## Manasseh Cutler.*

Manasseh Cutler died in 1823, at the age of eighty-one; and thirty-nine years ago the Rev. Edwin M. Stone, Librarian of the Rhode Island Historical Society, with a view to the speedy preparation of a biography, asked and received from the family the papers of Dr. Cutler. For some reason, never satisfactorily explained, this gentleman failed to complete, hardly even to begin, his work; and only since his death, about four years ago, have the papers of Dr. Cutler returned to the possession of his descendants.

Surely he was an unusual man whose journals and correspondence, published sixty-five years after his death, can awaken anything like a general interest. Manasseh Cutler was a noteworthy character in two respects. Among a generation of New England clergymen remarkable for their learning and piety, he was unique in the vast amount and great range of his knowledge, and in his spirituality. As virtual dictator of the terms of the Ordinance of 1787, as a leader in the settlement of Ohio by the "Ohio Company," and as a Federalist member of Congress from Massachusetts during four years, he stamped his vigorous personality upon the character of his own and succeeding generations.

Dr. Cutler was born in Killingly, Connecticut, May 28, 1742, and was graduated from Yale College in 1765. He studied law and was admitted to the bar. Believing, however, that he had a call to the ministry of the Gospel, he studied theology, and in 1771 was ordained and installed pastor of the Congregational church in the place then known as Ipswich Hamlet, since called Hamilton, Massachusetts. His pastorate of this church continued till his death—a period of fifty-two years. Not only was Dr. Cutler a lawyer and theologian, but he added to these professions a knowledge of the science and art of medicine. The payment of his salary in depreciated Continental currency, and the difficulty in obtaining even that meagre stipend, made some other means of livelihood almost a necessity. His love for scientific pursuits naturally inclined him toward the study of medicine. His rare intellectual powers made the mastery of what was then known in that department of science a comparatively easy matter. His practice as physician became so extensive that at one time in the year 1779 Dr. Cutler had forty small-pox patients under his care. Whatever might be thought to-day of his attainments in natural science, they certainly were not meanly considered in the year of grace 1785, or thereabouts. Dr. Cutler's enthusiasm and learning brought him correspondence with scientific men at home and abroad, and secured his election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society at Philadelphia, and several other institutions of a like character.

The journal of the years 1780 to 1785 is a curious study. It opens with the statement of the completion for the printer of a "Meteorological Journal," and contains frequent allusions to studies in botany, astronomy, chemistry, and physics. If a day proved stormy, the pastor of the church shut himself up in his study to pore over Dr. Hale's "Vegetable Statics" or Dr. Hill's "Natural History," the last of which he seems to have obtained from the Harvard Library by special permission of the Corporation. Observation of the wind and weather, clouds, sun-spots, moons of Jupiter, rings of Saturn, new plants gathered from all the region round, were daily recorded in his "place book." During one year he made a series of forty observations in order to settle the latitude of his house. The same year he was an active member of a party of scientists who observed the sun's eclipse, and within a month's time he made reports to the American Academy on this eclipse, on meteorology, and on certain prevalent forms of disease. One of these reports was published under the title, "An Account of some of the Vegetable Productions Naturally Growing in this Part of America, Botanically Arranged," and is still of great interest both because it is the earliest contribution to the science of botany to come from an American pen, and because it proved to be the basis of much further discovery in that field. The "Life" is at fault in dismissing it with a mere foot-note, at the bottom of page 116, Vol. I. Whenever there was a fast day—and they had one every quarter—Dr. Cutler preached a sermon. He preached

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at ordinations, funerals, and inaugurations, and twice every week in his own pulpit. With all this, in 1782 he established a school where boys were prepared for college. To the school he seems to have devoted a considerable portion of time and thought for several years. Here were trained boys bearing the names of Cabot, Lowell, Grafton, Peele, Poole, Phelps, and Low. The principal of the academy also gave instruction in navigation to seamen and in theology to prospective clergymen.

If there was any aristocracy in the midst of New England democracy the clergymen made it, and the minister of Ipswich Hamlet was constantly in demand to dine at Cambridge with the college, in Boston with the Bowdoins, in Newburyport with Col. Wigglesworth, or in the homes of his own parish,—a parish which counted at various times among its people the families of three governors, Dudley, Bellingham, and Bradstreet. Surely this was a busy life even in the slow-moving days of the last century. But if Manasseh Cutler had done nothing beyond his preaching, and dining, and study of flowers according to the Linnæan system, or his determination of the latitude and longitude of his residence with an old-fashioned sextant, these ponderous volumes would hardly have been published. A brief reference to history is necessary to a full comprehension of Cutler's work on the Ordinance of 1787.

At the close of the Revolutionary War the need for an army ceased. For months, and in some cases years, officers and men had served the cause of independence without pay. To muster out the troops before making any provision for their payment seemed impossible; to pay them in depreciated Continental currency was evidently unfair. Not only was there the obligation to pay a stipulated sum for actual service, but by act of Congress, September 16, 1776, the government was pledged to give as bounty for enlistment, to officers according to rank, amounts of land varying from one hundred and fifty to five hundred acres, and to privates, one hundred acres. By a later act the amount to be given to brigadier-generals was increased to eleven hundred acres.

At the time of the passage of the first act the United States possessed not one acre of public land. West of the Alleghanies was a vast country, of great fertility, reaching to the Mississippi, but practically without white inhabitants. This territory was claimed as the rightful possession of Virginia, Connecticut, and New York. Influenced by the patriotic earnestness of Maryland, New York, on February 19, 1780, ceded her vacant lands to the general government. New York was followed by Virginia in 1783, by Massachusetts in 1785, and by Connecticut in the following year. Connecticut, however, did not make her cession complete until the last year of the century. Thus was put under federal control a territory estimated to contain nearly 266,000 square miles.

Soon after the cession by Massachusetts Gen. Washington presented to Congress a petition signed by Brigadier-General Putnam and two hundred and eighty-seven other officers, urging the apportionment of the public domain among officers and soldiers in accordance with the promises contained in the two acts referred to above. Washington's influence and the just demands of the patriotic servants of the nation were at the time unavailing. In 1784, Congress passed an ordinance for the government of the territory northwest of the Ohio river. This had been drawn by Thomas Jefferson, and became law in its original form with one important exception: A clause prohibiting slavery from the territory after the year 1800 was defeated by a close vote. This ordinance was practically inoperative; but it is of interest because it marks Jefferson's position on the slavery question — a theoretical position which he maintained to his death.

The friends of western settlement were tired of waiting for activity under the terms of Jefferson's ordinance, and finally, on January 10, 1786, Rufus Putnam and Benjamin Tupper, both officers of high rank, called a meeting of officers, soldiers, and "also all other good citizens who wish to become adventurers in that delightful region" (the Ohio country) for the purpose of forming an association to hasten the settlement of that portion of the public domain. In pursuance of this notice, delegates from several counties in Massachusetts met in the Bunch-of-Grapes Tavern, in Boston, March 1, 1786. Among these was Manasseh Cutler, who had been chaplain of a Massachusetts regiment.

Two days later, a committee, of which Dr. Cutler was one, proposed "articles of agreement" which were unanimously adopted. These articles called for the subscription of an amount of money not to exceed one million dollars, which should be divided into one thousand shares, each share consisting of one thousand dollars in Continental certificates and ten dollars in gold or silver coin. The funds thus raised were to be applied to the purchase of public lands northwest of the Ohio river. The association was called "The Ohio Company," and its management was afterward vested in a Board of three directors. Within twelve months two hundred and fifty shares were taken, and this under the agreement that there should be at least one settler to each three hundred acres of land. March 8, 1787,—

"It was unanimously Resolved that three Directors

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should be appointed for the Company, and that it should be their duty, immediately, to make application to the Honorable Congress for a private purchase of *Lands*, and under such descriptions as they may deem adequate to the purposes of the Company. General Samuel H. Parsons, General Rufus Putnam, and the Rev. Manasseh Cutler were unanimously chosen." [Vol. I., p. 192.]

Under Jefferson's ordinance of 1784 no settlement in the Northwest had taken place. This failure can be explained in but one way. Eastern men would not emigrate to a new country in which the institution of slavery had already taken root, and from which, by a majority vote, Congress had refused to exclude a system utterly at variance with the principles of the Declaration of Independence and the strong convictions of the New England people.

Prompted by an offer for the purchase of lands made by Gen. Parsons, Congress, in April and May, 1787, discussed and carried to its third reading another ordinance, the full text of which is given by Dr. W. F. Poole in the "North American Review" for April, 1876. This was not acceptable to the "Ohio Company." It lacked utterly an affirmation of the great principles of civil and religious liberty. Such affirmation was to the minds of Putnam and Cutler and their associates an absolute necessity. The proposed law lacked in fact almost every element which gave the "Ordinance of 1787" its vital force.

After due deliberation, Dr. Cutler was delegated to go on to New York and use his influence to secure the passage of an ordinance under which the Company would be willing to negotiate for the purchase of a large amount of land. Armed with more than forty letters of introduction to influential men in and out of Congress, the New England clergyman arrived in New York on July 5. The "fisher for souls" assumed a new rôle—that of the modern lobbyist. Well he played his part. Easy and graceful manners, a well-founded reputation for scientific knowledge which preceded him, and the introductions above mentioned, gave him instant entrance to the society of the capital city. Believing that most of the Northern votes would be in favor of his proposed measures, Dr. Cutler assiduously cultivated the acquaintance of Carrington, Lee, Grayson, St. Clair, Milliken, and others from the South. Dr. Cutler's position was peculiarly favorable to the success of his project. He wanted to buy a large amount of public land with a currency that the government was vainly endeavoring to float. One who was prepared to invest a million or more of dollars in wild land, and so aid government credit, was in a position to dictate terms even to Congress. The terms were ethical rather than economical: freedom, education, stability of law, morality,—these were demanded and obtained. The ordinance—"that matchless piece of legislation," that "pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night in the settlement and government of the Northwestern States,"—was passed. It embodied the sentiments of those whom Cutler represented; and under its provisions, and only because of its provisions, Cutler proceeded with his business and closed the bargain for five and a half million acres of public domain.

This is not the place to enter upon the controversy as to the real authorship of the Ordinance. It has been carried on by men eminently fitted for the task, notable among whom are Dr. William F. Poole, in an article entitled "The Ordinance of 1787, and Dr. Manasseh Cutler as an Agent in its Formation," published in the "North American Review" for April, 1876, and Shosuke Sato, in the "History of the Land Question in the United States" (Fourth Series of the Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science). It is, however, proper to call attention to the inexcusable conduct of the compilers of this Life of Dr. Cutler, in studiously avoiding any mention of Dr. Poole's name and services, while at the same time making, in Chapter VIII. particularly, very free use of the "North American" article. Dr. Poole was the first to discover and publicly show that the introduction and passage of the Ordinance of 1787 was chiefly due to the efforts of Dr. Cutler. (See in "New England Historical and Genealogical Register," Vol. 27, p. 161, a paper read by Dr. Poole before the Cincinnati Literary Club, Dec., 1872; also the article in the "North American Review" for April, 1876, above referred to.) Andrew D. White, President of the American Historical Society, President Adams of Cornell, Dr. H. B. Adams, and Dr. Sato, have all made generous acknowledgment of Dr. Poole's service in the development of this fact; but for some reason, best known to themselves, the editors of the volumes under discussion have omitted to give honorable mention to that work which has done more than that of anyone else to give to a life of Dr. Cutler general public interest.

This article has already far exceeded the intended limits, but much more might be said of the career of a man who in his day stood perhaps second only to Franklin as an American scientist, who was a guiding spirit in the settlement of the great State of Ohio, and who was the principal agent in the preparation of a document which takes its rightful place by the side of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution as an imperishable monument to the success of democratic government. These volumes take us back to the

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helpful contemplation of the self-sacrificing patriotism, the zeal, the spirituality, the indefatigable labors, and withal the intense humanity, of a man who represents the best of those elements of character which gave us a grand government and have made this nation pre-eminent in the earth.

In this day of educational advance, the description of the physical laboratory of Yale College makes suggestive reading (Vol. I., p. 220); and in this campaign year, Dr. Cutler's abhorrence of Jeffersonian principles and of the more deplorable Jeffersonian practices (Vol. II., pp. 43–195 *passim*) might furnish some aspiring orator material for a thrilling stump speech.

Dr. Cutler's Journal and Letters is a noteworthy and valuable contribution to historical literature. Every student of Western civil history will take great pleasure in such pages as those describing 23,000 acres of the survey made by George Washington, in the account of the settlement of Marietta, and in some of the letters which fill up a large appendix. To the student familiar with the emigration to Ohio it would seem that the editors had done better to permit the journal and letters to speak unaided; and the writer believes the reader who seeks to gain a clear idea of the events in which Dr. Cutler was an efficient actor, will not be so greatly aided as he had the right to expect by the editorial additions to Dr. Cutler's own work.

W. H. Ray.

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