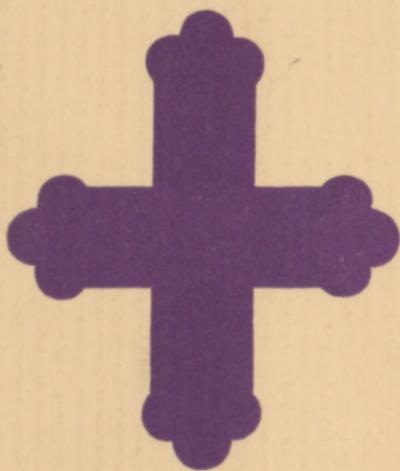


Knowles (E. R.)

Memorial



DR. JOSHUA BARTLETT RICH.



Dr. Joshua Bartlett Rich.

FEBRUARY 25, 1896.

“ His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal ;
Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind.”

Joshua Bartlett Rich was born in Roxbury, Mass., August 23, 1844. His father, Joshua Gross Rich, is a resident of Bethel, Me., and the oldest and most noted of the veteran hunters and guides of the Rangeley lakes. Although now 76 years of age, he is still actively engaged as a trial justice, pension solicitor and newspaper correspondent.

After following the sea for five years, he married, in 1842, Mary N. Day of Roxbury. A brave, pious and true helpmeet, she shared with him for forty years the perils and hardships of their home in the primitive forests of Maine, Mr. Rich's native state, whither he returned to live soon after the birth of their first child, Joshua Bartlett Rich. Dr. Rich's mother died in 1884, and eight of her fourteen children are yet living, all of them married and settled in life.



As de Tocqueville says: "The entire man is, so to speak, to be found in the cradle of the child." And the early years of Dr. Rich's life, amidst the dangers and privations of the wilderness, were spent in the grandest training school on earth. Learning from necessity all the curative herbs in nature's magnificent dispensary, acquiring self-dependence and benevolence, and becoming imbued with that peculiar sweetness of character which seems to be generously bestowed upon those who seek nature's beauties and try to do their best, he grew to a noble manhood—

"Himself an act of God,
His mind a thought, his life a breath of God."

From the very outset of his career, Dr. Rich was beset by obstacles which would have deterred almost any one; but he persevered, with characteristic earnestness, until he achieved remarkable and distinguished success. Leaving school in Bethel, Me., at the age of 19, he prepared for college at Phillips Academy, at Andover. He entered Yale with the class of 1869, but left that class at the end of the junior year, and was graduated with the class of 1870. In his college life he displayed conspicuous earnestness, devotion to duty, and maturity of character, thus giving promise of the useful and noble life to follow.

He next went to Lyme, Conn., where he taught in a classical school for one year, and where his gentle and Christian influence was felt and valued by the entire community. He then studied medicine for three years in Philadelphia at the Jefferson Medical College, and under the supervision of the eminent anatomist and surgeon, Dr. W. W. Keen. He received the doctorate in medicine in 1874, and for two years thereafter practiced in Philadelphia. During two years of his course of medical study, he was instructor in literature and science at the

Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind, where he showed extraordinary ability and thoroughness in his instruction and amelioration of the blind. One of the most distinguished philanthropists and teachers of the blind in this country thus writes:

“As a man, as a teacher and as a physician, he occupied a high place in public esteem, and his labors in behalf of the blind were well directed and productive of excellent results. He never ceased to feel a profound interest in the advancement of the cause of education among this class of our fellow men, and I have often witnessed his warm and unflinching sympathy with them, and the many helpful things which both he and his good wife were constantly doing for them.”

Dr. Rich was married in Philadelphia February 8, 1873, to Sarah Jeanne Wrigley, daughter of Edward Wrigley, a prominent merchant of Philadelphia. Miss Jennie Wrigley, as her friends called her, was one of the teachers in the institution for the blind, where her unselfish devotion and Christian benevolence wrought marked results in the intellectual and moral progress of her pupils. With high abilities as a writer, Mrs. Rich has occasionally found time to contribute poems and articles to the pages of several magazines and journals of the best standing.

Their happy home life, often suggestive to me that

“God hides Himself within the love
Of those whom we love best;
The smiles and tones that make our homes
Are shrines by Him possessed;—”

has been favored with four children: Franklin Peale, born November 11, 1873; Helen, January 15, 1875; Susan Marie, October 23, 1876; and Ethel, May 25, 1880, died January 12, 1882.

In September, 1876, Dr. Rich settled in Worcester, and became superintendent of the City Hospital, which office he found it necessary to abandon five years later, to be able to meet the requirements of his exceedingly large general practice. He has always continued on the surgical staff of the City Hospital, and for two years was president of the Worcester District Medical Society. He was also a member of the Worcester Medical Improvement Society and of the American Academy of Medicine. In each branch of Masonry he held a high standing. He was affiliated with Quinsigamond Lodge, Worcester Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, Hiram Council, R. and S. M., Boston Templar Commandery, Goddard Council, Lawrence Chapter of Rose Croix, and Massachusetts Consistory of the Scottish Rite.

Dr. Rich's wide practice and popularity were vastly augmented by his fidelity of attention, and the extent and multitude of his quiet benefactions and secret charities will never be half understood. As a surgeon and anatomist he held an eminent rank; his throat practice exceeded that of the specialists, and his gynecological practice was very extensive. It is impossible to emphasize adequately the admirableness of the spirit and method of his life and practice. Even the abrupt termination of his mortal appearance among us seems to have come as a result of his devotion to his high vocation. The entreaties of friends, to whom his lessening vitality was painfully apparent, failed to entice him to a respite from his incessant exertions ere his overtaxed heart ceased from its wearied throbbings.

While he did not "wear his heart upon his sleeve for every daw to peck at," he was invariably candid, open and sincere. His unassuming charity and nobility of character endeared him to every one, but were not so publicly heralded as are the pretentious but shallow and insincere

excellences of many whom successful sharpness and materialistic progress have exalted for the adulation of the mediocrity-worshipping and sham-loving society of our age and land.

Pre-eminently, Dr. Rich was a knight of truth, justice and right, never hesitating to sacrifice comfort, human opinion and self-interest in the cause of humanity and equity, and quite in contrast with many of the dignified notables of our day who are

“So careful by lordly sedateness
To compromise nothing but truth.”

But while this inflexible devotion to truth and justice was so conspicuous an adornment of this noble mind, yet there remains to be admired and loved that attribute which is an essential component of his very being—his inexhaustible and supernatural charity. He viewed all at their best, inspiring and cheering them to higher efforts and nobler ideals. To the depraved, the soul-disordered and the sin-sick, his very presence was a truce to vice as well as an assuagement to suffering.

His following of the higher life of usefulness and duty was consistent, doing at the instant moment its immediate duty, and never leaving this exemplification of the God-life for the nonce to follow some fashionable formality of the hour because it might be esteemed “the correct thing to do.”

As I have already shown, he unflinchingly maintained that outward attestation of the reality and uplifting power of the Spirit of Jesus, here and now, which a saintly theologian called “the practice of the presence of God.” He knew that heaven is not afar beyond the skies, but here and now, for those who will awaken to it; and that only the crucifixion of self in one’s own heart, and the resurrection to the life from God alone, can make one the

possessor of the kingdom of God. His creed was the simple but all-sufficient

“creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds.
More strong than all poetic thought,”

—the acceptance and following of the promise that, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God,—God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”

Ever earnest and marked by a regal dignity supported alike by interior character and physical endowment, he was equally cordial, gentle and companionable to those who enjoyed his friendship; while, for myself, bound to him by no tie of creed, nor of profession, nor of kinship, nor of any common interest, save the sympathy of an unsordid, unselfish love, I may say that while from the first moment of our acquaintance a familiar word never passed between us, it is equally true that no word was ever spoken between us that was not expressive of gentleness and esteem, almost invariably of affectionate respect. Uninterruptedly, to my heart of hearts, he has remained, and appeals, now and evermore, as

“The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,
The best conditioned and unwearied spirit
In doing courtesies; and one in whom
The ancient Roman honor more appears,
Than any that draws breath.”

To him I may add, in the words once spoken by a true saint of another:

“Thou art not dead, pure heart, above earth's strife
Thy home of rest is Love's serenest sphere.
To him, Death is the grandest step in life,
Who lives from God, in Faith and Duty here.”

EDWARD RANDALL KNOWLES.

