

CLASS OF 1828

ELIJAH WHITNEY, A. B., M. D.

Elijah Whitney, A. B., M. D. born Westboro, Nov. 26, 1798; married Sept. 30, 1833, Cornelia L. Pratt of Spencertown, N. Y. born Nov. 1, 1804; died March 8, 1844; married 2nd. Jan. 9, 1849, Wealthy Bryant, of Providence, R. I., born Nov. 28, 1812, died Apr. 16, 1884; residence, New York City.

Dr. Elijah Whitney was early trained to active labor, and worked for a while at a trade and on the paternal farm, but his precocious mind caused him to leave these occupations, and place himself under the care of Dr. John Golding in the study of the higher mathematics, and soon afterward both master and pupil attended Prof. Silliman's lectures at Yale college, where the latter obtained his knowledge in chemistry after a course of seventy-two lectures. His conceptions were vivid, and the range of his desires so widened that he now entered upon a full academic course at Brown university, completing it at Union College, Schenectady, N. Y., with a course in Hebrew under the late Dr. Eliphalet Nott. He graduated in the class of 1828, and was for some time before his death the oldest graduate living.

He immediately engaged in teaching, first in 1828, at the academy at Spencertown, N. Y., and the next year at Stockbridge, Mass., where among many bright scholars, he had as one of the brightest, the late Cyrus W. Field. As an off set to this period of his life he had the misfortune to be prostrated with a dangerous malady, resulting in an abdominal abscess. With sound judgment, he commanded the needed surgical operation to be performed, and had the satisfaction of experiencing a slow but permanent recovery as a consequence.

To consolidate his health he now determined in a trip to the West and purchased a "shay" and horse, hiring a man to accompany him. This was in April, 1830. He traveled by short stages up the Mohawk Valley, passing through the "villages" of Utica, Rome, Syracuse, Auburn, and Rochester; thence proceeding by the Ridge road to Niagara and south to Buffalo and Cattaraugus county. The region was sparsely populated and exhibited on all sides native forests with the poorest roads. Northwestern Pennsylvania was well settled and thrifty, while Ashtabula county, Ohio, through which his journey also lay, was uninviting and pleased him less. He drove on to Cleveland and south to Medina, Wooster, Sunbury, Columbus, Springfield and thence north to Urbana. At this latter place he found an academy and engaged to teach. He was zealous and enthusiastic in the midst of an illiterate population, and as a reward, received the appointment of county commissioner. Saving the profits of his office, he bought a handsome site in the town, which he afterward sold at a considerable advance and resigning his

office went down to Cincinnati to study theology. He arrived there during the cholera scourge, when the inhabitants were fleeing the city, and put up at the hotel, corner of Main and Fifth streets, and thence went out to Lane seminary on Walnut Hill, and engaged his services as professor in Latin, at the same time, undertaking the study of theology.

The institution at this time was but imperfectly organized, and to secure his executive abilities the directors also made him professor at large. In this capacity he kept the institution in order until Dr. Lyman Beecher, the appointed principal, arrived from Boston. Although his relations with this eminent divine lasted only a few months, they were such as to have a powerful effect over his future life. Religious and anti-slavery discussion became rife in Cincinnati, and Dr. Whitney was often asked to take part in them, and as a member of the Seminary faculty, creditably did his share. He was soon, however, offered the professorship of mathematics in a college in Missouri, which he accepted, and resigned from Lane. His new appointment proved a failure, for just as he was about to set out on his journey, news reached him that the college faculty had become embroiled in the prevailing anti-slavery discussion and had sacrificed their social support, money, and probably their building.

He returned to the East to enter his profession, and soon married, in 1833, in Spencertown, N. Y., Miss Cornelia L. Pratt, the daughter of a retired merchant, and a very talented lady. He was licensed to preach Apr. 21, 1835 by the Columbia Presbytery, and was ordained in 1837 by the Presbytery of Chenango, N. Y. The places which mainly enjoyed his ministerial services as pastor were Guilford and Coventryville, N. Y., New Brunswick, N. J., Sherman, Conn., and Providence, R. I. He also lectured to large audiences on moral reforms, the proper observance of the Sabbath, and temperance, in Western N. Y., central Ohio, New York City and many other places. He was a close student of Dwight's theology, and his orthodoxy was according to the teachings of that work. He believed that the doctrines of religion were reasonable and his whole theology was curative, and tended to raise his fellow-men from the abnormal to the normal and healthy condition, full of satisfaction with and enjoyment of the gifts of God. He had confidence in himself and inspired confidence in others. He had a very fine presence, well-proportioned frame, large oval, clear cut face, backed with great depth of head, broad, high forehead, and fine, black, glossy hair. His style of oratory was easy, flowing, graceful and thoroughly classical, and his arguments excellent. His voice was remarkable for clearness in enunciation and silvery tone. For about seventeen years, he served the church, preaching and expounding the moral government of God exerted by motive, and not by force.

Dr. Whitney lost his admirable first wife at Sherman, Conn. All his children were born of this union, and the loss to him was especially severe and one he never fully recovered from. Her long

illness revealed to him the incompetency of the medical practice of those days, occasioned a study of theories, and ushered into his observing mind, reforms in medicine of which humanity stood sadly in need.

Quitting the scene of his sorrow, he journeyed to Providence, R. I., and after a few years married for a second wife, Miss Wealthy Bryant, a lady of that city. There he became a druggist, and studied materia medica so thoroughly that he may be said to have learned it by heart. He obtained his first degree as Doctor of Medicine from the Syracuse Medical college and in 1852, removed to New York and became a regular practitioner. He at once took rank among the reformers as one of their superior men, and held it through a long career. His classical ability made him the most important and learned member of the eclectic school of medicine in New York City, and he was chosen their first president. He was also twice offered a professorship in Penn. Medical college, Philadelphia, but declined in deference to private practice. His accomplishments in medicine were shown chiefly in the management of chronic diseases, and for sometime in this specialty he was in partnership with the late Livingston Van Doren, M. D., a gentleman and educator of large learning and most excellent family. They lectured frequently, and were very successful in the reform practice.

He was one of the first users of electricity as a remedial agent in medical practice, adopting the electric bath as the best means. Dr. Whitney always retained the affection of his patients and in several instances with great boldness he went to a dangerous limit beyond ordinary medicine to save an important life and family for future good.

He was the author of an essay on yellow fever and a treatise on Asiatic Cholera, besides miscellaneous papers on religious and medical subjects, given from time to time to the press.

In 1877 Dr. Whitney became one of the founders and senior elder of the Union Tabernacle church in New York City. He was faithful to all his obligations. By his unvarying courtesy, tenderness and love he endeared himself to all who knew him. By his kindly counsel and wisdom, he was of great help to his pastor.

In October, 1891, he paid a last visit to his native town, Westboro, Mass. It overtaxed his strength. He was prostrated, and after several rallies, in the Spring of 1892, he commenced slowly to sink, until the last pulsation had come, the scene had ended, and he closed his eyes in death on the morning of April 3, 1892, ninety-three years, four months and ten days old.

Children:

IV Erastus P., born April 15, 1842; unmarried; resides 148 W. 77th st., New York City. As a boy he was educated in Spencertown, New York., Providence, R. I. Brooklyn, N. Y., and New York N. Y.

passing all the way up through a collegiate education and has loved his mathematics and his languages and a large historical reading. His life has been checkered with accident and fatality. His longest occupation was as chief bookkeeper for a large business firm. Of several small public positions, the most important was as U. S. treasury clerk in Washington during the war.

II Albert, born Dec. 11, 1837; married Cordelia C. Hurd

I Horace P., born Oct. 18, 1834; married Annie R. Taylor.

III Cornelia I., born Feb. 29, 1840.

FROM WHITNEY
Frederick D. Pierce
W. B. Conkey Co.
Chicago, Ill., 1895

1828

Dr. Elijah Whitney, died in New York Tuesday, at the age of 93. He was a graduate of Union College, his class being that of 1828. He taught school at Stockbridge, Mass., one of his pupils being Cyrus W. Field. He became a Presbyterian minister and taught at Lane seminary, Cincinnati, for a while. During forty years of the latter portion of his life he practiced medicine, having, when quite young, prepared for the profession by running away from his native town, Westboro, Mass., where he had been apprenticed to a tanner, and entering the Yale medical school. Before completing his course he went to Brown university. C. Apr 16 1892.

Neurology of 1891-1892

ELIJAH WHITNEY, '28,

was born at Westboro, Mass., November 26th, 1798. He taught at Spencer-town Academy N. Y., in 1829, at Urbana, O., 1830; was professor of Latin and Mathematics and Professor-at-large at Lane Seminary, Cincinnati, in 1831. He preached in Hudson, O., 1837; in New York, 1838; in New Brunswick, N. J., 1839; in Sherman, Conn., 1843; in Providence, R. I., 1848, and about the same time was Principal of a Grammar school. He practiced medicine in Brooklyn, N. Y., in 1853, and in New York City in 1858-92. He published a few religious articles, a paper on Yellow Fever and a treatise on Asiatic cholera. He was elected President of the Eclectic Medical Society about 1858, and was Contract Surgeon in the Civil War for a short time. He was licensed to preach in 1835 by the Cincinnati Presbytery. His political sentiments were always progressive, Whig and Republican, actively favoring Temperance and Abolition of Slavery. He was Evangelical, Congregational and Presbyterian. He died in New York, April 5th, 1892, in his 93rd year, with clearness of mind unabated, leaving a daughter and two sons.

✓ WHITNEY, ELIJAH. Student 1824-28. From Westboro, Mass. *Union 1828*
Ph 605 *Brown Hist. Cat. 16-15*
class 1828 non-grad.

ELIJAH WHITNEY, 1828, of Westborough, Mass., was member of the Adelpic Society.
Adelpic Catalogue 1830 (Died: 1892)

Elijah Whitney AB. 1828

Clyde Whitney

1828
F.B.