

BOOK REVIEWS.

The Scot in British North America. By W. J. Rattray, B. A. Vol. II. Toronto: Maclear & Co.

AS the tourist fairly enters the Niagara River he sees in clear weather, far away upon Queenston Heights, a lofty column which holds the stranger's eye like a basilisk, and haunts him with its stony gaze through every winding of the river. It is well known, however, to the old inhabitants that this tall sentry is sometimes not averse to kindly intercourse; and that it has its moods of sunshine as well as of gloom. In bright, warm weather, it often lifts its sad eyes from the old battle-field, and casts a wistful smile on arriving and departing throngs of hilarious youth. Occasionally in their faces it is startled to find the features of those gallant yeomen, over whose memory, as well as of their chief, it is its appointed duty to keep watch and ward. But it must be confessed that the column is much given to solitary musing. Moreover, like all the rest of the world, it is utterly depressed by gloomy weather and evil tidings. At such times, the column cowers from view, or it gazes sullenly down into the deep gorge, whence that mysterious river sends up husky whispers of tragedies, new and old—of old-time wars fought out on its banks, long ages before our history began, and now-a-days, alas, the river tells of foulest murders and most pitiful suicides. The stranger is ever inquiring how yonder gaunt sentinel came to be posted there? The book now before us, tells us what Scotland had to do with the matter. 1812, and its stirring *réveillé* lead in Mr. Rattray's second volume; and Macdonnell's Glengarry-men, impart their own verve to the story. 'War is, of itself, a hateful thing; and yet when it takes the dimensions of a struggle for existence—a conflict for home and hearth, wife and children—there can be no better educator for freeman. That which stirs the fibres of the heart and quickens its action healthfully, stiffens the backbone of the man and

raises his political stature for all time to come.' Having thus pitched his keynote, Mr. Rattray skilfully develops his theme—the gradual evolution of our system of Responsible Government. During the quarter century, ending with Lord Elgin's administration, the most active politicians were almost exclusively Scotchmen, or of Scottish extraction; and our author is thus able, within the plan of his work, to develop in personal sketches our early political history. Gourlay—'the banished Briton and Neptunian,' as he styled himself; Strachan, a true representative of the Church Militant; W. L. Mackenzie, the special aversion of the radical Gourlay, as well as of Strachan and the Family Compact—each member of the trio abhorred and opposed the other two with unquestionable ardor and sincerity. The quarter century of our history following the Treaty of Ghent, is to the last degree malheroic—indeed so completely engrossed is it by the triangular duel of these east-coast Scots, that, if we withdraw from this chapter of our history their three-corned battle-field, there is absolutely nothing left. Yet constitutional issues of the greatest moment to Canadians were then worked out to solution; and these great issues so ennoble the actors, that we follow Mr. Rattray's narrative with sustained interest. The facts are stated with admirable fairness, and there is a conscientious analysis of circumstances and motives that must win for our author the confidence of that ever-increasing number who desire, above and before all other things, historical truth. This discriminate handling is surely needed, where the softer features of character were often neglected in the early portraits, or where the portraits have been so long turned to the wall, that these more tenderlines have passed from general memory. It is well to remind our young men that Gourlay and Mackenzie were not 'ah, really mere demagogues and brawlers;' and that, on the other hand, Strachan was not in his political epoch an immeasurable self-seeker.