CHOATE, WEBSTER, LINCOLN, AND GRANT.*

THE Hon. George S. Boutwell, a man of Massachusetts, an ex-Governor of the Commonwealth, and laden with the honors of high service at various times in the national government at Washington, writes in this 12mo, of 232 pages, of Rufus Choate, Daniel Webster, President Lincoln, and General Grant, all of whom he knew personally. Mr. Boutwell ought to have been able to give us a fresh, interesting, and valuable book of recollections, but it cannot be said that he has. The chapter on Lincoln is supplemented by the eulogy on the martyred President pronounced by the author before the city government of Lowell, April 19, 1865; the chapter on Grant by an article on the third-term project reprinted from the *North American Review* of April, 1880. We see no special reason for the re-appearance of these two incidental papers except to swell the book.

Of General Grant, the nearest historically and the most vivid pictorially of these four figures, there are almost no personal reminiscences whatever. The fifty pages upon him are essentially a biographical sketch which might have been written by some one who had never seen him. As an account of his military career and presidential administration it is not lighted up by those familiar touches which the eye-witness can best give. The sketch of Lincoln is somewhat more to the point, but there is very little of Lincoln's own personality even in this. There is much more of Mr. Boutwell's opinion about Lincoln, and on page 105 there is a notable example of the author's frequent lack of clear thought and exact statement. "There are three methods in debate," he says, "of sustaining and enforcing opinions," and he proceeds to define and describe them as, first, authority; second, reason; and third, assertion. But it is evident from the context that the first and third are confused in his mind, and that what he means are tradition, reason, and authority. His idea is correct, but his way of expressing it faulty. We should further like to ask Mr. Boutwell, who professes some claims, we suppose, to being a republican statesman, what he means by saying on page 95, "The problem of republics is to develop military capacity without fostering the military spirit." That may be one of the duties of republics, but is it the problem?

The papers on Webster and Choate are much the best of the series, and that on Choate the best of all. Both of them enable us to see these subjects as Mr. Boutwell saw them. His estimate of Webster is exalted, but it is well put and forcibly supported:

> When Mr. Webster spoke at Plymouth in 1820, when he spoke in the Senate in 1830, there were men living who had heard Burke, and Fox, and Sheridan; and with them only, of all English-speaking orators, was he contrasted or compared. And if, for the moment, we can command the whole range of history, it is difficult to summon another orator who, in the Senate and in the contest of 1830, would have met so completely the demand of the occasion, and justified his cause and the conduct of it to future ages. And if, again, for the moment, we can command the whole range of history, can its two great orators be named, and he excluded from the list? Of those who have spoken the English language, he is inferior only to Burke; and if the position which Macaulay assigns to Burke shall be sustained by the continuing judgment of mankind, then will Mr. Webster's countrymen claim for him the second place on the page of universal history.

If Webster's figure as seen through Governor Boutwell's recollections be massive and majestic, what shall we say of Rufus Choate's? "A man only less than six feet in height, with a full, deep breast, high and unseemly shoulders, hips and legs slender and in appearance weak, arms long, hands and feet large and ill-formed, a head broad, chaste, symmetrical, covered with a luxuriant suit of black, glossy, wavy hair, a face intellectually handsome, and equally attractive to men and to women, a complexion dark and bronzed as becomes the natives of the tropical isles of the East, a beard scanty and vagrant, mouth and nose large, lips thin and long, an eye black, gentle, and winning in repose, but brilliant, commanding, and persuasive in moments of excitement;" an orator with a voice "copious, commanding, sonorous, and emotional," whose vocabulary "knew no limits," whose gestures would often have "seemed extravagant had they not been usually justified by the wonderful rhetoric which he commanded;" a man of "sensitive, nervous organization," in whose nature there was "a singular mixture of timidity and professional courage." His courtesy was un-

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failing. It was said of him, we remember, though Mr. Boutwell does not remind us of it, that "he treated every man as if he were a gentleman, and every gentleman as if he were a lady." Mr. Choate was a rapid speaker, whom reporters found it difficult to follow. Of his literary tastes and pursuits Mr. Boutwell says:

> The Bible was a book of constant study, and his devotion to the New Testament in Greek led Mr. Webster to say, as he examined the books of Mr. Choate's library, "Thirteen editions of the Greek Testament, and not one copy of the Constitution of your country!" He translated the Greek and Latin classics, studied French law and history in the language, and in English he read everything from the Black Letter to Dickens. The four great men of England, in his estimation and in this order, were Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, and Burke. Indulging in exaggeration, he wrote to Sumner, "Out of Burke might be cut fifty Mackintoshes, one hundred and seventy-five Macaulays, forty Jeffreys, and two hundred and fifty Sir Robert Peels, and leave him greater than Pitt and Fox together.

More of the matter and manner represented by this paragraph last quoted would have made Mr. Boutwell's good book very much better.