

A PICTURESQUE CANADIAN WRITER.

IN his admirable sketch of Major Richardson, prefacing the new edition of the latter's "History of the War of 1812," Mr. A. C. Casseiman, who edited the book, pays the following tribute to the literary style and strength of that author: "Three years before Scott died, when Thackeray was a stripling of eighteen, when Dickens had not yet become a reporter, Richardson was winning, by his first work of the imagination, applause from the English press and a large audience of English readers. In the very year of Scott's death, his masterpiece, "Wacousta," appeared. Whatever Richardson did he tried to do well. Unlike Cooper, he tells his story well, and tells it in faultless English. The interest is sustained to the end. There are no carelessnesses, no crudities, no notable mannerisms. Cooper often loses himself in the pathless mazes of his sentences. Richardson, incisive and logical, builds clause on clause, phrase on phrase, here adding a limiting detail and there a defining circumstance, until you marvel at the accumulated result and you would not have a single word charged. Yet there is no straining after rhetorical effect, no attempt at fine writing. The lucidity of style recalls Macaulay, who at this period was writing his early essays. A born literary artist, Richardson has drawn with a firm and skilled hand the children of his imagination."

The London Athenaeum declares the merits of the novel "Wacousta" consists in "the spirit of its historical pictures, which possess at least the consistency of truth. The writer displays no ordinary share of graphic power, and he has the rare talent of rendering a fearful battle in music. His descriptions of scenery are well executed but, unfortunately, they are rare."

In reading "Wacousta" one comes across passages of great power and beauty; the reader, indeed, regrets that the author so conscientiously subordinates everything to the narrative, and does not more frequently lend his pen to the word-painting in which he so remarkably excels.

A very good example of Major Richardson's skill in portrayal is found in the description of the renegade Englishman, whose adopted Indian name gives the title to the story of which he is the central figure.

"His companion (Wacousta) was habited in still a more extraordinary manner. His lower limbs were cased up to the mid-thigh in leathern leggings, the seam of which was on the outside, leaving a margin or border of about an inch wide, which had been slit into innumerable small fringes, giving them an air of elegance and lightness; a garter of leather, curiously wrought with the stained quills of the porcupine, encircled each leg immediately under the knee, where it was tied in a bow and then suffered to hang pendant half way down the limb; to the fringes of the leggings, moreover, were attached numerous dark-colored horny substances, emitting, as they rattled against each other at the slightest movement of the wearer, a tinkling sound resembling that produced by a number of small, thin delicate brass bells; these were the tender hoofs of the wild deer, dried, scraped and otherwise prepared for this ornamental purpose.

"The form and face of this individual were in perfect keeping with the style of his costume and the character of his equipment. His stature was beyond that of the ordinary race of men, and his athletic and muscular limbs united the extremes of strength and activity. His features, marked and prominent, wore a cast of habitual thought, strangely tinted with ferocity, and the expression of his otherwise not unhandsome countenance was

repellant and disdainful. At the first glance he might have been taken for one of the swarthy natives of the soil, but though time and constant exposure to scorching suns had given to his complexion a dusky hue, still there was wanting the quick, black, penetrating eye, the high cheek bone, the straight, coarse, shining black hair, the small bony hand and foot, and the placidly proud and serious air by which the former are distinguished. His own eye was of a deep bluish grey, his hair short, dark and wavy, his hands large and muscular, and so far from exhibiting any of the self-command of the Indian, the constant play of his features betrayed each passing thought with the same rapidity with which it was conceived. But if any doubt could have existed in the mind of him who beheld this strangely accoutred figure, it would have been instantly dispelled by a glance at his limbs. From his leggings to the hip that portion



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of the lower limb was completely bare, and disclosed, at each movement of the garment that was suffered to fall over it, not the swarthy and copper colored flesh of the Indian, but the pale though sunburnt skin of one of a more temperate clime."

Three new magazines are looked for as a result of the disruption of the S. S. McClure Co., publishers of McClure's Magazine, which was recently announced. One, which probably will see the light next Fall, will be backed, it is reported, by several writers who have retired from the staff of McClure's, among whom are Miss Ida M. Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker, and Lincoln Steffens. Another will be a new periodical along novel lines published by Mr. McClure himself; and the third, it is understood, will be backed by John S. Phillips