

*Cumbermede* is written because the example of Dr. Macdonald is seductive, and therefore dangerous. He is possessed of abilities of no mean order; he is sure of ardent admirers, and, in consequence, of a motley crowd of imitators. His own motives are unquestionably high and pure, and we have very little doubt that he will be of service in his day and generation. It does not follow, however, that because some protest seems necessary against the prevailing tendencies of the age, we ought to swing violently round to the opposite pole of thought. It may be well to avoid the Scylla of Materialism, but it is not so clear that, in the effort to do so, we need fall into the Charybdis of Mysticism. Dr. Macdonald's views of man and nature, if carried to their logical results, would place feeling upon the throne of reason, replace fact by morbid fancy, render religion the servant of mere intuition or caprice; and substitute the ravings of hysteria for the soberness of Christian devotion.

In Wilfrid Cumbermede the incipient tendencies only may be traced, not the ultimate extravagances. With the qualifications we have made, the work may be safely commended, as at once elevated in design, graceful in style, and earnest and impressive in tone.

Mr. Wilkie Collins is a being of another order. He does not trouble himself about psychology, subjective analysis, or the how and the why of individual character. To his view "the main element in the attraction of all stories is the interest of curiosity and the excitement of surprise." Life is a sort of chess-board, in which the pieces have indeed a different value; but this arises not from anything in the material of which they are made, but from the particular moves to which, by the laws of the game, they are restricted. The on-looker must, of course, be mystified as to the progress of the game, but he must make no mistake about the value of the pieces. By one or two strong daubs of colouring, Mr. Wilkie Collins marks his men beyond the possibility of mistake. In "Poor Miss Finch," the author begins by enumerating his human stock-in-trade—"a blind girl, two (twin) brothers, a skilful surgeon and a curious foreign woman." To which needs only be added a little nitrate of silver, administered to one of the brothers to give him a blue face, for the purpose not of distinction, but of confusion—and you have all the materials of Mr. Wilkie Collins' *legerdemain*. Madame Praeger is a very companionable governess, and the story of the blind girl, though rather too finely drawn out, is touchingly told. Herr Grosse is a sort of reformed Count Fosco; he is skilful in his profession, fond of Mayonnaise, and addicted to an unearthly style of swearing, perfectly incomprehensible to us, unless a residence in New York may account for it. We

shall not attempt any sketch of the plot, because that would be high treason in the author's eyes. "Poor Miss Finch" is perhaps, scarcely equal to some of Mr. Collins' former works, but it is sure to be read with interest from cover to cover, by any one who once takes it up.

We have only to add that these stories are admirably printed and profusely illustrated. They are issued by arrangement with the authors, and form the latest issues of the Canadian Copyright series in course of publication, by Messrs. Hunter, Rose & Co. On this account, apart altogether from their intrinsic value, they deserve the favourable consideration of the Canadian public.

RED RIVER. By Joseph James Hargrave, F.R.G.S. Montreal: Printed for the Author by John Lovell, 1871.

Voltaire, in his *Charles XII.*, makes a remark to the effect that, under the operation of some law of mental perspective, men are apt to imagine that the events of their own time and country, passing, as such events do, under their own immediate observation, are the most momentous that have befallen the human race since the creation of the world. It is only upon some principle of this kind, that such a phenomenon as the publication of a work like the present can be accounted for. The author is a native of Great Britain, who, in 1861, emigrated to the scene of his labours, where he has resided ever since. A residence of ten years, among a scattered population of less than 12,000 souls, all told, in a remote region, isolated from the rest of the world, seems to have had the effect which one would naturally expect. Events which happen out of the ordinary dull and monotonous routine of life in such a place, no matter how trivial in themselves, or how unimportant to the outside world, have acquired in the mind of the author, solely by reason of their rarity, a historic dignity.

The first four chapters, containing a description of the author's journey by sea and land from Liverpool to St. Paul's are quite out of place in a semi-historical work. The trip was more than usually uneventful, and the story of it is not told in a manner to redeem any deficiency in the matter. Besides, it has been told over and over again, and by such men as Lyell, Dickens, Peto, Dilke, Hepworth Dixon, W. F. Rae, Dr. Russell, Anthony Trollope, and others, most of them accomplished writers capable of imparting interest to the dullest theme. But what possible interest is there to a person wishing to study the history of Manitoba, in ordinary commonplace remarks upon the usual stock subjects of travellers to America: the sea voyage, sea-sickness, custom-house troubles, the value of American silver, the railways,