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## Edward Epps Powers.

*A Paper Read at the Sixth Triennial Reunion of Powers Institute Alumni, Aug. 31, 1895, by H. F. Williams.*

Forty years ago the twelfth of last June, there died in Chicago, after a very brief illness, the founder of Powers Institute, Edward Epps Powers, at the age of 62 years. The immediate cause of his demise was heart disease, or, as we might say to-day, heart failure. The town of Bernardston, in which he was born 102 years ago and upon which he has bestowed his munificence, to-day reveres his memory, and I feel it a special privilege to give to the keeping of the Alumni Association, in behalf of the town of Bernardston, this portrait of the man to whom we owe the possibilities of our education. Bernardston has at last done justice to the memory of her benefactor of almost half a century ago and hereafter at the head of the portraits of the men who have honored Powers Institute with their lives and their teachings will hang the crayon of him whose name has been on the lips as a household word of more than three thousand pupils.

Of the portrait itself I must say a word. The only picture apparently in existence of Mr. Powers—a small daguerreotype—was discovered recently and an artist of exceptional ability, W. F. Robinson of Malden, was also found who was willing to undertake the difficult task of making a crayon from it. Of his success I need only say that I obtained the criticism of the man perhaps the best qualified of any in New England to judge, of its likeness to the original man, F. H. Allen of Stratford, Conn., the son of Mr. Powers' former business partner. He pronounced it a remarkably fine likeness, and greatly complimented the artist on his success. It needs no other praise.

Could we see the man as he appeared a year or more before his death we should find a well-proportioned, broad-shouldered person, of erect carriage and medium height, scrupulously neat in dress, always wearing a silk hat, broadcloth coat and immaculate linen, with iron gray hair and beard almost white, with a courteous air, a pleasant smile and a determined look, such as characterizes the successful man of business. Socially he was said to have been one of the most genial and affable of men. He was a keen judge of human nature and he had an excellent memory. His kindness of heart and the generosity of his nature are shown no less by his taking barefooted urchins into the store and providing them with shoes and stockings and giving candy to the little girls, than in the leaving of $10,000 to the female orphan asylum of Columbus.

One time his banker in New York absconded, taking with him $40,000 of Powers' money. The latter, relating the circumstance to a friend, remarked: "I shall let him go and not spend a dollar to hunt him up. If he can live and be happy on stolen money he's welcome to it."

Mr. Powers was greatly interested in education. Deprived of all but the rudiments himself, he assisted others while he was living and also made provision in his will for several individuals, in whose welfare he was interested. His friends used to call it a "hobby" with him—an ever present topic of conversation. The child of this hobby is the seminary on yonder hill.

Mr. Powers did not connect himself with any religious denomination. He believed in a well-ordered life and in good works, and a well-worn Bible attested his belief in the Christian religion and guidance by its doctrine. To a favorite niece who urged him to join the church, he replied: "My child, my religious devotions consist in keeping quiet on Sundays and reading my Bible," and laughingly added, "I'll get to Heaven as quickly as you will."

As to certain characteristics of the man I quote from an obituary notice published at the time of his death in the Springfield Republican, and written by one of his executors, the late Henry W. Cushman of this town. He says: "As a man of business Mr. Powers had two characteristics, integrity and punctuality, and for these he was everywhere noted. His word was as good as a bond, for he was never known to vary a jot or tittle from what he had engaged. If he made a bad bargain he faithfully fulfilled it, but was more cautious the next time; and he was never known to be slack in his payments. No note or acceptance of his ever had the notarial mark of "protest" upon it. He could not endure the want of punctuality in others, for he never varied from it himself. He has often remarked that any young man may do well in life if he will be industrious, prudent and prompt." Mr. Powers was also noted for a remarkably sound and accurate judgment; for his universally gentlemanlike deportment to all; for the kindness of his heart, the suavity of his manners, and the benevolence of his disposition. The friends he loved, particularly the friends of his early days, he never forgot. As he advanced in years and his means increased, his benevolence also increased with his ability to do good." Mr. Cushman also cites several other instances of Mr. Powers' munificence to the town, to different organizations and to individuals.

Edward Epps Powers was a self-made man. Having received such education as a small country town could give 80 to 90 years ago to a farmer boy who worked in summer and only went to school in winter, he was apprenticed to a saddler and harness-maker in Springfield. He found this kind of life too narrow for his ambition and, as soon as he had acquired a little money, he and a companion, Lewis C. Allen of Bernardston, went South and began trade in the town of Clinton, Ga., opening a general store there under the firm name of Allen & Powers. Here they "did an extensive and prosperous business."

The Creek and Cherokee Indians occupied quite a part of Georgia and Alabama, though they had been subdued by General Jackson early in the century, but in 1832 their land was ceded to the United States government and for the next six years they moved West to the Indian Territory and left the fertile fields along the banks of the Chattahoochee and Alabama to the white man, who, having confiscated the land of his red brother and thrown into slavery his black brother, proceeded to get rich from the land of the former by the labor of the latter.

Then in the South cotton was king, and fortunes were easily made. It is not surprising that, under these conditions, a young, vigorous, energetic northerner like Powers could, in 15 years, roll up a fortune of a quarter of a million dollars. Mr. Powers himself owned a few slaves, whom he let out on contract, reserving only one for his own use.

As soon as the Indians left the region, Columbus, Ga., the head of navigation of the Chattahoochee, became the center of trade and commerce for the fertile cotton-growing region, and it was here that young Powers—having dissolved partnership with Allen—set up a mercantile establishment, engaging in the dry goods trade, which he continued for some 15 years, and laying the foundation of his wealth. He also dealt quite largely in cotton and made extensive real estate investments in Columbus, having faith in the growth of this southern center.

About 1845 he gave up active mercantile life, having made a fortune, and devoted his attention to investing his money. He spent his summers at the North and his winters in Georgia. The railroad business was just springing into prominence and Mr. Powers is supposed to have invested largely in railroad securities. An old friend remarked: "Whatever Powers touches turns to gold."

Mr. Powers lived and died a bachelor. This seems hardly in accord with his genial and social nature. The reason why he never married, if reason there was, cannot be told after this lapse of time. There is evidence, however, that he was not wholly satisfied with the celibate life he lived, and was unwilling that his name should die with him, for we find in his will that he left $100,000 to two children who had been christened for him. Edward Powers Allen was a son of his business partner, and he, on becoming of age, was to receive $50,000 on condition of changing his name to Edward Allen Powers. The other was Edward Powers Peabody, who, under similar conditions, was to receive a like sum. At this high cost was the name perpetuated and the Powers family tree received two separate and distinct new grafts.

By the will of Mr. Powers 100 shares of the Franklin County Bank stock were given to his native town for educational purposes. This was equivalent to $10,000. The income of half of this sum, $5,000, was for the support of "a high or grammar school"—which we now know as Powers Institute—the balance for the other schools of the town. But it was provided that the town itself should annually raise for schooling not less than $500 by taxation. How nobly Bernardston has fulfilled her part—doubly and trebly fulfilled it—even in the dark days when there was no prospect of another dividend on the bank stock—in order to maintain the foremost school in Franklin county—is well known to her tax-payers and public spirited citizens.

Once in three years at least comes her reward, when she welcomes to her arms the children she has helped to nourish—now full grown men and women. Education costs high, but it pays. But our poor alma mater, who has nourished such an abundant offspring, needs herself to be nursed in turn. Who is the man that is blessed with abundance of worldly goods that will, like the illustrious Powers, shed a benediction for all time upon this school? Horace Mann, on one occasion, when seeking funds for school purposes, asked his audience: "Who here wishes the highest seat in the kingdom of heaven?"

Bernardston has been blessed with many gifts from wealthy friends, as the names of Goodale, Powers, Cushman, Clarke, amply attest, and, we believe there will be others. Any man who leaves of his fortune to aid those less favored than himself is, in the truest sense, a philanthropist. What more noble gift is there than the gift of a school? What greater heritage can a young man or woman have than a true education? It means a right start in life. When Mr. Powers gave a part of his fortune to the youth of Bernardston he realized that his own life might have been made larger and fuller with a liberal education to start with.

Bernardston should see to it that the portraits of her benefactors be preserved with especial care, and that ample record of their lives be kept, in some sanctum sanctorum, some room in the public library, perhaps, even as the ancient Romans had a room for their gods and heroes. I am glad that the pupils of different teachers are seeing to it that their principals and favorite assistant teachers shall be remembered upon canvas. And every year, as we—on May 31—remember our fallen soldiers, I suggest that the pupils of Powers Institute lay a wreath upon the tomb of our benefactor, Edward Epps Powers, whose soul for 40 years has been marching on.

## The Catamount School Days.

[Historical paper written and read by Mrs. Fannie B. Shippee at the Catamount Hill reunion, Aug. 15, 1895.]

Had there been no school-house upon this hill, we would not be here to-day holding a reunion. Such a gathering as this is the result of civilization and education. The little log school-house was the foundation and the chief corner-stone of the prosperity, and we may say the moral and intellectual life of the people here. To be sure many of them were illiterate. I think they could all read, but some of them could scarcely write their names, and they deeply felt their deficiencies, and so did not undervalue an education. A frequent expression with them was: "Our children must get some learning." It was largely for this end that they toiled. I was informed by the late Androus Shippee that their first school-house stood upon the left side of the road, a few rods southeast of the Levi Davenport barn. It was small and of rude construction, built of unhewn logs. I could not learn the date of its erection, but it was abandoned about 1814, for a more commodious frame building, which stood several rods southeast upon the right side of the road. This frame school-house stood for about two years, when one cold night it was burned to the ground. Many in the neighborhood saw the light of its burning, and went thither only to find that nothing could be done to save it. Every man was given notice to meet there at 10 o'clock the next morning, and they were there promptly, and while the embers were yet smouldering, plans were laid to build a new school-house. A log dwelling house which stood upon the "Meadow-place," and had been abandoned by its owner, Artemas Churchill, was secured, and used for school purposes, and the school went merrily on under the same teacher, Inman Hall. We cannot say that the new school-house arose Phœnix-like, but in due course of time, by the united labors of all concerned, a new school-house was built of hewn logs and was always used for schools, and for meetings of various kinds, until the school district system was abolished, and the house was torn down. I have been informed that the Colrain school committee often affirmed that the Catamount Hill school was one of the best in town, and we do not call this statement in question, for we find that it was taught by many of superior ability. We find these names recorded as teachers: Margaret Rose, Sarah Taft, Prudence Deane, Polly Field, Emeline Johnson, Sarah Taylor, Mary, Nancy and Emily Smith, Cordelia and Marietta Maxam, Diantha Dwight, and Emma Farley, and many others.

The people here were honest, intelligent and kind; I know whereof I speak, for it was my privilege to live in their homes for three years, summer and autumn; boarding around, and I surely ought to know them quite well. To each of them as are here today, I would say, I am grateful to you, and heartily thank you for your kindness and courtesy shown me during that time. The grave has closed over many of them, but could my voice reach them, I would say, "Dear friends, to me you were kindness itself, and I shall ever hold you in grateful remembrance." I will now give you a few facts to show you how much the parents here desired an education for their children, and the children were as much interested in the cause of education as were the parents. It was Dolly Farnsworth who often consulted Rev. Mr. Flagg in regard to getting the best of text-books for her children. Asha Bass, who lived several miles from school, to go by the road, made a path for his children across lots, and in wet weather he went in advance of his children, broom in hand, and swept the dew and rain from the grass and bushes in the pathway.

I knew a family who were natives of this hill, or the mother certainly was, and the father's birthplace was not far from here. I allude to the parents of our worthy vice-president, Dr. A. F. Davenport. They removed to Griswoldville in the early forties. The third son, Joseph, was then a lad of 13 or 14 years, perhaps. He had attended school here, and had acquired a smattering of the three R's, doubtless. He did not attend school at Griswoldville, but worked in the mill from about 4 a. m. until 8 p. m., with a twenty minutes nooning. Long days and hard confinement for one of the jolly, light-hearted, rollicking Catamount Hill boys, who could study well in school, but was always in for play at recess and noontime. After Joseph became a hobbin-boy he grew steady and sedate. Perhaps the spinning jennies whispered to him while they buzzed, that his playdays were over, and he would soon reach man's estate, and must know more of the three R's. At any rate he commenced studying Adams' arithmetic. He studied hard and faithfully, trying to get the right answers to the examples. If he failed of doing that, he would call upon his mother, and she was a great help to him. We who knew "Aunt Alice" remember her as a woman of rare courage and large hope, and great usefulness—a real mother in Israel; she would drop her mop or broom, or whatever she was doing and go to him. They would talk it over, and she would make suggestions; Joseph would try the example again, and in time would get the right answer. And he went through the book, with the help of his mother, and her advantages had been very limited. That woman and her son were natives of Catamount Hill. That was a great feat for that boy of 14, and we do not wonder that he stands to-day one of the best dentists in Western Massachusetts, and is located in the city of Northampton, doing a prosperous business, and I read in the Boston Post, not long since, that he was going to deliver an address before the Massachusetts Dental society at Boston. We see that the results of that boy's perseverance were far-reaching. Did time permit, I might tell you as true and interesting stories of other natives of this hill, in acquiring an education.

The noble fathers and mothers of this hill who labored that their children might enjoy school privileges have most of them passed away. Yet some of them lived to see their wishes gratified, and my friends, we have with us to-day many descendants of those men and women who are scholars and teachers, graduates from some of our best insti-

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