

physical distress to the heart's depths. His was a tragic fate forged upon the anvil of great sufferings and torture. It seems incredible that works of such high standard, such exceptional qualities of style and diction, and such reliable historical value, could have been written by one, who, from the very outset of his literary career (in 1844) became afflicted with troubles which entailed great suffering, repeatedly threatened nervous prostration, and even loss of sight. At one time insanity itself was feared, through the tortures he endured. In spite of this and other infirmities, he struggled steadily and perseveringly to accomplish the task he had undertaken of writing the history of the conflicts between French and English that ended with the conquest of Canada. This he had the satisfaction of finally completing, to the delight of his friends and admirers, and to the advantage of the literary world.

Parkman was a man of great personal energy and activity, always wanting to be on the move. Rest was intolerable to him. During the attacks of severe pain to which he was subject, he was impelled to persistent physical efforts. As he often carried them to excess, they were followed by exhaustion and aggravation of his sufferings. On this point Dr. George Ellis says: "His maladies intensified his impulses to physical and mental exertion, while they limited the hours he could wisely give to reading and writing."

Farnham, who wrote a clever biography of Parkman, gives these details: "The extent of his sufferings is nowhere revealed, only hinted at, in writing; he is remembered, however, by an intimate friend or two, to have said that death would often have been a welcome end to his trials. . . . Once, when his physician, during a bad at-

tack, encouraged him by saying that he had a strong constitution, Parkman replied quaintly: "I'm afraid I have" . . . Sometimes, however, he felt so strongly that he had more than his share of trouble caused him to explode in a few very forcible expressions; then his quiet patience soon regained the mastery." After many years of agonizing sufferings he had attained almost a savage's endurance of pain; but what a nerve-racking life!

In a letter Parkman says: "I can bear witness that no amount of physical pain is so intolerable as the position of being stranded and doomed to lie rotting year after year. However, I have not yet abandoned any plan which I ever formed, and I have no intention of ever abandoning any." This is grit of the true ring. From such strains of stress and spells of gloom, he would rise again into the sunlight from the darkness, and be cheerful, and charming and as interesting as ever.

Farnham says, referring to the spring of 1848: "The difficulties were threefold: an extreme weakness of sight, disabling him even from writing his name, except with eyes closed; a condition of the brain prohibiting fixed attention, except at occasional and brief intervals; and an exhaustion and total derangement of the nervous system producing a mood of mind most unfavorable to efforts. To be made with impunity, the attempts must be made with the most watchful caution."

Parkman would read one minute at a time, rest one minute by looking at distant objects, begin again for another minute, and after the same interval of rest would start afresh. He would do this for a half hour at a time, twice or three times a day, and this only when

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