

SOCIAL FRANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. By *Cécile Hugon*, Sometime Scholar of Somerville College, Oxford. With twelve illustrations. 8vo., pp. 321. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911.

The author thus introduces the subject: "The seventeenth century is a peculiarly baffling one, because it appears on the surface so simple. It is simple because the *Memoires* dealing with the upper classes are as excellent as they are numerous; it is difficult to understand because the peasant and the tradesman of the period Vatican Archives, and has drawn from them much information about themselves.

"*'L'etat, c'est moi,'* is a truism which has become a household word; but a too ready acceptance of it as a truth places the student on the wrong road at the very outset of his pilgrimage. Never was a more heterogeneous collection of ideals, precepts and codes of morals presented for the acceptance of a nation than at this time. Never did nation comport itself in a more interesting manner than the French while engaged in the process of selection and of coördinating the matter selected. Hence it follows that the subject of this book is a very wide one, and I cannot claim to have dealt with even one section of it in full. The only aim of this sketch has been to represent the general aspect of the century in a few rough strokes, here and there filled in, but more often left bare.

"It deals chiefly with the minor ideals and hopes of mankind which form the principal difference between one age and another. We share the larger ambitions of our fathers, but we do not enjoy the same things. The political history of the period is so complicated, and at the same time so closely bound up with the domestic life of the nation, that a brief historical introduction appeared necessary. This summary of political events is only meant to serve as a help to the understanding of social conditions otherwise, perhaps, unintelligible."

Then follows the Introduction, to which fifteen pages are given.

Larger space is naturally given to the distinguished women who
The book is excellent and interesting, both in matter and treatment.
gathered about the Court of Louis XIV. and became more or less
prominent during his reign. History shows that they were worldly
and frivolous in many cases to a shocking degree, and yet that
they possessed great strength of character when put to the test
in time of pestilence.

If the sketches of the people in general and their everyday life
are briefer, they are not less interesting or complete, and are
brought out with sufficient clearness to perfect the picture.

The book is splendidly made, and both author and publisher are
to be congratulated.