

The chief objection to French domination lies in the aggressive way in which the claims of the French are preferred and insisted on. The English population would not care so much about the demands of French Canada were they presented in anything like polite or Parliamentary terms. But they are disgusted with the towering, domineering insolence of the claimants, and when it is considered that fully three-fourths of the taxation of the country is borne by the proscribed race, it is no wonder that the English cannot tolerate French aggressiveness.

The politicians and press encourage discord among the races. They have objects to serve in keeping the two sections of population apart, and they play on the fears and the prejudices of English and French alike, in all the moods and tenses of their vocabulary. Bloodshed may come sooner than many expect. It may come at once, unless wise counsels prevail, and the demon of race-passion is downed. The French and English will never love each other, but they might at least live in peace together. "Civil liberty was given them (the French) by the British sword," says Parkman, "but the conqueror left their religious systems untouched, and through it they have imposed upon themselves a weight of ecclesiastical tutelage that finds few equals in the most Catholic countries of Europe. Such guardianship is not without certain advantages. When faithfully exercised it aids to uphold some of the tamer virtues, if that can be called a virtue which needs the constant presence of a sentinel to keep it from escaping; but it is fatal to mental robustness and moral courage; and if French Canada would fulfil its aspirations it must cease to be one of the most priest-ridden communities of the modern world."

Montreal.

A CANADIAN.

LITERARY CRITICISM.

RECENT numbers of *The Forum* and *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* contain two striking articles on literary criticism, which the general reader will look at with more or less interest. The savage attack of the *Quarterly Review* on Mr. Edmund Gosse's "Shakespeare to Pope," suggests the *Forum's* paper on literary log-rolling, and the weakness and spitefulness of the average newspaper reviews of new books afford Mr. Edgar Fawcett the opportunity of saying some sharp things in *Lippincott* on criticism in general, and the men and women who dissect the current literature of the day for the American public in particular. Mr. Fawcett asks "Should critics be gentlemen?" but before he is quite finished with his subject, he shows conclusively that the average newspaper critic is not only not a gentleman in feeling or in manner, but is indeed a coarse, ignorant and narrow-minded individual, whimsical and conceited to the very extreme, and conscious of power which he may use at will for the purpose of crushing and destroying the literary life of any one against whom he chooses to level his shafts. Mr. Fawcett has evidently suffered much from the critics, both the gushers who praise his books without reading them, and the malignant ones who read them with the single object of finding weak points in the narrative and false quantities in his verse, each being equally obnoxious to the novelist and poet. Mr. Fawcett prints several examples to show the tenableness of his argument, but clever as his reasoning undoubtedly is, his contribution to the literature of his subject is only new in degree. What he says about the critics of to-day could have been said, and was said, nearly a hundred years ago. We all know the savagery of the early *Quarterly Review* and what it did for Keats. And such men as Macaulay and Jeffrey and Sydney Smith and the *Edinburgh Review*ers, did not think it beneath their dignity to cut up their neighbours' books, and even the authors on themselves, occasion. These reviewers used to meet and improve on each other's work. Macaulay, or some one else, tells the story that after one of the *coterie* had said all the sharp things that he

could say about a book and its author, the manuscript of the assault was submitted to the other friends in council, when each one present contributed spices of ridicule or knivesful of pain, the object being to make the blow as telling and as severe as the combined ability of these masters of sharp writing could make it. We have really nothing like this now-a-days, though, perhaps venomous criticism is more frequent than helpful or sympathetic reviewing. Of George D. Prentice, who could be as witty and wise as he was harsh and cold-blooded, when moved by his mood, it is related that during a visit of Horace Mann to his sanctum in Kentucky he asked that skilful master of nervous English to cut up a political opponent in his best style. Prentice put on his hat and went out, saying that he would return in a couple of hours, and telling Mann not to spare himself, but to lay on his strokes as heavily as he could. Mann flattered himself that he was equal to the mark. He began his task at once, and by the time that Prentice returned he had completed the article, and was contemplating it with the fierce joy that blood-thirsty critics feel. "There," said he to the editor, "will that do? How do you like it?" Prentice read it over carefully, and with evident delight, but when he had reached the conclusion he said to Mann: "Have you any objection to my adding a few paragraphs, by way of finishing it?" "Oh, no," said Mann—whereupon Prentice seized his pen, and began "Thus far, we have restrained our feelings." It may be conjectured that the attack was pointed enough when those two doughty veterans of the pen had said all that they wanted to say on the subject.

Well, as may be said, double-headed criticism, particularly of letters, is not so common in our day; but it is not so much against the severity of the newspaper reviewers that Mr. Fawcett complains. He finds fault with the general inadequacy of the average book notices, the ignorance of the critics, and their lack of equipment for the work they undertake, without the slightest misgiving regarding their fitness and aptitude. Of course, he scolds a good deal, but this is allowable, for have we not said, and has not Mr. Fawcett himself said that he is a sufferer? Mr. Fawcett's weakest point is where he recommends the total abolition of the newspaper critic. "All published comments on books in current newspapers" our author regards as "absurdly needless," and he would banish them from the columns of the journals, had he but his way. To this sweeping specimen of destructive criticism on the part of Mr. Fawcett we may well demur. Surely the book reviewing in the United States, faulty as it is, and spiteful as it must occasionally be, is preferable to the treatment which Canadian writers receive from the average Canadian newspaper. The Canadian world is so given to politics and commerce that the great organs of public opinion can find little or no space to devote to Canadian authorship. No Canadian newspaper employs a regular book reviewer, and such notices as from time to time appear are most trivial and perfunctory. Throughout the whole Dominion of Canada, not more than three or four daily newspapers take the slightest interest in literature, and three or four only attempt to publish reviews of books. This might please Mr. Fawcett, but it is not an encouraging showing for us.

Mr. Fawcett cites, with approval, the methods of a New York firm of publishers, who send their books to authors of established fame, and invite opinions on their merits. These they print as advertisements, and the plan is no doubt good, but how long does Mr. Fawcett think that authors of reputation would be found willing to act as "puffers" for the book-sellers? Of the making of books there is no end, and the kindly critics would soon find themselves unable to keep up with the demand on their time and patience, which the new system of book-noticing would entail. To the publisher, certainly, the plan has the merit of cheapness, but think of the trials of the unfortunate writer of "established fame," who would have to wade through all sorts of books merely to oblige. Mr. Fawcett, of course, does not call this real criticism, but he considers that it would be a "compromise, not a settlement; an improvement, not a remedy." Glendower could call spirits from the vasty deep. The publishers would soon find that the notices they summoned would not come. No author of established fame could afford to put himself in the position Mr. Fawcett and indeed other