

Books and Things

SERIOUSLY speaking, is there nothing we can do about it? We are not worse offenders, we like to tell ourselves, than other nations, but for a progressive and vigorous people, young enough to break a bad habit, even if it be the language habit, is such an excuse quite valid? Perhaps the person innocently most to blame is Professor Watson. Has he not told us, in *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist*, that "articulate language, which is limited to man," is "the main behavior difference between man and brute"? Can it be that our self-indulgence in articulate language, as often as a distinguished foreign visitor falls into our hands, is due to a craven fear that if we do not talk a good deal he may confuse us with the brutes? A fear not only craven, but also causeless, baseless, groundless. Take the most recent case in point. Suppose we had all joined, about a fortnight ago, a conspiracy of silence. Suppose not one of us had broken his oath. Would the danger have been imminent of M. Maurice Donnay's or of M. André Chevrillon's mistaking the members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters for some form of animal life lower than man? No. Almost a thousand times no.

The scene was an upper deck of the Paris, well forward, at the moment when she was beginning to raise our voluble coast. In imagination I distinguished two distinguished figures, standing a little apart, gazing westward and landward. In imagination I heard one of them speak to the other. M. Chevrillon, who has been here before, was speaking to M. Donnay. "Courage!" he said, and pointed toward the land. "You are nearing a land where you will be exposed, for the term of your confinement there, to luncheons (with speeches), to dinners (with speeches), to receptions by both lights, natural and artificial (with speeches), to speeches (with speeches). These speeches will be partly of the hands-across-the-seagoing variety, and partly tercentenarian. In so far as they are tercentenarian they will be about Molière, of whom you have lately heard, in France and again in England, much. In the United States you will hear more. Courage!" he said, and pointed toward our land, "for there lies the land where you will need courage." And it was so.

And it was so. Meals and speeches, speeches and meals, at New York, at Princeton, at Washington and Cambridge and Boston—had we nothing better than cookery and prose to set before these travellers from a country that excels us in both arts? It is as if a land as much younger than our land as ours is than France had sought to express itself, in honor of two distinguished American guests, by means of baseball and open plumbing. And yet, after all—unprotected though M. Donnay and M. Chevrillon may have felt against "perils by mine own countrymen"—and although they may five times have received forty speeches save one—yet nowhere—and even as I write my pen trembles with a patriotic pride that is positively pro-American—nowhere, at no woman's college or young ladies' seminary or school for girls, were they subjected to a performance of *Les Précieuses Ridicules*.

Let us remember this, let us repeat that we know not what's resisted. The trouble is that our French visitors, for knowing just this, are in an even worse position than we. And what wasn't resisted!—that, alas! they know. They know, for example, that Mr. Brander Matthews didn't resist the temptation to make a pun. "The Imaginary Invalid," he said, contrasting our now with Molière's

then, and touching upon Molière's appositeness to every time, "the Imaginary Invalid of today is a morbid student of psycho-analysis, making a Freudulent collection of his own complexes." Not the worst pun in the world, by a long chalk, but also, by a chalk longer still, not good enough. It is our duty, as respecters of our guests and as self-respecters, to avoid saying such things, to keep away from them, one hundred per cent away.

"Beware, at Jabbberfests, the Pun
Less prized in Paris than in Gath;
Conspue le Calembour, and shun
The humorous Brandermath."

What Mr. Matthews said, however, was said by a man who evidently knows and loves Molière. Mr. William Milligan Sloane—Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, France, and of the Swedish North Star—may love him too, for aught I know, but apparently with a love that has not led to undue intimacy. "There is no great thought," said Mr. Sloane, "when the thinker leaves his concept in embryo, naked and shivering, or at best inadequately clothed [see, on your programme, *What the Embryo Will Wear*]. The exact and adequate expression of a thought is the test of its truth: vagueness and confusion harbour only falsehood." Molière "left to all posterity that exactitude of thought and its expression which carries with it conviction, rendering argument unnecessary."

Possibly, when he said this, Mr. Sloane was speaking less as Chevalier of the Legion of Honor than as Chevalier of the Swedish North Star. A guess in which I am disposed to fortify myself by quoting something M. Donnay has written of Molière: "Un style plus correct au théâtre paraîtrait froid. Certes, il y a dans ses vers des inversions forcées, des expressions impropres, des chevilles, des ellipses rudes, des métaphores qui surprennent. On peut en être affligé à la lecture, parce qu'on lit des yeux et sans prononcer les mots; mais, au théâtre, éclairé, souligné par le geste, la physionomie et surtout la diction d'un bon acteur, ce qui nous paraissait laborieusement compréhensible prend un relief saisissant."

Seriously speaking though I have been, I am about to speak more seriously yet. There is one thing we can do toward bettering our treatment of Eminent Foreigners. One of these days, when my airship comes in, swift-sailing from Golconda, I shall undertake the task. My pockets crammed with Golconda gold certificates, I shall procure by advertisement the services of a Companionable Kidnapper with the gift of tongues. His duty it will be to go down the bay and smuggle Eminent Foreigners off incoming liners. His, too, the duty of slipping a well-chosen substitute into the empty cabin. All the wear and tear of eating and listening will be undergone by the substitute. The Eminent Foreigner, secure and obscure in his hiding-place, will peruse an accurate list of the dangers he is escaping, will gloat day by day over uneaten speeches and dinners unheard. His sojourn among us, although he may deem it nothing to write home about, will at least be painless, comparatively.

But to look forward until I shall be in funds is to look too far into the future. The present we have always with us, and to the present must we shorten our gaze. Our only solace is that for M. Donnay and M. Chevrillon the particularly wordy present they are bearing up against will soon be over. Before long they will have taken ship again. No ineluctable speeches will trouble their repose in transit. They need not listen to any louder sound or more sustained than the wind's voice on the North Atlantic.

P. L.

The Seed of the Puritans

Life and Letters of Henry Lee Higginson, by Bliss Perry. Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press. \$4.00.

THE theme of this admirable biography, as it was the theme of Henry Lee Higginson's life, is friendship. The first line is a quotation from a letter to his father, written before he was eighteen: "It is singular how little we really know of our relations." Perhaps this boyish sense of ignorance was prompted in a measure by the extent of the subject, for as a descendant of that Francis Higginson who landed at Salem June 27, 1629, and whose son John preached in the Salem pulpit for nearly fifty years, he inherited an immense family connection. The Higginsons "were allied to an amazing number of old Boston families: Cabots, Lees, Jacksons, Lowells, Channings, Putnams, Tyngs, Morses, Paines all called them 'cousins.'" Mr. Perry remarks that the sense of kinship flowered to perfection in the Higginsons; in Henry Higginson it became affection, loyalty, chivalry. One can attribute the broad humanity, the generous democracy of his matured character to the warmth and intimacy of personal feeling founded on blood relationship and early companionship. His entire public service can be read as a consecration to the memory of his friends. In his last years he wrote, "We need more true democracy, true fellowship between man and man and more wish to serve our fellows, for on it depend religion, morality, the usefulness and happiness of life—God's blessing, else why are we here?—If my nearest and dearest playmates had lived, they would have tried to help their fellows, and as they had gone before us, the greater the need for me to try." Mr. Perry does well to sprinkle his pages with the names of these playmates, classmates, comrades-in-arms, and associates in business and good works. Henry Higginson would have had it so.

After a boyhood in Chauncy Place, and at the Latin School, Henry Higginson entered Harvard in 1851. It was apparently a misfortune that ill-health obliged him to leave college after a few months, and spend a year abroad. Three succeeding years of business in Boston left him restless and unsettled, and once more he sailed for Europe. It was a call of friendship that made the immediate occasion of this journey, the illness in Italy of Charles Russell Lowell. Together they traveled northward from Rome, with a gig and a saddle horse, riding and driving by turns, and crossed the Tyrol to Salzburg. Thence he proceeded to Vienna to study music. It is easy to imagine him as one of Henry James' heroes, rather wistfully seeking to recover that inheritance of old world culture of which his generations of New England forefathers had deprived him. He was not the only Bostonian on a like quest. In Rome he had found "Charles Eliot Norton, Mrs. Stowe, the Frank Lowells, the Thomas Carys, and the Ticknors." Of the most famous expatriate of his time, William Wetmore Story, the sculptor, he noted with mild scepticism, the Puritan theory on which he had based his career: "that there is more difference in will than in ability to do, and that a man can with industry do anything." Of himself, however, he wrote with full conviction: "As everyone has some particular object of supreme interest to himself, so I have music. It is almost my inner world; without it, I miss much and with it I am happier and better." Again it was an apparent misfortune by which an injury to his

arm deprived him of any opportunity of distinction as a pianist. Instead it was reserved for him to become the greatest patron of music in America.

The account of Major Higginson's part in the war, which broke out a few months after his return, is again a record of friendship. His first service was in connection with his classmate, James Savage, to recruit a company at Fitchburg for the Second Massachusetts Infantry in which he became a lieutenant. In the autumn of 1861 he was transferred to the Second Massachusetts Cavalry, of which he became major, and in which Charles Francis Adams was a captain. In the months of inaction while the cavalry arm of the service was being developed, he heard of the death of James Jackson Lowell at Glendale, and of the slaughter of his old regiment at Cedar Mountain, where Stephen Perkins and James Savage fell. At Antietam he lost two friends, Wilder Dwight and William Sedgwick. At Aldie Gap after Chancellorsville he was himself severely wounded, and his brother, James J. Higginson, taken prisoner. In his months of convalescence came news of the death of Robert Gould Shaw at the head of his black troops at Fort Wagner, and of his own closest friend, Charles Russell Lowell, at Cedar Creek. These personal tragedies were the background of that simple and moving address to the Harvard students in presenting to them the Soldiers' Field, in memory of six "Friends, Comrades, Kinsmen" of whom he said: "Thousands and thousands of other soldiers deserved equally well of their country—I only say that these were my friends, and therefore I ask this memorial for them."

To these companions, so marked by tragic fate, there came brief interludes of happiness, which strengthened the bonds of kinship among them. To them the world was literally

A place to stand and love in for a day
With darkness and the death hour rounding it.

"Poor Jimmy Lowell," Higginson wrote after Glendale, "or rather poor Cousin Anna, for Jimmy is well enough off." It was Anna Lowell who after his wound at Aldie nursed him in the Amory Hospital. "Bob Shaw has just written Greely and me after his marriage; he is as happy as a king," he wrote to his sister. Charles Russell Lowell married Robert Shaw's sister. Major Higginson preserved a letter from Mrs. Tappan quoting William James' description of the review of Colonel Shaw's black regiment at Readville, where "Charles Lowell and Effie Shaw sat on their great war horses looking on, and looked so like a king and queen that he did not venture to speak to them." Greely Curtis, invalided home from the Second Cavalry, married Harriet Appleton; and Major Higginson himself, in his furlough after Aldie, married Ida Agassiz, to return to the front later on General Barlow's staff.

The Education of Henry Adams suggests a curious likeness between Boston of the thirties and forties, with its family clans and feuds, its intellectual ferment and enthusiasms to an Italian city of the early Renaissance. In the days just before the war the likeness is stronger, when the hard surface of Puritanism was broken up, and her young men were seeking eastward for seeds of new learning and culture. The war called them back to sterner duties. The failure of the Puritan Renaissance must be attributed in some measure to the sacrifice of their generation. After the war, the material development of