



## EDITOR'S EASY CHAIR

“AND what,” the reader said, with an accent of mocking challenge, “are you going to write about this time?”

“Oh,” we responded with characteristic gaiety, “the last thing, of course.”

“And that is?”

“Naturally the last thing we have been reading. But there are two of it, and apparently of such diverse interest and significance that our success in uniting them in one appeal to you will be more than commonly gratifying.”

“Then, if you will be a little less mystical, just what is it you are talking about?”

“About the careers and qualities of two most typical Americans, the one alive, with the promise of many useful activities in life and literature within him, and the other alive in the record of as great and generous things as any in our history.”

“Oh, now,” the reader breathed, with the relief of one who has guessed a riddle, “you are talking of Mr. Brand Whitlock’s autobiography, *Forty Years of It*, and Mrs. Mary Thatcher Higginson’s memoir of Thomas Wentworth Higginson?”

“Of what other last things could we talk, after we had been reading these? There are certain books in every epoch which eclipse by their human interest the literary interest of all the other books, and these are two such books. When you have yielded to their claim, you have very little allegiance left for the novels and the poems and travels and histories, though you may own their worth in their way. As often happens with us, we delayed a little in reading them, perhaps because we felt so sure of our surrender to them that we preferred to play about before making our capitulation, and wished to experience the minor charm of the books they would leave with so slight attraction for us. In fact, we read the Whitlock book two-

thirds through before we read the Higginson book at a go, and then returned to *Forty Years of It*, rejoicing in the verification of all the prophetic intimations we had experienced in the story of the belated Parliamentary colonel.”

“Now you are becoming mystical again!” the reader protested.

“Not at all, or at least not avoidably. We mean the light which the Higginson career throws upon the Whitlock career, and shows the one continuous with the other in the evolution of the American nature. Nature is not just the word we want, but we will let it stand for the present, or till we can think of a better. Meantime we will say that in the differing effect of these two Americans we have an esthetic proposition transmuted into something ethical, and again into something political. It is the question of the Romantic and the Realistic—”

“Ah, now!” the reader interrupted, “you are going to be worse than mystical; you are going to be offensive.”

“Not at all,” we contended. “The time when these terms as statements of different ideals in art could embattle their partisans for reciprocal slaughter is long past, and we can now peacefully recognize that they accurately state facts of character and springs of action as no other terms can state them. There was another fact of character and spring of action which antedated the Romantic, as the Romantic antedated the Realistic, and this was the Classic.”

“Worse and worse!” the reader groaned.

“No, no; do not despair as yet,” we entreated. “We are going merely to ask you to suppose that in our civic affairs the Classic motive prevailed before and throughout our War for Independence, and the Romantic before and throughout our Civil War, and the Realistic throughout the whole period since. Doesn’t this say something to you which seems to bear on the proposition before us?”

"The proposition of an essential parity in the continuous American nature of two Americans whose part in our affairs is as worthy study in their difference of ideal as any two who could well be paralleled and contrasted?"

"Go on," the reader assented.

"Well, we will say then that our War of Independence possessed us of the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, at least such of us as were white, or were not 'held to service'; the Civil War emancipated to the same right even those who had darkled in our forgetfulness of them as bound with them; and then to the Classic and the Romantic there seemed nothing more to be done for the race which high hopes and high tariffs could not do. It was at this auspicious moment that the Realistic sense of things began to penetrate the hearts and minds of men, to harden them and cloud them, if you please, or to soften and illumine them if also you please. People began to see that life and the pursuit of happiness had their difficulties even in the universal liberty we enjoyed, that even the darkling, forgotten brethren whom the Union had been re-established to free, were not in the possession of rights so inalienable that they could not be deprived of them. With the expansion of the great industries great industrial troubles began to rear their awful forms, and threaten the shrinking dividends with their hydra-headed—"

"Oh, come!" the reader interposed. "Is this an I. W. W. meeting?"

"Not at all. It is a gathering of peaceful capitalists in a bank parlor, hard-headed business men who like to recognize facts. It is an assembly of men whose ideal of themselves is that which Mr. Whitlock represents in his story of *Forty Years of It*."

"But he declares that such men opposed him and his predecessor Golden Rule Jones in their successive elections to the mayoralty of Toledo with every and all the means at their command. How, then, can you say that he represents their ideal of themselves?"

"There is that apparent contradiction. But it is hardly his fault that their ideal of themselves is not quite the reality. We certainly don't claim that he repre-

sented both in his four terms as mayor of Toledo, which might have been repeated at his pleasure if literature and the hope of greater work in it had not been his greater pleasure."

"Yes, but where is the parallel between such a mischievous dreamer as the successor of Golden Rule Jones and such a belated Parliamentary colonel as Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who was an Abolitionist from the first, and lost no chance to fight for the fugitive slave, and then led a regiment of slaves against their masters in the war for freedom?"

"Ah, what a Romanticist you are!" we exclaimed with a tolerant smile. "But you are not a final Romanticist, for if you were you would go back of the Parliamentary colonel to the sunny days and flowery ways of bondage, with the benign owner holding in loving fee the contented chattels, who rejoiced to behold in him a tender father (sometimes literally a father, but always a father). You stop short of that ideal, and you are not a final Romanticist; and our Parliamentary colonel was himself far from a final Romanticist. He was always Romantic, for he was always a hero, but when the Civil War was over, and the industrial troubles began to rear their awful forms, the Realist who always lurks somewhere below the surface in the hero, if the hero is an American, felt that somehow the enfranchisement of the human race had not been perfectly accomplished. There is nothing more interesting, nothing more characteristic of a man whom, in spite of certain foibles, we must see more and more one of our great men, than the courage with which he dealt with this feeling, and asked himself what next was to be done for humanity. He was not afraid even of the specter of Socialism which had begun to announce itself the deliverer, and he had moments of asking himself whether he should not be a Socialist. He could not be definitely so, for no man is born for all time, or else there would be no use in any one's dying; we would not need to make room for our successors. Mr. Whitlock himself stops short of Socialism or of being a Socialist."

"I wondered if you would admit it," the reader said.

"Oh, we are tolerably honest, when we are brought to book, or inadvertently bring ourselves. Perhaps we would even admit that the difference between these two men is not so much temperamental as contemporamental—if we mean anything by such a word."

"It is one of your vices to use words which you cannot mean anything by," the reader observed.

"Well, you at least know what we mean by a word which we tried to find in the dictionary and were forced by our failure to invent. You understand perfectly that their difference was more temporal than spiritual."

"Now you are coming nearer it. Yes, I will allow something of that kind. And yet it seems to me that my Parliamentary colonel is essentially different from your ex-mayor of Toledo."

"No, only superficially different. Both are novelists, but my ex-mayor is a real novelist, as you will own if you read his *Thirteenth District* and his *Turn of the Balance*, and your colonel was not a real novelist, as you will own if you read his *Oldport Romance*. The fiction of each is distinctively of its period, but the motive of each fictionist is more or less, but always importantly, of the other's period as well as his own. That is to say, Thomas Wentworth Higginson was of such a humanity, and such a faith in humanity, that his activities in its behalf could not be kept to the years of his prime or his middle life; they continued down to his latest years in aspiration and conservation. This was the beautifullest part of his Romanticism; to the last he idealized the duty which from the first he rendered with an eager and unstinted devotion. At the beginning he preached the good fight, and to the end he fought it. His story is one which no Realist would wish to minify; rather he would wish to find it out to its furthest implication and to magnify it; any artist of the great, true school might be glad to make that heroic story the matter of his art. All the same, such an artist must own that mainly it is of the day that is done, and that in the day that is and that is to come the life stories must be homelier, simpler, sadder. Hereafter it cannot be that as soldiers of an army with ban-

ners, triumphing with drums and trumpets, the servants of the cause of man shall arrive at their goal. The tragedy of the struggle will not be of the old, obvious cast of the revolutions in the past when resistance to tyrants could show gloriously as obedience to God, but it will hide the patient face of enduring doubt till something like science brings the time when His will shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

"Doesn't this sound something like the I. W. W. again?" the reader put in.

"So much the better for the I. W. W., then!" we retorted. "We are putting in words, clumsy enough, the fine significance of Mr. Whitlock's closing chapters. He is so far from believing in force, except the force of reason, that he does not believe people can be made to do good, or hardly even kept from doing evil. He is, so far as we have noticed, the first to observe that neither the Easy Chair, which goes by electricity, nor the thousands and thousands of stone pens, large and little, all over the land, have availed to purify our morals or to prevent us from committing crime when we are so circumstanced or conditioned as to feel the overwhelming need of it. He does not think that vice even can be policed away, or that strong drink or the strange woman can be banished by law; and these melancholy convictions of his are not the opinions of the cynic or the sentimentalist, but are the conclusions of a life which, though comparatively short, began to be confronted with the facts in the case very shortly after its beginning. He grew up in a peaceful little Ohio town, in a Southern tradition made over in the likeness of a Northern conscience against slavery, and in due or undue time he went from the shelter of a Methodist home to face the realities of the world as a newspaper reporter in Chicago. It was after full, or full enough, experience of these that he took up the study of law in his native state, and in the city of Toledo became the right hand of that strange magistrate and strange man known as Golden Rule Jones, who had the droll idea that people could really be *taught*, but never *made* to do unto others as they would that others should do unto them, and so became a byword

both with those who hated and those who loved him. The young Ohio attorney was of a different make intellectually, but not morally, from the Welsh miner grown rich in hard work and honest business, and when Sam Jones died the young attorney found out by his learning in the law how to reverse the decisions of the Ohio courts, and to establish the autonomous city which can no longer be hindered by hampering legislation or judicial opinion from doing the best for its people. This great achievement is so modestly recorded in Mr. Whitlock's book that one might easily miss its meaning or fail of its measure, but it is part of Ohio history as well as part of his biography, and it is known how, when Jones died, Mr. Whitlock succeeded him in his office again and again, and again and yet again, until, to save his soul alive for authorship, he would have no more of magistracy. In his office he followed the tradition of Sam Jones, but not with the pungent poetic originality of the Welshman. It could only happen once in that magistracy that any one should have Jones's chance, when a deputation of ladies and ministers asked him to do something about the strange women just then rather swarming in Toledo, to suggest that they should each take into their families, as he would take into his, one of those wretched girls and try to reclaim her. They departed from him perhaps more in anger than in sorrow; but when they made something like the same demand upon the young magistrate, he could only return them a less dramatic answer in a public letter substantially repeated here in his autobiography."

"And can *nothing* be done about the strange woman?" the reader asked.

"Why not by law, not by force, if you will believe Mr. Whitlock. He seems to think that her evil, like every other social evil, can be abated only by civilization, by education, by better conditions and circumstances, which shall begin with her origin, for she is mostly weak-minded as well as weak-moraled. But this is now generally recognized, and he claims no originality in it. What he could probably claim greater originality in is his rancor against Puritanism, or what he calls so, for want of a closer-fitting

term. He recognizes that as something which has existed in all religions and all times: as the idea that men can be reformed by the strong hand, that the race, always young and needing control, can be scourged forward by the school-master's rod rather than led by his kindly hand. He says he would not undertake to write the history of Puritanism, for it would be too large a contract, but he would like to write the history of American Puritanism."

"And do you think he would do it fairly?"

"Very likely not. It is hard to be just to the thing we hate. It doesn't much matter whether we have just cause to hate it or not—"

"You think that the Parliamentary colonel would write it better?"

"We haven't said so, even if we think so. But we should like to have had such a history from him. We feel sure that, however it criticized himself, it would be fearless. He was never afraid."

"And it would not be pessimistic?"

"Why, what is pessimistic?"

"Generally speaking, I don't know. Nobody knows. But I know *who* is pessimistic: your Mr. Brand Whitlock!"

"Because he does not believe in the rule of force? That sort of pessimism was preached from the Mount two thousand years ago."

"Ah, you can't get out of it that way! If you deny that he is a pessimist, you can't deny that he is a sentimentalist. Think of a city magistrate who approved of taking away the policemen's clubs, and then himself took away their canes, and gave them white cotton gloves instead, as a badge of office."

"There is a great deal in what you say," we admitted, sadly. "The question remains whether Toledo was a worse or better city after the constables left off clubs and canes and put on white cotton gloves. Whether in the long run it is safest to trust all men or some men. Whether with the light of each other's time the Parliamentary colonel and the ex-mayor would not have been essentially the same. Whether—"

"Now," the reader said, rising to go away, "you are a sentimentalist yourself, or, which is the same thing, a cynic; and certainly you are a pessimist."



## EDITOR'S STUDY

AS education proceeds, even in the public school, if there are stimulating teachers, the pupils feel an incentive to go on, not because of urgent pressure from behind, but because of the zest of pursuit, the joy of mental development, and the widening prospect.

Learning by rote is interesting as a kind of conquest, an athletics of memory. To do a sum in compound interest, partial payments, or proportion is to overcome a difficulty—burdensome enough without being ingeniously exaggerated by the text-book—and gives the pupil a consciousness of mastery. The very first steps—reading and spelling—as mere processes do not impress the little child with any significance, and it is hard to get the dull ones over at all; but reading soon becomes a means of conveying images and stories, and spelling is accompanied by definitions; the child has a sense of getting on in his conscious life, and rejoices in it.

In geography and history, while memory is exercised, the mental scope includes the physical and human world to a considerable extent, and the imagination is awakened by dramatic disclosures of humanity. In these studies, as also in natural history and chemistry, advantageous use may be made of the cinematograph for a more accurate presentment as well as for a more vivid imaginative appeal. The process of crystallization, presented in this way, is the real thing instead of a verbal description of it; it is a living wonder, and leads on to further exploration as no driving could urge. A fully equipped public school, with a generous extension of its courses, and conducted by men and women who are, as we call them, “natural teachers,” will test the pupils as to their mental limitations and dispositions and will increase tenfold the number of those who will continue their studies beyond the course, besides giving those who are for any reason prevented from

going on an impulse for such self-improvement as will make them mentally more inspiring parents to a new generation. No boy or girl should leave the public school with delight that the “demnition grind” is over.

Among the attractions of this extended course, and in the line of those we have mentioned, should be the interest awakened in books—so many now, and so attractive—supplementary to the more advanced studies. Every public school should have a well-selected library, including, besides books of information, the best classics; and the use of these books should be expected of the pupils, at least to such an extent that the desire and pleasure of reading shall be cultivated in them, with some sense of the significance and value of the treasury of knowledge thus open to them. Teachers who in the early part of the course have perforce been content to exact and wait have in this advanced stage the more positive satisfaction of leading and guidance; it is here that they openly illustrate their qualifications to teach.

But how is it possible, even in ten years—if that many are to be allowed to the public-school period—to include all this complex variation of the pursuit of knowledge? It would not be quite fair to the teachers to say that a satisfactory accomplishment depends wholly upon them. Some pupils—in the advance of general enlightenment their number will be less—are handicapped by heredity, and a much larger proportion seem obstinately indisposed to any mental effort. Both of these classes require special attention, so special as not to be allowed to retard the progress of the others. The merely perfunctory teacher will simply neglect them. But such a teacher—a too common type—will contribute little to the progress of any pupil, at any stage. The teacher who is really stimulating, and himself full of enthusiasm,