

And what was Gonzalo Pizarro? A gallant knight; liberal and kind-hearted, if somewhat vain and hasty; a brave and devoted leader; who was not only influenced by the fact that the conquest may be said to have lain in his family, but was warmly supported by the real affection of the larger portion of the Spanish inhabitants, until it became apparent that his continuance of the struggle was unjustifiable rebellion.

And what is Riel?

FRANC-TIMEUR.

THE FRENCH DRAMA.

(Continued.)

Jean Racine, the favourite tragic poet of the court of Louis XIV., and the most admired of all the French dramatists, was born at Porté Milton on the 21st December, 1639. He was educated at the College of Beauvais till the age of sixteen, when he was transferred to a school in the Abbey of Port-Royal-des-Champs, where his grandmother and aunt were leading a reclus life. Lovable as he was, the affectionate seriousness of his character, as well as his amiable disposition endearing him to all around him, his friends yet troubled for him, fearing that his strong sensibilities and vivid imagination would lead him into trouble. Here his love for the Greek poets, of which his favourite was Euripides, was first developed, and his teachers, fearful for his spiritual welfare, thought it necessary to condemn, and even to punish their favourite when they learned that he actually himself indulged in the "sinful practice of verse-making!" The Sacristan Lancelot, finding him one day deep in the "Loves of Theagenes and Charicleus" (a Byzantine romance, by Heliodorus) immediately threw the book into the fire; but the youthful poet only smiled; he already had the contents firmly fixed in his memory, and no burning of the book could take it from him.

After residing for three years at Port Royal, Racine proceeded to the College of Harcourt, where he completed his studies, and saw more of the world than was pleasing to his old friends at Port Royal, whose feelings were easily hurt at his writing in one of his letters a burlesque on the pious phrasology of the inmates of the Abbey.

Racine's first production was an Ode on the marriage of Louis XIV. for which he received a present of 100 louis d'or, and a pension, which however was not sufficient to maintain him. In 1661, having held out to him, by an uncle in Languedoc, the hope of a benefice, should he take orders, Racine attempted to study theology, but he soon found it an impossibility. While striving to fix his mind on the deep questions of the church, his heart was with Ariosto and Sophocles; so giving up the attempt in disgust, he returned to Paris, and having acquired the friendship of Boileau, devoted himself to poetry.

The first tragedy which issued from the pen of the young author was "Les Frères ennemis," which, though far inferior to his later pieces, gives promise of the genius afterwards developed; in this play he imitates Corneille, later on he shows more independence. In 1666 appeared "Alexandre," but it was not till 1668 when "Andromache" was given to the public, that his evident genius attracted marked attention; from that time for ten years Racine's career as a dramatist was unsurpassably brilliant. In 1669 or 1670 appeared "Britannicus," and in 1671 "Berenice." Corneille attempted this subject at almost the same time, but not with the same success: it is the picture of two hearts struggling against a noble and blameless love, and required something more than Corneille was able to give. "Bajazet" which followed in 1672 was founded on an event in Turkish history, and though in beauty of style it must be reckoned below some of Racine's other tragedies, yet the characters of Bajazet and Atalide, the principal figures in the play, are two of the finest and noblest portrayed by the poet. "Mithridate," "Iphigénie" and "Phedre" followed in quick succession, appearing at intervals of two years. Then in 1677, at the age of 37, Racine suddenly withdrew from the theatre, and would have become a Carthusian monk but for the intervention of some of his friends, who suggested that instead of doing as he wished, he should marry some pious woman and cultivate domestic virtues. Racine accepted this strangely-placed alternative, and a pious, though not over intelligent female being procured, the marriage took place in 1677. Racine was shortly after appointed historiographer to the king, and in 1689, at the request of Madame de Maintenon, wrote the play of "Esther," to be performed by the young ladies of St. Cyr. This play, though beautiful in its expression, does not rank high as a drama, but it is deserving of praise, in that it prompted the author to write "Athalie," his last, and undoubtedly finest work.

Racine's tragedies may be divided into three classes:

1. Those whose subjects are drawn from the *Greek theatre*, as *Andromache*, *Iphigénie* and *Phedre*.

2. *Historic tragedies*, as *Britannicus*, *Berenice* and *Mithridate*.

3. *Religious dramas* as *Esther* and *Athalie*. The great singer of Love in the early and brilliant part of Louis' reign, sounds in the ears of the old king the grand echo of the Divine Word.

From the days of Corneille and Racine to the present hour, critics of all nations have compared the two great dramatists; great upholders of Corneille have striven to condemn Racine; admirers of Racine, to detract from Corneille. They represent two different styles of dramatic writing prompted by two very different souls. Corneille is sublime, exalted, noble; Racine, natural, passionate and pathetic. Corneille shows us men as they *should be*; Racine, men as they *are*; one forces us to adopt his characters and his ideas; the other adapts himself to ours; one uplifts, astonishes, teaches; the other touches, moves, penetrates; one attracts admiration, the other feeling. Whatever there is of beauty, nobility, or grandeur, is

handled by the former; by the latter whatever in passion is delicate and lovely; Corneille is more moral, Racine more natural; the latter gains in truth what he loses in grandeur. Racine's characters are not annobled as Corneille's by their moral perfection, but by the free development of their natural qualities. In tenderness and elegance, grace of style, and delicacy of sentiment, Racine is without a rival. His faults may be ascribed chiefly to the influence of national taste; a certain stiffness and coldness; a strict adherence to rules which forbids all romantic colouring,—these instead of detracting from Racine's merit, make us admire him the more. Working within the scanty limits allowed to French dramatists, he managed with the utmost skill to raise the tone of feeling. His delineation of the passion of love is unsurpassed in tenderness, and none before or since has as well depicted the conflict of contending passions. Racine's style is exquisite. To quote from La Harpe in his *Eloge de Racine*, "His expression is always so happy and so natural that it seems as if no other could have been found; and every word is placed in such a manner that we cannot fancy any other place to have suited it as well."

In my next I will proceed to give a sketch of the plot of "Athalie," and the closing scene in the life of the great poet.

ESEMA.

MEDICAL NOTES.

The writer of "Medical Notes," like many others in Halifax, has been taking a holiday in the rural districts, which will account for the absence of said Notes in *THE CRITIC*.

Dr. McDonald's truthful remarks about diphtheria and the necessity of legislation, has passed without remark from any one in the profession. The doctor will have to dip his pen in gall and wormwood, if he wants the average doctor to be up and doing. Some persons withhold comment, because it is the *Secular Press* which deals with the question; very few of these people, however, pass a sleepless night when they find themselves commented upon by the same Press.

The distinguished Dr. Sands, of New York, is again visiting us, the doctor must find something attractive, socially as well as physically, to visit dull old Halifax, so often and so regularly. We are quite pleased to have him with us, and hope he may come to see and be even many summers in the future.

Small-pox is slowly extending its loathsome lengths over this country, but will have to move more rapidly to cause much havoc before Canadian frosts will kill it, with the more useful germs of vegetation.

Poor Spain excites the pity of the civilized world, if the scourge should bring her people out of their mental and physical lethargy, or produce another "Jenner," it would be a blessing to herself and the world, instead of a national curse.

Dr. McKeen, of Sydney, was in town last week; as usual with Cape Bretonians, he is a fine specimen, physically.

A "Medical Journal," started by some of our wealthy physicians, (somebody please count them, he will not lose much time), would break both hearts and pockets of those hardy enough to undertake it.

Dr. Cameron, of this city, is a good sample of what hard work, ambition, and strong common sense will do. The doctor is rapidly climbing the professional ladder, and he is doing it good-naturedly.

Dr. Carritto, of Amherst, left home for a milder climate last week; he is but a shadow of the once stalwart frame. He left home with the kind wishes of hundreds of his old patients and friends. We hope he, who has brought health and pleasure to so many others, may return as jolly-hearted and robust as ever.

"Medical Notes" carries two shooting irons, a poisoned dagger, a bottle of vitriol, an ounce of cayenne pepper, a sling-shot, a Philadelphia black-jack, and is accompanied by a fighting man and a bull dog; he intends hereafter, now that he has his full equipment for defence, to criticise where, when and whom he pleases. Spiel!

ASSEGAIS.

HOTEL ACCOMMODATION.

To the Editor of *The Critic*:—

It is well sometimes to "see ourselves as others see us." A correspondent, who has more than once spent sometime in Halifax, writes from Bournemouth, a small English town by the sea side:—"The hotel matter seems so vital to Halifax that one wonders the people do not see it. Here is Bournemouth completely artificial, even the very pine trees exotic, and the soil so poor that spruces will hardly grow in it, and yet the town has palatial hotels; population only 18,000. Halifax, with its unequalled advantages, would attract visitors from all parts of Britain and America. But the old place is *sleepy-sleepy*!"

Another correspondent writes from the United States, after this summer's experience in Halifax:—"Could not the want of first-class accommodation for visitors to Halifax be made known by advertisement in the United States, so that some of the surplus money in the States could be pressed into the service? It is really a shame there should not be a well-kept boarding house in Halifax; it is such a delightful place. We shall never forget our summer there, and all the kindness we received, and shall hope to go back there."

Yours, etc.,

PROGRESS.