

business life. What every man who is of any account in the world seeks at the opening of his career is a profession or calling which promises to give him sure employment with a prospect of wealth, or at least a competence, as the years go by. If he could find such promises in the public service as are held out in the model cities of Berlin, Paris, Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, and Liverpool, he would enter into it eagerly enough. As Mr. Shaw pointed out in his Paris and Glasgow articles, and as we have repeatedly pointed out in this department of *THE CENTURY*, in these cities the highest expert talent is sought for the heads of departments, is paid handsomely, and is kept in office for life or during good behavior. It is this policy which gives the city good government and at the same time secures the interest of the intelligent and moral portions of the community in public affairs.

In American cities the opposite policy prevails. Not only is no inducement offered for expert intelligence to seek place in the public service, but every obstacle is raised to prevent its finding an entry there. If by chance any man possessing it gets office, he is certain to be turned out at the end of a very brief period. The result is that every young man of first-rate intelligence shuns political life and public service and seeks for his occupation in other directions; while the men of inferior intelligence, unstable character, and flabby morality turn to politics as offering them a better chance of success than they could hope for in the severer competition of private occupations. It is not surprising that under such conditions we have had municipal rule in all our large cities; that municipal indebtedness rolls every year into larger and more portentous dimensions, and that all efforts to bring about a better state of affairs, by amending existing charters or enacting new ones, result in failure or only partial and temporary improvement. Reform of a thorough and lasting kind will be attained only when we get a system which will give us in all the departments of our municipal service the kind of officials which Mr. Shaw in his article on Paris, in *THE CENTURY* for July, described as controlling the police department of that city. "Every one of the numerous bureaus," he said, "is manned with permanent officials who have entered the service upon examination and who are promoted for merit." This system prevails throughout the service, making every bureau of the executive municipal government, according to Mr. Shaw, "a model of efficiency." The same system would produce similar results in American cities, making them as well governed as any in the world, instead of standing, as at present, among the worst governed in the world. It will be a slow and arduous task to educate public sentiment to a realization of this truth, but it must be accomplished before we can hope for genuine municipal reform.

#### James Russell Lowell, Poet and Citizen.

No name among those familiar to the late generations of Americans has done more to make our country respected and believed in abroad and to uphold the faith and courage of patriotic Americans than that of James Russell Lowell. It behooves us not so much to grieve for his untimely death,—for he was the youngest of the distinguished New England group of men-of-letters, and yet not the last to go,—but rather

to rejoice at the noble, salutary, and inspiring career of the great poet, humorist, essayist, scholar, diplomatist, politician, statesman, and citizen.

As a poet, whatever comparisons may be made with his predecessors or contemporaries, at home or abroad, whatever just criticisms may be recorded, we believe it will be found at the end that a large part of his verse has passed into literature, there to remain. The originality, vitality, intensity, and beauty of the best of it are self-evident. Although a true, spontaneous poet, his life had other strong interests and engrossing occupations, and the volume of his verse does not equal that of others whose careers have extended beside his own; his impression as a poet upon his time has not equaled that of others. It may, indeed, be said that if as strongly poetic in nature as they, he would have been dominated as exclusively as were they by the poetic mood. However this may be, the quality of his genius, as shown in his best work, was, we believe, quite as fine as that of any poet writing English in his day. No one can read his last volume of verse without being impressed anew by the vigor, variety, and spontaneous character of Lowell's poetic gift. Even his literary faults are of such a nature as to testify to the keenness of his thought and the abundance of his intellectual equipment.

But, after all, perhaps the most striking thing in Lowell's career was not the brilliancy of his mind, his many-sided and extraordinary ability,—but the fact that in every department of his intellectual activity was distinguished the note of the patriot. He loved letters for art's sake; he used letters for art's sake—but also for the sake of the country. His poetic fervor, his unique humor, the vehicle of his pithy and strenuous prose, his elegant and telling oratory—all these served fearlessly the cause of American democracy, of which he was the most commanding exponent in the intellectual world of our day. His keen sense of the responsibilities of citizenship, added to his native genius, made him from early life—in the true and undegraded sense of the word—a politician, and an effective one, as well as a statesman whose writings are an arsenal of human freedom.

A few years ago, as our readers will remember, it was the good fortune of *THE CENTURY* to bring out the record of Lowell's relation to Lincoln. It will be remembered that he was one of the first, in fact he himself believed that he was the very first, of the so-called "Brahman class" of New England to discover and widely proclaim the peculiar virtues and political abilities of Lincoln, at a time when many, even among the good, were suspicious or scornful of "the rail-splitter." Cordial recognition of good intent, as well as of natural gifts, was, indeed, one of Lowell's most admirable traits. American literature and American politics owe much to him, not only for inspiration and example, but for most cordial encouragement, both private and public.

Lowell passes from us in the very year of the establishment in America by statute of the principle of International Copyright, a cause of which he was the official leader as the president of the American Copyright League. He brought to the agitation all the stored-up wealth of his great reputation, the total result of a spotless and noble life, all the forces of his literary skill, his biting wit, his oratory, his moral en-



thusiasm, and his statesmanlike judgment. His appearance in person before a committee of Congress in 1886 was a great historical event of the triumphant war for the rights of the intellect before the law. Unlike other and younger literary men, it was not necessary for him to spend laborious and continuous days, weeks, or months in the conflict. Such was the power of his name, and the trenchancy of his occasional blows, such

the cumulative impulse of his fame and abilities, that his work, though done with apparent ease, was great and effective.

And now this immense intellectual and moral force is with us only as a memory and a record. Yet for many a day and year the name and words of Lowell will light the path of the republic of which he was the lover and laureate.

## OPEN LETTERS.

## "Laurels of the American Tar in 1812."

I. CRITICISM BY MR. POWELL.

THE article written by Edgar S. Maclay on the "Laurels of the American Tar in 1812" which appeared in THE CENTURY for December last is well written and well illustrated, but contains several statements needing correction.

1. It fails to set forth the great difference in size, 40 to 50 per cent., which prevailed between the combatants in most of the actions. For instance, the American 44-gun frigates which severally captured three British 38-gun frigates in single fight were each superior in size to their adversaries. The "load displacement" of the *Constitution* is always stated in American navy lists at 2200 tons, but the load displacement of British 38's was only about 1500 tons. As to the "tons burden" there is a large mistake in that entered to the English frigates in Emmons's "History of the United States Navy." It is almost ludicrous to compare the action of the *Levant* and the *Cyane* with the *Constitution* as at all between equal forces. The two small British ships only averaged 500 tons burden each, and the American over 1500; the short carronades of the former were nearly useless against the heavy long guns of their opponent.<sup>1</sup>

2. The statement that English shot always were of full weight, and American generally seven per cent. under weight, is more than doubtful. Simmons in Heavy Ordnance, 1837, states that English shot were under the nominal weight, and Colonel Owen, Professor of Artillery to Woolwich College, gives tables showing that when the shot, long after the war of 1812, had been rather increased in size, they were still below weight, so that an eighteen-pound ball weighed, even then, only seventeen pounds and eleven ounces. Sir Howard Douglas in "Naval Gunnery" remarks that the English cannon had more windage than the French and American; hence the ball would be rather smaller.

3. It is exceedingly improbable that the *Guerrière* in 1812 would have on board French guns and shot since her capture so long before as 1806. The utmost precision and uniformity in the naval and military services is necessary for supply and mutual exchange and support with cannon, shot, ammunition, etc., and those

<sup>1</sup> The official records of the English Admiralty and of the French Marine have clear evidence of the exact size of their 38- and 40-gun frigates at the commencement of this century; the large national collections of naval models in London and in Paris agree with these records, and the scientific works of both countries on naval architecture support the same facts. Adding the historical works of James and Brenton, we get an accumulation of evidence which must be absolutely conclusive to unbiased minds. Thus all this evidence has the remarkable quality of entire agreement as to the dimensions of the frigates, which are

points are carefully attended to in all regular services. How could one ship supply another with guns or shot if they did not exactly match the regulations?

4. Mr. Maclay, again, has not mentioned the respective complements of men. The American large frigates had 470 men; the British 38's had but 300 regular complement, all told; as often less as more. He is mistaken in giving the *Chesapeake* only 340; Admiral Preble, U. S. N., writing in the American magazine "United Service," acknowledges she had 390, but he overrates the crew of the *Shannon*. The total number of persons on board the *Shannon* of every grade was 330, and there is no mystery how it was composed, namely 300 full complement, 8 lent by her consort, and 22 Irish laborers or passengers only just pressed out of a merchant ship. Owing to Captain Broke's being wounded and temporarily unable to attend to business, his friends wrote the official report for him, and unfortunately were not sufficiently precise in their inquiries; but the report, notwithstanding, is abundantly correct for all practical purposes, the errors being of no importance. It is alleged by James that the *Chesapeake*, far from having a "scratch crew," retained on board the greater part of the men that had served the two years on her previous voyage, and the officers were most fastidious in picking out none but the best men to fill up with. See, in Mr. Maclay's own article, his reference to "picked seamen," page 207. It seems unlikely that when sailing out to meet the *Shannon* the men would dare to annoy Captain Lawrence with an ill-timed application for the prize money of the previous cruise, unless the spokesman at all events represented a large proportion of the complement. Out of the *Shannon's* "52 guns" four were mere boat guns or exercising pieces, and two of those fitted as stern-chasers were not once fired in the action.

5. The artist has taken poetical license in depicting the American ships as rather smaller than the British instead of much larger; the *Constitution* is drawn with three or four ports on the quarter-deck instead of eight or nine.

6. I refuse to believe that the *Constitution* in two or three hours' close action with the *Java* was hulled only four times. The official report allows 34 killed and

given as varying from 150 to 155 feet long and most nearly 40 feet or 12¼ meters in extreme breadth. Some recent transatlantic writers make the length more by measuring in the projection of the counter; but that is contrary to rule. Any one who really understands the subject of tonnage is invited to explain how such dimensions could possibly give a total of much more than 1100 tons Congress measure or 1030 Philadelphia measure. But the American frigates by the former rule, being of 1576 tons, were 43 per cent. larger than British or French.—H. Y. P.