

tered his Kant), profound acquaintance with political systems, common-sense political economy, and a diction which ranks him, despite his absent-mindedness in composition, with Newman and Arnold.

To most persons Bagehot is known chiefly by three works, "Physics and Politics," "The English Constitution," and "Lombard Street." Bagehot's imagination was captivated by Wallace, Darwin, Lubbock, and Sir Henry Sumner Maine, and "Physics and Politics" was the outcome. One of the peculiarities of this age, he says, is the sudden acquisition of much physical knowledge. "There is scarcely a department of science or art which is the same, or at all the same, as it was fifty years ago. A new world of inventions—of railways and of telegraphs—has grown up around us which we cannot help seeing; a new world of ideas is in the air and affects us, though we do not see it. . . . I think I may usefully, in a few papers, show how, upon one or two great points, the new ideas are modifying two old sciences—politics and political economy."

Bagehot has recently been called a great *précis*-writer. That is a most inadequate term if it is meant to imply that he was only a *précis*-writer; but if the meaning is that, among his other accomplishments, he could condense another's thought and restate it in clearer and more penetrating language, the characterization is profoundly just. Like Shakespeare and Handel, he always repays with interest: the great physicists of the nineteenth century are, in fact, in debt to Walter Bagehot—in "Physics and Politics" he has provided delightful propylæa to the study of their masterly works. It is in this work that he states his cherished theory of "imitation" with greatest clearness. He discusses nation-making and the changes that take place in national thought and feeling from age to age. Of course, he says, there was always some reason (if we could only find it) which gave the prominence in each age to some particular winning literature. There is always some reason why the fashion of female dress is what it is. But just as, in the case of dress, we know that nowadays the determining cause is very much of an accident; so in the case of literary fashion, the origin is a good deal of an accident. What the milliners of Paris, or the *demi-monde* of Paris, enjoin English ladies is, he supposes, a good deal of chance; but so soon as it is decreed, those whom it suits and those whom it does not, all wear it. The imitative propensity at once insures uniformity; and "that horrid thing we wore last year" (as the phrase may go) is soon nowhere to be seen. Just so a literary fashion spreads, though he is far from saying with equal primitive unreasonableness—a literary taste always begins on some decent reason, but once started, it is propagated as a fashion in dress is propagated; even those who do not like it read it because it is there, and because nothing else is easily to be found. The same patronage of favored

forms, and persecution of disliked forms, are the main causes, too, which change national character. Certainly, the philosophy of history was never handled more familiarly, and some will think with less seriousness; but Bagehot, more than any man of his generation, with the exception of Newman, grasped the fact that the greatest of human transformations originate in the simplest and most naïve of human emotions.

As the English Constitution has been in the melting-pot ever since the Reform Act of 1867, I am not disposed to dwell on Bagehot's celebrated work on that subject. In 1872, in his introduction to the second edition, he says: "A new Constitution does not produce its full effect as long as all its subjects were reared under an old Constitution, as long as its statesmen were trained by that old Constitution. It is not really tested till it comes to be worked by statesmen, and among a people neither of whom are guided by a different experience." The change since 1865, he declared, was a change not in one point, but in a thousand points; it was a change not of particular details, but of pervading spirit. The pervading spirit born of the Reform Act of 1867 has animated the British people for half a century; few of those now influenced by it were trained by the old Constitution; it has come to be worked by statesmen, and among a people neither of whom are guided by "a different experience." Bagehot was not lacking prophetic insight. He conceived that questions might be raised which, if continually agitated, would combine the workingmen as a class together. In "The English Constitution" we again find allusion to the Englishman's love of stupid people. Speaking of a completely new House of Lords, mainly composed of men of ability, selected because they were able, he says: "In the present English world such a House of Lords would lose all its influence. People would say 'it is too clever by half,' and in an Englishman's mouth that means a very severe censure."

The changes in British politics in the last half century are not greater than the changes in British finance. In 1873 Bagehot wrote: "Since 1844 Lombard Street is so changed that we cannot judge of it without describing and discussing a most vigorous adult world which was then small and weak." The period since 1873 may fitly be described in almost the same words. For this reason, "Lombard Street," Bagehot's most widely read work, is no longer the vitalizing influence that it was. The things for which it contended have become, in very large measure, accomplished facts. Yet "Lombard Street" still remains a work of great charm and instruction. Bagehot maintained that the Bank of England was bound not only to keep a good reserve against a time of panic, but to use that reserve effectually when that time of panic came. The keepers of the banking reserve, whether one or many, were obliged then to use that reserve for their own safety. If they permit-

ted all other forms of credit to perish, their own would perish immediately, and in consequence. It is hard to believe that this could have ever been doubted. Yet in Bagehot's day, so far as the Bank of England was concerned, a denial was entered. It was alleged that the Bank of England could keep aloof in a panic; that it could, if it would, let other banks and trades fail; that if it chose, it could stand alone and survive intact while all else perished around it. On various occasions, most influential persons, both in the government of the Bank and out of it, said that such was their opinion. The world owes it to Bagehot, in no small part, that such is no longer accepted opinion. It is a surprising fact that no one has yet called attention to the marvellous justification of Bagehot's theory of banking discoverable in the methods employed a year ago by the Bank of England in meeting the situation created by the sudden outbreak of the war.

Yet, after all that is said of his writings, it is the man himself that wins our admiration and affection. His must have been an irresistible personality. The intellect could never have slumbered while in his presence. Everything that one reads about him, and much that one reads in his published works, indicates a sensitive organization, a high spirit (as well as high spirits), a quick appreciation of everything that was just and fine. One would fail to estimate him correctly if one should say that he could be grave and gay, literal and fanciful, matter of fact and witty, in the same breath; these opposite qualities did not so much follow one another as interpenetrate one another in his discourse. He possessed both wit and humor; yet with him they were not mere playthings, but a peculiar vehicle for expressing the highest and most necessary truths.

Book Notes and Byways

ABIGAIL ADAMS AND A FORGOTTEN POET.

By JOHN THOMAS LEE.

Abigail Adams, wife of the second President of the United States, was perhaps the most remarkable woman of the American Revolution. Her published letters amply show her great qualities of mind and heart; moreover, they shed on the period a certain light which can be found in no other printed word. Although largely self-taught, Mrs. Adams was a diligent reader of the English poets and moralists, and she was particularly fond of poetry. It is therefore not in the least surprising that, when a resident of London about the year 1784, she should choose from the attractive shelves of James Dodsley, in Pall Mall, a volume of 243 pages, entitled "The English Garden: A Poem in Four Books," by W. Mason, M.A. (York, 1783), as a present for her niece, Eliza Cranch, the daughter of her elder sister, Mary.

By a lucky chance this volume has been

saved from destruction. A few months ago, while looking over a wheelbarrow-load of rubbish in a second-hand book-shop in a small city of the Middle West, I came across a little book bound in full-calf, which, however, possessed no interest for me until I read the inscription on the fly-leaf. There in a clear, bold hand was written: "Eliza Cranch's from her Aunt A. Adams." Here, then, was an association volume of uncommon interest—an item almost unique by reason of its rarity. This particular edition of "The English Garden" is enriched with commentary and notes by W. Burgh, Esq., LL.D. The learned Doctor's contribution is of greater length than the poem itself. In 125 pages he ponderously displays his erudition and expository powers; but, unfortunately, his somnolent commentary fails to make this "polite" bit of literature more readable. Eliza, no doubt, read the poem with rapt attention. For the young woman of to-day that would be a quite impossible performance. Indeed, I know of few students of poetry who would now feel any degree of eagerness to master the contents of "The English Garden."

The Reverend Mr. Mason has long been a forgotten poet. Two things only, so far as I am aware, have served to keep his name alive: his friendship for the poet Gray, from whom he received many letters, and his famous line on Hume, which finds a place in Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations":

The fattest hog in Epicurus' sty.

The line is from Mason's "Heroic Epistle" to Sir William Chambers—likewise a forgotten worthy.

Mr. Edmund Gosse tells us that Mason's letters to Gray were not infrequently "tributes to his own inordinate vanity." But in spite of this, Gray entertained a genuine friendship for the man, and speaks in the highest terms of Mason's gifts. Concerning his capacity for writing odes, Gray says: "Mr. Mason indeed of late days has touched the true chords, and with masterly hand, in some of his Choruses." And to him Gray addressed his "Comic Lines." Boaden, in his "Life of Kemble," informs us that "Mason was not meanly skilled in choral and scientific composition." The versatile clergyman also invented a musical instrument, which his friend Gray, in a letter dated May 23, 1767, calls a "zumpe." Mason was appointed Chaplain in Ordinary to George the Second in 1757.

Yet he is now all but forgotten; a fact at which I did not marvel when I tried to read his poem, "The English Garden," for the sake of the noble woman, who, one hundred and thirty years before, had purchased it in a famous London book-shop as a gift for Eliza Cranch. We may here indulge only in the opening lines:

To thee, divine SIMPLICITY! to thee,
Best arbitress of what is good and fair,
This verse belongs. O, as it freely flows,
Give it thy powers of pleasing: else in vain
It strives to teach the rules, from Nature drawn,
Of import high to those whose taste would add
To Nature's careless graces; loveliest then,
When, o'er her form, thy easy skill has taught
The robe of Spring in ampler folds to flow.

The late Mr. Charles Francis Adams was much interested in my "find," as he termed it, and only a few days before his death wrote about it in part as follows:

There can, I think, be no question whatever that the autograph is that of Mrs. Adams. Her handwriting was distinct and characteristic. I feel no hesitation on this head. It is certainly a curious "find." . . . Eliza

Cranch was Mrs. Adams's niece—the daughter of her sister. There is a tract of land in the town of Quincy, Massachusetts, still known as "Cranch's pasture." On it stood the house of Judge Cranch, his brother-in-law, appointed by John Adams, if I recollect right, the first Postmaster of Quincy. The Cranch pasture subsequently passed into the possession of John Adams, and not so very many years ago it was still a cow-pasture, in which I was wont to practice and train my horses.

Mr. Adams's wonderfully rich life closed soon after writing this letter, and I like to think that the recovery of the little volume gave him pleasure.

Correspondence.

THE NATION'S WAR RELIEF FUND.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: I see that "O." has sent you his check for \$2,000, although the condition he laid down has not been fulfilled. I see no reason why I should not do likewise as to the little contribution which I was prompted to offer in support of his scheme. I therefore enclose \$200, to be divided equally between the Belgian Relief Fund, the Polish Victims' Relief Fund, the Serbian Relief Committee of America, and the Jewish Relief Society for Poland.

F. F.

New York, December 7.

"SWEET VOICES" OF CONSCRIPTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: The conjunction, in the morning's newspaper, of Secretary Garrison's hint of a possible "compelling" of military service in this country, and Myron T. Herrick's publicly announced advocacy of "universal military service" for Americans, brought to my mind a paragraph from George Gissing's incomparable book, "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft." Let me quote the passage here:

"Some one, I see, is lifting up his sweet voice in praise of conscription. It is only at long intervals that one reads this kind of thing in our reviews or newspapers, and I am happy in believing that most English people are affected by it even as I am, with the sickness of dread and of disgust. That the thing is impossible in England, who would venture to say? Every one who can think at all sees how slight are our safeguards against that barbaric force in man which the privileged races have so slowly and painfully brought into check. Democracy is full of menace to all the finer hopes of civilization, and the revival, in not unnatural companionship with it, of monarchic power based on militarism, makes the prospect dubious enough. . . . But what a dreary change must come upon our islanders if, without instant danger, they bend beneath the curse of universal soldiering!"

If an Englishman, the citizen of an Old World empire, won and welded primarily by armed force, could feel thus in regard to compulsory military service, with what tenfold or hundredfold "sickness of dread and of disgust" must the possibility of this evil be viewed by Americans! For myself, nothing in all the black history of the past seven-teen months seems so fraught with menace for the future—not the future of America only, but of the world. Murdered lives, squandered treasure, devastated towns—these

are things over which time soon draws its veil, things which leave no ineradicable scar upon humanity's face. But national ideals, the precarious inch-by-inch growth of centuries, once cut down and trampled upon, are almost irreparably lost. A few months ago America was the hope of the world, the young Moses who alone might lead the nations out of the bondage of armaments and militarism, whose opportunity it was (the most glorious that ever presented itself to any country) to take the van in a world movement towards reason and brotherhood as opposed to the old suicidal dependence upon brute force. To-day America is embarked upon a policy that will soon make her the chief menace to world peace—the leader in a new and madder race to ruin among the nations; a policy that means the Prussianization of the entire world for an indefinite time to come. Never was a warning to mankind fulfilled more utterly than the Christian message that blazes in letters of fire and blood in the eastern sky, "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword!" And yet, blinded to that message by fear and selfishness and distrust and hatred, we Americans are wildly throwing overboard all our traditions, all our Christianity, and are taking the sword. Of course we do not lack the old hypocritical mask behind which every nation and every individual, however lawless and tyrannical, has made the appeal to force. "So long as right and wrong exist in the world there will be an inevitable conflict between them. The right-doers must be prepared to protect and defend the right as against the wrong." Nor is the old sophistry lacking to darken counsel and confuse the dull-witted. "One is impelled to query upon what proper consideration there is based any distinction between the right or necessity or desirability of using mental force to repel error, moral force to repel evil, and physical force to repel wrong." There is the frightful essence of the whole matter! To Secretary Garrison, and to the average American whose mind he so well typifies, there is no distinction between moral suasion and brute force—Marcus Aurelius is on the same level with Attila, Christ with Wilhelm II. Ideals, traditions, moral values—what are these but "sloppy sentimentalities," the nebulous mental playthings of dreamers and mollycoddles! Let us be real men in a real world. Let us base our conduct "upon a consideration of facts or conclusions of reason." Let us have our "supreme navy," our "world's biggest guns," our conscript army, and all the rest of it. Let us lead the nations in a new and more furious dance of death than has yet been known.

WALDO R. BROWNE.

Wyoming, N. Y., December 10.

A FRENCH VIEW OF AMERICA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Apropos of the reports which have reached this side of the ocean that ex-President Roosevelt is so keenly disappointed in the course which the American Government has pursued in the matter of its foreign policy that "he would be ashamed to show himself in Europe," may I address to you a few reflections? Of course these problems are very delicate and complex, and I am also well aware that a foreigner should hesitate to intrude in affairs of this kind. But, on the one hand, my attachment for America is so strong that I do not look upon it as a wholly foreign