

CLASS OF 1822

CALVIN JAY KEITH

A son of the Hon. Chapin Keith, late of Barre, was born in Uxbridge, Mass., April 9, 1800, and before he was a year old came with his father's family to Barre, Vt. At the age of eleven, having shown himself a good and industrious scholar in the English branches taught in the common school of his home village, he commenced fitting for college at Randolph Academy, in the spring of 1816. In 1818 he entered Union College at Schenectady, N. Y., and in 1822, was graduated with a good reputation for scholarship and moral character. He then, for a year or two, taught in the State of Virginia as private tutor in the family of a wealthy planter; when he returned to the North, and commenced the study of law in the office of the Hon. William Upham in Montpelier. Having completed the usual course of legal studies, he commenced practice in this village, at first alone, and afterwards, for three or four years succeeding 1830, in company with Mr. Upham. In about 1837, a brother of C. W. Storrs of Montpelier died in St. Louis, Missouri, leaving considerable property, and Mr. Keith was employed by relatives of the deceased to go to St. Louis and gather up and settle the estate. After executing this commission to the advantage of all concerned, he returned to Montpelier, not however to resume his profession, but to accept the office of Treasurer in the Vermont Mutual Fire Insurance Co., which was tendered him by the directors. But after acceptably executing the duties of this office for a year or two, he resigned the post to accept another commission to settle the estate of another deceased Vermonter in the South, one of the brothers Elkins, of Peacham, Vt., who had been in business as cotton brokers in the city of New Orleans. The estate was found to be large, and its affairs so complicated as to require the labor and attention of years to bring it to a close. For the next ten or twelve years, therefore, Mr. Keith took up his residence in New Orleans and remained there through all but the hot and sickly months of the year, which he spent mostly in Montpelier, having generally brought with him, at each annual return, such sums as he had been able to collect out of the different investments of the estate, for division among the Elkins heirs. After pursuing this course some ten years, assiduously engaged in the difficult, and, in many respects, dangerous position, he succeeded in bringing the affairs of the estate mainly to a close, excepting the case of the large quantity of Mexican scrip which was left on hand, and which was considered only of chance value. He agreed on a division of this uncertain property between the heirs and himself, the consideration offered to them being his promise to make no future charges for any future services. In a year or two after this bargain the general government decided to redeem this

Mexican scrip; and Mr. Keith being fortunate enough by means of argument made by some of the existing cabinet, to get his claims rather promptly allowed, realized for his share of the venture the snug sum of \$35,000, which, with his previous accumulations made him a man of fortune.

The year 1852 was mostly occupied in making a tour of Europe, and, having returned to Montpelier the following year, he was seized with what was supposed to be a brain fever, which ended fatally September 23, 1853. He was in some respects rather a peculiar man--in nothing more so, perhaps, than in his likes and dislikes, and these again were generally as peculiarly manifested. The former might always be known by his open commendation, and the latter by his entire silence when the names of the objects were mentioned. This seemed to grow out of his constitutional sensitiveness, which was often affected by what would have affected few others, which he could not help, but which his natural conscientiousness enabled him so to correct as never to make the matter worse by distraction. He was most constant and faithful to those who had his esteem; while to those who had not, he manifested only a negative conduct. But with his few peculiarities, Mr. Keith had many virtues. He was, in all his deals, one of the most strictly honest men in the world. His views of life, society, and its wants, were just and elevated, and he was patriotic and liberal in contributing to the advancement of all good public objects. His character, indeed, was well reflected by his singular will, to which we alluded in a description of our new cemetery. By his will he notices a whole score of such as have gained his esteem, by bequests of valuable keepsakes or small sums of money, and then goes on to bequeath handsome sums for various public objects, among which was \$1,000 for a cemetery for Montpelier village, and \$500 for a library for its academy. And thus he has identified his name with the public interests of the town where he longest resided and should thus be remembered among its benefactors.