Literature

New Amsterdam

THE moment for the publication of the first two volumes of a *History of the City of New York,* by Mrs. Schuyler van Rensselaer,[1] has been wisely chosen, in view of the coming Hudson celebration. No better or more permanent souvenir of the occasion can possibly be desired than these two volumes, which are ample guarantee of the quality of the two that are still to follow.

Mrs. van Rensselaer—where could a fitter name have been found to place upon the title page of a history of New Amsterdam than this?—has planned and thus far carried out a work of more than local significance and value, in this, that from her first page onward, she keeps in mind the larger significance of the Dutch settlement on the Hudson, *i. e.,* its relation to and influence upon the English colonies between which it intervened, a wedge, but also a meeting-point, where so much of Anglo-Saxon tradition and institutions was modified and adapted to the future uses of democracy. New Netherland — New Amsterdam, more by token—was a melting pot, and not the least important of the ingredients it served to fuse were of Dutch provenience. This historian says:

"Seeing how distinctly English in origin are most of our institutions and in how democratic a temper they are administered and by the people endorsed, modern Americans fail to understand that, while England did largely give us our belief in the rights of the citizen and in the practicability of republicanism, it was not the well-spring of our republican ideals. These developed inevitably on colonial soil, and their growth was helped much less by British precept or practice than in the beginnings by Dutch influences variously transmitted, and in later years by French teachings and example."

These be sane words in a sane historical study, which is notably impartial and just, free from the wholesale glorification of all things Dutch that, some twenty years ago, marked the beginning of the end of the predominance of the New England school of American historians, who sought in England alone, and nowhere else, the origins of our institutions. The late Douglas Campbell was one of the pioneer enthusiasts in the service of the Dutch claim to the predominant place among the formative influences of the United States; with him the pendulum swung to the other extreme. In Mrs. van Rensselaer's book it assumes its normal position.

The historian of New York is confronted with a lamentable lack of documentary sources, especially in the earlier years of the settlement. Indifference—nay, more, blindness—at home led to a neglect of records that in later years could no longer be consulted; those of the Dutch West Indian Company, for instance, sold by that languishing trading concern early in the nineteenth century as old paper, and destroyed by its purchasers. Whatever sources remain, however, at home and abroad, have served in the preparation of this history, another of whose merits is its sound appreciation of the influence of European international policies upon the history of New Netherland and the colonies to the north and south of it.

Mrs. van Rensselaer deals with the story of New Amsterdam, not with that of the whole province, except in so far as is necessary to give the proper perspective, this appreciation of relative values and meanings extending also to the British colonies. Hence the wider, the national usefulness of the work.

These first two volumes cover the story of New York during the period from its foundation to the accession of William and Mary—its Dutch existence. The remaining volumes will be devoted to the English domination and the years of the Revolution, 1789 being chosen for the conclusion of the history, the year of the inauguration of Washington as first President of the United States.

"To go farther than this would not be to continue the same story, but to begin on the same ground one of a different kind. Early in the nineteenth century there dawned for New

[1] HISTORY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. *By Mrs. Schuyler van Rensselaer.* New York: The Macmillan Co. 2 vols., 8vo. $5.00 net.

York a new period of prominence, during which it grew to be the chief city of the new nation and the New World. But in 1789 its original kind of importance was shorn away from it. It was no longer, as it had been for generations, the capital of a province independent of its neighbors and semi-autonomous, or, as it had been in recent years, the capital of a virtually independent State; and eight years later it ceased to be even the capital of one of the United States."

In this review only a general impression is conveyed, the impression left by the work upon the reviewer, which is one of sound historical balance, of well-seen proportions and well-drawn conclusions. Father Knickerbocker does not boast; he is merely conscious of the value of his contribution to the building of the nation. Within twenty years after its founding, eighteen languages were spoken within the limits of his town. He refashioned all this heterogeneous material after his own sturdy image; its descendants he taught to be good Americans. He has never ceased from performing this service to the country to this date.

Following in Douglas Campbell's footsteps, the Rev. Dr. William Elliot Griffis has rendered good service these last fifteen years as a popularizer, among young Americans, of the historical service of Holland to their country. His books are enthusiastic and they are picturesque, sufficient unto their purpose. To their number he now adds, in commemoration of the Hudson celebration, a fifth volume, *The Story of New Netherland: The Dutch in America*,[2] in which, as always in his writings, the human element prevails over the scientifically historic. His books deserve a place on the shelf of every New York boy and girl who boast Dutch blood, as which of them cannot?

In this connection it is appropriate to refer to the new edition of Motley's *History of the United Netherlands*,[3] in two volumes, printed on thin paper, which brings the work, so much larger in bulk than the "Rise of the Dutch Republic," of which it is the continuation, within handy compass.

Motley continues to hold his honored place among the Dutch historians, a pioneer in many ways, and still, in some, their guide. This edition, from the press of his original publishers in this country, is provided with a brief introductory note, which draws largely upon his correspondence for the information it conveys. This fact will serve as a pretext, if one be needed, for a reference to this "Correspondence," edited by George William Curtis, a strikingly brilliant collection of letters that is well worth rereading, and especially worth recommending to the attention of a younger generation, which is not likely to turn to it unless invited in this way.

Of the *United Netherlands* nothing new can be said at this late date, except what has just been written above. Motley's three great works remain the best on the history of Holland during its most important period available to the English reader. They continue a living influence, because to sound scholarship they add a contagious, uplifting enthusiasm for the great causes of humanity whose fate was decided in the Low Countries three centuries ago.

[2] THE STORY OF NEW NETHERLAND. *By William Elliot Griffis.* Illus. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 16mo. $1.25 net.

[3] HISTORY OF THE UNITED NETHERLANDS, FROM THE DEATH OF WILLIAM THE SILENT TO THE TWELVE YEARS' TRUCE. *By John Lothrop Motley.* New edition, portraits. New York: Harper & Bros. 2 vols., 8vo. $3.00