

AN OLD FRONTIER OF FRANCE. By Frank H. Severance. Dodd, Mead; \$7.50.

Mr. Severance is a specialist in his chosen field, the Niagara region during French discovery and dominion. He is painstaking and accurate, with an apparently vastly absorbent, orderly intellect, and if only he might have quickened his subject with a more human touch, the reviewer could accord him unstinted praise. The story of civilized man's struggle with the wilderness, with savages, and finally with other civilized men is one of ever-renewed interest, reflecting as it does the evolution of nationality.

Champlain, La Salle, and Tonti, "the man with the iron hand," in their laborious but relentless progress westward, were not, perhaps, inspired by the highest motives, but they were of the stuff that we can admire. Later, exploration was frequently but an excuse for profit in trade, just as trade was still later to become a mask for depredation, and national defence the byword for cruelties hardly exceeded by those of the shifty allies of the French in America. Dongan wrote, in the last years of the seventeenth century, "'Tis a very hard thing that all the Countreyes a Frenchman walks over in America must belong to Canada," and therewith demanded the "breaking down" of the chief French stronghold at Niagara. The attitude that he criticizes was hardly confined to France. It might be applied with scant injustice to every man of whatever nationality who traversed the disputed country of western New York, the Lakes, and the territory of "La Belle Rivière."

Through the maze of bickerings and badly directed affairs, a few men of unusual power stand out. There was Joncaire the Elder, interpreter by profession, clandestine fur-trader, and subtle diplomatist for the French in their dealings with the Iroquois. There were his sons, —Philippe, of whom the Senecas wrote to the

Governor that "they saw clearly their Father was angry with them, since he did not send back their son Joncaire, as that alone could tranquilize them," and Chabert de Joncaire, that ingenious rascal who possessed a like power over the loyalty of his Indians, and who followed his term on the Niagara portage as "the greatest transportation monopolist in America," with a few years of not too solemn reflection in the Bastille. We read of such able opposition leaders as Colonel John Bradstreet and Sir William Johnson, the conqueror of Niagara. The author quotes liberally from the caustic, often humorous old journals and reports. In his chapter on "Niagara News in 1757" he reflects most graphically the rough-and-ready existence on the frontier, when prisoners and scalps were brought in with daily regularity, when starving incomers were replenished from the king's stores with little regard to the legitimacy of their disposal, when "ladies, women and children" lent an air of domesticity and gaiety by their unpermitted presence. It was a good time to be alive.