

CHARLES STEWART PARNELL.

Having had frequent occasion, in the past four or five months, to notice the career and travels of Mr. Parnell, there is no need to repeat the particulars to-day. We publish his portrait in connection with his visit to the principal cities of Canada, and in our next number we will present our readers with scenes of his reception in Montreal.

A FEW GEMS FROM AMERICAN POETS.

A certain well-known writer has declared that our critics are those who have failed in literature and in art. I think this is a mistake. Carlyle is both a great author and a great critic. In the American field of literature we have Stoddard, Stedman and Howells who are equally great as authors and critics. In fact, many of our best critics have been poets. Sir Walter Scott was estimated as a good reviewer. In American literature we have James Russell Lowell who fills the threefold sphere of poet, essayist and critic. He was born at Cambridge, Mass., in 1719, graduated at Harvard and has, for more than twenty years, been Professor of Belles-Lettres in that institution. Prof. Lowell is about equally distinguished in poetry and prose. Among the best of his poems are: "The Biglow Papers," "The Present Crisis," "Sir Launfal," "A Glance Behind the Curtain," "Under the Willows," "Commemoration Ode," "The First Snowfall," "Longing," and "The Changeling." His principal prose works are his three volumes of essays and reviews two of which are entitled "Among my Books," and the other "My Study Window." Lowell excels in so many things that it is difficult to say what is his leading characteristic. Probably nowhere else in the whole range of contemporary literature can be found such versatility combined with such excellence. In some of his poems we most admire his wit, in others his delicacy and pathos, in others his airy fancy, in others his fine descriptive powers, in others the daring sweep of his imagination and the terrible energy of his passion; and always and everywhere there is an ease and facility of movement that makes us feel that he is not putting forth half his strength. But with all his excellence he is not a popular poet like Longfellow. He is too subtle and profound; requires too much thought on the part of the reader. This is particularly the case in his later poems. These are not only difficult but obscure so that reading them to ordinary minds is not a pleasure but a task. His great learning and his thought-power seem to have got the better of his poetic sensi-



CHARLES STEWART PARNELL, M. P.

bility and to have spoiled a great poet to make a great critic. As an essayist and reviewer, Prof. Lowell has few living superiors. His knowledge is extensive, his judgment sound and his style both brilliant and forcible. He is distinguished from Longfellow and other American poets in this that he has a strong political bias which frequently breaks out in his poems. At times he pierces with his lance of satire very keenly. His "Biglow Papers" are famous satires and deserve the laudation heaped upon them by critics. Of course much of their effect lies in the New England *patois* with scriptural phraseology and allusions. A Shelley-like fervour and earnestness characterize many of his poems. The following extract from his poem, "An Incident in a Railroad Car," testifies to this:

"It may be glorious to write
Thoughts that shall glad the two or three
High souls, like those far stars that come in sight
Once in a century!—

But better far it is to speak
One simple word which now and then
Shall wake their free nature in the weak
And friendless sons of men:

To write some earnest verse or line,
Which, seeking not the praise of art,
Shall make a clearer faith and manhood shine
In the untutored heart.

He who doth this in verse or prose
May be forgotten in his day,
But surely shall be crowned at last with those
Who live and speak for aye."

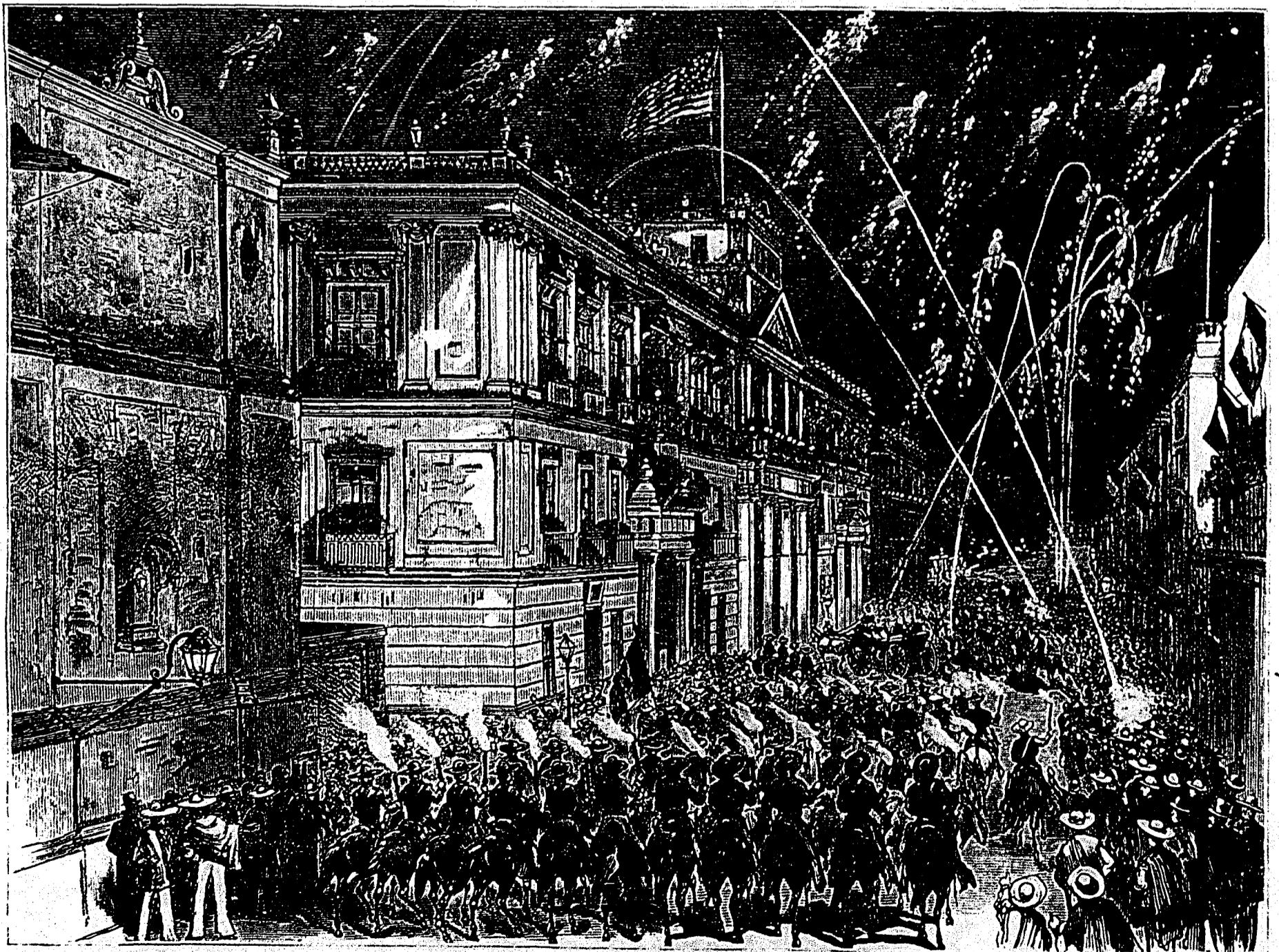
There is too a great wealth of imagery in many of Lowell's poems. He is always happy in his descriptions of nature and can hit off a scene in the fewest possible words. He sings of birds and flowers like another Tennyson and always with the supreme fidelity and accuracy. What a beautiful pen portrait is the following from his poem "To the Dandelion!" what a perspicuity both of language and thought marks each line!

"Then think of deep shadows on the grass—
Of meadows where in sun the cattle graze,
Where as the breeze pass
The gleaming rushes lean a thousand ways—
Of leaves that slumber in a cloudy mass,
Or whiten in the wind—of waters blue
That from the distance sparkle through
Some woodland gap—and of a sky above
Where one white cloud like a stray lamb doth move."

Taken all in all James Russell Lowell is one of the most versatile of American writers and if his genius does not sparkle as brilliantly before the gaze of an admiring people as other bright constellations in the firmament of American literature it is because it illumines so large a sphere and sheds a continuous light.

Belleville, Ont.

T. O'HAGAN.



THE RECEPTION OF GENERAL GRANT AT MEXICO.