'a du sang chauvage et même qu'ils étions bien fiers de

<sup>1</sup> *Moi.*                    <sup>2</sup> *Puis.*

<sup>3</sup> The first person plural of the verb used with pronouns of first person sing. and third pers. pl.

<sup>4</sup> *Entendu.*                    <sup>5</sup> *Ceux.*



descendre des premiers habitants ; i<sup>6</sup> s'disions les seuls vrais Américains. Pour lors donc eune fois établis icite tous ces gaillards-là s'avions mis à travailler dur ; et pi i s'étions bâti des cabanes et avions défréchi<sup>7</sup> et netteyé d'la terre et chacun dans eux autres a eu eune désert<sup>8</sup> pou cultiver du maïs, du talac, de l'indigo, et boucoup plus tard du coton et pi ensuite a venu la canne et ensuite le riz.

Nous grands-popas avions eu boucoup des pitits. Ça me fait jongler dans mon jeune temps, quand ma pauvre définte moman me faisait carder du coton pou faire la cotonnade ; les fils étions tindus<sup>9</sup> bleus ou rouges. Alors on avait des bien jolies tchulottes et des véreuses<sup>10</sup> pou aller vous promener l'dimanche. On avait été d'aparavant à la messe pou apprendre le catéchime avec le tchuré et pi quand on était paré<sup>11</sup> on faisait sa première communion. Oh ! mais c'était eune beau jour, on sentait qu'on était légère comme une plume. A rien m'aurait pas tenté pou faire eune péché, a rien aurait pu me faire virer<sup>12</sup> de bord et prendre eune mauvais chemin comme les mauvais garments.

Aussitôt on était assez grand pou travailler la terre, on soignait les bêtes. Notre popa nous donnait toujours eune tite taure<sup>13</sup> pour commencer et au bout de quéque temps alle<sup>14</sup> avait un veau, ça fait que chacun dans nous autres avait un p'tit commencement pou nous marier.

Nous autres dans la campagne on se mariait jeune. On courtisait les filles et eune fois un garçon avait choisi sa prétendue, la noce tardait pas boucoup. Oh ! mais du Djiab si on s'amusait pas bien mieux qu'à c't'heure. A eune noce ou eune bal on dansait des rigodons, et c'était si tentant que les violoniers mêmes quittaient leur violon et se mettaient à corcobier comme les autres. Ah ! tu peux guetter<sup>15</sup> va, c'était pas comme à c't'heure, non. Parlez-moi des autres fois, oui. A présent à n'importe qui temps i dausions ; nous autres on dansait jusque quand la saison commençait à frédir, mais par exemple, quand le Mardi<sup>16</sup> Gras tombait un samedi, i avait pas de Catherine, <sup>17</sup> il fallait un bal. Dans les grand chaleurs on avait pas le temps, on travaillait trop boucoup dur a la charrue ; i fallait rabourer la terre, renchausser et déchausser l'maïs et l'coton, et pi à la fin de l'été faire des mulons de foin et de paille. J'vous garantis on était souvent mal en position avec le soleil qui vous grillait la caloquinte,<sup>18</sup> les chouboulures, les maringouins, les bêtes rouges et les poux de bois. On avait pas même le temps de charrer<sup>19</sup> un peu comme disait nainaine<sup>20</sup> Soco.

Sitôt le soleil était couché fallait jongler à boire eune bonne tasse de lait et manger un peu de couche<sup>21</sup> couche et pi aller s'fourrer en bas le bère<sup>22</sup> pou dormir un peu et se lever à la barre du jour. Cré mille misères i avait des moments on fumait<sup>23</sup> un vilain coton ; surtout quand notre défint popa vivait. Il était toujours le premier deboute ; i fallait filer raide. Mais pouvre défint, le Bon Djeu l'a pris, et mouan même je suis après procher<sup>24</sup> côté le curé pou garder ses poules. Bon Djeu merci, au jour d'aujourd'hui tous mes pitits sont grands. Je leurs y ai donné tout ça j'avais, et comme i me reste plus arien, ça c'est juste que ça j'ai fait pour eux autres ils le faisons pou mouan.

6 *Ils.*                    7 *Défrichi.*

8 *Champ*, a curious expression. The word *désert* must have designated the prairies.

9 *Toints.*                10 *Vareuses.*            11 *Pr t.*

12 *Viver de bord*, one of the nautical expressions so common among the Acadians.

13 *G'nisse.*                14 *Elle.*

15 *Tu peux guetter va* : You may say what you please.

16 *Quand le Mardi Gras tombait un samedi* : In carnival time.

17 *J'avait pas de Catherine* : It had to be done.            18 *La t'te.*

19 *Charrer*, to converse.            20 *Marraine.*            21 A dish made with corn meal.

22 *La moustiquaire.*

23 *On fumait un vilain coton, for on filait* : We were in an embarrassing situation.

24 *Procher côté le curé pou garder ses poules* : I shall soon die ; I shall be in the cemetery to take care of the curate's chickens.

J'ai pas fait avec eux le partage à Montgommery. C'est dans le temps à d'Arta guette<sup>25</sup> que ce fameux lapin là vivait. C'était un gaillard qu'était plus coquin que bête; quand il allait à la chasse avec ses camarades comme il était fort comme eune cheval il commençait toujours par grogner faire semblant t'être en colère. L leur faisait eune bonne cache et quand il fallait partager le gibier il prenait tout et laissait la restant pou les autres. Ça fait depi ce temps-là nous autres ons dit toujours le partage à Montgommery.

Ma plume connaît galoper quéquefois dans l'passé, alle prend l'estampic,<sup>26</sup> mais je connais l'arrêter quand même je dois li mettre eune brid-on. Comme je me sentions lasse j'va finir icite ma première lettre, et je vous promets, Mussieu, de vous écrire encore avant le jour de Noël. On doit faire eune grand réveillon si vous voulez venir. On va se revoir plus tard.

Je vous salue de loin.

BATIS GROSBOEUF.

#### DEUXIÈME LETTRE.

*Bayou Choupique, le 12 Novembre, 1890.*

MUSSEIU PHILOLOGUE,

Vous me disez comme ça dans vot' réponse que ma lettre vous avions fait bien du plaisir et pou je continue à vous conter les affaires des premiers Cadiens qu' étions venus icite. C'est jus au fur et à mesure j'écris que ça m' revient. Pour lors donc je vas tout vous dire to it ça je connais. P'ti brin<sup>27</sup> par p'ti brin ça va finir par faire eune gros tas. Bien sûr y en a des choses qui allions vous interboliser,<sup>28</sup> parce que c'est pas un p'ti morceau j'avions pou conter.

Les Acadiens avions été chassés par les Anglais. C'est des fameux coquins qu' étions pou ainsi dire des pirates, ils avions profité de leu butin après que ces malheureux avions parti de leu pays, et les coquins savions emparé de leu maisons pou eusse rester et pi ils avions eu des déserts<sup>29</sup> tout bien cultivés. Les Acadiens leurs y avions toujours gardé un p'tit chien<sup>30</sup> de leur chienne et à chaque fois qu'ils entendios dire *God-dam*, c'est comme si on leur jetait de la cendre chaude dans le dos.

Nos a'te ix aimions la chasse. Le grand-popa de mon popa étions grand chasseur. Bon matin il étions debout et après s'avoir rincé<sup>31</sup> la dalle, il fallait quéque chose pou bousiller<sup>32</sup> l'estomac. Il parlait, mais bien sûr, aussi bien que le Bon Dieu a fait les pommes, il revenait chargé de gibier: des canards, des chevreuils et des ours. Alors il évitait<sup>33</sup> des amis pou dîner avec lui; c'était des vrais ramequins,<sup>34</sup> des vraies bamboches. Là on décidions donner un bal pou amuser la jeunesse. Un p'tit garçon à cheval allions porte en porte éviter tout le monde. On était pas fier, on était tout égal nous autres. D'abord on était honnête, on demandait pas la restant. Le monde venions à pied, d'autres à cheval, boucoup en charrettes. On avait pas calèche ou barouche; on attelait Ti Gris et Ti Noir et ça vous trottions sur le chemin comme les grands cheval qui venions du Kentucky. V'la la chanchon on chantait dans c'temps là, écoutez-bien:

<sup>25</sup> Very long ago: D'Artaquette and Vincennes were burned by the Indians.

<sup>26</sup> *Le mors aux dents*: stampede.

<sup>27</sup> A curious rendering of "petit à petit l'oiseau fait son nid." <sup>28</sup> Surprendre.

<sup>29</sup> A pretty expression: "des déserts bien cultivés."

<sup>30</sup> *Garder un p'tit chien de leur chienne*: avoir une dent contre quelqu'un.

<sup>31</sup> *Apr s'avoir bu.* <sup>32</sup> Remplir. <sup>33</sup> Invitait. <sup>34</sup> Grands dîners.

PREMIER COUPLET.<sup>35</sup>

Depi que j'ons fait connaissance  
 D'un certain tendron,  
 J'ons courons à l'accointance,  
 J'ons perds la raison.  
 Je ne connais dans la nature  
 Rien de plus flateur  
 Que l'aimable créature  
 Qui me tchient au tchoeur.      *bis.*

## SECOND COUPLET.

L'autre jour en cachette,  
 Alle me fit présent d'un bécot.<sup>36</sup>  
 Ah! ma bouche en devint miette  
 Et j'en restai tout sot.  
 Ce bécot là au fond de mon âme  
 Imprîma le bonheur;  
 Il redoubla la flamme  
 Qui me tchient au tchoeur.      *bis.*

## TROISIÈME COUPLET.

Il n'y a rien de remarquable;  
 Partout un soleil.  
 Dans le monde habitable  
 On trouve tout pareil.  
 Mais alle a ma douce amie  
 Un pitit air flateur  
 Une fidgire de fantaisie  
 Qui me tchient au tchoeur.      *bis.*

## QUETRIÈME COUPLET.

La beauté la plus tentante  
 Peut me faire les yeux doux.  
 Ah! je lui dirions: vous êtes charmante  
 Mais il n'y a rien pou vous.  
 Ce n'est pas que sa fidgire jeune et belle  
 Ne soit pleine de fraîcheur,  
 Mais ce n'est pas vous qu'êtes la demoiselle  
 Qui me tchient au tchoeur.      *bis.*

On ne s'embêtaît pas à faire de la politique comme vous autres avec vos élections à tous les six mois. Nous, les autres fois, le Gouverneur nommaît un commandant<sup>37</sup> dans notre paroisse. Il étoit capitaine des armées du roi, et grand jige, et comme on avoit pas de procès, il avoit pas grand chose à faire; jus fumer sa pipe, et pi se promener le matin et se reposer l'après midi. Quéquefois le commandant réglait une succession et il gardait une bonne part pou lui aussite; il disoit il étoit héritier nommé par le Gouvernement.

Quand y avoit un mariage tous nous autres on accompagnaît les mariés à l'Eglise et après la cérémonie on revenait en chantant, et à la noce on tiraît des coups de fîsil. C'étoit eine habitude, ça preuve que nos aïeux aimions la poudre et qu'ils n'en avions pas peur. L'endemain de la noce chacun reprenaît son ouvrage pou travailler dans le désert. Mouan, comme j'étais piti, je montions à califourchon sur le cheval de charrie et mon grand frère tchombonsaît<sup>38</sup> les guides; ça allait pu vite comme ça.

<sup>35</sup> The song is naïve and graceful, although the metre is not always correct.

<sup>36</sup> *Un baiser.*      <sup>37</sup> During the Spanish domination.      <sup>38</sup> A verb formed from *tenir bon*.

Quand y avait un enterrement nous autres on portait le mort en terre sur un boyard à bras. Tout le monde accompagnait le pauvre défunt et comme c'était fatigant, les porteurs étions changés de temps en temps. Ça allait tout doucement, mais quand la cérémonie étions finie on revenait raide reprendre l'ouvrage, parce qu'on fouinait pas dans ce temps-là. Oh! non, on bouquait <sup>39</sup> pas su l'ouvrage.

Aussite si on étions pas tous riches du moins on avait de quoi quand la guerre a venue. Dans les familles le plus vieux garçon était cila qu'allait à l'école et par ensuite quand il était assez savant il montrait à tous les autres de la famille. Le second était charpentier, le troisième forgeron et le quatrième cordonnier. Les filles faisaient la cotonnade et coudaient; <sup>40</sup> c'était toutes des bonnes couturièuses, <sup>41</sup> par ainsi tout se faisait su l'habitation.

On avait pas ni Raide <sup>42</sup> Rode ni Estimotte <sup>43</sup> mais quand c'était pou voyager on était pas embarrassé. On allait aux Attakapas et aux Opélousas à cheval et les femmes venions tout de même comme les hommes. On campait dans le bois le soir, on allumait ein bon feu pou chasser les maringouins et les tigres, on faisait du café et on charrait jusqu'à minuit. Les hommes faisions la garde et au p'tit jour on se remettait en route. Mais quand on arrivait chez des amis ou bien des parents dans la plairie, alors c'étions des contentements, des plaisirs, des diners jusqu'à on était tanné. <sup>44</sup> On était trop contents nous en tourner côté nous autres parce que on était lasse s'amuser, i fallait penser à travailler. Mais tous les ans on faisions ces voyages, parce qu'on apprenait boucoup des quéques choses. L'homme qu'est bien instruit c'est cila qu'a boucoup roulé sa bosse dans le monde.

Faut je vous conte un charibari <sup>45</sup> qu'on a donné à un vieux qui s'avait marié icite côté nous autres. A ce charibari le monde étions venu de tous côté, mais on a fait tant du train <sup>46</sup> et du tapage, c'était un tumulte qu'avait bouleversé tout le voisinage. Alors le commandant avions donné l'ordre de finir tout ça, aussite ça l'a arrêté net. Mais les chicanes et les chamailles avions continué dans le jour; ça fait y en a eu plusieurs batailles et duels et plusieurs jeunes hommes s'avions massacré à coups de fisils; y en a deux qu'avions été tués. Mouan je m'a trouvé compromis comme témoin. J'ai-t-été obligé de décamper.

Je m'ai embarqué dans eune pirogue et j'avions dérivé jusqu'à la ville côté mon parrain. Quand j'étions las flaner et naviguer <sup>47</sup> à la Nouvelle-Orléans j'ai parti à pied pou tourner chez mouan coûte qui coûte. J'avions trouvé du monde je connaissions tout partout, ça fait j'étions pas obligé tchemander <sup>48</sup> à manger ni pou coucher. Ça c'est le plus joli voyage j'avions jamais fait. J'ai pris deux ans pou m'en revinir. Il faut je vous dis, je suis violonier de mon état, pas un bal s'a jamais donné sans c'est mouan qui joue. J'avions arrivé un samedi à St. Jacques, y avait un bal, mais le musicien s'a trouvé malade. J'ai offri <sup>49</sup> mes services, ah! comme tout le monde étions content. Lendemain j'étions évité dans tous les maisons. J'avions reluqué la veille au soir une belle Acadienne; Maginton m'avait tapé dans l'oeil. Alors, je l'y ai dit tout suite: "la belle, vous me plaît, si vous disez oui on va se marier." Alle m'a répondu: "Tape, ça me va." Je m'ai marié avec alle et on <sup>50</sup> a resté côté son père jusqu'à plus de deux ans. Par après j'avions appris la mort à ma pauvre moman. J'ai revenu au Bayou Choupique pour régler la succession. Ma foi, quand j'ai eu ma part j'ai dit comme ça, tant pire pou les amis j'ai quitté derrière, mouan, je vas rester icite dans mon pays. Vous voyez, Mussieu

<sup>39</sup> On ne reculait pas.    <sup>40</sup> Cousaint.    <sup>41</sup> Couturièuses.    <sup>42</sup> Railroad.

<sup>43</sup> Steamboat    <sup>44</sup> Fatigué.    <sup>45</sup> Charibari.    <sup>46</sup> Du bruit.    <sup>47</sup> Se promener.

<sup>49</sup> This incident is true, as well as the marriage that followed.    <sup>48</sup> Demander.

<sup>50</sup> On for nous, or je, is very common.

Philologue, où l'ombril<sup>51</sup> est enterré on veut toujours rester; y a quéque chose comme qui dirait qui vous amarre<sup>52</sup> là.

On dit le Cadien connaît pas à rien parce qu'il a pas d'inducation, mais il faut li donner éine chose, il aime son pays, sa famille et ses amis, et si y en a qui rougissent quand on les appelle Acadiens, mouan je vas vous dire, Mussieu Philologue, j'en suis bien fier. Pensez-vous pas que j'avons raison?

Je vous salue de loin,

BATIS GROSBOEUF.

I hope that this brief sketch of the Acadians of Louisiana and of their dialect will be an introduction to a more complete study of the subject hereafter.

ALCÉE FORTIER.

TULANE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA.

51 *Où l'on est né.* 52 Another nautical term for *attache*.



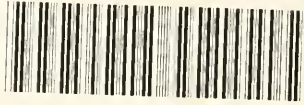








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