

must be allowed for in all Indian words we have from them. The English usually called the Oneida and Oswego Rivers the Onondaga. In a similar way Genesee River was often termed the Seneca.

These notes need not be carried further, for it is my present purpose merely to direct attention to a few points. Examination will show that large numbers of Indian names are still in use, but with no better meanings than our own.

W. M. BEAUCHAMP.

Baldwinsville, N.Y., Oct. 31.

Battles and Rain.

IN *Science* for Oct. 16 I quoted the only part I had then seen of the now rather famous reference by Plutarch to the occurrence of rain after great battles, and I then considered it as having the meaning commonly ascribed to it. Mr. Powers, however, now tries to show that the commonly accepted meaning is erroneous, and supports himself by the original passage. It seems to me that the ordinary view is correct, and that Mr. Powers, by omitting a portion and by an incorrect interpretation of the passage, has been misled. I will give the passage as translated by Langhorne, italics, punctuation, and all.

"From these writers [historians] we learn, that the Massilians walled in their vineyards with the bones they found in the field; and that the rain which fell the winter following, soaking in the moisture of the putrefied bodies, the ground was so enriched by it, that it produced the next season, a prodigious crop. Thus the opinion of Archilochus is confirmed, that *fields are fattened* with blood. It is observed, indeed, that extraordinary rains generally fall after great battles; whether it be that some deity chooses to wash and purify the earth with water from above, or whether the blood and corruption, by the moist and heavy vapors they emit, thicken the air, which is liable to be altered by the smallest cause." Dryden's translation begins this last statement as follows: "It is an observation, also, that extraordinary rains pretty generally fall after great battles," etc.

It will be seen at once that the last part of this statement by Plutarch has a very different meaning from the first. It would be a remarkable climate that would permit the blood to remain on the earth, or thicken the air with moist and heavy vapors, six months more or less. The extraordinary rains referred to must have occurred very soon after the battle. These served to soak the corruption (which would begin in a very few hours in that climate) and the blood into the surface soil, and thus tended to purify the surface, as Plutarch says. The rains of the subsequent winter carried this material still deeper, and enriched the crops. Plutarch does not connect the two rains together, but rather carefully separates them by the clause referring to Archilochus. The rains of the winter following were evidently gentle, long-continued, and crop producing, and not like the earlier extraordinary rains immediately after the battle and lasting, probably, a few hours only. It would seem as though a good understanding of this earlier view may help prove the falsity of the later regarding explosions and rain.

H. A. HAZEN.

Washington, D.C., Nov. 3.

BOOK-REVIEWS.

Christopher Columbus and how he received and imparted the Spirit of Discovery. By JUSTIN WINSOR. New York, Houghton, Mifflin, & Co. 8°. \$4.

Now that the fourth centenary of the discovery of America is close at hand, books relating to that event, and to the man who brought it to pass, are likely to be abundant. We doubt, however, if any of the rest of them will equal in interest and importance this work of Mr. Winsor. It is written in the spirit and with the methods of the best historical criticism, and with a sincere endeavor to discover and state the real truth. On the one hand, it presents the significance and results of Columbus's work in a clear and impressive light, while on the other it endeavors to set forth with historical fidelity the lineaments of his character. Its literary merits, too, are considerable, the style being strong

and incisive, yet at the same time clear and easy flowing. The opening chapters, which treat of the documentary sources from which the life of Columbus has to be learned, are somewhat too technical for the ordinary reader, and similar passages occur in some other parts; but the narrative portions of the book are as interesting as they are instructive. We need not dwell, however, on these features of the book, as the events of Columbus's life are too well known to need recapitulating here, and Mr. Winsor does not profess to have discovered any new sources of information. He has simply followed the original authorities, so far as these are now available; and the merit of his work lies in the fidelity and skill with which he sifts his authorities and interprets the facts.

The first thing that we wish to know about any prominent historic character is the nature and significance of his life work and its effect upon the world. In the case of Columbus the significance of his work was far different from what he himself supposed, and its ultimate results such as he never dreamed of; yet he was none the less the master spirit in the work of discovery, and is entitled to all the honor which that distinction can give him. How great and far-reaching the results of his work were is clearly set forth by Mr. Winsor, especially in his appendix, in which he traces the history of succeeding discoveries down almost to the present day. He shows, as others have shown, that Columbus's ideas about the sphericity of the earth and the possibility of reaching Asia by the west were derived from earlier thinkers, and adds, "There was simply needed a man with courage and constancy in his convictions, so that the theory could be demonstrated. This age produced him." Mr. Winsor makes little account of the alleged discovery of America by the Norsemen, though he does not deny the possibility of such discovery; but he thinks that the story of their voyages could have had no influence on Columbus, and was in all probability unknown to him. In connection with his account of Columbus's voyages and those of his contemporaries, and also in recounting the discoveries since his day, Mr. Winsor lays before us a great number of ancient maps, in which the growth of geographical knowledge can be clearly traced. Indeed, his treatment of the scientific aspects of his subject is as full as could be desired.

But the feature of his book that will excite the most interest is his estimate of Columbus's character, which is emphatically iconoclastic. He evinces no spirit of hostility to the great navigator, though he has some some sarcastic remarks about Irving, De Lorgues, and other biographers; but he shows by well attested facts that Columbus was far from possessing the nobleness of character that has usually been attributed to him. He says very truly that a man like Columbus ought to be judged by a high moral standard — the standard of all ages; but that when so tried the great discoverer is found wanting. The principal charge brought against him is that he originated and persistently followed the practice of enslaving the native Americans and of selling them as slaves in the markets of Spain, thereby becoming the originator of American slavery. This accusation, though by no means new, is supported in this book by overwhelming evidence, so that it is hard to see how any fair-minded man can deny or palliate it; and it throws a very dark shadow over the fame of Columbus. Mr. Winsor also charges him with deceit, cupidity and arrogance, and there is, unfortunately, great difficulty in rebutting these charges. His final judgment on the man who discovered the New World is as follows: "Its discoverer might have been its father; he proved to be its despoiler. He might have given its young days such a benignity as the world likes to associate with a maker; he left it a legacy of devastation and crime. He might have been an unselfish promoter of geographical science; he proved a rabid seeker for gold and a viceroyalty. He might have won converts to the fold of Christ by the kindness of his spirit; he gained the execrations of the good angels" (p. 512).

The world is so accustomed to the opposite view of Columbus's character that many readers will reject the portrait that Mr. Winsor has drawn of him; but we incline to think that it is the one that will eventually be accepted by impartial minds. In any case Mr. Winsor's narrative and arguments are worthy of all attention, and we heartily commend his book to our readers.