

DR. BOWDITCH OF MASSACHUSETTS.*

For three generations the name of Bowditch has been identified with original research in two important branches of science — mathematics and medicine. It has also an honorable position in public life and in the records of good citizenship. The eminent physician who, with rare success, has edited the two volumes containing the biography and correspondence of his distinguished father, has rendered a valuable service not only to students of science but to students of American history as well. As he prefaces the work with the statement that here is "the personal experience of an active Abolitionist," so he has recalled the vital incidents of that movement for which his father paid willing sacrifice; at the same time he has interwoven abundant revelations of his father's devotion to the progress of medicine. The public and personal incidents are tactfully blended. The childhood days in the Salem home, next to the Old Witch House, are told with charm. The reader finds in this picture of Nathaniel Bowditch, the wise, inspiring father of the subject of this sketch, a new familiarity of relation with one who is most often recalled as the translator of La Place's "*Mécanique Céleste*." With a mind keen for research, young Henry Bowditch decided, with some reluctance, to adopt medicine as his profession; and, college days ended, he went abroad to stay two years at foreign schools and hospitals. His father's fame as a mathematician was his passport to many a noted *salon* besides that of Madame La Place, while his enthusiasm for his work increased rapidly under the best of Parisian doctors, notably Dr. Louis, who became not alone a teacher but a life-friend to the American student. Science, in its theo-

retical and applied phases, did not submerge the romantic tendencies of the young physician, as revealed in letters descriptive of his vacation rambles amid the haunts of Burns and "Highland Mary." Still more tender and reserved is the story of his love for the English girl, comrade of his *pension* experience, whose face smiles at the reader with the gracious beauty and "sweet records" of seventy years.

Almost before Dr. Bowditch could establish his professional life in Boston, came the opening discords, soon to become open rupture and war, between North and South. In this life-history, the familiar incidents of the Garrison mob, the escape of the Crafts, and the rendition of Simms, are retold with the vividness of personal experience. The extracts covering these events are taken from the letters of Dr. Bowditch, and from his journal-compilation entitled "Thirty Years' War of Anti-Slavery." In token of friendship for him and common zeal in the cause he served, Whittier wrote the stirring poem called "Massachusetts to Virginia," to be read by Dr. Bowditch at a meeting in Ipswich; while Lowell, for a similar occasion, wrote the lines associated with the death of Charles Torrey, "Woe Worth the Hour." For the imported sun-dial, with quaint history, placed in front of the Bowditch homestead at Weston, Whittier, in further attestation of his friendship, wrote the beautiful stanza of aspiration, —

"With warning hand I mark Time's rapid flight,
From life's glad morning to its solemn night;
Yet, through the dear God's love I also show
There's light above me by the shade below."

When the exciting events of the fifties had been succeeded by the actual conflict, the patriotic heart and practical mind of Dr. Bowditch gave their noble services to his country. Even when his first-born lay dead on a Southern battle-field, the father stifled his grief and worked with renewed vigor to gain better ambulances and hospital-service. In the midst of political crises, Dr. Bowditch had continued his medical studies, as well as practice, urging new modes of treatment for diseases of chest and lungs. In this phase of medicine he was pioneer in the modern methods that have reached further efficiency through the skill of his son. His fame in his profession brought him appointments of honor in this country, notably as a member of the National Board of Health; and when he paid visits to Europe, in later life, he was greeted with dual acclaim, on his own as well as his father's record, by-

*LIFE AND CORRESPONDENCE OF HENRY INGERSOLL BOWDITCH. By his son, Vincent Y. Bowditch. In two volumes. Illustrated. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

scientists of England and the continent. He modestly makes but casual mention of these tributes, but prefers to narrate at length a night walk with the police through East London streets, — interesting to him in his philanthropic profession, and especially associated with memories of Dickens and his studies of London life. If the latter portion of the biography seems somewhat discursive and commonplace in contrast with the earlier events of more vital interest, there is a delight in following the serene years to their close in 1892, — the fitting end of a life of pure, high service to humanity.

ANNIE RUSSELL MARBLE.