ELLIOTT, A. M., «On a Philological Expedition to Canada», dans *The Johns Hopkins University Circulars*, Baltimore (Maryland), vol.4, n° 35, déc. 1884, p. 20-21.

> D'origine américaine, Elliott (1844-1910) est le fondateur de la Modern Language Association. Ses travaux l'emmenèrent à s'intéresser à la langue parlée au Canada. Il y vint dans le but d'amasser du matériel dont il pourrait se servir par la suite pour effectuer une analyse scientifique du langage des Canadiens. Le passage qui suit est tiré de *On a Philological Expedition to Canada*, article qui est un résumé dans lequel Elliott ne fait part que d'une petite partie des faits saillants de son enquête. Elliott est l'auteur d'articles spécialisés sur le français du Canada qu'il a fait paraître dans *American Journal of Philology*.

« {Abstract of a paper read at the meeting of the University Philological Association, October 3, 1884}.[1]

[...]

In point of language the Canadian French is certainly one of the most interesting topics for a philologian. Here we find that time has stood still, especially for the more remote rural districts, and the scholar could easily imagine himself holding intercourse with the subjects of Louis XIV. This means that we have the unique privilege in this age of steam and travel of studying in them a form of speech that has scarcely known change for the past two centuries. But this idiom is not a dialect of that remote period, and the greatest surprise to a student of language arriving in Canada is to find that, contrary to the general impression of scholars, the vernacular does not bear any specific dialectic character, but is the Middle (sixteenth century) French with those natural changes which would be produced by the intimate fusion into a whole of all the different species of language that were originally brought from the mother country. The commonest *Habitant* understands French and the stranger will easily follow him in conversation, provided he knows the terms and forms of the old language. The next most general characteristic of this striking type of speech is the colorless uniformity of pronunciation referred to above. Displacement of accent (Láreau), the sonant character of final consonants, especially the *t* in proper names (Nicolet); the imperfect articulation of the *r* – all these are more or less noticeable everywhere and are doubtless due to the influence of contact with the English. The further general syncopation of *emutum*, as in *j'f'ra*, *t'nez*, *v'nez* and the extensive application of the «Law

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[1] Les accolades remplacent ici les crochets qui figurent dans le texte de manière à ce que le lecteur ne confonde pas ces passages avec nos propres interventions qui se font toujours en crochets.

of Least Action» in strong contractions, such as *j'm'a* (*a* in English *father*) for *je m'en vais* are common and make the language, for a short time, rather difficult to be understood by the uninitiated.

For the Phonetics the most notable deviation from the modern French usage is found in the variety of sound-shading given to one and the same graphic sign where the Parisian often has but one or at most two species to offer us. This holds true for the vowel, and more particularly for the diphtongs; for example, in the *oi* and *eu* combinations. In both of these we have three distinct nuances of sound, namely, for the former, 1, *oi* = *ea* in English *wear*, *swear*; 2, *oi* = French *oé* (*moé*); 3, *oi* = the abnormal modern French *wa*; for the latter, 1, *eu* = the ordinary French phonetic equivalent (German ö); 2, *eu* = simple French *u* (German ü); 3, *eu* = a sound midway between these two and which I designate by ü. The *a*, too, gives us three distinct kinds, viz : 1, *a* = *a* in English *all*; 2, *a* = *a* in English *father*; 3, *a* = the common flattened French *a*. The Norman *ar* for *er* (*travarser*, *sarvant*, etc.,) is universal, and the strengthening of *i* to *a* most common, *e. g.*, *shallin* (shilling), *Ballé* (Billy), etc.

For the consonants the palatalization of the guttural mutes is one of the first and most striking peculiarities that a stranger is likely to notice; for example, *trankjille* (tranquille), *kjeu* (queue), *vainkjeur* (vainqueur). Cf. Virginian *kjar* (car), *gjirl* (girl). Again, the interchange of palatalized *t* and *k* as in *moikjé* (moitié), and the substitution of the former for simple guttural tenuis as in *tjuré* (curé), or the replacing of simple dental by palatalized guttural, *e. g.*, *kjuer* (tuer). The syncopation of a palatalized dental sonant and the development afterwards of the palatal vowel into its corresponding semi-vowel state is found everywhere, as in *Canayen* (Canadian). *R* frequently undergoes the same vocalization, *e. g.*, *cayottes* (*carottes*). Prosthetic, epenthetical and epithetical elements abound, especially for strong dentals, as in *tsour* (*sous*), *tsur* (*sur*), *i n'y a t officiers*, *léjart* (*une voiture léjart*).

The morphology gives us more interesting examples of Folk-treatment, as, for example, the article *il* = *i*, *ils* = *iz*; all adjectives in *if* are invariable (*une femme vif*); the numerals ending in *s* have feminine forms (*troises femmes*); all new creations of verbs on English stems are thrown into the A-conjugation, *e. g.*, in *bit-er* (beat), *scrép-er* (scrape), *slak-er* (to slack), *leugh-er* (log) = to roll logs together, while in the formative period of French those hybrid compounds were distributed between the *A* - and *I* - forms, as is seen in modern French *garnir* (= A. S. *varnian*);

Old French *gandir* (= Goth. *vandjan*). Among the older inhabitants especially we hear *j'avions*, *j'étions*, etc., similar to the custom of verb-usage in rural districts of France.

For the syntax I will note here only one general characteristic, that is, the universal omission of the real negative particle in the combination *ne-pas*, *e. g.*, *j'pense pas* (for *ne pense pas*), *j'aime pas*, etc. This phenomenon is interesting in that it simply carries one degree further the tendency of the classical language to make the Latin *passus* share the burden of negation with its legitimate representative *ne*. The supplementary particle finally comes to take the place of the primitive element altogether. Old French words and expressions are naturally found everywhere in the greatest abundance and original French terms, with special uses peculiar to the Canadians, are numerous. Among the latter we may cite *cailler = s'endormir*[2], *butin* = Norman for «clothes», *mouiller* (taking effect for cause) = *pleuvoir*, *poudr-er* (from *poudre*) = to snow a fine, mealy snow; *embarquer*, *débarquer*, for *monter*, and *descendre* with reference to a vehicle, *mouver* = «to move household effects,» etc., etc. But it is not alone old words and new uses of modern terms that meet us here. The special formations in Canadian French are very extensive and often serve to show how the classical language was probably built up by adding one analytic product to another. From the Latin *quasi* we have the adverb *casiment*, and so, too, from the modern French *presque* (*pressum quod*), the Canadian, in generalizing his adverbial categories, produces *presquement*. After the manner of the early creations in the language he has no scruple in producing a simple verb *venter* = «to blow» (used of wind) from the substantive *vent* and from *gens* he strikes out *engenser* in the same mould which his ancestors used for the production of similar verbal parasynthetics with the relational *en*.

Following again in the footsteps of the early makers of his language in adapting Latin flexions to Gothic and German stems, he says, *sidez les chars* (= to run cars off the main on to the side track of a railroad), *le cheval a bolté* (= «the horse bolted»), *blackballer*, etc., etc. It is, however, in the province of proper names where we find to-day the most extraordinary phenomenon, perhaps, in the whole range of creations with which the French Canadian has enriched his native tongue. We are so accustomed to think the supply of material sufficient for the demand in this department of word-formation and, therefore, the name-book has been closed, that we can scarcely believe the evidence of our senses when we suddenly face a people with whom the process of proper-name creation is in full force and of daily occurrence. Such is the

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[2] On lit *s'en dormir* dans le texte.

case in Canada. A single example will suffice to illustrate one phase of this procedure. Monsieur Guérin has two sons named, respectively, Charles and Jacques. The former is a special favorite of his father and receives the soubriquet *la joie*, that is, Charles Guérin dit La Joie. As said Charles grows up he drops entirely the name of his father (Guérin) and is only known as Monsieur Charles La Joie, his brother all the time continuing to bear the original designation of his father's family. It thus constantly happens that two persons or two households most closely connected in blood relationship have wholly different names, and these new soubriquets serve again in their turn for the production of other appellations.

In the above *résumé* I have tried to give simply a few salient points along the line of investigation which I have followed in collecting material for a scientific treatment of the Canadian French language. I hope in a few months to begin to publish the results of my work. » (p. 21)