

## PLINY EARLE CHASE.

By SAMUEL S. GREEN.

PLINY EARLE CHASE, the eldest son of Anthony and Lydia (Earle) Chase, was born in Worcester, Mass., August 18, 1820. His father was a vigorous thinker, a man of clear and comprehensive mind, who was influential in the establishment and management of several important educational and financial institutions. Among the positions which he was called upon to occupy, was that of Treasurer of the County of Worcester, an office held by him for thirty-four years, and, after his resignation, by his youngest son<sup>1</sup> for the succeeding eleven years. Between the years 1823 and 1835 he was a partner of his brother-in-law, the late Hon. John Milton Earle, in the ownership of the *Massachusetts Spy*, now the oldest existing newspaper in Massachusetts. That paper, it will be remembered, was established and for many years published by Isaiah Thomas, the founder of the American Antiquarian Society.<sup>2</sup>

Pliny Earle Chase was named for his mother's father, Pliny Earle of Leicester, Mass., a gentleman who had the honor of introducing into this country the manufacture of machine card-clothing. It is interesting to note that this industry was established here as a result of efforts made by Mr. Earle in meeting exigencies that arose in the experience of Samuel Slater at Pawtucket (then a part of Massachusetts, now in Rhode Island), originating, in 1790, the manufacture in the United States of cotton cloth by

<sup>1</sup>Charles Augustus Chase.

<sup>2</sup>For an account of the life of Anthony Chase, see Comley's History of Massachusetts. Boston: Comley Brothers, 1879.

mechanical power.<sup>1</sup> Among the other children of Pliny Earle were the late John Milton Earle of Worcester, the late Thomas Earle of Philadelphia and Dr. Pliny Earle of Northampton. During a series of years beginning with 1823 and ending a few years before his death, which occurred in 1874, John Milton Earle was the editor and principal or sole proprietor of the *Massachusetts Spy*, as he was also of the *Worcester Daily Spy* after its establishment in 1845.<sup>2</sup> Thomas Earle was a prominent lawyer and the candidate of the Liberty Party in 1840 for Vice-President of the United States.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Pliny Earle, after having been superintendent of two other hospitals for the insane, namely, the Asylum at Frankford near Philadelphia, and the Bloomingdale Asylum of New York City, served for twenty-one years as Superintendent of one of the State Lunatic Hospitals of Massachusetts,—in Northampton,—withdrawing from the last named position in 1885.

Thomas Chase, late President of Haverford College, is a younger brother of the late Pliny E. Chase. Mrs. Lydia E. Chase, the mother of the subject of this brief memoir, was a woman of remarkable strength of mind and independence of character.

Pliny Chase attended the common schools in Worcester and Friends' Boarding School in Providence. His school-mate, Mr. Edward Winslow Lincoln, of the former place, writing of his presence in the Boys' Latin School of that

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<sup>1</sup> Pliny Earle made for Mr. Slater the first cards for carding either cotton or wool by machinery, that were made in America. The holes in the leather for 100,000 of the teeth were pricked by hand by Mr. Earle, with two needles in the end of a stick. In 1805 Pliny Earle and Brothers began building carding machines for cotton and wool. In 1829 great improvements in the machinery for making card clothing were made by Pliny Earle's son, William Buffum Earle, whose machines have always maintained a high reputation. See, further, *History of the American Card-Clothing Industry* by H. G. Kittredge and A. C. Gould. Published by the T. K. Earle Manufacturing Company, Worcester, Mass., 1886.

<sup>2</sup> Lincoln's *History of Worcester*, continued by Charles Hersey, pp. 277 and 427.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson's *New Universal Cyclopædia*, article Earle (Thomas).

town, states that from the first moment he entered the school he was "the object of an affection that few succeeded in winning."<sup>1</sup> He entered Harvard College without a condition in 1835, and graduated with high rank in 1839. Mr. Lincoln, and our associate, Rev. Dr. Hale,<sup>2</sup> who were both classmates of Chase, speak of him as distinguished while in college for general scholarship, and particularly for a remarkable proficiency in mathematics. Dr. Hale writes, "he was a quiet, unobtrusive young man, but a favorite in the class from his uniform courtesy and a measure of humor which never left him during his life."

In 1844 Mr. Chase took the degree of Master of Arts at Cambridge. Nearly the whole of his life he was engaged in the occupation of teaching. Immediately after graduation from college he had the charge of schools in Leicester and Worcester, Mass.; then went to Providence, R. I., to teach, and afterwards, for the same purpose, to Philadelphia. Most of the years 1844 and 1845 he spent in New England, and during a portion of that time he assisted in cataloguing the library of this society. Returning to Philadelphia in the autumn of 1845, he resumed the work of teaching, but was obliged to relinquish it in 1848 and engage in other pursuits for several years, on account of severe hemorrhages from the lungs. Soon after 1848 he entered into a partnership for carrying on the stove and foundry business in Philadelphia, Pa., and Wilmington, Del.<sup>3</sup>

In 1861 Mr. Chase resumed the occupation of teaching, in Philadelphia. In 1870 he visited Europe, and in the following year was appointed Professor of Natural Science

<sup>1</sup> Letters printed in the *Worcester Daily Spy* of February 9, 1887. <sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> While engaged in mercantile pursuits he was visited by Mr. Lincoln. The latter writes that he "found him established in one of those rectangles that so exasperate the average yankee, engaged in solving a problem and selling a Franklin stove, with considerable friction between the two occupations. Upon my asking him," he says, "with unaffected wonder, what induced the scholar of our class to dissipate in hardware, he assuaged my indignation with the softly spoken, 'Thee must see, Edward, the multiple of bread and butter!'"

in Haverford College, with which institution he was thenceforward connected until his death. He also served for several months as an acting professor in the University of Pennsylvania, in the place of Professor Fraser who had died in office. In 1875 a new chair, that of Philosophy and Logic, was established in Haverford College and Professor Chase was transferred to it. The subjects placed under his charge in that position were particularly congenial to a man constituted as he was. In 1876 the degree of LL.D. was conferred on him by Haverford College, on account of his attainments and original researches in mental and physical philosophy. On the organization of Bryn Mawr College in 1884 he was appointed Lecturer on Psychology and Logic in that institution. In 1886 he presided at the Commencement exercises of Haverford College as Acting-President. He died December 17 of the same year. Mr. Chase married, June 28; 1843, Elizabeth Brown Oliver<sup>1</sup> of Lynn, Mass. They had six children, of whom five, two sons and three daughters, as well as Mrs. Chase, are still living.

The first book published by Mr. Chase, probably, was *The Elements of Arithmetic, Part First*, 1844. This was followed by *Part Second*; in 1848, by the *Common School Arithmetic*; and, in 1850, by a new work on the same subject, prepared in conjunction with Horace Mann. In 1884 he published "Elements of Meteorology for Schools and Households. Part I., Practical Instructions. Part II., Principles and Scholia." This is perhaps the first attempt to put this subject in a simple and popular form.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Chase delivered many lectures and addresses, and made many contributions to periodical literature. His

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<sup>1</sup>Niece of Gould Brown, the author of the valuable "Grammar of English Grammars."

<sup>2</sup>Paper in the *Haverfordian* for January, 1887, by Professor Allen C. Thomas of Haverford College. Much of the matter in the portion of this notice which follows has been taken from Professor Thomas's paper, and no inconsiderable part of it is expressed in his own words.

most important papers appeared in the transactions and proceedings of the American Philosophical Society. In the proceedings for November 5, 1880, may be found a "List of Papers communicated to the American Philosophical Society by Pliny Earle Chase, LL.D." They number in all 119, beginning with one on Sanscrit and English roots and analogies, September 17, 1858, and ending with a paper on relations of chemical affinity to luminous and cosmical energies, April 16, 1880. The titles of the contributions show a wide range of investigation in philology, meteorology and physics. After 1863 Professor Chase confined his attention chiefly to the last two subjects, and especially to the confirmation of the general postulate that "all physical phenomena are due to an Omnipresent Power acting in ways which may be represented by harmonic or cyclical undulations in an elastic medium." Sixteen papers appeared in the proceedings of the American Philosophical Society after 1880. Professor Chase was also a contributor to the American Journal of Arts and Sciences (Silliman's), to The London, Dublin and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine, to the *Comptes Rendus* of Paris and to the Journal of the Franklin Institute. For the last-named periodical he had for a number of years prepared the scientific notes or gleanings from other scientific publications, chiefly foreign. In 1864 the Magellanic medal of the American Philosophical Society was awarded to him for his paper on the "Numerical relations of Gravity and Magnetism."

"Professor Chase," writes Allen C. Thomas, a fellow professor at Haverford College, "belonged to that class of philosophers who are ahead of their times, men who see, though it may be imperfectly and dimly, very deeply into the relation of things, and whose speculations, like those of the Marquis of Worcester, though misunderstood and perhaps even unintelligible to contemporaries, contain truths grasped and accepted by future generations."

Professor Chase was for several years one of the Secreta-

ries of the American Philosophical Society, and latterly one of its Vice-Presidents. He was a member of many scientific and literary societies in the United States and foreign countries. He became a member of the American Antiquarian Society in October, 1863. He was an enthusiastic botanist. "Though language," writes Professor Thomas, "was in later years quite a side issue, he was an unusually able linguist and could speak with comparative ease six or seven languages, while with the aid of a dictionary he could read 120, including dialects. He was one of the two or three men in the country who could read Eliot's Indian Bible." "Rarely," writes the same gentleman, "does it fall to the lot of any one to meet a purer life, a kindlier heart, a greater simplicity, a more perfect humility. Never putting himself forward, he was always ready to listen to others, and always treated them with kindness and consideration. His own extensive attainments were kept in the background, so much so, indeed, that many of his friends were not by any means aware of the extent and variety of his knowledge."

Mr. Chase was born and brought up among members of the Society of Friends, and always had the strongest attachment to its principles. In later years, although never officially recorded as a minister of the society, he frequently spoke in the ministry, and it is stated that his discourses will long be remembered by his hearers. Professor J. P. Lesley of Philadelphia, in an informal letter to the writer of this notice, pays the following tribute to his friend. The "mathematical abilities" of Pliny Chase "were of the highest order; and his long series of memoirs on what he called the Harmonics of the Solar system, were so remarkable that they were reprinted by the physicists of London. But there were as few who comprehended them as who could read Pierce's mathematics. Pliny was one of the best of men, of the sweetest temper possible, an excellent teacher, adored by his pupils, and is lamented by all of us!"

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