

## Andrews' History of the United States.\*

AMERICAN critics differ very widely with respect to the value of this new history of the United States. But those who favour the book appear to be somewhat at a loss when trying to give grounds for their approval. We have found the work distinctly disappointing. The author's literary gifts are few and feeble, and his sense of proportion poor and uneven. He is most painstaking and fair-minded—except when dealing with foreign matters—but he never rises above the recording secretary style, never imparts dramatic interest to his story, and seldom displays any feeling in what he is writing. Judging from this history we should suppose President Andrews to be possessed of a strong rather than a fine intellect, and to have very little imagination. He tells a straightforward story with some terseness and vigour, but he has not the qualifications of an historian. He is an annalist.

It is claimed in the preface that this history utilizes more than any of its predecessors the many valuable researches of recent years into the rich archives of the United States and other countries. The claim is justified. President Andrews corrects several errors made by his predecessors, he having had access to materials of which they had had no knowledge. He is justified, too, in claiming accuracy in all references to dates, persons, and places, "so that the volume may be used with confidence as a work of reference." We have not found a single error in these particulars. But when President Andrews speaks of his "scrupulous proportion in treating the different parts and phases of our national career, neglecting none and over-emphasizing none" we at once begin to quarrel with him. His most favourable critic has ventured to hint that the author's sense of proportion is not all it should be. Some important events are described with every attention to detail; others equally important are passed over with a touch both light and uncertain. A Canadian reviewer naturally expects to find some explanation of the abrogation of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854. But no explanation is given, though large space is devoted to discussing the Treaty, and the effects of its abrogation in Canada and the United States. The author does not appear to know who took part in negotiating the Treaty of Washington for he mentions no names. So little is said of the Behring Sea Arbitration and its causes that the subject might have been omitted for all the information the sentence or two contains. One smiles at the descriptions given of sea fights and battles, the point of view is so very American. Especially is this the case when writing of the war of 1812. He magnifies the achievements of American warriors, devoting many pages to recounting their bold and valiant deeds, but has not a word to say concerning the several defeats which they suffered. It is all very high and mighty and great—but it is not history. It is buncombe. President Andrews is very funny when he dilates on the "wrongs" suffered by American fishermen at the hands of cruel Canada. And what were these "wrongs"? The fishermen were not permitted to regard Canadian harbours as their own private property. It is very pathetic. Altogether, the fish business is a sore topic with the author of this book. He gets a little cross about it. Perhaps that is why he is not always consistent when writing of the settlement effected by the Washington Treaty.

The Boston *Literary World* reviewed President Andrews' book a few weeks ago. The reviewer expressed his regret that he "found himself unable to read every page of a narrative so firmly handled. . . . so copiously illustrated by pertinent details." He did not say why he was unable to read the book. He leaves that to our imagination. *The Literary World's* reviewer was very discreet.

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Miss Stoddart's biography of Professor Blackie is now almost ready for publication, although some delay may be expected while the Professor's correspondence, which has been placed in Miss Stoddart's hands, is gone through for material.

\* "History of the United States." By C. Benjamin Andrews, President of Brown University. With maps. 2 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. Toronto: William Briggs. \$4.

## Recent Fiction.\*

IN the Year of Jubilee," by George Gissing, is, or rather aims to be, a description of the life of the lower middle class in the great metropolis. It is, however, rather a caricature than a description. The book contains hardly one respectable character, and is certainly not written *virginibus puerisque*. The characters are mostly half educated people, frivolous, mean and sordid, without a single high or elevated idea among them. We believe the book to be a libel on the class it attempts to depict. Having said this, however, we hasten to add that in many ways the book is the most powerful we have yet had from Mr. Gissing's pen. If the characters are caricatures they are remarkably well drawn. One or two of them are worthy of Dickens himself. One especially, Mr. Samuel Bennett Barnby—"the Prophet," as his enemies nickname him—is a joy to the reader where ever he appears. Let him speak for himself, as he escorts two young ladies to view the illuminations on the day of Jubilee.

"I shall make this the subject of a paper for our Society next month—'The Age of Progress.' And with special reference to one particular—The Press. Only think now of the difference between our newspapers, all our periodicals of to-day, and those of fifty years ago. Did you ever really think, Miss Morgan, what a marvellous thing one of our great newspapers really is? Printed in another way it would make a volume—absolutely; a positive volume; packed with thought and information. And all for the ridiculous price of one penny!"

He laughed, a high, chuckling, crowing laugh—the laugh of triumphant optimism. Of the man's sincerity there could be no question; it beamed from his shining forehead, his pointed nose; glinted in his prominent eyes. He had a tall, lank figure, irreproachably clad in a suit of grey; frock coat, and waistcoat revealing an expanse of white shirt. His cuffs were magnificent, and the hands worthy of them. A stand-up collar of remarkable stiffness kept his head at the proper level of self respect.

"By the bye, Miss Lord, are you aware that the Chinese Empire, with four hundred million inhabitants, has only ten daily papers? Positively only ten."

"How do you know?" asked Nancy.

"I saw it stated in a paper. That helps one to grasp the difference between civilization and barbarism. One doesn't think clearly enough of common things. Now that's one of the benefits one gets from Carlyle. Carlyle teaches one to see the marvellous in everyday life. Of course, in many things I don't agree with him, but I shall never lose an opportunity of expressing my gratitude to Carlyle. Carlyle and Gurdy! Yes, Carlyle and Gurdy; those two authors are an education in themselves."

He uttered a long "Ah!" and moved his lips as if savouring a delicious morsel.

"Now here's an interesting thing. If all the cabs in London were put end to end,"—he paused between the words gravely—"what do you think, Miss Morgan, would be the total length?"

"Oh, I have no idea, Mr. Barnby."

"Forty miles—positively! Forty miles of cabs!"

"How do you know?" asked Nancy.

"I saw it stated in a paper."

The girls glanced at each other and smiled. Barnby beamed upon them with the benevolence of a man who knew his advantages, personal and social.

Then there is Luckworth Crewe, the pushing advertising agent, and Jessica Morgan the awful example of the results of cramming for examinations—and many others. All the characters are clearly drawn and stand out well.

The two chief characters, hero and heroine we suppose we must call them, are Lionel Tarrant and Nancy Lord.

\* "In the Year of Jubilee." By George Gissing. Bell's Indian and Colonial Library. London: George Bell & Sons. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co.

"Peter's Wife." By Mrs. Hungerford. Bell's Indian and Colonial Library. London: George Bell & Sons. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co.

"Beyond the Dreams of Avarice." By Walter Besant. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co. London: Chatto & Windus.

"Old Brown's Cottages." By John Smith. Pseudonym Library. London: T. Fisher Unwin. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co.

"The Rubies of St. Lo." By Charlotte M. Yonge. London and New York: Macmillan & Co. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co.

"The Sphinx of Eaglehawk." By Rolf Boldrewood. London and New York: Macmillan & Co. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co.

"A Man of Mark." By Anthony Hope. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

"Far from the Madding Crowd." By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan's Colonial Library. London and New York: Macmillan & Co. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co.