

Our Library.

Nos. 21, 22, 23.

"History of the Colonization of the United States. By George Bancroft."

THE history of the first settlement of the United States, down to the Revolution, which would seem at first sight to possess nothing but dry and unprofitable details, becomes both entertaining and useful in the hands of this able historian. He dilates upon the interesting particulars, which occur in the course of the narrative, which gives it rather the air and liveliness of a biography than of a closely connected history. Such, for example, are the chapters on the history and character of the Indians, the Pilgrims, the Quakers, and of Slavery. Much information is also given with regard to Great Britain, with which the United States were connected during the period of which he treats. The interest of the narrative is much enhanced by the graces of his style, which is one of the most fascinating with which we have ever met. The author is, we believe, a member of the French Academy, to which he was lately elected in preference to a large number of learned Europeans, it is to be hoped he will continue his history through the American Revolution, as the best narrative of that war yet published. It is written by a Spanish Foreigner, Charles Boita.

The following is Mr. Bancroft's graphic sketch of one of America's most gifted sons:

Benjamin Franklin.

IN Boston, however, where the pulpit had marshaled Quakers and witches to the gallows, one newspaper, the New England Courant, the fourth American periodical, was established, as an organ of independent opinion, by James Franklin. Its temporary success was advanced by Benjamin, his brother and apprentice, a boy of fifteen, who wrote pieces for its humble columns, worked in composing the types, as well as in printing off the sheets, and himself, as carrier, distributed the papers to the customers. The little sheet satirized hypocrisy, and spoke of religious knaves as of all knaves the worst. This was described as tending "to abuse the ministers of religion in a manner which was intolerable." "I can well remember," writes Increase Mather, then more than fourscore years of age, "when the civil government would have taken an effectual course to suppress such a cursed libel." In July, 1722, a resolve passed the council, appointing a censor for the press of James Franklin; but the house refused its concurrence. The ministers persevered; and, in January, 1723, a committee of inquiry was raised by the legislature. Benjamin Franklin, being examined, escaped with an admonition; James, the publisher, refusing to discover the author of the offence, was kept in jail for a month; his paper was censured as reflecting injuriously on the reverend ministers of the gospel; and, by vote of the house and council, he was forbidden to print it, "except it be first supervised."

Vexed at the arbitrary proceedings of the assembly; willing to escape from a town where good people pointed with horror at his freedom; indignant, also, at the tyranny of a brother, who, as a passionate master, often beat his apprentice,—Benjamin Franklin, then but seventeen years old, sailed clandestinely for New York; and, finding there no employment, crossed to Amboy; went on foot to the Delaware; for want of a wind, rowed in a boat from Burlington to Philadelphia; and, bearing marks of his labor at the oar, weary, hungry, having for his whole stock of cash a single dollar, the runaway apprentice—greatest of the sons of New England of that generation, the humble pupil of the free schools of Boston, rich in the boundless hope of youth and the unconscious power of genius, which modesty adorned—stepped on shore to seek food, occupation, shelter, and fortune.

On the deep foundations of sobriety, frugality, and industry, the young journeyman built his fortunes and fame; and he soon came to have a printing-office of his own. Toiling early and late, with his own hands he set types and worked at the press; with his own hands would trundle to the office in a wheelbarrow the reams of paper which he was to use. His ingenuity

was such, he could form letters, make types and wood cuts, and engrave vignettes in copper. The assembly of Pennsylvania respected his merit, and chose him its printer. He planned a newspaper; and, when he became its proprietor and editor, he fearlessly defended absolute freedom of thought and speech, and the inalienable power of the people. Desirous of advancing education, he proposed improvements in the schools of Philadelphia; he invented the system of subscription libraries, and laid the foundation of one that was long the most considerable library in America; he suggested the establishment of an academy, which has ripened into a university; he saw the benefit of concert in the pursuit of science, and gathered a philosophical society for its advancement. The intelligent and highly cultivated Logan bore testimony to his merits before they had burst upon the world:—"Our most ingenious printer has the clearest understanding, with extreme modesty. He is certainly an extraordinary man,"—"of a singularly good judgment, but of equal modesty,"—"excellent, yet humble." "Do not imagine," he adds, "that I overdo in my character of Benjamin Franklin, for I am rather short in it." When the scientific world began to investigate the wonders of electricity, Franklin excelled all observers in the marvellous simplicity and lucid exposition of his experiments, and in the admirable sagacity with which he elicited from them the laws which they illustrated. It was he who first suggested the explanation of thunder-gusts and the northern lights on electrical principles, and, in the summer of 1752, going out into the fields, with no instrument but a kite, no companion but his son, established his theory by obtaining a line of connection with a thunder-cloud. Nor did he cease till he had made the lightning a house-hold pastime, taught his family to catch the subtle fluid in its inconceivably rapid leaps between the earth and the sky, and compelled it to give warning of its passage by the harmless ringing of bells.

The Depth of the Sea.

WITH respect to its depth, except near shores and in frequented tracks, we know almost nothing. Theoretical considerations indicate a mean depth of "a small fraction of the ellipticity of the earth," which can hardly be interpreted at more than four or five miles. Ross sounded (in 15° 3' south, 23° 14' west) without finding bottom at 27 600 feet (about five miles and a quarter), which is the greatest depth yet attained.

Answer to the Enigma in the last Calliopean.—CON-STANTINOPLE. O.

Hamilton, Oct. 12th, 1848.

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D. C. VAN NORMAN, A. M.,

Principal

Hamilton, August 9, 1848.

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