

BOOK NOTICES.

The United States: An Outline of Political History. 1492-1871. By GOLDWIN SMITH, D. C. L. New York: Macmillan & Co., 1893. Crown 8vo., pp. 312.

It is not necessary to speak particularly of the literary style of this volume. It is enough to say that it is in every respect worthy of the reputation which the accomplished author has so long enjoyed as one of the greatest living masters of English composition. Then, in addition to the graces of a finished style, he has evinced in every part of the work the fulness of his information. If Dr. Smith has not, to any great extent, played the part of an original investigator, he has evidently availed himself very fully of the labors of the historians who have preceded him. His work is the result of large reading, and of much thought. It is a marvel of condensation. And for such as have not the time to read what may be regarded as its sources, this compendium of the political history of that part of the continent included in the United States, will be a great boon. And even to such as have read the books from which the information contained in this volume is drawn, it will afford valuable assistance in enabling them to systematize the knowledge which they have acquired, so as to give them a more complete mastery of it than they would otherwise have had.

Dr. Goldwin Smith admits what probably no candid student of history would be disposed to deny, that the separation of the American Colonies from the Mother Country, sooner or later, was inevitable; but he has candor enough to point out that the reasons for the revolt were unworthy, petty and insincere. In fact, his reading of the history of the Revolution, is anything but favorable to the Revolutionary fathers. Samuel Adams, who was the fomentor of the quarrel in New England, "had failed in business as a malster and as a tax-collector, but had succeeded as a political agitator, and has found a shrine in American history as a patriot saint." Patrick Henry, chief fomentor of the quarrel in the South, "was a bankrupt at twenty-three, and lounged in thriftless idleness till he found that though he could not live by industry, he could live by his eloquent tongue." Indeed, he finds little to admire in any of them except Washington himself. He "was to the Confederacy, all in all. Without him it would have been ten times lost, and the names of the politicians who had drawn the country into the conflict would

have gone down to posterity linked with defeat and shame. History has hardly a stronger case of an indispensable man."

One can scarcely wonder, in view of the cold-blooded manner in which Dr. Goldwin Smith has dissected these men, that our kinsmen in the United States find his book a hard pill to swallow. What he says of the barbarous treatment of the Loyalists at the close of the Revolutionary War does not make the dish which he has proposed for them any more palatable. And his exposure of the unworthy motives which led to the attempted conquest of Canada in 1812, and the disastrous results to which it led, will certainly not add to the popularity of the work on the other side of the border. This war was wholly without excuse. But there was, as it appeared to Clay and those who were led by him, a tempting opportunity to inflict a telling blow upon England and to make an easy conquest of Canada. "England was sorely pressed in the struggle with Napoleon. Of her allies, none were left but the Spanish people and Russia, which Napoleon was preparing to invade. The opportunity for striking her was tempting, and Canada seemed an easy prey. The prospect of sharing Napoleon's victories would also have its attraction, nor is there anything in the violence of a brutal tyranny uncongenial to the violence of such a democracy as that of young Clay."

If these and other kindred unpalatable truths needed to be told, Dr. Goldwin Smith was perhaps as suitable a person as any other to tell them. If the unity of the Anglo-Saxon race is to be restored, the end upon which his heart is set and for which he writes, it is perhaps well that the influences which were at work bringing about its disruption should be as fully understood as possible. It is just possible that this, like a great many other well-intentioned efforts put forth in the same interest, may have an entirely different effect than that which was contemplated by the author. Americans will not love England more because the men who laid the foundation of the republic took a mean advantage of her in the day of her sore trial, and the motives by which they were actuated were unworthy and dishonorable. And it will scarcely have the effect of inducing Canadians to rush into the arms of a country that, not only unnaturally, without adequate cause, turned its weapons upon the mother who bore it, but has continued its rancour toward her unto this day.—W. S. B.