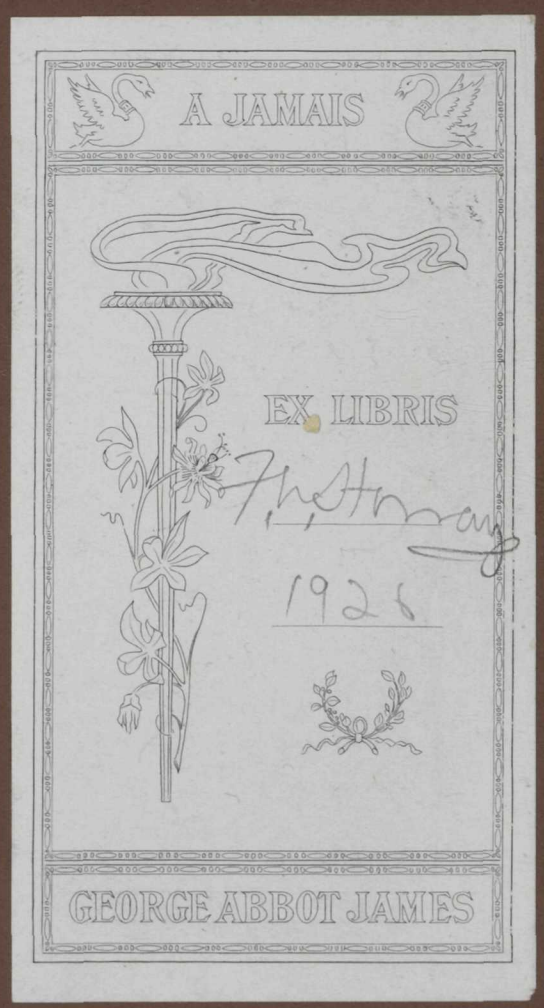
MEMOIR

OF THE

Hon. William Sturgis.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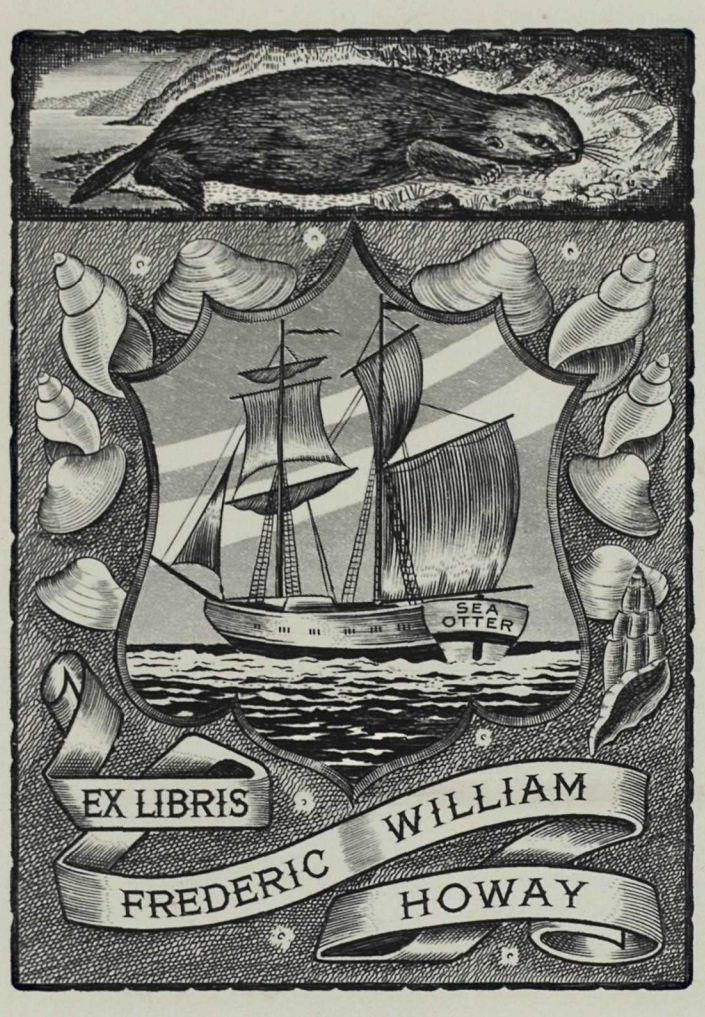

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MEMOIR

OF THE

HON. WILLIAM STURGIS.

PREPARED AGREEABLY TO A RESOLUTION

OF THE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

By CHARLES G. LORING.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF JOHN WILSON AND SON.
1864.

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MEMOIR.

THE formation of character being the chief purpose of human life, considered in reference alike to this world and to the world of which this is the threshold, the death of any member of our community, who has exhibited a character of commanding influence, or of peculiar strength or beauty, naturally excites the desire to learn by what means the end of living was thus far accomplished.

Nor is the inquiry of less usefulness than interest. Recurrence to the road which has led to moral or intellectual preeminence or to conspicuous achievement is needed, not only to indicate the means for attaining to the noblest object of human effort, but to correct an often erroneous estimate of circumstances, generally accounted advantages, which, however, are not infrequently hinderances to the best progress in life; and to better understand others, which we are prone to regard as hardships or privations, but which are, in reality, needful helps in scaling the heights of a worthy ambition. And especially is such recurrence to early influences important in a community like that in which our lot is cast, where the casual relations of birth have no power to raise the possessor to any permanent or widely extended usefulness or power, independently of his individual worth, whatever may have been his lineage or fancied advantages of inherited position.

It is an instructive fact, that the men, who of late years have been chiefly distinguished among us for elevation of character in public and private life, — who acquired the largest fortunes for themselves, and assisted others in acquiring them, — and who exerted the greatest influence upon the commercial and manufacturing interests of this portion of our country, — were men of no early advantages, excepting the absence of the circumstances usually accounted as such; with no means of providing their daily bread but their own industry; no better education than our public schools afforded; and no patrons but such as faithful service in humble stations had acquired for them. Samuel Appleton, Nathan Appleton, Amos Lawrence, Abbott Lawrence, William Appleton, and William Sturgis, are names familiar among us as household words, in their suggestion of ability, wealth, influence, and intellectual and moral pre-eminence. And to the same list may be added the names of Francis C. Lowell and Patrick T. Jackson, who, under some few circumstances usually esteemed more advantageous, rose, independently of them, to be the architects of their own fortunes, and the founders of the vast manufacturing interests of the Eastern States.

The memoirs of such men are also interesting and useful, as exhibiting representative types of the fruit of New-England descent and training. The energy, self-devotion, personal independence, moral purity, and earnestness of the Pilgrim Fathers have come down in undiminished force, though in modified forms, to their descendants. Their intensity of character and of purpose has been as visible in the peaceful enterprises of commerce and manufactures, which have made the United States the second commercial nation in the world, as it was when manifested of old in clearing the forest, subduing the savage, and establishing the foundations of republican government in the wilderness. Nor has it been less conspicuous in the generous use made of the fruits of

toil, as the liberal foundations of unprecedentedly numerous and wise institutions for promoting religious, moral, and intellectual culture, and for the relief of human suffering, abundantly testify. And now, in this dark hour of our country's agony, the same intensity of character has burst forth with yet increasing lustre in the voluntary sacrifices of life and property, so generally and nobly made for the suppression of treason, the maintenance of the nation's life, and the glory of its flag. When the history of the present Rebellion shall be written, the voluntary contributions of blood and treasure everywhere laid by the people of the Free States upon the altar of their country, in a resolute defence of the great principles of freedom and of law, and in a self-relying determination to sustain the Government and the honor of the national standard at all hazards and at any price, will constitute an era in the annals of patriotism more glorious to the United States, and of better augury for their future safety and power, than any warlike achievements, however illustrious.

Perhaps no one, known by the present generation, has presented a more striking example of the peculiar traits of character of the Pilgrim Fathers, as modified by the advanced civilization of the age, than the subject of this Memoir; who, entering life upon a little farm on the sands of Cape Cod, began his career of self-reliance when sixteen years old, as a sailor-boy before the mast, on wages of seven dollars a month, and has recently closed his days on earth at the ripe age of eighty-one years, — possessed of a most ample estate, standing with his family in the foremost rank of American society, and distinguished for a highly cultivated intellect, and for remarkably extensive knowledge, that embraced not only the commerce of the globe, but a wide field of historical and literary information. Nor was he less conspicuous for firm and liberal principles, for a clear perception of justice, for a high sense of honor, for generous sentiments

and tender affections; and he died surrounded by numerous and ardent friends of all ages, — from gray-haired contemporaries, to the charmed boy with whom he conversed as a companion upon the philosophy of life or the events of the times, and the little children who loved to gather around him to listen to his tale of marvels and adventures among the Indians of the North-west Coast.

WILLIAM STURGIS was born on the twenty-fifth day of February, 1782, in the town of Barnstable, on Cape Cod, in Massachusetts, near to Plymouth, the landing-place of the Pilgrims of the "Mayflower." His father, of the same name, was a highly respectable shipmaster of Barnstable, who for many years sailed in command of various vessels from Boston. He was a lineal descendant of Edward Sturgis, the first of the name in this country, who came over from England in 1630, and, having first settled at Charlestown, afterwards removed to Yarmouth, where, in 1638, he is recorded as one of the "first planters" of that town.

His mother was Hannah Mills, the youngest daughter of the Rev. Jonathan Mills, a graduate of Harvard University, who was settled in the ministry at Harwich, where he died.

His earliest introduction into life was to a sphere of usefulness and responsibility. His father's nautical pursuits kept him from home for the greater portion of his time, leaving to his wife the care of the young family (in which William was the eldest child and the only son), and of the few acres of land that constituted what was then called a Cape-Cod farm. She was a capable and energetic woman, with a large share of sound common sense; but she found it indispensable to avail herself of the aid of her son, as soon as he was old enough to afford any, in the management of their domestic affairs. She was, however, too judicious to suffer her requirements to interfere with his regular attendance at school, whenever one, public or private, was within reach. The schools of that day were none of them of a high order, compared with those of the

present time; but such as he attended were probably as good as the average then to be found in country towns at a distance from the metropolis. At the age of thirteen, his mother, being solicitous to procure for him the best education her means would afford, sent him to a private school in Hingham, kept by Mr. James Warren, son of General Warren of Plymouth, a prominent patriot of Revolutionary times. Here he passed a year; and in a memorandum made by him, from which this brief account of his life is chiefly taken, he bears grateful testimony to his teacher's fidelity, by saying, "If I did not make sufficient progress, it was not the fault of the instructor, who was attentive and efficient." His subsequent love of learning, and the ability in composition to which he attained amidst occupations generally regarded as unfavorable to the cultivation of letters, bear equally satisfactory testimony to the fidelity with which the pupil improved his brief opportunity for gaining the rudiments of an education. In the year 1796 he came to Boston, and entered the counting-house of his kinsman, the late Mr. Russell Sturgis, at that time largely engaged in the purchase and exportation of what were denominated "shipping furs."

And here, too, his aptitude, and his faithful improvement of his time and of the means of acquiring knowledge in the service of his employer, prepared him in a peculiar manner for taking advantage of the seemingly marvellous contingencies, so soon unexpectedly to present themselves, and to be made the stepping-stones of his rapid career to the ultimate objects of his ambition. After remaining in this service about eighteen months, he entered the counting-room of Messrs. James and Thomas H. Perkins, merchants of great eminence and extensive commercial relations, and at that time much engaged in trade with the North-west Coast and China. He remained there until the death of his father, which took place abroad in the year 1797, after his vessel had been captured and plundered by piratical privateers in

the West Indies. His family were left in straitened circumstances; and William, being now thrown wholly upon his own resources, and compelled to adopt some occupation that might not only secure his present support, but give promise of future success in life, did that "which was most natural for a young Cape-Cod boy to do" under such circumstances,—he decided "to follow the sea."

Having been taught the rudiments of navigation at school, he set earnestly to work, devoting all the time that could be spared from his duties in the counting-room to the acquisition of such further knowledge of the theory and practice of the art as would qualify him for office on board of a ship, and thus prepare the way for early promotion to the command of one.

After a few months of diligent study under the instruction of Mr. Osgood Carlton, a well-known and highly respected teacher of mathematics and navigation in those days, he was pronounced competent to navigate a ship to any part of the world. And events most unlooked for speedily followed, that manifested the fidelity with which he had studied, and the justice of the eulogium of his instructor.

In the summer of the year 1798, his employers, the Messrs. Perkins, were fitting out a small vessel, the "Eliza," of one hundred and thirty-six tons (below the average in size of those now employed in the coasting trade), for a voyage to the North-west Coast, San Blas on the western coast of Mexico, and China, under the command of Captain James Rowan. This officer was a good practical seaman, without education or much theoretical knowledge of navigation; but, having been several times on the North-west Coast, he was well qualified to carry on a trade with the Indians, which was conducted wholly by barter. The large number of the crew for a vessel so small, amounting to one hundred and thirty-six men, but necessary for defence against the Indians, rendered the passage one of great discomfort to those before the mast, and ex-

posed the "green hand" to a somewhat severe experience of the hardships of a sailor's life. They sailed from Boston early in August; and, after touching at the Falkland and the Sandwich Islands, they reached the North-west Coast in the latter part of the month of December. Captain Rowan soon perceived the peculiar qualifications and efficiency of young Sturgis, and selected him as his assistant in the management of the trade. This was an opportunity which the youthful aspirant well knew how to appreciate and improve. He not only devoted himself assiduously to the mastery of the business in all its details, but also to a laborious study of the Indian languages, and to the cultivation of friendly relations with the natives by kind words and courteous manners, as well as by the most scrupulous truthfulness and honor in his dealings with them. By such means he soon succeeded in securing a degree of affection, respect, and influence among them, to which no other white man had ever attained, and of nobler worth than even the kindred elevation which he afterwards enjoyed in the best informed and most polished society of his native State. Indeed, his name has ever since been cherished by these untutored savages with singular affection and reverence, in bright contrast with their recollections of the vices and barbarities of others, whose superiority in civilization, if such it can be called, served only as the means of brutal excesses, frauds, and cruelties, of which the former experience of the poor Indian afforded no parallel. Among the latest tidings from that decaying race came affectionate inquiries from an aged chief concerning his old friend, "the good Mr. Sturgis," — the dying echo of the influences of a noble character upon the children of the forest, still reverberating, after more than sixty years, from the shore of the Pacific Ocean to his grave on the shore of the Atlantic.

After visiting numerous tribes, and disposing of the portion of the cargo destined for that coast in exchange for sea-otter

skins and other furs, they anchored in the port of Caiganee, in latitude 55° north, much frequented by trading vessels. Here they found two Boston ships, — the "Despatch," commanded by Captain Breck; and the "Ulysses," by Captain Lamb. The crew of the latter ship were in a state of mutiny. They and the officers, having revolted a few days before, had seized the captain, put him in irons, and confined him to a state-room, with an armed sentry at the door. This was alleged to have been done in consequence of the cruel treatment by Lamb of those under his command. Captains Rowan and Breck interfered, obtained his release, and took him on board of the "Eliza." After negotiations with the mutineers, occupying several days, and a promise by Lamb to pardon all that had been done, and to treat them better in future, the crew, with the exception of the officers and two seamen, consented that he should resume the command of his ship. This was done; the second and third mates, with the two unwilling seamen, being taken on board the other vessels, and the chief mate being confined in irons on board of the "Ulysses." This arrangement left that ship with no officer excepting the boatswain, who was illiterate, and without a knowledge of navigation. Captain Lamb made very liberal proposals to induce some officer from the "Eliza" or the "Despatch" to take the situation of chief mate on board of his ship, but unsuccessfully; for, so bad was his reputation for ill treating his officers as well as his men, that no one was willing to go with him. It was indispensable, however, that there should be some officer on board capable of navigating the ship, and of managing the trade with the Indians, to take the place of Captain Lamb, in the event of his death, or of his inability to continue in command.

Young Sturgis being competent for both of those duties, although deficient in practical seamanship, Captain Lamb proposed, that he should take the place of chief mate of the "Ulysses," with liberal wages; and should also act as his

assistant in trading with the Indians, and for his services should receive a small commission upon all furs collected on the Coast. Such an offer to a lad of seventeen, then a boy in the forecastle, doing duty as a common sailor, but eager for advancement in the profession he had chosen, was too tempting, in regard both to station and emolument, to be rejected; and, on the thirteenth day of May, he left the "Eliza," and joined the "Ulysses," though not without serious misgivings. They remained on the Coast, collecting furs, until November; when they sailed for China, and arrived at Canton near the close of the year. There they found the "Eliza," which, after visiting several ports on the western coast of Mexico, reached Canton in October, and was then nearly ready to sail for home. Young Sturgis had found his situation on board of the "Ulysses" less uncomfortable than he had apprehended, but nevertheless far from being a pleasant one; and he eagerly accepted a proposal from Captain Rowan to rejoin the "Eliza," and take the position of third mate on her homeward passage. As Captain Lamb could easily procure experienced officers at Canton, he consented to this arrangement; and, professing entire satisfaction with the manner in which Mr. Sturgis had performed his duties, promptly paid him his wages and commissions. The "Eliza" soon afterwards sailed, and arrived in Boston in the spring of the year 1800.

The reputation of Mr. Sturgis was now so far established, that he was immediately engaged to serve as first mate and assistant-trader on board of the ship "Caroline," owned by Messrs. James and Thomas Lamb and others, and then fitting out for a three-years' voyage to the Pacific Ocean and China, under the command of Captain Charles Derby of Salem, — a worthy man, but not particularly qualified for the enterprise, as he was in feeble health, had not before visited the Coast, and knew nothing of the Indian trade. He appeared to be in a consumption when they sailed; and his health failed so rapidly, that, before the end of the first year, he virtually

gave up the command to Mr. Sturgis; and, in the course of the second year, he formally resigned it to him, went on shore at the Sandwich Islands, and there died shortly afterwards.*

Thus this young man, at the early age of nineteen, and with less than four years' experience at sea, became master of a large ship in a far distant country; the sole conductor of an enterprise requiring the highest qualifications of seamanship, together with the greatest energy and discretion in the management of a large crew, employed in peculiar and miscellaneous services on shore as well as on board; and requiring also unceasing vigilance and courage to prevent surprises and attacks by the savage inhabitants, and great judgment and skill in conducting a barter trade, now committed wholly to his care and responsibility. He proved himself worthy of the trust. He completed the voyage with entire success. He had obtained a valuable collection of furs on the Coast, which he exchanged at Canton for an assorted China cargo, and with this returned to Boston in the spring of the year 1803, to the great satisfaction and profit of his employers; and thus entitled himself to stand in the foremost rank in the most difficult and responsible department of his chosen profession.

It is difficult to imagine a state of more intense satisfaction and of more laudable pride, than that with which this youth, just entering upon manhood, and not yet invested with its legal responsibilities, must have greeted the shores of his native State. Only five years before, he had left it as a stripling before the mast, and he was now returning to it as the master of a noble ship, with a valuable cargo on board, the fruit in great measure of his own skill and exertions, and with the consciousness of an established reputation that would thereafter enable him to command opportunities in the road to rank and fortune.

The combination of circumstances which thus led him at this

* See Hawaiian Archaeologist Society Journal No. 16. P. G. (1929)

early age so suddenly and unexpectedly to the pinnacle of his ambition, and a position of such grave and honorable responsibility, cannot but arrest the attention of the most thoughtless reader. To such as may be disposed to account it fortuitous it certainly presents a remarkable problem in the calculation of chances. But to those who believe, that there is "a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will," this wonderful adaptation of the means to the end, and these events, seemingly so accidental and disconnected, working harmoniously to show how capacity and success may be the reward of energy and faithfulness in the springtime of life, will suggest a more inspiring solution, in the lesson of instruction and encouragement which it was intended to convey. There is not the slightest reason for believing that young Sturgis entered the counting-room of his kinsman with any especial purpose in reference to his subsequent career, the only apparent cause being the willingness of a relative to lend to him a helping hand in preparing him for mercantile life; but the knowledge which he thus acquired of the qualities and relative natures of furs was doubtless the chief external cause of his early and surprising success. It induced his first commander to select him as his assistant in trading with the natives. This opened wide to him the door for the learning of their languages, the cultivation of their confidence and friendship, and the acquisition of tact and skill in dealing with them; and these attainments, already great, were doubtless of most important influence in causing his appointment as chief mate of the "Ulysses," which, again, was the introduction to his subsequent precocious and successful career.

As his early qualification had, while he was gaining it, no direct reference to the great results to which it led, so the opportunities for its almost immediate and successful application had no probable connection with any such use of it in the ordinary course of events. The most extravagant fancy

could not have pictured a more improbable thing than the sudden elevation to which a mutiny on board of another ship, upon a far-distant and wild coast, was so soon to raise him; or the further advancement which was to follow so immediately, in his next voyage, from the resignation of the master, vesting in him the command of the ship, and constituting him the sole conductor of one of the most arduous and responsible enterprises of the naval profession.

Of course the owners of the vessel were solicitous for the continuance of such an agent in their service. She was accordingly at once fitted out, and sailed under his command on another similar voyage, which also proved eminently successful, terminating in June in the year 1806.

Mr. Sturgis, or, as he was then uniformly styled, Captain Sturgis, was now first in the foremost rank of all engaged in this department of commercial enterprise; and his services were of course eagerly sought for. Mr. Theodore Lyman, a merchant of Boston, had become largely interested in the North-west trade. He had, at this time, two ships on the Coast; and was fitting out another for the same destination, named the "Atahualpa." He offered Captain Sturgis very liberal terms to take command of this ship and proceed to the Coast for one season, and assume the charge and direction of all his business there; and thence to go on to Canton, taking with him one of the two other vessels, and the furs collected by all of them, to be exchanged for homeward cargoes. This offer was accepted; and, in October, he sailed on his fourth voyage round the world. Thus the sailor-boy of 1798 had become in 1806, as it were, an admiral, in command of a fleet upon the Coast, where, eight years before, he had arrived in the humblest station. This expedition also proved very profitable both to Mr. Lyman and to himself, and terminated on his arrival in Boston in June, 1808.

The threatening aspect of the foreign relations of the United States, and the embargo which then paralyzed com-

mercial enterprise, detained Mr. Sturgis at home until April in the year 1809; when he again sailed in command of the "Atahualpa," for Mr. Lyman, upon a direct voyage to Canton, with an outfit exceeding three hundred thousand Spanish milled dollars, to be invested there in a return cargo. In this adventure the late Mr. John Bromfield was associated with him, — a gentleman of great intelligence and elevated character. A warm friendship immediately grew up between them, which constituted much of the happiness of their lives, until the lamented death of Mr. Bromfield in the year 1849.

The vessel, lightly armed with a few small cannon, came to anchor in Macao Roads (about seventy miles from Canton) on the night of the 21st of August; and, early the next morning, was attacked by a fleet of sixteen Ladrone or piratical vessels, some of them heavily armed, under command of Appotesi, a noted rebel-chief. The fight was a very desperate one on the part of the comparatively small crew of the "Atahualpa," and continued for more than an hour; some of the pirates being so near as to succeed in throwing combustibles on board, which set the vessel on fire in many places. But the coolness and intrepidity of her commander, aided by the presence and assistance of Mr. Bromfield, inspired her gallant crew with invincible courage. The pirates were repulsed with great slaughter, and the ship was enabled to escape, and find protection under the guns of the Portuguese fort. She was again attacked by them on her passage up, in company with four other American ships, but finally reached Canton in safety. This voyage, like all the rest in which he had been engaged, terminated very successfully, and he arrived at Boston in April, 1810.

By twelve years of arduous effort and unremitted toil in the service of others, at sea and in foreign lands, and by prudent economy, Mr. Sturgis had at last acquired sufficient means for establishing himself in business on his own account. He concluded, therefore, to abandon the sea; and now entered into

copartnership with Mr. John Bryant, under the name and firm of "Bryant and Sturgis," as merchants resident in Boston for the prosecution of foreign trade. This copartnership continued for more than half a century, being for many years the oldest in the city of Boston, and was indeed terminated only by the death of Mr. Sturgis. Although these gentlemen were unlike in many respects, and entertained different views on many subjects, their connection was entirely harmonious; and the writer of this Memoir heard Mr. Sturgis, not long before his decease, remark that no unpleasant word had ever passed between them. Their business was principally with places upon the Coast of the Pacific and with China; and, from the year 1810 to 1840, more than half of the trade carried on with those countries from the United States was under their direction. They occasionally, however, had commercial intercourse with nearly every quarter of the world.

In the year 1810, Mr. Sturgis was united in marriage to Elizabeth M., daughter of John Davis, Judge of the District Court of the United States for the District of Massachusetts: *clarum et venerabile nomen*, which, to those who knew him, recalls the image of one of the most scholarly, benignant, and venerable gentlemen, and one of the purest, most enlightened, and humane judges, that ever blessed society, or ever adorned the bench. His presence was felt as a benediction no less in court than everywhere else. It was he, who, not long before his death, while sitting, in an autumn twilight, at his window in the country, conversing with a friend upon old age, and the falling leaves as illustrative of the decay of life, replied, "Yes; but then we see the stars more plainly."

Mr. and Mrs. Sturgis had six children: one son, who died at an early age; and five daughters, all of whom were married, and three of whom, with their mother, survive him.

It could not be otherwise than that a person of the mental strength and activity of Mr. Sturgis should soon become

generally known and appreciated, and that any political party should desire to increase its power and influence by sending him as its representative in the public councils. Nor was it less natural, that one whom rapid and unexampled success must have inspired with confidence should be willing to widen the sphere of his reputation and influence. We find accordingly, that, in the year 1814, he was elected a representative of the town of Boston in the Legislature of Massachusetts; and such was his capacity and fidelity, that, from that period until 1845, he was for the greater portion of the time a member of the House or of the Senate. He was not, however, and from his nature could not be, popular in political life, nor fitted to succeed as an aspirant for political preferment, even if his taste or inclination had pointed in that direction. He was altogether too independent and self-relying, and too single-minded in his conceptions of duty, to enter into the compromises required of the leaders of a political party, however necessary such compromises may be considered, and however justifiable in persons of different temperament, or of what perhaps may be accounted broader views of policy. No party could rely upon his support of measures, or his acquiescence in them, for its own sake, when, in his private judgment, they conflicted with the general welfare. The too often controlling argument, that the preservation of the existence or power of the party is the one thing essential for the public safety, or that "the party is the State," could never weaken his conviction, that he was the servant of the State, and not of any party. His political influence, however, was the greater in general society; and was perhaps as potent as that of any other individual not in the highest rank of public service. He was nominated for election to the House of Representatives in Congress at the time when Mr. Nathan Appleton was a candidate, as representing the principle of protection in opposition to that of free trade; but he withdrew from the canvass in order to secure his friend's

success. He was an active and influential member of the Convention for revising the Constitution of the State in 1820. For some years preceding his death, he had been the oldest member of the Boston Marine Society, of which he was for a time the President. He was an honorary member of the Massachusetts Mechanics' Charitable Association; and a member of the Massachusetts Historical Society, to whose archives he made important contributions, and to whose funds he was a liberal benefactor.

Of the character, intellectual ability, and varied attainments of Mr. Sturgis, there happily remain memorials highly valuable and interesting, which, for the sake of history, and in justice to his memory, should be put in a permanent form. They consist of his "Diary, or Journal of his First Voyage"; "Three Lectures upon the North-west Coast," originally delivered before the Mercantile Library Association in 1845–6, and subsequently, by request, before the members of the House of Representatives; an article in the "North-American Review" in 1822, (vol. xv., art. 18, p. 370,) upon the subject of "The Claims of Russia upon the North-west Coast"; a pamphlet containing the substance of a Lecture upon the Oregon Question in 1845; and two articles upon the tragedy on board the United States brig-of-war "Somers," printed in the "Semi-weekly Courier" of Aug. 7, 1843, entitled "The Somers Mutiny."

The most interesting portion of his life, as affording means for contemplating the formation and the peculiarities of his character, was that which began with his first voyage to the North-west Coast at sixteen years of age, and ended with his last expedition abroad, from which he returned at the age of twenty-eight, after attaining a measure of success, in knowledge, reputation, and wealth, which might satisfy the reasonable hopes of most men, if it were the result of a long life ardently devoted to the pursuit.

The "Diary" contains not only the records of events of

ordinary daily interest (as the courses of the vessel, and barters with the natives and others), which might be made in moments snatched from duty or rest, but full descriptions of the places visited, of the various tribes, of the modes of traffic, of the manners and habits of the Indians, interspersed with occasional impressive descriptions of scenery, and with anecdotes characteristic of savage life. And with them are mingled citations from Shakspeare, Milton, and Goldsmith; indicating, that, amid all the severe and engrossing labors of his daily life, this boy-man was nourishing the germs of a literary taste, which was to ornament, and minister to the happiness and usefulness of, his maturer years. "Ossian" was one of his favorite books at sea; and, to the mind of a young man, turning from the exhausting drudgeries of daily toil to seek literary food in pastures of his own choosing, there was a not unaccountable affinity in the tone and sentiment of that vague and mystical poetry with the wild and often sublime solitudes of the North-west Coast, where so many of his days, and watches of the night, were passed.

In this "Diary," also, are contained tables of the longitude and latitude of every place visited, and of the number of skins acquired; also a sort of dictionary or list of the most familiar Indian words, — the English in one column, and those of the several tribes opposite to them in corresponding ones, — evidencing the pains he took for the accurate learning of their languages. Of these he became so thoroughly a master, that, as the writer of this Memoir has been recently informed by one, who, engaged in the like enterprises, saw him upon the Coast, he could not only carry on the trade with the natives, and converse with them easily about matters of ordinary intercourse in their own tongues, but could freely discuss with them any other topics in which they were interested, including themes of religion, philosophy, and morals, as well as of trade; and could banter and exchange repartees with them as familiarly as any one of their number. The

same gentleman states further, that his popularity with the Indian chiefs was unbounded; that he was universally known, welcomed, and trusted; and that he exercised an influence among them, to which no white man ever before attained, and in which no chief excelled him.

He not only kept this minute and accurate record of all the transactions relating to his own vessel and his trade, but one also of all the vessels which they met on the Coast, or of which they could obtain any account; — of their voyages, the places they visited, the number of skins they obtained, and all the other incidents tending to a perfect knowledge of the business. His "Journal" is replete with criticisms and comments upon the manner of conducting the trade, and the vices, faults, follies, and mistakes of those engaged in it; evincing a clearness of vision, maturity of judgment, and decision of character, truly wonderful in a lad of seventeen years of age; and winding up with a detailed statement of the course to be pursued in order to make a successful voyage.

By the extensive knowledge of details which he was ever careful to obtain, and by a constant study of the various elements and phases of the business in which he was engaged, he afterwards became enabled to foresee the fluctuations and changes which would necessarily follow the precipitate embarkation in it of numerous adventurers whom its profitableness would soon allure, and thus to avoid their miscalculations and the mischances which befell most of them, and to accumulate wealth for himself and his employers, while many others at the same time encountered only ruinous losses.

There are upon record instances of marvellous precocity in poetical invention, and in limited departments of science, which have excited the astonishment and admiration of the world; but it may well be doubted whether any such instance can be accounted more surprising, in its kind, than this, of practical ability in a youth, leaping as it were in an instant from the forecastle to the quarter-deck an accomplished navi-

gator, endowed with the irresistible power of command, which a strange and mutinous crew could not but obey; — speedily attaining, as if by intuition, a knowledge of the principles, details, complications, and whole scope of a newly discovered trade on a far-distant, savage coast; with a knowledge, also, of human nature, and a tact in controlling men, both civilized and savage, which very few in long lives of service among them acquire; — governing and governed by the principles of an inflexible justice and by a high sense of honor; — and mingling with the severest of human labors and responsibilities the habitual cultivation of literary taste.

The following are extracts from the "Diary," on his first arrival on the Coast, a few days before entering upon his eighteenth year, with no other opportunities for mental culture than those above stated, and none for this sort of composition but such as could be snatched at intervals from the laborious drudgery and miscellaneous interruptions of life in the forecastle.

Here are two descriptions of scenery in Norfolk Sound: —

"The appearance of the country here is really romantic. On one side of us, within pistol-shot, and which seems in the evening almost as if you could touch it, is a thick spruce wood, extending close to the water's edge, frowning in native horror, and looks to be only fit for wild beasts to prowl in: on the other side appears a mixture of land and water. At short distances are passages which either run inland, or, by joining, cut the country up into small islands. Some of them are not much larger than the ship, and numbers much smaller. They are composed of rocks rising just clear of the surface of the water, on which is sprinkled a little soil; and from this rises a thick cluster of tall spruce-trees, which, in the *tout ensemble*, look very handsome, and often bring to my mind the romantic little Island of Poplars, in which is Rousseau's tomb. Add to this the melancholy sighing of the wind among the pines. But a truce to descriptions; and let me proceed to business. . . . . .

"The place where we walked was all rocks; and, on the shore-side of us, they rose like a barrier, in some places full an hundred

feet perpendicular. On the tops of these (which overhung all the beach beyond the Point) again are tall spruce-trees, which seem to grow on the edge of the precipices as plenty and as thick as on the lowland. Some of them, which had advanced their heads too high for the feeble support their roots afforded, had shared the fate of all such foolish pretenders, by being dashed from the pinnacle to the bottom of the precipice; and, with their roots still clinging to the rocks above, and their heads on the beach below, offered an instructive example to thousands, who, by presuming on as slight foundations, have no right to expect aught but the same fate. . . . In the afternoon, two large canoes came round the East Point; and, as they turned it, all joined in a war-song, which they rattled off with spirit quite handsomely. Upon their approach, we found that they each contained a petty chief, and about nine young men. The chiefs, who were both good-looking men, and carried themselves with great dignity, sat upon a high box in the middle of the canoes. They had beards about two inches long, with a considerable pair of whiskers; and wore very long hair, which, by what we could understand, was taken from the heads of their enemies killed in battle. The tops of their heads were powdered with small geese-down; and a long red and yellow feather, painted, which rose over all, completed the head-dress. In their ears they wore a kind of shell of pearl, which is of some value here, and, when the coast was first visited, was esteemed of very great. Over their shoulders they wore a cloth of their own manufacture, about a fathom square, made out of the wool of their mountain sheep: round the edges they work in sea-otter's fur; and, on the whole, it makes a very handsome appearance. What they wore on their legs I could not say, as they did not condescend to rise from their seats, but, after purchasing three or four muskets, left us, and went on shore. All the young men in the canoes had their faces daubed with red and black, and their heads powdered with red ochre and geese-down. This, though no doubt only what is conformable to their ideas of beauty, yet made them look not far unlike Milton's description of Death, — 'Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell.'"

The following is an account of a visit to an Indian habitation: —

"Alsatree now took me by the hand, and led me towards the house. In entering it, you may well imagine my astonishment, when, instead of six or eight people, as I expected, I beheld about forty

people — men, women, and children — seated around an enormous fire, which was made in the middle of the house. Some were employed in making fish-hooks for halibut; some, wooden bowls. The women were busy broiling and boiling halibut; the children, waiting upon the old folks; and several of the females, who were not slaves, making wooden lips. At my entrance, labor stood suspended; and they looked at me with about as much astonishment as Hamlet, when he first saw his father's ghost."

It appears that affection and sentiment are not exclusively confined, as seems sometimes to be supposed, to what we call the civilized heart. Speaking of the death of Captain Newbury, who had acquired the confidence and friendship of the Indians by his kindness and justice, a chief said: —

"Newbury — a good man! He is now gone to a good country, and I shall not see him again: but I have his chest at my house in which he kept his clothes; and, when I look at it, I think of him.

. . . . .

"Mr. Bumstead and myself went on shore on the beach, and took a walk through their huts. There were about fourteen, with eleven or twelve persons around each; and they did not look unlike what our imagination pictures to us of bands of robbers seated around their fires in some dark forest, where they waylay the unwary traveller. They, however, so far from molesting, treated us with the greatest civility; and, as we passed each tent, would insist upon our sitting down with them. But, after having seen those we knew, and shaken hands with all, we returned immediately on board. We saw Shanakate, the Great Eater; and though supperless, yet *he* appeared happy, surrounded by his children, whose faces, newly varnished with train oil and red ochre, shone by the light of the fire like the body of a chaise newly painted, and verified Goldsmith's description of a port of rural felicity, where the fond father

> 'Smiles at his cheerful fire, and round surveys
> His children's looks, that brighten with the blaze.'"

There are several notices of cases where chiefs had been entrapped on board of vessels, and confined in irons until

compelled to regain their freedom by heavy ransoms. The following is one of them: —

"He [one of the chiefs], however, would not venture himself on board of us; having been several times made prisoner by different vessels, and obliged to ransom himself by giving up the greatest part of his skins. This was the way some people, not worthy of the name of men (and who, I thank Heaven, cannot call themselves Americans), took to make their fortunes. C——, C——, and Alsatree, the principal chiefs on the coast, they trepanned on board their ships; and, having seized and laid some of them in irons, forced them, contrary to every principle of honor or humanity, to deliver up their skins before they would give them their liberty."

From the earlier entries in the "Journal," it appears, that, when he arrived upon the Coast, the author was imbued with all the prejudices against the Indians, which, at that period, prevailed so universally among his countrymen, and the sources of which he attempts in the third Lecture to explain. This circumstance invests his subsequent opinions, formed after long and familiar personal acquaintance with them, and very peculiar opportunities for careful and extensive observation, with a peculiar interest and truthfulness. And so keenly did he always feel and express himself upon the subject, that probably no thought would have cheered his dying hour more gratefully, than that he should be instrumental in leaving on record a testimonial in their behalf.

The three "Lectures" are particularly valuable for their development of the habits of life and the moral and intellectual characters of those Indian tribes by one who lived with them on terms of familiar and confiding friendship, and as constituting the most important and trustworthy record, if not the only one, of their later, soon to become their final, history. Nor are they less strikingly illustrative of the noble traits of character of their author in the details of his intercourse with the Indians, and of the efforts which he ever loved to make, in

public and in private, to vindicate them from the obloquy and hatred of which they have been too generally and thoughtlessly the objects.

His opportunities were such as particularly qualified him for this undertaking, since his first visit to the Coast was made in 1799, about twenty years after Cook's discovery of Nootka Sound, and while the generation was still living that "witnessed the arrival of the first white man among them; and many of the very individuals who were prominent at the time of Cook's visit were still in the prime of life, and became personally known to him." He passed a number of years among them at the time when they were first becoming known to the civilized world, and were in a state approximating to that in which the discoverers of the northern portion of our continent found the aboriginal inhabitants; and he continued to carry on the trade with them, personally or by agents, until it ceased to be valuable,—witnessing its growth, maximum, decrease, and final abandonment by the citizens of the United States.

The "Lectures" are written in a clear, simple, and expressive style, indicating familiarity with English literature, and at times exhibiting the truest eloquence in sentiment and description.

Although requested for the press by the appreciative audience to which they were originally addressed, and afterwards by others, the author uniformly declined to publish them, from distrust, as is understood, of their value. They are, however, well worthy of being perpetuated, as interesting and authentic memorials of a very important though temporary department of commercial enterprise, and of the manners and characters of a people now rapidly becoming extinct; and also as a vindication of the natives from the unmerited reproaches heaped upon them by the corrupters, oppressors, and murderers of their race.

His feelings upon this subject are thus emphatically expressed at the commencement of the first Lecture:—

"These early visits gave me the opportunity, too, of observing changes in the habits and manners of the Indians, effected by intercourse with a more civilized race; and, I regret to add, brought to my knowledge the injustice, violence, and bloodshed which have marked the progress of this intercourse from first to last. I cannot expect that others will feel the same degree of interest in these reminiscences that I feel; but I have thought that they might engage your attention for a while, and perhaps awaken sympathy for the remnant of a race fast disappearing from the earth, — victims of injustice, cruelty, and oppression, and of a policy that seems to recognize *power* as the sole standard of *right*."

Again, near the close:—

"The numerous tragical occurrences on the Coast show the personal hazards incurred by those engaged in the trade, and perhaps warrant the remark of Mr. Greenhow, in his valuable memoir upon Oregon, prepared by order of Congress. Speaking of the American trade upon the Coast, he says: 'The persons engaged in this trade were constantly exposed to the most dreadful hardships and dangers, against which nothing but extraordinary courage and skill on their part could have enabled them to struggle successfully. More than one American ship has been seized, and all on board massacred, by the natives of the Pacific coasts; and seldom, indeed, did a vessel from the United States complete her voyage in that ocean, without losing some part of her crew by the treachery of those with whom they were dealing.' Mr. Greenhow and myself agree, in the main, as to the facts, but are at issue as to the cause. He ascribes it to the treachery and ferocity of the Indians; I, with better opportunities for investigating and ascertaining the truth, find the cause in the lawless and brutal violence of white men: and it would be easy to show that these fatal disasters might have been averted by a different treatment of the natives, and by prudence and proper precaution on the part of their civilized visitors."

The second Lecture is more particularly devoted to the character, manners, and domestic habits of the Indians. The following description will probably surprise many who have been accustomed to look upon them as little better than beasts of the field; and, rightly considered, might do some-

thing towards improving and elevating the domestic relations of parent and child, as generally acted upon even in highly civilized Christian communities: —

"The Indians of whom I speak are piscatory in their pursuits; reside upon the borders of the sea, from which they draw their principal subsistence; and use altogether the canoe, both for this purpose and for transporting themselves and families from place to place. Their migrations are limited to a change of residence from one permanent village to another at different seasons of the year, following the periodical movements of the several species of fish upon which they mainly depend for food; and to trading excursions, which are often made, sometimes to distant points, visiting tribes residing several hundred miles from their own village. Upon these occasions they are usually accompanied by their women and children, who are adroit and skilful in the management of canoes, and, in taking and curing fish, are as efficient as the men themselves. These circumstances, exercising a material influence upon their domestic and social character, have, in a degree, softened the naturally stern nature of these Indians, and rendered them less sanguinary than the tribes in the interior. War, however, is not unfrequent; and bravery and skill in conducting it are qualities commanding as high admiration and respect as among the most warlike people: and the Indian upon the borders of the Pacific accords to an accomplished and successful destroyer of his fellow-men the same pre-eminence that is conceded to him by the most civilized nations. *In their domestic relations, they manifest as much tenderness and affection as can be found in any state of society.* The constant presence of their women gives to them a proper influence; and their position, though subordinate in some respects, is, upon the whole, as favorable as that occupied by their sex in civilized life, — nominal submission, actual control. *Children are uniformly treated with tenderness and indulgence, seldom punished, and never struck.*

"The Indian doctrine is, that it may be necessary to beat dogs, but not to strike a child. The children, on their part, seem intuitively respectful and submissive to their seniors. I do not recollect to have seen punishment inflicted upon a child but in a single instance, and then not very severely. A woman, with a family of children, was alongside of the ship in her canoe, making some purchases; and, among other articles, she obtained a quantity of molasses, which was

put into a large tub in her canoe. A little naked urchin, two or three years old, half covered with oil and dirt, made repeated attempts to get at the molasses, much to the mother's annoyance. At length, in a great pet, she caught the child by the arms, and plunged it into the tub, leaving it seated in the viscid substance up to its chin. The child bore the punishment with as much stoicism, and employed himself in the same manner, as a young Yankee would have done.

"The only occasion upon which blows are inflicted is in the practice of a singular custom among them. At times during the winter, in a cold, frosty morning, all the boys of a village, from five to ten years old, assemble upon a sandy beach in a state of nudity; and, each having furnished himself with a bunch of rods, they wade into the water up to their armpits: and then commences an uproarious scene; each one using his rods with his whole strength in thrashing every one who comes within his reach, always giving a preference to those of his own size. This continues for some time; when, at a given signal, a general plunge and a short swim finishes the frolic, and they resume their garments and their gravity. The Indians say that this practice hardens the bodies of the little fellows, and the flagellation they get loosens their skins, and thus promotes their growth."

These untaught savages do not appear to have attained to the scientific discovery in favor of the flagellation of children, — that it is salutary as a counter-irritant, in order to relieve irritation within; but they seem to have found out what may be more valuable, namely, the means of preventing it. It probably had never occurred to them as a convenient safety-valve for letting off the impatience, spleen, or ill-temper of the parent.

A conversation with a chief concerning the ornaments with which the Indians are accustomed to adorn themselves is alike amusing and suggestive: —

"Their fancy for many articles could be traced to a desire to imitate their somewhat more polished visitors; and the absurdity, if any there was, lay in the manner in which they used them. When attacked upon this point, they would dryly refer to some of our usages as equally absurd with their own. Talking one day upon such

matters with Altadsee, a sarcastic old chief of the Hanslong tribe, I ridiculed the practice of covering their own and their children's garments with rows of brass and gilt buttons, and loading them with old keys, to be kept bright at a great expense of labor. 'Why,' said he, 'the white men wear buttons.' — 'True,' I replied; 'but they are useful to us: the fashion of our garments requires buttons to secure them.' — 'Ah!' said he, 'perhaps it is so; but I could never discover the usefulness of half a dozen buttons upon your coat-tails: and, as for the waste of labor in scouring old keys, you are right; it is very foolish, and almost as ridiculous as the fashion, which I am told prevails in your country, of placing brass balls upon iron fences in front of your houses, to be polished every day, and tarnished every night. Truly,' he added, 'Eijets hardi and Hanslong hardi cootnanous coonnug' ('White people and Hanslong people are equally foolish')."

Their dwellings, furniture, and household ornaments are thus described: —

"Their dwellings are of a more permanent character than those of the Indians in the interior. In the winter villages, some of the houses are quite large, covered with boards, and probably as comfortable as the houses in London and Paris are represented to have been five centuries ago. I have seen houses upon the southern part of the Coast more than one hundred feet in length, and forty in breadth; and Jewett, who was two years a prisoner among them, describes Maquinna's house at Nootka as a hundred and fifty feet long. In articles of furniture, either for use or ornament, they are quite deficient; and their mode of living is so simple, that little is required. The only ornamental articles I recollect to have seen in their houses were copper tea-kettles. These we imported from Holland, and carried to the Coast in large quantities. It would have been almost sacrilege among the Indians to have degraded this beautiful piece of furniture, as they esteemed it, to culinary uses. It was placed in an elevated and conspicious position in the house, kept perfectly bright, and regarded with as much solicitude and care as I have elsewhere seen bestowed upon a tawdry French vase, filled with showy artificial flowers, and carefully covered with a glass case."

Of their usual demeanor, he says: —

"The Indians are not a joyous race, and have few amusements. The only public ones are singing and dancing, and these not in a style

calculated to inspire or indulge mirth. The women take no active part in the dance; but their pleasant voices are often heard in song, sometimes with great sweetness and pathos. Their musical instruments are a hollow cylinder, used as a drum, and rattles of various sorts; but they are only used to mark time, and stimulate the dancers, who take great pains to prepare themselves for the occasion, and only appear in full dress. When engaged in the war-dance, they cover the head with scalps taken from their enemies, the hair filled with the down of sea-fowl or the eagle. Their mode of scalping adapts it to this purpose; for they take off the whole skin of the head, preserving it entire, with the hair attached. I cannot commend their grace in the dance; but their spirit is worthy of imitation. They engage in it with some life and animation: at least it was easy to discover whether the dancers were awake or asleep,—a fact not readily ascertained in modern days in more polished communities."

After commenting upon the imperfect, prejudiced, and partial descriptions of Indian character generally to be found in books and in the stories of travellers, Mr. Sturgis thus announces the result of his own observation and study of it:—

"My own opportunities were favorable for observing and estimating Indian character; but, even with a close and long-continued intimacy under circumstances that tended to dispel the reserve that an Indian maintains in his intercourse with strangers, I found it scarcely possible to comprehend, much less to describe him, or to understand his motive for much that he does. His character is made up of incongruous and seemingly conflicting elements. The noblest impulses and best feelings of man's nature are in him closely allied to brutal propensities; and the bright and dark hues are so mixed and blended, that at times they are scarcely distinguishable, and seem lost in one another. He is, even to those who have most carefully studied him, a mysterious being, and must remain so; for we cannot fully comprehend his impulses and motives: and doubtless Mr. Schoolcraft is correct in remarking, as he does, that 'the civilized man is no less a mysterious and unaccountable being to an Indian, because his springs of action are alike unintelligible to him.' But, while it may not be possible to comprehend all the anomalies of Indian character, enough may be discovered and understood to entitle him to much higher consideration than he usually enjoys. Few have

the opportunity to make a just estimate of this race. Those who form an opinion of them from the wretched, degraded remnants of the tribes who formerly occupied New England, such as the Penobscots and others, or from delegations from more distant tribes that are occasionally paraded about and exhibited, like wild animals, as a show, will do the Indian great injustice, and have a very erroneous impression. To judge the Indian fairly, he must be seen, as I have seen him, in his native forest, before he becomes contaminated by intercourse with civilized men; for, to our reproach be it spoken, contamination and degradation invariably and speedily follow such intercourse.

"In this original state, while he retains his independence, and preserves self-respect, he is proud even of existence; and it is not a mere poetical fiction in the writer who says, that 'the Indian in his primitive state stands erect, his foot firmly planted upon his mother earth, surveys the wide expanse of Nature, and, with conscious superiority, strikes his breast, and exclaims exultingly, "I am a man"!' I have at times perceived the workings of strong and lofty feelings in the Indian's bosom, that could not be more truly or happily expressed. Mr. Catlin, with all his frippery, has given many interesting facts respecting remote Indians, who, at the time of his visit, were little changed by the intrusion of civilization; and I doubt not his statements may be relied on, with some little allowance for his evident partiality for the red man. His conclusion, after a long residence among them, is, in his own words, that 'the North-American Indian, in his primitive state, is a high-minded, honorable, hospitable being'; and in another passage he asserts, that 'the North-American Indian, in his native state, is an honest, hospitable, faithful, brave, warlike, cruel, revengeful, relentless, yet honorable, contemplative, and religious being.' My own experience does not lead me to dissent from this opinion. It may sound strangely to hear the Indian spoken of as a religious being; but, if a constant reference in all that he does to the supposed will of his Creator constitutes a religious being, the North-American Indian is eminently one. Mr. Schoolcraft, speaking of the great tribes of the Far West, says, 'It would surprise any person to become acquainted with the variety and extent to which an Indian is influenced by his religious views and superstitions: he takes no important step without reference to them; they are his guiding motives in peace and in war; he follows the chase under their influence, and his very amusements take their tincture from them.'

"To the Indian, much that we do seems ridiculous and absurd; and some of the practices of civilized life are as revolting to his feelings as their most barbarous usages are to ours. I have often been struck with the comments of sensible Indians upon what they had noticed or learned respecting our customs, particularly by those of Keow, the principal chief of Caiganee, a place much frequented by trading-vessels. Keow was, upon the whole, the most intelligent Indian I met with. He was a shrewd observer, of quiet perception, with a comprehensive and discriminating mind, and insatiable curiosity. He would occasionally pass several days at a time on board my ship; and I have often sat up half the night with him, answering questions, and listening to his remarks. I have no doubt that our conversation, first and last, would fill several folio volumes, even in the sight-destroying type of modern pamphlet-printing. His comments on some features of our social system, and upon the discrepancies and inconsistencies in our professions and practice as Christians, particularly in relation to war, duelling, capital punishment for depredations upon property, and other less important matters, were pertinent and forcible, and by no means flattering to us, or calculated to nourish our self-conceit."

This Lecture closes with a thrilling description of an Indian execution; which, but for its length, should be inserted here, as a specimen of the rare powers of Mr. Sturgis as a writer; and is omitted only in the confident belief that the whole course of Lectures will soon be given to the public, as hereafter suggested.

The third Lecture is devoted to the consideration of the treatment of the Indians of the North-west Coast at the hands of the white man, "showing that he was the aggressor; and vindicating the red men from the charge that has often been brought against them, of wanton cruelty and unprovoked barbarity." Although evidently written under the influence of strong feelings of commiseration for the wrongs inflicted upon this unhappy race, such as a generous and lofty nature could not but entertain in contemplating such a subject, the statements made from his personal knowledge, and the historical evidence adduced, seem fully to sustain his conclusion.

It closes with the following beautiful and touching declaration, in which his descendants may hold his name embalmed in precious remembrance, as that of a truly great and noble man. No one ever possessed a larger power for evil or for good, with perfect impunity in its exercise, than William Sturgis possessed on the North-west Coast; and no man ever exercised it with profounder humanity, more inflexible justice, a more conscientious sense of responsibility, and greater kindness, than he displayed towards these uncivilized, helpless, and outraged inhabitants of the wilderness.

"When I call up the past, and look back upon the trials and dangers of my early pursuits, it is with feelings that I should vainly attempt to describe. I have cause for gratitude to a higher Power, not only for escape from danger, but for being spared all participation in the deadly conflicts and murderous scenes which at times surrounded me. I may well be grateful that no blood of the red man ever stained my hands; that no shades of murdered or slaughtered Indians disturb my repose; and the reflection, that neither myself nor any one under my command ever did or suffered violence or outrage during years of intercourse with those reputed the most savage tribes, gives me a satisfaction, in exchange for which wealth and honors would be as dust in the balance."

These Lectures were received with great favor by the audiences before which they were delivered, and they added to the general respect previously entertained for the elevated character of the author, as well as to his literary reputation.

The first effort of Mr. Sturgis as an author, in print, was in the pamphlet upon the Oregon Question, before alluded to.

In the year 1821–22, the people of the United States were startled by claims suddenly and unexpectedly made by the Russian Government to the exclusive possession of the most valuable portions of the North-west Coast, amounting virtually to the right of exclusive possession of the whole American continent north of the 51° of latitude, and of holding the

Pacific Ocean as a close sea to that extent, although about four thousand miles across.

The Emperor had issued a ukase to this effect, which had been communicated by the Russian minister, the Chevalier de Poletica, to our Government. By it, all foreign vessels coming within one hundred miles of the shores of the territories so claimed were declared subject to confiscation and forfeiture, with the cargoes on board.

To Mr. Adams's inquiry for an explanation "of the grounds of right, upon principles generally recognized by the laws and usages of nations, which could warrant the claims and regulations contained in the edict," M. de Poletica declared himself happy to fulfil the task; and he undertook in an official communication to maintain them upon three bases, — the titles of first discovery, of first occupation, and of peaceable and uncontested possession for more than half a century. These propositions he undertook to establish by a variety of historical references and statements, which certainly, to one not otherwise informed, made out a very plausible, if not a very strong case.

Such an event could not fail to excite the deepest interest among those who were engaged in the trade on the Coast, then at its height, and particularly in the mind of Mr. Sturgis, who was thoroughly master of the subject by means of his personal exploration of the most important portions of the territory included in the ukase, and of the study he had made of its history, both by inquiry of the natives, and in the published Voyages of the discoverers and adventurers in those regions. The importance of the trade at that time was so great, and the indignity to the United States which would be involved in a summary enforcement of the threat was so manifest, that war between the two countries seemed inevitable, unless the justice of these claims could be demonstrated, or the assertion of them should be abandoned.

Mr. Sturgis immediately prepared, and published in the

"North-American Review," a reply to them and to the several arguments adduced by the Russian minister, which, it is believed, constitutes a refutation as annihilating as any to be found in the records of political discussion. His familiarity with all the essential facts and elements of the case from the earliest known period, his admirable array of the argument, and the clear and vigorous style in which it was presented, leave nothing to be desired. It gave the *coup de grace* to the most material portions of the claim, and secured for the author an extensive reputation for being among the ablest public writers, as he had long been among the first of the eminent merchants, of his country.

In the subsequent negotiation with Russia upon the subject, she abandoned the chief of these vast pretensions; the United States conceding to her the exclusive right of settlement within ten leagues of the sea north of latitude 54° 40′, — that being the southern limit of the Russian possessions in America thus extended.

The estimation in which this contribution to the "Review" was held may be seen in the following remark concerning it, in a note from the Hon. Edward Everett, dated 11th October, 1827: "This consideration naturally leads me to turn my thoughts to those gentlemen whose assistance I formerly enjoyed; and, after the tributes which have been publicly paid to your article on the North-west Coast, you cannot call it flattery, if I say, that to no one piece was the 'North-American Review' (under my editorship) so much indebted as to that with which you favored me."

The next subject upon which Mr. Sturgis came before the public, with his name, was the sad tragedy on board of the United-States brig-of-war "Somers," under Commander Mackenzie, in the sudden execution of one of her officers and two seamen, without previous trial, on the charge of an attempt to excite a mutiny. It took place in the summer of 1843; and no event short of the immediate danger of

a foreign war probably ever excited the people of the United States more profoundly.

It became the subject of universal animated discussion in conversation, and of numerous heated articles in the gazettes and periodicals of the day. A great majority of them were in favor of Commander Mackenzie; not only fully sustaining him, but attributing to him extravagant praise for heroic conduct in the execution of those unhappy men. Among such articles, the most conspicuous was one in the "North-American Review," which was written by a gentleman of the legal profession, and of eminent literary reputation; and which, as was remarked in the leading paper of the day, would "pass down to future inquirers as the contemporary expression of opinion of the ablest and most esteemed of the critical journals of the country."

Indeed, so general at first was the belief of the justifiable nature of the execution as a matter of irresistible necessity (from the impulsive conviction that such an awful transaction could not by possibility have otherwise taken place), that comparatively very few were found who thought otherwise, or ventured to express such thoughts if they entertained them. Mr. Sturgis, however, was one of the few who did entertain them; and it is needless to add, that he therefore fearlessly expressed them.

After the termination of the trial of the commander, for the alleged murder of these men, by a naval court-martial, in which, by a majority of three fourths of the members, the charges were "found not to be proven," and after the publication of the evidence and the finding of the Court, and of the article alluded to in the "North-American Review," Mr. Sturgis published, as we have before stated, under his signature, two articles, headed "The Somers Mutiny," and "The Somers Mutiny, No. 2"; which may be found in the "Semiweekly Courier" of August 7, 1843.

Great as was the confidence which his nautical experience,

cool judgment, and known honesty and independence of thought, could not but extensively inspire, still no one could have been prepared for the critical ability, literary skill, legal acumen, and eloquence, exhibited in these papers.

The first was occupied, in part, by a consideration of the existence and probable causes of the wide-spread popular opinion in favor of Commander Mackenzie, but was mainly devoted to a masterly, vigorous, and comprehensive reply to the article in the "North-American Review." The second contained a careful analysis and most able discussion of the evidence, in which he maintained, "that the occurrences on board the 'Somers,' after the arrest of Spencer, *ought not to have induced any cool, judicious commander, exercising an ordinary degree of judgment and discretion, to have thought it necessary to put Spencer, Cromwell, and Small to death for the safety of the 'Somers' and the security of the officers and crew;*" and it closed in terms of unequivocal and very strong condemnation of Commander Mackenzie, "not only for what took place on board the 'Somers,' but likewise for his persevering efforts, in his official narrative, on his trial, and in his published defence, to blast the reputation of the living, and render odious the memory of the dead."

The following pathetic appeal may take rank with the best specimens of modern eloquence: —

"It might have been thought necessary, for the vindication of Commander Mackenzie upon his trial, that all the offences alleged to have been committed by young Spencer on board the 'Somers' should be fully set forth. But what possible good can now result from gathering and recording every doubtful anecdote of his boyish life? The reviewer does not give his authority for the stories he relates. They may or may not be true. But, whether true or false, they are, in my opinion, out of place upon the pages of the 'North-American Review.' Let the dead rest. No deed of violence had been done by the accused. The only charge against him is the *intention* to commit a crime. And, were the charge true, surely a horrid death, under the most aggravating circumstances, suddenly announced to him, with

notice that ten minutes would be allowed him for preparation, — ten minutes! — in that fearful hour, for a child to pour forth to his parents the agony of his soul; to express contrition; to explain all that might palliate his offences; to entreat their forgiveness, and to invoke, as he did invoke, blessings on their heads! — ten minutes for life's closing scene, — to make his peace on earth, and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of God! — surely, surely, such a death might expiate crime actually committed: let it atone for the *intention* only to commit one, and let the dead rest. Spare the living too. If the political eminence of the father must place him beyond the pale of humanity, and leave him exposed to these attacks, be tender with the mother; respect her grief. She now finds consolation for her agonized feelings in the firm belief that her son died innocent. Is it generous, is it just, needlessly to shake her belief, take from her this consolation, and add a keener pang to the anguish of a mother's heart? Sure I am, that only the want of due consideration could have led the amiable and high-minded writer of the Review to follow in the track of thoughtless newspaper-scribblers or venomous party politicians, and by giving currency to idle gossip, or something worse, heap obloquy upon the memory of the defenceless dead, and wound afresh the lacerated and quivering feelings of the living."

These papers produced a great change in public sentiment throughout this part of the country, the minds of many having been previously uninformed of the precise facts, and of the course of reasoning relied upon in justification of Commander Mackenzie, most of which, indeed, could be fully known only after the publication of the trial.

They should be preserved in some permanent form, not merely as specimens of the masterly ability and independence of the writer, but as the proper counterpart of the celebrated article referred to, that it may not "pass down to future inquirers as the [*only*] contemporary expression" of the public opinion of the day; the subject being, as Mr. Sturgis in his introduction says, one which "affects in no slight degree the reputation of the navy, the character of the country, the sacred cause of justice, and the holy rights of humanity."

But a still more important and signal service was rendered to his country by Mr. Sturgis, upon the breaking-out of the controversy between England and the United States, in the year 1844, concerning the Oregon Territory; which controversy the political partisans on both sides of the water, in equal utter ignorance of the position and extent of the country and of its history, and of the various rights of other nations upon its coasts, were ready to inflame into open war.

Here, again, his personal familiarity with the topography of the Coast, with the course of trade on its various rivers, and with the extent to which it had been resorted to and occupied by foreign nations, and particularly by Spain, England, and the United States, qualified him in a very peculiar degree, if not exclusively, as far as an individual could be qualified, for the formation of an impartial judgment, and for enlightening others upon the subject; and he proved himself as well adapted to the task intellectually and morally, as he was by this peculiar knowledge.

He prepared an elaborate treatise upon the subject, which he afterwards delivered as a Lecture before the Association above mentioned, in January, 1845, the substance of which was soon afterwards printed as a pamphlet.

The matter was one of great perplexity and seeming confusion, owing to the miscellaneous claims, made by Russia, England, Spain, and the United States, of prior discoveries, and of the use and occupation of various portions of this vast wilderness,—bounded on the east by the Rocky Mountains, on the west by the Pacific Ocean, with its numerous indentations, bays, sounds, inlets, capes, and islands, and extending from the forty-second degree of north latitude to that of 54° 40′;—and constituting an area of seven hundred and sixty miles in length from north to south, and of about five hundred from east to west, with large rivers extending far into and draining the interior.

No one, remembering the agitation of this question at that time, can be forgetful of the insensate cry of "Fifty-four forty, or fight!" which was so flippantly and recklessly uttered by the party politicians of the day, in equal ignorance and disregard of the truth and the right of the case; or can forget the deep apprehension of a closely impending war, felt by the friends of peace on both sides of the Atlantic.

In this treatise, Mr. Sturgis, after an exhausting exhibition of the material facts of the case, and a setting-forth of the respective claims and pretensions of the parties interested with great clearness and judicial impartiality, arrived at the following result: —

> "Some of the objections made by the British commissioners to our claims to the *exclusive* possession of the whole territory cannot be easily and satisfactorily answered; and some of their objections are unfounded or frivolous, — the mere skirmishing of diplomacy, and unworthy of high-minded diplomatists: but it must, I think, be evident, to any one who looks carefully into the whole matter, that *some* of the pretensions of each party are, to say the least, plausible; and that, according to the rules established among civilized nations in similar cases, each has some rights, which should be adjusted and settled by compromise and mutual concession."

He then entered upon a discussion of the various interests which each party might be supposed to have in the possession of these territories, and concluded by recommending the adoption of the line substantially established by the subsequent treaty, but defined it in much more precise and clear terms, which, if they had been copied, would have prevented the possibility of misapprehension, and have saved the two countries from the unhappy San-Juan controversy, which still rankles as a thorn to disturb their friendly relations.

The line, as described in the treaty, is in these words: "From the point on the forty-ninth parallel of north latitude, where the boundary laid down in existing treaties and conventions between the United States and Great Britain terminates, the

line of boundary between the territory of the United States and those of her Britannic Majesty shall be continued westward along the forty-ninth parallel of north latitude to the middle of the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver's Island, and thence southerly through the middle of said channel and Fuca's Straits to the Pacific Ocean."

The line proposed by Mr. Sturgis was as follows: "A continuation of the parallel of forty-nine degrees across the Rocky Mountains to tide-water, say to the middle of the Gulf of Georgia; thence by the *northernmost navigable passage* (not north of forty-nine degrees) *to the Straits of Juan de Fuca*, and down the middle of these straits to the Pacific Ocean; the navigation of the Gulf of Georgia and the Straits of Juan de Fuca to be for ever free to both parties; *all the islands and other territory lying south and east of this line* to belong to the United States, and all north and west to Great Britain."

It will be perceived that the insertion of the words here Italicized would have rendered the definition of the navigable passage intended, and of the territories intended to be separated by it, too plain to admit of controversy.

This pamphlet was not only widely circulated among the ministers and statesmen at Washington, but also among those in England, where it met with almost universal approbation for its intelligence and candor.

The writer of this Memoir feels perfectly justified, by the evidence in his possession, in asserting that the settlement of this dangerous controversy, by the line adopted, was mainly, if not entirely, owing to this effort of Mr. Sturgis, and the use made of it by the friends of peace in both countries.

It must be a rare fortune for any private individual, holding no official station, and in no immediate connection with the statesmen conducting the foreign relations of his country, to be thus instrumental in the final solution of two great national controversies, which, but for his efforts, might have terminated in disastrous wars.

Both of these adjustments are monuments of his intellectual ability and literary accomplishments, and call for a grateful national remembrance; but that of the Oregon Question evinces the breadth of view also, and the rare magnanimity, which enabled him justly to appreciate and honestly to vindicate the claims of the adversary of his country, while firmly maintaining hers.

To these qualities, signally manifested in this pamphlet, may probably be attributed, in a great measure, its success in moderating the views of his own countrymen, and winning the confidence of the English rulers and people.

The three "Lectures" upon the trade of the North-west Coast and the characters and manners of the Indian tribes, the article in the "North-American Review" upon the claims of the Russian Government to that region of the American continent, and this discussion of the question in controversy between Great Britain and the United States concerning the Oregon Territory, are the most extensive, authentic, and valuable contributions to the earlier history of that part of the world which have hitherto been made, and probably leave very little for future gleaners. It is to be hoped that they will be embodied in a volume for permanent preservation, as they would constitute one without which no collection of books upon the subject of America, and no historical library, could be accounted complete; and to them, for the reasons above suggested, should be added the papers on the "Somers Mutiny."

Such is the brief, simple narrative of the principal events in the life of this extraordinary man. They sufficiently, perhaps, proclaim the intellectual strength and moral elevation which were the most conspicuous features of his character. His whole nurture, indeed, seemed fitted for the cultivation of the sterner virtues almost exclusively. His childhood and early boyhood passed upon a little sterile farm, the labors of which devolved principally upon him, with no room for mental expansion beyond the occasional privileges

of a village school; his youth and early manhood spent on shipboard, in the rough companionship of the forecastle and the steerage, or in the lonely watches of despotic authority upon the quarter-deck, — breasting the tempests of the open sea, or the more harassing perils of coastwise navigation upon wild and inhospitable shores; his introduction to business life in traffic with the savage inhabitants of the Coast; and his almost total seclusion, in most of the forming period of life, from the opportunities of mental and spiritual culture, and the influences of a refined civilization, — might well have seemed calculated for the growth only of the heroic courage, indomitable energy, self-reliance, and ability to command, by which he was among all men pre-eminently distinguished. To the general observer, his quickness of perception, clearness of judgment, stern love of justice, fearless independence, promptitude of decision, and dauntless resolution, — constituting a character of rare strength, — might often overshadow its gentler traits, and sometimes might obscure these even from his own consciousness. But there was a native urbanity, a depth of affection, a readiness of sympathy, a generosity, a refined nobleness of nature, manifest to those whom he loved, or to whom friendship or any just claim gave opportunity for the exercise of them; and these were exhibited no less in his intercourse with the wild Indians upon the far-off savage coast, than at the domestic hearth or in the social circles of civilized life. And to these were added a love of letters, a ready wit, a sense of honor, and an appreciation of the courtesies and amenities of cultivated life, which might seem hard to be accounted for under such rough training, except in the natural structure of his mind and heart, — as steel of the hardest temper takes the finest polish. No one, who knew him, ever doubted, that at all times and under any circumstances, he would "dare do all that may become a man"; and no one probably ever lived more uniformly faithful than he to the conviction, that "who dares do more is none."

In turning to contemplate the character of Mr. Sturgis in private life, we might naturally anticipate some diversity of opinion; as it is not possible for a man of faculties so various and acute, and of such abounding energy, to produce on all minds similar and harmonious impressions. His rapidity of decision, strength of will, and entire independence in the expression of his convictions, would, of necessity, at times awaken a spirit of opposition, and sometimes, perhaps, excite irritation; although in his later days certainly, and throughout his life so far as opportunity for observation on the part of the writer of this Memoir extended, his convictions were always uttered with an urbanity, and a graceful disclaimer of any want of deference to those of others who might differ from him, that entirely disarmed the hearers of any suspicion of arrogance or overweening confidence on his part. His early life passed in necessarily entire reliance upon his own resources and judgment in the most exciting, perilous, and responsible duties, could not but have imbued him with some corresponding degree of self-confidence, and may occasionally have rendered him less accessible to conviction in matters of preconceived opinion, than persons of inferior force of character. But it would be a great injustice to his memory, for one familiarly versed in his habits of conversation and discussion, whether upon matters of business, or of speculation only, not to bear witness to the courtesy and candor with which his side of the question was uniformly maintained, and to his readiness to yield to the stronger reason; while instances will recur to the minds of his friends, in which, although not at first convinced, he would afterwards seek to make known a change of opinion consequent upon further reflection.

It may be, that many accounted him stern, who saw him only occasionally, or when he was called upon to express opinions concerning the management of public or private affairs, or the policy that had been or should be pursued concerning them.

He certainly was stern in his hatred and denunciation of all falsehood, equivocation, and pretence, under any and all circumstances; and he had, perhaps, less indulgence or consideration than most men for the weakness by which so many are led into conduct and situations wanting in nothing of fraud and criminality but the originating will. Perhaps, too, he had less consideration for the imbecility of purpose, by reason of which multitudes so often, more or less voluntarily, become dependent upon charity or pecuniary aid. These were natural consequences of his own peculiar habit of self-reliance, and the hard discipline of self-denying economy, severe labor, and unremitting effort, by which he had surmounted the difficulties of early life while dependent solely upon his own exertions, and had without help attained to the highest objects of his aspiration. Further: his own reflection and observation had satisfied him, that the promiscuous giving of alms was productive of far more evil than good; and to yield to importunity in begging would have been in him a weakness instead of a virtue.

He rarely, therefore, gave to street mendicants, or in response to the numerous calls made by individuals for pecuniary aid. And this has led to the belief, more or less extensive, that he was wanting in liberality. But, without claiming for him a pre-eminent spirit of philanthropy, or any unusual degree of impulsive generosity, justice now demands a reference to munificent gifts made by him, which, in his lifetime, he took studious pains to conceal.

A short time before his death, he gave to the Observatory in Cambridge the sum of ten thousand dollars, having before made to it several valuable donations. Upon application to become one of several to contribute for the payment of the balance of the debt of this Society, incurred in the purchase of its Hall, he promptly gave the whole sum required. Many instances might be adduced in which he gave large amounts for public charities and for private relief; usually, how-

ever, accompanied with strict injunctions of secrecy. A singular illustration of the misconception that may prevail upon such a subject occurred soon after his decease. A gentleman, who supposed himself well acquainted with Mr. Sturgis, in speaking of him to another friend, remarked, that it was to be regretted that "he was so close, and always so unwilling to give." To which the person addressed replied: "I do not know how that may be in comparing him with others; but I do know, that, within a short space of time, he has given ten thousand dollars to one institution and two sums of one thousand dollars each to two other charitable purposes; and that he recently contributed five hundred dollars for raising one of our regiments." The gentleman felt reproved, but made no reply. He soon afterwards returned to apologize to the living and the dead for his remark; saying, "Since I left you, I have heard of two other recent instances of like liberal, but secret, donations." It is known to a few only, that he appropriated an ample fund of twenty thousand dollars for a public benefaction, to which an allusion only can now be made. This is held by trustees selected by himself to effect his object; which will be an enduring monument not only of generosity, but of the most considerate wisdom and humanity. Few men probably, of equally extensive munificence, take equal pains that the left hand shall not know what the right hand is doing.

Nor was this liberality confined to the relief of suffering, and the promotion of science and art. Mr. Sturgis was equally ready to lay portions of his wealth upon the altar of sentiment, and of reverence for the honored dead.

When, in the year 1834, the philosopher and philanthropist, Spurzheim, died in this city, where his lectures excited a deep and extensive interest, and gave an impulse to thought upon mental, moral, and physical development, — the fruits of which have been ever since abundantly apparent in our pulpits, lecture-rooms, and schools, — his remains were

deposited with public honors at Mount Auburn; and Mr. Sturgis, who had listened to his teachings, soon afterwards erected, at the cost of a thousand dollars from his own purse, the beautiful monument which marks the place where rest the remains of the beloved and honored stranger; in testimony, to use his own words, of "respect for the memory of one, whose clear, comprehensive, and elevated view of the nature of man marked him as the sound philosopher; and whose unwearied efforts to promote human happiness, by physical, intellectual, and moral culture, placed him in the foremost rank of the philanthropists of the age."

Instances might be adduced of his peculiar promptitude of decision and action in emergencies of peril; but the enumeration would be superfluous, as his character has been already sufficiently shown to leave no question of it under any circumstances.

With his abounding energy was mingled a magnanimity and kindliness of feeling, which made him ever ready to strengthen or aid others to whom his interposition might be useful. The following note from Theodore Parker will show to what extent an impromptu act of kindness may be serviceable, and in what manner it must have been rendered, to be so long and so gratefully remembered: —

"BOSTON, Nov. 30, 1855.

"WILLIAM STURGIS, Esq.

"DEAR SIR, — Fourteen years ago this month, I delivered a course of lectures on matters pertaining to religion in Boston. A few minutes before I began to speak, while I felt such agonies of embarrassment and fear as I hope never to know again, you came and sat down beside me, and strengthened me. I have been thankful ever since; and now beg you to accept the volume which accompanies this note, with the grateful regards of

"Yours truly,

"THEODORE PARKER."

The act and the acknowledgment are equally honorable to both parties. When will the world learn that kindness and

sympathy are, beyond all others, the most powerful levers with which to move the human heart?

On another occasion, at an assemblage to listen to an address from Mr. Wendell Phillips, some disturbance arose from efforts made to prevent his being permitted to speak. Mr. Sturgis, who was present, although he was probably as decidedly opposed to the orator's peculiar sentiments as any person in the room, immediately stepped forward upon the platform, and, appealing to the sense of propriety and the self-respect of the audience, and at the same time vindicating the right of free speech, secured the meeting from further interruption.

As an instance of the firmness of resolution which was so marked a feature of his character, it is worth relating, that, during his voyages at sea, he became greatly addicted to smoking, insomuch that he was scarcely ever without a cigar in his mouth in his waking hours. One evening, while pacing the quarter-deck with this solace of his lonely watches in his lips, the strength which this habit had acquired, as manifested in the extent to which it had reached, suddenly occurred to him; and, after pausing a few moments, he deposited the cigar upon the taffrail, saying to himself, "I will not take another until I change my mind": and he never smoked another in his life, except during the battle with the Chinese pirates above described; at the commencement of which he called for his cigars, to the enjoyment of which the circumstances doubtless gave a peculiar zest.

A similar instance is found in his total abstinence from wine; in the moderate use of which, in company with his friends, he took great pleasure; but, being satisfied that it had a tendency to cause or aggravate a disease to which he was liable, he abstained entirely from it. Of spirituous liquors he never drank a glass in his life, being, as he said, so deeply impressed with the evils of intoxication, that he early resolved never to drink one; and he never did.

No man was more faithful to the dictates of disinterested friendship. Nor did his affectionate service terminate with the lives of his friends; but it became the inheritance of their families, in deeds of kind attention and assistance rendered wherever acceptable. Nor did it cease even with his own life, but was renewed and prolonged in testamentary bequests. Allusions to particular instances would be an offence to him, whose affectionate consideration of others was excelled only by his sensitive and scrupulous delicacy. One instance, however, may not inappropriately be alluded to, as illustrating this fidelity in the rendering of service, and testing its genuineness far more than the bestowment of money could have done. It is this, that, for a period of about thirty years, he took entire charge of the very large estate of a personal friend, absorbing equal time and labor with the care of his own, upon the condition of never being asked to receive compensation.

As to his personal habits, Mr. Sturgis lived in almost Spartan simplicity, although liberal to his family in bestowments upon his children, and in supplying generously all that constitutes the comfort and substantial luxury of a well-ordered household. His dress was always simple and unpretending; his furniture and equipage entirely without ostentation or superfluity; nothing being expended upon works of art and the elaborate adornments in which so many find great and reasonable pleasure. These he held in very light esteem. Although endowed with a keen sensibility to the beauties of nature, as his writings abundantly testify, he appeared to be singularly deficient in taste for art, always disclaiming the capacity to derive pleasure from it.

No pictures adorned his walls, and no sculpture found niches in his house. It seems difficult to account for this inaptitude to enjoy that which by many is justly accounted one of the choicest privileges of cultivated life. The only solution which suggests itself is to be found in the habits ac-

quired in the severe simplicity of his early days, and in the self-denying economy which he was compelled to practise; limiting his expenditures to the absolute necessaries of life, and discarding every indulgence in what seemed a superfluity, or might interrupt his progress to the stations to which he aspired. Perhaps this misfortune, as many may deem it, was in part owing to the entire want of any opportunity for acquiring the rudiments of taste in art at the period of life when the faculties and feelings are most susceptible to its influence.

One of the peculiar traits of his social character was a ready wit, a faculty of repartee and badinage very rarely excelled, and indeed not often equalled. But it was always entirely under his control, and was never suffered to transcend the bounds of a courteous urbanity, or of innocent amusement. Indeed, it was not unfrequently the happiest means of conveying an expression of his affection and regard for his friends; and occasionally it found vent in versification, indicating great readiness and felicity in such use of his pen. Nor did he shrink from the practical consequences of his merriment, if turned to account against him.

An amusing instance of his humor and readiness occurred while he was in the legislature. In an animated debate, a friend, whom he highly esteemed, ornamented an able argument, on the side to which Mr. Sturgis was opposed, with somewhat numerous quotations in Latin and Greek. As soon as he sat down, Mr. Sturgis arose, and remarked, "that he had been much impressed with the very able argument to which he had listened, and especially with the learned citations with which it had been adorned, and which, he did not doubt, were most apposite and illustrative, but which he, and, as he believed, a large majority of those to whom they were addressed, did not comprehend, not having been taught the languages in which they were uttered; that he was not willing, however, that his friend should carry off all the literary honors of the

occasion, nor alone have the benefit of producing conviction by speaking in an unknown tongue;" and, in conclusion, he repeated several sentences in the Indian language of the North-west Coast, affirming "that they were as much to the point, and doubtless as intelligible and convincing to most of those present, as had been the quotations in Latin and Greek with which the gentleman had favored them."

In commercial transactions and all matters of contract, Mr. Sturgis ever acted upon the highest principles of mercantile integrity. His extensive knowledge, quick perception, and understanding of human nature, gave him decided advantages over most men; but such was the legitimate and honorable use he made of them in negotiation, that no suspicion of his want of entire good faith was ever excited. Probably no man ever lived in our community in whose integrity, or in whose bare word, more implicit faith was reposed.

He had very large sums always invested in loans and personal securities; but he never took more than the legal rate of interest. In conversation, not long before his decease, he said to a friend: "I have never taken more than six per cent. for the money I have lent; and you may think this a little inconsistent, when I tell you, that, if it were a question of merchandise or stocks, I might make the very best bargain I could, and use in a proper way any knowledge I might have, which I had a right to, to give me the advantage. It is not my habit, my taste, if you please; and," he added, "I always remember a remark which old Mr. Astor once made to me, that the practice of taking usurious interest 'narrered the mind and 'ardened the 'art.'"

His judgment upon all matters of investment was greatly prized and sought for, and always freely and cheerfully given, whatever might be his personal interests, — with the frank disclosure, however, of any that might be supposed to influence his opinion.

His extensive and familiar knowledge of all branches of

trade and manufactures, and of the intrinsic values of estates real and personal, caused him to be much sought for as president or director in many of the larger and more important incorporated institutions; the duties of which offices he performed with exemplary disinterestedness, punctuality, and fidelity.

The strength of the domestic affections in Mr. Sturgis was in correspondence with the other elements of his character. His love for his children and grandchildren was tender and intense, and was his chief source of daily interest and happiness, particularly in the later period of his life. He imparted to them liberally of his large fortune, and cultivated with them the habit of constant and cheerful intercourse; making his departure to be felt by them as the loss not only of a natural protector, but also of a familiar companion and confiding friend.

The depth of his parental attachment was manifested on the death of his son, — a youth of remarkable promise, both intellectual and moral, standing at the head of his class in the University, and equally conspicuous for every manly grace and virtue. He was suddenly killed, at the age of sixteen years, by a blow from the boom of a vessel, while he was on a sailing excursion. His father never recovered from this grief. He had naturally placed the fondest hopes in this only son, who had already become a proud ornament of his advancing age; who seemed possessed of every faculty and virtue which the fondest and most judicious parent could desire; and to whom he looked for the transmission of his name and reputation with increasing honor.

It was his first great grief; and its shadow darkened the whole remainder of his life. At first, the intensity of his agony was such, that no mention of the young man's name, or allusion to the event, was ever made; every one feeling, that, though not prohibited, the allusion would be but a fresh excitement of an uncontrollable sorrow with which the father

was struggling. In his strong nature, he sought no sympathy, preferring to suffer in the solitude of his own soul; or he dared not trust himself to converse on the subject, lest it might betray him into a weakness to which he would not yield; or he felt, perhaps, that his loss was so profound and unutterable as to be beyond relief. This was indeed a sad mistake, in which, however, he continued for many years; and it was not until he was far advanced in life, that he could bear any allusion to this sorrow. But the "sable cloud" gradually "turned forth her silver lining on the night,"—in the subdued intensity of his character; the increasing tenderness of his affections; the touching sensibility which he manifested when a parental grief befell any one, however unknown, or otherwise a stranger to his heart; and in his manifestations of interest in the friends of his beloved boy. He became conscious of his error; and, in a letter of condolence to a friend in affliction, long after his son's death, he expressed his regret that he had thus yielded to his first impulses; and counselled free interchange of thought and feeling, as the natural, and among the most effectual, means of relief.

About twenty years before his death, his love of his family and his taste for the simplicity and surroundings of rural life, led him to establish a home in the country during the summer and autumn, where he could gather around him all his children and their families. For this purpose, he selected a spacious and commodious house, originally constructed for a summer hotel, on the border of Horn Pond,—one of the most beautiful and romantic of the many beautiful lakes with which New England abounds; and here they passed together many delightful seasons in the most unrestrained enjoyment of affectionate and confiding family intercourse, of a generous hospitality, and of all the simple luxuries which country life affords and country life alone can supply.

One side of the lake was bordered by very steep hills, rising abruptly, and covered with deep woods. He was

wont in the evening to take his boat alone under the deep shadows of this shore, and remain there until quite late; where the solitude, evening grandeur, and utter stillness of the scene, brought back to him, as he said, his early years on the North-west Coast.

He indulged his grandchildren in the most unrestrained liberty of familiar affection; and many hours, of the deepest interest to their parents and any visitors in the circle, as well as to the little ones, they passed in his company; when, after frolicking with them in their childish games, he would yield to their solicitations for some stories about the Indians and the North-west Coast. Such narratives, beginning in the twilight on the piazza, were sometimes protracted into late evening, being enlivened with illustrations of the opinions or religious character of some Indian like Kilchart, until the listeners came to feel towards him as warm a personal friendship as did the narrator. To use the words of one who was familiar with his daily life there, "Those who then visited Horn Pond will not easily forget, either the natural beauty of the lake, with the densely wooded mountain rising beyond it, or the images of those who dwelt there, and who have since passed from this earth; who were so full of life and joy and radiance, and who entered so largely into the daily happiness of him who has just gone to meet them. There was in their character a loyalty, a straightforward truthfulness, a depth of affection, and a nobleness of nature, that were evidently hereditary."

The death, thus alluded to, of two of his beloved daughters, so changed the scene of such hitherto undisturbed and unalloyed happiness, and the effects of it were so great upon his heart, that the associations and the contrast became too painful; and this patriarchal summer home was, not long afterwards, relinquished.

Mr. Sturgis would probably not be accounted a religious man by those whose faith demands the nurture of a prescribed

ritual or of stated observances; or by those whose piety leads to a self-denying asceticism, as a means of propitiating an offended God; or by those who base their trust upon the intellectual belief of a particular scheme of salvation; or by those whose idea of the whole duty and destination of man is his exclusive culture and exercise of the devotional sentiments, regardless of the development of the other elements of his nature. But, if an entire conviction of the existence and attributes of God — as the Author and Supreme Governor of the universe; as a Ruler of infinite power, justice, and love; and as having designed his children for ultimate happiness hereafter, to be attained by means of the discipline of life, and by conscientious obedience to his will as revealed in his works, in the nature of the human soul, and in the inspirations of the teachers whom he has sent in all ages to enlighten them — if this entitle any man to the appellation of religious, it may be justly claimed for him. It is certain, however, that he made no especial pretensions to that character; and he would have infinitely preferred to be classed among the unbelieving, rather than to be guilty of the hypocrisy, or the blasphemy, of professing a faith that he did not sincerely entertain. His views of God were, that he is a beneficent Parent, who makes all things work together for good; and of death, that it is but an exchange of worlds, alike for the departing and for those soon to follow; and these views were beautifully illustrated in the following bequest in his will to one who was, otherwise than by the incident referred to, almost unknown to him: "I give and bequeath to the Rev. John H. Morison, of Milton, the sum of five hundred dollars, as a mark of my esteem and respect, and approval of the manner in which he led the services at the funeral of my late friend, W. W. Swain, at New Bedford. The cheerful and bright views of the change which we call death, that he expressed on that occasion, are altogether in accordance with my own long-cherished sentiments."

The personal appearance of Mr. Sturgis was very impressive. Although of rather low stature, his square frame, upright posture, and whole movement, indicated great muscular strength and energy. His head, rather closely set upon the shoulders, was large; his forehead, broad and high; his eyes were of dark blue, overhung by peculiarly heavy brows; his nose was aquiline; and his mouth, when closed, strongly indicative of firmness and resolution. His countenance, when composed, was grave and full of expression, — a clear index of the dignity and energy by which he was ever distinguished; but, when lighted up by the tenderness of affection or the joyousness of spirit in which he abounded, or by the animation of conversation, it became singularly beaming with his emotions; giving to their utterance a gentleness, strength, or vivacity, never to be forgotten by those who enjoyed the privilege of familiar converse with him. It is greatly to be lamented by his friends and descendants, that an extreme aversion to having his portrait taken, or any representation made of him by which his personal appearance could be perpetuated, has deprived them of the treasure which a suitable likeness would have been.

The writer of this Memoir lays down his pen with regret. It has been to him a grateful occupation to dwell upon the character and remembered traits of one whose friendship, although acquired in the "sear and yellow leaf" of old age, had shed many refreshing influences, which he had hoped still longer to enjoy. No one can be so sensible as himself of the imperfect manner in which his pleasing duty has been performed; nor could any one have been more gratified, had he been enabled to lay a more fitting tribute upon the grave of one so much respected and beloved.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

I.

At a special meeting of the President and Directors of the Massachusetts Hospital Life Insurance Company, consisting of the following members, George W. Lyman, President, and William Amory, Edward Austin, Francis Bacon, J. Ingersoll Bowditch, James M. Beebe, J. Wiley Edmands, George H. Kuhn, Amos A. Lawrence, Charles G. Loring, Francis C. Lowell, John A. Lowell, George R. Minot, and Ignatius Sargent, on the twenty-third day of October, 1863, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted: —

Resolved, That, in the death of the Hon. William Sturgis, we mourn the departure of one of the honored founders of this Institution; of an officer, who, in continuous service from its original establishment, has been devotedly faithful and zealous in the management of its affairs; and to whose sagacity, knowledge, elevated principles, and financial skill, it is in a great measure indebted for its extensive usefulness, and the wide-spread confidence which it enjoys.

Resolved, That we shall ever hold in precious remembrance the inspiring vivacity and urbanity, the acute sense of justice, the lofty honor, and eminent ability, by which he was ever characterized in the discussions and social intercourse of the Board, — causing his departure to be profoundly lamented, as that alike of the honored officer and adviser, and of the respected and beloved associate and friend.

Resolved, That, in the death of this honored and eminent man, we are mindful of his claims upon the respect and gratitude of his fellow-

citizens for the great share which he has contributed to the mercantile prosperity and glory of the Commonwealth, by a long life of faithful and successful service in the promotion of her mercantile and manufacturing interests, pre-eminently characterized by vigorous enterprise at sea and on shore; by far-reaching sagacity and extensive knowledge; and by a high sense of honor and unswerving fidelity, united with untiring energy and perseverance, — entitling him to stand in the foremost rank of those who have established and maintained her commercial reputation at home and abroad.

Resolved, That a copy of these Proceedings be transmitted to the family of the deceased, with an assurance of the sympathy of this Board in their bereavement.

II.

The Standing Committee of the Cape-Cod Association held a special meeting on Saturday, the twenty-fourth day of October, 1863, at eleven o'clock, A.M. The President of the Association, on taking the chair, said, —

This special meeting is called for the melancholy purpose of announcing to you the death of our venerable and highly esteemed Vice-President, the Hon. William Sturgis.

In my official duty, gentlemen, I can hardly do more than communicate to you this sad event, and leave it to your sympathy and judgment to propose the form of tribute most suitable to the occasion.

A record of Mr. Sturgis is, I am sure, broadly written in the heart of each member of this meeting, and each page is eulogy. Known to many of us for nearly half a century, his high qualities are deeply engraved on our minds, and cannot be easily erased. His honorable bearing, his cool judgment, and his considerate action under difficulties, stamped him as an uncommon man; and his extensive knowledge, and his judicious inferences from it, made him a useful one. He was consulted and prized by his associates, respected by the community, and honored by all.

Mr. Sturgis, as you well know, was a native of the Pilgrim Cape; and the right arm of the Commonwealth, our good old Cape Cod, must ever venerate and lament him. He was true to them in all

things. He made their interests his own, and his head and his purse were responsive to their wishes.

To this Association his loss is great. Mr. Sturgis was one of its founders, and its largest pecuniary benefactor. The doings of the Society had his sanction and support; and under his encouragement it has prospered. He has now gone to add to the galaxy of our departed and distinguished officers and friends, — himself a bright star among them, — and leaves a void in our organization not easy to be filled.

The Rev. Dr. Lothrop, Francis Bacon, and Isaac Thacher were appointed a Committee to draft a series of resolutions, expressive of the feelings of the Association on the death of Mr. Sturgis, and reported the following, which were unanimously adopted: —

It having pleased Almighty God, our heavenly Father, to remove by death the Hon. WILLIAM STURGIS, one of the Vice-Presidents of this Association, we desire to put upon our Records an expression of our feelings and of our judgment of his character, by the adoption of the following resolutions: —

Resolved, That, as members of the Cape-Cod Association, we receive with deep regret the intelligence of the death of our distinguished associate, the Hon. William Sturgis; and, while we bow in devout submission to the divine will, — grateful that a life so useful and honorable was so prolonged, — we lament that another endeared name has been stricken from the roll of our officers and members; and that we are deprived of the sympathy and fellowship of one, who, from the organization of our Society, — his signature being the *first* attached to its Constitution, — cherished a hearty interest in its objects, and exhibited a ready zeal to promote its prosperity, extend its influence, and uphold its honor.

Resolved, That we sympathize with this community in the emotions awakened by the death of another of its "merchant princes," whose name has been so long associated with all that is manly and sagacious in commercial enterprise, lofty and venerable in unspotted integrity, large and generous in Christian charity.

His warm heart made him a tender and steadfast friend. His strong intellect and clear judgment made him a wise and safe counsellor. Singularly independent and honest in the formation of his opinions; unswerving in fidelity to his convictions; of an impulsive temperament, guided by principle, and made amenable to conscience, — his character and career, honorable to himself and beneficial to others, leave his name to be held in remembrance as that of a wise, just, faithful, and benevolent man.

Resolved, That a copy of the foregoing resolutions, with the expression of our sincere sympathy, be sent by the Secretary to the family of the deceased.

III.

At the annual meeting of the BOSTON MARINE SOCIETY, held on the third day of November, 1863, the following Preamble and Resolution were offered by Captain JOHN S. SLEEPER: —

Whereas Captain WILLIAM STURGIS, who has been an active and honored member of the Boston Marine Society for more than sixty years, has been called away by the Almighty Power at a ripe old age, to rest from his earthly labors.

Therefore *Resolved*, That the members of this Society will long treasure the memory, and endeavor to emulate the example, of one who justly deserved the character of a skilful sailor, an enterprising merchant, a useful citizen, and an honest man.

The above was unanimously adopted, and ordered to be placed on the records of the Society; and a copy of the same to be presented to the family of the deceased.

IV.

AT the stated monthly meeting, held Thursday, Nov. 12, 1864, the President announced the death of Lord Lyndhurst, an Honorary Member of this Society, and the death of the Hon. William Sturgis, a Resident Member, in the following terms: —

We may not forget, gentlemen, that, since our last monthly meeting, two names of more than common significance have been stricken from our rolls, — one of them the name of an Honorary, and the other of a Resident Member. You would hardly pardon me for omitting some brief notice of them before passing to the regular business of the day.

The President then proceeded as follows: —

The Hon. WILLIAM STURGIS died in this city on the evening of the 21st of October, at the age of eighty-one years. Born on Cape Cod,

and taking naturally to the sea as the field of his early enterprise, he soon rose to the highest rank as a navigator. His voyages to the North-west Coast, and to China and the East Indies, at a time when our commerce with those regions was in its infancy, were frequently attended with adventures and perils of an almost romantic character. They served at once to display and to develop the extraordinary energy and bravery of his nature. Quitting the sea with a large fund of commercial experience, and establishing himself in a mercantile house in Boston, he became one of our most successful, enterprising, and eminent merchants, as well as one of our most esteemed and valuable citizens. Wherever he was, on sea or on shore, he exhibited a sagacity and an intellectual vigor of the highest order. Few men of any profession have surpassed him in clearness of comprehension, in quickness of perception, or in practical common sense. And no man surpassed him in the courage to declare and defend his own opinions, whatever they were. Frequently a member of both branches of our State Legislature, he was distinguished for his readiness and ability as a debater. It was a rare thing for any one to get the advantage of him in offhand, or even in more deliberate, discussion. Nor was his pen less ready than his tongue. His frequent contributions to the public journals in former years, and his written reports in the Legislature and elsewhere, would compare well with those of most of our trained scholars.

During the controversy between Great Britain and the United States on the subject of the Oregon boundary, his personal acquaintance with that territory, and his familiarity with the whole history of its discovery, were of the highest importance to our Government. The lecture which he delivered on this subject before the Mercantile-Library Association of our city, and which was printed at the time, was one of the most interesting and valuable public discussions of the question; while his private correspondence with distinguished statesmen, both at home and abroad, was well understood to have had no small influence in bringing the controversy to an amicable and satisfactory issue.

It was only a few months since that our departed associate and friend promised me that he would put this correspondence into a shape to be preserved in the archives of our Society; and I trust that it may still find its appropriate place here. I need not say that he had given other evidences of his interest in our welfare. You have not forgotten the announcement at our last annual meeting, that he had

made a donation to our treasury of the whole amount needed to complete the discharge of the mortgage on this building. Finding, as one of the Committee to examine our accounts, that about twelve hundred dollars would accomplish that result, he volunteered to send me his check for the sum, on the simple condition that his name should not be published in the newspapers. Mr. Sturgis has thus entitled himself to be gratefully remembered among our benefactors, as well as among our most respected and distinguished associates; and I am sure you will all concur in the adoption of the customary resolution, which I am instructed by the Standing Committee to report as follows: —

Resolved, That this Society has heard with deep regret of the death of their valued associate, the Hon. William Sturgis; and that the President be directed to name one of our number to prepare a Memoir of him for our Transactions.

This resolution was seconded by the Hon. CHARLES G. LORING, who spoke as follows: —

Mr. PRESIDENT, — I ask indulgence for a few minutes to express my concurrence in the proposed resolution.

My acquaintance with Mr. Sturgis, although of long-distant date as a general one, had ripened in the course of the past six or seven years into a very cordial, and, I think I may say, somewhat intimate friendship. Our intercourse, though at the first chiefly official, soon became frequent, and far exceeding the necessities or ordinary routine of business. I can therefore, I think, speak with somewhat of authority concerning his claims upon our remembrance, and bear testimony to the fitness of the record of it which it is now proposed to make.

In the course of a long and busy life, presenting many opportunities for observation and study of the characters of prominent men in our community, I remember no one of more striking peculiarities and harmonized strength than that of our deceased friend in his later, and, as I am disposed to believe, his best days. For surely we may reasonably account those the best, when effort and aspiration have terminated in possession of the prizes of life, and opportunity and disposition are given for the right enjoyment and use of them; — when the vigorous faculties exerted in their attainment still find "ample room and verge enough" for gently exciting play in the duties and incidents of family relationship and social life, in the guardianship of the interests of others, and in the needed authority of

ripened judgment in the general affairs of men; — when the mellowing influence of a long experience in self-examination, and in varied observation of the mingled and often undistinguishable strength and weakness, virtue and frailty, truth and error, which compose so much of the motley web of human life, has begotten that spirit of liberal interpretation of motive and conduct which such experience alone seems able to beget; — when the standard of truthfulness, honor, and fidelity to duty, has become the ever-ready and controlling test of worth, and of claims for consideration and respect; — and when a subdued consciousness of the affection and respect of descendants, relatives, associates, and friends, throws its mellow sunshine upon the descending path of earthly life. And such were the peculiar blessings of old age, in the midst of which our friend has left us.

The prominent elements of the character of Mr. Sturgis are too generally and too well known to require minute description and analysis on this occasion; and the history of its formation would demand more time and space than the occasion permits. They may well become the subject of a Memoir for the archives of this Society, of which he was a liberal benefactor and an honored member; one who has made material contributions to the history of a portion of the country. It is enough for the present purpose, and in view of a more enlarged memorial, that we now recognize the marvellous strength of that character, in the vigor of his intellect, his almost unequalled quickness and accuracy of perception, his far-reaching sagacity, his profound and comprehensive judgment, his keen insight into human nature, his untiring energy, indomitable resolution, and unflinching courage; — that we recall to mind his varied and accurate knowledge, extending far beyond the confines of his especial pursuits and occupation; his cultivated literary taste, his brilliant conversational powers, his genial disposition and inspiring vivacity, his aptness in lively repartee, and happy social influences upon all around him; — and that to these we can add the remembrance of his high sense of honor, his unswerving loyalty to truth, and fidelity to every trust.

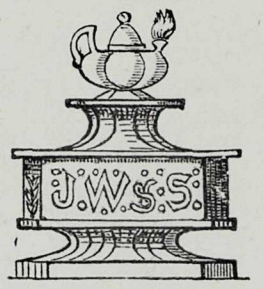
These were traits of character obvious to all who came within the circle of his acquaintance. But to these elements of strength and power were united others, which, though less conspicuous, are yet not less worthy of recorded remembrance. To them he added a tender love and generous devotion to his children and relatives; the most considerate and enduring affection for his friends, extending after

their death to those dear to them, in continued deeds of substantial kindness; and an enlightened and extensive liberality, founded on a mingled sense of duty and generous feeling, of which liberality many institutions and individuals have been the recipients, but which, during his life, remained mostly unknown, because of the uniform injunction of secrecy, upon the pledge of which the gifts were made; it being his constant effort in these ministrations, that his left hand should not know what his right hand was doing.

With this hasty and very imperfect tribute to the memory of our friend, I beg leave to second the adoption of the resolution.

The resolution, after a few remarks by Mr. QUINCY, was unanimously adopted.

The President nominated Mr. Loring to prepare the customary Memoir of Mr. Sturgis.



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