

Deane (C)



MEMOIR
OF
JOHN APPLETON, M.D.
BY CHARLES DEANE.

THE subject of this sketch was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on the 9th of January, 1809. As a boy, he attended school in that town until his fifteenth year (in 1824), when his father died. Under the direction of his guardian, Major John Prince, clerk of the courts, young Appleton, in the interval of his studies, was employed in the clerk's office at Salem. While there, a love for antiquarian and genealogical researches seems to have been developed. About this time, he chose medicine as his future profession; but, owing to some opposition of his guardian, he was not able to commence the study of it till he became of age. In February, 1830, he entered the office of Dr. A. L. Pierson, of Salem; and, in the winter of 1830-31, he attended the medical school of Harvard University. During his studies, he also read with Dr. William J. Walker, of Charlestown, and Dr. Winslow Lewis, of Boston. In February, 1833, he graduated as Doctor of Medicine, and took the Boylston prize. He practised in his profession for a short time in Boston, and subsequently in Hamilton, Essex County, 1833-34; Gloucester, 1835-39; Westfield, Hampden County, 1839-42; West Newbury and Georgetown, Essex County, 1843-55. He was quite successful in the practice of medicine; but its duties were arduous, and wore upon his constitution. At one period of his life, he was a successful lecturer, not only upon subjects relating to his profession, but upon biography, temperance, — of which he was an ardent advocate, — and upon music. He was an accomplished musician, and an occasional composer. He painted in oils and water-colors, and sketched with considerable skill.

In 1855, he accepted the invitation of the Historical Society — through the solicitation of his friend, Dr. Shurtleff — to fill the place of Assistant Librarian, which position he continued to occupy till December, 1868, a few weeks before his death, when he resigned. At the time Dr. Appleton entered upon this service, the Society had resolved to



print a catalogue of its library; and he at once devoted the hours not employed in the general administration of the library to this work. He not only completed the cataloguing of all the printed books and pamphlets, but corrected the proof-sheets while the work was going through the press. In all this he showed ample historical and bibliographical knowledge for the work. The first volume of the catalogue was published in 1859, and the second in the following year.

Dr. Appleton also rendered important service in copying ancient manuscripts for the Society's publications, and in correcting proof; his abundant learning and excellent taste being a sufficient guarantee for the trustworthy performance of his work. In the preparation of the volumes of Winthrop Papers for the press, he not only rendered the aid above mentioned, but he made the drawings of a large number of seals, and superintended the printing of them in *fac-simile*.

Dr. Appleton's countenance was striking, and his presence commanding. Personally, he was the most agreeable of men, so simple and modest, so refined and cultivated, so affectionate and eager to serve, that he drew every one toward him. His principles were unswerving, and his character was based upon a rock. His son, to whom I am indebted for some details of his life, writes: "Under his placid exterior he carried one of the most courageous spirits I ever knew, and he was one of the bravest men I ever met with."

The tributes paid to Dr. Appleton, by Dr. Robbins and by the President of the Society, at the meeting following his decease, in language more appropriate than I can frame, beautifully delineate his character and worth, and the valuable services he rendered this Society.

On the 22d May, 1831, Dr. Appleton married, at Boston, Miss Elizabeth M. Messer. He lived in Cambridge for a number of years, and died there on the 4th of February, 1869, aged sixty years and twenty-six days, leaving two sons and four daughters. The oldest son, John W. M. Appleton, served in the war of the Rebellion, and was major in the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment.

Dr. Appleton was elected a member of the Society in January, 1869; but he was never able to attend a meeting after his election. His acceptance of membership bore date only six days before his death.*

* By a rule of the Society, though never formally voted as such, no member receives compensation for services rendered to it. Therefore, Dr. Appleton, though he for many years constantly attended the meetings, was not a member while he held the office of Assistant Librarian.

Dr. Appleton prepared the following papers, which were published in the Proceedings of the Society under the dates given: —

1. On the Great Seal of New England, July, 1862.
2. On the Portrait of King William in the Society's gallery, September, 1862.
3. On Almanacs in the reign of Queen Anne, June, 1863.
4. On an *Amortissement* of Louis, Duke of Orleans, October, 1863.
5. Sketch of the Contents of the "Journal de Castorland," February, 1864.
6. On an Order of the Privy Council, on the Petition of William Morton, March, 1864.
7. On Early Charts of the Harbor of Boston, &c., September, 1864.
8. On the William Winthrop MSS., December, 1864.
9. On the Portrait of Sebastian Cabot in the Society's gallery, January, 1865.
10. On the Alleged Portrait of Rev. John Wilson in the Society's gallery, September, 1867.

He also prepared and printed: —

1. Pedigree of Appleton, on a broadside. Boston, 1864.
2. Monumental Memorials of the Appleton Family. 4to, pp. 30. Boston, privately printed, 1867.



