

MR. PERKINGTON'S DIARY.

Monday, September 5th. Met B—this morning who told me that for three hours he had been attending divisions in the City Council. I asked him of what kind, for divisions of some sort are there always on hand. "On this occasion," he answered, "we were dividing and redividing on amendments." "Such," I said, "seems to be the normal state of your worshipful council." But it does seem strange that so much valuable time should be lost in such puny bickerings. C—accounts for it by the intense love of Aldermen of hearing their own voices, and the pleasure they derive from voting upon however small a matter. Was horrified to hear that the Council had decided not to water the streets for some days on account of the lowness of the water in Beaver Lake. Thought of the state of our streets when Beaver Lake was full, and dreaded the morrow. Wife and daughters having bought new autumn bonnets and other trip-pery (ex Hecla) were much depressed at the news.

Tuesday, September 6th. Went to Gardens to see the flower show. Dismal forebodings realized. Wind of course rose, as street water failed, and arrived at the show as white as a miller. The display of flowers was miserable and attendance small, though considering the number of beautiful gardens which I pass in my walks, I cannot but wonder that the list of exhibitors is not longer. Perhaps many fear that their flowers would sustain injury at such a show. This I am told would not be the case. My wife has a superb sun flower in our back yard which she truly says would make more show than anything we saw in the H. G. Wife and daughters sulky about the weather, so meant to dine at club. Saw B—on the steps, who looked coldly on me for what I had said about City Council; so dined at Stewarts, where I found excellent fruit from the States.

Wednesday, September 7th. Wife insisted on my attending sale in Pleasant street. Bought fifty things I did not want and gave three times their price for many, because I saw that fellow C—deliberately bidding against me. I can't understand why folks will go on bidding for things they cannot possibly want. C—did for a mouse-trap. I got the mouse-trap however, for I had not forgotten the way C—outbid me about that cradle I bought such a fancy to last month. Wondered who those people are that one meets at every sale and what they do with their purchases. Wife was nodding and blinking so fast at the auctioneer, that, for family considerations, I thought it best to remove her.

Thursday, September 8th. To Windsor, to the Bazaar which wife begged me to attend. Found out just after leaving Mount Uniacke that the bazaar had been held the day before and had been a great success. Was much displeased and determined to stop at the next station, though I knew which I had come on to Windsor. Stopped at Still Water and waited for afternoon train. Eat bread and molasses for luncheon, nothing else being at hand in the only house I could see within miles. Came back to Halifax by evening train, and arrived late at the great dinner, to our Mayor. Much speech-making in which I did not join, and which bored me. Hope we may have as good a mayor next year. Passed a pleasant evening, and found wife just returned from a tea-party where she had picked up some very funny bits of news as she called them, but which I call gossip or even scandal.

Friday, September 9th. Lost Ponto this morning, and the more sorry for it, because his collar has gone to be engraved and he is now without one. Sent out servant to enquire about the dog. No tidings. B—called and said he had just seen C—walking with a dog very like Ponto to the police station. Went there at once and made enquiries. Recognized my dogs howl, in an inner room—rushed in—and found the poor beast already half dead from poison. "Can he be saved?" I asked. "No," answered a policeman. "I guess not now, we have been trying how much he could stand for the last three hours. I fancy this dose will fix him." Dog died. Went home in a rage, but learn that C—(who owes me a grudge) has a perfect right to act towards any dog as he did to mine. This law should be altered. Endocia perfectly wretched about poor Ponto, very much out of sorts to bed early.

OUR GARRISONS IN THE WEST.*

Our Garrison in the West has created no little stir in the literary world in Halifax, and has been honoured by extremely laudatory reviews, in all, or nearly all the local papers. Why it has been singled out for this marked and special commendation, we are at a loss to understand. That it does possess a certain degree of merit, we do not wish to deny, but praise ad libitum is much out of place. We would vain hope, that we may justly congratulate the reviewers on their proficiency, in the art of "plastering," which, for the benefit of the uninitiated, we may explain to mean, praising a book to order, without going through the formality of reading it. If our congratulations are misplaced,

* *Our Garrison in the West*, or, *Sketches in British North America*, by Francis Duncan, M. A.; F. G. S.; F. R. G. S.; Member of Colonies Committee S. A.; D. C. L. King's College, N. S.; Lieutenant Royal Artillery.

and the writers of the poems in question really did read *Our Garrison in the West*, their literary discrimination must be of a remarkably feeble order, and we have no doubt, their silly adulation was quite as revolting to the author, as to ourselves.

After these remarks, it is absolutely necessary that we give our own view of the merits and demerits of the book in question. In his preface, the author apologizes for irregularity and lameness of style, on the plea of hurry and illness. Now apart from the fact, that there is no reason on earth, why *Our Garrison in the West* should not have been just as successful if published six months later, and therefore with the advantage of so much more revision, this is a most pernicious description of preface. It so to speak, seeks credit by inference; while deprecating damaging criticism, it seems to say, "if I can do this when ill and in a hurry, what could I not achieve when well and at leisure." It does not, however, also much harm, as might be anticipated, as people have got into the habit of ignoring prefaces, while concluding that the author has done his best, however bad or good that may be. If he chooses to assert that he had not done so, the reading public has in his case an additional right to complain, at having had revised or carelessly written books flung before it.

We will now turn our attention from the preface to the book. From the materials he lays before us, and from sketches here and there in his happier style. We think the author had it in his power to produce a readable book, of no very high literary order, but amusing, and to a certain extent instructive. All possibility, of this however, vanishes, when he adopts a style affected and verbose to the last degree. Every page he writes, except in Chap. XV and XVI, could with advantage be condensed into half the space, and many, we fear, would disappear altogether in the process. Redundant wordiness, a passion for tying an adjective to every substantive, gives a labored and heavy tone to his writing; and we need scarcely remark, that jocularity in this ponderous form, is rather trying. When Mr. Duncan is able to emancipate himself from the florid style, he is forcible and neat, while his simpler descriptions of scenery are often remarkably good. The chapter "Through the thousand Islands to Kingston," too long to give here, is a specimen of what he can do in his happier moments, though even here we detect at times a straining after effect, which jars upon our feelings. One habit of Mr. Duncan's, we cannot too strongly condemn, that is his practice of pulling in by the ears, quotation after quotation, apropos or not in they come, at the top of a page, at the bottom, and in the middle, till we are tempted to believe that they are pressed into the service, for symmetry, not for sense. We have no particular objection to scraps of Latinity at the head of a chapter, and we are glad to find that the author keeps up his Horace, but it is surely somewhat pedantic to introduce an anecdote thus: "One of our mess, let me call him Smith.

"Quid rides? mutato nomine, fabula de te narratur."

We were just going to suggest that in a future edition, the chapter "On the Tracks of Longfellow" might with advantage, come in for a large share of the pruning-hook, as bordering on full-flavoured sentimentalism, but the way in which fact and fancy are therein mixed up, is too irresistibly comic to be lost. After, in obedience to the author's wishes, trying to fancy ourselves amongst

"Men whose lives glided on like rivers that water the woodlands, Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an image of heaven," and just as we were getting into a properly ecstatic frame of mind, we are suddenly brought down to mundane considerations by the prosaic announcement, that the fare from Halifax to St. John, N. B., is six and twenty shillings. From a dinner under difficulties on board the Creole, away we go to "linger among the fields, where the village (Grand-Pre) was, or by the shore of that bay where on that day of sorrow

"The ships with their wavering shadows, were riding at anchor" As dead to sublimary matters, we look, and lo! "the cloud, part, and as of old to Evangelize.

We see serenely the moon pass Forth from the folds of a cloud, and one star follows her footsteps. As out of Abraham's tent young Ishmael wandered with Hagar. Hey presto, to our amazement and discomfiture, we are discussing Nova Scotian apples with intense metaphorical gusto. The dinner on board the Creole, above alluded to, is by the bye, one of the best humorous passages in the book.

The waves thundered against the crazy beams, on which the tea-trays, called state-berths, were suspended, until you felt them give, and expected every moment the cold splash of water over your uneasy carcass. I forgot whether I was sea-sick or not, that voyage; but I remember attempting to partake of a meal on board. This may have been done as a cure for the malady, for constant stuffing is supposed, by some, heathen, to be a remedy; but whether it was so or not, of this I am sure, that even to a sound and healthy digestion, a meal on board the Creole, would have acted as a most violent emetic. Down, far down, in a part of the vessel where nothing but rats and par-boiled stewards could exist with comfort—in a Cabin, whose sides were lined with the mouths of gentlemen, in more or less advanced stages of illness, you saw by the flickering light of a