

E 415

.9

F4 P9

E415
9 F499

WILLIAM PITT FESSENDEN:

A

MEMOIR

PREPARED FOR THE

NEW-ENGLAND HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL REGISTER

FOR

APRIL, 1871,

BY

GEO. HENRY PREBLE.



REPRINTED FOR PRIVATE DISTRIBUTION, WITH ADDITIONS.

BOSTON:
DAVID CLAPP & SON, PRINTERS.
1871.

E 413
8
F 279

TWO HUNDRED COPIES PRINTED.

Ms. Aug. 31. 12

THE FESSENDEN FAMILY.

THE subject of this biographic sketch was descended from Nicholas Fessenden, who was born in England 1651 (?), and came to New-England previous to 1674. In the early colonial times the name was variously written—Phisenden, Fishenden, Fessington, Fezington, &c.

JOHN FESSENDEN, the first of the name who came to America, was among the earliest settlers of Cambridge, Mass., and was admitted a freeman, 1640-41. According to a MS. of the Rev. Thos. Shepard, of Cambridge, now in the library of the N. E. Historic, Genealogical Society, he received the confession of "Goodman Fessington, Jan. 8, 1640," and admitted him to church membership. Nicholas, the ancestor of William Pitt, was his nephew and heir. Savage says, Nicholas "came over in 1674, perhaps with his wife Margaret, to inherit his uncle's estate." According to another account, John emigrated from the county of Kent, to Cambridge, in 1636, accompanied by his wife Jane, nephew Nicholas, and niece Hannah, and died Dec. 28, 1666, constituting his nephew Nicholas and niece Hannah his heirs. His widow, Jane, died Jan. 13, 1682, aged 80, without issue. By still another account, Nicholas came to this country when a small boy to live with his uncle, which is probably correct, and whose heir all accounts agree he was. His sister Hannah* was married, first, to John Sewall, of Newbury, Oct. 28, 1674, and second, to Jacob Toppan. She was a native of Canterbury, as appears by her gravestone in York, Me., viz.: "Here lyes

* Vol. xvii. of the New-England Historical and Genealogical Register, at page 304, has some memoranda by Judge Sewall, who was a brother of John Sewall the husband of Hannah Fessenden, which are taken from the Calendar pages of Triggs's Oxford Almanac for 1689. Under date "Monday, Jan. 14, 1688-9," he says, "Rode on a Coach to Canterbury. Visited Aunt Fessenden her son John and three daughters, Mary, Elizabeth and Jane, as I take it. Cousin Jno sup'd with us at ye Red Lion."

This "Aunt" F. was probably the mother of Hannah and Nicholas Fessenden, as it was the custom of Judge S. to call the parents of his brothers' wives and sisters' husbands, his uncles and aunts.

ye body of Mrs. Hannah Toppan born at Canterbury England 1649. married in N. England to Mr. John Sewall and after his decease to Mr Jacob Toppan both of Newbury. dec'd April 4. 1723."

NICHOLAS¹ FESSENDEN,* the American ancestor of all the existing families of the name on this continent, after the decease of his uncle John, continued to reside in Cambridge, and was married in 1672-3, to Margaret, or Mary, Cheney, who died Dec. 10, 1717, in the 62d year of her age. By her he had fourteen children, viz.:—1. Jane, 1674; 2. Hannah, 1676, both of whom died in infancy; 3. John, 1677; 4. Nicholas, 1680; 5. Thomas, 1682, d. an infant; 6. Thomas, 1684; 7. Margaret, 1687, d. unmar.; 8. Jane, 1688, mar. Sam'l Windship, high sheriff of Middlesex, 1712; 9. Mary, 1689, mar. Joshua Parker, 1712; 10. *William*,² b. 1694; 11. Joseph, 1697, mar. Mindwell Oldham, 1733; 12. Benjamin, Jan. 30, 1701; 13. Hannah, mar. John Chipman, of Sandwich; 14. Eben.

Benjamin the 12th child, born 1701, went to Sandwich, Mass., and is ancestor of the Fessendens in that quarter. The Maine Fessendens are descended from William the tenth child of Nicholas, born in Cambridge, 1694, who owned a farm there and was by trade a tanner, and who married Martha Wyeth in 1716, by whom he had eleven children.

WILLIAM³ FESSENDEN (*William*,² *Nicholas*¹), the eldest son of the first William, and grandson of Nicholas, was born in Cambridge, on the family seat near Harvard University, Dec., 1715, and was graduated at Harvard College, 1737. He was a schoolmaster, and was licensed to preach, but did not follow the vocation. He was married to Mary Palmer, Mar. 31, 1740, by whom he had six children. He instructed a public school in Cambridge, and died of apoplexy at the age of thirty-three, leaving a widow and three children, viz.: two sons and a daughter, of whom the Rev. William Fessenden was the eldest.

REV. WILLIAM⁴ FESSENDEN (*William*³ *William*²), born Nov. 3, 1747, O. S., was the grandfather of the subject of this memoir. He was graduated at Harvard College in 1768; taught a public school in Topsfield, Mass., one year, then studied divinity, and was settled as the first minister of the

* May 28, 1705. Peter Town constituted Nicholas Fessenden, Senior, one of the overseers of his will, and attached to it the following memorandum before signing:—"It is my desire, my dear wife do let Mr. Nicholas Fessenden, schoolmaster, have five pounds as a token of my respect to him, unless my wife shall want it for her own comfort—she to be the judge."

First Parish in Fryeburg, Me., Oct. 11, 1775. He was a man of sterling qualities, an earnest and devout man, distinguished for his philanthropy and hospitality, and died deeply lamented. He was twice married: 1st, to Sarah Reed, of Dunbarton, N. H., in 1771, who with her one child died the following year. In August, 1774, he was married, 2d, to Sarah Clements, of Haverhill, N. H., the wise and genial woman who long survived him, and was the mother of nine children. She died in Portland in 1836, at the house of her son, Samuel, having attained the ripe age of 83 years, and having survived her husband more than thirty years.

SAMUEL FESSENDEN, the fifth child of Rev. William⁴ and Sarah (Clements) Fessenden, was born in Fryeburg, Maine, July 16, 1784, and named for his maternal grandfather, Samuel Clements. His early education was at Fryeburg Academy, under the instruction of Amos J. Cook, a graduate of Dartmouth College, and he taught school in his native town before entering college. After entering Dartmouth College, he pursued the same occupation in Paris, Me., and Boscawen, N. H., to help out the means of finishing his college course, and took his degree with high reputation as a scholar, in 1806.

He passed his legal studies under the direction of the Hon. Judah Dana, of Fryeburg, and was admitted to the bar in 1809. He first established himself in New-Gloucester, but in 1822 removed to Portland, where he formed a connection in business with Thomas Amory Deblois, which was continued until 1854, when the partnership was dissolved in order that he might take his son Daniel W. into business with him. The new firm continued until his son was elected clerk of the courts in 1861, when, advanced in years, and with the honors and burdens of more than fifty years of professional life upon him, and with the respect of the community, he retired from all active duty in his profession to the repose of private life, which his feeble health imperatively demanded, and died in Portland, March 19, 1869, aged 84 years and 8 months, preceding his distinguished son to the grave only about six months.

Samuel Fessenden in early life, by a course of general classical reading, stored his mind with a copious knowledge. His standing in college was among the best scholars, a rank he sustained in after life. In 1828, he was elected a member of the Maine Historical Society; and in 1846, Bowdoin College conferred upon him the degree of doctor of laws. In 1828, on the death of President Tyler, of Dartmouth College, he was spoken of as pre-

sident of that institution, but his aversion to changing his mode of life suspended further effort. He early took a deep interest in the political affairs of the country, as his father, who had represented the town in the general court of Massachusetts, had before him. Both were strong and undeviating federalists of the Washington and Hamilton school. The name he gave his eldest son, the subject of this memoir, indicates his politics, as none but the federalists believed in Pitt.

The year after he settled in New-Gloucester, he was invited by the federalists there, to deliver the 4th of July oration. Francis Eaton, another lawyer of the town, was the orator of the democrats. The town was strongly federal, and that party erected a flag-staff in front of the house in which the oration was to be delivered, on which they hoisted the national flag. Col. Foxcroft, the democratic leader, sent word that the flag must be taken down. Hearing which, Mr. Fessenden stationed two men by the staff, who assured him the flag should not be lowered during the oration, unless over their dead bodies. It is needless to say the banner floated unmolested. It was on this occasion that Parson Moseley, the minister of the parish and a high federalist, read the hymn beginning—

“ Break out their teeth, Almighty God ;
Those teeth of lions, dyed in blood.”

Samuel Fessenden was the representative of New-Gloucester in the general court of Massachusetts in 1814, '15, and '16, and a senator from the county in 1818 and '19; advocating throughout with great power the principles of the federal party. In 1814, during the discussion of the proposition to send delegates to the Hartford convention, he said, in a speech against the national administration, he was “ready to take the constitution in one hand and the sword in another, and demand the constitutional rights of the people.” The last year of his senatorship, the district of Maine swung from her ancient moorings by the side of the old commonwealth of Massachusetts into independent life. In 1825 and '26, he represented Portland in the legislature of the new State. After that he became engrossed in his law business to the exclusion of every thing else. He early became a member of the Masonic order, and for a number of years was grand master of the grand lodge of Maine.

His commanding figure; his full, round voice; his emphatic and graceful elocution; his powers, physical and mental, peculiarly qualified him for a prominent position in a deliberative assembly. He distinguished himself so

much in the legislature that, in 1818, he was elected major general of the 10th division of the militia of Massachusetts—a commission he continued to hold under the separate organization of Maine for fourteen years, and which fairly entitled him to the title of “General,” by which he was commonly known. He collected around him, as his staff, gentlemen of high standing in the community, and his parades were brilliant and attractive.

General Fessenden followed the federal party into its various changes; to national republican under John Quincy Adams, and to whig, when Clay led off the party. But when the anti-slavery power was acquiring force, with his accustomed ardor, and from a sincere conviction, he entered the ranks of that then unpopular party, and did yeoman’s service in its cause. It was a matter of principle with him, and he was regardless of what men might say if it conflicted with his sense of right. He received colored persons into his house; he took them with him to church; he visited them in their families, and encouraged them in every way to attain a place in society. In 1814, he introduced a colored man, Macon B. Allen, into the district court while in session, and moved the court that he be admitted to practise as an attorney and counsellor-at-law, under the existing law of Maine, which rendered any citizen eligible to admission who produced a certificate of good moral character: but Allen was rejected on the ground that he was not a citizen. Afterwards having sustained a satisfactory examination before a committee of the bar, he was recommended, and admitted, but never entered into practice in Maine. In 1841, General Fessenden was the candidate of the anti-slavery party for governor of the state. As a matter of course he was extremely popular with the colored people, and at a festival which they held, one of the race gave as a complimentary toast:—“General Fessenden, though he has a white face, he has a black heart.”

Probably no lawyer in Maine ever argued so many cases to a jury as General Fessenden, and perhaps none tried more important questions of law before the court. Certainly none was more successful in civil or criminal practice. For over half a century in active practice, in the courts of Cumberland, he was, for many years, the acknowledged head and Nestor of that bar, which has always been famous for its legal ability. Perhaps General Fessenden’s closest competitor for many years, was the late Simon Greenleaf, the distinguished author of the Treatise on Evidence, whose authority is accepted wherever the English language is spoken, or the common law recognized. In fidelity to the interests of his clients, General Fessenden

probably never had his superior. In criminal trials his devotion was absolute ; and we have it from his own declaration, that he never defended a person whom he believed to be guilty of the offence with which he was charged, and that indeed he had never been consulted by any such.

Dec. 16, 1813, Mr. Fessenden was married to Deborah Chandler, of New-Gloucester, who through her grandmother was a direct descendant from Governor Winslow, by whom he had eleven children.

He was the author of two orations, delivered when a young man, and of a treatise on the Institution, Duties and Importance of Juries. In 1846, the trustees of Bowdoin College conferred on him the degree of doctor of laws. A genial man, the frosts of age failed to chill the enthusiasm of his early youth. He was a sincere christian, and a gentleman of the old school ; stately, kindly in presence, liberal to the poor, and an indulgent parent. The purest sources of his enjoyment and the best influences of his life, he found in the domestic circle. Of his children—viz.: nine sons and two daughters—five of the sons were educated at Bowdoin College, and three at Dartmouth ; four were educated to the law ; three studied medicine, and one theology. Three have been members of congress, viz. :—William Pitt, Samuel Clement, and Thomas A. Deblois.

Born before the adoption of the national constitution, and entering on the duties of his profession at the close of the administration of Mr. Jefferson, he lived to witness the overthrow of the rebellion, and the annihilation of the system of slavery he so loathed ; and dying a few months before his distinguished son, he was spared the sorrow that event would have occasioned him.

His funeral took place from the residence of his son William Pitt, whose duties in Washington prevented his presence. It was attended by the members of the Cumberland bar association, of which he had been so long an associate ; by many of the race he had befriended ; by a crowd of friends, and by the grand lodge of Maine in full regalia, the latter acting as pall bearers, and performing Masonic rites at Evergreen Cemetery, where the body was deposited. On the casket in which the body rested was an elegant cross and wreaths of the rarest exotics. The features of the deceased bore a placid expression as of one who had merely lain down to rest, and such portion of the body as was visible, was caressingly entwined with ivy.

This sketch of the father shows under what influences William Pitt Fessenden grew up to manhood.

given to literature. He was some few years older than I, but we were almost the only persons in that village who were devoted to literary pursuits. Hence our companionship was constant. * * * We studied many books together; some of them not now well known: such as Bigland's History of the World, Rollin's Ancient History, then Russell's Modern Europe, or Plutarch's Lives; and we read through and through the village library, which was deemed magnificent, with its forty or fifty volumes."

On leaving college young Pitt studied, under the supervision of his father, the profession of law with the Hon. Charles S. Davis, of Portland, one of the best read lawyers of the Cumberland bar, whose kind and able counsel, and peculiar line of practice, cultivated and developed that activity of mind and skill, and readiness in equity pleading, and those brilliant powers that carried him with undeviating step, to the head of the bar of Maine, and to the leadership in the senate of the United States, and would have given him the highest seat on the bench of the supreme court of the State, had he been willing to sacrifice the noble aspirations of the political life into which he indeed had been unwillingly drawn, for the quiet and solid rewards of judicial office. A part of his time as a law student was also passed in New York with his uncle, Thomas Fessenden, a member of the New York bar.

After spending four years in the study of law, he was admitted to the bar at the age of twenty-one, and on commencing practice modestly sought the quiet little village of Bridgeton, Me. After two years practice there, he removed, in 1829, to the larger field of Portland, and joined his father and Mr. Deblois in their extensive practice; bringing to it a ready furnished mind, a keen intellect, and a certain self-possession which gave him a position far in advance of the young practitioners who were his contemporaries. Finding three able lawyers too much for one office, he sought for a short time his fortune in Bangor. From thence he was drawn, in 1832, and finally and permanently established himself in Portland, which thenceforth was the scene of his professional and political triumphs. In the year last named, he entered into a law partnership with the Hon. William Willis, and the firm continued for twenty years to do a successful business. It was during this period that Mr. Fessenden acquired his highest reputation at the bar; and it may be said that for clearness of statement, keenness of analysis and closeness of logic, no member of the profession in Maine was his superior. He was concise and direct in his argument, which seldom exceeded three-fourths of an hour, and while exciting the attention of the court was perfectly level to

WILLIAM PITT FESSENDEN.

WILLIAM PITT FESSENDEN, the eldest son of General Samuel Fessenden, was born in Boscawen, N. H., within a few miles of the birth place of Daniel Webster, October 6, 1806—the same year that his father was graduated from Dartmouth College. His mother, whose maiden name was Greene, and a native of Boscawen, was an attendant upon the services of the Episcopal Church, and later in life became a devout and consistent communicant. Her infant was accordingly baptized agreeably to the form and rite of that Church; and Daniel Webster, who had taught in the Fryeburg academy, and was an acquaintance of the Fessendens, was its godfather. Mr. Webster complained when, in 1852, he was a candidate for President before the whig national convention, in Baltimore, that many years previous he rode twenty miles over the snow, on a cold winter day, at the request of his friend, General Fessenden, to attend the christening of his son, and now that son (Wm. Pitt) was steadily voting against him in the convention. During the period of childhood, young Pitt received the assiduous and affectionate care of his father and step-mother. Inheriting, in no small degree, his father's mental qualities as a scholar, lawyer and legislator, he was especially remarkable for his ready sarcasm and wit. Endowed with a fine, nervous temperament, and studious beyond his years, he entered Bowdoin College before he had attained the age of thirteen, and graduated with high honors in 1823, before he was quite seventeen. Such precocity has had few parallels—one is that of Edward Everett; another, that of the Great Premier of England, for whom he was named, then in the height of his power. The Hon. James Brooks, who at the time was a political opponent, speaking of these early years in his eulogy before congress, said:—"Mr. Fessenden was my friend, associate, room-mate and bed-fellow, in early boyhood. I grew up with him in the town of Lewiston, then a comparatively small and unknown village in Maine, on the Androscoggin river, on the frontier of civilization, but now a large and populous manufacturing town. He was a teacher of the village school there, while I was a boy in a country store, acting as a clerk in the establishment. He was a student in Bowdoin College, and sent forth to teach in the then small village of Lewiston, where there were but very few inhabitants, and those struggling with the forest and the field, and but little

the comprehension of the jury. He was an able and forcible advocate. Occasionally he was employed to argue cases in the supreme court of the United States, in which his triumph was no less signal than in his own State. During this period he attracted great attention in legal circles by his argument before the supreme court, by which he succeeded in reversing a decision of Judge Story relative to the responsibility of an innocent owner of real estate sold at auction, for frauds committed without his knowledge, by the auctioneer. His argument in this, as on all forensic occasions, was remarkable for its logical force and legal acuteness.

Immediately on his return to Portland, Mr. Fessenden was elected to various city offices, and in 1832, at the age of twenty-five years, having already been offered and declined the whig nomination to congress, he was elected to represent the city of Portland in the State legislature, and was chosen a member of the convention which nominated Henry Clay for president. These were the first steps in his political career. He entered the legislature as its youngest member, but at once attracted marked attention, and was straightway its leader, distinguishing himself both as an orator and legislator. It foreshadowed the later bearing of his mind toward questions of finance, that his principal speech was made upon the United States bank. Declining a re-election and all office, he devoted himself from 1832 to 1839 exclusively to the practice of his profession as a counsellor and advocate. In 1838, he declined a second time to become a candidate for congress.

In 1837, Mr. Webster having been invited by his admirers there to visit the State of Kentucky, chose Mr. Fessenden for one of his accompanying friends. The great senator presented him to the people of that State as his *protégé*, and as a young man of ability who had already given high promise of future distinction and usefulness to his country; and Mr. Clay and his friends received him with all the consideration and courtesy due to his merits and the generous endorsement of his illustrious friend and patron. The warm greeting of the people of Kentucky, and the witching hospitalities of Ashland, made a lasting impression upon Mr. Fessenden. Mr. Webster had been previously his political leader and instructor, and from that visit "he fully associated Mr. Clay, and firmly held the respect and confidence of both." says Mr. Davis, the senator from Kentucky in his eulogy, "to the end of their lives, and in his career fully responded to the high estimates and hopes which they so early formed of him." He was a special favorite of Mr. Clay and the Kentucky delegation of both Houses; they were proud

that the distant Northeast had sent to Congress a friend and follower of their great leader, himself of such rare merit.

In 1839, he consented to sit again in the State legislature, and though an uncompromising whig, while the legislature was strongly democratic, he was made chairman of the judiciary committee, and president of the special commission to revise and codify the statutes of the State. If there are any other instances in our history where a young man has, before reaching his thirty-fourth year, twice refused to go to congress, while yet consenting to sit in the State legislature, we are unacquainted with them. Whether this reluctance arose from a too modest estimate of his actual powers, a distaste for public life, or from a desire to make fuller preparation for the national arena on which he was to enter, he could not long withhold his presence from the federal capitol. In 1840, he was nominated for congress in the exciting Harrison campaign by the whigs of Cumberland district, and, running far ahead of his party, was elected. He distinguished himself in the current debates of the period, making important speeches on the bankrupt bill, which threw him into successful debate with Caleb Cushing, and on the loan bill and army appropriation bill, taking ground against the reduction of the army. He was re-nominated at the end of his term, but the political arena did not suit his taste, and he resolutely declined, preferring to return to the practice of his profession. Yet two years after, in 1845, to secure the passage of certain local measures in which his constituents were interested, he consented to sit in the Maine legislature. Altogether he was elected to represent the city of Portland six years in that body, viz. :—1832, '39, '45, '46, '53 and '54: In 1843, he received the vote of his party in the legislature, for the senate of the United States, as he did again in 1845, while a member. In 1858, Bowdoin College conferred upon him the degree of doctor of laws, and the same honor was conferred by Harvard University in 1864. In 1848, he supported the claims of his godfather, Mr. Webster, in the whig convention which nominated General Taylor.

In 1850, he accepted the nomination and was elected to congress, but his seat, through an error in the returns, was given to his competitor. Mr. F. refused to contest the case before congress, apparently from a principle which had marked his previous course—that he would not ask for office, much less contend for it. In 1852, he opposed the platform, but supported in the whig convention the nomination of General Scott for president, in obedience to the wishes of his State, and steadily voted against Daniel Webster.

In 1853, having again consented to serve Portland in the State legislature, he received the votes of the senate of that body for United States senator. The house of representatives by four votes failed to concur, and no senator was chosen. He was, however, chosen by the legislature a member of a commission to negotiate the purchase of the Massachusetts lands lying in Maine.

In the succeeding year (1854), the Kansas-Nebraska bill having arisen, the free-soil democrats voted with the whigs and elected Mr. Fessenden on the first ballot to his chief and permanent sphere of usefulness, the United States senate. This coalition of free-soil democrats and old-line whigs inaugurated the formation of the republican party in Maine, of the necessity of which Senator Fessenden was one of the most conspicuous and powerful advocates.

He took his seat in the senate, Feb. 23, 1854, and a week afterward, on the night of the 3d of March, delivered a speech of electrical effect against the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, which immediately lifted him into national fame. A southerner, who listened to this speech in the senate, exclaimed in the midst of it, "Why, what a man is this! all his guns are double-shotted." He was re-elected to the senate in 1859, without the formality of a previous nomination, and again in 1864. He was fifteen years in the senate uninterruptedly, save from June, 1864, to March, 1865, when he consented to hold, through the darkest hours of our finance, the office of secretary of the treasury. On the resignation of Mr. Chase, Mr. Fessenden was very solicitous for the appointment of some one who, by his reputation and financial skill, would at once command the public confidence and preserve the credit of the government, and went to the President to talk to him about it. To his great surprise the President told him he had concluded to nominate William Pitt Fessenden, of Maine. Mr. Fessenden protested against the nomination and refused the office, pleading physical inability as well as want of confidence in his fitness for the place; but Mr. Lincoln assured him that he had the confidence of the capitalists of the country, and that in fact he had already sent his nomination to the senate, and it would be confirmed before he could reach his seat. Such an appeal could not be resisted, and he accepted with the conditions that he was to serve only until a fit man could be found for the place. A newspaper writer has said:—

"Mr. Chase, while our armies were struggling in the agonies of the conflict from the Wilderness to Richmond, and when gold had risen from 90 to 180, and was threatening to rise to 280, having resigned, Mr. Fessenden caught the falling standard with true political courage, and held it until the surrender of the rebel armies. He took charge at

a time when it was too late to change policies and impossible to reform them. Nevertheless he stopped the issues of greenbacks, which had fallen to 40 cents on the dollar. He held the office disinterestedly to prevent the loss of confidence from embarrassing the government, and, as soon as the fearful crisis had passed, resigned his portfolio and returned to the senate to which he was re-elected."

To the writer of this sketch he once said:—"I took the office reluctantly and as a matter of duty, and vacated it just as soon as I could."

The first six years of his service in the senate he was a member of the committee on finance, and in his later terms was the chairman of that committee. He was also a member of the library committee, and one of the regents of the Smithsonian Institution. He was also chairman of the joint special committee on reconstruction, and prepared its report, which in point of ability has been called the great work of his life.

Mr. Douglas, in 1861, during a debate having stated that an assertion made by Mr. Fessenden was false; in his reply he defined his position with respect to duelling very explicitly by saying, "the senator from Illinois need not fear, or to speak more delicately, need not apprehend any hostile message from me. He (Mr. Fessenden) made it a point to use insulting language to no one, least of all to gentlemen who recognized a code for settling difficulties different from his own. And why? Because he would consider himself a coward to deliberately insult a duellist when he could not give the offended party the only satisfaction which he would deem adequate for the wrong. But a man who like the senator from Illinois is presumed to recognize the code, and who wantonly insults another, knowing that he is not a duellist, is even a greater coward than I."

When the secession movement rose to its height in 1861, he was chosen a member of the famous peace congress, and used his influence to avert the horrors of civil war. Finding the southern states determined and immovable in their purpose to sever their connection with the Union, he promptly declared for coercive measures. During the long years of bloodshed which followed, he supported Mr. Lincoln's administration by his votes, his speeches, and his writings, and last, but not least, gave three of his four sons to the army, one of whom lost a limb and another his life, in consequence of wounds received in battle.

The latest and most prominent act of his senatorial and public life was the stand he took against the impeachment of President Johnson. He looked at the question as a lawyer and jurist, and consequently his votes were governed, not by personal feelings, nor by considerations of a political or

party nature, but by the law and the evidence which as a juror and trier of the cause he was called to pass upon. It was the sharpest test, perhaps, that any public man has been subjected to in this generation, and he met it unflinchingly.

The temporary loss of popularity with his party which followed his vote in this trial was regained before his death, when considerate men came to appreciate the pure motives that dictated and vindicated his action. No charge of corrupt motives was ever made against him in this or any other matter, and the only motives which his bitterest enemies assigned to him in this case are not entitled to serious consideration. "Results will tell," said Mr. Fessenden, "whether I am right or wrong. Meanwhile I am here on my conscience and my oath; and if my constituents doubt my motives or distrust my judgment, they must send some one else to fill my place."

In this he illustrated his great characteristic—fearless individuality. He went with his party when he thought it was right, and nothing on earth could induce him to go with his party when he thought it was wrong. His aim was to do right.

He never sought the popularity that floats merely upon the passing breeze. Like Lord Mansfield he was not indifferent to his standing in the popular opinion, and like him coveted the applause that follows, not that which is run after.

On his return to Portland at the close of the session, he made a masterly speech to his constituents in the city-hall, which was packed to overflowing, and sent the audience away convinced that he had voted out of his true and honest convictions. If they had been disappointed in his vote, they were not disappointed in the man of their choice.

In his personal manner and bearing Mr. Fessenden was the trimmest figure in the senate. He sat in his seat or walked at pleasure, with his hands behind his back, up and down the floor behind the seats. His familiarity with the position gave him a light and easy grace and dignity of manner, as if he were born and bred to the place. He was of medium height: that is to say, about five feet ten inches, though looking taller; frail in person, and erect as a plummet line. His head was high, clear cut, and expanding about the forehead and crown. His clear blue eyes looked out over finely drawn features that were changed to the public never a line's breadth by ill health or emotion. The expression was something hard and set, but without anything saturnine or cynical. It was the expression of a fair, just man, with-

*He was
a
S. J. M.
S. J. M.
S. J. M.
S. J. M.
S. J. M.
S. J. M.*

out hates or enmities, but drawing the reins of the world a little too closely to the limits of his passionless individuality. No one could look upon his face or mark the native dignity of his bearing—worthy of a Bayard or a Sidney—without feeling, as was said of the elder Pitt, that modern degeneracy had not reached him. In the senate he had not a touch of the mellow, captivating qualities of fancy or imagination to commend his address to popular approbation, and yet for ten years it was hardly disputed that he drew the firmest rein in it, on the affairs of that body. He was always on the alert, speaking often but not at great length. One who had only seen him in public but had never spoken to him, said he impressed him like a man who moved through the world in a Scotch mist, ready to chill to the bone those he did not care for.

In personal affairs he had a first-rate heart under his vest, much kinder than the public suspected; but having no patience for humbug and no tolerance for bores, he acquired a reputation for brusqueness and petulance wholly undeserved. He deemed his time too valuable to be wasted on dunces and office-beggars. Those who knew him in private found him a most genial and delightful character, full of kindness, wit, and good nature. Ex-Governor Israel Washburn, of Maine, in a recent letter to me, says, "his heart was as warm as his head was clear." To the kindness and gentleness of his inner nature, let the gratitude and love of hundreds of his humble friends, whose lowly estate made their friendship more dear in his eyes than the smiles and flattery of the wealthy and famous, testify. No man was ever more sincerely lamented than he has been by those who really and truly knew him, and his friendship was the more precious that it was known to so few. The man who would go to a vine which had been planted by dear, dead hands, and caress its blossoms till his eyes grew dewy with remembrance, no matter what his worldly exterior, could not have a cold, unsympathizing heart. In the happy phrase of Shakspeare:—

"He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one,
Exceeding wise, fair spoken and persnading;
Lofty and sour to them that loved him not;
But to those that sought him,
Sweet as summer."

He had read everything notable in literature, and his sole recreations in his latter years were novels and whist. His somewhat severe dignity of countenance would relax in the private circle; anecdote and repartee flowed freely from his seemingly caustic lips; and he would pour out the torrents

of his wrath and indignation at the servility, the rascality, and the timidity of the time-servers with whom he was brought into daily contact. Of the sycophancy of the politician he had no trace whatever. His character and his career were full of the dignity of self-respect. There was a suavity in his address, at times, which would have seemed impossible to those who knew him only on the floor of the senate as a keen and trenchant debater, feared by his friends and merciless to his adversaries. His character is well summed up in some lines attached to his name in the *Memoirs of the 40th Congress* :—

“ Apply your eye-glass and minutely scan
 The form and features of a wondrous man—
 Sharp in his physique—you could well expect
 Sharpness and boldness in his intellect;
 Ready in thought and irony—not wit,
 Behold in FESSENDEN our modern Pitt.
 He speaks; and steel-clad weapons from his brain
 Sweep like a tempest o'er the hills of Maine.
 Then like a storm-king, with unpitied eye,
 He views the prostrate forms around him lie.
 Cold in his temper, and of icy glow,
 He shines like his Katahdin crowned with snow,
 No smiles or blushes leave their genial trace
 Upon his Norman, frigid, thoughtful face.

* * * * *
 Though seeming strange, the truth must be confessed
 That fervid elements control his breast,
 Like fires which in volcanic mountains glow,
 Whose summits glisten with eternal snow.”

His heart was as tender as a woman's, and an appeal was never made in vain to the kindness which ruled his character. Once an estrangement between him and another senator occurred on account of words spoken in debate. After a few days that senator sent him, from his desk, a note saying :—“ If I have offended you I ask your forgiveness. If you have offended me I have forgotten it.” Mr. Fessenden did not keep back his tears as he crossed the chamber to shake hands with his old friend, from whom he had been temporarily separated. Another striking example has been published. Mr. Fessenden once made a remark which was interpreted as an insult to Mr. Seward. When informed of it, and seeing such a meaning could be given to his words, he instantly went to Mr. Seward and said :—“ Mr. Seward, I have insulted you; I am sorry for it, I did not mean it.” This apology, so prompt, frank and perfect, so delighted Mr. Seward that, grasping him by the hand, he exclaimed :—“ God bless you, Fessenden, I wish you would insult me again.”

Mr. Williams, senator from Oregon, in his eulogy before the senate, says, “ I was a member of two committees of which Mr. Fessenden was chairman,

and once only did his anger break out in hasty words towards me ; but in a few moments he came, and in the kindest and most apologetic manner expressed his regret at the unpleasant occurrence."

A newspaper writer has thus described his appearance upon the floor of congress :—

" When he rises to speak in the senate, he steps forward of his seat between the desks in front, with his spectacles thrown up on his head, his hands in his pockets, and one leg thrown across the other, and leaning against his desk, he begins to talk freely in a moderate tone of voice. There is no posture of the orator, no graceful gestures, no clarion voice, no gorgeous imagery, no startling conceptions, no brilliant periods. He is a free, easy, lively, clear-headed talker."

It is true Mr. Fessenden never spoke for effect, yet if excellence in oratory is to be determined by its instant effect, he was entitled to a high rank. His style was clear and close ; his reasoning concise ; his language simple and natural ; his sarcasm keen and pungent. His speeches were never elaborated with a view to their appearance in print. Mr. Sumner has said that " nobody could match him in immediate and incisive reply." Mr. Trumbull :—" His clear intellect, quick perception, and incisive manner of speaking gave him great power in a legislative body." Mr. Williams :—" Plain, simple, and unaffected in manner and habit, so he was in speech, and his style was as pure and transparent as the waters of a New-England brook. When Mr. Fessenden arose to address the senate, it will not be irreverent to say, that so far as the subject under discussion was concerned, he was generally able to say—' Let there be light, and there was light.' Saladin's sword was not sharper than his." Mr. Morrill, of Vermont :—" Studious of facts, guilty of no nonsense, reverent to the highest principles of republican policy, cogent and severely logical in argument, his speeches were always a marked feature in any debate." Mr. Cottrell, of New Jersey :—" In the heat and fervor of off-hand debate he was without a rival in this chamber ; his keen, sharp, incisive style, and earnest manner would sometimes wound an opponent, but he bore malice to none." Mr. Vickers, of Maryland :—" If true eloquence consists in great will, great courage, great intellect, and the power that controls the judgment, then he was an orator of the first class ; or if to be worth much, speech must begin like a river, and flow and widen and deepen to the end, he possessed that attribute also. It may be said of him, as was once remarked of a distinguished French orator, that he said just what he meant to say, and like an expert navigator he steered his words and his ideas through the shoals which beset him on every side, not only

without going to wreck, but without ever running aground." Mr. Lynch, of Maine:—"Before making a speech he thought out and thoroughly analyzed his subject until his mind had reached a distinct conclusion by logical and correct methods, and then stated in the simplest language what that conclusion was, and how he had himself arrived at it. His construction of a speech was like the building of a Solomon's Temple; you heard neither the sound of the hammer, nor saw the *débris* of the workman, but every stone was taken from the quarry ready fitted to its place, and the building rose silently and rapidly from foundation to capstone." Such were the opinions of some of his contemporaries and associates in congress. Like expressions could be multiplied.

On the morning of the 8th of September, death closed the earthly honors and triumphs of this truly great man, the larger portion of whose life had been spent in public service. On Tuesday, August 31, he was in the street, and in his usual health. During the night following he experienced a painful attack of the disease incident to the season, but was relieved and was considered recovering. Dangerous symptoms presented themselves on Thursday, and the evening following his medical attendants became aware of inflammation of the bowels, which did not yield to the most active treatment, and that his life was in imminent danger. During Friday, it was generally believed he was dying, and the rumor went abroad by telegraph that he had deceased. But on Saturday and the three following days, he was free from pain, and exhibited so much strength that the hope of his recovery up to Tuesday evening steadily increased. His condition through the night was favorable, until about three o'clock in the morning, at which time, in moving himself in bed, it is believed an intestine was ruptured, and under the intense pain that followed, partially alleviated by opiates, he sank away, and expired at twenty minutes past six o'clock, Wednesday morning, September 8, 1869.

The morning of his death occurred the terrible September gale of that year, which swept with devastating influence over the whole of New-England and a greater part of the continent. Streams were flooded, bridges carried away, trees uprooted. The dying statesman peacefully sighed his soul away amidst this elemental war. The great brick house in which he lay was shaken by the blasts, and a favorite tree which he had planted in front of it was broken down by the tempest. His surviving sons, his physicians, Doctors Thomas F. Perley and William Wood, and several of his near friends and relatives, were with him in his last moments.

Mr. Fessenden was one of the guests so mysteriously poisoned at the National Hotel, Washington, in 1858, a calamity which caused great horror throughout the country. He never fully recovered from its effects, and it is believed the disease which resulted in his death had its remote origin in the malaria then introduced into his system. A post-mortem examination confirmed all that his physician had believed.

On Saturday, the 11th of September, friends gazed for the last time upon his pallid features. The body had been removed to the First Parish (Unitarian) church, of which when in Portland he was a constant attendant. At an early hour the citizens waited patiently upon the steps and the side walk for the hour of the services, and until the family and various public bodies had taken their seats. The interior of the church was most appropriately and tastefully draped in mourning. From over the pulpit recess heavy folds of sable depended looped on either side, while the pulpit and galleries were shrouded with the same. Over the upper part of the pulpit an ivy was gracefully festooned, and fastened on either side was a single white rose and a wreath of immortelles decked the front. Small clusters of white flowers, from which depended trailing vines, were placed around the border of the communion table, while three large bouquets gave forth their delicious perfume. The organ was dressed in festoons of sable, and ornamented by three other bouquets, while the clock, whose hands were stopped at 20 minutes past 6, was lovingly entwined with a wreath of ivy. The metallic coffin representing rosewood, which stood upon trestles in front of the pulpit, bore on a silver plate the name, date of death and age of the deceased.

At 10½ A. M. precisely, the Machigonne and Eastern State Encampments, and the Ligonia Lodge of Odd Fellows (of which last the deceased was a member), entered the church, followed by the mayor, aldermen and common councilmen of Portland. Immediately after these the Cumberland bar arrived, headed by the venerable Ex-Chief Justice Ethan Shipley, leaning upon the arm of his son, and accompanied by the judges of the supreme court. Many other distinguished persons were present. As soon as the family and relatives of the deceased had taken their seats, the quartette choir of the church sung the solemn anthem—"I heard a voice from Heaven saying blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." The Rev. Mr. Bailey, pastor of the church, then read a peculiarly appropriate burial service of his own selection, beginning with an acknowledgment of the infinite power and wisdom of God, passing to the mournful separations and privations of

death, as described by the poets of the Old Testament, and concluding with the inspiring promises of St. Paul in the New. Doct. Carruthers, who had only a few months previously performed the same sad services at the burial of the father, next proceeded to deliver an eloquent funeral discourse and eulogy over the son; at the close of which the choir sung the beautiful hymn beginning—

“ Lowly and solemn be
 My children’s cry to thee,
 Father Divine.”
 “ A hymn of suppliant breath,
 Owing thee Life and Death,
 Alike are thine.”

At the conclusion of the hymn, the Rev. Mr. Bailey offered an appropriate and beautiful prayer, which was followed by a chant by the choir—“ Thy Will be done”—which was most touchingly rendered. The Rev. Dr. Carruthers then pronounced the benediction, after which notice was given that the casket would be placed in the vestibule, to afford all who might desire it an opportunity of looking their last upon the features of the deceased. Prior, however, to its removal, the Odd Fellows passed by it, each member depositing upon the coffin a sprig of cedar, the type of immortality. As soon as the casket was placed in the vestibule the immense congregation passed from the church, each pausing for a moment to take a last glance at one they had so loved and respected in life; and after they had all departed, the multitude thronged in from the street, in decorous order, and quietly, some with tears standing in their eyes. The procession was then formed, and took its course through Congress, Pine and Vaughan streets, to the Western Cemetery, where the remains were, without other service, deposited beside those of his wife, daughter and son. Along the entire route the streets were crowded with sorrowing citizens. The bells of the churches tolled a requiem. Minute guns from the Arsenal and Fort added solemnity to the occasion, and the flags of the foreign consulates, and the shipping as well as from innumerable private dwellings, were displayed at half mast. In a word, the mourning was universal and sincere.

On the assembling of congress, the 14th of December, 1869, was set apart by both houses to commemorate the virtues and services of the deceased senator; when the memorial addresses were made in the Senate by senators Morrill and Hamlin of Maine, Sumner of Massachusetts, Trumbull of Illinois, Anthony of Rhode Island, Williams of Oregon, Morrill of Vermont, Cottrell of New Jersey, Patterson of New-Hampshire, Da-

vis of Kentucky, and Vickers of Maryland ; in the house of representatives by Lynch, Peters and Hale of Maine, Dawes of Massachusetts, and Brooks of New-York. These addresses subsequently were collected in an elegant volume and published by order of congress. Appropriate resolutions, directing the usual badge of mourning, were also passed.

The New-York *Tribune* said of these eulogies and their subject:—

“The eulogists vied with each other in their gracious tributes—in their honorable testimony. And yet the bounds of simple truth were not overpassed, were scarcely reached. Their most glowing epithets, their most sounding periods failed to give one that sense of Mr. Fessenden’s rare nobility of nature, and intellectual supremacy which was caught by a single glance at his living face, so pure and so intense, so strong, yet so exquisitely refined. It was a face set inflexibly against all shams and sophisms, social, moral and political ; but it was not an unbelieving face. It was keen and penetrant in expression, without a touch of cunning. It was marked by a peculiar pride, watchful but not jealous ; lofty but not lordly. Much has been said of this characteristic pride of the great senator, but little perhaps understood. It was not an assumption, it was not even a habit ; it was a native vital element of the man. It hung about him like an atmosphere, a still, cold mountain air, utterly without the sting of hauteur and the bluster of arrogance. You felt it without resenting it. It would never have prevented the unfortunate from approaching him, or kept a little child from his knee. It made his smile the more beautiful, made every indication of the inner sweetness and tenderness of his nature the more irresistible.”

Better than this poor record of his triumphs, his impress is left upon the age. His high example of spotless integrity cannot be without its influence upon those who shall come after him, and repeated from generation to generation, will last forever. His character is worth more to his country than his deeds. Mr. Sumner pronounced the judgment of the Senate and the people when he spoke of him as “of perfect integrity and austere virtue, and inaccessible to the temptations which, in various forms, beset the avenues of public life.”

“True friend, steady leader, wise counsellor, considerate patriot, devoted to liberty and his country” (said a paper of the day), “he has gone to his reward, and the greatest of those who spoke or listened to these eulogies, will be fortunate indeed, if when his work below is done, he shall leave behind him a life as pure and useful, a character as upright and honorable, a record as unselfish and praiseworthy as that of William Pitt Fessenden.”

Mr. Fessenden gathered no riches from his public employments, but rather suffered a loss by them from their interruption of his legal practice. He however inherited an ample fortune through his marriage, which he carefully conserved and transmitted to his children.

CHILDREN OF WILLIAM PITT FESSENDEN.

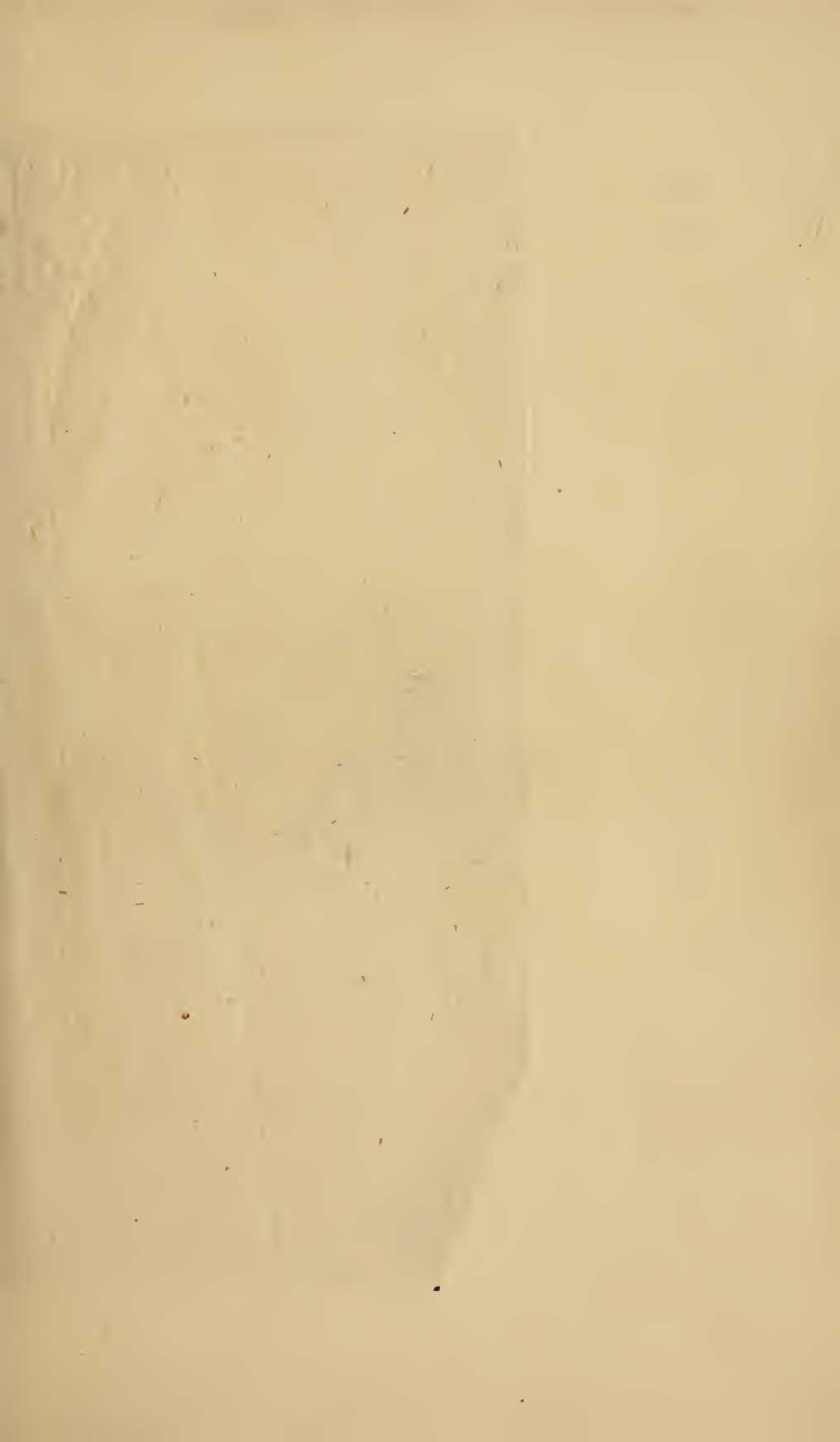
WILLIAM PITT FESSENDEN was married in Westbrook, now Deering, Maine, by the Rev. Ichabod Nichols, D.D., of Portland, April 23, 1832, to Miss Ellen Maria, the youngest daughter of James and Almira (Hsley) Deering, and granddaughter of Nathaniel and Dorcas (Milk) Deering. Mrs. Fessenden died suddenly July 23, 1857.

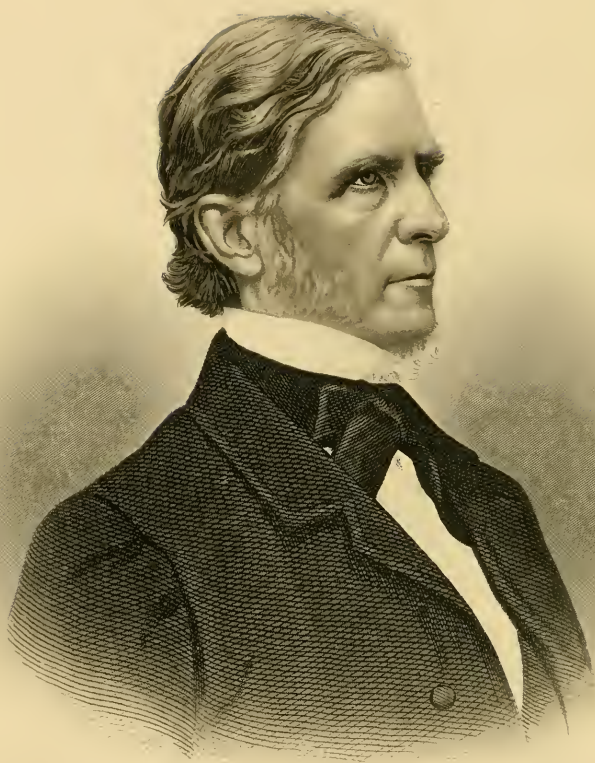
By this marriage he had children, viz. :

1. JAMES DEERING FESSENDEN, born Sept. 28, 1833; graduated at Bowdoin College, 1852; married Miss Frances Cushing Greeley, Nov. 5, 1856. He entered the United States Army as an additional Aide de Camp, with the rank of Colonel, July 16, 1862—was promoted to Brigadier-General August 8, 1864, and honorably mustered out of service as a Brigadier and Brevet Major-General, Jan. 15, 1866.
2. WILLIAM HOWARD FESSENDEN, born May 5, 1835. Received the degree of LL.B. from Harvard Law School, 1860. Bowdoin College conferred on him the hon. degree of A.M., 1865.
3. FRANCIS FESSENDEN, born March 18, 1839. Graduated at Bowdoin College, 1858. Married to Miss Ellen Winslow Fox, August, 1862. He entered the United States Army as a Captain of the 19th Regiment of Infantry, May 14, 1861. On recruiting duty, July, 1861, to Jan., 1862. Commanding company army of the Cumberland to April, 1862. Engaged at the battle of Shiloh (severely wounded in the arm). Colonel 25th Maine Volunteers, Oct., 1862, to Jan., 1863. Commanding 3d Brigade, Casey's Division, in department at Washington, &c. Commanding 1st Brigade Abercrombie's Division, and engaged in the battle of Chantilly, Va. Colonel of 30th Maine Volunteers, and engaged in the Red River Campaign. Commanding Regiment and engaged in the battles of Pleasant Hill and Monett's Bluff, La. (severely wounded and lost right leg). Brigadier-General of United States Volunteers, May, 1864. Member of Military Commission, Washington, D. C., and Commanding 1st Infantry Division Department of West Virginia to July, 1865. Commanding 1st Brigade Hancock's Corps, July, 1865. Member of the Board for examination of officers, July to Aug., 1865. Member of the Wirtz Military Commiss. Aug. to Oct., 1865. President of Court of Inquiry and of a Military Commiss. Nov., 1865, to March, 1866. Assistant Commissioner Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, Maryland, W. Va., and the Shenandoah Valley, July to Sept., 1866. Brevet Major-General United States Volunteers, Nov. 19, 1865, for gallant and meritorious services in the field during the war. Promoted Brevet Major United States Army, July 6, 1864, for gallant and meritorious services at the battle of Shiloh, Tenn., where he was severely wounded in the arm. Brevet Lieut.-Colonel United States Army, July 6, 1864, for gallant and meritorious services at Monett's Bluff, La. Brevet Colonel and Brigadier-General United States Army, March 13, 1865. Brevet Major-General United

States Army, for meritorious and gallant services during the war. Declined the appointment of Lieutenant-Colonel 45th Infantry August, 1866. Transferred to the 28th U. S. Infantry by the reorganization of the army. Retired on his own application, with the rank of Brigadier-General United States Army, November 1, 1866.

4. SAMUEL FESSENDEN, born Jan. 6, 1841; graduated at Bowdoin College, 1861. He was mortally wounded at Bull Run, Va., Aug. 30, 1862, and died at Centreville, September 1, 1862. He was First Lieutenant in the 2d Maine Battery, and acting aide to Brigadier-General Z. B. Tower, when wounded.
5. MARY E. D. FESSENDEN, born June 16, 1842; died December 10, 1848.





Engraving by J. H. Johnson, 1847

W. P. Hays

1847

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 897 391 4



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 897 391 4



HOLLINGER
pH 8.5
MILL RUN F3-1543