

BOOK NOTICES.

MONTCALM AND WOLFE. Vol. I. By Francis Parkman. Boston: Little, Brown and Co. Toronto: Williamson and Co.

Mr. Parkman has made the field of early Canadian history his own, and we should find it difficult to point to a writer who has written with more sympathy for his subject, with a greater degree of preparation, or in a more captivating style. His new work, entitled "Montcalm and Wolfe," is the seventh of the series of his narratives on "France and England in North America." With regret we learn that, with the exception, possibly, of one other volume, dealing with the period between 1700 and 1748, the present work is to be the last. That he has meanwhile skipped the period referred to, we can well understand, as he has been anxious to give a measure of completeness to his project, by dealing at once with the larger subject which closes the period of French occupation of the continent. His health, we understand, is precarious; and whether we get from his pen a volume that shall fill the gap from the beginning of the century to the Conquest is not so important as it is to secure the filling in on his canvas of the larger figures and culminating events which complete the series of historical pictures. A perusal of the preface to the present volume will give the reader an idea of how adequately Mr. Parkman has furnished himself with trustworthy material for his new work. In its preparation he has laid under tribute the archives of both continents. To quote the author, "the subject has been studied as much from life and in the open air as at the library table." Here, no doubt, is the secret of Mr. Parkman's success as a historian. The volume before us may be said only to lead up to, and not actually to deal with, the central figures in the drama which closed with the Conquest. Montcalm alone, and not Wolfe, is introduced. The period dealt with is confined, in the main, to the years 1754-57; but within these years we have important ground gone over, and a picture presented to us of the trend of events immediately preceding the fall of Quebec. A few bold strokes on the canvas set before us the two opposing nations—the England, political, social, and military, of the Second George; and the France, with the glitter and silken nobility, of Louis XV. and the Pompadour. As a pendant to the picture of the social and political aspects of these nations, we have a crayon sketch of the attitude of the other European powers, and a silhouette of the American combatants. Here are two specimen bits from the canvas, pictures of the social England and France of the period:—

If politics had run to commonplace, so had morals; and so too had religion. Despondent writers of the day even complained that British courage had died out. There was little sign to the common eye that, under a dull and languid surface, forces were at work preparing a new life, material, moral, and intellectual. As yet, Whitefield and Wesley had not awakened the drowsy conscience of the nation, nor the voice of William Pitt roused it like a trumpet-peal. It was the unwashed and unsavory England of Hogarth, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne; of Tom Jones, Squire Western, Lady Bellaston, and Parson Adams; of the "Rake's Progress," and "Marriage à la Mode"; of the lords and ladies who yet live in the undying gossip of Horace Walpole, be-powdered, be-patched, and be-ringed, flirting at masked balls, playing cards till daylight, retailing scandal, and exchanging double meanings. Beau Nash reigned king over the gaming-tables of Bath; the ostrich-plumes of great ladies mingled with the peacock-feathers of courtesans in the rotunda at Ranelagh Gardens; and young lords in velvet suits and embroidered ruffles played away their patrimony at White's Chocolate House, or Arthur's Club. Vice was bolder than to-day, and manners more courtly, perhaps, but far more coarse.

The prestige of the (French) monarchy was declining with the ideas that had given it life and strength. A growing disrespect for king, ministry, and clergy was beginning to prepare the catastrophe that was still some forty years in the future. While the valleys and low places of the kingdom were dark with misery and squalor, its heights were bright with a gay society—elegant, fastidious, witty—craving the pleasures of the mind as well as of the senses, criticizing everything, analyzing everything, believing nothing. Voltaire was in the midst of it, hating, with all his vehement soul, the abuses that swarmed about him, and assailing them with the inexhaustible shafts of his restless and piercing intellect. Montesquieu was showing to a despot-ridden age the principles of political freedom. Diderot and D'Alembert were beginning their revolutionary Encyclopædia. Rousseau was sounding the first notes of his mad eloquence—the wild revolt of a passionate and diseased genius against a world of falsities and wrongs. The salons of Paris, cloyed with other pleasures, alive to all that was racy and new, welcomed the pungent doctrines, and played with them as children play with fire, thinking no danger; as time went on, even embraced them in a genuine spirit of hope and goodwill for humanity. The Revolution began at the top—in the world of fashion, birth, and intellect—and propagated itself downwards. "We walked on a carpet of flowers," Count Ségur afterwards said, "unconscious that it covered an abyss," till the gulf yawned at last, and swallowed them.

Such was the social condition of the two nations that were about to take each other by the throat in the deadly struggle for supremacy in the New World. Mr. Parkman introduces the picture to account for the imbecilities that marked the relations of both countries with their kin across the Atlantic. In the opening and following chapters are strikingly set before the reader the difficulties the colonists had to contend with in maintaining a contest, not only against the forces of civilization, but against those of Nature and barbarism. The scene shifts from the Ohio to the Bay of Fundy, or from the St. Lawrence to the Monongahela. Every tribe of Indians successively confronts us, and every phase of the Jesuit is presented to view. We have the episodes of Acadian expatriation, and the horrors of the Indian massacre on Lake George—the fall of Oswego and the attack and surrender of Fort William Henry. Nor is the interest confined to events. Washington and Jumonville; Bigot and Vaudreuil; Winslow and Shirley; Braddock and Dinwiddie; Dieskau and Levis—all live again and play their part in history, so far as the volume goes. Montcalm we are first introduced to in France; but the scene quickly shifts from the domestic happiness of the family-seat at Candiac to the barbarity of Indian pow-pows at Montreal and the sickening sights of cannibalism and the war-dance on Lake Champlain. The portraits of Montcalm, of De Levis, and Bougainville, his companions-in-arms, and of Vaudreuil, the Governor of New France, are full of interest, to the Canadian reader especially. The descriptive passages are many and graphic. Some matters of history Mr. Park-

man puts, if not in a new light, at least with more clearness and effect, as he has succeeded in accumulating material bearing on the case. Everything he probes to the bottom; and his judgments are given with a frankness and dispassionateness which well become the historian. We are tempted once more to make a quotation, with which we take leave for the present of this most interesting book. The extract is from Mr. Parkman's summing up of the chapter on Acadian expatriation.

New England humanitarianism, melting into sentimentality at a tale of woe, has been unjust to its own. Whatever judgment may be passed on the cruel measure of wholesale expatriation, it was not put in execution till every resource of patience and persuasion had been tried in vain. The agents of the French Court, civil, military, and ecclesiastical, had made some act of force a necessity. We have seen by what vile practices they produced in Acadia a state of things intolerable, and impossible of continuance. They conjured up the tempest; and when it burst on the heads of the unhappy people, they gave no help. The government of Louis XV. began with making the Acadians its tools, and ended with making them its victims.

MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.

THE Chicago *Current* of last week prints an unintentionally comic article by Mr. McGovern on "Some Aspects of Music." This gentleman desires to prove, first, that a music-box, though it begins by delighting the hearer, becomes afterwards somewhat monotonous. "There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave to tell us this." He next says that a piano, however well played, has the same result; that an organ is little better; that a full orchestra and large chorus lack variety of tone; and that, in fact, never will real lovers of music escape this monotony until in a future life they hear the "ten thousand harps" of Milton. Possibly even they may fall on a person of so ardent a temperament, unless he persuades some of them to be a little out of tune as a fillip to his jaded spirit. Mr. McGovern commences by the remarkable assertion that, "To people born with a 'musical ear'—that is, with a tympanum stretched tightly enough to respond to the upper octaves of vibration—it (the music-box) is always an unqualified delight at the early hearings. Sometimes the ear is so peculiarly true that the sensation of pleasure never departs, and the rapid vibrations continue to be the only music entirely in harmony with the nature of the hearer." What news this will be for musicians! They have hitherto supposed that he who could appreciate the smallest shades of difference in pitch had the best ear for music; but, according to this theory, the most perfect ear is that which approaches nearest to the perception of the highest notes of the twelve octaves which form the theoretic compass of the human ear. If the tympanum be subjected to unusual tension, so as to raise its fundamental note, the perception of acute sounds will be heightened, but the general sense of hearing will be dulled thereby, not improved. This can be easily tested by closing the nose and mouth and sending breath out of the lungs. By this air is blown through the eustachian tube into the cavity of the tympanum, forcing the membrane outwards and stretching it. This raises its fundamental note, diminishes its power of vibrating in sympathy with low notes, increases its range of sympathetic vibration upwards, and, on the whole, impairs the sense of hearing. Mr. McGovern goes on to say that those who have not this natural gift of appreciation of the higher notes become in time tired of the effect of the music-box. An explanation of the phenomenon would be interesting, as the instrument in question certainly contains bass, as well as treble notes; in the meantime musicians will be inclined to credit these people with a more developed musical taste than a less developed musical ear. Mr. McGovern modestly includes himself in this inferior class, as he not only confesses to getting tired of the peculiar "flavour" of the music-box, but also says that, having attended a piano recital of several hours' duration, that instrument had the same effect upon him. The programme of that recital would be a curiosity, as the average length of such a performance is about an hour and a-half, at most two hours; but "several hours" of piano recital would certainly be apt to pall, so would several hours of pictures, as any one knows who has "done" the entire Burlington House exhibition in one afternoon. Of the piano he says: "Its flavour is so marked that, except to him who is willing to have charity, there is no difference in tunes. It is not a Rubinstein 'Pres du Ruisseau,' nor a Beethoven Sonata, nor a Mendelssohn 'Song Without Words,' it is 'Piano,' a remarkable and interesting thing, but above all things 'Piano.'" Instead of "charity" a musical ear would be more useful for distinguishing tunes, and would then be much better employed than in appreciating the "upper octaves of vibration" and proving that it is "true" by never tiring of the music-box. The writer goes on to say that this, which he considers true of the music-box and piano, "May, we can opine, be true of the organ, the vast orchestra—aye, even the festival with a thousand voices and two hundred instruments," and concludes by surmising that only in a future life shall we get the disembodied essence of music that he longs for. He seems to consider that the only necessary proof of the music-box, piano, organ, and orchestra being on the same dead level of monotony is his dictum, "we can opine." We can opine much that is not the case, and certainly more proof is needed to support such a sweeping assertion. The piano, it is true, has only one *timbre* (the technical term translated by Mr. McGovern into the inelegant word "flavour"), and for those incapable of appreciating the endless shades of expression gained by the varying touch of an accomplished pianist it may be monotonous. The organ, however, has an enormous variety of tones and combinations, whilst the orchestra is practically unlimited in its resources. There are, certainly, limits to the length of time that any ear can listen to music, as there are limits to the capabilities of the eye for enjoying pictures without fatigue; but, within these limits any one who can complain of monotony should cease to be considered musical at all. There are