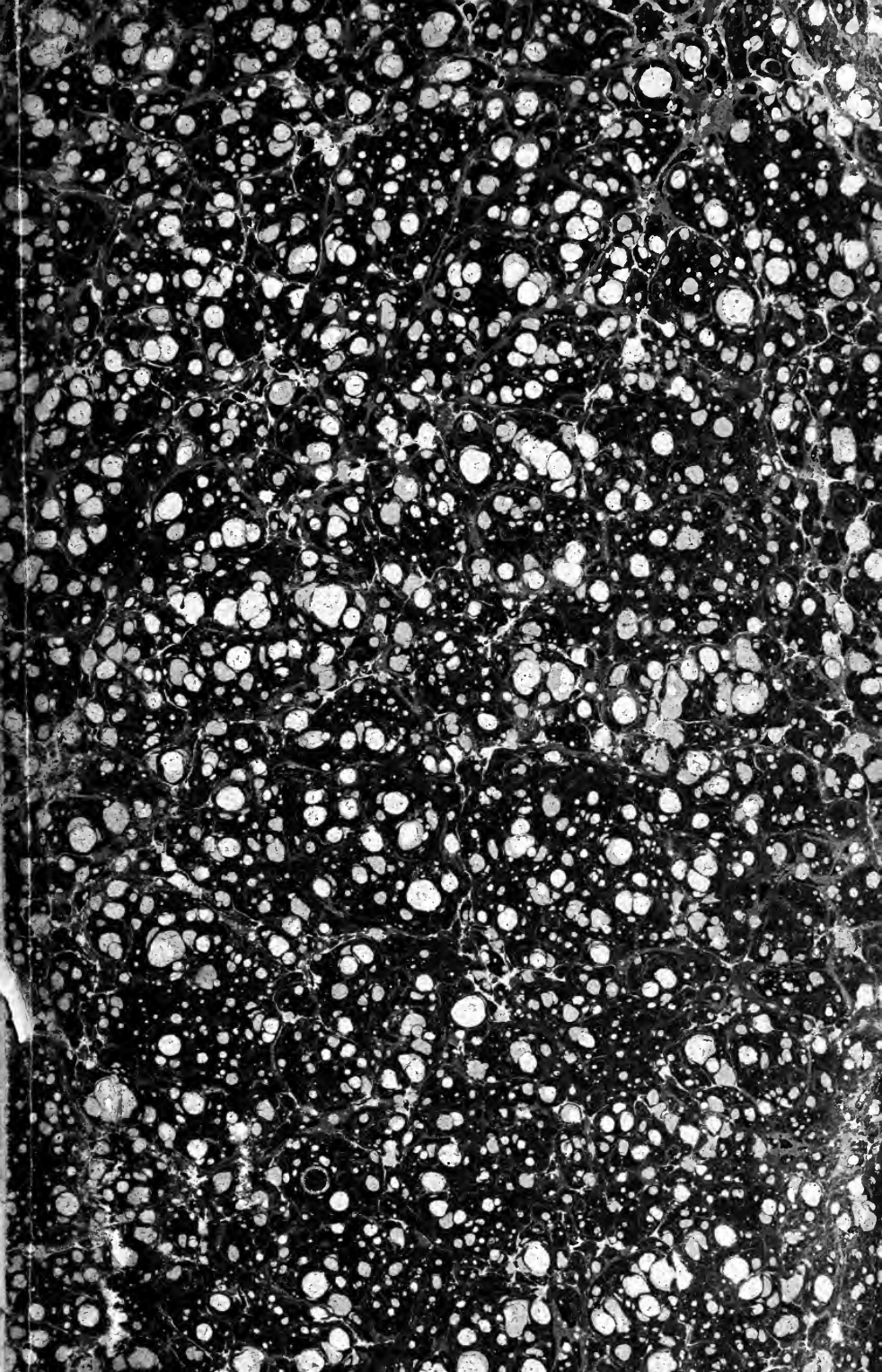


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JOSEPH EARL SHEFFIELD.

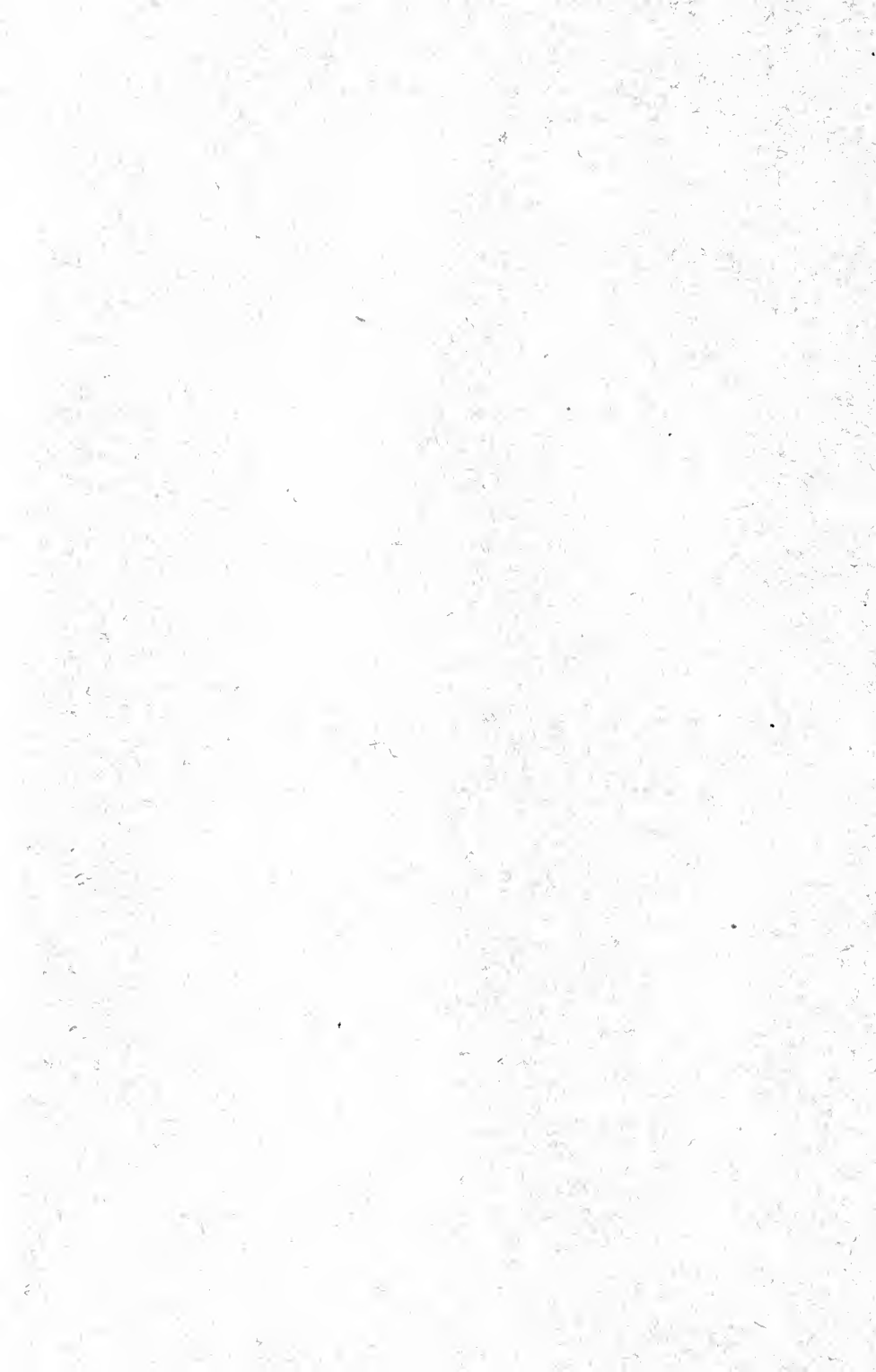
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A COMMEMORATIVE DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

PRESIDENT PORTER,

June 26, 1882.



A DISCOURSE

COMMEMORATIVE OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

Mr. JOSEPH EARL SHEFFIELD,

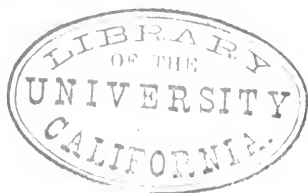
*DELIVERED AT THE BATTELL CHAPEL,*

June 26, 1882,

By NOAH PORTER,  
PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

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## JOSEPH EARL SHEFFIELD.

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WITHIN the last college year, death has removed from our University the most liberal of all its numerous benefactors, whose name will be forever attached to one of its most prominent and important departments. It seems eminently appropriate that on this anniversary some public recognition should be made of his distinguished generosity, and some formal expression should be given to our feelings of honor and gratitude. These duties have been assigned to myself as in some sort an official service. I must however discharge them in another spirit. Our deceased benefactor was my neighbor and friend. As such he was familiarly if not intimately known to me as a man of peculiar and marked characteristics founded on positive and earnest principles and aims. As such he was fully understood by but few of the many who wondered at his enterprise and were blessed by his generosity. I deem it therefore a privilege to be allowed to recite the history of his life and to

delineate his character, and thus to discharge the obligation of private friendship to his public reputation, which is imposed by his striking career of public usefulness. Fortunately, the materials for this delineation are more than usually abundant and trustworthy. The records of the more important events of his life are generally exact and minute, and the expression of his purposes and principles has been given by himself with more than usual frankness and fullness, for reasons that are honorable to his judgment and his heart. The external incidents of his life have already been made known to the public so fully and variously as to preclude the necessity of repeating them all. I shall therefore take the liberty in this discourse to limit myself to such as will best illustrate the principles and character of the man.

JOSEPH EARL SHEFFIELD was born in Southport, then a part of Fairfield, Conn., June 19, 1793, of a ship-building and ship-owning stock, his father having taken part in the war of Independence, and with his brothers built, equipped and sailed a privateer, and having been several times engaged in hard-fought battles. After the war was over his father removed to Fairfield and embarked in the Cuban trade, with good success till before and during the war of 1812<sup>5</sup> his accumulations were

swept away by a series of misfortunes, under the operation of the Berlin and Milan decrees, and in consequence of the unfaithfulness of one of his captains. Till the age of fourteen he faithfully attended the village school, except that meanwhile he showed the adventurous spirit of the family by going twice to Carolina as a cabin-boy, with the consent of his mother, as he is careful to add, and also that he was thus cured of going to sea. In 1807, at the age of fourteen he was taken as clerk to Newbern, N. C., by Mr. Stephen Fowler, who had been a schoolmaster to the elder Professor Silliman, and in the year following was transferred to the drug-store in the same town of his brother-in-law, the late Dr. Webb; continuing there till the spring of 1812, when as he was on a visit to his parents, war was declared against Great Britain. It may be remarked that in that early period great numbers of young men from New England found at the South, on the coast and in the interior, fields of active enterprise in the way of trade, and occasionally laid the foundations for large fortunes. The following year, at the age of twenty, he was solicited to act as supercargo of a vessel bound for North Carolina, which should run the British blockade at Sandy Hook, and provide itself with a return cargo of pitch and other naval stores then bringing a high price in New York. Being suc-

cessful in both enterprises he was made a partner of the house before he was 21; commencing his almost uniformly successful, and always sagacious career. In two years he showed his self-reliance and sagacity, when finding his house at the close of the war in possession of a large stock of goods bought at war prices and under heavy liabilities, he sold them at low rates as rapidly as possible "contrary to the judgment but not to the consent of his partners," and rapidly converted the returns into naval stores which still continued high at New York; "much to the joy of his associates and surprise of his more timid and tardy neighbors who had not believed in the rapid decline of goods and had looked on these bold operations with no little misgiving and astonishment, many of whom (and very worthy men I recollect they were) had finally to follow in the stream of wide-spread failures and ruin that overtook the trading community after the peace of 1815."

In 1816, prices having fallen in North Carolina to a ruinous point, and his firm having still on hand a large stock of goods, he set off on horseback upon a solitary journey of exploration of a thousand miles, much of it through the then Indian territory. His destination was the new settlements in Alabama to which emigrants were then rapidly flowing. After visiting several infant

towns, he fixed upon Mobile as his future home, then containing 1,000 inhabitants, and ordered at once his entire stock of goods worth some \$50,000 to be shipped to this port. They did not arrive till the spring of 1817, when pursuing the policy already adopted he sold them very rapidly at low prices, investing the proceeds in cotton and peltries, in what was almost the first cargo that was sent directly from Mobile to New York. In view of what was regarded by many as the unfortunate location of Mobile as a sea-port, Mr. Sheffield in connection with several enterprising merchants undertook to locate and build up another port on the other side of the bay. The enterprise proved unsuccessful, and after five years of hard labor he returned to Mobile in 1822 no better in his fortunes than when he began. Here he remained prosecuting a very extensive and lucrative business till the spring of 1835, when he removed from Mobile to New Haven at the age of forty-two. His reasons for this course were thus expressed in a letter to a friend under date of July 20, 1834 :

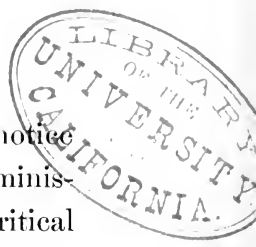
“I have made up my own mind positively to leave Mobile early next spring and settle somewhere north of the Potomac.”  
\* \* \* “My great object is to live in a community where I can give such education to my children as will fit them for a rational and religious course in this life and prepare them for a better. These considerations have far greater weight with me than all the money I might accumulate here at the expense of

them, and in selecting a residence for life, I shall have this object constantly in view without regard to personal considerations or business."

In 1876, in reviewing his political life, he writes thus :

"In the spring of 1835 I removed from Mobile and took up a permanent residence in New Haven. The ill health of Mrs. Sheffield in that sickly climate and the rapid increase of my family—which we were unwilling to have educated in a *slave* community—and above all an abhorrence of slavery made this course necessary."

His career in business during his residence at Mobile for about twenty-two years was eminently sagacious, enterprising and honorable. He very early formed most advantageous connections with eminent merchants in New York, Liverpool and Havre, for whom large operations were undertaken and to whom large consignments were made. For several years he was one of the largest shippers in Mobile. In the year 1830 when he was thirty-eight years old, he was selected by Nicolas Biddle, then president of the United States Bank, as the confidential director of the Branch United States Bank in Mobile and charged with duties of an especially delicate character in very hazardous times, having been told on receiving his appointment that "the Board of the Branch Bank at Philadelphia would rely on his watchfulness, pru-



dence and independence in giving them early notice of irregular business or favoritism." His administration of this trust during several very critical months was such as to be followed by the offer of the presidency—which he declined, and also, from considerations of delicacy, resigned his place as director. His experiences up to this time were regarded by himself as having constituted and completed his education as a man of business. His own reflections upon the lessons which he derived from this discipline are at once so characteristic of the man and so valuable in themselves that I quote them at length.

The following was written from Dresden at the age of sixty-four, in a familiar letter to his sons:

“ But you must bear in mind that I was then young, especially when I was called upon, in 1815 in Carolina and in 1817 in Mobile, to exercise my own judgment in important matters, in which not only my own credit and *future prospects* were concerned, but the interests and credit of my associates, who were too distant to be consulted. Of course my reflections and decision as to the proper course of action, being in a measure responsible to others, made a deep and lasting impression on my mind, of the necessity of mature and earnest reflection in forming one’s judgment, and after thus arriving at a conclusion, of *then* acting with energy in carrying out your plans. My decision and prompt action *then*, no doubt gave some direction and tone to my future business course and standing; and I now recommend you never to decide hastily, and without mature and honest reflection in important matters; but earnestly seek in your own judgment the *right course*, and when you have decided, *then* to act with *energy* and *promptitude*—

taking care in all public matters or enterprises to throw your own interests and your own feelings to the winds rather than suffer them to have any, the least, influence in your actions or decisions. Swerve not from your convictions of right and duty; learn to say *no* with decision, *yes* with caution. *No* with decision when it meets a temptation; *yes* with caution when it implies a promise;—and however things may eventuate, you will have the satisfaction of having acted honestly, and may sleep quietly.”

The following was written at the age of eighty-three :

“When I embarked in commerce, the most interesting of all business occupations, my mind was called to a higher plane and tone, for then it became incumbent on me to seek knowledge and correct information; and whether it was cotton or coffee, in the former of which I was for many years chiefly and largely engaged, it was all-important to success that I should make myself fully and accurately acquainted with the productions of all climates and countries, and to carefully watch and note the probable causes which were likely to increase or diminish production, not only in one’s own country but in all parts of the world where cotton was grown, and at the same time watch and carefully consider all the causes which were likely to increase or diminish consumption.”

We return again to our narrative. We had followed Mr. Sheffield to the removal of his family to New Haven, at the age of forty-two. This removal did not terminate his business relations with Mobile. For some nine years afterwards he regularly spent his winters in that city for the purpose of buying and shipping cotton, and was brought into still closer connection and higher reputation with the merchants and capitalists of New York.



The next most important event of his life, so far as his subsequent history is concerned, was the purchase of the majority of the stock of the so-called Farnington Canal, the legal title of which was the New Haven & Northampton Co. The most of this stock had fallen very largely into the hands of Mr. Sheffield at a low price, and for several years it yielded a moderate profit to Mr. Sheffield and Mr. Henry Farnam, its principal owners, the latter gentleman having been connected with it as an engineer from the beginning of its construction.

The purchase and operation of this canal led to an intimate and unbroken friendship with Mr. Farnam in which both found the greatest satisfaction. This friendship grew out of the most intimate business relations in which each admirably supplemented the other, and to the perfect confidence and the united strength which attended this union should be ascribed the inception and the early completion of some of the most important enterprises of the present generation. The management of this canal naturally brought Mr. Sheffield into intimate connections with the capitalists and merchants of New Haven, and into active zeal for the promotion of its interests by other public works.

Few people know how prominent and influential was Mr. Sheffield in the first conception and actual construction of the railway to New York. In the

summer of 1843, being a fellow director with Judge Samuel J. Hitchcock, of the railway from Hartford to New Haven, Mr. Sheffield suggested to him the project of a railway to the great metropolis. It was only after much persuasion that he induced him to consider it, and by many and repeated arguments that he convinced him that it was both desirable and practicable. On leaving for Mobile for the winter he employed the Judge to procure a charter at the ensuing session of the Legislature for a railway to the west line of Connecticut. This was accomplished in the spring of 1844. A survey of the route was made immediately at Mr. Sheffield's expense by Professor Alexander C. Twining, and books for subscription were opened. To interest the house of Baring Brothers in this new, and at that time very doubtful, enterprise, Mr. Sheffield went in person to London, in 1845, on his first visit to England and for this single object, and after much effort received a favorable response to his proposal on condition that Judge Hitchcock should be the president. The next steamer brought to England the news of his death and for a while interrupted these plans. Mr. Farnam had, in the meantime, during Mr. Sheffield's absence, at his own expense, negotiated the right of way with 360 out of 420 claimants on the line which had been fixed. As the result of these

movements the subscriptions were made, and the road put under contract, Mr. Sheffield being in the direction, and giving up the most of his time for two years to the enterprise. But while this was going on he with Mr. Farnam had embarked in the enterprise of constructing another railway along the line of the Farmington canal, Mr. Sheffield having purchased at an enhanced price the stock which he had previously sold. This was completed for twenty-eight miles to Plainville with great rapidity and almost entirely at Mr. Sheffield's expense, Mr. Farnam and himself being the sole shareholders with the exception of \$2,000. Subsequent complications in several directions sprung up which were perseveringly adverse to this road, many of which were exceedingly vexatious to Mr. Sheffield. These effectually interrupted the contemplated connection of this road with Springfield, broke off entirely his personal relations with the road to New York and very soon induced both Mr. Sheffield and Mr. Farnam to transfer their interests and activities to another and distant field, not, however, without leaving upon Mr. Sheffield a series of burdensome and expensive responsibilities for the remaining thirty years of his life in extending and completing the Canal railway.

His new enterprises in the west, however, were inspiring and full of hope, and their splendid and

most honorable success were most gratifying to his ambition. They were also largely remunerative. The first of these undertakings was the connection with Chicago of one of the great western lines, by the construction of the last 100 miles that had long been delayed. This was easily accomplished by the credit of Mr. Sheffield and the energy of his associate, and the day after Chicago was connected for the first time by rail with New York, the price of real estate was doubled in the great city of the lakes. The next movement was still bolder in its proposal and more successful in its achievement. It was another movement towards the Pacific by the construction of the Chicago and Rock Island R. R. This was finished in five-eighths of the time contracted for, and with scarcely the least friction or delay, by reason of the confidence which was felt in the financial ability and honesty and the skill and energy of the two contractors. At its completion, in 1854, 1,000 guests were invited by Messrs. Sheffield and Farnam to a holiday excursion, which was one of the most memorable and instructive that was ever celebrated in this country. The next movement westward was the bridging of the Mississippi. Other and important interests arrested this enterprise and serious legal difficulties were interposed which were finally set aside by the highest tribunal of the nation. This being accomplished,

the work of moving farther westward was, after some hesitation, finally left by both to other hands. In all these movements and the transactions incident to them, Mr. Sheffield made large additions to his estate, although he was till nearly the end of his life vexed and burdened by the many calls which were made upon him to save and make sure his first railway investment. It was most gratifying to him and his friends to find that this enterprise, which had been so long a drain upon his estate, and a constant trial to his patience, by an unexpected event a few months before his death, had at last made good the confidence, the pledges and assurances which he had embarked in it. To those who knew how keenly he had felt this long delay, the relief was almost as grateful as it was to himself who had suffered so long in his patience, his person and his pride.

I have already given in Mr. Sheffield's own words the principles which he had early adopted for the direction of his business life. From these principles he never deviated, and he held them if possible with greater warmth and tenacity at the end than at the beginning. They were a part of his manhood, the expression of his living self, the application of sound ethical and practical principles. They will always hold good in the acquisition and

protection of property, in the ambitions and competitions of exchange, in the hopes of enterprise, in the projects that build cities and people deserts, that tunnel mountains and open highways for nations. These principles are simple and yet easily understood, as applicable on the one hand to the commerce of two children as on the other to the adjustment of the claims of two nations which rule the world. Separate from these principles trade is the meanest huckstering, enterprise is but selfish aggrandizement, bargains solemn farces, and contracts instruments for legal knavery. From the earliest days of trade and commerce down to the present, there have been merchants and bankers who were not only princely in their state and splendor but also princely in their honor and truth, not only princely in the reach of their plans and aims but princely in their methods of fulfilling them. There have also been merchants and bankers who have been the meanest and the most cruel of their kind. To which of these classes Mr. Sheffield belonged I need not say. Whatever else might be said of him it was always true that as a man of business his sense of honor was as quick as the blush of a maiden and hence it was that whenever he gave his word, no matter how largely or speedily any credit was needed, credit and money were always at his command. I need not say that he abhorred from the bottom of

his soul sharp practices of every sort—that he was never content to fulfill his word or bond merely to the letter if he could by any means evade its spirit.

There are eminent men of business who say of their associates that every man is to be presumed a knave, thereby confessing that this is true of themselves. There are also lookers-on who sometimes conclude that the artifices of modern exchange and the enormous opportunities of capital are such that what men call honor and high-toned sentiment must soon be forever dismissed from the transactions of traffic and the lawful competitions of enterprise and exchange must end in violence and robbery. To Mr. Sheffield such utterances were simply blasphemy against his guild and against his manhood. He was not honorable simply from the traditions of his guild, but he was honorable from the convictions of his conscience and the sentiments of his heart.

Thus far have we followed Mr. Sheffield in the transactions of business and the accumulation of wealth. We should naturally follow him next in the use of his property and the exercise of benevolence. The most conspicuous and widely known of his benefactions were made to the Scientific School which will always be known by his name. These benefactions began the year after the successful completion of the Rock Island Railway, in

1855, and continued till his death, with an unre-mitted flow for a period of twenty-seven years. His attention had previously been favorably directed to the college by the personal interest and sympathy in his early railway operations of two or three members of its Faculty, at a time when personal sympathy was especially grateful. After the marriage of his daughter in 1854 to Professor John A. Porter, the Professor of Analytical and Agricultural Chemistry, 1852-1864, in the then infant and struggling "Department of Philosophy and the Arts," he had made his first donation to this department of some five thousand dollars. This was just before he went abroad in 1856 for an absence of two years or more. Professor Porter was a broad-minded and sanguine scholar, of varied knowledge and culture in both literature and science, who was well fitted to inspire a man like Mr. Sheffield with interest in the prosperity and plans of the then infant institution. It was a time when the so-called New Education was beginning to be talked of, and when varied projects were devised and discussed for promoting an education which should be at once more technically scientific and more positively practical than had been provided in the colleges. To meet these wants in a tentative way one section of the department already spoken of was organized, and its friends soon be-

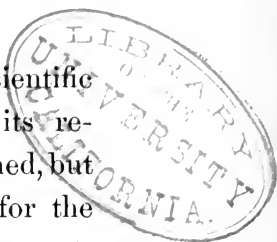


came convinced that for its successful development it needed a separate building and apparatus as also a fund for the endowment of professorships. All these were in part provided for by Mr. Sheffield about the time of his return from Europe in 1858. The old Medical College was purchased for \$16,500, then enlarged and refitted at an expense of \$35,000, and completed as Sheffield Hall in time for the opening of the school in September, 1860. In October of the same year, Mr. Sheffield perceiving that an additional endowment was essential to its success added \$40,000, making according to his statements an expenditure of \$101,557.92.

In 1865-6, after the State grant of \$135,000, he again enlarged Sheffield Hall at an expense of \$46,739.38, and added a Library Fund of \$10,000. Later through his influence Mrs. Higgin gave £5,000 to endow a professorship, and at her death added a legacy of £1,000 for the same purpose. In 1870-1 he gave the land and contracted for the erection of North Sheffield Hall at a cost of \$115,360. Other large gifts are not named, which included liberal contributions for specific objects, and frequent additions to its income. All these gifts may be estimated as something over \$450,000. By his will he directed that his handsome residence and the grounds attached should eventually become

its property, and that the school which bears his name should share equally with each of his children in the final distribution of his large estate. All these gifts may be safely estimated as considerably more than \$1,000,000. It is worthy of notice that whenever anything was contributed to the school by others, Mr. Sheffield was inspired to add a liberal gift of his own. The gift of the State Fund induced him to enlarge Sheffield Hall and to add to its apparatus and library. The efforts for endowment in 1869-71 which were responded to to the extent of some \$90,000, including the gift of Mrs. Higgin, led him to add some \$76,000 to the endowment previously given by himself.

It also deserves to be noted that the relations of Mr. Sheffield to the trustees and officers of the College and Scientific School have uniformly been most pleasant and friendly. Every one of his gifts was inspired by an intelligent and unshaken confidence in the theory of the school and in the wisdom of its managers. It is most noteworthy that he never manifested the desire or made the effort to direct its policy or interfere with its administration. When elected a member of the Corporation of the College by the votes of the graduates, he took his seat at a single session in acknowledgment of the compliment, but forthwith resigned his place. He never attended the Commencement of



the College or the Anniversary of the Scientific School. Whenever any enlargement of its resources was needed he was glad to be informed, but he was content to understand the reasons for the opinions of those in whom he confided, without attempting to alter them or advancing a theory of his own. It was enough for him to confide in the judgment of men whom he believed to be honest, and knew were competent. In these respects he was a model worthy of imitation, and presented a striking contrast to many patrons of schools of learning and institutions of beneficence. While in some relations he manifested a sensitive distrust of men, he was slow to withdraw his confidence from those whom he had learned to trust. In respect of intelligent, cheerful, abundant, untiring, and modest liberality to institutions of learning, Mr. Sheffield was an example to the men of wealth in all this land. His liberality of this description has been surpassed by few in respect to the amount of his gifts. Here and there indeed one has given larger sums with the express purpose of founding an institution which should be called after his name. Mr. Sheffield began his benefactions with no such intentions or expectations, but from a personal conviction of the value and promise of a tentative school which was then regarded only as an offshoot of a great university. It grew in his esteem and confidence as

he witnessed its well-earned success by honorable methods, on a basis of honest work. It also grew in his affections, and before he knew it, it was adopted as his child. His opportunity was a rare one indeed; but it is perhaps more rare that such an opportunity finds a man sagacious enough to understand and improve it.

Mr. Sheffield did not limit his public benefactions to the Scientific School. He was for many years a Trustee of Trinity College and warmly interested in its prosperity, and gave to it, from time to time, donations amounting in all to \$16,800.

The Berkeley Divinity School, of Middletown, also had his warm and active sympathy, which was manifested by liberal gifts from time to time, to meet its pressing wants, amounting in all to \$75,000, and by a generous legacy at his death of \$100,000.

Mr. Sheffield did not limit his benefactions to institutions of higher education. The earliest object of any distinguished liberality after he became a resident in New Haven was the Parish School of Trinity Church. He found this school, in 1854, in a straitened condition, and at the instance of a few well-known ladies of the parish, he gave \$5,000 as a fund for the support of a teacher, and a second \$5,000 after his return from Europe in 1858. About this time the necessity for a Parish Home was

pressed upon his attention by the same ladies. As the result of this solicitation and of his own deliberate and serious thoughts, he provided for the excellent and interesting suite of buildings on George Street, which include a Parish School-house, an Old Ladies' Home, and a Chapel, with accommodations for a minister at large, at a cost of some \$168,000, all of which were given, in trust, to the Parish of Trinity Church, and solemnly consecrated on the 24th of July, 1869.

This enterprise of love symbolizes those strong though partially concealed sensibilities of his nature, his tenderness for neglected children, for helpless old age, and for wanderers from the Christian fold. His sympathizing benevolence and his readiness to relieve suffering are illustrated by a recollection from his own childhood which he was impelled to record on a casual slip of paper at the age of 88. I copy some portions only :

When I was a little boy at the village school, and had learned to read, I found on the last leaf of my spelling-book, or school-primer, a woodcut of an old man in great-coat, partly bent forward, and under it the following :

'Pity the sorrows of a poor old man,  
Whose trembling limbs have brought him to your door,  
Whose days are lengthened to the latest span,  
Give to the poor and God will bless your store.'

At this picture I used to look with pity for the "poor old man." I recollect distinctly asking my mother if the poor old man ever came to our door, and she replied no, but he might come some day. "Well," I replied, "if he does I will give him *all* my walnuts." To which she replied that he might need food, etc. "Yes, I know you will give him all that, and I'll give him my walnuts, too."

That picture and those lines made an early and deep impression on my mind and heart. I never have forgotten them. I hardly ever meet a beggar at my door without being reminded of them.

I add a few lines composed on a cold, stormy day—Jan. 31, 1878—"applications at the door for help, money or bread, being constant and urgent."

Oft called to the door, where shivering and cold  
Stand the poor and the needy, the young and the old.  
"My mother is poorly, my father is dead,  
The children are crying—almost starving for bread."

I glanced toward the parlor, where health and good cheer  
Most happily reign throughout the whole year;  
And I said to myself, "Can I assume a cold heart,  
And say to these beggars, you must hungry depart?"

Shall one whom Providence has raised above want  
Shut his eyes and his ears on the hungry and gaunt?  
Or shall he remember what the good book records:  
"What you give to the poor you lend to the Lord."

Shiftless fathers and mothers may lie in their bed,  
And send out their children thus begging for bread,  
But the children themselves, all hungry and cold,  
Have a claim on the wealthy grown old.

Whatever their faults, whatever their sin,  
Their appealing, sad looks all my sympathy win.  
So I haste to my drawer with a cheerful, kind heart,  
Get them "tickets for bread," and see them depart.

Some with thanks and loud blessings, some in silence take  
leave,  
Some with stolid indifference their thanks faintly breathe,  
While others more grateful (and these not a few),  
Show a tear in their eye as they bid me adieu.

May I always remember whose steward I am,  
And relieve poor distress whenever I can.  
For the rich and the lordly, we are taught in His word,  
Like the poor and the lowly, ascend naked to God.

The child, in respect to human sympathy, was eminently "father of the man." The tenderness of childhood never left the inner sanctuary of his soul. Prosperity did not harden his heart. Nor did his frequent experience of ingratitude from the poor, or his occasional disgust at the unworthy among the prosperous, embitter his feelings toward mankind. His earlier charities were also conspicuously religious, in consistency with his New England notions and the early associations of his religious home.

The transition is natural to his religious feelings and his religious life. Of the growth and characteristics of this life he has left an interesting memoir which is characterized by simplicity, earnestness and humility. He was baptized in childhood in the

Episcopal Church and trained to attend its services, and in all his early wanderings was accustomed to attend religious worship regularly on Sundays at whatever house of worship was convenient. When with others he commenced the settlement of Blakeley he united with his associates in "providing religious services for the people and almost the first money of any amount that I felt at liberty to give away was \$500 towards erecting a two story building to be used as a school house during the week and church on Sundays." "We employed the Rev. J. P. Warren, Presbyterian, of Massachusetts, and wife, as preacher and teachers. She was the sister of Harriet Newell, so celebrated as the first female missionary." "When Blakeley went down and Mobile went up we removed to Mobile and I was an early promoter of church work there, and subsequently subscribed \$2,000 towards building the Government Street Church." "The last two years of our residence there we were regular attendants at the Government Street Church, Presbyterian, under the charge of Rev. Mr. Johnson, a most excellent and eloquent preacher." "When we removed to New Haven, in 1835, . . . a more serious enquiry and examination of ourselves occupied our minds and under these good influences we became members of Trinity Church, and in September, 1836, we were confirmed by



Bishop Brownell." The thoughts and feelings which he expresses in this connection are too sacred to be repeated here. They are thoroughly characteristic of the man and reveal the generous simplicity and yet humble self-distrust which marked him as uniformly upright before God and downright before man. He certainly endeavored to walk with God by a definite and supreme purpose for the last half of his life—although to use his often repeated language he was constantly stumbling in his path. Yet still his prayer was renewed and most devoutly—"Lead thou me on."

I need not say that Mr. Sheffield was a man of superior intellect and that this superiority was manifested in the acuteness, penetration and forecast of his judgment, and by the skill and success with which he made his business life to become an efficient school of training to his plastic mind. He delighted in the use of the pen and he made the practice of writing a business and delight. Had he given himself greater leisure and opportunity for the culture of literature, for which he had a decided taste, he might have become an accomplished writer, as he certainly could not but be an able critic. Men of letters, technically so-called, are by no means aware how much and various a discipline of intellect is involved in the composition of a good business paper, especially when the relations involved

are complicated, and the positions are disputed or questioned. Such productions are, for obvious reasons, not usually classed among those called literary. And yet many such require for their composition a great variety of the highest intellectual qualities and such as can come only by training of some sort—either the training of the schools or the training of life, more usually the training of both. Clear statement, acute analysis, exhaustive argument, decisive confutation, orderly method, felicitous diction and elevated sentiment, are all conspicuous in many a business letter and report. Had these qualities been applied in other forms of activity, they might have brought to many a merchant the laurel which has usually been reserved for the philosopher and poet, for the critic and orator. These considerations suggest how important the mental discipline and culture of the college may become in their relation to the activities of commercial and practical life, and how essential to success in business is the achievement of a discriminating and comprehensive judgment, clear and methodical statement, and even of eloquent and effective diction. Mr. Sheffield set the highest value upon these qualifications, and upon the value of a liberal education to develop and mature them, and for this reason he supported schools of learning with such lavish liberality. He may in some respects have

built more wisely than he knew, but it was altogether in harmony with his judgment that the school which bears his name, early became more than a school of special skill and limited research and was lifted up into a college of liberal culture which aims as specifically to discipline the intellect and character as it does to impart technical knowledge and skill.

It was impossible that a man of such largeness of views and of so wide an acquaintance with commercial and public affairs should not be a man of decided political opinions and ardent political sympathies. Like many of his fellow-merchants at the South, especially in those early times, he was known as a man of Northern principles during the many years in which the questions which divided the people of the South were those of Nullification and State rights on the one side and Unionism and Federal authority on the other. He cast his first vote with great energy, at Newbern, N. C., in 1814, for what was then called the Federal ticket. Party spirit was at fever heat and Mr. Sheffield was brought into critical relations with dangerous men, one of whom made a deadly assault upon his person. The event was reported through the country and made no little sensation. Subsequently, at Mobile, during the exciting times of Nullification, from 1830 to 1835, he was again very thoroughly

aroused by the preparations and threats of an active resistance to the collection of certain duties on cotton bagging at Charleston and Mobile, and was prominent as a member and promoter of a *quasi* military organization of some sixty or seventy northern residents for the purpose of defending the United States authorities against violence.

These excitements were scarcely over when by his removal to the North he encountered the rising waves of a movement of a very different character—the Anti-slavery movement which in varying forms and varying fortunes finally led to the memorable Civil War, in which American slavery perished forever. With the anti-slavery movement as such in any of its phases and organizations, Mr. Sheffield never sympathized, much as he had learned to dread and abhor slavery. He withdrew in silent grief and disdain from all political parties when he gave his last vote at any election for Bell and Everett. The war was to him an event in which he had no complacency in any of its aspects except in its assertion of the sovereignty of the Union. In any other relation he could not look upon it with the least satisfaction. He could not sympathize with his own family and many of his lifelong associates in any hopes or anticipations of possible good. His own mind was beset with the gloomiest apprehensions as to the final result in

respect to the integrity and resources of the nation. The effect upon his feelings of this almost solitary position could not be happy as the sun of his life was beginning to decline and he found himself so isolated from many eminent men with whom he had been accustomed to agree in opinion, and shut up to his solitary forebodings of the manifold calamities which he feared for his country. But he made this position no excuse for the neglect of his social duties and continued in the active discharge of his accustomed neighborly courtesies and in the administration of public and private charities. He contributed liberally to alleviate the hardships and sufferings of the soldiers in the field and the hospital. The fact deserves notice that many of his most liberal contributions were made after the war broke out—after he was more than seventy years old. When the war was well over and the many ugly questions which peace brought with itself were in some sort settled, he more than acquiesced in the extinction of slavery though he never forgot to sympathize with the personal sufferings and hopes of his old acquaintances at the South. At the same time he fell back with more than accustomed loyalty upon his recollections of Clay and Webster, and the school of patriots and orators which they represented.

The fact is not to be concealed that in some respects Mr. Sheffield's life was more or less isolated from the most of his fellow citizens in New Haven, and that he felt it to be so to a degree which was more or less wounding to his sensitive nature. It is not difficult to explain how this should happen. He came here to reside in middle life, a stranger to the many who had been associated with one another in their own youth and manhood. He came here with the prestige of a large fortune and the social elevation and consequent social distance which necessarily befal most men of great wealth—being withal too sensitive to seem to court popularity or conspicuousness of any sort. His first important business investment was in an enterprise in which every individual had lost faith and hope, and which he shouldered almost alone. The conduct of this enterprise would bring him into no special sympathy with the younger men who had their fortunes to make or with the older who had their accumulations to protect. His second movement, viz., for the initiation of the railway to New York, was just beginning to work for the welfare of New Haven and his own well deserved reputation for his efforts in this direction, when he was again painfully disappointed. The railway movement to Plainville was felt to be his own for the same reason as in the purchase and management of the canal

he had been left to himself. This investment soon involved new vexations and responsibilities. Disappointment seemed to him to attend this as it had attended his other honest efforts for the well-being of the city; or rather, the battles for which the city as he thought had left him to fight alone. One complication succeeded another, one delay followed another, one advance of a hundred thousand dollars made another necessary. Meanwhile light was dawning in a distant field. A new sphere of hope and enterprise was opened, in which he was splendidly successful, and in which the reputation for sagacity and energy and public spirit which he had earned in his earlier life was more than made good. And then how nobly did he use much of the wealth thus obtained in generous investments which have added greatly to the beauty and solid interests of the city. He provided first a hospital for the aged, a school of charity for the young, a church for the poor, and finally with lavish and persevering liberality he built up a great school of science and culture, which has widened and enhanced the reputation of the college and of the city itself.

It is not surprising for the reasons which have been given that in some sense Mr. Sheffield should have failed to see and feel how greatly he was honored in this quiet and undemonstrative community,

that he did not fully appreciate how truly the solid men among us regarded him with affectionate gratitude and honorable pride, and how honestly they would honor his memory when he should be gone. Among the many inequalities of this unequal life of ours, none is more painful than that so many good men should finish their lives not knowing how greatly they were honored and loved by those whose love and honor they would have prized as the most precious of all their gains in life.

Those of us who knew Mr. Sheffield as a neighbor can testify that he was eminently courteous, sympathizing and just, and that the more intimately we knew him the more emphatically did we find him a warm and true friend who rejoiced with us in our joys and mourned with us in our bereavements and sorrows. Few of his acquaintances knew how warm and tender-hearted he was, how sensitive to the singing of birds, to the indications of spring, to the beautiful in nature, to the pathos of literature and the sorrows and joys of human kind, nor how freshly these emotions warmed his heart to the end of his life.

In his own family he was eminently affectionate and tender hearted both as husband and father, finding in his own home the haven of his rest, and looking within it for his most satisfying delights. His children look back to many hours of their ear-



liest childhood as made merry by his cheerful sympathy, and to the shaded years of their own family life as illumined and hallowed by his watchful care, his sensitive tenderness and his grave admonitions. He died \* in peace and gratitude and love and hope in the presence of them all. As they watched the ebbing of his life they could not but bless their Father in Heaven for the goodness which had given them such a father on earth, while they could not but weep that a blessing so long continued should be taken away.

“So long continued!” For nearly ninety years he lived, and when he died his eye was scarcely dim nor was his natural force greatly abated.

We see him no more, but he lives with God. Meanwhile the great school which he almost created, the poor whom he blessed with his bounty and his love, the city which he enriched by his enterprise and beautified by his taste, the Church in which he was a devout and humble believer, all unite to hallow and bless his memory.

\* February 16, 1882.

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