

*The Cambridge History of American Literature.* Edited by WILLIAM P. TRENT, JOHN ERSKINE, STUART P. SHERMAN, and CARL VAN DOREN. Volume II. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons; Cambridge, England: University Press. 1918. Pp. x, 658. \$3.50.)

THIS is a better book than the first volume, partly because the material is richer. It includes Thoreau, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Whittier, Poe, Holmes, Lowell, Whitman, Lanier, publicists, orators, and historians, divines and moralists, early humorists, newspapers and magazines, poets of the Civil War, dialect writers, short stories, and books for children, thus covering nearly all the greater names (except those treated in the previous volume) and most of the important movements and "tendencies" in American literature of the nineteenth century. There is also a higher average of ability in the contributors, some of whom are among the best-known professors of English in America.

Because of the purpose, stated in the preface to volume I., to make the work "a survey of the life of the American people as expressed in their writings rather than a history of *belles-lettres* alone", the present volume has much historical value. With varying degrees of success, the contributors have tried to present their subjects in relation to the broader currents of the national life. In the case of Whittier, Lowell, the poets of the Civil War, and Southern writers of the Reconstruction period, the task was easy, although it has not been performed with conspicuous ability. Even Poe, exotic though he was, is brought into some contact with American life by the discussion of his literary criticisms; and Longfellow's influence upon the national culture is clearly shown through his "threefold function of transmitter of Old World culture to the New, shaper into verse of aboriginal, colonial, and Revolutionary material, both legendary and historical, and lyric interpreter of the simple thoughts and feelings of an unsophisticated people". At times, indeed, the historical method supplants the literary; the discussion of Hawthorne consists chiefly of an exposition of his relation to Transcendentalism, and is therefore inadequate as an interpretation of the art of our greatest romancer; while the chapter on Whitman is little more than a biography. *Furor historicus*—or something worse—is responsible for a prolix account of Motley, who gets more pages than Longfellow, Whittier, Poe, Lowell, or Holmes. On the other hand, one of the keenest disappointments is the chapter on Webster, by a distinguished United States senator, from whom the reader might justly expect a broad and thorough treatment of America's greatest orator—a treatment which should expound his political philosophy and discuss the effect of his personality and speeches upon our national life; instead, apparently because of an antiquated notion of what is appropriate in a history of literature, the writer devotes himself to elaborating and illustrating the truth that Webster's style has "literary quality". In refreshing contrast is the

chapter on publicists and orators (other than Webster) of the first half of the nineteenth century, which deals interestingly with the writings of Marshall, Story, Kent, Wheaton, Clay, Calhoun, Everett, and others, showing their relation to the growing life of the country. Much the same may be said of the chapter on American historians from 1783 to 1850. Two of the best chapters in the book bear the somewhat unpromising titles, *Magazines, Annuals, and Gift-Books, 1783-1850*, and *Newspapers, 1775-1860*; written out of fullness of special knowledge in comparatively unfamiliar fields, they throw light upon matters having close relation to general conditions both historical and literary. The chapter, *Divines and Moralists, 1783-1860*, is likewise excellent, making vivid such personalities as Dwight, Bushnell, Beecher, and Mark Hopkins. Much may also be learned of American life on its moral and theological side from the well-written chapter, *Books for Children*, which traces entertainingly the moral and esthetic changes in juvenile literature since colonial days. The student of history, no less than the student of literature, will find admirable the chapter on *Dialect Writers*, especially the portion on the American negro as revealed in *Uncle Remus* and other works in negro dialect. Less can be said for the chapter on the short story, which contains little of moment about either the form or the substance of this very significant literary type.

As a history of literature the volume has much the same faults and virtues as its predecessor. It lacks unity in method and point of view; this defect is to some extent inevitable in a composite work, but the editors might have subdued it somewhat more, and in particular they should not have allowed the chapters on Hawthorne, Webster, and Whitman to vary so widely from the norm. Inequality of style seriously lessens the dignity and value of the volume. One cannot expect all the contributors to have the sure mastery of touch that appears in the chapter on dialect writers, or the close-knit and solid, if somewhat heavy, style of the general editors and most of their better known collaborators; but no theory of editing ought to tolerate so great a divergence from a standard style as may be seen in the chapter on the New South, which is marred by elementary errors of expression, including such flowery mixtures as the sentence, "Not by any surcease of sorrow but by the genuine fire of a new vision did Southern poetry bud forth into a patriotic cry". The proportions of space allotted to different authors might be improved: some of the twenty-four pages lavished on Prescott and Motley might well have been divided between Whittier and Lowell, who get only thirteen each; Thoreau does not need as much room as Hawthorne; and if Tabb deserves three pages, Longfellow deserves more than his scant ten. When the other *dii majores* have a chapter and a chapter-heading apiece, it seems bad book-making to hide Holmes away in a chapter entitled *Writers of Familiar Verse*, the more so since his prose receives twice as much space as his verse.

The literary criticism in the volume as a whole is sensible and fair.

Some readers will think that Poe's tales are underrated, that Lanier's versification deserves warmer praise, that various verdicts on short-story writers are open to question, and so on; but in general the judgments are sound; and, if most of them lack originality and brilliancy, they are at least free from erraticism and hysterics. It is regrettable that room was not found for a more detailed treatment of the greater men, particularly a study of sources and a more penetrating analysis of thought and form. The most original criticism in the book is that on Hawthorne's relation to Transcendentalism, which pictures him as a cool speculator on spiritual problems, especially the doctrines of self-reliance, compensation, and the relation of good and evil, testing them by projecting them into his novels and seeing how they work there. The writer probably exaggerates Hawthorne's consciousness of the relation of his novels to the Transcendental philosophy. He is sometimes reckless of statement, saying that the love of Dimmesdale and Hester "never caused them repentance", whereas Dimmesdale's dying words refer to their having "violated" their "reverence each for the other's soul"; and, again, asserting that *The Marble Faun* shows "the evolution of good out of sin—not out of repentance for sin", while the character through whom Hawthorne expounds the doctrine says of Donatello, "His remorse, gnawing into his soul, has awakened it". It is, nevertheless, a novel and suggestive study, and the book would stand higher if it contained more like it. Yet the book as it is has much of value for students of history and literature, because of its general accuracy as a record of facts, its breadth of view, and its co-ordination of the minor and the greater things of the period into a loose kind of unity. The bibliographies, which fill a third of the volume, deserve a special word of praise, particularly the lists of dated contributions to periodicals.

WALTER C. BRONSON.

*Colonel John Scott of Long Island, 1634(?)–1696.* By WILBUR C. ABBOTT, Professor of History in Yale University. (New Haven: Yale University Press; London: Humphrey Milford. 1918. Pp. 94. \$1.25.)

So that rogue finds at last a biographer. With a zest and a banter that lend charm to his tale Professor Abbott links together the episodes of the strange career that made the little bound boy of Salem lord of Long Island, conqueror of Dutch Guiana, adviser to the colonial office, geographer to the king, international braggart and bravo, spy and informer. But Mr. Abbott is a hanging judge. That Scott's evidence could twenty years ago be taken seriously by those who for England or America looked into the Venezuelan boundary he calls a "glorious restoration of his reputation". But the American investigators, identifying as Scott's the narrative printed without his name, pointed out, and repeatedly, his damaged reputation. They looked up in the British Museum