

able number of books, contemporary or nearly so with the events described, also help to throw light upon them ; and these have all been examined. The citations in the margins represent but a small part of the authorities consulted.

This mass of material has been studied with extreme care, and peculiar pains have been taken to secure accuracy of statement. In the preface of "The Old Régime," I wrote : "Some of the results here reached are of a character which I regret, since they cannot be agreeable to persons for whom I have a very cordial regard. The conclusions drawn from the facts may be matter of opinion ; but it will be remembered that the facts themselves can be overthrown only by overthrowing the evidence on which they rest, or bringing forward counter-evidence of equal or greater strength, — and neither task will be found an easy one."

The invitation implied in these words has not been accepted. "The Old Régime" was met by vehement protest in some quarters ; but, so far as I know, none of the statements of fact contained in it have been attacked by evidence, or even challenged. The lines just quoted are equally applicable to this volume. Should there be occasion, a collection of documentary proofs