

BOSTON'S STATUES.

SOME ROUGH CRITICISM BY MR. WENDELL
PHILLIPS.

From the Boston Advertiser.

Pat Cannon supplied the Harvard students with gingerbread. When President Quincy forbade him to enter the college grounds, Pat said: "And sure I wish the old man no harm; but may he go to heaven very soon." No Boston man would wish Thomas Ball any harm; but to save a deluge of fearful statues one may surely be pardoned for wishing that he may go to heaven very soon. Boston seems hagridden with Thomas Ball, and so groans under the infliction of hideous statues.

Mayor Quincy was a man of Goethe-like presence, rare manly beauty, and a sedate, dignified bearing. In a different way his figure was as impressive as was the grand repose of Webster. But what stands for him in School-street? A dancing-master clogged with horse-blankets. Not a dancing-master taking a position—that might possibly be graceful; but a dancing-master assuming an attitude, which is always ridiculous, and, wholly unlike Quincy, who never assumed anything, but was nature itself, all over. I tender my sincere condolence to those who share the great Mayor's blood.

Then the poise of the clumsy mass! It seems to feel the uncertainty of its pose, and guards itself by throwing its shoulders to the left, and, by making an angle at the thigh, thrusting its blanket mass far to the right. Any one sensitive to balance nervously longs to prop up that right side, fearful of his tumbling backward or over on his comical companion, a tipsy old gentleman, somewhat weak on his spindle-shanks, swaying feebly to and fro on a jaunty cane, as with villainous leer he ogles the ladies. And this represents the sturdy, self-centred, quiet dignity of Franklin, which at once charmed and awed the court of Louis!

Ball's Quincy has one merit—it is better than Franklin; and it is lucky for the artist that his clumsy Mayor has the dilapidated roué for a foil.

Then Webster, that mass of ugly iron at the State-house! which cheers us as we climb those endless steps, robbing the effort of half its weariness by resting us with a laugh, of which a journal said, with undue frankness, that Everett, well knowing how hideous it was, let it be raised to revenge himself on the man who overshadowed and eclipsed him. But they have supplied him, too, with a foil, which half redeems its shapelessness. It is Horace Mann, waked up so suddenly that in his hurry he has brought half his bed-clothes clinging to his legs and arms.

And so we come in our walk to Everett, in trousers too large for him, and a frock coat which he has slightly outgrown! It requires consummate genius to manage the modern costume. But this figure also seems toppling over backward, as, with more energy than Everett ever showed in his lifetime, he exclaims, "That is the road to Brighton!" pointing with lifted arm and wide-spread fingers to that centre of beef and the races. Story's friends say he never lifted that weary arm, but yielded to a committee's urging—as no true artist ever should do.

But who is this riding-master, on a really good horse, staring so heroically up Commonwealth-avenue? Washington? Well, then, my worthy George, drop your legs closer to your horse's side; it must fatigue you to hold them off at that painful distance. Rest yourself, General; subside for a moment, as you used to do at Mount Vernon, into the easy pose of a gentleman; don't oblige us to fancy you are exhibiting, and rather caricaturing, a model "seat" for the guidance of some slow pupil. Cannot you see, right in front of you, Rimmer's Hamilton? Let that teach you the majesty of repose.

If this bronze pyramid on Boylston-street be a cask made of staves, why is it set on human legs? And if it is really Sumner, why do his chest and shoulders rise out of a barrel? Is his broadcloth new felt, too stiff for folds, or is he dressed in shoe-leather? That matters little, however. But no angry Southerner would have needed to smite those overfed cheeks, which may have faced many a snow-storm on the locomotive, or many a north-easter on our coast, but surely must have been far too innocent of thought and passion ever to anger Senates or rouse nations to war. This heavy-molded prize-fighter is the marvelous achievement of that wise committee which rejected Miss Whitney's "matchless model" (as they confessed it to be) of the seated Senator, "because no woman could make a statue!" No, indeed, I hope not, if this Irish porter in his Sunday-clothes is the ideal they desired.

Miss Whitney's model of Sumner sits with marvelous ease; the chair almost unseemly, the modern costume perfect, and so cleverly managed that one forgets it in the quiet, intellectual, level gaze of the listening Senator; and we feel that this man might have awed Senates, or if the Satanic elements of his day ever confronted him their assault would be as vain as the giants' rebellion against Jove.

No Ball or Greenough hand ever lifted that proud column (the soldiers' monument) which crowns Frog-pond Hill; the drapery of its figures so flowing and graceful that, without hiding, it adorns them; costumes and figures neither violent nor clumsy, but easy, life-like, natural, and suggestive—each telling its own story; no sense of weariness in gazing at them; no drawback on your satisfaction. It has only one peer—that living figure at Concord—so full of life and movement that one fears he shall not see it again if he passes that way the next week. This otherwise perfect column has one defect—the one I have noticed in every city and town monument raised since the war. For anything these marble records tell, the war might have been, like that of 1812, for "free trade and sailors' rights" or for a North-eastern boundary. You search in vain through them all for the broken chain or the negro soldier. Millmore has done better than his fellows, for he gives us, in one bas-relief, the stern and earnest face of J. B. Smith, a suggestion welcome and honorable. He should have done more. Perhaps some time it can be mended, and a broken chain and negro form tell what really saved the Union.

Perhaps, though, as the Greeks built the monuments commemorating civil wars of wood, that they might soon crumble, leaving no angry trace of the quarrel, so our artists thought best to blot and raze away everything that told of the bitter issue in the rebellion. My thought is, if enduring monuments are erected at all, they should tell the truth. Let green sods cover the battle-fields, unless you put there the records of the whole truth. I do not translate the old proverb, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*, as men usually do, say nothing but good of the dead. I rather render it, "Of the dead say nothing, unless you can tell something good of them."

WENDELL PHILLIPS.