

## NEW LIGHT ON EARLY HISTORY.

Dr. Elliott Coues, the distinguished author and scientist, has brought out a new publication (Francis P. Harper, New York,) that will add to his fame as a critical commentator, and adds also another strong link to attach his name to the history of the north and west. His edition of "Lewis and Clark's Expedition" was a great work which has already been reviewed in these columns, but too much cannot be said in praise of it as a conscientious and able commentary on one of the most remarkable achievements of the world's great explorers. There is a singular lack of reliable material relating to the early history of the northwestern territory, and as the years go by so much more difficult is it to distinguish facts from fiction. Washington Irving's relations are pleasing, but they must be taken with a grain of salt. Mr. Irving was a brilliant author but it will not be too much to say that he was more enthusiastic in a desire to captivate the reader with fine descriptions than to dig down after cold, hard facts. On the other hand, Dr. Coues is merciless in stifling anything that approaches imagination or color, in all that he relates of a historical character; his style is a model of concise and painstaking brevity. We cannot find better terms in which to express this quality of his, which is displayed in every line of his commentaries. If there had been a line of historians of the type of Elliott Coues, from the time of Herodotus down to the present, the world would today be informed accurately of what has transpired, at least since the death of the Father of History.

Dr. Coues, in his last publication, has taken the manuscript journals of Alexander Henry, Fur Trader of the Northwest company, and of David Thompson, Official Geographer and Explorer of the same company, and from the record of their explorations and adventures among the Indians of the Red, Saskatchewan, Missouri and Columbia rivers, he has published such a mass of facts as are invaluable to the his-

torians of the future. Not only this: the records are faithfully published, and Dr. Coues has critically examined each important statement as to the itinerary and identified the localities, with comments and observations that are of practical value. Not only this: he has so faithfully preserved the text and the spirit of the record that it is presented to the reader in all its fresh and original vigor and as if the events had but happened yesterday. Dr. Coues has wisely made more prominent the journal of the fur trader, Alexander Henry, rather than the dry astronomical observations of the geographer, Mr. Thompson, in order to present a faithful picture of things as they existed in the northwest one hundred years ago; he therefore permits the fur trader to tell the story of his adventurous life, beginning in the autumn of the year 1799 at Portage la Prairie, on the Terre Blanche, British America; thence to the plain of the Saskatchewan, and thence over the mountains to the mouth of the Columbia river, on the Pacific coast, where the bold trader met his death by drowning, on Sunday, May 22, 1814. During the fourteen years that transpired, Mr. Henry, as agent of the Northwestern Fur company, encountered the various tribes of aborigines, buying their furs, stimulating them to extraordinary exertions, and all the time taking notes of their habits and customs, and has thus incidentally made a most important contribution to ethnography. His observations are necessarily true, because he had no other object in view than to record the facts as connected with the business in which he was engaged; he had no theories to bolster, and the journal was not made with any thought of publication.

The pictures of barbarism thus incidentally presented are of great value to the student of ethnology and of interest to the ordinary reader, but the book is not for general reading. Only a limited number of copies were printed and these have perhaps all been taken by advance subscriptions; enough copies, however, have been distributed and placed in the hands of scholars and in public libraries to preserve and diffuse that which is proper for public information. There are many passages in the book relating to the habits

of the savages that are given with rough simplicity by the trader, and whilst these furnish facts that are interesting to the student, they are of a kind that are wisely withheld from popular publications. The book throws new light not only on the early history of the northwest, but presents facts in the line of scientific investigation that are of the highest value to ethnology.—S. B. EVANS, in *Ottumwa Sun*, May 8, 1897.

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NO ONE can travel up and down the Mississippi without being astonished at the immigration constantly pouring into Iowa from all parts of the country; but especially from Indiana and Ohio. Two gentlemen from Richmond county, Ohio, told us that from that county alone 1,000 persons were coming to Iowa this fall; at every ferry on the river crowds are awaiting to cross; and the land offices all over the State are unable to meet the demands upon them by those who are eager to enter lands.—*Keokuk Dispatch*, 1854.

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AN ARRANGEMENT has been made at Davenport for the redemption of the Florence wild-cat currency which is in the hands of workingmen. Funds have been placed in Judge James Grant's control to effect this laudable purpose. An attempt was made to impose upon this arrangement by parties who were not laborers, but it appears to have been unsuccessful, owing to the discrimination of the Judge.—*Dubuque Express and Herald*, August 18, 1858.

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THE CARS will be running through to Fairfield, a distance of fifty-two miles, by the 1st of September. The object of the company is to push the road through to the Des Moines river at the earliest day possible, and it is quite probable they will reach Ottumwa this winter.—*Burlington Gazette*, August, 1858.

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