

North Carolina's Language

(By BION H. BUTLER)

NEVER get much excited over the persistent claim of many of the North Carolina folks that this state comes nearest to having pure Anglo-Saxon blood of any of the states in the Union, for to me it has been a difficult job to cipher out what pure blood really is. With the Scotch surrounding us here in the upper end of the Cape Fear valley, and the German stock predominating in the counties one or two removes to the west, and the sprinkling of Huguenots and mixed blood from the French and Swiss borders of the Palatinate in various sections we wander considerably from Anglo-Saxon purity, if there is any such thing as pure Anglo-Saxon, which is a complex mixture in itself.

Nevertheless, the sentiment of the thing is sound. What North Carolina has is one of the best blends of American blood that has been established in this country. United States is the language talked in North Carolina. It may be sandpapered a little by indifference in hitting the "r" its full strength, and in toying with syllables that could be emphasized a little more, but it is United States, or perhaps it might be said, American English. In the thirty years since I have been acquainted with North Carolina I have never had occasion to try to do a pantomime conversation with anybody in any language but the one we both understood. That makes it nice. Years ago I was a printer in the territorial printing office in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I set type in Spanish there until I grew to like chili con carne and could eat red pepper like a native. Up in Michigan a court clerk tried to persuade me to help him decipher a deed written in French that was on his records, and a Frenchman in Northern New York one day undertook to tell me a long story about having swallowed a mosquito and being afraid it would kill him, and it took me an hour for my simple American comprehension of French to get into my head that he was to be "mort" because he had taken a drink at a spring that was rather lively with meat as well as drink. In Pennsylvania I was lost on a country road one day, and all the information I could get as to the course out of the strange territory was from a Pennsylvania Dutchman, and I don't know to this day what he was trying to say. In Nevada I lived at a hotel conducted by a Swiss, and he had a Chinese cook. The Chinaman learned English from the Swiss and the style of his speech was as picturesque as anything I have ever encountered. A Swiss man is not the handiest fellow with the English language, and when a Chinaman gets the dialect second hand, through a language like the Swiss which is a mixture of German, French, Italian and Romansch, he has a peach of a tongue.

In Massachusetts 67 per cent. of the white population is foreign born or born of foreign parents. In North Carolina less than 1 per cent. of the white population is foreign born or born of foreign parents. North Carolina has the smallest percentage of foreign born or of foreign parentage of any state in the Union. And that is one of the nicest things in this big American republic. Wherever you go in this state you can talk to anybody you fall in with. No matter who it is or where in North Carolina, unless a stranger trekking through, he can talk to you in a language you understand, and that gives the world a breadth that you realize only when you think of your loneliness in some places in other states where your companions for the time may have been addicted to any of the forty or fifty different languages spoken in the North.

North Carolina is growing to be a state active in manufacturing. But in all the big mills and factories but one language is heard. Any sign posted by the foreman can be read by every one in the mill when printed in the one language, United States English. Every worker can talk to his fellow-worker in the common tongue of both. Employer and worker in the North know what a decided advantage that is. And what is more, where every one talks American English

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