

# LITERATURE

## Sixty Years in Public Affairs

THE reminiscences of a man who has been for sixty years a part of American public life, eminent most of the time and in commanding position part of the time, can hardly be other than interesting.\*

The Hon. George S. Boutwell was Governor of Massachusetts in 1851-1852; Representative in Congress, 1863-1869; Secretary of the Treasury, 1869-1873; Senator from Massachusetts, 1873-1877.

It was he, then Secretary of the United States Treasury, whose hand unloosed the stream of gold that flowed into Wall Street and swamped the conspirators who were trying to send gold to 200 and probably would have done so had not the United States Treasury put out \$4,000,000 of the yellow metal in purchase of bonds. The assurance of Mr. Boutwell that General Grant knew nothing about the gold conspiracy, even tho his brother-in-law, A. R. Corbin, was a tool of Gould and Fisk, is not necessary at the present day, for suspicion against Grant was buried long ago. Henry-Clews and other writers who have dealt with the incidents leading up to and surrounding Black Friday in Wall Street (September 24th, 1869) inform us that Gould and Fisk decoyed Grant to Washington, Pa., "to see an old army comrade," when they began to force gold up. Mr. Boutwell does not corroborate this statement, and he declares that the meeting of the President with Gould and Fisk aboard one of the Fall River steamers was accidental as far as General Grant was concerned. Just before going to Washington, Pa., Grant wrote these words to Mr. Boutwell regarding the fight in Wall Street over gold:

"The fact is, a desperate struggle is now taking place and each party wants the Government to help him out. . . . I think from the lights before me I would move on without change until the present struggle is over. . . ."

When it became apparent that the panic

produced by the gold corner was seriously affecting the business interests of the country and diminishing Treasury receipts, Mr. Boutwell judged it was time to take a hand, and he suggested selling \$3,000,000 of gold for bonds. Grant told him to make it \$5,000,000, and he compromised on \$4,000,000.

Mr. Boutwell admired General Grant in all his capacities, and considered him far superior in military affairs to Sheridan or Sherman. He ranks Sheridan above Sherman as a commander, and assures us (Vol. II, p. 243) that Sheridan, in spite of his denials, did say after his return from Europe at the close of the Franco-Prussian War, "That either of our armies at the close of the war (Civil War) could have marched over the country in defiance of both the French and German forces combined."

In regard to General Sherman's religion, or lack of it, Mr. Boutwell flatly contradicts the statement of the General's eldest son, Thomas, who is a Jesuit priest, to the effect that his father was baptized as a Catholic, married as a Catholic and had often been heard by the son to say "that if there was any true religion it was the Catholic." Such a statement, Mr. Boutwell thinks, puts an imputation on General Sherman which he ought not to bear:

"Of the thousands that one may meet in a lifetime," says Mr. Boutwell, "General Sherman was among the freest from anything in the nature of hypocrisy or dissimulation. Of those who knew him intimately after the close of the War there are but few, probably, who did not hear him speak with hostility and bitterness of the Catholic Church. For myself I can say that I heard him speak in terms of contempt of the Church. On one occasion, with reference to fasts and abstinence from meat on Friday, he said: 'I know better than those priests what I want to eat.'"

Lincoln, Lee, Blaine, Conkling, Lowell and a host of others whose names are household words, live in these pages. The author had a difference with Sumner about Grant, and finally mention of his name was dropped between them, as

\* REMINISCENCES OF SIXTY YEARS IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS. By George S. Boutwell. Two vols. New York: McClure, Phillips & Co. \$5.00 net.

Sumner could never forgive Grant for removing Motley from his post as Ambassador to Great Britain.

Tho Mr. Boutwell was born in 1818, and is consequently 84 years of age, he has not yet entirely gone from the public stage. The last pages of his book are filled with the speech recently delivered by him at Salem, Mass., denouncing the imperialistic policy of the present Republican administration. After stating in this speech that the President is the creature of the Constitution, and his jurisdiction is limited by that of the Constitution, he goes on to say:

"When the President asserts that the Philippine Islands are not under the Constitution he admits that the Philippine Islands are not within his jurisdiction. If, on the other hand, the islands are within his jurisdiction, it follows that his right of jurisdiction over them must have come from the presence of the Constitution itself."