NEW PUBLICATIONS.

BANCROFT'S CENTENNIAL EDITION.

HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. By GEORGE BANCROFT. In Six Volumes. Centennial Edition. Vols. I., II. Little, Brown, & Company.

Mr. Bancroft's work in the composition of his great history resembles the processes of Nature, in being a gradual evolution rather than an absolute and complete creation. During the forty years since the date of the preface to the original edition, it has been the subject of studious assiduity and vigilant revisal on the part of the author. The purpose which he then announced has since been pursued with unfaltering devotion. There has been no abatement of "the sincerity with which he has sought to collect truth from trustworthy documents and testimony." With the lapse of years, he has never "grown weary in comparing witnesses, or consulting codes of law," giving a perpetual freshness to his narrative by drawing new life from original sources.

The first edition of the work was a monument of historical research, critical acuteness, and descriptive power, to which at that time there was no parallel in the literature of the country. It was remarkable alike for clearness of perception, sagacity of judgment, and felicity of statement. The terse simplicity of its style, relieved by frequent passages of picturesque splendor, was in admirable keeping with its profound analysis of philosophical principles. For the peculiar distinction of the work consists in its not being a superficial narrative of events, but a masterly exposition of the ideas in which they had their origin. Mr. Bancroft is a disciple of the school which believes in thought as the foundation of action. In his view the true comprehension of the development of history demands insight no less than observation. Its essential elements are not found in the images which glide over the panoramic scene, but in the interior of thought where the germs of action are prepared, and the springs of vitality given to external events. Hence the intellectual condition of an epoch falls within the scope of his history, as well as the secrets of diplomacy, and the achievements of military prowess. Political freedom is traced back to the philosophy of Descartes, which demands liberty of thought as the condition of progress, and the benign institutions of William Penn in the government of the Quaker colony are referred to the influence of the "Inner Light," in opposition to the philosophy of Locke, which seeks the origin of human knowledge in external sources.

The constant recognition of the unity between the inner and the outer man, between the suggestions of the soul and the results of experience, is the key to Mr. Bancroft's history. The excellence of his plan is attested by the success of his work. Few literary products of the age have been received with a more cordial acceptance, or sustained their original prestige through so long a succession of years. The centennial edition is now appropriately produced as a precious offering for the centennial year. It bears the last touches of the author's hand, and is the fruit of his ripe and rich experience. He has evidently engaged in the work of revision with the keen zest of original composition. Every page in its new form literally shows the freshness and ardor with which he has sought to impress the child of his age with the seal of perfection. It has been no holiday task to submit the labor of a life, commenced in the fervor of youth, and pursued through the strength of manhood, to the austere judgment of impartial maturity. The work has been performed with a critical thoroughness and justice, a freedom from the pride of authorship, and from the seductions of personal self-consciousness, of which there are but rare examples in literary history. The students of the original work may sometimes indeed be tempted to regret the severity with which Mr. Bancroft has pruned the composition, and to lament the curtailment of favorite passages whose beautiful and luxuriant bloom was curiously blended with the glowing colors of the ripened harvest.

In the prosecution of his task, Mr. Bancroft has made free use of the suggestions of friends in all parts of the Union, on special branches of American history which they had made their study. Every important criticism has been carefully weighed, and never rejected, except after examination. The main object has been the attainment of exact accuracy—an end of course out of the question, since the fall of Adam—so that not even a partial error should escape correction. A very few statements disappear beneath the touch of rigid historical criticism; some new topics are admitted; and in many cases, the form of expression is modified, and, as is perhaps inevitable with an author's later judgments on his own writings, not always for the better.

The Introduction to the first volume, dated in 1834, which is a master-piece of compact and lucid statement, describing the condition of the country at that time, is retained without the change of a word. The first chapter, however, shows many important alterations. For instance, the detailed argument against the discovery of the Continent by the Northmen, prior to Columbus, is reduced to a single paragraph, as follows:—"The enterprise of Columbus, the most memorable maritime enterprise in the history of the world, formed between Europe and America the communication which will never cease. The story of the colonization of America by Northmen rests on narratives, mythological in form, and obscure in meaning; ancient, yet not contemporary. The intrepid mariners who colonized Greenland could easily have extended their voyages to Labrador, and have explored the coasts to the south of it. No clear historic evidence establishes the natural probability that they accomplished the passage; and no vestige of their presence on our continent has been found." The alleged discoveries of Verrazzani, the Florentine navigator, in 1524, which are fully described in the original edition, with an allusion to the uncertainty of the traditions, and "the obscurity of the accounts respecting his life," now entirely disappear in the light of subsequent research. With such a pregnant omission, an explanatory sentence or two, might not have been out of place.

The Fifth Chapter which, apropos of the colonization of Virginia, presents a succinct history of slavery and the slave trade, condensing volumes of research within the compass of a few pages, has been subjected to severe revision, although no essential change has been made in its method or the character and bearing of its statements. Several new sentences are introduced with admirable effect, confirming the positions of the original text. In proof that Grecian slavery was regarded as inherently unjust, a singularly apt quotation from a comedy of Philemon is now introduced for the first time: "A man, O my master," so speaks a slave, "because he is a slave, does not cease to be a man. He is of the same flesh with you. Nature does not make slaves." Again, after the description of the prevalence of slavery throughout the dominions of Rome, and a reference to the fact that the slave markets were filled with men of various nations and colors, the following conclusive sentence is added: "'Slaves are they!' writes Seneca; 'say that they are men.' 'By the law of nature all men are born free,' are the words of Ulpian who held that slavery first came in by the law of man. The Roman digests pronounced slavery 'contrary to nature.'" An example of the caution with which the text has been reexamined is shown in the change of the word *would* to *might*, and the omission of the term *entire* in the passage: "The spirit of the Christian religion would, before the discovery of America, have led to the entire abolition of the slave-trade but for the hostility between the Christian church and the followers of Mahomet," converting the absolute assertion of the original into a qualified statement. As an illustration of the influence of religion in ameliorating the customs of Europe, after speaking of the clergy who had broken up the Christian slave-markets at Bristol and at Hamburg, at Lyons and at Rome, we have an additional passage of great force from French history: "The jurists of France came to their aid, and in language addressed half to the courts of law and half to the people, in July, 1315, Louis X. by their advice published the ordinance, that by the law of nature every man ought to be born free, that serfs were held in bondage only by a suspension of their early and natural rights, that liberty should be restored to them throughout the kingdom so far as the royal power extended; and all masters of slaves were invited to follow his example by bringing them all back to their original state of liberty."

The adventures of Captain John Smith are related in a modified version, in accordance with the results of later research, and the romantic story of Pocahontas is explained by the exaggerations of the contemporary press. The first printed "News from Virginia" made famous to English readers the name of Pocahontas, the daughter of Powhatan, a girl of "teene" or twelve years old, "which not only for feature, countenance, and expression, much exceeded any of the rest of his people, but for wit and spirit was the only nonpareil of the country." But the charming traditions of the lovely Indian maiden here fade into the prosaic report, that "the child, to whom in later days he attributed his rescue from death, came to the fort with her companions, bringing baskets of corn for the garrison."

In the Eighth Chapter, devoted to "The Pilgrims," several pages of the narrative are greatly expanded and a considerable portion has been entirely rewritten. The attempt of George Popham to form a settlement on the Kennebec in 1607 is described in detail, and many additional particulars of that enterprise give a fresh interest to the original account. The sketches of the Reformation in connection with the history of the Puritans, which formed so admirable a feature of the early editions, have been elaborated with great care, and much new matter has been added with advantage to the original outline. The following passage on the German Reformation now appears in this chapter for the first time:—

In Germany, the Reformation sprang not from the superior authority of the sovereign, but from a peasant-born man of the people, and aimed at a regeneration both in morals and doctrine. When Martin Luther proclaimed that justification is by faith alone, superstition was at one blow cut up by the roots. The supernatural charm which hung over the orders whose members or whose chief had, time out of mind, usurped the exclusive right to absolve from sin and to interpose themselves between man and God, was dissolved. Every man became his own priest, and was directly in the hands of the Almighty, with no other mediator than the Eternal Wisdom, with no absolution for evil deeds but by repentance and a new life. There could be no higher expression of the liberty of the individual ever against his fellow-men. The claim of right to the freedom of private judgment is a feeble and partial statement in comparison; for it declares the individual man under God alone, not the keeper of his judgment only, but independent of pope, bishop, priest, and all others of his kind, the keeper of his reason, affections, conscience, and character; in a word, of his whole being, now and hereafter. Therefore it is that, in an age when political questions were enmeshed in theological forms, justification by faith alone was the inscription on the gate through which the more advanced of the human race were to pass to freedom.

The parallel between Luther and Calvin, which affords a characteristic specimen of the author's favorite style of portraiture, is presented in a new and enlarged form, evincing his unwearied diligence in the pursuit of rhetorical precision, as well as of historical exactness. As reconstructed for the present edition, it reads as follows:—

Both Luther and Calvin brought the individual into immediate relation with God; but Calvin, under a more stern and militant form of doctrine, lifted the individual above pope and prelate, and priest and presbyter, above Catholic Church and national church and general synod, above indulgences, remissions, and absolutions from fellow-mortals, and brought him into the immediate dependence on God, whose eternal, irreversible choice is made by himself alone, not arbitrarily, but according to his own highest wisdom and justice. Luther spared the altar, and hesitated to deny totally the real presence; Calvin, with superior dialectics, accepted as a commemoration and a seal the rite which the Catholics revered as a sacrifice. Luther favored magnificence in public worship, as an aid to devotion; Calvin, the guide of republics, avoided in their churches all appeals to the senses, as a peril to pure religion. Luther condemned the Roman Church for its immorality; Calvin, for its idolatry. Luther exposed the folly of superstition, ridiculed the hair shirt and the scourge, the purchased indulgence, and dearly bought, worthless masses for the dead; Calvin shrank from their criminality with impatient horror. Luther permitted the crucifix and the taper, pictures and images, as things of indifference; Calvin demanded a spiritual worship in its utmost purity. Luther left the organization of the church to princes and governments; Calvin reformed doctrine, ritual, and practice; and, by establishing ruling elders in each church and an elective synod, he secured to his polity a representative character, which combined authority with popular rights. Both Luther and Calvin insisted that, for each one, there is and can be no other priest than himself; and, as a consequence, both agreed in the parity of the clergy. Both were of one mind, that, should pious laymen choose one of their number to be their minister, "the man so chosen would be as truly a priest as if all the bishops in the world had consecrated him."

The history, in its new form, while it retains the essential spirit and method of the original issue, is, in many respects, better adapted to popular use, although the greater fullness of detail in the latter will often be regretted by the special student. For convenience of reference, the compactness of this edition is an improvement. Instead of the eighteen chapters of the first and second volumes in the old edition, we now have forty-three in the same number, and the remaining volumes will doubtless be compressed in the same proportion. If they do not gain in value, like the books of the Sibyl, with the reduction of number, it may be taken for granted that they will lose nothing of intrinsic importance to the perfection of the narrative. They will still present a copious variety of details, preserving the perfume and strength of many rose-gardens in their fine essence, and richly blending utility and charm in their brief completeness.

MORRIS'S VIRGIL.

THE ÆNEIDS OF VIRGIL, DONE INTO ENGLISH VERSE. By WILLIAM MORRIS. 8vo. pp. 358. Roberts Brothers.

This is the third English translation of the Æneid which has appeared within the last ten years. Prof. Conington's attempt to render Virgil's great epic into octosyllabic verse (after the manner of Scott's "Marmion") having been published in 1866. It received respectful notice from English critics, at the time; but its success was of that negative kind which is bestowed when the conditions presume failure. Mr. Cranch followed with his smooth and elegant blank-verse translation, which gave us much more of the spirit of the original, besides approaching it more closely in form; and now Mr. William Morris lays before us a version which is hardly less of an experiment than Prof. Conington's. He has chosen the opposite of the latter's device, on the evident ground that the Alexandrine line (seven iambic feet) is the nearest approach to the hexameter. So far as mere quantity is concerned, this is true; but in movement the English Alexandrine, with its accustomed cæsural pause at the end of the fourth foot, corresponds exactly to the two closing lines of a stanza in Scott's octosyllabic poems.

We shall not enter on any general comparison of these three translations, but examine Mr. Morris's work from the point of view of his probable intention. The first purpose of any translator of a poem must be the nearest possible representation of its meaning, form, and literary style in his own language. We are therefore a little surprised that Mr. Morris, who has displayed an unusual mastery of the refinements of metrical art, did not choose at once the hexameter of the original, a measure which is slowly becoming naturalized in English poetry. His success would have been a gain for all who believe in the possibility of adopting this and other classic meters. He has, indeed, sought to transfer certain advantages of the hexameter to the Alexandrine, in order to avoid the tendency of the latter to become monotonous and fatiguing. Nothing can be more skillful than the manner in which he has varied the pauses, now suddenly interrupting the movement, and now allowing it to gather, sweep, and roll beyond the close of the line, like the curling crest of a wave. Whatever can be done to give change, variety, power, and sweetness to the measure, he seems to have attained. Moreover, he keeps remarkably close to the meaning of the original lines, and we but rarely catch a gleam of some personal preference of expression which leads him to modify the Latin words. The opening passage is a fair illustration, although inferior to some others we shall quote:—

I sing of arms, I sing of him, who from the Trojan land
Thrust forth by fate, to Italy and that Lavinian strand
First came: all test about what he on earth and on the deep
By heavenly might for Juno's wrath, that had no mind to sleep:
And plenteous war he underwent ere he his town might frame
And set his Gods in Latian earth, whence is the Latin name,
And father-folk of Alba-town, and walls of mighty Rome.

Mr. Morris, in fact, exhibits such refined skill in his use of the measure that his choice of it comes near being justified. But his dialect, archaic beyond all modern experience or need, brings up a more important question. We will not ask, Is it fitting to attempt the revival of obsolete words and forms of expression, however well adapted to poetic use? but rather, Can the epic of Virgil, the product of an exquisitely refined genius and an exceptionally polished age, be appropriately presented to the English-reading public of our day in the literary garb of the fifteenth century? It seems hardly so much a translation which we find as an old English poem, newly discovered and modernized just sufficiently to make it universally intelligible and agreeable. The Saxonism of the language communicates itself to the characters; Æneas and Turnus appear like sturdy Thanes, Dido becomes an old Armoric queen, and even the Olympian deities suggest Odin and Thor behind the masks of Mars and Jove. Read this description, and what manner of folk is instantly set before the imagination!

His saffron scarf, the crackling folds of it
Of linen fine, in knot about a red-gold buckle knit;
His kirtle was embroidered fair, his hosen outland-wrought.

The book swarms with such sentences as the following: "And all men's eyen bear upon the Queen"—"Eld, the mouldy-dull, the empty of all sooth"—"with four-some-driven wedge"—"unused to bear Minerva's crate"—"the ground was all a-slop"—"he does his brows about,"—"shall do the olive dusky gray"—"their echoing noise the very lift [sky] doth fill"—and with such lines as:

"And now amidmost of all these suchwise Æneas spake."

Until these words and phrases are universally accepted—a question which we will not now discuss—they must inevitably suggest to the reader's mind, first of all, the stamp of the age to which they belong. As well might Virgil himself have chosen the oldest Latin dialect known in his day, instead of endeavoring to impress a new grace, ease, and elegance upon the tongue spoken at the symposia of Augustus. One ignorant of the Latin Æneid will get but scanty knowledge of its literary quality from these *Æneids* (wherefore plural?) of Mr. Morris. Instead of making lavish employment of the Latin element in our language—which would be so much of the original poem simply *transferred* and not translated—he has taken especial pains to eliminate that element from his vocabulary. His really admirable skill (in a philological sense) is thus not merely wasted, but it is employed in a false direction. Had he given us his grounds for going back to Chapman's Homer for a model, instead of seeking for the true equivalent of Virgil's style in the purest poetic phrase of this day, we might be able to attribute to a sincere if mistaken theory what we must now ascribe to the willfulness of strong personal tastes.

One of the finest passages, wherein the purposed Saxonism of speech is less apparent, is the description of Polyphème, given to Dido by Æneas:—

But when he touched the waters deep, and mid the waves was come,
He falls to wash the flowing blood from off his eye dug out;
Gnashing his teeth and groaning sore he walks the sea about,
But none the less no wave there was up to his flank might win.
Afeard from far we haste to flee, and, having taken in
Our supplinal, who had earned it well, cut cable silently,
And bending to the eager oars sweep out along the main.
He heard it, and his feet he set to follow on the sound;
But when his right hand failed to reach, and therewithal he found
He might not speed as fast as fares the Ionian billow little,
Then clamor measureless he raised, and ocean quaked thereneath
Through every wave, and inwardly the land was terrified
Of Italy, and Ætna boomed from many-hollowed side.
But all the race of Cyclops stirred from woods and lofty hills,
Down rushes to the haven-side and all the haven-dills;
And Ætna's gathered brethren there we see: in vain they stand
Glowering grim-eyed with heads high up in heaven, a dreadful band
Of councilors: they were as when on ridge aloft one sees
The oaks stand thick against the sky, and cone-hung cypresses,
Jove's lofty woods, or thicket where Diana's footsteps stray.

The description of Dido's death is one of the most successful passages, in its closeness to the meaning and its reflection of the spirit of the original:

Then on her long drawn agony did Juno pity cast,
Her hard departing; Iris then she sent from heaven on high,
And bade her from the knitted limbs her struggling soul untie.
For since by fate she perished not, nor waited death-doom sived,
But hapless died before her day by sudden fury driven,
Not yet the tress of yellow hair had Proserpine poll-shred,
Nor unto Stygian Orcus yet had doomed her wandering head.
So Iris ran adown the sky on wings of saffron dew,
And colors shining thousand fold against the sun she drew,
And overpoised she hung: "So bid, from off thee this I bear,
Hallowed to Dis, and charge thee now from out thy body fare."
She spake and sheared the tress away; then failed the life-heat speed,
And forth away upon the wind the spirit of her went.

We might select many more passages of equal excellence, to show what good intellectual quality has wrought upon the work. The one prominent defect we have set forth will hardly lessen its interest for scholars. It is evidently the production of a mature and well-endowed intellect, secured by nature against the chance of entire failure though it may sometimes miss the best methods of success.

FLORAL DECORATIONS FOR THE DWELLING-HOUSE. A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE HOME ARRANGEMENT OF PLANTS AND FLOWERS. By ANNE HASSARD. (American Edition, revised.) 12mo. pp. 168. Macmillan & Co.

The author of this delightful little volume is a lady who thoroughly understands her subject, both in its principles and its practical details. The relish with which she takes up, one after the other, every form of the decorative use of flowers, and the ready clearness with which she illustrates it, communicate something of her own enthusiasm to the reader. Beginning with the proper lighting of a dining-room and the setting of a table, in which not even the size or color of the salt-cellars is overlooked, she rises through the region of vases and button-hole bouquets to window-gardening, plant-stands, and the artistic decorations of Christmas. From the many excellent wood-cuts which illustrate the book we discover that she has a fine sense of form as well as of color; hence her suggestions are never made at random, and may be followed by the inexperienced lady-housekeeper with a comfortable sense of security. She even objects to see oranges on a fruit dish, on account of the color—"it kills other fruit, flowers, and even the china, if the latter has any shade of yellow in it; and no amount of foliage seems to tone it down." For finger-glasses she recommends three leaves of rose-geranium floating on the water, with a blossom of scarlet geranium peering the corner of each leaf. Here is a description of what she calls "one of the prettiest little ornaments for the breakfast table I ever put together:" "The receptacle which I employed consisted of a soup-plate, and in the center was a plant of sedge; round the edge of the plate I put a fringe of different varieties of ferns—some of them golden ones—placed so as to exhibit the color on the backs of the fronds; over the surface of the moss I then arranged sprays of rich purple cineraria, white azalea, lily-of-the-valley, and white cyclamens with purple tips, a few fronds of maiden-hair fern being interspersed through the whole, and up the slender stems of the sedge ran a few slight shoots of kangaroo-vine." There is no lack of equally tasteful and ingenious devices throughout the volume.

CARTER QUARTERMAN. By WILLIAM M. BAKER. 8vo. pp. 158. Harper & Brothers.

Like Mr. Baker's previous works, this is a picture of Southern family life rather than a story. It is characterized by the same merits and faults, and suggests that the old material has been simply made over in new forms. We lose, therefore, somewhat of the first freshness of the field, and take less interest in types of character which are no longer new. Mr. Baker has the power of imparting a vivid and picturesque reality to his scenes, and flooding them with the sparkle of high animal spirits; but the constant alternation of such scenes with the expression of religious faith or experience, sometimes introduced as if under the compulsion of duty, frequently disturbs the unity of his work. The two elements are by no means irreconcilable; they only need more delicate gradations of light and shade, more careful study of character and a better appreciation of literary art. "Carter Quarterman" is a story for boys rather than men. It begins with the birth of the hero, describes his earliest recollections at considerable length, sends him to boarding-school through many chapters, and terminates with his early marriage. There are many things in this narrative which might have been omitted, and a few things which ought never to have been introduced; yet it is bright and all over with delightful little touches of description and gleams of human nature. If Mr. Baker could understand the character and present limitations of his undoubted talent, and were willing to make his works more coherent in style and harmonious in structure, he would achieve a much more definite success.

THE STATESMAN'S YEAR-BOOK, FOR THE YEAR 1876. By FREDERICK MARTIN. 8vo. pp. 765. Macmillan & Co.

The merits of this annual, and especially the immense industry and care exercised in its compilation, though it cannot be accepted as an infallible authority, in point either of the latest or the most accurate information, have already been fittingly acknowledged by "G. W. S." in a late London letter to THE TRIBUNE. We need only add that in form, alphabetical arrangement of subjects, index, and flexible binding, it leaves nothing to be desired as a convenient manual of reference.

The Phrenological Journal has a second paper by Mr. F. G. Fairfield, on the "Psychological Basis of Religion," presenting a series of criticisms on recent prominent writers on biology, and maintaining the importance of a transcendental view of life, involving the notion of "a self-activity as the primary attribute of living tissue, tending to self-consciousness as the scale of organism is ascended."

The Eclectic for April has an interesting table of contents, including Mr. James Martineau's reply to Professor Tyndall on "Modern Materialism," Professor Huxley's essay on the "Border Territory between the Animal and Vegetable Kingdoms," a biographical sketch of "Caroline Herschel," the sister and helper of the great astronomer, the concluding chapter of the piquant series of "German Home Life," and other articles which cannot fail to attract the attention of the American reader, and which are not easy of access in their original sources.

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