

**EDWARD LILLIE PIERCE.**BY GEORGE F. HOAR.

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It is hoped that a full and extended biography of our associate, prepared with a thoroughness and ability such as are found in his own masterpiece of biographical literature, may be given to the world. Such a work will be a chronicle of important service, of noble friendships, of lofty public spirit, and of profound and varied learning. We can find room in our proceedings for little more than a brief and dry catalogue of facts and dates.

Edward Lillie Pierce was born in Stoughton, Massachusetts, May 29, 1829. He was the son of Colonel Jesse Pierce and Elizabeth S. Lillie. By the father's side he came of a race which has contributed many famous names to New England history, including Franklin Pierce, President of the United States, Benjamin Pierce, the great mathematical genius of America, and his son, and John A. Andrew. By his mother's side he was the grandson of Major John Lillie, an officer on the staff of General Knox. He took a just pride in his honorable ancestry, and, in his later years, devoted a good deal of time to investigating his family history. He was prepared for college at Bridgewater Academy and at a classical school in Easton. He was graduated at Brown University at the age of twenty-one in the year 1850, from the Harvard Law School in 1852, and received the degree of Doctor of Laws from Brown University in 1882. He received many college honors, having won during his college course nine first prizes for excellence in various studies. In the year

1848, while still in college and but nineteen years of age, he wrote articles upon the Independence of the Judiciary and the Executive Veto, which were published in the *Democratic Review*, and attracted wide attention. One of his prose essays at college was upon Sir Thomas More as a statesman and a scholar. He won a prize at the Cambridge Law School for an essay of which the topic was the Consideration of a Contract, which was printed in the *American Law Register*. In 1853 he published a careful article upon Secret Suffrage, which attracted great attention in this country and was republished in Europe. In 1857 he published a treatise on American Railroad Law which soon became a standard authority and has passed through several editions. In the transactions of the Norfolk Agricultural Society for 1851 is published an essay of his to which the society awarded a special prize. The article on Secret Suffrage was highly complimented by John Bright, referred to in Parliament, and reprinted and circulated in England as one of the tracts of the Ballot Society.

After graduating at the Law School Mr. Pierce became a student in the office of Salmon P. Chase in Cincinnati, and afterward accompanied him to Washington as his confidential secretary. In 1857 he earnestly opposed the Know Nothing crusade against foreigners and Catholics, and wrote an able letter on that subject, containing much statistical information, which was circulated as a pamphlet by the Republican State Committee.

He was a delegate to the Republican National Convention which nominated Lincoln in 1860, and to that which nominated Hayes in 1876. He enlisted as a private on the breaking out of the War in Company L of the 3rd Massachusetts Regiment, and took part in the destruction of the Norfolk Navy Yard. In 1862 he was put by Secretary Chase in charge of the freedmen and plantations of the Sea Islands of South Carolina. He made some very interesting and important official reports, which had large influ-

ence on our national policy in dealing with the freedmen. In August, 1863, he was appointed Collector of Revenue for the Third Massachusetts District, an office which he held for three years. On June 26, 1866, he was appointed District-Attorney by Gov. Bullock to fill a vacancy occasioned by the resignation of Benjamin W. Harris. He was elected by the people to the same office in 1866, and re-elected in 1868. On November 3, 1869, he was elected Secretary of the Board of State Charities, in which office he served with distinguished ability until April 1, 1874. He was nominated by Gov. Claflin as a Justice of the Superior Court September 29, 1871, but failed of confirmation by the Council. This action of the Council was never attributed to any doubt of Mr. Pierce's ability and absolute integrity, but was held to have been due to animosity occasioned by some emphatic expression by him of his indignation at the official conduct of one of the Judges. In 1875, 1876 and 1897 he represented the town of Milton in the Massachusetts Legislature. He rendered a great public service by procuring the passage of an act drawn by him "To Limit Municipal Indebtedness." In 1876 he was Chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary. In December, 1878, on the recommendation of the Massachusetts Senators, he was appointed by President Hayes Assistant Treasurer of the United States, but declined the appointment. He was for many years lecturer in the Boston Law School. He promoted the foundation of the Public Library of Milton, of which he was for many years trustee. He wrote a report on the subject of public libraries, which was incorporated largely in the publication of the American Social Science Association.

The following list of his publications is probably incomplete :

Remarks on the "Personal Liberty Laws," before a committee of the Legislature, February 1, 1861 ; Report to Gov. Andrew on the condition of "Massachusetts Soldiers," at

Fortress Monroe (*Boston Daily Advertiser*, June 1, 1861) ; Articles in the *Atlantic Monthly*, on "The Contrabands at Fortress Monroe," November, 1861, and "The Freedmen at Port Royal," September, 1863 ; Official Reports on "The Freedmen at Port Royal," February 3 and June 2, 1862 (printed in the *Rebellion Record*) ; Address on "The Two Systems of Government Proposed for the Rebel States," at the Town House in Milton, October 31, 1868 ; Speech on Municipal Indebtedness, in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, April 9, 1875 (printed in the *Boston Journal*, April 27, 1875) ; Address at Milton, Memorial Day, May 30, 1870 ; Speech at Faneuil Hall, June 27, 1876, on the nomination of Mr. Hayes as President ; Lecture on "The Private Life and Literary Friendships of Charles Sumner," before the Long Island Historical Society, Brooklyn, New York, December 18, 1877 ; Article entitled "A Senator's (Charles Sumner's) Fidelity Vindicated," *North American Review*, July-August, 1878 ; Address before the Suffolk Bar, on George S. Hillard, January, 1879 ; Address at the dedication of the Town House, at Milton, February 17, 1879 ; Address before the Alumni of Brown University, on "The Public and Social Duties of the College Graduate," June 15, 1880. Essays on "The Independence of the Judiciary" and on "The Executive Veto," *Democratic Review*, 1848 ; Essay on "Sir Thomas More as a Statesman and a Scholar" ; Essay on "The Consideration of a Contract," printed in the *American Law Register* ; Essay on "Secret Suffrage," 1853 ; Treatise on "American Railroad Law," 1857 ; Essay published in The Transactions of the Norfolk Agricultural Society for 1851 ; "Diary of John Rowe," 1895 ; "Major John Lillie and the Lillie Family of Boston," 1896 ; "Enfranchisement and Citizenship," 1895, being a collection of addresses and papers on various subjects.

He took constant and most efficient interest in the affairs of his town. He was moderator of the Milton town meet-

ing from 1888 to 1897 inclusive, except when abroad in 1894. He was nominated for Congress by the Republicans of his District in 1890, but was unsuccessful. He was the choice of a large number of the Republicans of his District for that office in 1888, but generously gave way to Mr. Beard, who was nominated, but defeated at the election.

He visited Europe in 1869, 1873, 1879, 1881, 1882, 1884, 1887, 1891, 1893 and 1897, visiting Russia, Constantinople, England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Egypt. He was a frequent guest of John Bright at Rochdale, and of the Earl of Carlisle at Naworth Castle and Castle Howard. He met Gladstone at Sir William Harcourt's. He received distinguished attention from many eminent Englishmen, and was an honorary member of the Athenæum Club. In 1882 he gave a library of 800 volumes to St. Helena Island, South Carolina, where he had been stationed and had done excellent work among the negroes during the War.

Mr. Pierce was placed in charge of the colony of contrabands at Port Royal by Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury. He left New York for Port Royal, January 13, 1862. His mission was originally intended as one simply of investigation. But he was soon appointed special agent in control. He made another visit in 1863.

In his official reports, dated February 3, and June 2, 1862, and in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* for September, 1863, he describes at length his observations. He was also appointed Supervising Agent of the Treasury Department for the Department of the South with a view to assisting in the reorganization of Florida on the basis of equal suffrage for the colored people. He visited South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. July 18, 1863, he was the guest on Morris Island of Brigadier-General George C. Strong, who commanded the assault on Fort Wagner. He took supper in the General's tent that evening with a large number of officers, among them Colonel Shaw. He

witnessed the attack and gave a graphic account of the whole affair in a letter to Governor Andrew, dated Beaufort, July 22, 1863.

He was the author of the resolutions of the Republican State Conventions of 1869 and 1872, and was chairman of the committee on resolutions at different times. He spoke in the Republican National Convention of 1876 at Cincinnati against a proposition to deny to Chinese immigrants the equality recognized by the Declaration of Independence.

He married April 19, 1865, Elizabeth H. Kingsbury, daughter of John Kingsbury of Providence, Rhode Island. She died March 30, 1880. Their children are: Edward Lillie, born March 28, 1866; Mary Mackie, born November 14, 1869; George Burgess, born January 21, 1872; Charles Sumner, born September 5, 1874; Arthur Johnson, born July 15, 1876; Reginald Kingsbury, born July 20, 1878.

The following notice of Mrs. Pierce from the Providence Journal of April 5, 1880, is taken from the Pierce Genealogy, by Frederick C. Pierce, Worcester, 1880, from which many of the foregoing details have been taken:

"The brief announcement in the papers of the death of Mrs. Edward L. Pierce of Milton, Mass., gives small hint to the community in general of the heavy loss sustained by her family and the friends to whom she was endeared. Born in Providence, and living here through her school days, and the associations of youth, she formed deep attachments which can never be forgotten. Tender memories will be awakened in many hearts among those who, though separated from her for long years, can bring back without effort the picture of those blended qualities which made her youth so charming and full of promise. Her father's school was the centre of all that was bright and earnest in youthful studies, and gained no common impulse from the filial sympathy and ardor with which she entered into all its interests. Not in school only, but in the church and in social life, she endeared herself to all about her, and exerted a gentle but strong influence.

"Her marriage took place fifteen years ago, and she removed at once to her husband's home in Milton, Mass. That unique and beautiful town, lying on the edge of a great city, but possessing its own independent life, its interesting historical associations, and its rare natural beauty, secured at once her warm attachment, and remained her loved home to the last. Coming as a bride in all her early beauty, she could not help but win the kindly sympathy of all. As her children grew up about her, she developed more and more those remarkable qualities which came to her by inheritance, and which were founded in true Christian principle."

March 8, 1882, Mr. Pierce was married to his second wife, Maria Louisa Woodhead, daughter of Edward Booth Woodhead and Elizabeth Woodhead of Huddersfield, England. Their children are: Grace Elizabeth Pierce, born November 20, 1883; Harold Whilworth Pierce, born March 31, 1885.

If Mr. Pierce had not achieved his great work which will carry his name down in history,—the "Memoir of Charles Sumner"—his life would still have been notable as that of one of the most useful, influential and eminent men of his time. He would have been remembered by many intimate friends, both at home and abroad, themselves among the most interesting persons of the century. He exercised a great influence on the political history of the Commonwealth and country. He dealt courageously and powerfully with great questions. He was one of the most important figures in the great movement which abolished slavery, subdued rebellion and secured, so far as they have been secured, freedom and political equality to the negro. He was a law writer of learning and accuracy, among the first to deal with a great department of jurisprudence in which he is recognized by his profession as a master. His measure for limiting municipal indebtedness is one of the most important and valuable contributions to the legislation of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Every

man engaged in a death struggle for righteousness knew that he could count on Edward Pierce as a brave, steadfast, unflinching and constant ally. He was wise in counsel and efficient in action. He was the embodiment of the best intellectual and moral traits of Massachusetts. The story of his life, of his friendships, of his controversies, of his contributions to literature, to jurisprudence, to statesmanship, with his extensive correspondence, ought to be, and doubtless will be, preserved for the instruction and gratification of posterity. His great characteristic was thoroughness. He was always careful before stating the most unimportant fact to establish it by complete investigation. He went down to the roots in everything he did or said.

But his great place in history and literature will be held in his capacity of biographer of Charles Sumner. The political movement which resulted in the abolition of slavery in the United States, and through the force of the example of this country, in the West Indies and in Brazil, was inaugurated by a meeting held in Worcester on the 28th June, 1848. The people of the Northern States, except those portions which had been settled from the South, had for a long time disliked and abhorred slavery. This feeling had been without organization and without leadership, excepting a very small number of persons known as "Garrison Abolitionists," who declined to hold public office, to vote, or in any way to support the Constitution of the United States, because of its provisions recognizing the lawfulness of slavery. There was another party known as the Liberty Party who sought to advance their end by political methods; but who were willing to support men belonging to other political organizations if they were willing to trust them to do what they could to resist the further spread of slavery in the country. But the party organized for the first time at Worcester adopted as its fundamental principle resistance to the extension of slavery



into the great regions between the Mississippi River and the Pacific, and refused its support to any person belonging to either the Whig or the Democratic party, whatever might be his individual opinions and purposes in respect to that matter. This party, a few years after, took the name of Republican, but did not lose its identity, which has been preserved to the present day. Charles Sumner was its leader in Massachusetts, and probably down nearly to his death its most powerful and influential leader in the country, with the exception of Abraham Lincoln alone. His biography by Mr. Pierce, in four volumes, is the history of the Republican party, and the history of the abolition of slavery in the United States.

Mr. Pierce was singularly well equipped for his work. He was eighteen years old when the party was founded. He had then an intellect remarkably mature for a person of his age. He watched public events, even at that time, with a most intelligent and zealous interest. Soon after, he became acquainted with Sumner, and was his closest and most confidential friend until his death. Sumner made him one of his literary executors, together with Henry W. Longfellow and Francis V. Balch. Mr. Pierce, as has been said, quite early in life became the confidential secretary of Salmon P. Chase. He became also very intimate with Henry Wilson, John A. Andrew, William Claflin and others who were prominent in the same cause. He was himself prominent in the councils of the Republican party, member of the Legislature, frequently member of the State conventions, and a member of two important national conventions, in one of which he had much to do with shaping the platform. He was a man of an intelligent and alert habit of observation, which no trifle escaped. He had a tenacious memory, from which nothing seemed to be lost. He took all matters of politics, history and literature with great seriousness, so that few things which came under his observation pertaining to either ever seemed to

him to be trifling. He had a remarkably sound and dispassionate judgment. He had an unwearying industry. He sifted matters to the bottom and sought his evidence in the original sources. In spite of his zealous and earnest convictions he had a singular fairness and impartiality of historic judgment. His narrative is without bitterness or heat. The men who had earnest controversies with Sumner during his lifetime (and there were a good many of them), and their representatives, with scarcely an exception, bear testimony to the singular fairness and truthfulness of Mr. Pierce's narrative of these controversies, — a narrative which Mr. Pierce makes complete, without flinching or suppressing. In spite of Mr. Pierce's love for his illustrious friend he maintained through life his own independence of judgment and of action. He has a good, vigorous and racy narrative style. He is quite capable of lofty eloquence on fitting occasion, but never undertakes to use it as a cover for feebleness of thought.

Pierce's *Life of Sumner* will be the standard authority for the history of the great revolution which Charles Sumner led. There will never be any trustworthy authority for the history of the United States during that eventful period which does not study Mr. Pierce's book, or which does not adopt his conclusions. It is, so far, one of the very few masterpieces of American biographical literature. Mr. Pierce gave the best years of his life, all the accomplishments of his early education, every power of an intellect which might have brought him success and fame in any of the walks which the Republic opened to him, to embalm the memory of Charles Sumner for the admiration of posterity. The great work was well done. There is little wanting in this matchless biography. A loving sympathy with his subject; judicial impartiality; fairness to antagonists; untiring industry; thoroughness of investigation; absolute truthfulness; a contemporary and intimate knowledge of the transactions he had to relate,—all these he

possessed in an uncommon degree,— it may almost be said in a degree unexampled in the annals of biographical literature. Mr. Pierce's name will go down in history and will abide by the side of the great name of the man whom he commemorated, so long as the memory of the great contest for liberty abides in the hearts of the American people.

There were two events in the life of Edward L. Pierce which gave him especial delight,— a delight which he expressed freely in the unrestrained intercourse of private friendship. One was a day's ride which he took in company with John Bright, who had never beheld the scenes before. It was the privilege of the writer, at Mr. Pierce's suggestion, to make the same journey a few years later. The scenes seemed to be peopled not only with memories of the great men of a former time to whom it had been familiar, but with the memory of the two friends, now both dead, who had made so recently a pilgrimage to their shrines. The day's ride took them past the house of William Penn, the cottage where John Milton finished *Paradise Lost*, the home and the burial-place of Burke, the home of Gray and the country churchyard where his dust sleeps, to which, though consecrated to the rest of the dead, his muse has given immortality.

The other was a banquet given in honor of Mr. Pierce the 29th December, 1894, on his return from Europe, just after the completion of his great work. There were gathered the few survivors of the founders of the Free Soil party, and the representatives of the large number who were gone. Mr. Pierce was the guest of the evening. A list of the signers of the invitation is given below, a star marking the names of those who were present:—

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|--------------------------|---------------------|
| *Adams, Charles Francis. | Allison, William B. |
| *Aldrich, P. Emory.      | *Baker, John I.     |
| *Allen, Frank D.         | *Balch, Francis V.  |
| *Allen, Nathaniel T.     | *Beard, Alanson W.  |
| *Allen, Walter.          | Bennett, Edmund H.  |

- Bigelow, John.  
 ~Bird, Charles Sumner.  
 \*Bishop, Robert R.  
 \*Blackwell, Henry B.  
 \*Blanchard, S. Stillman.  
 \*Blunt, William E.  
 \*Bolles, Matthew.  
 \*Borden, Simeon.  
 \*Brayton, John S.  
 \*Bumpus, Everett C.  
 \*Burr, Isaac T.  
 Candler, John W.  
 \*Capen, Elmer H.  
 \*Carter, Josiah H.  
 \*Cate, George W.  
 Chadwick, John W.  
 \*Chamberlain, Mellen.  
 Chandler, William E.  
 \*Churchill, John P. S.  
 \*Claffin, Adams D.  
 \*Claffin, Arthur B.  
 \*Claffin, William.  
 \*Codman, Charles R.  
 \*Crapo, William W.  
 \*Crocker, George G.  
 ~Davis, Edward L.  
 \*Davis, Robert T.  
 Dawes, Henry L.  
 \*Doherty, William W.  
 Douglass, Frederick.  
 \*Endicott, Charles.  
 ~Endicott, William, Jr.  
 \*Ernst, George A. O.  
 Fisher, Milton M.  
 Forbes, John M.  
 Fox, Charles B.  
 \*Fox, William H.  
 \*French, Asa.  
 Fuller, Robert O.  
 \*Gadfield, Thomas.  
 \*Goodell, Abner C.  
 \*Goulding, Frank P.  
 \*Green, Samuel A.  
 \*Greenhalge, Frederic T.  
 Hale, Edward Everett.  
 Harris, Benjamin W.  
 \*Haskell, Edward H.  
 \*Hawley, Joseph R.  
 \*Heywood, Frank E.  
 Heywood, Samuel R.  
 Higginson, T. Wentworth.  
 \*Hill, Hamilton A.  
 Hoar, E. Rockwood.  
 \*Hoar, George F.  
 \*Hoar, Rockwood.  
 \*Hoar, Samuel.  
 \*Hollingsworth, Amor L.  
 \*Hopkins, William S. B.  
 Houghton, Henry O.  
 \*Hunnell, James F.  
 \*James, George Abbot.  
 \*Jenks, Henry F.  
 \*Johnson, Arnold B.  
 \*Johnson, Samuel.  
 \*Lane, Jonathan A.  
 Lodge, Henry Cabot.  
 \*Marsh, Henry A.  
 \*McClellan, Arthur D.  
 \*McPhail, Andrew M.  
 \*McPherson, Ebenezer M.  
 Monroe, George H.  
 Morrill, Justin S.  
 \*Morse, Elijah A.  
 \*Morse, Robert M.  
 \*Newhall, Lucian.  
 Phillips, Stephen H.  
 \*Phillips, Willard P.  
 \*Pickard, Samuel T.  
 \*Pierce, Charles Sumner.  
 \*Pierce, George B.  
 \*Pillsbury, Albert E.  
 Platt, Orville H.  
 \*Pratt, Laban.  
 Purvis, Charles B.

* Rice, Alexander H.	Tait, Royal C.
* Rice, William W.	* Talbot, Newton.
Robbins, Royal.	Thayer, Charles M.
Robbins, Royal E.	Thayer, James B.
* Roberts, Louis A.	* Wales, Nathaniel.
Ropes, John C.	Walker, Francis A.
* Salisbury, Stephen.	* Walker, George.
Shattuck, George O.	* Walker, Joseph.
* Sherman, Edgar J.	Walker, Joseph H.
Sherman, John.	* Ware, Horace E.
* Stackpole, J. Lewis.	Washburn, Henry S.
* Stearns, Richard H.	Washburn, John D.
* Stebbins, Solomon B.	Weeden, William B.
* Stevens, A. W.	White, Stephen V.
* Stockard, Elijah B.	Winslow, John.
* Stone, Eben F.	* Winslow, Samuel E.
* Stone, Henry.	* Wolcott, Roger.
* Storey, Moorfield.	* Woods, Henry.
Swint, John L.	* Wrightington, Stephen C.

Cordial letters were received from the following gentlemen, all of them speaking in the highest terms of Mr. Pierce's masterly biography :—

Henry Cabot Lodge.	Milton M. Fisher.
Carl Schurz.	John W. Chadwick.
Henry L. Dawes.	James O. Murray.
Chauncey L. Knapp.	Samuel May.
Frederick Douglass.	Alfred P. Putnam.
Edward Everett Hale.	William H. Baldwin.
John Bigelow.	Francis A. Walker.
John D. Long.	George H. Moore.
William E. Chandler.	Merrill E. Gates.
James B. Angell.	Hiram Barney.
Frederick D. Huntington.	James G. Vose.
Frank B. Sanborn.	Moses Pierce.
James B. Thayer.	Orville H. Platt.
Justin Winsor.	

The time was devoted to the memories of the greatest political achievement in the world's history ever accomplished without bloody revolution, and to congratulation

and honor for the man who had so admirably and perfectly narrated its story. Every speaker, every letter from persons unable to be present, concurred in expressing the perfect satisfaction of the friends of Charles Sumner with the work of his biographer, and the founders of the great party of freedom and their representatives with the work of its historian.

The following sentences from the letter of Rev. John White Chadwick sum up the general verdict:—

“Mr. Pierce’s *Life of Sumner* will be nobly praised. It cannot be praised in excess of its deserts. It is more than a great biography of a great man. It is a great history of a great time, all of which Sumner saw, and a great part of which he was; and that Mr. Pierce has not exaggerated that part, but rightly estimated its proportion to the parts taken by others, is one of the most marked and interesting features of his work. It is to me a marvel of fidelity, of patience, of lucidity, of fairness to all concerned.”

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