

## A RECENT CANADIAN NOVEL.

It is a matter of regret to every true Canadian that we have as yet scarcely the beginnings of a national literature. Patriotism, which binds men together and to their fatherland, is based on a consensus of feeling in regard to the scenery, institutions, and history of their common country. If now it is asked what has been done to bring these things home to the hearts and minds of Canadians, it must be confessed that this has as yet received but little attention from persons competent to perform the task. The only literature bearing on Canada has been the work of foreigners. Longfellow has touched one event in our history, and the story of *Evangeline* is now known wherever the English tongue is spoken; and the misty shore of Minas Basin ranks with the Rhine, and Windermere, and Loch Katrine. Again, within the last year, Mr. Parkman of Boston has published his "*Wolfe and Montcalm*," a work of exceptional merit. And we have abundant material waiting for the master hand to fashion it. There is scenery unsurpassed in beauty and grandeur; there are such heroic figures as Carleton, Champlain, Frontenac, and Montcalm; there are numberless wars, battles, and sieges; there is the history and institutions of that wonderful French community that grew up along the lower St. Lawrence; there are hosts of Indian legends extending away back into the ages. All these subjects, and many others, are waiting to be dealt with by the historian, novelist, and poet.

Believing this then we were much interested when we learned that Rev. David Hickey, a Canadian, had written a novel founded on the first siege of Louisburg. In this event there is doubtless material for a powerful novel. Moreover it was understood that Mr. Hickey was eminently qualified for treating this subject. He is a gentleman of good education, and has had much practice in writing. During several years residence in the neighbourhood of Louisburg, he had exceptional opportunities for preparation for his work. The author also has himself been a soldier, having seen service in the American Civil War.

This book, entitled *William and Mary, A Tale of the Siege of Louisburg*, has appeared; and though it has received many favourable notices from friendly critics, all must be grievously disappointed in it. From no point of view is it a success. It is not a

Canadian novel. It is not a good story. It is a poor story poorly told. Worse than all it is not literature. It is simply a tirade against Calvinism—a raising of questions long since dead—treated in a manner so false to nature and art that the author reminds us strongly of the phantom of the old spinster in the *Ingaldsby Legends*, who attempted "to lick a ghost of a dog with a ghost of a stick."

The story opens with a description of a Puritan Sabbath in New Hampshire, in 1737. We are introduced to the household of deacon William Farley of Woodside, where we find the deacon himself sitting morally and physically erect in a straight-backed chair, his wife, and his son William, the hero of the piece, who, now a boy of ten, is engaged in the interesting task of studying the Westminster Catechism. While they are thus employed, a thunderstorm begins, on which the author lavishes his finest rhetorical touches. The thunder is "grandly terrible," "like the shriek of charging squadrons," "the artillery of God," "a roar as if heaven and earth had crashed together." Meanwhile "the trees writhe and twist, and twirl and reel." Suddenly there charges in upon them out of the rain their neighbour, Abijah Oliver, whose wife is taken ill. We are then conducted to Abijah's house, through "sweeping, swirling torrents," only to find that Mrs. Abijah has made her exit. At the death bed we find Mr. Fenwick, the Woodside pastor, a most excellent man, but who believes in the "eternal decrees" as firmly as his deacon. Abijah's children, Harry and Mary Oliver, also appear, the latter being the heroine of the story.

The purpose of the author evidently is to protest against the Puritanic type of Calvinism, which, as exhibited in Farley, tends to fatalism. He elegantly says that, if Calvinism were true, "we would be the victims of gigantic gorgons of evil malignity, reveling in blood and disporting in tears." The first protest comes from Abijah Oliver, who objects to the dogmas of "lection and 'pintin and 'fectool callin;" for he believes that Mr. Fenwick's unusually long sermon on that hot Sabbath had more to do with causing his wife's sudden illness than the eternal decrees. The minister and deacon have many tedious conversations on this subject. During one of these evening talks we have a glimpse of nature as seen from Farley's front door. Here is a characteristic