

FRANCIS PARKMAN AND HIS WORK.

MASSACHUSETTS has furnished the men who have chiefly written American history. Palfrey, Prescott, Bancroft, and Parkman have taken their places in our literature as permanent authors. Each has contributed work of value. Prescott illustrated the Spanish occupation of America; Bancroft was the first to tell the story of the United States; Palfrey was the first to give a unique and continuous account of the history of New England; and Parkman has told the story of the French occupation of North America so that it will not need to be told again. The present century is notable in this country as the period for writing its history as well as that in which its literature has been chiefly produced, and during this time the materials have been gathered and assorted and utilized so that the history of the aborigines and the story of the occupation of the continent by Europeans could be told with fulness and accuracy. It is not a little remarkable that four Massachusetts men, the product of the best culture in New England, and all contemporaries, should have practically been the historians of America in this way; and if their histories have varying merit, they are at present those which command attention for the periods which they cover, and they have set high the standard which must be followed by writers in the future.

Francis Parkman was the youngest of these historians, and the writing of the story of France and England in North America was the occupation of his life. He had it in mind in his eighteenth year, and worked toward it and planned for it through all the rest of his life,—giving his thought, his time, and his fortune to it with a unique devotion which, in spite of almost insurmountable difficulties, enabled him to complete his undertaking within the limits of three-score years and ten. The result of what he planned to do when a Harvard student is before us, and is so thoroughly the fruit of a rare consecration to a great enterprise that the story of his life is essential to a full appreciation of the greatness of his task, and of the exceptional gifts and character which he brought to its completion. From his early boyhood, even before he had formed the resolution to take

up "The Seven Years' War," he unconsciously shaped his course in the direction in which his life was to go, and was preparing for it in his daily recreations. He was always fond of an outdoor life, and when a student at Cambridge was as familiar with rifles as he was with his books, and had inured himself to exposure and hardship in the Middlesex Fells and in summer expeditions in the wilderness of northern New England, so that he might understand how pioneer warfare was carried on and be thoroughly acquainted with every detail that might be experienced by a pioneer in the wilderness or a settler upon the frontier. Before he left college, he utilized a year in Europe in becoming acquainted at first hand with the institutions which had given character to the French civilization in North America. When he was graduated at Harvard in 1844, he had made himself a master of French and had pursued his English studies far more thoroughly than was then common in an academic education, taking Burke as his master in style, and already distinguishing himself among his associates as one who had plans of his own.

After graduation, under the pretext of studying law, he was really studying the history of Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and preparing himself by a general knowledge of the state of Europe to trace the efforts of the French at the highest reach of the monarchy to take their share in the colonization of North America. At every step in this young man's career, he was working at some part of the great undertaking which he had in mind. He threw his whole soul into it, and in the spring of 1846, in company with his cousin, Mr. Quincy A. Shaw, he undertook the experiment of spending the summer with a tribe of Dacotah Indians living this side of the Rocky Mountains, in their native wilds. They were complete savages, and his life was in their hands, but the knowledge which he sought was worth the taking of extraordinary risks to obtain. It was essential to the writing of a history in which the North American Indians had a distinguished part. No one could give a lifelike account of these tribes, their habits, their methods of warfare, their part in the settlement of the country, unless by personal observation he knew how to interpret their actions; and in this brief adventure he acquired just the knowledge which was necessary to prepare him for his task. But while among them he was overcome with physical illness. It was then that the spirit of the man rose to the situation. He knew that among these roving savages to confess illness was to be tomahawked, and many a time

he was lifted into his saddle in the morning when it was only by an effort of the will that he could keep in his seat during the day. It was the turning of a tour of observation into a fight for life, and all the heroism of his nature rose to the occasion. He suppressed his illness as best he could, and was accounted among the savages as a brave man. When he returned home the strain had proved so great that he found himself disabled for the rest of his life. It was for a long time a struggle, almost hopeless, to rise above his physical condition. His troubles threatened congestion of the brain, and it looked as if his summer with the Indians would result in a permanent disability to carry on his work.

It was then that the man stepped forth and arranged his career. Apparently he had no outlook and could not do what he had prepared himself to do; and at the time when he was just ready to begin his lifework and was ready to make any sacrifices for it, it was seemingly out of his reach. Some men would have yielded to despair and allowed the mind to sympathize with the enfeebled body, but not so Parkman. He had planned a work whose proper execution demanded not only the full command of his mental gifts but many years for its successful development. It was quite as ambitious as that which Bancroft set out to prepare in his youth, and like that it had to be written from original materials. The historian must gather his facts from documents furnished by the actors in leading events and laid away in public archives, and he must reconstruct from widely scattered materials the history of the periods he covers and must inspire them with his own sense of their character and meaning. To do this successfully requires the full command of his powers.

But at the very outset Parkman was beset with conditions which threatened to leave him a hopeless invalid. The physicians assured him that he would die, but he told them that he should not die; they told him that mental work would be fatal, but with all respect to their diagnosis, he refused to follow their advice. While his brain was in such a condition that he could not use it at all, his eyes gave out, and for three years he was obliged to suspend all intellectual work and live the quietest of lives. But nothing could quench his intellectual vitality, and with every physical trial his spirit rose above the enfeebled body and controlled it to his will. He knew as if by intuition that the subject to which his attention had been drawn was one that was complete in itself, and that it combined elements

of romance and discovery such as had not been presented in the previous accounts of the occupation of America. He conceived the plan of going back to the beginning and tracing the native tribes from their first contact with French and English civilization down to the time when the French occupation of North America ceased to exist. This covered a period of more than two centuries, and it ended in the placing of North America under the control of one nation and in the way of a development into one civilization. The telling of this story was to exhibit the struggle of the aborigines with the white men, to enter with the knowledge and the instincts of our common humanity into the heart of savage life and to set forth this struggle in its reality and severity. At the same time it was to show how far French institutions of the time of Louis XIV. could be made to serve a civilizing purpose in this struggle, and how far they could aid the highest purpose. The struggle was unique. It was a warfare in the wilderness, a contest in which the Indians and then the French usually had the advantage, but in which the victory was not with the swift nor the battle with the strong, and in which the Anglo-Saxon race rose to its full power and finally gained the mastery in North America. To tell this story for the first time, from original materials, scattered here and there in the archives of three nations, and to gather up the traditions of savage life and of the old French conquests, and of the settlers upon the border, and to weave them all into one consistent and artistic story,—was the work that Parkman had before him. He addressed himself to it, sick as he was, as if he were a well man, and it may be said that every working day of his life and every particle of his mental strength was employed in this task until it was completed in 1892.

The strength of his purpose is to be measured by the difficulties which beset him. For a great portion of the fifty years during which this undertaking occupied his whole time he could not use his eyes continuously for more than five minutes, and at his best he could never work more than ten hours a day. He had the industry and the habits of application of a literary man, and his life was spent in the handling of historical materials, but he was compelled to follow the life of a recluse. Much as he enjoyed society, he could not bear the strain of it. He must choose between his pleasure and his work, and it was always in favor of the work. No other literary man of the period has labored under greater difficulties. "The Oregon Trail" was dictated to his companion among the savages, and all his

other volumes were dictated to a member of his family who prepared them for the press. When I asked to be allowed to see his manuscripts, he replied "I have none." He could not bear the strain of writing, and it was only with the utmost care and seclusion from excitement that he could work at all. Prescott had impaired sight, and his infirmity has helped the sympathetic appreciation of his writing. Parkman resolutely hid his difficulties from the public and reluctantly spoke about them. His conviction was that the public had nothing to do with the personality of an author, and that his published work alone was its property, and he lived up to his conviction. In all the prefaces to his works there is hardly a hint at the difficulty which he had to contend with, and though not a line of his histories was written without physical strain, his style is as clear and joyous and serene as if his work had been done with ease. He had a thorough mastery of himself, and knew his limitations and kept within them. For half a century he lived a life of "repressed activity," (these are his own words) having his mind wholly unimpaired, but unable to use it beyond a certain limit on the penalty of having it taken away from him. The contrast in his later years between his wonderfully fine physique, which suggested the powers of an athlete and the vigor of a mind and will that could not easily endure opposition, and the complete control of his vital forces so that the lion was always couchant within him and the spirit was subdued to the gentleness and modesty of a child—this contrast was habitually shown in his bearing and was more marked to one who enjoyed his friendship and knew him well than anything else. He bore his affliction with a gentle patience that was as touching as it was beautiful, and made him both gracious and lovable.

While his mastery of himself was the supreme work of his life and the foundation of everything he did, it was also the secret of the success of his work. To gather his materials he had to make seven separate trips to Europe, and constantly to engage the services of experts in hunting among manuscripts and in copying important documents. Nearly two hundred folio volumes of these copies are in an oaken cabinet in the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society, the permanent evidence of the tireless industry which he illustrated in his writings. This immense mass of materials had to be read to him several times before he could master it. He could not read and study it himself. His first aim was to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials and to obtain a good outline of

a period; then he went over the same material again to see how one part was related to another; then he began to fill in the details which gave a personal character to the narrative; and then with the whole story in his mind, and with each part adjusted to the other, he was ready to dictate. It will be seen from his method of mastering his materials that it was the method by which art conceals art, and his continual grasp of this great subject and his unexampled mastery of his materials were favored by the limitations of his life. He confined himself to one subject; it was his constant thought by day and by night; and it was held in his grasp so completely that every part received adequate attention. He was under no temptation to neglect accuracy, to spare reputations, to favor parties. The actors had all disappeared, and even the issues of the contests had passed into history. Provided he could snatch from his physical infirmities time enough to study his materials with a clear head, his conditions were superb for the production of works of enduring value, and he spared no pains to prepare himself by visiting localities and by verifying statements of fact to make his history as nearly as possible a true story. There were no obstacles which he did not surmount, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a single careless or misplaced or inaccurate word in the twelve volumes which he has given to the world. This mastery of difficulties was moral as well as intellectual, and it was the gathering up of what was strongest and best in a great man for the conscientious execution of a work to which he had consecrated himself in early youth with all the gifts that he had. In modern literary annals there is no author who for half a century has pursued his task with equal mastery of himself and of his materials, or with equal moral force in the execution of his purpose. With everything against him, he rose superior to obstacles: his writing asks no favors, though it was wrought under almost insuperable difficulties.

It is this statement of what he overcame in writing the history of France and England in North America which places us in a position to understand his work as an historian. It illustrates and develops his qualities as a man. His history was the one thing that he lived to do, and it absorbed his entire thought and strength. Parkman was intolerant of shams and unrealities. He went below the surface to the foundations. He was satisfied with nothing but the original documents, and the first work he did in planning his series of historical narratives was to gather from every quarter the

original materials which contained the facts with which he had to deal. This fidelity to truth and accuracy in statement cost time and money, but the same fidelity which led him to visit in 1846 the primitive tribes of the Rocky Mountains in order to portray the American forest and the American Indian in their full reality, led him to exhaust every bit of material that was accessible in writing his history. Nothing short of the original documents would do, and from the beginning his historical narratives had the character of impartial records. With every bit of accessible knowledge at his hand, he could write history that was accurate, and it has been his crowning merit that his statements could be verified. He felt the influence of Jared Sparks as a student of history and would do nothing unless he could work from original documents and have the field to himself. He was fortunate, on the whole, in obtaining the entire control of the documents that were necessary to his purpose, and more fortunate still in being able to use these materials in such a way that his judgment and impartiality were not successfully disputed or denied. It is the crowning merit of his work that it will stand.

Born and bred a Unitarian, and not in any sense accepting the religious faith which dominated French civilization, he treated the Jesuits and the old régime in Canada with such fairness that his statements, at times severe and revealing things that it was not pleasant to mention, compel the acceptance of what he wrote as the truth. A higher compliment to his fairness as a historian could not be paid. He was just and fair to all parties, and he had the courage to state the truth so that it must be accepted. This veracity and fidelity have been so distinct a feature of his historical writing that his volumes have been accepted without dispute as an authority for the period which they cover. Their statements have borne the brunt of attack, and though the narratives have been in some cases subjected to the fierce light of criticism for nearly half a century, when the series was completed in 1892, there was but little for the historian to revise in the text of the earlier work.

The narratives began with "The Conspiracy of Pontiac," in which he presented the American Indians in their contact with the French and the English in their native forests. Though this work came from a young man in his twenty-eighth year, it bears none of the marks of immaturity. The style is different from that of "The Oregon Trail," and the grasp of the subject is definite and clear,

while the style is never too redundant and constantly gleams and flashes with the feeling of the author. It is in this work that he deals at length with the Indian character, and has Pontiac for his hero; but complete as it is as a sketch of the struggle which the Indians maintained against the Europeans, it is a narrative written with the coolness, the judgment, the insight, and the impartiality of his latest work. Where the subject admits of painting, whether it be the forest life, or the American landscape, or the picturesqueness of the natives, he never falls below his theme; and he struck a note in 1851 which is the same that he kept in 1892. The different volumes vary much in their character, but in every case the treatment is adequate and final. In "The Pioneers of France in the New World," the men who laid the foundations for France in Canada, Champlain and his associates, are portrayed so that it seems as if the reader attended them in their discoveries, and the ancient and adventurous life which they lived is revived. "The Jesuits in North America" is a story of wonderful interest and fascination. It could not have been written unless the author had had free access to the Jesuit "Relations," and the strength of the work comes from the fact that he has here told a story almost as it came from the lips of these Jesuit missionaries.

Hardly less graphic and exciting is the volume on "The Discovery of the Great West" in which La Salle is the leading figure, and the story of the discovery of the Mississippi and the Great Lakes is told with wonderful minuteness and care. "The Old Régime in Canada" is among the later volumes the one which most plainly sets forth the French civilization in Canada, and it is that in which Parkman's ability to portray manners and the spirit of the times is seen at its best. The strength and the weakness of the French system in the seventeenth century are here set forth in great detail, and the reasons why it could not succeed stand out in a strong light. "Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV." shows "how valiantly, and for a time how successfully, New France battled against a fate which her own organic fault made inevitable." In this volume the events group themselves about a single figure, "the most remarkable man who ever represented the crown of France in the New World." The next volumes in the series were "Montcalm and Wolfe," in which the historian came finally to deal with the subject which had attracted his attention when his mind was first drawn to the history of the French occupation of the continent. It

is in this work that Parkman is in contact with a subject which calls forth his full strength. It is not simply in its details that the story impresses one, but in the author's grasp of the situation,—his holding the main lines of the story while the English gradually win in their contests with the French and complete their conquest on the heights of Abraham. In this work he brings the history to an end, but there yet remained "A Half-Century of Conflict" to be covered before the full story could be told, and in the later work the struggle of the rival claimants to North America is set forth, not in its greater movements, but in a series of skirmishes and disputes and small struggles which tired out both parties.

These volumes, taken as a whole, are an authentic and exhaustive history of the French occupation of North America, and they are prepared with such attention to every demand of literary art that the toil of the author is hidden in the grace and ease of his narrative. The style is equally removed from the stately dignity of history and the luxuriance of romance, but the language is the English of our own time, flexible, each word fitly chosen, without exaggeration, or conceit, or straining for effect. It is the style of sincerity, of freedom, of truth. There are no concealments in it. It is the perfection of an historical style which gains the ears of the people. It is picturesque, full of graphic descriptions of nature, giving exact pictures of the forest, the localities, the battlefields, the persons, and the thrilling moments in the narrative, and so effective in its object that the reader is unconscious of its excellence, while under the spell of its power.

Parkman had the gift of the historical imagination, and could reproduce what he saw in his mind so that his readers also could see it. He dwelt so entirely with his subject that he could feel it to his fingers' ends. It inspired and mastered him, and when he attempted to tell the story, he made it as real to the reader as it was to himself. It caught hold of the roots of his mind, and it held him as he holds his readers. He wrote these narratives as the painter fills out his canvas. He put feeling and color into the story, and gave it the lights and shades of actual life, lifting it, as all great literature is lifted, so that it reflects the changes of human conflict as they are seen to-day. The result is that the story is like Shakespeare's plays. It reproduces the past and has the touches of life in it. The history is enjoyed by the young as much as by the scholar, and it enters by right of inheritance into the permanent literature of

the country. It is work done in simplicity, with power, with an adequate sense of its value, and with a thoroughness that produces the best results. This historical imagination is the rarest of gifts, and it lifts the work of its possessor to the highest plane. Parkman had the power to throw into his story the elements which made it real and graphic, and he felt its meaning so intensely that it throbs and thrills in his narrative and makes it a transcript of actual life. What is remarkable in him as an historian is that this power to infuse his narratives with the passion and excitement of life without apparent effort is almost as prominent in his first volume as in the latest; and yet nearly half a century lies between them.

What Parkman might have done, had he been able to command the full use of his mind, it is useless to inquire; but what he did under the constraint of "repressed activity" by the absolute control of an eager and impulsive temperament, and by the discipline of himself, is more remarkable as an example of what the human will can accomplish when controlled for the highest ends, than his greatness as an historian. Compelled to reserve all his strength for his work, to taste of the pleasures of life as a forbidden luxury, to do constantly what to one of his temperament was the most odious thing to him, and completely to remake himself in order to accomplish what he aimed to do, his fifty years of struggle with an undertaking which only a well man would have dared to enter upon, is one of the boldest, most unflinching, and most heroic achievements on record in the annals of literature. If the story of his life should be written as he lived it, as the mind rose above and controlled the body, it will make one of the most thrilling narratives of heroic effort that has ever been given to the world. No one could know him in the intimacy of friendship without becoming conscious that Francis Parkman had by nature an intellect of the highest order, and that it had been held back from the conflict into which its possessor was as eager to enter as the tiger is to secure its prey. His mind was eager and restless by nature to the last degree. To will a thing with him was to accomplish it, but when he found that his lifework depended upon his self-control, and that it must be only through heroic self-restraint that he could do what he had planned, he had the power of will to yield and to conquer. His achievement was great, but it was produced under difficulties which showed the man to be greater than his work.

JULIUS H. WARD.

CHILD-STUDY: THE BASIS OF EXACT EDUCATION.

THE study of children is now attempted by very different methods, for purposes quite diverse, and with all degrees of scientific exactness. The points of view here taken, and the literature, now numbering many hundred titles, are so new that I can find nowhere any attempt at a general survey of the various lines of work now under way to aid me in presenting such an outline as the editor of "The Forum" has requested; while new material is accumulating so fast and the future promises so much that any attempt to map out the field even by a text-book could have only temporary value.

That so considerable a part of the work has been done in this country, which, if it has not had a large share in the development of the physical sciences, now shows signs of making up its arrears by advancing several branches of the great science of man, is a fact well befitting a republic, new and without tradition, which most needs to take a fresh, free look at every aspect of human nature, which alone is true and to which school, as well as church, state and family, must conform to be true, good or stable. The future of the movement depends largely upon long, hard work yet to be done and requires the coöperative effort of many people—teachers, parents and men of science, whose efforts may now be coördinated in a national society, the organization of which was projected last July in Chicago.

Most of this vast and growing material has been wrought out by investigators who made little attempt to coördinate their work with what others had done. The doctors, the anthropologists, the psychologists, parents and teachers, have each given little attention to each other's work. We may cross-divide all this work by age into four convenient groups. A.—Studies of the human embryo, such as Preyer and others have made. B.—Studies of infancy up to the ages of three or four years. Here belongs the work of Preyer, Perez, Compayré, Tracy, Shinn, and many earlier observers. For this work the term Psychogenesis is often used, on the often denied assumption that the fundamental elements of the soul are here being de-