

With this new arrangement the work of actual experiment was concluded in the autumn of 1882, from the discussion of which Prof. Newcomb concludes that the velocity of light *in vacuo* is 299,860 kilometres per second. If we combine this result, according to the well-known relation, with the constant of aberration, 20".492, as determined by the recent labors of Dr. Nyrén at Pulkova, the resulting parallax of the sun is 8".794, corresponding to a distance of practically 93 millions of miles—a value which, if the general drift of results obtained by other methods is to be trusted, cannot be much displaced by any subsequent research.

#### LONGFELLOW.

*Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.* With extracts from his journals and correspondence. Edited by Samuel Longfellow. 2 vols. Boston: Ticknor & Co. 1886.

THIS biography is characterized by its good manners. There is no line in it, any more than in his poems, which the poet dying would wish to blot, and this is double good fortune. Those who were his acquaintances need not fear any disillusion as to their place in his real esteem, and those who worshipped him from afar will find no appreciable lessening of the proper heroic distance between themselves and the object of their devotion. At the end, it is as if one had grown familiar with the study at Craigie House, had heard the poet talk of his past and his books with a discreet suppression of names not already public by virtue of their owner's repute, and had listened to extracts from the journals and correspondence, while all the time the doors leading out of the library are kept closed. The editor—and he is indeed only an editor—has adopted that modern substitute for autobiography which consists in a selection and arrangement of papers written by the man himself and connected by the slightest thread of narrative. He says in his preface that this method is one by which "the reader would best learn how a man of letters spends his time and what occupies his thoughts." This plan has been rigidly adhered to, and consequently the work is essentially Longfellow's diary, expanded and illustrated in parts by letters, and exhibits to the public the surface of events and thoughts in the life of a poet, in the literary and social environment of Boston, who was one of the most cultivated members of the group that gave distinction to the period.

The editor himself describes this life as that of a man of letters; and whether or not he meant to distinguish sharply between the phases of Longfellow's career as poet and as scholar, the effect of the mode of biography chosen is to present its subject as a scholar who wrote poetry rather than as a poet primarily and always. In nearly all accounts of men in whose lives the world takes interest there are some salient points, some deeds or works or incidents which have attracted attention to the individual; but in telling the story in detail the biographer often finds difficulty in managing those intervals in which his hero's days did not differ from those of ordinary mortals. It is in such portions that the much lamented "disillusion" usually makes itself known. In Longfellow's case the writing of a series of poems has drawn the curiosity of men toward his personality, and if one would get at the true record of his poetic life, that would be the biography for which men would care most; but that is a very secret matter, and hard both to discover and to disclose. Moods visited him and he wrote; but between these, and filling up the intervals of his poetic life, was a life of letters, and it is this life of which his diary was a transcript. This was easy both to record and to publish. Long-

fellow himself tells us what he thought of its relative importance in his real history: "How brief this chronicle is, even of my outward life. And of my inner life, not a word. If one were only sure that one's journal would never be seen by any one, and never get into print, how different the case would be! But death picks the locks of all portfolios and throws the contents into the street for the public to scramble after." Waiving all question as to the degree of privacy to which a poet's life is entitled, let us take it at once on this best authority that the diary which is spread before us is not the true record of a poet's soul, but the jottings of what happened to him in the body, the cities he saw, the men and women he met, the scenes of natural beauty and childish festival he witnessed, the society he dined and talked with, the books he read or wrote, and such of his thoughts, sentiments, and moods as he was not unwilling that the public should "scramble after." The letters, both of his own inditing and from others, which supplement the diary, will not affect the matter, since they belong to the same outer region of life.

It has generally been believed that Longfellow's life was, in its human relations and its social and material surroundings, very charming; in these volumes this opinion is sustained by page after page of detail. Whether as host or guest, as son, father, or citizen, as stranger or as bosom friend, the element of urbanity pervaded his character. One finds it only too easy to quote instances in which his refined amiableness gave beauty to trivial or even mean and intrinsically ugly incidents. This social phase of the biography presents our cultivation in the intercourse of life with the greatest perfectness which it has yet found in any literary record; the diary, in this regard, becomes at once an indispensable part of the *memoirs* of manners. So much is true of it in relation to the entire coterie (and it was not a very small band) of which Longfellow was one of the most finished members; but beyond this, some of the individuals whom he habitually mentions gain in agreeableness by what he has to say of them. To take the most notable instance, it is certainly impossible to lay down the volumes without a much pleasanter impression of Charles Sumner's nature than the public has thus far entertained. Longfellow was not blind to the grandiose quality in his friend, but he writes of him so warmly, and displays his attachment in so many ways, and insists so often upon the affectionate, humane, and simple heart of his Herculean orator, that the statuesque memory of the Senator loses something of the chill which has belonged to it; and the glimpses one gets of Sumner during his frequent visits to Craigie House display him in an attractive guise. On the other hand, Sumner's friendship seems to have reacted on Longfellow, to develop in him an interest in politics not natural to him, and to quicken his patriotism and enlarge his life with public sympathies. The vigor and decision of Longfellow's remarks upon the state of the country, the clear and certain tone whenever that conflict of "the North wind against the Southern pestilence" is spoken of, free him from the doubt which has been sometimes indulged; that he secluded himself from the great cause of his day more than befitted a complete man. There is evidence enough in these pages to show how intense and constant was his aversion to the violence of politics, but in spite of that he entered into the spirit of the time, and from an early period had his heart in the right place. That this was in some degree due to his intimacy with Sumner also seems plain; and thus the withdrawal of the veil of privacy from their friendship is a gain to the memory of both.

The social feature in Longfellow's life is, perhaps, the leading trait of this work, and its most

immortal part; its charm is to be felt, as the editor justly says, only by the perusal of a multitude of details as they follow day by day in the record of the poet's own hand. Scarcely second to this, however, is his friendship and association with books. From early years his genius was fed from this source; and the fortunate accident of time, which made his graduation at Bowdoin College coincident with a desire on the part of the trustees to found a chair of modern languages, determined his fate as a poet who should lean much on books. The travels and studies which were undertaken to fit himself for the prospective professorship may be said to have controlled his career. He returned with an admirable literary culture, which his later post at Harvard helped to perfect. His reading from that time was in Continental rather than English literature, and his poetry showed its influence. It is true that he derived many poetic impressions directly through the eye in the course of his journeys abroad, but for the most part he obtained them through the foreign romantic poets and the primitive imagination of the northern bards. Had he been in closer contact with poetic motives in life itself, he might have been touched with passion; but as he felt them at second-hand, as it were, he could not lift his mood higher than the region of sentiment in that considerable portion of his work which deals with mediævalism, or with the contemporary picturesqueness which still survives in the ruins of the Gothic past. In those parts of his poetry where the literary influence is less obvious, it is no less potent. He was a poet who was developed by books, and not by experience; even when he draws from life itself, his cunning is bookish. This is the impression already given by his works, and his biography makes it deeper. It is the "man of letters" whose history is given to us. The poetic temperament, nevertheless, is very frequently to be observed. The susceptibility of the organization to slight changes in the surroundings; the restlessness, the weariness, the fret of the spirit; the delight in receiving the impression, and the reluctance to work it over into expression; the joy in the vision that comes at the rare moment, and the shrinking from the labor of the spell that bids it stay forever and be seen of all eyes—these and the other common qualities of temperament which are often as keen in those who have no faculty of language, can be noticed throughout all his long life. Longfellow's personality is revealed in these passages, but this is merely the light and shadow of life's surface; the poetic nature is deeper than that. Probably the point of view under which he is viewed in his own diary is the correct one, as it is the common one among critics. His art, taste, and treatment present the qualities of culture; and the forms of which the theme is immediately from life about him are just those which cause him to be called "the poet of the affections." Outside of home-life, books were his inspiration; in other words, generally he was sustained in the poetic mood by the beauty and virtue of which he read.

Some light is thrown upon Longfellow's methods of composition. He wrote with singular ease; indeed, we recollect no poet of equal rank who is known to have been blessed with like facility. The shorter poems, and particularly the "psalms," as they are half-humorously entitled, came to him without effort, sometimes "by whole stanzas and not by lines," as he says, and they required little correction—usually, it seems, only the strengthening of a phrase, but no complete recasting. Similarly with the long poems, when his subject was once settled on and the work begun, he apparently ran on "trippingly," and was satisfied with the corrected first draft. This shows admirable mastery as well as speed,

while it suggests that the feelings of the poet were not excited to any great energy. One notes, too, that his subjects for shorter poems were frequently selected and the poems written later; a practice which generally indicates the forcing of a poet's talents. Another characteristic, which is rich in suggestions to an analyzer of literary men, is the habit he exhibits of setting down in his diary striking figures of rhetoric heard in sermons or elsewhere, not for the sake of the thought, but of the form. Sometimes one comes upon a landscape sketched in a few exquisite lines, but such entries do not seem to be notes for future work. On the whole, the young poet will not learn much about the craft from these volumes; so far as anything can be inferred from such slight material, equability marked his poetic life as invariably as it did his social intercourse.

Thus this biography in nowise contradicts or modifies the popular estimate which was long ago arrived at in respect to the poet. It merely sustains and amplifies the opinion that has been so often expressed. We have not been surprised by the gift of the intimate and unguessed record of a noble soul—one of those memories which are shrines of the ideal life; but we have what was to be expected, a full and delightful history of the external aspects of a lettered life in a refined society, as it was led by a man who fulfilled his duties in the varied relations of his sphere in a way that made his days beautiful and his memory a humanizing influence upon all who have any perception of the sources of its charm. Our polite literature gains greatly by this, more than by any work which has been published for some time in this country. Nevertheless these volumes are neither a complete account nor a thorough study of Longfellow's life. They occupy in his works a similar place to Hawthorne's note-books. Autobiography is of necessity an imperfect view of its writer's individuality; it is usually invaluable, it is often agreeable, but it is always insufficient. Other memoirs must supplement this by showing how he seemed to the eyes of others, and the scholar who seeks the genesis of his poems must establish the logical connection between the life and the works. Of his personality we are not likely to know more—one suspects there was really little more to know; but of the quality of his genius, in the light thrown on it by his private life, a good deal is yet to be written.

#### THE COÖPERATIVE HISTORY OF AMERICA.

*Narrative and Critical History of America*, edited by Justin Winsor. Vol. II. Spanish explorations and settlements in America from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1886.

WITH the first instalment of this work in our hands, a work long expected with an interest inspired by the success of the coöperative method under the same guidance in the 'Memorial History of Boston,' we naturally review in thought the work done in modern times by other hands upon the history of this continent. It is a high standard that has been set by the labors of Robertson, Humboldt, Prescott, Kohl, Parkman, and Bancroft, and yet the 'Narrative and Critical History of America' must be pronounced in scope and method the greatest contribution that has been made to the literature of our history. Not that it can compete in beauty of artistic workmanship with much that has preceded it: it makes no effort so to do. Though not devoid of literary excellence, it is first and foremost a scientific work, as truly such as is Helmholtz's 'Lehre der Tonempfindungen.' Strange as it may sound to those whose memory goes back to the date of the Treaty of Guadalupe

Hidalgo, its only rival is that valuable and ponderous series now issuing from the laboratory of Hubert Howe Bancroft on the Pacific Slope. One of these books will probably henceforward suggest the other, as the trick of a feature will sometimes recall a totally dissimilar physiognomy. Both owe their origin to the specializing tendency of the present, which makes coöperation first possible, then necessary; and the fact of coöperation, though not the distinguishing feature of Mr. Winsor's work, is the first to attract attention. Here the likeness begins and ends—nay, coöperation even has taken on a different guise in the East and West. The Californian editor, in a land where worth of personality is supposed to be most fully appreciated, carefully, systematically suppresses the individuality of his assistants; Mr. Winsor's plan is based upon a most scrupulous accrediting to each co-worker his every line and word.

If we may not justly adapt to the new history the sentence wherein Sir William Jones defined the work of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and write, "The bounds of its investigation will be the geographical limits of America, and within those limits its inquiries will be extended to whatever is performed by man or produced by nature," we may safely say that in scope it is unapproached. It deals with the two Americas, from the earliest period to which surmise can reach, to the generation that tells the tale. Of the eight stout volumes we are told to expect, those at present published, the second, third, and fourth, relate the discoveries and settlements of the Spanish, English, and French; the later volumes will continue the narrative, while the first will handle the aboriginal history of the continent, as well as the strange, fascinating story of the pre-Columbian discoveries, and that dim—we had almost said telepathic—half-knowledge of the existence of a western world which haunts all the earlier centuries of history. This volume will be among the last to appear, in order that full use may be made of the present study of our native ethnology and archaeology, when every year is giving what, before the war, a decade failed to give.

It is not the scheme of authorship—the striving to pick out for each era and topic the one man who knows most about it—it is not its unrivalled scope, that gives this work its enormous and permanent value. The method of construction insisted upon in the felicitous title, 'Narrative and Critical History of America'; the coupling with each narrative chapter a chapter descriptive at length of the sources of information upon which the narrative was based, and of their comparative value—this is the feature of the book. The nature of the ordinary "history" is well known: the author, having collected his material and selected his point of view, writes his text well or ill according to his kind; to this he appends, perhaps, notes explanatory and otherwise, and references to his authorities, which he quotes by designations often inaccurate and not seldom unintelligible; sometimes, to our rejoicing, he devotes a couple of pages to an account of the authorities, and of his diligence in examining them. Such work grows less common, but a reminiscence of it lends zest to our appreciation of a scientific method. Surely all scholars who like to know the ground whereon they walk, will welcome the application of such a method upon such a scale.

The second volume, which lies before us, deals with the explorations and settlements of the Spaniards from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. It opens with the voyage of Columbus and closes with that of Magellan. In turning the pages there appears to be about as much critical matter in small type as narrative matter in larger type. Another thing strikes us at the first

examination: editorship, as Mr. Winsor understands it, is no child's play. Of the 617 pages in the volumes (exclusive of the index) some 340 are from his pen, and very many of the others bear traces of his care. He has written the chapters upon Columbus and Cortes, and the critical chapter on Vespucci, and about all the cartographical matter. The other writers and their subjects are as follows: Sydney Howard Gay takes Vespucci, and Doctor Edward Channing the other early followers of Columbus; Dr. John G. Shea writes of Ancient Florida, of Ponce de Leon, De Soto, and the tragedy of Fort Caroline; the Rev. George E. Ellis sympathetically recounts the life of Las Casas; Prof. H. W. Haynes, of the Archaeological Institute, follows the early explorations of New Mexico; the Conquest of Peru is described by Clements Markham, and the Rev. E. E. Hale lends a new charm to Magellan's voyage. Such a roll of names guarantees thoroughness and care in workmanship, and no one who goes to the book will be insensible of it. As we have already said, history is here treated scientifically, not artistically; the critical part has overbalanced the narrative. The general reader must approach the book with his loins girt up. He will be constantly reminded that the pursuit of truth is no longer compatible with a journey upon that broad and easy way which we all like now and then, despite its dolorous goal. No sooner is he suited to one author than he will be thrown violently out of the saddle by a critical chapter or bibliographical note, and when he has climbed in again it is only to find that he must adapt himself to a different pace. We are not cavilling; we merely wish to explain that this history is not to be read as one of Prescott's is read, and was not meant to be. The literary merit of the separate narratives is overcome by the lack of artistic adjustment pre-ordained in the conception of the plan. To regret this would be, as George Eliot has said, to demand that not this book but another should have been written.

Throughout the volume the object has evidently been to epitomize the results of what has been done before, rather than to enter upon new lines of investigation. Thus the first chapter condenses all that has been written about Columbus down to the latest phase of the discussion regarding his last resting-place, and gives an account of the mingled light and darkness which Harrissee has just thrown upon his history; but the writer has been careful to refrain from deciding doubtful questions, and is conservative in his utterances, though sharing the estimate of Columbus's character which every rebellious reference to the sources renders more probable. In dealing with Vespucci, too, neither Mr. Gay nor the editor throws any new light on the mysterious first voyage, but we are left with the belief that we have all the light there is. An impression of novelty there undoubtedly is in Mr. Shea's article, but we suspect it to lie rather in the point of view than in the facts. His heart is warm towards the Spaniards, and one will hardly recognize, as it comes from his persuasive pen, the story of the vengeance of Dominique de Gourgues which so thrilled us in Mr. Parkman's telling. Dr. Shea corrects a common injustice in pointing out good reasons for believing that the expedition of Ayllon in 1521 along the northern coast to Virginia was very particularly not intended to be a slave voyage.

It was well to devote a chapter to the "Protector of the Indians," for we heartily agree with Dr. Ellis that the dare-devilry of the conquerors did often bewitch our earlier writers from a proper portrayal of the effect of the conquest upon the natives. Nor is the scientific method of dealing with such matters much better than the Carlylesque. Dr. Dewey wrote (and Dr. Ellis