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A Half-Century of Conflict. By FRANCIS PARKMAN. Two volumes. Boston, Little, Brown & Co., 1892. — viii, 333 ; viii, 395 pp.

In the dainty preface with which Francis Parkman sent forth eight years ago his *Montcalm and Wolfe*, he called attention to the fact that the publication of that book as the concluding one in the series on "France and America in the New World," had left a period between 1700 and 1748 still untouched by him. "When this gap is filled," he added, "the series . . . will form a continuous history of the French occupation of this continent." It is the author himself, then, who instructs us how we are to describe the book now before us : it is a book written to fill a gap.

These words intimate at once the limitations and the triumphs of *A Half-Century of Conflict*. That particular half-century, surely, no American historian would have chosen for its own sake ; and this American historian has evidently been drawn to it, not by his taste or by his enthusiasm, but by his sense of duty, the austere purpose of a life-time, the sacredness of a great literary resolve, the scholar's ideal and the artist's passion for completeness.

The unattractiveness of the period for purposes of historic treatment may be accounted for, in part at least, by the wide local dispersal of its events, their seemingly accidental, fragmentary and fitting character, their apparent lack of connection or even of meaning, the absence of great men and of great deeds, — in short, by the inexorable curse of commonplace. Let it be admitted, then, that in the subject of this book are difficulties which no genius could overcome : that no industry or insight, no gift of historic interpretation, no enchantment of style, could cause the story of these forty-eight years to be so impressive or so instructive as is the story, told by this same master, of those years which hold for us *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West*, or *Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV.*, or, above all, *Montcalm and Wolfe*. Having admitted so much, it is probable that the most self-restrained critic will be inclined to confess that every conceivable difficulty in the period which genius could subdue seems to have been met by the genius of this author. Very likely there are other books of Parkman's which one would rather be reading than this book. Perhaps, however, no other book of his can give us, when all the difficulties of the situation are taken into account, so striking an indication of his literary power. Elsewhere he has been more attractive ; nowhere else has he overcome so many temptations to be unattractive.

In this book, then, it can fairly be said, Parkman has done, if not his most captivating work, at least his most difficult work. He has here pushed his way, an unaccompanied pioneer, through a vast and tangled

wilderness of events, — events miscellaneous, obscure, widely separated in space, apparently unrelated, petty, disorderly ; and he has discovered the true principle of order and of unity which binds them all together, and which makes them, as here depicted, stand out before us as essential, even if subordinate, parts of a very imposing world-drama. The two volumes on *Montcalm and Wolfe* portray the final struggle in the long contest between England and France for the possession of North America, — giving us, of course, the stately and tragical climax of the entire history. On the other hand, these two volumes lay before us, with the most consummate skill in arrangement, with the most exquisite tact in delineation, the vast detail of facts which filled the half-century immediately prior to that final struggle, which made that final struggle a necessity, which even foreshadowed its result. To the philosophic student of American history this book contributes data without which the fate of three races upon this continent, and the correlation of mighty forces in its national life, would be left inadequately explained.

The story of this half-century, as here told, may be said to fall into two great parts : the first stretching from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the year 1713, the year of the Peace of Utrecht ; the second stretching from 1713 to 1748, when at last “the colonists found a short breathing space against the great conclusive struggle of the Seven Years’ War.” In the first part, the action and interaction of events in North America find their true co-ordination and import as responding to the passions and the vicissitudes of the European War of the Spanish Succession. In the second part, the Peace of Utrecht is seen as merely ushering upon the stage “a threefold conflict for ascendancy in America, — the conflict for Acadia, the conflict for northern New England, and the conflict for the Great West.” Under this simple analysis a chaos of confused and meaningless incidents rises into order, and takes on the dignity of historic significance.

If we are to speak of the scientific quality of the work given to the world in these two volumes, it is enough to say that an author who in the course of more than forty years had never published anything ill-studied or ill-composed, has not here in any respect fallen below his own standard. Here, once more, we find that completeness and even affluence of documentary outfit, that patient and perfect mastery of the whole case in all its ramifications and in every particular, that serene fairness of judgment reached after an unbiassed consideration of all conflicting claims, and finally, that superb union of moderation and fearlessness in the announcement of results, which have from the first won for this historian the thorough confidence of every reader who was not himself already a thorough partisan.

It is quite impossible, in this place, even to indicate the many direc-

tions in which this new book of Parkman's throws new light upon a period of American history never yet very well understood. For the comprehension of race-types — French, Indian, English, American — this book adds much material to that already furnished by the author's previous labors. Here one finds fresh and startling proofs of the acuteness and the boldness of French statesmanship in its designs upon this continent ; while of French foresight, possibly no more effective instance has anywhere been given than that which is here brought out, wherein, so early as the year 1710, the writer of a *Mémoire sur la Nouvelle Angleterre* makes the amazing prediction, which sixty years later began to be literally fulfilled, that if France shall disappear from North America, then "ces diverses provinces se réuniront, et, secouant le joug de la monarchie Anglaise, s'érigeront en démocratie." Furthermore, with evidence both new and rich, the author presents to us again the contrast between the French and the English types of colonial government and colonial person ; the ineffable hatred and dread of the French establishments in America which filled the souls of the English colonists ; the vigor, self-denial, ability and courage with which those colonists, especially in New England, planned and toiled and fought for their deliverance from the French peril ; the deterioration in character of the Jesuits in America in passing from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth ; the superficial and the fruitless nature of the religious work which the Jesuits wrought upon the Indians ; finally, the author's favorite thesis, that the philanthropic conception of the Indian is one which can be held by no man who ever comes into actual contact with that most intractable biped.

Upon the whole, *A Half-Century of Conflict* rounds out to completion a great literary and scientific undertaking, which cannot fail to have a permanent interest for the people of the three nations who are the chief subjects of it, — Englishmen, Frenchmen and Americans. It would be a real misfortune if the accent which is so commonly laid on the literary charm of these brilliant histories were to lead us to underestimate their value as mere contributions to knowledge ; for it is a perfectly quiet account of them to say, that they are essential to any real understanding of much American history prior to 1763, and of not a little American history since that time.

Yet it is of the purely literary charm of these histories that one would prefer to speak, in closing, whatever he might have to say about them. In Francis Parkman there remains to us, amid the hurried and amorphous literary scrap-work of our day, an historian who expresses the old-time sense of leisure, thoroughness, precision, and grace of style, — the last one of that noble quartette of American historians who held to a lofty ideal respecting mere form in the presentation of their work.

Perhaps Parkman will yet be ranked as the greatest of the four. At any rate, he is perhaps the only one of the four whose work will not need to be done over again, and who in his own field can have neither rival nor successor.

MOSES COIT TYLER.

Monographs and Essays. By WILLIAM FRANCIS ALLEN. Memorial Volume. Boston, printed for the Editors [D. B. FRANKENBURGER and others, Madison, Wis.] by G. H. Ellis, 1890. — 392 pp.

When the history of the university renaissance in America during the last quarter of a century comes to be written, the name of Professor Allen, of the University of Wisconsin, will find in it an honorable place. To that elevation in the character of academic instruction and academic study which has at last created true universities where before were but finishing schools and professional seminaries, William Francis Allen contributed in no small measure. He did not, perhaps, greatly worry himself or others about "methods"; he did not try to turn the average American graduate into a poor copy of the German *privat-docent*; nor did he yield to the temptation to invite the general public to look at what he was doing. He recognized the limitations of his material, and set himself quietly to do the best he could under the conditions. He was indeed somewhat too unobtrusive: one of our modern young specialists would doubtless have persuaded the governing body to allow him to exchange the chair of classics for that of history in something less than eighteen years. What, nevertheless, Professor Allen did at the University of Wisconsin was to substitute the intelligent study of historical questions and the scholarly use of historical material for the school-boy recital of text-book lessons; and what he — more perhaps than any one else — did for historical study generally in America was to de-provincialize it and bring it into touch with the best modern thought of Europe. This he did by the long series of reviews he contributed to the *New York Nation*. Certainly no English journal has made so sustained an effort as this American publication to keep its readers abreast of the best historical work of Germany and France; and the *Nation* was in this connection but another name for Professor Allen. Professor Allen left behind no literary monument at all worthy of his great powers. The explanation is to be found, not so much in his arduous university duties, as the writer of the introductory memoir suggests, as in his never-ceasing activity as a reviewer, — a reviewer not only of important treatises, but of innumerable school handbooks; not only of works in a particular field, but in many and widely different subjects. The very excellence of these ephemeral criticisms is their condemnation. No man has