

### **Edward Crafts Hopson.**

*A Biographical Sketch read before the Vermont Historical Society, January 25, 1865, by Henry Clark, Esq. of Poultney.*

As it has been the purpose and objects of the Vermont Historical Society to gather from the records of the past the materials from which to write the biographies of the men who endured the toils and hardships attendant upon the struggle which made our beloved State an independent sovereignty, and our country a nation of freemen: equally should it be our love and care to gather up the memorials of the services of the noble men who, in this national trial, have freely poured out their heart's blood, and offered their lives a willing sacrifice upon their country's altar, in defence of the institutions, government, and flag which were bequeathed them by their fathers, as the richest legacy ever bestowed by one generation upon another in the annals of the world's history. The halls of legisla-

which are of especial importance and interest in his life and character.

Edward Crafts Hopson, son of the Rev. Oliver and Mrs. Caroline Hopson was born in Naugatuck, Conn., on the 18th day of June, 1842. At an early age he had a severe attack of congestion of the brain, and his life was despaired of. On his recovery a clerical friend of his father remarked: "He is spared for some good purpose." In 1847 his father removed to Poultney, Vt., to assume the rectorship of St. John's Church.

Born into a christian household, and until his eighteenth year surrounded by the most affectionate and religious influences of a noble christian home, and with a warm watchful and educating love, I was wont to notice him as an active and intelligent lad, with something of peculiar manliness and sensibility blended in his face, indicating an ardent character that would make its mark somewhere if his life should be prolonged. He was always respectful in his demeanor—

the world's history. The halls of legislation, the walks of science, of literature, of christianity, of law, of the student of every life-vocation, have been deprived forever of some of their brightest stars, by the zeal which thrilled their noble spirits to defend their country. It is fitting that we enter their names upon the page which is to make the future of our republic one of the brightest which has yet been written. It is not those only in high rank that should be borne in remembrance; their names are cherished somewhere; and the poorest and most obscure private in the ranks has some one to mourn his death, and to treasure his name as a connecting link with its own submissive grief.

“There's not a heart, however cast  
By grief and sorrow down,  
But hath some memory of the Past  
To love and call its own.”

cheerful and hopeful in spirit—and devoted to his home. He was modest and retiring even to a fault. He was ready to be instructed, eager to embrace and hold fast the truth, desirous, beyond most lads of his age, of study, especially of history, and made himself thoroughly familiar with the Crimerian War. Few were his equals in the knowledge of general history, and current events, and he ever exhibited the purpose to make his life a noble and useful one by securing the peace, and advancing the welfare of others around him. He pursued his preparatory studies for entrance to college under the instruction of his father and brother the Rev. Geo. B. Hopson, and entered Trinity College at Hartford Connecticut (his father's Alma Mater) in the fall of 1860. He faithfully prosecuted his course for two years, and had entered upon his

While flowers may come and fade, while the beauties of the world will charm and dazzle and then pass away, the soldier that has fallen for his country shall live in grateful hearts, his deeds will be wrapped in the flag he followed into battle, they will grow more splendid as the fruits of his own battle field are gathered into the great garner of his country's glory. They have fallen heroically, bearing the battle flag of the free through the great conflict for humanity. They will not return from the wars. They sleep on the fields of their glory, and the memories of these buried heroes always crowd upon us. When we go about our business; when we sleep an hour in pleasant quiet; when we enter the sanctuary of God; thoughts of the thousands of martyrs for our liberty now sleeping their long sleep upon the fields of death crowd upon our souls, because we know it was they who saved us.

for two years, and had entered upon his junior year. As a student he developed and matured those characteristics which had marked his boyhood, and his standing was that of second in his class. At this period of his course the call for men to enter the army became urgent, and he believed it his duty to enter the ranks, and consequently procured the consent of his parents and of the president of the college. He enlisted August 6th, 1862 in Company D, 19th Connecticut Volunteers—which regiment was changed in December 1860 to the Connecticut Heavy Artillery. Several of his college companions enlisted in the same Regiment.

He suspended his collegiate course to enter the army, in the most patriotic and unselfish spirit, relinquishing companionships dear to him, and prospects that were bright, for the public service with its trials and perils, expecting to meet hardships, but determined to endure them as a faithful sol-

With these feelings I have thought proper to present on this occasion, the memorial of one who, though but a youth, was a man in purposes, one who although not a native of Vermont, and the member of a Connecticut Regiment, yet has spent the most of his life amid our green hills, and has exhibited in every period of his life, that he had studied our history and imbibed the spirit of heroism which has ever marked the lives of the men of Vermont. Therefore we would rehearse the story of heroic life and character, and lay our offering on the grave, which will remain, it is probable, unrecognized of men until the morning of the resurrection.

I attempt no elaborate eulogy of him. His own lips would be the first (if they could speak) to forbid such an enterprise. I wish only to minute briefly a few of the facts

ished memories—to bid adieu to a fond father, a devoted mother, and loved brothers and sisters—leave a home of comfort,—forego the honors of college, and its sweet associations for the tented field. Nothing but the sacred devotion to duty could have induced him to take his life in his hand, and go forth in defence of the government. Methinks I see him present himself before the honored President of the college, and lay the consent of his parents before him asking in a modest unassuming manner that he might have a leave of absence, and for what? For the purposes of pleasure and amusement? For the love of adventure? To follow his companions to the halls of merriment and gayety? No! not all these, but that he might save his country, that he might defend the principles which were given him in the lives and sacrifices of so

ancestors. There is much of sublimity in this scene, and we are not surprised at the reply he received. The President, firmly convinced of his unalloyed patriotism, and the earnestness exhibited, not only granted his request, but kept his class open to him for a year, for his return to it if he should have opportunity.

He served with his regiment on guard duty in the defences of Washington, for more than a year, being stationed at Forts Worth, Lyons, and Williams. On the 19th of May the regiment left to join General Grant in his active campaign against Richmond, and from that date to the battle of Cedar Creek his regiment endured a very trying series of marches and battles, moving from Fredericksburgh to the fearful contest at Cold Harbor, thence to Petersburg and the Weldon Rail Road, and from thence ordered back to the defences of Washington from the attack of the raiders upon Fort Stevens, and finally were assigned to the 6th Corps to reenforce General Sheridan in the Valley of the Shenandoah. The regi-

mate trust. It is sufficient to say that through all his letters, a generous, loyal, noble soul is frankly shown.

Soon after the formation of the colored regiments he evinced a laudable desire to have a commission in a colored company, and I believe he did not seek this position for its mere honor,—for the field was open to him in other directions for usefulness—but that he might not only teach them the duties of a soldier, but perform a higher and holier mission to the unfortunate men whom he should seek to elevate. I think he felt a christian duty in this regard. High, noble, and holy were his purposes and his aims, but he fell ere his purpose was accomplished.

He communicated his views and wishes to a relative in whom he had the greatest love and confidence. This friend endeavored to dissuade him by the argument that it was not a position he ought to assume.—His reply is one which showed his conscientious determination to follow in the path duty seemed to dictate.

ment was also at the battle of Winchester, Fisher Mountain and Strasburgh, "winning universal commendation for courage and good conduct, but losing fearfully in numbers."

I may be allowed an extract from a letter addressed to his mother, dated "Near Gaines' Mills, June 4th, 1864," which speaks so beautifully of his dependence upon God, and of his submission to the orderings of Providence whatever they might be. He says:

"God be praised! We are thus far successful, and through the mercy of God I am thus far uninjured, although I have had some narrow escapes, and the regiment has been badly cut up.

We came up last Wednesday by a forced march from near Mechanicsville. That evening the 6th corps was ordered to charge the enemy's breastworks. Our regiment had to cross an open field, on the other side of which at the edge of a thick forest was their first line of breastworks, and farther

He says: "Can it be that you seriously dissuade me from seeking an office in a colored regiment because the enemy hate and ill-treat those officers? thus recommending me to follow the dictates of plain, unvarnished cowardice? Rather a cool proposition to make to a soldier. You say these officers are disliked by a large and powerful party at the North. What party? There is none which dislikes them except the Copperhead party, and do you seriously wish me to truckle to *them*, and shape my conduct according to *their* wishes? \* \* \* I am going right ahead, and use all honorable efforts to obtain the position which I desire. If I succeed I shall feel that I am in a high and honorable position, ranking as an officer of the United States regular army, and commanding faithful and obedient United States soldiers. And if in the discharge of my duties as a United States officer, I am either murdered by Southern traitors or disabled by Northern traitors so mote it be."

on, through the wood was a second line.— With the help of God we went over both, but some regiments on our left gave way without our knowledge, and a body of the enemy crept up and suddenly poured in a raking fire along the ditch, startling us at first, as we supposed the battle was over and that the enemy had retreated. We soon drew up and returned the fire, and then getting into some convenient rifle pits fought for several hours when the firing ceased on both sides, and the most of us fell asleep from exhaustion, having marched and fought since the midnight previous. \* \*

\* \* \* Col. Kellogg of our regiment killed. Major Ellis is wounded, something like a hundred men are killed, and from three to four hundred wounded and missing.

\* \* \* \* \* I prayed earnestly that I might be enabled to do my duty faithfully, and I believe my prayer was answered.”

In conclusion he says: “Do not be at all disturbed or alarmed about me. I hope, pray and believe that Willie and I will both be restored to our family and friends in a peaceful and united country. At any rate I believe I am where I ought to be. I am

He concludes as follows:

“If I should feel it my duty to act contrary to your wishes, and opinions, I hope you will not judge me too harshly; but I cannot be convinced by your arguments, and the more I reflect upon the subject the more it seems to me that duty, honor and self-interest all point one way.”

Noble sentiments, heroically uttered! I have no doubt he felt in his heart, that in this sphere he could help to educate and evangelize some portion of the black race, whom he saw reaching forth for the blessings of Christianity and Liberty. And what a field lay before him for the full exercise of his christian philanthropy and love, to expend its material and personal power. He, too, fully appreciated the work to be done to educate the negro, and the demand for self-denying effort in this new field of missionary work. He, too, was susceptible to the moral forces which are giving new life to moral sympathy now deeply throbbing in the great heart of the nation in behalf of the rights of a long enslaved nation.

I believe I am where I ought to be. I am in the hands of the Lord. Whether I live or die it is well."

This extract shows the earnest sincerity of his christian life; the thoughtfulness and the manly modesty which were combined in this young ardent and affectionate disciple.

It is not fitting to multiply extracts from his correspondence; it would seem to trench almost too rudely on the privacy of his heart, to open further to the general ear the words he was accustomed to write in the fulness of the tenderest and most inti-

colored nation.

But his hopes were suddenly cut off ere their full accomplishment. He fell at his post, early in the morning of the great battle of Sheridan, on the 19th of October last—shot through the head, and died instantly. On the same day an order came for his discharge that he might accept a commission as Lieutenant in the 10th Regiment of U. S. colored troops.

With a character like his, resolute, prompt, full of enthusiasm, and thoroughly convinced of the essentially base and infamous character of the rebellion organized against our government; persuaded, too, of the



vast importance to the country and the world of the principles and institutions on whose behalf the nation was contending—it was only natural for one of his conscientious and frank nature to make his life the pledge of his affection for his country and her liberties.

A letter from his beloved friend and college tutor will better give you an estimate which I will read in place of any further description of my own.

Head Quarters 10th U. S. Colored Troops,  
City Point, Va., Nov. 8th, 1864.

**REV. MR. AND MRS. HOPSON:—**Dear Friends:—The sad news of the death of your son Edward has just reached me, and though I am a stranger to you I have taken the liberty engendered by a long and intimate friendship for him who is now no more, to send you a few thoughts and ask that I may mingle my tears with yours in memory of the dear boy who has nobly offered his all, the sacrifice of a pure and earnest life upon his country's altar, and who now, we feel, is reaping the rewards of that devotion among the loved ones above.

I am, my dear sir and madam, very truly and respectfully yours,

**THEO. C. GLAZIER,**

1st Lt. and Adj't 10th U. S. C. T.

The Rev. Dr. Lewis of Watertown, Conn., whose son was the captain of the 2d Conn. Artillery, says:—"My son speaks of Edward as a most excellent soldier and man. In the long marches, when comrades were giving out through fatigue, he would often be seen laden with the musket of four or five of them, his physical strength and endurance being wonderful."

This is a beautiful instance of his readiness and willingness to assist his brother soldiers, as well as exhibiting his endurance and hardships. Both letters indicate, as indeed we already know, that his diligence, fidelity and patriotic zeal, his kindness, manliness and christian self-possession, his cheerfulness and courage commended him from the first to the favorable, and even affectionate regards of his officers. He was just as earnest and thorough a Christian in the camp as at home. Temptation to the customary vices of the camp never seemed

My intimacy with Edward embraces a period covering our lives both as students and soldiers. The same earnest feeling that roused him, when traitorous hands struck at our national life, to lay aside the student's seclusion for the battle field, prompted him in all his efforts in college and urged him on to a conscientious discharge of all his duties.

Later, when the relations of teacher and student had been removed, and we had both entered the same company, and been appointed to the same tent, we were thrown into habits of greater familiarity. I learned to appreciate him even more than before, and to realize how it was that he was ever the universal favorite into whatever society he was thrown.

Always obliging and self-sacrificing; eager to promote a comrade's comfort, oftentimes to the detriment of his own; thoroughly energetic when he believed he was working on the side of the right; brave to the very verge of rashness, a true-hearted christian soldier has gone from us.

to touch him. Another letter from Adjutant Theodore F. Baile, sums up in a word the estimate in which he was held and how he performed every duty. He says:

"Corporal Hopson was one of the men who gave to the 19th Connecticut its *character*. I do not think since the regiment was organized until the day of his death he ever attempted to shirk a single duty, or that he did a thing unbecoming a Christian gentleman or a Christian soldier." An eulogy of which any man, however high his rank, might well be proud.

In presenting this sketch of my young friend I would not raise him above many others of his comrades in arms scattered through our noble army. Yet I claim for him all the peculiar characteristics of the purest patriotism, lofty aims, and above all, a high-minded Christian gentleness of which few are possessed even in this enlightened age; and think him worthy of this public record I have made, and of the notice of this honored Society who would lay up in the archives of history the noble

You who live amid home scenes can hardly realize the temptations that beset the soldier's path. You know not the courage that is required to take forth one's Testament in a tent, and to read a chapter, or to kneel at the close of day in the presence of the scoffer and to offer a silent prayer among the careless or the indifferent; yet Edward, by his unobtrusive religious habits I am confident, turned many a soul of that company to God, and his young life has not been in vain.

I have been endeavoring, for nearly eight months, to obtain for him a commission in our present regiment, and have but just succeeded. Major General Butler had been pleased to appoint him a 2d Lieutenant, and his commission, which I enclose to you, reached me last evening, dated the 10th ult. His appointment, by reason of the delays incident to army life, probably did not reach him at all. ¶

I can hardly resign myself to say "He doeth all things well." I have worked so long

deeds and achievements of the youngest as well as the eldest of the sons of our loyal Commonwealth.

His body rests where it fell, and no affectionate hands of friends will probably ever be able to distinguish from others, and to heap the memorial pile above it. And the country at last redeemed, renewed, purified by suffering, and pacified in a long tranquility of righteousness shall be to him and to others, gallant and cherished, who with him have fallen on bloody fields, and who to-day fill unrecognized graves, the grandest monument. His dust may rest where he fell; but, "Faithful and true," we may say of him whenever we recall. "Faithful and true," is his eulogy forever, on the records of earth and heaven.

Deeply and tenderly will his cheerful face be missed from the family circle, and from the friends who were wont to meet him, but the "*vacant chair*" will tell of a noble manhood, and true Christian life.

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• I can hardly resign myself to say "He doeth all things well." I have worked so long to have Edward with me, and have looked forward each day and thought that its close brought so much nearer the time when I could grasp him by the hand and welcome him as a brother officer among us, that I do not seem to possess the strength and grace requisite to bow in submission to the divine will,

Man proposeth, but God disposeth; and in that great hereafter, we shall all know even as we are known. May He give you strength in this the time of your great affliction, and temper that sorrow even as your hearts can bear, and bring us all at last to join the loved ones in the land of rest.

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