

WILLIAM CASSIDY

The history of journalism is best found in the lives of those who have been journalists.

Prominent among those who aided in making the journalistic history of Albany, is William Cassidy. With Webster, Barber, Southwick, Croswell, Weed, Dawson, Manning, and others, he aided in making that history foremost in the annals of the nation. He was born in Albany, August, 12, 1815.

The grandfather of William emigrated from Ireland and settled in Albany in 1790. His father was John Cassidy, who with his uncle, Patrick Cassidy, were esteemed citizens.

At an early age, Cassidy began his classical education at the Albany Academy, and at the age of sixteen was admitted to Union College, in the Senior class, graduating in 1833, after remaining in college one year. He studied law in the offices of Judge McKown and John Van Buren. His articles on political subjects, written at his leisure and published in Democratic journals, found favor with the public. The taste thus cultivated and encouraged, induced him to leave his legal ~~profession~~ studies and adopt the profession of journalism. At the time of life when other young men are scarcely through with their collegiate education, Mr. Cassidy's brilliant gifts as a writer were winning wide recognition, and he was acknowledged by the leaders of the Democratic party as one of their ablest and most effective political writers. At the age of twenty-five he first entered the field of journalism as a regular, writing for the Plaindealer and Rough Hower, then published in Albany.

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The contest between the "Barn-burner" and the "Hunker" factions of the Democratic party will long be remembered as more bitter than that which the former party waged against the Whigs. The Atlas entered the political arena as the opponent of the Democratic party led by the Argus, a veteran in the politics of the State. At this time Edwin Croswell, wielding a bold, gigantic pen, was the editor of the Albany Argus. The sharp and bitter antagonism between that journal and the Atlas was what might have been expected.

Cassidy, as the friend of Silas Wright, and the "Free-soilers" and "Barn-burners," vigorously maintained his position against his formidable opponent. The contest continued with unabated ardor until 1856, when the advent of the Republican party, and the great power it developed, with other causes, led the factions in the Democratic party to unite and the Atlas and Argus became consolidated. This event was a triumph for Mr. Cassidy. He had exhibited such brilliant talents and such lofty character, such admirable management in editing the Atlas, that he was selected, with Mr. Croswell's approval, as editor of the new paper, which received the new

name of the Atlas and Argus. Under his editorship the Atlas and Argus, rapidly attained a high and commanding position in the State. In a short time Cassidy became its principal proprietor.

In 1865, the Argus Company, a joint stock association, was formed, and Cassidy became its president. He continued to edit the paper for the remainder of his life. In 1866 he made the tour of Europe, enriching the literature of his native country by many charming and elegantly written letters, which first appeared in the Argus, and were copied into various journals. Mr. Cassidy always persistently refused political position, though in 1867 he was elected a member of the Constitutional Convention, and in 1872 was appointed by Governor Hoffman on the State Commission to Revise the Constitution. He accepted both these positions with reluctance, and they were the only ones he ever held.

As Governor Robinson said, in addressing the Commission after Mr. Cassidy's death: "No temptation would lead him from those fundamental principles which he had imbibed from conscientious conviction, deep thought and study. The welfare of the State was his sole concern, and his advice to his associates was summed up in his remark: 'See that your constitution enunciates principles, and those, principles of elevated statesmanship.' "

As has been said, his career was that of the political editor. He helped to make and unmake men. His own life was that of the sanctum, the library and the social circle. His influence was such as is wielded by a matchless pen; his achievements those of a master of thought, the exponent of party, and the leader of political councils. He combined in a superlative degree the qualities which distinguish the wit, the scholar and the politician. These, with his fine taste and culture, made him one of the most brilliant and accomplished men of his time. He had an eminently social nature and loved the social circle. John G. Saxe, the poet, paid a pleasing and delicate compliment to Mr. Cassidy, when he dedicated a volume of his poems to him, as a tribute to his scholarship.

Mr. Cassidy's personal appearance and bearing were striking and noble. His manner was uniformly courtly and dignified in its courtliness; unstudied, yet perfect. His love for his native city was not the least of his characteristics. He believed in Albany, and never failed to enlarge upon its advantages of position and the manifest evidences of its of its marked progress. He lent every energy towards its improvement, and as a member of the Board of Commissioners of Washington Park, he entered into every project looking to the expansion of that beautiful spot, and urged every wise scheme for kindred purposes.

But his active and useful life terminated suddenly, with brief warning to his friends that he was soon to leave them forever. He died at his home in Albany, January 23, 1873, after a very short illness.

CLASS OF 1833--William Cassidy--3

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Mr. Cassidy was a life-long member of the Catholic Church, and died in that faith.

In 1856 he was married to Miss Lucie Rochefort, who survives him. He left three sons.

History of the County of Albany p. 357
Howell & Tenney
W. W. Munsell & Co.
New York
1886.

Wm. Cassidy Lot # 83

Small oval oil portrait

Some cracking
& damage

Frame in good condition

Larger oval Lot 82

Small loss in right

by signature

Small tear on left
by stretcher

Lot # 81

daguerotype of

Wm. Cassidy

tintype of wife

& miscellaneous photos
& papers

Lot #83

large oval

Sketch impression
on canvas

Some varnish (?)
stains

#85 CDV by
Brady
A.S. Cassidy

WILLIAM CASSIDY

Son of John and Margaret Cassidy, was born in Albany, at the old homestead, corner of Chapel street and Maiden Lane, on the twelfth day of August, 1815. His grandfather had settled there when he came from Ireland, in 1790. William Cassidy was reared in the Catholic faith of his fathers, and was educated at the Albany Academy, under Dr. T. Romeyn Beck, (Union 1807) until the age of sixteen. At that age he went to Union College, Schenectady (Dr. Eliphalet Nott being president), and, immediately entering the senior class, graduated the following year, 1833. Soon after he entered the office of Judge James McKown and John Van Buren, where he studied law faithfully, and it was while thus engaged that he began political writing, contributing anonymously to several Democratic papers; and the fact was speedily developed that his tastes were literary rather than legal.

In the Spring of 1843 he became part owner and sole editor of the Albany Atlas, a Democratic daily newspaper, which had been started a short time previously. In this position his work was, for many years, almost unceasing, but scarcely ever laborious, because he brought to its discharge an ever-ready pen, a mind stored with choice and varied reading, and a pure and abiding love for his profession.

In 1856 the Atlas and The Argus newspapers were consolidated, under the title of "Atlas & Argus," and in April, 1865, Mr. Cassidy formed The Argus Company, a joint stock association, of which he remained president until his death. During those thirty years he was the editor-in-chief of his paper, and in all these years his paper and its teachings held high and honorable rank in the State and nation.

In 1866 he took a brief respite, and made the tour of Great Britain and several of the Continental States.

In 1841 he was appointed State Librarian, and in 1846 he was nominated, in the Democratic Legislative Caucus, for the office of State Printer. In 1867 he was elected to the Constitutional Convention, and in 1872 was one of the sixteen appointed by Governor Hoffman on the State Commission to revise the Constitution. These were the only public positions he ever held. He never coveted, but, on the contrary, always shrunk from public office. His only ambition was to serve the people well through the columns of his paper.

He died at his residence, in Albany, at half-past four o'clock, on the morning of January 23rd, 1873, surrounded by his family, and in full possession of all his faculties.

His funeral took place from the Cathedral, at half-past eleven, on the following Saturday morning, and his remains were subsequently interred in St. Agnes' Cemetery.

FROM Memorial of William Cassidy (Contains Portrait)
The Argus Company, Albany, 1874

Copy in Union College Library

Cassidy, Hon. William, a distinguished journalist and citizen of Albany, was born in the homestead of the Cassidy family, at the corner of Chapel street and Maiden Lane in that city, on the 12th of August, 1815, and died at his home in the same city on the 23d of January, 1873. His grandfather, who came from Ireland in 1790, settled in Albany, where he passed the remainder of his life. His father, John Cassidy, and his uncle, Patrick Cassidy, both life-long residents of Albany, were well-known and highly respected citizens, and intimate associates of DeWitt Clinton and other distinguished men of that time. Young Cassidy attended the Albany academy under the well-known scholar, Dr. T. Romeyn Beck. At sixteen years of age he applied for admission to Union College, Schenectady, the nearest to his home, then presided over by the Rev. Dr. Eliphalet Nott, and showed such proficiency at the examination that he was given advanced standing in the senior class, graduating with it the following year, 1833. Soon after this he began the study of law in the office of Judge James McKown and John Van Buren, and while thus engaged he found time to gratify his literary tastes by contributing articles, mostly on political subjects, to several Democratic papers. His success in that direction persuaded him that his talents better fitted him for literature than for law, and he decided to adopt the profession of journalism. At a time of life when other young men are scarcely through with their collegiate studies, Mr. Cassidy's brilliant gifts as a writer were winning wide recognition. His power as a political writer was acknowledged by the leaders of the Democratic party, and, although he originally entered upon the discussion of subjects of public moment only through the interest of a young man ambitious, perhaps to spread his views before the people, he found these themes most congenial, and in a short time perused them with increasing vigor and ability. The associations, therefore, of his early life were with men of political prominence, and through constant intercourse with them he acquired that absorbing interest in public affairs which characterized his subsequent career. At the age of twenty-five he first entered the field of journalism as a "regular," writing for the "Plaindealer" and the "Rough Hewer", then published in Albany. In 1841 he was appointed State Librarian, and discharged the duties of that office until the spring of 1843, when he became connected with the Albany "Atlas", a daily newspaper which had been started in 1841, by Vance and Wendell, and, in conjunction with Henry H. Van Dyke, edited that journal. His duties in this connection were incessant, and would have been arduous indeed had he not possessed a wonderful facility in writing, a mind stored with facts gleaned from choice and varied reading, and an actual love for his work. The "Atlas" was founded as the organ of the section of the Democratic party known as the "Barnburners," and was the recognized organ of that wing of the party during its separate existence. Its establishment became necessary from the fact that the two factions of the party were so antagonistic that one newspaper could no longer serve both. The men who rallied most closely around Silas Wright differed more and more upon questions of principle from their party associates, and were so emphatic, pronounced and unyielding, that public discussions of these differences became a necessity. The "Atlas" was organized with limited means and without the hope of sustaining aid from party patronage. It was started for the purpose of fighting powerful leaders of its own party who had a following of more than half the rank and file, and it was set up in open rivalry to the "Argus", long established and recognized as the regular party organ. The small attacking corps which undertook to capture the citadel was like a forlorn hope of an army. To lead this forlorn hope young Cassidy, who had, as before stated, already won his

spurs in political discussion, and who was then only twenty-six years of age, was, by acclamation, selected. This was indeed a post of honor for the young journalist, but it was also one of great care and anxiety. Mr. Cassidy's ready, caustic and sparkling pen, and his fine powers of ridicule and invective, which never degenerated into personalities, made the "Atlas" a prominent name and fame among partisan newspapers. While he was editing the "Atlas", Edwin Croswell edited the "Argus". The two papers were of course at swords' points. Mr. Cassidy, as before intimated, followed the fortunes of Silas Wright and Martin Van Buren, and labored strenuously and effectively in the interests of the "Barnburners" and "Free Soilers", while Mr. Croswell supported the faction known by the name of "Hunkers". In 1856, when the differences which had divided the Democratic party were healed, the "Argus" and "Atlas" were consolidated; Mr. Croswell retired from the editorship of the former, and Mr. Cassidy became the editor of the new paper, which was now known as the "Atlas and Argus". This position he retained until the day of his death. The paper grew and prospered, and in time its principal proprietorship became invested in Mr. Cassidy. In April, 1865, the "Argus" Company, a joint stock association, was formed, and Mr. Cassidy became President. The following year he took a brief respite from his editorial labors and went abroad, visiting Great Britain and Ireland, France, Germany, and northern Italy. During these travels he wrote a number of very interesting letters to his paper. Mr. Cassidy never coveted public office; his great ambition was to serve the people in the way he was best fitted to promote their interests--with his pen through the columns of his newspaper. In 1867 he was elected a member of the Constitutional Convention, and five years later was one of sixteen prominent citizens appointed by Governor John T. Hoffman on the State Commission to revise the Constitution. These were the only public offices he ever held. In the labors of the Constitutional Commission he took an absorbing interest, and rose far above all feelings of partisanship in aiding in the consummation of the great work in which he was engaged. "No excitement, no temptation," said the Hon. Lucius Robinson, in addressing the Commission shortly after Mr. Cassidy's decease, "would lead him away from those fundamental principles which he had imbibed from conscientious conviction, and deep thought and study". The welfare of the State was his sole concern, and his advice to his associates was summed up in his remark: "See that your Constitution enunciates principles, and those, principles of elevated statesmanship." Although the formal record of Mr. Cassidy's public life is brief, the full story of his influence and power would fill a volume. His career was that of the political editor. He helped to make and unmake men. Yet while he lifted others from obscurity to renown, he sought none of the honors of public station for himself. His own life was that of the sanctum, the library and the social circle. His influence was such as is wielded by a matchless pen, and his achievements those of the master of thought, the exponent of party, and the leader of political councils. For thirty years he was editor-in-chief of his paper, and in all these years his paper and its teachings held high and honorable rank in the State and Nation. He combined in a superlative degree the qualities which distinguished the wit, the scholar and the ~~polit~~ politician. These, with his fine taste and culture, made him one of the most accomplished and brilliant men of his time. He had an eminently social nature and loved the social circle. His conversation flashed with wit and gems of thought, and though his writings at times gave the impression of a cynical habit of thought, his nature was kindly and genial to a fault. John G. Saxe, the poet, paid a delicate compliment to Mr. Cassidy when he dedicated the volume of his poems to him, as a tribute to his elegant scholarship. It was not, however, entirely as an editor that his genius displayed itself. He was wise in council. Had the Democratic party been oftener guided by his advice it would have escaped falling into

many serious errors. As a politician he was sagacious and far-seeing, yet too loyal to party to abandon it because his own ideas were not accepted. Having cast his lot in politics with the Democratic party, it was his aim to make it the exponent of progress and reform, and then bent his whole energies to its success. Mr. Cassidy's personal appearance and bearing were striking and noble. His manner was uniformly courtly, and dignified in its courtliness; unstudied, yet perfect. He possessed a delightful suavity, everywhere and always winning and attractive. His love for his native city was not the least striking of his characteristics. As was said by a writer in the Albany "Sunday Press", "There was a time when his ardent love chained him to Albany with hope, when elsewhere he might have reigned with success." He believed in Albany, and never failed to enlarge upon its advantages of position and the manifest evidences of its marked progress. He lent every energy towards its improvement and beautification, and as a member of the Board of Commissioners of Washington Park, he entered with spirit into every project looking to the expansion of that beautiful spot, and urged every wise scheme for kindred purposes. Study was a passion with Mr. Cassidy; he drank deep at the fountain of classical knowledge, and was well versed in the language and literature of Europe. Science, philosophy, theology, the fine arts, all fell within the range of his active and studious mind. Mr. Cassidy's death took place after a short illness. It was entirely unexpected, as he possessed a strong constitution, and enjoyed good health up to within a few days of his demise. On the formal announcement of his death both branches of the Legislature adjourned after taking appropriate action. In the Senate Messrs. Woodin, Henry C. Murphy and Erastus C. Benedict made remarks eulogistic to their deceased friend, referring with profound emotion to their deep sense of his loss. In the Assembly similar remarks were made by several prominent members, and a series of resolutions extolling the character and services of the deceased were presented and adopted. Besides these the following local bodies: The Delta Phi Fraternity, the Park Commissioners of Albany, the Board of Trade, the Young Men's Catholic Lyceum, the Trustees of St. Agnes' Cemetery, the Typographical Union, the employees of the "Argus" Company, and the Directors of the National Commercial Bank passed resolutions of condolence and appreciation. Letters of regard and condolence were also received by the family from prominent men of the country, notable among which were one from John, Archbishop of New York written January 24, 1873 and one from John T. Hoffman, written in Florence, Italy on February 13, 1873.

Mr. Cassidy was a life-long member of the Catholic Church, and died in that faith. His funeral took place from the Cathedral at Albany, which, on that occasion was crowded with friends, including the highest dignitaries of the several departments of State, and prominent citizens of Albany and the neighborhood, who joined with his friends in mourning the loss of an able and honored citizen. The remains were taken to St. Agnes' Cemetery, and deposited in the family vault. Mr. Cassidy was married in 1856 to Miss Lucie Rochefort, and left three sons.

Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Biography of New York, Vol. II
(Edited 1882)

Cassidy William
Editor "Albany Argus"
N.Y. State Librarian

1833

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History of the County of Albany p. 357
Howell & Tenney
W. W. Munsell & Co.
New York
1886.

SEP 17 1961 1833

Irish Editors Active in Albany

A thread of good Irish linen wove itself, too, into the tapestry of Albany journalism at a period when the papers of this city were primarily political organs of great influence.

Two Irishmen emerged as potent editors in the exciting pre-Civil War era. They were William Cassidy and Hugh J. Hastings. Both began their careers on the staff of the Democratic Albany Atlas.

Cassidy's father emigrated from Ireland to settle here in 1870. William was born in 1815. He went to Union College and took up the study of law in the office of John Van Buren, dashing son of President Martin Van Buren. He was state librarian.

The more law he read, the more Cassidy itched to write. A gift for witty satire and vigorous phrases flowed through his pen. He started writing contributions to local sheets.

Then he saw a good fight looming. The Democratic Party was splitting wide on the slavery issue. The factions were called "Barnburners" and "Hunkers". The Van Burens, father and son were "Barnburners" — of free-soilers. A new paper sprang up as mouthpiece of the "Barnburners". It was the Albany Atlas. Cassidy joined it in 1843 and soon became its editor and part owner.

The breach in the Democratic Party was finally healed as the new Republican Party rose to power. Cassidy merged the Atlas & Argus, under which name he published it through the Civil War. While he opposed Lincoln politically, he wrote one of the most brilliant editorials on his assassination.

Cassidy was the intimate of statesmen, and became secretary of the Democratic State Committee. When he died, the Albany Journal, with which he had long feuded, said he was "undoubtedly

THE ALBANY IRISH

By C. R.
Roseberry



the ablest Democratic editor in the country."

Hugh Hastings was born in

Ireland in 1820, brought to Albany by his parents as a boy of 11. He began his career as a reporter for the Atlas, but took a different political fork from Cassidy. He espoused the Whig side against the warring Democratic factions. In 1848, he founded the Albany Knickerbocker Press as a Whig paper.

Hastings later moved to New York as editor and publisher of a newspaper.

Clipped from
Albany Times-Union
Centennial Edition

Class 1833

by

Joseph R. Brown, Jr. '03

Date: April 22, 1956

Clipped from
Albany Times-Union
Centennial Edition

Class 1833

by

Joseph R. Brown, Jr. '03

Date: April 22, 1956

ATLAS BIRTH

The Albany Argus continued as the spokesman of the Conservative Democrats, that is, the Hunkers. In the early '40s a new Democratic paper, the Albany Atlas, was started as the mouthpiece of the Barnburners. Because anti-slavery feeling dominated in Albany, the Atlas gained ground as the Argus lost it.

There arose as editor of the Atlas a combative, though suave, young Irishman named William Cassidy, the son of an Albany Dutchman. He had graduated from Union College and won favor with the Van Burens, who placed him in the job. Allied with him was James French, who had married a Van Buren daughter. Cassidy was soon engaged in a vitriolic running editorial duel with Croswell of the Argus over the annexation of Texas. The Atlas, with the Van Burens, maintained that slavery should not be admitted to Texas when it became a state. This stand of the Atlas dealt a grave blow to Democratic party discipline and prestige. The embittered Croswell sued Cassidy for libel.

The Morning Atlas and Argus was one of the staunchest Democratic papers in the nation, and one of the bitterest anti-Union Copperhead sheets printed during those vital years of strain. It bitterly attacked the administration and poked fun and abuse at Mr. Lincoln until the assassin laid the Emancipator low.

The morning after the assassination, the editor, William Cassidy published what has been agreed upon as the finest editorial printed when the sad news was telegraphed to the nation, closing by saying—"He died in the hours of the country's restored greatness, in the full fruition of his own personal triumph. History might have disputed the character of his acts; and if he had lived he might have forfeited some of his fame. The assassin's blow will rank him in the memory of nations among the martyrs of liberty."

OLD ALBANY EDITORS DISCUSSED BY BYRNE

Leading roles played by Thurlow Weed and William Cassidy, editors of the past, in the building of Albany during the 19th century was the subject of an address by Senator William T. Byrne over WOKO last night.

The senator was speaking in the series of "Know Albany" broadcasts sponsored Sunday nights by the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

Weed's name, like that of his successor, William Barnes, is inextricably linked with the history of the Albany Journal, while Cassidy's prowess with the pen was largely shown in the editorial pages of the old Albany Argus.

Alumni

U. G. M. 1833 May 1933

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Cassidy, William, 1833 10/12/1854

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Pearson Diaries V.4,p.700

CLASS OF 1833

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Calvert Comstock and William Cassidy were editors of the
"Atlas & Argus" July 7, 1856

Prof. Pearson's Scrap Book p. 413

ucslaf1833cassidy-w-0017

1833 WILLIAM CASSIDY.

MARRIED:-At the Church of St. Anne, Astor Place, New York,
on the 8th inst., by Rev. Dr. Forbes, Pastor of
the church, William Cassidy, one of the editors
of this paper, to Miss Lucie Rochefort, daughter
of B. Rochefort, of New York.

Atlas & Argus
May 10, 1856.

CASSIDY TRUST FUND QUARREL BEFORE COURT

Justice Schenck Asked to Decide in \$160,000

Estate

Whether the will of an incompetent person shall be declared valid or his estate be otherwise administered is a problem facing Supreme Court Justice Schenck.

The estate in question is a \$160,000 trust fund bequeathed by John Clinton Cassidy upon his death last year to his mother, Juliette B. Bevington of Ste. Agathe, Quebec.

The attack on the validity of the will was launched in Special Term yesterday by an uncle of the testator, Edward R. Cassidy, living in France. He seeks an injunction that will restrain B. Jermain Savage, Albany lawyer and trustee of the fund, from disbursing it to anyone except a representative of the Cassidy family.

He seeks also to have the will of his nephew declared null and void on the grounds of insanity and to have himself named heir to one-half of the trust fund.

The mother of John Clinton Cassidy and his heir under his will is shown to have been author of the petition declaring her son incompetent. She also took similar action in the case of her husband.

The trust was created out of the half-million dollar estate of Col. William Rochefort Cassidy, son of William Cassidy, editor and owner of the Albany Argus for many years. The latter's editorial on the death of Lincoln still is considered one of the most masterly pieces of journalistic writing of its time. Colonel Cassidy died in Brighton, England, Feb. 5, 1916.

Left Large Bequests

He left numerous bequests to Albany organizations and charitable institutions and created three trust funds, one of \$70,000 for the benefit of a brother, who brings the present suit. Upon the latter's death the fund is to go to St. Peter's Hospital, Albany, to be a perpetual trust in memory of his mother and father.

The hospital had been founded some years before by an aunt, Elizabeth Cassidy Cagger, in memory of her husband, Peter.

Two trust funds were created from the residuary estate, one for the benefit of a niece, Frances Eliot Heiner, and the other for a nephew, John Clinton Cassidy, who died last year. They were children of a brother, John P. Cassidy.

The niece and nephew also were bequeathed powers of appointment by the will as to the principal of the trust, with the privilege of leaving it to whomever they wished on their death.

Nephew Declared Incompetent

Some years before his death the nephew was declared incompetent by a Supreme Court order and his uncle, Edward, the present plaintiff, and his sister were appointed a committee of his person and property.

The uncle now contends John was incompetent and insane at the time the will was drawn, that he was deprived of his free will by undue influence from his mother and that he lacked the testamentary capacity to make a will.

Motions for dismissal of the complaint were made by William Van Rensselaer Erving, appearing for Mr. Savage, and George J. Hatt 2nd, counsel for Mrs. Heiner. Decision was reserved.

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WILLIAM CASSIDY.

Was on Thursday appointed, by the trustees of the capitol, State Librarian, in the place of Robert Brown, removed. Mr. Cassidy is a young gentleman of fine acquirements, well qualified for the duties of the appointment, and highly esteemed for his moral and personal qualities.-

Daily Albany Argus, Feb.26,1842. (Saturday)

William Cassidy

A.B. 1833

William Cassidy

1833
H. B.