

“THE FAMOUS DOCTOR STEARNS”

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF DR. SAMUEL STEARNS
WITH A BIBLIOGRAPHY

BY JOHN C. L. CLARK¹

BENJAMIN STEARNS and Dinah Wheeler were married at Lancaster, in the Massachusetts Bay Province, 11 September, 1738, by the Rev. John Prentice. Benjamin was of Concord, as, too, was Dinah's father, Josiah Wheeler, who migrated to Lancaster about the end of the preceding century. Her mother was Martha Prescott, daughter of John Prescott, Jr., and granddaughter of the founder of Lancaster. The homestead whither Benjamin Stearns came to dwell with his wife's parents lay at the easterly base of Wataquadock Hill, in Bolton, which had been incorporated as a township, from Lancaster territory, in 1738. A path from the door led to the easterly bound "Bay Road"² running a little to the north of the house. Besides carrying on the farm of a hundred and fifty acres, which his wife inherited from her father three months after their marriage, the husband made, and doubtless mended, shoes, for in deeds he is described as "cordwainer." In one document Mrs. Stearns is called "spinster,"—no meaningless epithet applied to this old-time housewife, among whose possessions when she died were "2 great Wooling Wheels."³ Plenty of wholesome work for the boys and girls born into this New England household!

¹Mr. J.C.L. Clark, of Lancaster, Mass., who made a life study of Dr. Samuel Stearns, died at Lancaster, Sept. 6, 1936.

²Middlesex Deeds, XXIII, 403.

³Worcester Probate Records, Series A, Case 55621.

To the prudence and energy of old Josiah Wheeler his grandchildren owed the comfort, if not affluence, in which they grew to maturity. Around the fireplace of the substantial farmhouse, its lower walls brick-lined for better protection against savage foes, many a tale must have been told of adventure and Indian fighting.¹ Grandmother Wheeler, to whom the use of half the house was allotted by her husband's will, took as the companion of her old age Captain Peter Joslin, whose first wife with her children had been murdered in their home by Indians in 1692.² To traditions of that earlier time of mortal conflict, the father, back from soldiering at Louisburg in 1745, could add fresh war-like experiences, his "tales growing green from their tale that is told." Probably his reminiscences failed to include the fact noted by Lieutenant Dudley Bradstreet, of Groton, that on 24 November "Benjⁿ Stearns [was] Drunk in y^e Royal Hospital," and the next day was sent "und^r y^e main Gaurd."³ But over-indulgence when opportunity offered may surely be forgiven the homesick garrison of pestilential, shot-shattered Louisburg, with no comfort, to quote Parkman's story of the siege, "but their daily dram of New England rum."

Of the seven children of Benjamin and Dinah Stearns, the remarkable character of whom I purpose giving some account, was the second, born 13 July, 1741.⁴ An elder brother, Josiah, died young, and after

¹This ancient homestead, built probably before the end of the seventeenth century, and demolished during the decade of 1920, was Josiah Wheeler's dwelling as early as 1711, having been purchased from his brother-in-law, Lieutenant John Houghton (John², John¹).

²Joslin survived his fourth wife (Mrs. Wheeler) eleven years, dying in Leominster in 1759 at the age of ninety-four. His wife is buried with her first husband (Josiah Wheeler) in the old Common Cemetery in Lancaster.

³S. A. Green, *Three Military Diaries Kept by Groton Soldiers*, 35. A manuscript in Benjamin Stearns's crude handwriting, perhaps copied from the diary of a fellow-soldier in Capt. Warren's Company, at Louisburg, came to light twenty years ago in the S. S. Houghton house in Bolton. *Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc.*, XLII, 135-144.

⁴*Vital Records of Bolton, Mass.* D. L. Mansfield in his *History of Dummerston*, VI. (1884) says that Stearns was born in Lancaster, an error which led H. S. Nourse (*Bibliography of Lancastriana*, 1901) to confuse him with another Samuel, son of Timothy and Dinah (Peirce) Stearns, born in Lancaster in 1745. This Samuel was a Leominster blacksmith,

Samuel came Daniel in 1743, Mercy in 1745, Martha in 1750, Sarah in 1751, and Asa in 1754.

"By Parents and Ministers," as he relates, the young Samuel "was instructed in the Christian Principles, and . . . to fear God, honour the King, and to live a peaceable and quiet life in all Godliness and honesty." Of his father it remains to say that, excepting his one military campaign, the hardships of which may well have shortened his life, his activities extended little beyond his farm and shoemaker's bench, and that, at the age of forty, in January, 1755, he died. More than by the unlettered Benjamin Stearns, the clever boy's character was probably influenced, for better or for worse, by the Rev. Thomas Goss, the Royalist minister of Bolton. In one of the doggerel pieces of verse which he had a fondness for writing, he gives an account of his education.¹

I oft' was sent unto the Grammar Schools:
 But did not imitate the Idle fools . . .
 My Mind on learning very much was bent,
 Hence, I to other kinds of schools was sent,
 Spent Money well, which some how had been earnt,
 Arithmetic and Algebra I learnt.
 Geometry and Navigation then
 I learnt as perfect as the most of Men,
 Surveying too, and Trigonometry,
 And that Grand Science call'd Astronomy.
 In Music too, I was well taught we know,
 And ev'ry branch of Med'cine here below.

But to this complacent recital of his acquirements he adds more humble lines recognizing the limitations of human knowledge: _____

who shortly before his death in 1805 removed to Fitchburg. Benjamin (John^s, Isaac^s, Isaac^s) and Timothy (Samuel^s, Shubael^s, Charles^s) were only distantly related. A deposition in Dr. Samuel Stearns's autograph declares "that according to the best of my knowledge, I was born in Bolton, in the County of Worcester, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts." *Appleton's Cyclopædia of American Biography* and Dr. Nichols's *Bibliography of Worcester* have 1747 as the year of his birth, though Appleton, evidently, on the authority of Burnham's *Brattleboro* (1880), gives the place correctly. The mistake in the year of Stearns's birth is traceable to his own gravestone.

¹The poetry on this and the following page is from a manuscript volume of Dr. Stearns's poetical and prose effusions, in which on pp. 394-396 is an autobiographical poem "The Character of Dr. Samuel Stearns" (original in Amer. Antiq. Soc.).

When I'd been through this labour and this pain,
 In darkness I did find I yet remain,
 For things are yet hid by the God of Might
 Both from my own, and learned mortals' sight!

We may picture the ambitious youth following his medical studies under the tutorage of local practitioners, among them the Bolton doctor, Daniel Greenleaf. "During the generation immediately preceding the Revolution, the science of medicine in Massachusetts was making progress by slow but steady steps . . . Medicine had passed through the creeping stage and was now beginning to walk alone . . . It was a long stride in advance when men began to turn their studies in one direction, and to make a specialty of general practice. The opportunities, however, were few for the successful prosecution of this object. There were neither medical schools nor hospitals; and the young men were obliged to pursue their studies under the guidance of practicing physicians."¹

Stearns sought instruction of a different sort from Dr. Nathaniel Ames, the younger, of Dedham, who noted in his diary, 25 February, 1768: "Sam Sterns of Bolton wants to know how to make Almanacks."² He apparently found an opportunity, also, to cross the ocean, for according to his own statement he had been "taught by an Astronomer in Europe."³

His mother died in 1771. About that time he settled as a physician in Paxton, which had lately been set off as a "district" from Leicester and Rutland. He speedily acquired a large practice, apparently replacing other practitioners. He says in his poetical autobiography:

Two Doctors there, (but not to my disgrace)
 Then pull'd up Stakes, and soon did leave the Place;
 No other Doctor after that was found
 Within the limits of Paxtonian Ground.

¹S. A. Green, *History of Medicine in Massachusetts*, 80-81.

²Quoted from the original MS. in the collections of the Dedham Historical Society. "Bolton" is miscopied "Boston" in the *Dedham Historical Register*, Oct. 1891 ("Extracts from the Ames Diary") and in *Briggs's Essays, Humor, and Poems of Nathaniel Ames, Father and Son* (Cleveland, 1891), 34.

³*Massachusetts Gazette*, 11 March, 1773, *Supplement*.

Granting Stearns's innate tendency toward empiricism, one need not suppose this success ill-deserved. His study of medicine had probably begun early in life. He was now a man of thirty who, in addition to the local instruction and reading available, had presumably picked up new ideas abroad. "I constantly did ride," his autobiographical muse canters on, "within the Town, and out of town besides." He had apprentices under him and kept for sale a stock of drugs. Moreover, he at once utilized the knowledge gained from Dr. Ames by issuing annually, through various printers, a "North-American's Almanack." Stearns's varied employments bear, indeed, a certain resemblance to those of the "ingenious" Doctor Saffold mentioned in "The Tatler," who succeeded Doctor Lilly "in the studies both of Physick and Astrology, to which he added that of Poetry."

In the effusion previously quoted Stearns asserts that

. . . some old women thought I was a Witch,
Cou'd tell their fortunes, and their Minds were bent
I cou'd reveal each wondrous strange event;

but one looks in vain in his almanacs for the dire "omens and prognostications" which formed an important part of many such publications, especially abroad. Probably his knowledge of astrology was employed only in the familiar predictions of the weather.¹ When the old almanac-makers were serious in their forecasts of heat and cold, sunshine and storm, their wisdom was often enough "gossiped from the stars," and sometimes they "read the seasons on the breast bone of a goose."²

In February, 1773, Stearns's almanac tells its

¹Regarding astrology Stearns wrote in his *American Oracle* (1791): . . . as I acquainted myself with every branch of the art when I was young, and found by my own experience and observation that it is only a deception as to the telling of future events, I shall expose it as an imposition contrived by imposters to delude the ignorant, and get away their money for nothing. It is true, indeed, that an Astrologer may chance to guess right sometimes, but I am persuaded that he cannot tell when any person will be married, how long he will live, nor where things are secreted that have been carried off by thieves." (Pp. 92-93.)

²Parkhurst's *New England Diary and Almanac*, 1808.

readers, "The Planets denote that foul weather is near." The commentary on the weather to be expected straggling down the crowded pages, elbowed by times and places of courts, saints' days, and the characters of the ephemeris, maintain, now and again, the philomath's traditional whimsicality. "The Ladies dress very gay, but they cannot exceed that Gaiety with which the Earth is now adorned." "The grum Thunder rumbles in the Clouds and the lofty Oaks are broken with the heavy Strokes which descend in flaming Torrents from the gloomy Clouds." "The Winter we do dread and fear, because the Cold is so severe." "Whisking cold weather." "Cold weather which makes old Maids fret and scold." "Winter like Weather, which makes old Batchelors toast their Shins by the Fire." And this for December, 1774, "Snow or Rain or Hail or Fair Weather," which leaves the matter safely open.

In the almanac for 1772 the cause of thunder is thus lucidly explained:

The heat of the Sun causes an ascension of two sorts of exhalations, the one of water, the other of more humid and liquid parts of the earth, as the juice of trees, plants, herbs, manured fields, and such like; all which have a natural salt, or a spiritous sort of sulphur, which meeting together, coagulate, and are of an inflammable nature, as appears when they meet with proper matter to set them on fire either by sympathy or antipathy; for fire will produce fire naturally; or fire may be caused by violent motion or rarification of the air, as when flint and steel are smote together. Now 'tis confessed by all Naturalists, that heat and cold have the same effect in many cases: To mention one, heat thins and rarifies the air; or to speak properly, Is air rarified? and so does extremity of cold; for cold is but a privation of heat, and is no part of the creation; and the destruction of the change of its nature terminates again in heat. This being premised, it follows that cold which lies in the middle region of the air, meeting with its opposite igneous exhalations, by a kind of an antiperistasis, the exhalation is kindled, and the violet strife is the cause of that noise we call Thunder-Claps.

Fantastic as are some of his meteorological theories, Stearns's passion for astronomy was genuine. In his

almanac for 1772 he discourses not uneloquently of the "divine science":

The Study of Astronomy, that Divine Science, is a Study which ought to be kept up (notwithstanding the Objections that some ignorant people raise against it) by reason of its being so very advantageous to Mankind, as it discovers to us the wonderful Harmony of Nature, and sheweth wherewith the whole Frame and Structure of all created Beings are linked and knit together, to constitute the great Machine of the Universe. Astronomy teaches us how to observe and discover the Motions of the Heavenly Bodies, and it weighs and considers the Vigour and Force by which they circulate in their Orbs. Without it the Navigator could not conduct his Vessel from one Part of the World to another, with that safety he now does; neither could the Dimensions of this Globe whereon we live be known to any Degree of exactness. The Astronomer while sitting in his Study can trace the Erratic Planets through all their intricate Paths, and thereby foretell for many Ages to come the Eclipses of both Sun and Moon, their Quantities and Durations, and Conjunctions, Oppositions and Mutual Aspects of the Planets, and what will be the Distances of the Stars from either of the Poles at any Time.

From the study of this Divine Science arises also these excellent Advantages, viz. that there is no knowledge that is attained by the Light of Nature, that gives us truer and juster Notions of that Supreme Being of infinite Wisdom and Power who is the Maker of both Heaven and Earth, than it does. None furnishes us with stronger Arguments by which his Existence is demonstrated: Nothing shews more his Power and Wisdom than the Contemplation of the Stars and their Motions. What is there more ravishes the Mind of Man into an Admiration and Love of God, than so many and so great Bodies, endowed with Heavenly Light, most beautiful to the Eye! and when contemplated most delightful to the Understanding! Their mutual Intercourses, most regular Motions, their certain and determined Circulations, and their Returns and Periods, settled by a Divine Law, in an admirable Harmony, make manifest to us the immense Power, Wisdom and Providence of their Maker; which when we consider, we must necessarily acknowledge, reverence and celebrate the Author and Contriver of all these Things.

"The North-American's Almanck" for 1776, which contains the Rev. William Gordon's account of the battle at Lexington and Concord, was probably the most popular of the series. Included in its wares are

also "Sir Richard Rum's Advice to the Soldiers and Others,"¹ and "Directions for Preserving the Health of the Soldiers in the Camps."

On 31 March, 1773, Dr. Stearns and Miss Sarah Witt, both of Paxton, were married at Bolton by that sturdy old magistrate and soldier, Colonel John Whitcomb.² The only offspring of the marriage, a son, died in his second year.³ Mrs. Stearns was a daughter of Oliver Witt, sometime captain in the militia regiment commanded by Colonel John Chandler of Worcester, who was later to bear the sobriquet "Tory John." Captain Witt before the Revolution was probably the most influential citizen of Paxton, a deacon in the church, and, from the incorporation of the district in 1765, for ten years a selectman, always first on the list, as he had been a selectman of Leicester. Unfortunately for his material prosperity, when the time came for lines to be sharply drawn between Whig and Tory, his sympathies were for King George. Stearns, like his father-in-law, "honoured the King." Moreover, he hated war. "Although," he says, "I was a loyal subject to the King, yet I never was an Enemy to my Country, for it was always against my Conscience to kill the human species, or to injure them in their Persons, Characters or Properties."

Stearns's home lay "about a Mile South Easterly" from the Paxton meeting-house, on land purchased in 1774 from Mrs. Stearns's father. His youngest brother, Asa, settled near by. He was a carpenter who had done his bit for the country at the outbreak of the War.⁴ In 1778, at Paxton, a certain Rebecca Snow was

¹Sir Richard Rum seems to have made his initial appearance, as the personification of the favorite New England tippie, in a temperance tract entitled "The Indictment and Tryal of Sir Richard Rum," first printed at Boston in 1724. (See *Pub. of Colonial Soc. of Mass.*, XVII, 234-244).

²Bolton Town Records.

³Paxton Town Records.

⁴Asa Stearns marched from Lancaster (*Mass. Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War*, XIV, 931), where he was then living, in June, 1775. See deed of Samuel and "Salley" Stearns to Asa Stearns, joiner, of Lancaster, of land in Paxton. (Worcester Registry of Deeds, Vol. 83, p. 444.)

brought to bed of a bastard son who to his death in early manhood bore his father's name, Asa Stearns.¹ Five years after the commission of her fault, the girl, with belated severity, was hailed before the Court of Sessions which, "having considered of her offense, ordered that she pay a fine of ten shillings to the Commonwealth."² Asa *père* had meantime wooed and wedded Elizabeth Witt, the young sister of his brother's wife.

A souvenir of one of Samuel Stearns's Paxton friendships consists of a Hebrew lesson-book which, in addition to his autograph, bears the note: "A Gift from M^r. Pall Snow."³ The son of an inn-keeper, Paul Snow was born in 1758 in Rutland,⁴ of which a part was later included in Paxton. In 1779 he entered Harvard with the class of 1783,⁵ but remained at most only one year, perhaps leaving college to teach. It is related that one Sunday morning, in the summer of 1783, while his father's household were at breakfast, they noticed sounds as of someone opening the front door of the tavern, and mounting the stairs. The youngest son, a child of eight, cried, "Paul has come!" but upon investigation no one was found. Two weeks later Paul was brought home ill, and soon afterward died. The youngest son of the little brother, when a very old man, told me this eerie little story.⁶

¹Paxton Town Records.

²Records of Worcester County Court of General Sessions, V, 85.

³This volume, now in the possession of the Clinton (Mass.) Hist. Soc., with a Latin New Testament of Stearns's was found in the house in Lancaster Centre where the twin daughters of Stearns's brother Daniel spent their latter days. These books were undoubtedly among the articles taken by Daniel Stearns, as will appear, in satisfaction for debt.

⁴Vital Records of Rutland, Mass., 90.

⁵Faculty Records, IV, 127.

⁶"A young woman, who lived on the north side of Long Island in the State of New York, with a magistrate, went on a visit about 18 miles to the south side of the Island, and whilst she was absent, she appeared with a candle in her hand to the magistrate and his wife, as they were in bed. The magistrate spoke to her, asked if she had got home, and she vanished immediately. She returned home a short time afterwards, and was taken ill of a fever, and died in a few days." Stearns, *An Account of the Late Wonderful American Vision* (among the appended accounts of apparitions).

Another clever Paxton boy, whom the village doctor was to meet later in far different surroundings, was James Earle,¹ the portrait painter, brother of the more noted Ralph Earle. He executed a miniature of Stearns about 1790, in London.

Our doctor was hard pressed for money. He seems, it must be confessed, never to have been clear of debt. Like all physicians, great and small, he had bad debtors himself. In *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy* for 29 December, 1775, Dr. Stearns "takes this opportunity to return his sincere thanks to his good customers for all the favours they have been pleased to afford him, and earnestly desires all those that are indebted to him, whose accounts are of a year's standing to make immediate payment."² From his brother Asa the doctor borrowed, from 1777 to 1779, various sums of which, on Asa's death in Hardwick in 1794, about a hundred and thirty pounds remained unpaid.³ A note for a smaller amount to David Peirce, of Paxton, was taken up by the generous Captain Witt—and never repaid.

With the war Dr. Stearns's evil days began. But before narrating his political troubles, it will be well to describe the great scientific work which for thirty years it was his ambition to publish, but only a fragment of which was ever to see the light. From its inception, the author's plan seems not to have changed essentially, only taking on from time to time added splendors. I can do no better than to quote, somewhat at length, the synopsis of his magnum opus from the preface to his "American Herbal," published in 1801.

¹Earle was born in Leicester, 1 May, 1761. Like his brother he went to England, and there married, in 1789, the widow of Joseph B. Smythe, a New Jersey Tory. He later practiced portrait-painting in South Carolina, and died at Charleston, from yellow fever, in August, 1796, on the eve of returning to England, where his wife had remained. Abridged from Dunlap's *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, (Boston, 1918), II, 115.

²This advertisement was repeated in the *Spy* for 12 and 19 Jan., 1776.

³Worcester Registry of Probate, Series A, Case 66744. These worthless notes formed a considerable portion of Asa's personal estate.

Observing that medical books, having been written at various periods, "frequently gave different accounts concerning the virtues, operations and effects of medicines, upon the human body; the description of diseases, and the methods of prescribing remedies for their cure"; "that there was no established rule" in America "for a guide to the apothecaries in compounding their medicines"; and "that the methods of instruction were likewise different, amongst the different teachers of the healing art,"—he undertook in 1772 to compile a dispensatory, and later, a system of physic and surgery. Dr. Stearns says:

He intends to publish his productions in two large volumes in folio, under the names of an *American Dispensatory*, and the *Columbian Practice of Physic*, and *System of Surgery*; and the work is to be adorned with copper plates, neatly engraved, comprehending chymical characters, Botanical figures, and cuts of the surgical instruments.

As to the arrangement of the work, it is to be chiefly alphabetical.

In the *Dispensatory*, he has given:

1. An account of the Rise and Progress of medicine from the days of *Melampus* to the present age.
2. Of the Elements of Pharmacy.
3. Of the *Materia Medica*, wherein the mineral, vegetable, and animal productions are described; the results of the chymical experiments upon 437 articles carefully laid down, the virtues of the simples explained, and their uses in pharmacy physic, and surgery exhibited.
4. Of the preparation and composition of medicines, according to the late directions given by the royal Colleges of Physicians in London, Edinburgh, and other European countries.
5. Of the extemporaneous prescriptions, lately contrived for the use and benefit of practitioners.
6. Of the arrangement of medicines into different classes, with an account of the operation and effects of each class upon the human body.
7. A possological table, exhibiting the doses of those simples and compounds, which are intended for internal use.

In the *Columbian Practice of Physic and System of Surgery* he has given:

1. An account of the six non naturals, as,
 1. Of the air,
 2. Of aliment,
 3. Of exercise and rest,
 4. Of wakefulness and sleep,
 5. Of repletion and evacuation,
 6. Of the passions and affections of the mind.
2. Of more than 1387 diseases; their classes, orders, genera, species and varieties; definition, causes, diagnostics, prognostics, regimen, and proper methods of cure.
3. A syllabus of the symptoms of diseases.
4. Of the instruments, auxiliaries, and medicines used in the Surgeon's Art; with the most important directions concerning the reduction of fractures and laxations; the performing of capital operations, and the curing of abscesses, wounds, and ulcers.

Perhaps it may not be improper to mention, that by reason of the late discoveries and improvements in chymistry, and other branches of medicine, the virtues of the mineral, vegetable, and animal productions of the universe, have been more fully ascertained; new remedies discovered; new modes of composition invented; and new, cheaper, and more easy methods of cure introduced into the practice of physick, in European Kingdoms, Empires and States.—That those, who learnt to be physicians, surgeons, or apothecaries twenty years ago, are in need of further instruction, or of being learnt again, if they are not acquainted with the new medical discoveries and improvements; and that these things are principally unknown to the greatest part of our American practitioners, and especially in country places, for the want of publications.

And it may not be improper to observe that all the medical light and information that can possibly be collected, ought to be spread through all the regions of the medical world, that the mind of our practitioners may be illuminated, and their practice regulated . . .

If we ask a number of our practitioners, if they have seen the late *Pharmacopœia Londinensis*? the answer is no.

Have you seen Dr. *Lewis's Materia Medica*, in quarto?—No.

Have you perused Dr. *Cullen's Nosology*?—No.

Have you read Dr. *Motherby's Medical Dictionary*?—No.

Have you seen the *London Practice of Physic*?—No.

Have you seen the *Practice of the London Hospitals*?—No.

Have you read Dr. *Wallis's* works?—No.

Have you perused the *Transactions* of the *College of Physicians* in Philadelphia?—No.

Have you been acquainted with Dr. *Rush's Medical Enquiries*?—No.

Have you perused Dr. *Bartram's Botany*?—No.

Have you seen the *Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*?—No.

Have you read the *Encyclopædia*?—No.

Have you seen a view of the *Science of Life*?—No.

Should any enquire why all the gentlemen of the faculty have not been supplied with these, and other useful productions?—the answer must be, *Poverty*; for it is poverty that has prevented the printers from reprinting, and our practitioners from purchasing those excellent books.

This catechism at least suggests rather interestingly something of Stearns's own professional reading.

Of course the foregoing summary is of a work which at the point we have reached in Dr. Stearns's chequered career was only begun. I have quoted it here because his ardent wish to perfect that work and to give it to the world was the chief impulse of a somewhat long life. His two unpublished volumes were in brief, a compendium of the extant knowledge and theory of all the medical branches except anatomy.

One day in 1774, having stopped at a tavern to do an errand for a neighbor, Dr. Stearns encountered a crowd of tap-room loafers heaping insults upon one whom they called a Tory. The doctor delivered his message to the landlord and went about his business. But later he was told that, for not joining in the fracas, the tipsy "Sons of Liberty" dubbed him a Tory too. This trifling incident merely showed the direction of the political wind,—a sirocco which in times to come would scorch him to the soul. His popularity with his townfolk ebbed gradually. Whig dominance was not yet complete. In 1774 and the next year he was elected assessor,¹ and in May, 1776, the town—Paxton "District" having acquired township rights by the general act of 1775—chose him to be one of a committee of five to voice its disapproval of the Test Act.

¹"Voted to Doctor Sam Stearns for making rates last year, " 12 shillings (23 May, 1776).—Paxton Records.

Summoned before the local Committee of Correspondence and Safety, Dr. Stearns met the inquisition satisfactorily. But little by little his practice fell away.¹ He was, so he tells us, unjustly taxed, and paid two heavy fines for not entering the army. Threats were heard against his life. His "Astronomical Productions" were "shot at and burnt, and their Sale totally impeded for some years." A belated edition of "The North-American's Almanack" appeared from the press of Stearns's printers, in Worcester, bearing the name of another author,² for how could one put any faith in the astronomical calculations of a Tory?

The climax of these misfortunes came in the autumn of 1780. As one reputed to have learning and influence, who was suspected of winning others away from the popular cause, Stearns had long been subject to the closest scrutiny. Nothing, however, had been found in his conduct which could be used against him, unless it were receiving some questionable guest. "I was taken in Reality," he says in a letter, "for Entertaining a Stranger—for a Deed of Hospitality." This mysterious visitor may have been a British agent, but at all events Stearns's enemies were no doubt eager for his destruction. Their opportunity finally presented itself in the person of a vagabond named Thomas Gleason.

This precious scoundrel, who was a native of Worcester, is agreeably described by the husband of one of his aunts, with whom he had lived, as "a person who was much addicted to vice and immorality . . . and . . . not to be depended upon, because he had

¹Professor Van Tyne mentions the suspicion which fell on Loyal physicians. "Many a story of a lucrative practice ruined was told to the British commissioners when they heard the Loyalist claims after the war." It was current report that Tory apothecaries "wittingly made mistakes, and that all their drugs were more or less poisoned." (*The Loyalist in the American Revolution*, 197.)

²Isaac Warren, Jr., born in Medford in 1745. In 1772 he married Abigail Brooks of Woburn, where he himself printed "An Astronomical Diary: or, Almanack" for 1775. He was engaged to serve in the army for the town of Lancaster for three years from September 1777. His family were receiving aid from the town of Lancaster two years later, as dependents of one in the service.—*Mass. Soldiers and Sailors in the Rev. War*, XVI, 616; Lancaster records; *Clinton (Mass.) Courant*, 2 Aug., 1890.

rather lie than speak the truth."¹ In 1776, when twenty years old, he had served in the Continental army, and in a forgotten skirmish on an island in the Harlem River had received a wound in the leg² which, four years later, appears to have been still unhealed. His next emergence from oblivion is less honorable. We find him, in 1779, before the Superior Court at Worcester, on three charges of passing counterfeit bills, to which he pleaded guilty and was committed to jail for two months.³ On the expiration of this sentence, in July, he again enlisted in the army, and marched with other recruits to Springfield.⁴ But, in September of the next year, this knight of the road had reappeared in his accustomed haunts,—in Worcester, in Holden, where he had probably an aunt living, and in Paxton,—an alleged deserter from both the American and British armies, and once more in trouble over counterfeit bills. According to his own later statement, "he had hid a certain quantity of counterfeit money in Stearns's pasture, under a plank, and . . . afterwards went to Holden, where he was taken up on suspicion of having been concerned in counterfeit money" and was "in great danger."⁵

A warrant for the arrest of Dr. Stearns, Captain Witt, and his son Oliver, was obtained from James Sullivan, later Governor of Massachusetts and then one of the judges of the Superior Court of Judicature,⁶ sitting at Worcester, and, 23 September, they were

¹*Dr. Stearns's Petition to His Excellency the Governour* (Worcester, 1785), 10: Deposition of Elisha Smith.

²Rev. War Records, Bureau of Pensions, Sur. File, 39, 591.

³S.C.J. Worcester Files, No. 152998; S.C.J. Records, 1778-1780, f. 79.

⁴*Mass. Soldiers and Sailors of the Rev. War*, VI, 497, lines 12-19 and 20-24. In spite of some inconsistencies in description these records evidently belong to the same man. The war-service of this rascal is to be carefully distinguished from that of Thomas Gleason of Woburn, a patriot of different mould, who was "of the party which opposed the British troops at Lexington and Concord; lost a thumb by the bursting of his gun, and his hand otherwise injured" (*American State Papers*, Class IX-Claims, 109),—notwithstanding which he enlisted in the service ten days later and served with apparent credit through most of the war. (Rev. War Records, Bureau of Pensions, Sur. File 32, 732; *Mass. Soldiers and Sailors in the Rev. War*, VI, 497, lines 25-29 and *passim*.)

⁵*Dr. Stearns's Petition*, 9; Deposition of Nahum Willard.

⁶Thenceforth, under the State Constitution, known as the Supreme Judicial Court.

marched thither under guard. The accusations against him were of corresponding with and affording aid and comfort to the enemy, and of passing counterfeit money. Stearns afterward declared that the latter charge—the only one ever pressed—was not mentioned in the warrant, and that he first became aware of it several years later. Brought before Justice Sullivan, the prisoners were required to give bonds of one hundred thousand pounds each for their appearance at the April term of the court. Captain Witt and his elder son Daniel recognized as sureties for Stearns, and Stearns and Daniel Witt for the two Olivers.¹ With reference to the amount of the bonds, it should be noted that the ratio to specie of the various emissions of paper money—the ordinary circulating medium—had sunk at this time to less than two per cent.² In subsequent proceedings the hundred thousand pounds was reckoned at less than fourteen hundred.

The accusation that Stearns and his friends had passed counterfeit bills was a common one against the Loyalists. Though in this instance, perhaps, merely a pretext for persecution, in many cases the charge was doubtless well founded. A Lancaster Tory, Ezra Houghton, pleaded guilty in court to having defended the practice when not pursued “on a selfish principal to build a man up.” “When it is done on a more noble principal with a View to bring the War to an end and to prevent the effusion of human blood, he did not View it so bad.”³ Concerning Stearns and the Witts, a Worcester physician, Dr. Nahum Willard, afterward deposed to a confession made to him by Gleason. “Some time,” says Dr. Willard, “after Captain Oliver Witt and Doctor Samuel Stearns, were taken up and recognized on a complaint of their being traitors to

¹S.C.J. Worcester files, No. 153955. In these recognizances the date is 22 Sept., but Stearns's statements that the arrest took place Saturday, the 23rd, are explicit.

²Bullock's *Essays on the Monetary History of the U. S.*, (1900), p. 65.

³S.C.J. Records, 1778-1780, f. 225. Quoted by Jonathan Smith in “Toryism in Worcester County during the War for Independence” (*Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc.*, XLVIII).

the country, as I was walking in the high-way, in Worcester, a man came up to me, and told me that he wanted my advice about a sore he had on his leg. I asked his name—he told me, his name was Thomas Gleason—I asked him, if he was the person that had sworn against said Witt and Stearns—he answered yes, but he said he was obliged to swear as he did to save his own life . . . But he said, that the said Witt and his family, including said Stearns, were as innocent as the Angels in Heaven.”¹ The following April an indictment was found against Capt. Witt “for uttering nine false and Counterfeit bills, of the denomination of fifty dollars, knowing them to be false and Counterfeit, to one Moses Clark.” On this indictment Witt was eventually tried and acquitted. Whatever the facts of the matter, so much counterfeit money was in circulation at this period, almost indistinguishable from the various emissions of crudely printed bills issued by Congress and the State governments, that many a man must have passed it innocently.²

As for Thomas Gleason (to get that troublesome individual out of the way once for all), having, in February, 1781, been restored to the army, by June he had again deserted.³ The truth probably is that, during the later years of the Revolution, he followed the career of a professional deserter, like the bounty jumper of the Civil War, for mercenary reasons. From this time, however, authentic traces of him are lost until 1790,⁴ when he appeared before the Supreme Court, at Cambridge, to stand trial for fraudulently obtaining a note of hand, but had “the leave of Court to depart.”⁵ The following year he was arrested at

¹*Dr. Stearns's Petition*, etc., p. 9: Deposition of Nahum Willard. For an account of Dr. Willard, who was a Loyalist, see Joseph Willard's *Willard Memoir*, pp. 413-414.

²*Del Mar's History of Money in America* (1899), p. 107.

³*Dr. Stearns's Petition*, etc., p. 7; *Mass. Soldiers and Sailors of the Rev. War*, VI, 502, lines 3-7 and 497, lines 38-40.

⁴An “exaggerated” story reached Dr. Stearns that Gleason had been hanged at Penobscot by the British as a thief and deserter (*Petition*, p. 7).

⁵S.J.C. Middlesex files, No. 150179; S.J.C. Middlesex Minute Book 33.

Worcester on a charge of burglary, committed at the house of William Hyslop in Brookline—his pack, containing the stolen goods, being found in Holden—and in September, 1791, was committed to Castle Island for five years.¹ The last scene in this sorry life-drama begins in 1818, when Gleason, then a resident of Dummerston, Vermont, applied for, and received, a pension, of eight dollars a month for his service in '76—probably the only term of enlistment he had served out. In his declaration he says, "I am now advanced in years, in a feeble state of health, and by reason of reduced Circumstances in Life, am in present need of the Assistance of my Country for Support." In 1820, having removed to Cavendish, he made a second declaration, in which it is recited that he has "no Property of any Kind, either Real or Personal, excepting Wearing Apparel . . . that he is by occupation a Labourer," and by reason of the wound in his leg "is unable to labour for a considerable proportion of the time." He died at Cavendish, Vermont, in 1831, in his seventy-sixth year. Braggart and liar to the last, he appears to have boasted in his old age that he had served for seven years of the war and hence was entitled to bounty lands.²

The Sunday following his arrest, while on the way to church, Stearns was told that one of the grand jurors had said, "We have been above three years laying this plan of taking up the doctor as a traitor. We have got the dog at last and will have him hanged." This information was hardly reassuring. By the act passed by the Legislature in 1777 regarding treason, "giving aid and comfort" to the enemy was punishable by death.³ Two days later word was brought him that a second warrant had been issued with the design to

¹S.J.C. Suffolk files, Nos. 106013, 106022, 106049. "The Castle," in Boston Harbour, ceased to be a State prison in 1798, by reason of its sale to the United States. Descriptions of the existence of prisoners there at this period are to be found in the published narratives of the outlaws Stephen Burroughs and Henry Tufts.

²Papers on file at the Bureau of Pensions (see reference *supra*).

³*Acts and Resolves of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay*, V, 640.

keep him in close confinement. Believing his life in peril, Stearns decided to seek the protection of the British in New York. The scene is not difficult to reconstruct: the friendly messenger breaking in upon the frightened household; the swift packing of saddlebags, not with pills and boluses, but hastily gathered food and clothing; the wife's tearful embraces; the hasty mounting; and the rider pounding away to the westward with danger in the guise of an officer of the law just over the horizon.

Reaching the British lines, in November Stearns took the oath of allegiance to the King before the mayor of New York. He continued an absentee until the end of the war, practicing his profession in New York and Long Island,¹ and doubtless enduring many hours of lonely bitterness and anxiety. The sights of the unfamiliar town, the mutual sympathy of "comrades in exile," the half-contemptuous friendliness of the King's officers, even his honest pride in publishing in 1782, "the first *Nautical Almanack* that ever was printed in America," all these were poor substitutes for his accustomed life among the Massachusetts hills. But even the existence of an exile has its compensations. Nothing, for instance, could have been more gratifying than to meet with adroitness the chaff of good King George's rather haughty representatives. One day a group of officers were discussing the perplexities of the military situation. "Pray sir," says one of them, turning to Dr. Stearns, "as you are a mathematician, can you tell us how long it will take to surmount insurmountable difficulties?" "Yes, sir," says the doctor, "just as long as it will take to go beyond the bottom of the bottomless pit." "Damn you!" laughed the officer, "you are too deep for me."²

¹P.R.O. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Vol. 102: Transcript of the MS. books and papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists (N. Y. Public Library), hereafter referred to as Transcript, VIII, 404.

²*Philadelphian Magazine*, July, 1789. In a notebook of Josiah Houghton, Stearns' nephew (Lancaster Town Library), the same anecdote is quoted from "the Comic Jester printed in 1810."

Mrs. Stearns's lot was even less enviable. While the presence of her father doubtless insured her against the extremest privation, the time was for her one of poverty and foreboding. In August and September, 1781, no less than five executions were levied against the home in Paxton and the family acres in Bolton.¹ The homestead, which Samuel and Asa Stearns had bought from their mother's executors two years before, passed finally out of the family in October, when the younger brother sold his share. One of Samuel's creditors was Daniel Stearns—less merciful, as we have seen, than Asa, himself none so prosperous a man—to whose share fell some part of his unfortunate brother's books and household goods and a portion of the Paxton dwelling. According to Stearns's own statement more than three thousand dollars also was in 1781 taken "out of my Estate in Paxton, for taxes . . . besides the tax they laid upon my House and Lands, &c. in Bolton." In the result, this piecemeal scattering was worse than the confiscation of property by the State, which so many absentees suffered. "As the word 'confiscate' signifies a seizing of private property," demurred Stearns, with the convincing logic of fact versus theory, to some objection of the Wilmot commission, ". . . it was thought proper to say it was confiscated, . . . but whether proper or not . . . the main thing is that [I have] lost it." His wife, he says, was turned "out of doors . . . whilst the wives of others whose property had been confiscated were allowed the improvement of one third."

In January, 1784, Congress promulgated the definitive treaty with Great Britain, and, at the same time, issued a proclamation enjoining the authorities of the various states to see that its articles were carried into effect. Relying on the provisions of the treaty that no prosecutions should be "commenced against any person or persons for or by reason of the part which he or

¹Records of Worcester County Court of Common Pleas, X, 193-194, and executions on file.

they" had taken in the war, that such prosecutions already begun should be discontinued, and that any person might go to any part of the United States "therein to remain twelve months unmolested" while endeavouring to obtain the restitution of confiscated property—none of which provisions was technically applicable to his case, Stearns returned to Paxton the following spring, intending to collect such debts due him as he could, and then emigrate with his wife to Nova Scotia. His wife, as we have seen, he had found "in a Wretched and Miserable Condition Stripped of her property, and turned out of House and home.—One Cow had been left for her subsistence; but that had been taken and sold at Auction for the payment of taxes."¹ Nor was he alone in his helplessness to remedy matters. "I also found my Countrymen," he says, "in a very distressed Condition, by reason of the heavy Burthen of the War, the loss of their Paper Currency, and the want of a Circulating Medium. Lawsuits had been greatly Multiplied, many were imprisoned for Taxes and other Debts. Generals, Colonels, Majors, yea some of their best Men suffered Imprisonment."²

What, then, could a poor Tory expect? To prison, and, he comments, a very "disagreeable" prison, crowded with poor debtors, he went. "The jail in which Dr. Stearns was confined," writes the late E. B. Crane, "stood on the west side of Lincoln Street, about

¹A method of raising public revenue which, however, involved some difficulties. An "Historical Sketch of Paxton" in the *Worcester Magazine* for August, 1826, has a note relating to a precisely similar episode. "Three cows had been taken by the collector, in 1781, to pay the taxes of certain individuals, who had refused to do so. Secret exertions were made by the friends of the delinquents, and a large number in Paxton and the adjacent towns agreed to meet at the time and place of the proposed sale, vi et armis." Information of this "plot" having reached the committee of safety, "one or two neighboring magistrates . . . appeared with a sufficient number of patriotic citizens . . . , to the confusion of the malcontents." After some altercation the collector proceeded with the sale, and a bid was offered despite the threats of the "insurgents," when the latter "unexpectedly pulled out the bars of the yard," allowing the cows to "escape." Some blows were then "exchanged; but order was some restored, and the demands of the collector satisfied."

²By way of an illustrious example, a few years later Colonel Timothy Bigelow, of Worcester, underwent confinement for debt in Worcester Jail from 15 Feb. to 1 Apr., 1790, when he was released, as the Jail Register notes, "By Deth."

opposite the old brick building now [1907] occupied by the Morgan Construction Co. The building was 38 feet long and 28 feet wide, with seven feet studding, and built of wood in 1753."¹ How disagreeable, nay how unspeakable, the condition of this jail actually was, is shown by the reports of the committees of investigation appointed from time to time by the Court of General Sessions. In June 1786 it was found that about twenty-six prisoners were lodged in one small garret. At that time the court granted permission for the erection of huts or barracks by the prisoners in the jail-yard, the boards to be provided at the expense of the county.² Not even straw, Stearns complains, was allowed him for a bed. His very food was supplied through the humanity of Lemuel Rice, the under-keeper, of whom we are again to hear.

To his sister Martha and her husband Simon Houghton at Bolton he writes, 15 May:

This is the first Opportunity I have had to write to you since I was Oblig'd to flee by Reason of the Persecution.

I had not heard one Word from my Friends since last Summer till the 24th of April at which Time I came from Long Island to Paxton and the 26th of said Month I was Confined in Gaol in Consequence of my being given to Hospitality in time past.

I heard the Malancholly News of the Death of our Sister^a the day before Yesterday which Dispensation of Divine Providence I hope will be Sanctified unto us all. I hope you will come and see me as soon as your Circumstances will Admit of it and write to me by every Opportunity. I wou'd Write a great Deal More but the Bearer hereof is waiting now and I have not time. I propose to Write to you again.

I am your &c

Sam^{ll} Stearns.

Mr & Mrs Houghton.
Worcester May 15th 1784.

This note was followed by a longer letter, written the same day, only a portion of which has survived:

¹*Proc. Worcester Soc. of Antiquity*, XXIII, 100.

²Record Worcester County Court of General Sessions, Vol. 5, p. 236.

³Mercy Stearns died 8 May, 1784.

When I went off I expected my Bondsmen wou'd all have gone off to the British and had they have done it would have been much better for them and me too as they might have Draw'd pay for their Estates from the Crown of England and got Double the Money their Estates will fetch at the present Day. The Deficuly that I labour under at present arises upon Account of the Bonds which are Reduced from 100,000 pounds to 1400 £ such bonds have been given up in other governments upon People's Petitioning to the Gen. Assemblies and I knew not but that mine was given up 'till I came home as I had heard the Gen. Assembly had been petitioned on that Acc^t and the Bonds were like to be given up—there is no better way for me to do that I know of then [sic] to have another petition sent in to the Gen. Court and if the Bonds are not given up I must Swear out of Jail by Delivering up what I have in the World to my Creditors. It is Repugnant to the Articles of the Peace to Commence any Action against me upon Account of my taking the Part of Great Britain in the late War and upon that Account I don't expect to be detained in Gaol. I shall demand my Right to git in my Debts if I meet with no other Impediment and if I am Denied I shall attempt to Depart off as soon as I can conveniently.

Thus I have given you a short Account of some of the Deficulties I have meet with upon the Account of the part I have taken and I hope you will excuse me as this Day is the first time I have had to Write &c and also as there has been a great many false Reports made and Spread about my going off and it is probable you as well as many others have been missinform'd.

It has been Reported that I made Counterfeit Money which is false and it has also been Reported that I was taken for passing Counterfeit Money which is also false. I was taken in Reality for Entertaining a Stranger, for a Deed of Hospitality.

In the Letter I wrote you this Morn I inform'd you that I had heard of the Melancholly News of the Death of our Sister &c. I never heard she was sick 'till I heard she was dead. I shou'd be glad you wou'd let me know how long she was sick and how she was &c. Do take good care of her Little Girl. I understand by Daniel you are willing to keep her and do by her as tho' she was your own child. I wou'd take her and bring her up if my Circumstances wou'd admit of it. I always Intended to have taken good Care of her and her Mother but the troubles I have meet with has prevented it. I thank you both for the Care you have taken of them in my Absence and hope you will be Rewarded for it both in this World and the Next. I thought before I left Long Island that I wou'd come and see you all and git you all together but it was not to be so. I have had two

severe fits of Sickness since I left the Continent and have been afflicted some with the fever and Ague. It has been very Sickly within the British Lines and a Great Many thousands of People have Died by the Pestilence as Well as by the Sword. I have followed the Practise of Physick the Chief of the time since I have been gone and have had a great Run of Business—and shou'd have made a good deal of Money had it not been for the Evacuation of New York.—My sickness and three Robberies that I have meet with.

I have had nothing to do with the War upon either side & have not kill'd nor Robbed any Person since the World began.

The Miserable Wretches that have laboured to Destroy my Reputation Deminish my Busines Rob me of my Prosperity and Deprive me of my Life without any apparent Cause will hereafter meet with their Reward in the Day when they shall be punished with everlasting Destruction for such Abominable Deeds committed against the Laws of the Supreme Governour of the Universe.

Farewell, I have already intruded upon your Patience I doubt by being Lengthy.

Please to remember me to Brother and Sister Whitney¹ and if you think proper you may Show them this Letter.

Give my Comp. to All Friends.

I Remain your &c
Sam^l Stearns

M^r Simon Houghton and

M^{rs} Martha Houghton his Wife.

N. B. I have had a Notion of Settling at New Haven. If I don't go to Nova Scotia, But the Intolorable burthen of Heavy Taxes and the Poverty and Distress that Increases and abounds Discourages me about tarrying in these Parts.

Captain Witt's acquittal on the counterfeit money charge hardly cleared the atmosphere for anyone. We may believe, however, that the freeing of his name from even a technical stigma of felony was matter for general satisfaction. Stearns, as he says, had inveterate enemies, both in the legislature and out of it; but at the worst his good father-in-law never shared his personal unpopularity. A fine of forty pounds "in gold or silver" which in 1781 Witt had been sentenced by the supreme court to pay to the use of the town of Paxton, for seditious speech, was

¹Sarah Stearns and Elijah Whitney were married, 14 April, 1772.

promptly remitted by the town.¹ In 1785 he was restored for one year to the office of selectman, the highest mark of his townsmen's esteem and sympathy. A year or two later he removed to Hubbardston, whither his two sons followed him.

The real troubles of the two elder Witts were only beginning. As Stearns's bondsmen they had in 1784 petitioned the general court that their bonds might be remitted or reduced. The defendant, it was set forth by Captain Witt, was now safely in jail and ready for trial. The payment of nearly fourteen hundred pounds, judged to be the equivalent in silver of £100,000 in paper money, would reduce them to poverty after fifty years, on Captain Witt's part, of hard labour and honest industry.² Daniel Witt informed their honors "that he has from the beginning of the contest between Britain & America; been a Steady Supporter of the American Cause according to his ability and Sphere in life as can be made abundantly manifest."³ In answer to these dignified, even pathetic, representations they received "leave to withdraw"; later, however, four hundred pounds of the sum held to be due was remitted to Captain Witt and six hundred to Daniel.⁴ "As a reason why they did so," Stearns wrote many years after, "it was pretended, that one had been a greater tory than the other." This left the captain owing the Commonwealth about three hundred pounds, and his son about one hundred; and for these sums executions were levied upon them, 19 April, 1785, and they were, says Stearns, "imprisoned with me." The Captain's incarceration lasted forty-six days when he was discharged on giving a bond for the amount of his debt, payable

¹S. J. C. Record, 1781-82, ff. 83-84 (Boston), and Paxton Town Records.

²House Document, No. 1515: "To the Hon. Senate and House of Representatives in Gen. Court Assembled at Boston. June 1784." The fact that this document is in Stearns's writing indicates that he and his wife's kinsmen were working in harmony toward the settlement of their difficulties.

³House Document, No. 1514. Dated at Paxton, 17 Jan., 1784.

⁴*Acts and Resolves of Mass., 1784-85* (reprint) pp. 247-8, 357-8.

with interest in one year.¹ Daniel Witt, who remained in jail about three weeks, "on being weary of his situation, raised the money, with great difficulty."²

The doctor's bonds had now been satisfied, and not without hardship. Captain Witt, says Stearns, in his "History" of the case, written in the third person, "is an old gentleman, [and] has been obliged to part with his interest, and is turned out of his habitation in his old age."³ To take this partisan statement with a grain of salt is well enough: no man lets himself be gouged if he can help it, and one is glad to know that at the time of his death in 1807 Captain Witt possessed a farm in Hubbardston of nearly four hundred acres. That Stearns's sureties were not utterly ruined is quite aside. They had settled; and, one would suppose, his own release should have followed. But with what seems a malign foresight of this very contingency, in March, 1785, an execution has been issued against Stearns himself for the full amount of his bond, "1386 Pounds, 16 Shillings Lawful Silver Money!"

This circular course of justice certainly gave colour to his belief that his enemies wished him "to die and rot in gaol." And in jail he remained, like a poverty-stricken Mr. Dick, occupied with incessant memorials, though Sessions files show that he occasionally had the opportunity to earn a few shillings from the county by keeping the jailbooks and "doctring" other prisoners. Representations were made to the general court by his enemies that he was kept in durance not by the Commonwealth, but by his bondsmen; that a petition in his behalf from the selectmen of Paxton and depositions by Dr. Willard and others, regarding the perjured evidence of Thomas Gleason, were forgeries,⁴

¹Resolve of 31 May, 1785.—*Acts and Resolves of Mass., 1784-85* (reprint), p. 627. By a resolve of 29 Oct. permission was granted that the amount of the bond, £294.8s., might be paid "in those securities of this Commonwealth, which are payable in the last state tax." (*Acts, etc.*, pp. 740-1). But a resolve of 8 March, 1788, remitting about thirty pounds of the bond, shows that it had not then been fully paid (*Acts, etc.*, 1786-7, pp. 833-4).

²Daniel Witt was released 12 May, his father 4 June. Jail register at Worcester.

³*A short history of the treatment that Dr. Samuel Stearns hath met with*, (1786), p. 11.

⁴The respective authenticity of these documents is sufficiently proved by Mass. Senate Documents, No. 522, 3 and 1.

and these false reports did their unholy work. A petition to the Congress in New York, though not acted upon, was delivered to the Massachusetts delegation, one of whom, Dr. Samuel Holten, of Danvers, enclosed it in a letter to Governor Bowdoin. His excellency forthwith sent a message regarding the matter to the General Court.¹ That body, 2 July, 1785, refused to pay any attention to the case by reason that the judgment against Stearns was recovered "long before the Treaty of Peace" and the crime with which he was charged "the infamous crime of fraud, in knowingly passing counterfeit money," and the governor was desired so to inform the Massachusetts delegates in Congress.²

The result of all this agitation was, however, so far favorable that the "counterfeit money" pretext was dropped, and his status fixed as a mere debtor to the Commonwealth. A resolve of the General Court, passed in November, 1785,³ in intent ordered his discharge from jail upon his taking the poor debtor's oath. But in the way of this stood his precious manuscripts. In petition presented to the Legislature in the following February⁴ he feelingly set forth "That for a Number of Years past, he has been preparing for Publication, a New Dispensatory . . . He has also Mathematical, Philosophical, and Astronomical Productions, Preparing for Publication; which together with the Dispensatory, must fall to the Ground, if He should Deprive himself, of the Liberty of finishing, and Receiving, any Profit or Advantage, from the same, by taking, the Oath aforesaid."

So through the troublous months of 1786 the distressed scientist remained in confinement, though about the beginning of that year he was granted the welcome

¹*Acts and Resolves of Mass., 1784-85* (reprint), pp. 720-1.

²*Ibid.*, p. 693.

³*Acts and Resolves of Mass., 1784-85* (reprint), pp. 775-6.

⁴Mass. Senate Document, No. 522.

privilege of the "jail-yard."¹ This imaginary "yard," the limits of which were fixed from time to time by the Court of Sessions, included a considerable area of highway and public land adjacent to the jail—within these limits it was the practice to permit imprisoned debtors to go and come during the daytime as they liked and engage in whatever employment presented itself. In the autumn of 1786 the intolerable economic grievances of the time came to a head in the revolt against authority known as Shays' Rebellion in which Oliver Witt, Jr. seems to have been inculcated. The alarm of war resounded at the very doors of the Worcester prison; and the Hancock Arms near by, the landlords of which long held the office of jailor, sheltered in succession detachments of militia and insurgents. On the evening of Tuesday, the 5th of December, while a party of the latter were sheltered at this hostelry, an incident is said to have occurred, discreditable to Stearns, however interpreted, of which a highly colored account is found in William Lincoln's "History of Worcester."² Lincoln's characterization of Stearns as "astrologer, almanac manufacturer, and quack by profession" is unjust; but a century ago when his book was written, the name "Tory" was still evil in men's nostrils, and the tradition which he recorded certainly tends to the conclusion that Stearns was a pretentious fool. On that stormy December night, a party of Shaysites, over their toddy at the Hancock Arms, became suddenly ill, and a hubbub arose at the suggestion that the drink was poisoned. Dr. Stearns was brought in haste from the neighboring jail, and, in the words of Lincoln, "detected in the sediment of the cups they had drained, a substance which he unhesitatingly pronounced to be a compound of arsenic and antimony, so

¹P. R. O. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Vol. 102: "Transcript of the MS. Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists" (N. Y. Public Library), VIII, 404.

²Lincoln (1837), 145.

deleterious that a single grain would extinguish the lives of a thousand. The numbers of the afflicted increased with frightful rapidity, and the symptoms grew more fearful. It was suddenly recollected that the sugar used in their beverage had been purchased from a respectable merchant of the town, whose attachment to government was well known, and the sickness round was deemed proof conclusive that it had been tampered with for their destruction. A file of soldiers seized the seller, and brought him to answer for the supposed attempt upon the forces of rebellion. As he entered the house, the cry of indignation rose strong. Fortunately for his safety, . . . an intelligent practitioner of medicine arrived, and the execution of vengeance was deferred until his opinion of its propriety could be obtained." To cut the story short, it transpired that a package of snuff had by accident been upset into the sugar-barrel: "the illness soon vanished," and "a keg of spirit was accepted as full satisfaction" from the accused shop-keeper.

If we are to take this anecdote fairly literally, the error in Stearns's analysis should, I think, be ascribed to his heart rather than to his head. It is incredible that years devoted to the study of the *materia medica*, however limited his opportunities, could have left him the ignoramus he is here represented; but the chance further to excite those in rebellion against a common enemy—the authorities from whom he was himself suffering oppression—may have appealed to him irresistibly. A natural affinity existed between Toryism and Shaysism, between the political aristocrat, crushed and bleeding, and the defiant rustic. Amid the excitement of actual rebellion against the government he naturally hated, Stearns perhaps fell from grace.

The vilest deeds, like poisoned seeds
Bloom well in prison-air;

and mobs have now and again thrown prison-doors open. But we can hardly suppose that Dr. Stearns,

lover of mankind, would have persisted in his imposture to the point of murder.

Some verses written by Stearns this same year, "The Widower in Jail Exposed to Sale," would hardly be worthy of notice, were it not that they have been used by two previous writers¹ as biographical material. That they were merely a jeu d'esprit is evident: Stearns at this time was not a widower. This personal description, however, is probably accurate enough:

I am but of a middling size,
My limbs are straight, they're good and sound,
I have a pair of bluish eyes,
And with good health I do abound.

In the same "Song" he says,

The ladies wish me out of jail,
Are sorry for my dismal fate;

and, indeed, popular disapproval of his treatment was at last somewhat aroused. "Three Staunch Whigs" who were friendly to Stearns, put their names to a broadside setting forth his unhappy condition and asking financial aid. This circular being sent out to the ministers of three hundred and fifty Massachusetts churches, was read by some to their congregations, and hearers of it are alleged to have exclaimed, "The devil is in our general court!" and the like. "A Curious petition in print," noted Dr. Bentley, of Salem, in his diary, "circulated in favor of a Doctor Stearns, of Paxton, a Refugee, imprisoned in Worcester Gaol, delivered by me to the Committee."² The Rev. Joseph Lyman, of Hatfield, wrote, in doubt and perplexity, to the Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, General Artemas Ward, that he could bring himself neither to publish nor to conceal so

¹D. L. Mansfield, who in his *History of Dummerston* prints the poem in full, and Mrs. Van Wagenen in her *Genealogy and Memoirs of Isaac Stearns and his descendants*.

²*The Diary of William Bentley* (Salem, 1905), I, 39-40.

dangerous a document, and that it had "struck [him] very disagreeably."¹

Some contributions said to have been made, never reached their destination, but this appeal to the humanity and justice of the people at large may indirectly have aided Stearns's cause. From the repeal, 30 April, 1787, in compliance with the recommendations of Congress, of all State laws inconsistent with the treaty of peace,² he drew encouragement. "I have had the Pleasure of being informed," he writes on 22 May to Simon Houghton, "that you are Chosen, a Member of the Hon. Gen. Court.³ Should therefore be exceeding Glad, you would take your Horse and Come and See me next Friday or Saturday; I will Reward you well for your Trouble, tho' I shall be unable to do it now . . . I hope . . . that there is a foundation laid for My Liberation . . . I want to Converse with you upon Matters of Importance, and to Git you to do Business, for me, of that Kind." The new Legislature met the last day of May. By a resolve passed 6 July⁴ Stearns was released on the twenty-eighth.

One of his last acts in prison was to copy and prepare for distribution through the country a petition to the Governor and Council for mercy toward a fellow prisoner under sentence of death,—Henry Gale, the Shaysite.⁵ Gale had been condemned for treason, and, 23 June, led to a gallows on Worcester common, where a reprieve was read. Like all others convicted of participation in the rebellion, he was later pardoned.⁶

¹A copy of this broadside, addressed in Stearns's hand to "the Rev. M^r Lyman and the Church and Congregation under his Care in Hatfield," with the minister's letter, is in the library of the American Antiquarian Society.

²*Acts and Resolves of Mass. 1786-87* (reprint), 259-60; see also 982-3.

³Mr. Houghton represented Bolton and the District of Berlin in the Legislatures of 1787, '88 and '90.

⁴*Acts and Resolves of Mass., 1786-87* (reprint), 711.

⁵A copy of this document, in Stearns's easily recognizable hand, sent, with a circular letter dated 5 July requesting signatures, to the Selectmen of Lancaster, has been preserved. With these is the rough draft of a paper by which it would appear that Lancaster responded to the appeal by a petition to the Governor for the lives of *all* the rebels condemned to death. The many addresses from the towns in behalf of the unhappy insurgents are missing from the State Archives at Boston.

⁶Lincoln's *History of Worcester*, 150-1; 2d. ed., 131.

At the end of his three years' imprisonment¹ Stearns went to Brattleboro, Vermont. Two, at least, of his old Bolton friends, the elder Stephen Greenleaf and John Houghton,² had settled there, and there Mrs. Stearns now remained. Her husband speedily set out for Montreal to seek compensation for his losses from the members of the British commission on Loyalist claims,³ Colonel Thomas Dundas and Jeremy Pemberton, who were holding sittings there. But once more disappointment stared him in the face. The law under which Dundas and Pemberton had been sent to America, set 1 May, 1786 as the limit for the reception of claims, and the applicant had come too late.

A petition from Stearns, written in December, 1787, praying the Massachusetts Legislature to clear his name from the injurious charge made against him to Congress in 1785, received short shift. The petitioner was given "leave to withdraw his petition" without the customary reference to a committee.⁴ The winter

¹The official documents of the case, most of which have already been cited, as well as the register of the Worcester gaol and statements by Stearns himself, seem to show that his technical confinement, at least, was continuous from 26 April, 1784 to 28 July, 1787, a period of three years, three months, and two days. The entry of his discharge on the gaol register is in his own writing. Against this must be placed his assertion, made under oath in a petition to the King in 1799, that he suffered "two years, Eleven Months, four days, Eighteen hours, and fifteen minutes Imprisonment." This calculation, explicit to pedantry, is repeated as to years and months in other of his papers. His gaoler certified, 2 June, 1784, that Stearns was "Confined by his Bail in Gaol" (House document 1515), and 18 May, 1787, that he had been in his custody "near three years." He was afterward sued by the same official for his board for one hundred and fifty-three weeks, "ending July, 1787." He may at first have been able to pay for his board, and the account apparently begins 12 July, 1784, but this would fix the date of his release 18 June! Much study of the evidence has failed to suggest a solution of this enigma, but it is impossible to believe that Stearns would minimise his wrongs.

²Stephen Greenleaf was the son of Dr. Daniel Greenleaf. John Houghton (John³, James², Ralph¹) was born in Lancaster, 7 June, 1727, and died in Guilford, Vt., 11 June, 1826, at the age of ninety-nine. Mr. Houghton, like many very old people, probably came to believe his age even greater than it was, for in the register of Christ Church, Guilford, and in a newspaper notice of his death, it is stated as "101." He is reported to have been "a strong Tory," but the description probably means merely that he was an adherent of New York in the struggle with the "Green Mountain Boys." Another friend and a distant kinsman of the doctor, Reuben Stearns (Nathaniel⁴, Isaac³, Samuel², Isaac¹), of Holden, Mass., also removed to Brattleboro about this time. His son Samuel was a physician.

³This commission as constituted by act of Parliament in 1783, consisted of John Wilmot, Daniel Parker Coke, Col. Robert Kingston, Col. Thomas Dundas, and John Marsh. Jeremy Pemberton and Robert Mackenzie were added in 1785, Mr. Coke having resigned.

⁴Journal of the House of Representatives, VIII, 448 (14 March, 1788). The petition apparently has not been preserved among the State Archives, but a copy found among the papers of Simon Houghton is now in the possession of the Amer. Antiq. Soc.

of 1788 he appears to have spent in Brattleboro,¹ where Mrs. Stearns, who had probably been a teacher in Paxton before her marriage, was already, perhaps, earning a subsistence by keeping a dame's school;² but this year he was again a wanderer, for we find him twice in the city of Quebec, with an interval of two months between the visits.³ One experience of his travels he describes rather vividly: "I have been on Lake Champlain," he writes, "when [the northern lights] have descended to the water, greatly illuminating the hemisphere, sprakling and dancing like lucid pillars, moving in different forms and directions, according to the motion of the air: the vapours in the mean time, stiffened with the cold."⁴

Some personal adventures which apparently belong to this period were related by Stearns, in a characteristically improving vein, a few years later in his "American Oracle." "I had never," he says, "but one patient that was drowned; and after bleeding, rubbing, &c. when such life began to return, he sighed, gaped, twitched, and went into such violent convulsions that it took about four or five men to hold him. As soon as he could swallow, I gave him (as I had nothing else with me) a large does of Bates's anodyne balsam in some warm water, which allayed the spasms, promoted a diaphoresis, and he soon recovered." . . .

"This accident happened by the oversetting of a small canoe; and I have often been surprised that the practice of making such dangerous things, and the venturing of people's lives in them, has not been suppressed. I was very near losing my life by being overset in one of them, in the river St. Lawrence, in the

¹At all events he speaks of being in Vermont, 26 Jan., 1788 (*The American Oracle*, 159) and among the manuscript collections of the Amer. Antiq. Soc. is a letter from Stearns to Isaiah Thomas, dated at Brattleboro, 3 March, 1788.

²"His Wife and Family are in Vermont—where she keeps a School." Stearns's petition for temporary support to the commissioners in London, 8 March, 1789. Who the "family" were, I have no idea.

³*American Oracle*, 315-316.

⁴*Philadelphian Magazine*, May, 1789.

province of Quebec.—I once also suffered shipwreck, in consequence of the ill conduct of our captain, who got drunk, and let the vessel run too near the rocks. At last he fell over-board, and the sailors, being surprized, left the helm in order to save his life. I ran out of the cabin, and seeing nobody at the helm, sprang to it myself. In a moment, however, the stern of the vessel struck, and threw off the rudder; and the wind being violent, she soon struck again, and bulged, the captain by this time having got into the vessel. We all jumped overboard, and effected our escape to land. A woman with a child about a year old was with us: I carried the child ashore myself.—Drunken captains, and drunken sailors, are by no means fit to have the care of vessels.”¹

In the autumn of 1789, young Robert Bailey Thomas, who wished to obtain “a practical knowledge of the calculations of an Almanack” that should make him a rival of the great Thomas in Worcester, journeyed from what is now West Boylston, Massachusetts, “into Vermont to see the then famous Dr. S. Stearns . . . but failed of seeing him.”² The famous Dr. Stearns, as it happened, desirous of petitioning the British Government directly for compensation, and of forwarding his interrupted work by study in Europe, near the end of 1788 had departed for England by the way of Quebec.

The period, about two years and a half, which he spent abroad, was doubtless one of the happiest in Stearns’s life. His efforts to obtain reimbursement from the Government were in some measure successful. In the act of Parliament of 1789 continuing the powers of the Loyalist commission,³ he was named among those whose claims might yet be received, because prevented, “by such particular Circumstances as appear to intitle them to special Indulgence,” from referring them under the acts of 1783 and 1785. His claim was

¹*American Oracle*, 291-2.

²*The (Old) Farmer’s Almanack* for 1835. By Robert B. Thomas, Boston.

³29 Geo. III, cap. 62.

considered and determined, 7 Nov., 1789, by Kingston and Marsh.¹ In the final settlement by Parliament in 1790, he was granted six hundred and fifty pounds for loss of property, and an annual pension of sixty pounds, the regular allowance of one half of the commissioners' estimate, as compensation for professional income.² Although the ready money must have seemed sudden wealth to him, the amount fell far short of his claim. His own valuation of his lost possessions, including land in Paxton and his right in the Bolton farm, was about nine hundred and seventy pounds sterling, of which over three hundred appears to have been on his "shop of medicines." This he swelled to more than four thousand with the ruin of his "mathematical, philosophical, and physical professions" for the fourteen years since 1775, at the rate of two hundred and twenty-five pounds sterling a year. In his memorials to the commission he says that his property was seized by his sureties.³

A few weeks after his own examination, Stearns appeared before the commission as attorney for Daniel Dunbar, a Loyalist of Halifax, Massachusetts. Dunbar was an officer in the militia who, in 1774, after being tossed on a rail, "dragged and beaten," to compel the surrender of his company colours to his Whig neighbours, fled to Boston, whence he accompanied the British army to Nova Scotia and perhaps to New York. There, at all events, he was by 1789 established as a dealer in dry goods. Like Stearns, by the act of 1789 he was recommended for special consideration.⁴

Stearns's investigations for the "Dispensatory" and "Practice" were meanwhile carried on at various seats of learning. At some time he joined the Freemasons,

¹P. R. O., Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Vol. 97; Transcript, IX, 485.

²P. R. O., Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Vol. 109; Transcript, XI, 282.

³P. R. O., Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundles 48, 49 and 80.

⁴P. R. O., Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Vol. 97; Transcript, IX, 492. For the final settlement of Dunbar's claim, v. Transcript, Vol. XI, 132. See also Mass. Archives, Vol. 154, p. 56; Sabine's *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists*, I, 398; Stark's *Loyalists of Massachusetts*, 421.

for in London he walked in a grand Masonic procession.¹ He assisted Elhanan Winchester, the universalist, in his *Philadelphian Magazine*.² His writings in this publication range from directions for making tea to poetry on "The Philosopher's Choice":

It is my choice to find a place,
Upon this earthly globe;
Within some healthy pleasant place,
To settle mine abode.

Where I from tyrants' cruel rage,
And robbers may be free:
Where evil men do not engage
To spoil true liberty.

More noteworthy was his acquaintance with Dr. (afterward Sir) William Herschel. That great explorer of the heavenly spaces was now established, with his newly married wife, at Slough, his distinguished sister Caroline—his assistant for fifty years in his astronomical labors—living near by in lodgings. "Dr. Herschel," wrote Stearns in his "American Oracle," "discovered the Georgium planet³ with a telescope about six feet in length; and he has lately constructed another, which is about 40 feet long, and 4 feet 9 inches in diameter. This is the largest I ever saw, and I believe of any in the world."⁴ In a chronology of remarkable events in the "Oracle," Stearns records under date of 26 Jan., 1790: "Dr. Stearns receives a letter from Dr. Herschel, informing that Mrs. Herschel, sister to the Doctor, discovered a comet on the 7th instant."⁵ The meaning of this, of course, is that Miss Herschel—

¹*Free Mason's Calendar* for 1793. New York. Few traces of Stearns's Masonic associations have come to light. In a little volume entitled *The Vocal Companion and Masonic Register*, Part II (Boston, 1802), he is given first among the "subscribers" to the now defunct Jerusalem Lodge of Westmoreland, N. H. (p. 42).

²Not the American *Philadelphia Magazine*, as is asserted in Albert H. Smith's monograph, *The Philadelphia Magazines and their Contributors*, (1892), and elsewhere.

³The planet Uranus, discovered at Bath, 13 March, 1781.

⁴*The American Oracle*, 43. Herschel's forty-foot telescope, began at Clay Hall, Old Windsor, "about the latter end of 1785," was finished in August, 1789, at the house at Slough which was his home from 1786 until his death in 1822. (See Edward S. Holden's *Sir William Herschel, His Life and Works*, N. Y., 1881, *passim*.)

⁵*The American Oracle*, 35. See also *Memoir and Correspondence of Caroline Herschel* (N. Y., 1876), 85.

the prefix "Mrs." being in the eighteenth century still often applied to single women of standing—having discovered a new comet (the third of the eight to her credit), her brother Dr. Herschel writes about it to his American friend Dr. Stearns. Unfortunately Stearns's innocent reference to the circumstance in his book has given rise to a legend which, though baseless, may at this late day be difficult to dispel. "Thus it is known" comments the historian of Dummerston, Vermont, upon the passage quoted from the "Oracle," "that William Herschel, LL.D., F.R.S., married a sister of Doctor Stearns!" Mr. Mansfield's misunderstanding has been perpetuated in "Military Annals of Lancaster, Massachusetts," the author of which confused the doctor with another Samuel Stearns, born in Lancaster in 1745, and in Miss Cabot's "Annals of Brattleboro." Mrs. Van Wagenen in "Genealogy and Memoirs of Isaac Stearns and His Descendants," fixes on Mercy Stearns, whom she calls "Mary or Mercy," as possibly "the sister"—the only one available—"who married into the Herschel family."¹ It is strange that none of these writers took the trouble to ascertain that William Herschel was but once married, in May, 1788, to Mrs. Mary Pitt, a widow, only child of Mr. James Baldwin, a merchant of London. Fanny Burney sets down in her diary for 3 October 1788: "Dr. Herschel was there [at Windsor]: . . . his new-married wife was with him, and his sister. His wife seems good-natured; she was rich, too! and astronomers are as able as other men to discern that gold can glitter as well as stars."²

In the summer of 1790 Stearns made a brief trip to Paris. At Calais, like Laurence Sterne, who no doubt was his far-off kinsman,³ he won the goodwill of a

¹Mercy Stearns died unmarried in 1784.

²*Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, (London, 1876), III, 45.

³"Stearns, Sternes, Sterns, Starns, &c., &c., is undoubtedly a variation or corruption of the name Sterne" . . . Van Wagenen, *Stearns Genealogy*. The arms, with crest a cock starling, mendaciously referred by the novelist to the captive starling of the "Sentimental Journey," was borne by Laurence Sterne's great-grandfather, Richard Sterne, Archbishop of York, and brought to America by the founders of the Stearns family three-quarters of a century before Laurence Sterne's birth.

begging Franciscan, and proceeded in the footsteps of the sentimental traveller by way of Montreuil and Amiens to Paris. He just missed witnessing the Festival of the Confederation at the Champs de Mars, 14 July, but saw the festivities of the following Sunday, of which he gives an account in his "Tour," published after his return to London. He visited hospitals and the Royal Observatory, as well as the theatres, and formed a pleasant acquaintance with a physician of the Spanish court, M. Iberti, who himself was compiling a dispensatory. Returning on the 22nd from a visit to the anatomical museum at Charenton, he "passed by the place where the Bastille stood; and, behold! a number of the priests, with a great multitude of people, had met together to pray for the souls of them that had been slain, when the Bastille was taken on the 14th of July, 1789." Naturally at this stage of events in France, Stearns regarded the Revolution with complacency, doubtless believing the constitutional monarchy to be firmly established.¹

In his book he sets down with great minuteness the stages and expenses of his journey, and several amusing encounters, especially with women. Temptation was thrust upon him as often as upon Mr. Yorick, but he makes much less fuss about the matter. Surely Mrs. Stearns had no reason to doubt the fidelity of her discreet doctor. After the fête of 18 July he repaired to "a grand hotel, where thirty-two tables were spread in one room," to dine. There "a French lady viewed me with an amorous eye . . . ; but I was soon off with myself." Two evenings later, "after the play was over, on returning to my lodgings, I was seized on the

¹"The Illumination of the minds of the people in France," ejaculates Dr. Stearns, "has been productive of the great and glorious Revolution; of the forming of a new constitution, the enacting of the new laws, and the abolishing of those things that were repugnant to the interest and prosperity of the kingdom. How pleasant must it be to see both the King and the National Assembly unite together in establishing the new constitution, and in promoting whatever may conduce to the good of the nation, and benefit of mankind in general! May the flame of liberty, like the refulgent beams of the sun, be extended over the face of the whole globe; and may all nations partake of the great and glorious blessings of natural freedom!"—*Dr. Stearns's Tour from London to Paris.*

way," says he, "by a very gay young lady." Passion no doubt made her heedless of her native idiom, for she accosted him with, "J'aime vous, Monsieur." "I was obliged to break her hold," and again he was off with himself. He seems to have been rather taken with a fellow passenger on the return journey, a beautiful English widow who had been to Paris to place her daughters in a convent to be educated. This lady discoursed feelingly upon matrimony, and the doctor fancied she supposed him to be a bachelor or a widower.

Stearns says in July, 1790, that he "had a diploma in [his] pocket, which was a sufficient recommendation, in any quarter of the globe."¹ The nature of this talisman is open to conjecture, for it was not until 2 October of that year that he attained the crowning glory of the degree of Doctor of Laws from Aberdeen University. In the minute book of the faculty he is called "of Islington, late of Quebec," and described as "a gentleman of good character, an eminent mathematician and philosopher, a skillful physician and celebrated astronomer."² Those by whom the doctor was recommended were "Captains Goldsbury and Morrell and Dr. Mosely." As to the academic value of this distinction, the following remarks by Thomas Green Fessenden, with reference to Dr. James Anderson (author of "Recreations in Agriculture and Natural History"), are exactly pertinent: "in America it is not generally known that for twelve pounds two shillings and six-pence, sterling, any *creature* can obtain in the Universities of Aberdeen and St. Andrews a diploma, which will dignify the possessor with a Doctor's Degree in Divinity, Law, or Physic . . . A few years since, several Oxonians, who had beheld with an unkind aspect the inundation of these titled candidates for employ in all the professions, without the sacrifice of any of the study, time and expense, which are

¹Dr. Stearns's *Tour from London to Paris* (London, 1790), 35.

²*Officers and Graduates of University & King's College, Aberdeen, MVD—MDCCCLX.* Ed. by Peter John Anderson, M.A., LL.B. (Aberdeen, 1893), 112.

required of the students in the English universities, previous to the attainment of these *insignia* of merit, clubbed, and raised a sum sufficient to pay for three diplomas. Three of the long eared species of animals, vulgarly yclept *Jackasses*, were then procured, and appropriate names given to each, as the Rev. Mr. *Bray*, Dr. *Ear*, and Squire *Sulkey*. The *cash*, accompanied by a recommendation of these three distinguished characters, was transmitted to the then Principal of Aberdeen University, and on the return of the mail, the three candidates were each raised in Law, Physic and Divinity, to a rank with Dr. Anderson."¹

As might be expected, Stearns was attracted by the animal magnetism craze, which Mesmer had started a few years before in France, and which now was at its height in England. At times upwards of three thousand persons were crowding about a house at Hammersmith, unable to gain admission to the demonstration of a mesmerist within.² In December, 1790, he was admitted to Mr. John Cue's "magical theatre." After witnessing the treatment of several persons, one of whom a lady, was thrown into "dreadful commotions," he was consulted by the "Grand Dispenser of the Animal Electric and Magnetic Effluvia" as to the possibility of helping two patients "made blind by Gutta Serena." Stearns warily "advised him to try the remedy, and bid him good morning." The reflections following a second visit to the Grand Magnetical Theatre "led him to become, with some misgiving, a believer in the fashionable cure; and the following year he put forth a pamphlet, "The Mystery of Animal Magnetism," embodying his views on the subject.

Early in 1791 Dr. Stearns issued, as a thin pamphlet, "An Account of the late Wonderful American Vision," to which were appended five brief narratives of "late remarkable apparitions." In the "Vision" are

¹*Terrible Tractoration!!* (1st Amer. ed., N. Y., 1804), 187-8.

²John Livingston Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*.

predicted, in prose and verse, various calamities in the world at large, especially in America.

Old Belzeebub shall deceive the people, and cause them to contend among themselves, until they fight and kill one another.

Parents and children, brothers and brothers, shall go to war against each other.

And there shall be much slaughter and desolation, both at home and abroad.

The Savages shall fly to arms, and bring about another war in America, and carnage shall overspread the Western country.

The pinching hunger shall cause the Indians to rob and steal; and whilst men are asleep in their beds, their hens and turkeys will be stole; the barns and stacks of grain robbed; the fat sheep, lambs, and hogs killed; and the horses, oxen, and cows, drove off.

But the White People will go to war against the Indians, with fifes, drums, and guns; some of the murderers will be killed, and others drove off.

And the nations in other parts of the world shall go to war, and destroy towns and cities.

During the time of the war, the pestilence shall be sent in many places, and the famine shall destroy numbers of the human race, and many shall die both upon the land and water.

These judgments shall be sent to furnish transgressions, whose conduct will disgrace the human race. But wars and fightings will continue until the fall of mystical Babylon.

The passing of John Wesley, 2 March, 1791, called forth from Stearns a broadside "Elegy" on the great preacher, in which the lines on the education of the young Wesley strongly suggest the autobiographical verses already quoted.

His mind on learning very much was bent,
Hence to a college he in time was sent;
Studies profound the *pupil* follow'd 'till
He was a man of scientific skill.
As time roll'd on, with pleasure and with ease,
He did receive the requisite degrees.
After his learning he had thus obtain'd,
To preach the Word he truly was ordain'd . . .

Stearns's facile muse, indeed, was not above self-plagiarization, and one passage in the Wesley "Elegy"

is but slightly altered from lines printed the year before in his "Tour":

When roaring winds bring up the thicken'd cloud,
When the grum thunder rumbles out aloud,
When the earth quakes, when lofty mountains fall,
When cities sink . . .

* * *

When famine and the pestilence doth rage;
When wicked nations in a war engage:
When blood and carnage greatly do expand [!],
When desolation overspreads the land:
And boist'rous tempests rage upon the sea,
Great Wesley then from danger must be free . . .

* * *

Let not his *hearers* then at death repine,
Since it was made by God an *Act Divine*,
To raise the *Just*, the *Husband*, *Child*, and *Wife*,
From scenes of trouble to a better *life*.

But let them all whilst in the present state,
His good example mind to imitate;
That when they die, like him, they may be blest
With glory, honour, happiness, and rest.

No doubt Wesley's strongest appeal to Stearns's admiration finds expression in the lines:

He loyal was, impress'd the blessed thing
Of fearing God, and honouring the King;
Exhorted men to let contention cease,
To live in love, in harmony, and peace.

As an elegy these glib heroics leave much to be desired, but perhaps they suited well enough the taste of the London streets. One may hope that all this scribbling at least served to put a few extra shillings into the author's pockets.

His last publication in England was "The American Oracle," in which were reprinted, with revisions, some of his contributions to the "Philadelphia Magazine," besides a vast amount of other miscellaneous matter. No stranger collection of facts and fancies, wisdom and folly, ever appeared between covers. On one page he denounces the practice of astrology, which, he says he

has found by his "own experience and observation . . . is only a deception"; and on the next he appears as an apologist for belief in witches. He preaches against gluttony, drunkenness, gaming, and the slave trade; his zeal for righteousness was always outspoken. He discourses on medicine, farming, architecture, marriage, Quakers, Shakers, Methodists, Moravians, and "Swedenborgers"; on prisons, the planets, fleas, bed-bugs, and mad dogs; on animal magnetism, and "recent discoveries in the arts and sciences." One such discovery (his own) has to do with the cause of the aurora borealis, and can be best told in his own words:

In the evening of the 26th of January, 1788, as I was sitting in a large room in the State of Vermont, the weather being very severe, a cat jumped into my lap, whose hairs were stiffened with the cold; and, as I stroked them, I observed that they emitted coruscations, and began to conclude that they were the electrical fluid. In a few minutes I turned my attention to the cause of the Northern Lights. Said I, why may not the atmosphere emit coruscations as well as the hairs of the cat, if it is properly stiffened with the cold, and agitated by the different currents of air? I therefore formed a new *hypothesis* concerning the cause of the *Aurora Borealis*; and supposed, that those phænomena are generated by aqueous, nitrous, sulphurous, bituminous, and other exhalations from the fumes of various kinds of waters, earths, minerals, vegetables, animals, fires, burning volcanoes, &c.; which being charged with a sufficient quantity of the electrical fluid, and rarefied by the heat of the sun, become lighter than the surrounding atmosphere; that from hence they ascend, until they are elevated to the upper regions of the air; and being driven by the wind from the equatorial and temperate to the polar regions, meet with the cold, combine and stiffen to a proper consistence by reason of their humidity; and, being afterwards agitated by different currents of air, crackle and sparkle, like the hairs of cats and other animals when stiffened with the cold; which coruscation in the temperate and frigid zones, appears in the horizon, zenith, or elsewhere, according to the positions of the spectators, and the elevated exhalations; that the diversities of the colours arise from the difference of the qualities of the combined particles, as those which are of the most inflammable nature shine with the greatest lustre.

That the Northern Lights did not appear in ancient times, because the air was not impregnated with proper materials to generate those phænomena; that the consuming of great quantities of fuel in America in these latter ages, the breaking out of burning mountains, and the visitation of our system by blazing stars, whose atmospheres have been so greatly expanded by the heat of the sun; that a part of them have fell into the atmosphere of our earth, and charged it with new matter; that from this, and the other fumigations, the air has undergone such a change, that whenever it is brought into a proper consistence, the *Aurora Borealis* makes its appearance, unless it becomes invisible by the rays of the sun or moon.

* - * *

Sometimes I have heard the combined particles crackle, when they have been agitated by the wind: their noise resembled, in some measure, that of a loose sail flapped in a gale of wind.

The hemisphere is often illuminated till it is as light as bright moon-shine; the particles move in different directions, and appear in different forms: they frequently send forth streamers, which dance like lucid pillars; and about two or three times I have seen them appear like armies fighting against each other.

Today all this seems ridiculously unscientific. But Stearns's hypothesis is not very unlike other early attempts to connect the phenomena of the aurora with the little known forces of electricity—as the theories of Franklin and of Kirwan, whose memoir¹ on this subject was almost exactly contemporary with Stearns's amusingly related "discovery." In 1788 electrical science was hardly in embryo. There is no reason to suppose that, such as it was, Stearns's theory was other than the result of independent reflection on the splendors he had witnessed in the Vermont wilds. The incompleteness of his reading is shown by his own ignorance of the appearances of the aurora prior to 1716, although instances from past ages had long before been collected by Halley and de Mairan.

Elsewhere in the "Oracle" he wisely protests against the wanton destruction of forests in America, a warn-

¹Trans. of the Royal Irish Academy, 1788, 70.

ing which has quite a modern tone, although his anxiety relates wholly to the resulting scarcity of fuel and timber. "But perhaps," he surmises, rather prophetically, "large quantities of coal mines may be discovered in some future time in places where fuel may be wanted." In his observations on prisons Stearns, of course, speaks from hard experience.

Let men, or women, who may be confin'd,
 Unto their mortal bodies be so kind,
 As to take care that they *shun* ev'ry thing
 Which may amongst them bad *disorders* bring.
 If they desire in good health to abide
 Whilst they're obliged in prison to reside
 Let this thing always in their mind remain,
 That from intemp'rance they must all refrain:
 Abstain from drunk'ness, anger, rage and strife,
 And aim to live an upright steady life.
 Read and discourse with pleasure and delight,
 Both in the day, and in the silent night.
 Go to bed early, see that ye arise
 Nigh to the time the sun does in the skies;
 Wash clean your face, comb out your matted hair,
 And if need be, see that your nails ye pare:
 Keep up your spirits, often talk and laugh,
 And walk around, with, or without a staff:
 Tell pleasant stories, make the air to ring,
 With a loud voice, when ye attempt to sing;
 And often times, if you can get a chance
 Divert yourselves, with music, and a dance.
 If you wou'd rest and not live in a tease,
 Destroy the bed bugs, kill off the fleas;
 From other vermin always mind and see
 That ye at all times keep exceeding free.

* * *

Amongst you let tobacco fumes arise,
 Whose virtues are extoll'd unto the skies;
 And vinegar burnt often in the day,
 Is good to drive all noxious things away.

Now and then in Stearns's queer olio we find a bit of his native Massachusetts folk-lore. In a discourse on mineral springs he writes: "At Lancaster, in the County of Worcester, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,

there is a spring whose waters are beneficial in rheumatic complaints, as I have found by my own experience and observation. The patient may drink half a pint two or three times in a day, and plunge himself once when his stomach is empty. He should come out of the water immediately, and keep himself warm after the immersion."

The fame of this spring lasted to my own day, but alas! its healing properties are dissipated, for apparently it has become merged with a neighboring brook.

"Of the Black Snake": "A very remarkable instance happened in the county of Worcester . . . , since the commencement of the late war.—A boy dreamed several nights running, that he was killed as he was going after the cows, at a certain place, by a black snake; and told his master and mistress of his dreams, and that he was afraid to go after the cattle. At last he grew so timorous, that he actually refused to go at all unless he could have company; but his master flogged him and sent him off. The next morning the poor boy was found dead at the place he had mentioned, with a large black snake round his waist."

"When a black snake gets round a person," Stearns adds, "'tis best to cut it in two. Hence the necessity of travelling with a pen-knife; for whether they are round a person's neck or waist, they draw themselves tighter and tighter as he fetches his breath, and at last put an end to life."

And this, which brings pleasant memories of Whittier's ballad, "The Double-Headed Snake of Newbury": "Two-headed snakes are very scarce, and perhaps of a monstrous kind, though it has not as yet been determined whether they are so or not."

When it comes to apparitions, of which he treats in the chapter already cited dealing with witches and other manifestations of the uncanny, one need not doubt the honesty of Stearns's conviction that such things sometimes appear. He had seen apparitions

himself several times in the past—ghostseers' fantasies become more and more vivid the longer it is since they "saw" them. "Although," says Stearns, "I am far from being timorous or superstitious, and believe people are often affrighted and think they see apparitions when they do not, yet I am convinced that they do sometimes appear, not only from the writings of the Scriptures, and the testimonies of persons of good repute, but from my own experience and observation, having seen not less than five in the day-time, and when I was not thinking of such things, nor the least affrighted till they all vanished; excepting one, which I knew to be an apparition as soon as I saw it, because it was in the form of a coffin, and proved ominous of the death of a near relation: three of the others were in the forms of men, and the other in the form of a woman. I have also heard noises, which, together with the apparitions, I esteemed to be fore-runners of the deaths of certain persons."

The 4th of September, 1791, after a voyage of about ten weeks, Stearns arrived at New York.¹ His disbursements on landing suggest similar levies upon the traveller of the present day,—twelve shillings ninepence to the steward, nine shillings to the cook, four and six to the carpenter, six shillings to the cabin boy, and "36 dollars 6 Cents Duties." Twelve days later we find him writing to Isaiah Thomas² from the home of his friend Daniel Dunbar, whose house and shop were at 175, Queen Street—that ancient thoroughfare, now a part of Pearl Street, of which a contemporary description says that it was "very conveniently situated for business, but . . . low and too narrow; not admitting, in some places, of walks on the sides for foot passengers."³

¹"He was gone, from America," he says in one of his papers, "near three years: arrived at New York, Sept. 4th, 1791." *The New York Daily Advertiser*, 5 Sept., 1791, notes, among arrivals in port, "Ship New York, Smith, London 70 days."

²MSS. collections of the Amer. Antiq. Soc. Stearns's letter is misdated 16 June (for 16 Sept.). Probably, at the moment, he was thinking of the date of sailing, which by his statement in this letter of the length of the passage, 67 days, was 29 June.

³General description of the City of New-York in *The American Magazine*, March, 1788; New York Directories for 1789-1791.

Stearns brought with him a quantity of the sheets of "The American Oracle," and immediately on his arrival made arrangements for a New York edition. He copyrighted also his "American Dispensatory," which no doubt he expected soon to publish. An incident arising from a copyright notice of the "Oracle" in the "New York Morning Post" illustrated the angry contempt which Stearns's extravagant pretensions could excite, even in those who probably were not generally ill disposed toward him. The "Massachusetts Spy" of 6 October, 1791, contains the following comments, the "copy" for which the editor, Mr. Thomas, scribbled on the margin of a "Post" of 27 September: "Vanity and arrogance were never more conspicuous in the noddle of ignorance, than is displayed in the title page of a production called 'The American Oracle.' The Author, well known in this part of the country, in the title page is styled The HONOURABLE Samuel Stearns, L.L.D. and Doctor of Physick, Astronomer to the Provinces of Quebec and Newbrunswick; also to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the State of Vermont, in America.' In another trifling publication, by the same author, printed in England, he is called 'An American Philosopher,' &c." A similar instance appears in a copy of "The Mystery of Animal Magnetism," presented by the author to his fellow-exile, Samuel Paine, in which that gentleman politely added the words "a Quack" to the signature of the preface. Again, "So says the Author! !!" reads a comment upon the attractive portrait of the "American Philosopher" which forms a frontispiece for the "Tour to Paris."¹

In spite, however, of carping criticism, of which these are doubtless not the sole instances, Stearns must have felt that he returned to his new home in Vermont a far different man from the poverty-stricken outlaw of three years before. He had money in his pocket, and, as title to consideration—at least in his

¹The copies of the publications here cited are in the Library of the Amer. Antiq. Soc.

own opinion—the “American Oracle,” so necessary “in all families,” the “Tour,” and his other publications, and the Aberdeen degree. Besides the “Oracle” which, as we have seen, was republished in New York on his arrival, he returned with a stock of his various pamphlets. In an existing fragment of his accounts,¹ he notes consignments to booksellers of “Oracles,” “Tours,” “Elegies upon the Death of the Rev. Mr. Wesley,” treatises “upon the Animal Mag,” and “Visions.” Undying as was popular rancour against the Tories, the active fury of Whig persecution had ceased. The Revolutionary period was over. Men were occupied with new issues. Among the Brattleboro hills, far from the scenes of his former adversities, he had little to fear from political spite. Ever an optimist, he must have believed that the years before him held success for the great work which was never absent from his thoughts.

A lady who remembered his being called, in her childhood, to attend her mother, told Mr. Mansfield, the Dummerston historian, that Dr. Stearns was “a nice looking man. His hair was white and combed straight back from his forehead.” Like Old Grimes, “he wore it in a queue.” “During his visit,” the old lady recalled, he “looked in the mirror two or three times to see whether his hair was all right.”

Meanwhile, in spite of imprisonment and absence from the country, Stearns had continued the publication of his almanac, at Boston and at Bennington, Vermont, from 1787 to 1792, under the title of “The Universal Calendar.” In 1793 there appeared at New York a “Free Mason’s Calendar,” dedicated “to the most ancient and honourable Societies of *free* and accepted *masons* in America” by their “sincere and loving brother, Samuel Stearns, R.A.M.” A “New-England Farmer’s Almanack” for 1794, calculated by Stearns, was printed at Springfield.

¹Shown me by Miss Dorothy M. Prouty (Mrs. Helyar), of Brattleboro, a descendant of Stearns’s second wife.

The same year marks the beginning of the popular "Farmer's Almanac" of Robert B. Thomas, who, as we have seen, once sought instruction from Stearns. But Asa Houghton, "astronomer," writing-teacher, store-keeper, and inn-holder, third of the eleven children of Stearns's sister Martha, must be considered his real successor as a maker of almanacs. A "Gentlemen's and Ladies' Diary: or, An Almanack" for 1797 was printed at Worcester for Houghton, then a youth of one-and-twenty, who in his address to the reader, dated at Bolton, 14 April, 1796, says: "This is the first time he has ever published Astronomical Calculations, and if his Productions shall happen to merit the attention and patronage of an indulgent public, he will, in future times, endeavor to serve them in this manner, according to the best of his capacity." Evidently the hopes thus modestly expressed were to some extent realized, for two years later he acknowledges the "unparalleled favors" of a "benevolent Public," and Houghton's Almanac continued to appear, with various Vermont and New Hampshire imprints, for more than a quarter of a century. The mystery of making almanacs, which Stearns had derived from the younger Ames, and he from his more noted father, was thus passed on from one generation to another.¹

¹Asa Houghton at one time conceived the idea of making this popular avocation a sort of family pursuit. In a letter written June 30, 1813 from his home in Putney, Vt., to his parents and sisters in Bolton, he says: "In the course of my contemplations, I have hit upon something novel, & in my opinion, something handsome may be realized from it, viz: An Almanac, to be entitled The Lady's Almanac. Nothing of the kind having been published in the country, it must have an extensive circulation. Shou'd this thing meet Martha or Abi's approbation, it is my desire, that one or the other of them come to Putney by the middle of Oct. next, & attend to the study of *Astronomy* under my direction. By good attention said science may be acquired in a few months. I shou'd charge nothing for *tuition* or *board*, except assisting Mrs. Houghton some, when necessary; which wou'd be only a necessary change & diversion from your Studies. This Study wou'd store y' mind with the most interesting & useful information—besides it wou'd rank you the *first* of y' sex in the country. . . I wou'd furnish, to be published under y' name, Receipts in Cookery, directions in Needle work, drawing & whatever else may interest the Lady, to be inserted in sd work. After one has learn'd sd science, she can instruct the other, & the work cou'd be publish'd in both names. This is an honor I wish to reserve in our family." Unfortunately this Napoleonic scheme of family glory came to nothing. (Original in Amer. Antiq. Soc.)

But Stearns was yet to reap the aftermath of former troubles. During his confinement at Worcester, the under-keeper, Lemuel Rice, who had now risen to be jailer of the new stone prison, had personally paid for Stearns's board. On petition to the General Court for reimbursement, after the prisoner's release, he had received the inadequate sum of fourteen pounds.¹ One should not expect a jail-keeper, who worked for his living, to be a philanthropist, and Mr. Rice had been waiting for his money some years when, in 1793, Dr. Stearns returned to Massachusetts to visit old friends. Seizing the opportunity, Rice sued him for a hundred pounds damages. Stearns was arrested at Taunton, and clapped into the Bristol County jail. After a few days he was by some means bailed out. The case dragged along nearly a year, during which the doctor presented himself at several terms of the Worcester court. Finally, at the March term in 1794, the defendant having failed to appear, judgment was entered for the plaintiff in the sum of thirty-four pounds, eight shillings.² It might well be imagined that Mr. Rice had gained an empty victory; but in a scrap of Stearns's personal accounts is entered as paid "1794 June 8 Leml Rice 48 £. 10 s. Cost 23 £. 18 s. 9 d. [Total] £ 72.8.9." This interesting fragment, from which I have previously quoted, shows Stearns in an unexpectedly favorable light as a payer of old debts—while his money lasted: that, for instance, about this time, he repaid Daniel Witt sixty-six pounds.

Much of his time was still spent away from home. First and last, he travelled, he says, in nine of the American "governments." From a statement in one of his books³ it would appear that he kept a minute

¹This was intended to cover only the period between March, 1785, when Stearns's status was changed to that of a prisoner for debt to the Commonwealth, and the following November, when he was granted permission to swear out of jail. *Acts and Resolves of Mass., 1788-89* (reprint), 326. In his suit against Stearns Rice disregarded this partial payment (House document 3873).

²The records of the case are in C. C. P. Records, Worcester, XV, 534 and 573, and XVI, 13 and 126-7.

³*The American Herbal*, preface, p. 5.

diary of his various journeys, the loss of which, judging by his shrewd and pleasant garrulity in the "Tour to Paris," is much to be regretted. The "rough jottings actually made by him from day to day, in taverns, under the shadow of a hill, or in the friendly covert of a hay-stack,"¹ had a value, one may be sure, far beyond that of his medical collections or his philosophic vaporings. His fluency and naïve egotism are qualities which, joined to an observing eye, give to such a narrative interest and charm.

The meeting at Philadelphia, in 1797, of the joint Anglo-American commission to determine the losses of British merchants, on account of the war, in unrecoverable debts, offered hope to others besides Stearns. It was a standing grievance with the Loyalists that many claims were disallowed by the Wilmot commission on the fallacious theory that opportunity for the collection of debts was secured by the treaty of peace. Now, in turn, the new commissioners, in deference to the hostility of the American government toward the Loyalists, would recognize the claims only of *bonafide* British subjects.² The detested Tory was still a man without a country. January 1798 found Stearns at Philadelphia, where he was able to give Mr. Liston, the British minister, "some account of his sufferings." But his representations to the Commission that his incarceration at Worcester had prevented his collecting what was due him, were met with the answer that "they esteem themselves, as not empowered to act upon the subject, because his Imprisonment is considered, not as a lawful, but as an unlawful Impediment to his collecting his Debts." By way of counter-argument Stearns urged, with some subtlety, in a petition to the King drawn up a few months later, "That he understands, that a Number of

¹Moses Coit Tyler, on Timothy Dwight (*Three Men of Letters*, 123).

²Papers relating to American Loyalists. Ordered, by the House of Commons, to be printed, 30 April, 1821. Pp. 26-7 (Sessional Papers, 1821, XXIII, 392-2). Regarding this commission see also J. C. Bancroft Davis's *Notes upon the Treaties of the United States with Other Powers* (Great Britain).

your Majesty's Subjects in Nova Scotia, and elsewhere, who formerly belonged to Massachusetts, are debarred from receiving Compensation for their Debts in the same manner; although, it does not appear by the Records, that the General Assembly of Massachusetts, ever repealed the laws they made in the time of the War for the purpose of Persecuting of the American Loyalists, and which were repugnant to the Definitive treaty of Peace between Great Britain and America, till the Year One Thousand, seven hundred and Eighty seven."

The main object, however, of his peregrinations was the perfecting of his medical works and the seeking of means for their publication. A subscription list extant, which though distinguished in quality, is but meagre in numbers, contains the names of Governor Huntington of Connecticut, Bishop Seabury, Dr. Benjamin Rush, at whose home in Philadelphia Stearns was sometime a guest, Dr. William Smith, and "His Ex. Geo. Washington, Esq. LL.D. P.U.S." [President of the United States]. Publishing by subscription appearing too slow a method, Stearns conceived the idea of a Medical Lottery, by which thirty thousand dollars, which he later advanced to sixty, was to be raised, to defray not only the expenses already incurred by the author and the cost of printing, but also the free distribution of the "Dispensatory" and the "Columbian Practice" to the physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, and students throughout the country. Money, he plausibly argued, was raised by lottery for all sorts of public benefits, as, for instance, four hundred thousand dollars "to open a canal in the Ohio country," and why not to open "the grand canal of medical knowledge?"¹ His project was approved by President Dwight, Samuel Latham Mitchill, and other "worthy characters," but received scant attention from Congress and the general assemblies of Connecticut and Rhode Island, from all of

¹Stearns's *American Herbal* (1801), 12.

which bodies he sought leave to establish the proposed lottery. A more modest petition to the Legislature of Vermont that two thousand dollars be raised by the same means was dismissed on the ground that the sum named was inadequate for the purpose in view.¹

Stearns's efforts to obtain the support of the Connecticut Medical Society in this scheme were productive of much discomfort. In response to a petition presented in October, 1796, the Society, then sitting at New Haven, appointed a committee, consisting of Doctors Æneas Munson, Jared Potter, John Spalding, and Obadiah Hotchkiss "to examine the manuscripts of Dr. Samuel Stearns, and report thereon at the next convention"; and it was voted as the opinion of the convention "that an American Dispensatory, if executed with judgment and ability, would be of real benefit to the community; but whether the work alluded to in the petition of Samuel Stearns, Doctor of the Canon and Civil Laws, is included in that description or not, is a subject on which they cannot decide, as they have neither of them had an opportunity of examining its merits."² Soon afterwards Stearns obtained from two of the committee a certificate "that on examination it appears to Us, that the Work will be of great Utility to the Gentlemen of the Faculty, and of general Benefit to the Citizens of this, and the other States of America," and a similar endorsement from the others based on a less full examination. The Medical Society again convened, at Hartford, in May, 1797, when Stearns once more came before them, "returning thanks to the Convention, and Committee for what they had done for him at New-Haven, in the preceding year." He published at the same time in the "American Mercury" of Hartford, a long article, containing observations on the rise and progress of medicine, the theory and practice of physic in America, the medical productions compiled by Dr. Stearns, and

¹*Journal of the General Assembly of the State of Vermont for 1800*, Bennington, 1801, 234.

²Reprint of Proc. Conn. Medical Soc. from 1792 to 1829 inclusive (Hartford, 1884), 44.

the best method of spreading medical knowledge. These means of bringing his plan to the attention of the general assembly "had been recommended by some of the fellows of the Medical Convention." "The Publication," he adds, "cost 4 Dollars."

The sequel to all this endeavor was disappointing enough. The matter was dismissed with a virtual vote of censure to the committee for yielding to "the repeated importunities of said Stearns" in giving him a certificate "approbating" his work before reporting to the convention, which further declined "to recommend the aforesaid Dispensatory to the Public." This vote which was obviously slighting in tone, was printed in the "Mercury" of 22 May and in other Connecticut papers. Stearns notes that a gentleman informed him "that the Convention was prejudiced against him."

A protest from his own pen, over the signature "Medicus," against this treatment appeared in the "Providence Gazette" of 8 July. "Pray, are you ashamed," he inquires, "to join with the most respectable characters on the continent, in promoting the preservation and restoration of the health and happiness of mankind, when your incorporation as a Medical Society was for the purpose of promoting the increase of medical knowledge? But I doubt you have lost the golden opportunity of immortalizing your names, by not assisting at ushering into the world the first system of pharmacy, physic and surgery ever compiled in America. What ideas you have of the Doctor's character and abilities, or what induced you to treat him with neglect, I cannot tell. He is recommended by those long acquainted with him as a gentleman of good character, an eminent mathematician, a skilful physician, and a celebrated astronomer. After he had attended lectures upon the various branches of learning in Europe, he was graduated as a Doctor of the canon and civil laws; and besides all this, he is a member of some of the most respectable societies in the world; hence you would have done yourselves no dishonour

in assisting him in the important work he has undertaken. Had one of the ancient physicians done half so much for the promotion of the health of mankind, he would have drawn the attention of kings and princes, have been rewarded with riches and honours, had his name engraven in pillars of marble, and written on the walls of temples, to commemorate his noble exertions—I would not," he continued, with a rather incontinent descent from the mount of vision, "have troubled you nor the public with this disagreeable narration, had you kept an account of your proceedings out of the news-papers."

Stearns appears, at this time, to have championed the cause of Dr. Elisha Perkins, of Plainfield, Connecticut, inventor of Patent Metallic Points or Tractors.¹ Adoption of this "metallic" nonsense was quite in line with Stearns's earlier acceptance of animal magnetism, of which "Perkinism" was a development,

Galvanism worse bedevill'd:
Indeed they both are but a schism
From old exploded Mesmerism.²

It was claimed for the Tractors that the metals of which they were composed made the best conductors of "animal electricity." Perkins's cure, later exploited by his son in England, where it became a popular craze,³ gained him little credit with his professional

¹The Amer. Antiq. Soc. has Stearns's manuscript of "Medical Communications on the Different Kinds of pain: and the Utility of Dr. Elisha Perkins's Metallic Points." Whether these "Communications" appeared anywhere in print I have not discovered.

²"Terrible Tractoration!! A Poetical Petition against Galvanising Trumpery, and the Perkinistic Institution." Canto III. This famous satire by Thomas Green Fessenden, of Vermont, was written in England in 1803 in the interests of Perkinism, upon which it was outwardly an attack.

³The literature of the subject is extensive and sometimes amusing. From an advertisement issued by the younger Perkins one learns that two "of these Instruments, one of which is Yellow and the other of a Whitish Colour, constitute the Set." "The Observer," Mr. Perkins continues, "will here be enabled to form an idea of their very portable nature." Considering "their durability and very extensive efficacy in the removal of Diseases, now so universally admitted, 'how necessary are they (in the language of the Rev. Dr. Trotter) as a Remedy in every Family, and especially as a *vade mecum* for Clergymen, whose professional avocations lead them so frequently among the afflicted.'" The price, five guineas the set, in "a neat Red Morocco Case," seems a mere bagatelle. In use the Tractors were drawn over the portion of the body affected, the points lightly touching the skin. It is not difficult to agree with the explanation suggested in the Encyclopædia Perthensis that the success of the treatment was to be attributed "to the imagination of the patient."

neighbors. The same convention of the Connecticut Medical Society which overthrew Stearns's hopes, expelled Perkins from membership; and "I think," writes Stearns, "they have done dishonour to their Institution."

A letter written "in great haste," at Dummerston, 5 September, 1801, to Asa Houghton in Bolton relates to the author's efforts to sell "The American Herbal":

"I have lately sent to Gen. Whiting¹ 28 Books in sheets, and the Price is 16 Dollars & 94 Cents; and I have ordered him to pay the Money to you. I have also sent 127 Herbals, to Major Holman's² in Bolton, for you, and Your Uncle Abraham Houghton,³ to dispose of, which I will thank you to dispose of as soon as possible. If any of My Subscribers are dead, the Heirs Executors or Administrators are obliged to take the Books and to pay for the same, for the Subscription is as good against the Estate of the Diseased [sic] as a Note of hand. I have got a small Waggon almost finished for the purpose of sending Books about the Country, and My Men will Carry Almanacks for you if it will be of any service. If you will send Me an order upon Mr. Prentiss, I will take some by the Groce. Your Aunt remains in a very weak and low condition. * * * You may send an Order written on a sheet on which your Letter is written, to prevent double Postage."

A few weeks after the doctor had reported his wife's condition to Asa as weak and low, Mrs. Stearns died, 14 October, 1801, in her fifty-fifth year. A stone in

¹John Whiting, of Lancaster, "was by trade a bookbinder. He had been an officer in the Continental army, and was a scholarly and very lovable gentleman of the old-fashioned type. In 1808 he was appointed justice of the Court of Sessions, but soon after entered the United States army as lieutenant-colonel, dying in 1810. He is known as General Whiting, because brigadier-general in the state militia." H. S. Nourse, *The Retailers of Lancaster and Their Stores*, No. 5, *Clinton (Mass.) Courant*, 14 Mar., 1896.

²Silas Holman, an inn-holder of Bolton.

³Abraham Houghton, eldest son of Jacob, Jr., and brother of Simon Houghton, was born in Lancaster, 27 Nov., 1725, and died at Lyndon, Vt., 6 March, 1813. He lived in Bolton and Harvard, Mass., and Putney, Vt. Although not "present at Braddock's defeat," as *The Houghton Genealogy* asserts, he was a soldier in the French and Indian War in 1755.

the burial ground at Dummerston Centre, adorned with urns and altars and those apochryphal dignities in which her lord delighted, describes her as the Hon. Mrs. Sarah Stearns, and the "Honourable" person whose "amiable consort" she was as "One of the Senators of the University of Aberdeen in Scotland."¹ In her will, which was never proved, dated at Brattleboro, 1 August, 1799, she bequeaths "to my kind and loving Husband . . . all my estate both real and Personal, including all that is, or may be given to me by my Honoured Father, Oliver Witt, of Hubbardston, . . . Gentleman."²

In 1801 "The American Herbal," a small work by Dr. Stearns, was printed by David Carlisle "for Thomas & Thomas and the Author" at Walpole, N. H., where in 1793 Isaiah Thomas had established a press and bookstore with a resident partner. The "Herbal," as we shall see, was not a very profitable venture. In the preface Stearns once more made elaborate announcement of his "American Dispensary," as well as of "The Columbian Practice of Physic, and System of Surgery." But by 1805 five reprints of the Edinburgh New Dispensary had appeared in America,

¹In answer to an enquiry, Mr. P. J. Anderson, librarian and historian of the University of Aberdeen, writes: "I cannot trace any connection between this University and Dr. Samuel Stearns, other than the degree of LL.D., which gave him no right to use the designations "Hon." or "Senator."

²The following letter from a lawyer at Brattleboro is found in Worcester Probate files: Brattleborough May 14. 1802.

SIR,

I find by the will of Sarah Stearns, the late wife of D^r. Samuel Stearns of Dummerston in this county, that she has bequeathed to her husband, in general terms, certain legacies which she supposed to be bequeathed to her by her father, Oliver Witt, of Hubbardston in your county. I am informed that M^r. Witt is dead, and I wish to ascertain whether any, and if any, what bequests were made in his will to M^r. Stearns. I wish to trouble you for this information, and should there be a will of M^r. Witt's in your office, and should it contain any legacies to M^r. Stearns, if you will copy such parts of the same as relate to this subject, and transmit the same to me by the mail, I will remit to you your fee and a compensation for your trouble. And you will much oblige,

Sir,

Your very H^oble Serv^t.

JAMES ELLIOT.

Register of Probate,
Worcester.

while in 1806 Dr. Coxe of Philadelphia published his "American Dispensatory." As time went on, Stearns must have felt that his chosen field was occupied more and more fully by others.

Of the Doctor's projected works, all that has come to light is a manuscript of his "Dispensatory," of about 240 quarto pages, now in the Library of the American Antiquarian Society.¹ This I believe to be an early draft of the work,—probably written before 1790—originally intended for the printer, but left unfinished with the intention of incorporating it in a later and improved copy. Stearns, as we have seen, received the degree of LL.D. from Aberdeen University, 2 October, 1790, about two months after his return from Paris; but on the title-page of this manuscript he calls himself merely "Samuel Stearns, Professor of Physick and Astronomy." The omission of his academic suffix, after its attainment, is inconceivable! Moreover, he still uses the title, "The North-American's Dispensatory," under which he had announced the book in 1786 in "A Short History of the Treatment that Dr. Samuel Stearns Hath Met With in Massachusetts." When he copyrighted the proposed volume in September, 1791, immediately after his return to this country, he adopted the final title, "The American Dispensatory." The manuscript contains only the *Materia Medica* from "Acetum Colchicum" to "Thea," though the title-page promises also "A Pharmacology Or a Great Variety of the Most efficacious Official Compositions and extemporaneous Prescriptions with an Index of Diseases and their Remedies [sic] together with a Posological Table Containing the Doses of all the Simples and Compounds."²

¹Formerly in the library of Dr. James Conland, of Brattleboro (died 3 May, 1903), which was dispersed by auction at Anderson's, New York, 7 Jan., 1904.

²The vellum-bound blank book containing this draft of the "Dispensatory," the remaining pages of which Stearns used later for miscellanea, bore the label of Chesneau *ainé*, a stationer of the rue des Vergetiers, Rouen. I am unable to deduce from this circumstance that the book was purchased during Dr. Stearns's noteworthy tour to Paris in July, 1790—when he did not visit Rouen.

According to Gilman's "Bibliography of Vermont," Stearns wrote while living in Dummerston a dissertation, never printed, on the practice of medicine, which was in the possession of the late Dr. J. A. Allen¹ when he resided in Brattleboro. Probably this was "The Columbian Practice of Physic."

But of Stearns's matured work, by which his place as a medical writer should be determined, we have only the published "American Herbal." "The manuscript *Materia Medica*," writes a friend, the late Dr. Charles L. Nichols, "does not compare favorably with the Edinburgh Dispensatory. It is accurate, both botanically and medically, but it is very superficial, and expressed in very general terms. The printed book ('The American Herbal') is not at all like the manuscript, and is rather better, though it is confined to medicines indigenous to America. I think you would call him a ready writer rather than a thinker, an organizer rather than an observer. It is greatly to his credit that he originated the idea of compiling a dispensatory for the Colonies, and that he published his "Herbal" of indigenous drugs; but he did not use well the material which he says he studied."²

Probably a "Circular" printed in the Windsor "Vermont Journal" for 9 and 23 November, 1802, may be regarded as a not unskillful bit of advertising:

To the Public.

The Medical Art is rising rapidly to higher and higher degrees of perfection in America. The Hon. Samuel Stearns, Physician, and Doctor of the Canon and Civil Laws, has compiled and published an *American Herbal*, which exhibits the Virtues, Uses and Doses, of our American Productions, so far as they are known.

He has also compiled an *American Dispensatory*, and a System of *Physic and Surgery*, containing an account of those things which have stood the test of Ages, all of which, he com-

¹Dr. Jonathan Adams Allen (1788-1848), afterward long of Middlebury, settled in Brattleboro in 1816.

²This opinion was furnished me by Dr. Nichols some thirty years ago, after examining Stearns's manuscript "Dispensatory."

piled in the course of twenty eight years, and are ready for the press.

As the like has not been done before in America, a number of Physicians, and other gentlemen, have ordered a *medical Monument*, to be erected in Brattleborough, in this State, by subscription, to commemorate his noble exertions.

For the failure of his serious literary plans the composition of copious and most unpoetic verse was perhaps a solace. Stearns's services, as are many a rural jingler's, were sometimes required for gravestone inscriptions, of which he furnished a series, preserved in his volume of manuscript, commemorating Captain Reuben Ward, of Marlborough, New Hampshire, and members of his family. One need not be heartless to smile at the following, "in memory of Miss Patty Ward, who died Nov. 14th, A.D. 1795, aged 5 years, 6 months, and 27 days":

By boiling Cyder, She was slain,
When less than Six of Age:
Then her exquisite racking Pain
Remov'd her from the Stage.

But her immortal Spirit went,
To the Almighty King,
Where all the Godly ones are sent,
The Praise of God to sing.¹

His effusions treat of many subjects, -the Blue Laws of Connecticut, the tariff, the "horrible effects of persecution," the Sabbath, and various wars from 1753 to 1783. Some are of a personal character, as one on "Mother Slander," who

oft' does Scold,
And take it in disdain,
Because I read with candour bold
The Works of Thomas Paine.

And oftentimes she does complain,
And spread about the Town,
That my Religion[s] all in vain,
And I'm a Deist grown.

¹Still to be seen at Marlborough.

This rumor was unjustified; the "universal restoration" views in which the doctor probably held with his friends Winchester and Kneeland, seem to have been his most serious aberration from orthodoxy. Another long poem, the first stanza of which recalls the jingle about Captain Shays, narrates Stearns's difficulties with a gentleman denominated "Old Gin, the Man of Sin," who in Vermont did dwell, Sirs. This monster, having been banished from the Baptist Church, Sirs, for misconduct toward the "fid'ler's wife," added to his other iniquities this, that he failed to pay "Dr. S—" for professional services.

In a petition to the public, apparently drafted in 1797, for assistance in publishing his medical books, Stearns declares that he "has spent the greatest part of his time for more than 9 Years past, and near 4,000 Dollars of his own Money, in travelling and Compiling the Work: and must be at a great Expense hereafter, in completing the Manuscripts, and in Inspecting the Press; and as the Price of the Necessaries of Life have been much elevated of late; and as he has met with sundry unexpected and heavy Losses: he is so much reduced, that he finds himself under the disagreeable necessity of mentioning, that he expects he shall be obliged to abandon his Medical Studies, and take to some other Employment in Order to support himself and Family; unless he can be assisted by some persons richer than himself."

This prediction was fulfilled a few years later. For a brief period, in partnership with his nephew, Asa Houghton, and one "Captain" Jabez Butler, the doctor turned country store-keeper. Their store, forty by sixty feet, was located in the east part of Dummerston, on the road leading from Brattleboro up the Connecticut Valley to Dummerston Centre,—"the main line of travel to Bellows Falls."¹ Stearns with-

¹This building was burned while occupied by Roger Burchard who, in 1870, lost his life in the burning of another store near the same spot (Mansfield's *History of Dummerston*, 67, 175-177).

drew from the firm in January, 1804.¹ Doubtless measuring rum and calico was less to his taste than high converse with young Abner Kneeland—but lately gone from Dummerston to Alstead, New Hampshire—in after years known to the world as a free-thinker, but at this date combining the avocations of carpenter, schoolmaster, and Baptist preacher.² For Asa Houghton this venture in store-keeping ended in trouble with his remaining partner, Butler, and his own commitment for debt to the jail at Newfane, where employment “tending store,” within the liberty of “one mile square,” and the presence of his wife and babies rendered his lot not uncheerful.

Stearns may himself, somewhat earlier, have been a prisoner for debt in the jail on Newfane Hill.³ Windham County court-records show that an execution was issued, 23 December, 1802, against Samuel Stearns, LL.D., for a debt of about four hundred dollars to one John Brown. In a rhymed advertisement dated 14 February, 1803, the doctor returns “grateful thanks” to those debtors of his own “who honestly have paid me all my due.” But others there are, he laments,

who have not paid me yet,
Which I do hope will not the same forget.
The want of Money puts me in a fright,
At high Noon Day, and in the silent Night;
Without some Cash, my credit soon will fail,
And I, alas, be dragged off to Jail.
I send this forth, indeed, with Good intent,
Hoping it may Imprisonment prevent;
That those indebted, to me, soon will pay,
And drive my Grief and trouble far away;
For I'm in Debt to some, to Master Barns,
And am Your humble Servant Samuel Stearns.

At all events he appears not to have suffered a long confinement, for on the 10th of November, 1803, he

¹Brattleboro Reporter, 30 Jan., 1804.

²More than suspected, however, of Universalism. (See Kneeland's *Columbian Miscellany*, Keene, N. H., 1804, p. IX, note.)

³See Gilman, *Bibliography of Vermont*, 262.

married Mrs. Elizabeth Kelley, of Dummerston.¹ The ceremony was performed "according to the method practiced by the Church of England," by the Rev. Samuel Mead, who is called in the marriage certificate "Rector of the Church in Alstead, N. H."² Mrs. Kelley, already twice widowed, with three grown daughters, was a handsome, dark-eyed woman of forty-nine. Her youngest daughter, Hepsey Albee, a girl of nineteen, acted for a time as the doctor's secretary, and in later life confessed that she was ashamed of the unusual learning thus acquired, "as it was not nice for girls to know too much at that time."

The last letter of Stearns's which has come to my knowledge was written at Dummerston, 20 October, 1804, to Simon Houghton, with reference to his difficulties in collecting the subscriptions for the "Herbal." In tone, as well as by its dark hints of conspiracy against him, it suggests worn out nerves and flagging courage. Its references to Asa Houghton, whom he had apparently seen the day before, seem to show an absence of confidential relations between uncle and nephew. He writes:

Asa was well yesterday, and I hope he is doing well in the way of trade: it is said, that he is married to a woman, by the Name of Sally Negus. I send Capt. Baxter, the Bearer to you in order to Collect some Money due to me for Books in your Parts; it is now more than three years since their Publication, and I have not Received, scarce one Quarter part of the Money that was due to me for the same. I will thank you to Aid and

¹Daughter of Ebenezer and Mary (Sluman) Wheelock, of Mendon, Mass., where she was born, 2 May, 1754. She married in 1776 Nathan Albee, also of Mendon. Their families were neighbors in the section of Mendon which is now South Milford. (See Ballou's *History of Milford*, 392, 526 and 1106.) They removed to the adjoining town of Bellingham, where were born their three daughters. The youngest, Hepzibah, born in 1784, married John Alexander, Jr., and died in Brattleboro in 1860. Nathan Albee died in 1792. In 1797 his widow married Alexander Kelley, of Dummerston, who died 15 January, 1803.

²A misleading description. Samuel Mead, A.M. (Harv.), was an eccentric Congregational minister, a native of Harvard, Mass., and pastor successively of churches in Alstead, N. H., from which he was dismissed in 1797, Danvers, Mass., and Amesbury, Mass. (See the Rev. Seth S. Arnold's historical *Sermon*, Alstead, N. H., 1826, 15; and Nourse's *History of Harvard, Mass.*, 429, 466.) The certificate of Stearns's marriage to Mrs. Kelley is given in Mansfield's *Dummerston*, 69.

Assist the Captain, all you can, in Collecting Money, and in giving Information concerning those who have, and those who have not had, and paid for their Books . . .

I find by my Account, that I sent 99 Herbals to Asa Houghton, and that I have rec^d but about 16 Dollars for the same; if your Brother Abraham is with you, perhaps, he can give some Information concerning the matter. There was some Books left with Mr. Johnson, in Leominster, and whether they were a part of the above number or not, I am not Certain.

Some have reported, that the Herbal is good for Nothing, because it was not neatly bound, and because it is written in too high a Style, &c. and have endeavoured to keep me out of my pay on those Accounts, when in the mean time they Promised in their Subscriptions to take and pay for the Work bound in Boards; and when the Technical Terms are explained before their Eyes. Some of Our Quacks do not want to have the Common People know the things Contained in the Herbal; Hence they have reported that it can be of no utility to the Vulgar; others have despised the Work, because it was compiled by one who did not fight for the French, in the time of the American Contest; and I have just Reason to believe that the Sale has been greatly diminished that way; and I wish that Certain Spies that are suffered to run about in different Empires, Kingdoms, and States, exciting Contention and Discord, endeavouring to impede the progress of Science, and to subvert every regular Established Government, were taken Care of.

It is very strange that when a Book is compiled from the best Authorities, and Published for the Promotion of the Public Good, when it has been examined and Recommended by the learned, that it should be so much decryed by the Vulgar! that the Subscribers should be induced to Violate their Promises by refusing to take and pay for their Books, unless some Enemy is at the Bottom of the fraud!

I cannot enlarge for the want of time. If you have any of my Books that you cannot Sell Please to deliver them to the Captain. I Suffer very much for the want of My Money.

The doctor's somewhat crabbed allusion to Asa's marriage came a little late in the day. On the 7th of October that gentleman had advised his "Dear Hon'd Parents" that "the Nuptuals of myself & Amiable Miss Salley Negus were celebrated at Dummerston last August." In the same letter he writes: "D^r Stearns calculates embarking for Europe next Spring, or Summer. However, his tarry there, he calculates, will

be but short." But poverty, to which may be added increasing infirmities, was to prevent the contemplated voyage, the objects of which we can easily guess. Probably the plan was nothing more than the flickering hope of a disappointed man for government aid and scientific success.

The last of his life Stearns's home was again in Brattleboro. His nephew and namesake, Samuel Houghton, who visited him in 1806, wrote, in the flowery style, and the orthography, of youth: "I found him in tolerable good health; But that genius I am affraid has in a great manour left him which [he] has nourished so long, he appears to be very infirm; & very much broken in memory. He *says* he shall make a visit at Bolton this winter with his wife, I have never heard him speak so strong of the visit before, but I am afraid the hoary fleeses of *snow* with his Marbled locks will not agree to travel. He complains very much of that Sceptred Monarch who Tynanzes over the principal part of the World . . . viz 'Poverty'; which has been his ruler this some time." We get hints of another imprisonment "for an old debt" at Keene, N. H. the following year, which seems to have broken whatever remnant of spirit was left in him. From a letter dated 19 February, 1807, to Isaiah Thomas from Alexander Thomas at Walpole, N. H., we learn that "Poor old Dr. Stearns is in *close* confinement in Keene gaol, on account of Sam^l Paine, a brother pensioner.¹ The Dr. cannot pay the debt possibly & I think Mr. Paine, if he knew Dr S's situation would at least suffer him to have the liberty of the yard. I really wish you would be good enough to speak to him or the person who has charge of his business. It would be an act of humanity at least. I am told he bought the demand for a song.

¹Samuel Paine, H.U. 1771, son of the Hon. Timothy Paine, born 23 Aug., 1754, was associated with his father as Clerk of the Courts and Register of Probate, before the Revolution. He left the country, and visited New York, Nova Scotia and England. He received a pension of £84 per annum, from the British Government, as an American Loyalist. After the war he returned home, and died in Worcester, 21 June, 1807. Lincoln's *History of Worcester*, 222.

It was originally 25 £ & is now 206 dolls . . . Perhaps your son might buy it of Mr Paine for a trifle. & Dr. S. is willing to engage to make a number of annual calculations in advance & give bonds to perform faithfully & in a given time."

In a letter of 4 March Alexander Thomas writes to John Prentiss, printer, of Keene: "The person at whose suit D^r Stearns is confined is sick & not likely to recover, quite stupid. If you see the D^r please tell him I wrote about him to M^r T[homas] & requested him to see M^r Paine about it. I don't know as it will have any effect. His subscription paper I fancy will be of no avail." And in a final appeal to Isaiah Thomas the following day: "I really wish you would speak to Dr. Paine, who I suppose has S. Paine's concerns in his hands, on the subject of Dr. Stearns. He only wants the light of the sun & free air . . . Think you might touch the Dr's [Paine's] feelings so as to let him *come from close confinement before it is too late*. . . . I hope you will do the best you can. You will gain no silver nor gold but it may be a good thing to think of." The suggestion that Isaiah Thomas buy up the Paine claim, in return for calculating almanacs, is not without pathos. The subscription paper alluded to is a characteristic appeal by Stearns for help, addressed to the congregations of various churches, reviewing his sufferings since the beginning of the Revolution. By whatever means his release was effected, one may be thankful for the poor old doctor that he could die comfortably in his own bed. His last home, to which he returned from his incarceration at Keene, was a house bought by his wife, in May 1805, in Brattleboro, on the old country road to Marlboro, later the home of her daughter Hepsey Alexander.

Asa Houghton reports Dr. Stearns in 1808 as "very much superannuated." The end came at Brattleboro, 8 August, 1809,¹ not quite a month after his sixty-

¹Samuel S. Houghton's notebook in the Town Library, Lancaster, Mass. (See also the *Columbian Centinel*, Boston, 19 Aug., 1809—"Died . . . In Brattleboro' (Vt.) Samuel Stearns, LL.D.; a celebrated astronomer,"—and other contemporary newspapers.)

eighth birthday. "I feel incompetent," wrote Sam Houghton to his mother ten days later, "to Eulogize our Uncle's life at present, but view him thro all the vicisitudes & walks of his life we see a calm serene & mild resignation which demonstrates that Charity endureth All Things."

A letter from Mrs. Stearns written Christmas Day, 1810, brought Mrs. Houghton further tidings of "poor Samuel," as the good Martha was wont to call her elder brother.

Brattleborough December 25th 1810.

DEAR SISTER.

With pleasure I employ a few moments in writing to you (tho I have not the happiness of being personally acquainted with you). I received your favor of Sep^r: 26th but have not been in a situation to address you till now. You request me to write concerning the Doctors last illness &c. His disorders were occasioned by trouble and perplexity and at last by being confined for an old debt. His illness was a stupidity somewhat of an apoplectic kind. He declined about two Years previous to his death. I am not satisfied that he was sensible of his approaching dissolution. He retained his reason in some measure till the last tho he was confined to his bed about six months. I asked him if he was willing to leave the world should it be God's will to take him? He answered in the affirmative: this was about four weeks previous to his death. He never appeared to be as he was before after he was released from Jail. He would frequently discourse of Bolton and the people living there; but I don't recollect that he seemed to bear in his mind any one of his friends in particular. I should be very happy to make you a visit; but do not know that I ever shall. I should be exceeding happy to see you at Brattleborough if you would take the trouble to come. I am in as good health as usual. My respects to yourself and family.

Your Friend and
Sister in Law,
ELIZABETH STEARNS.

Mrs. Martha Houghton.

P.S. Give my respects to Dr. Stearns' brother and likewise to Mrs. Whitney¹; and tell them I should be very happy to see them.

¹Daniel Stearns, who married Deborah Carter of Lancaster in 1788 and was for many years a resident of that town, where he died in 1818. Mrs. Whitney was Dr. Stearns's sister, Sarah.

It would seem that the slate-stone tablet which marks his grave in Prospect Hill Cemetery at Brattleboro dates from some time considerably after his passing, and probably was not erected under the direction of his family, for not only is his age stated wrong by five years, but the date given for his death is a year too late. The inscription reads:

Sacred to the memory of Doct.
 SAMUEL STEARNS, L L D
Who died Aug. 8, 1810, aged 63.
Self-taught
Nature was his preceptor philosophy
His mistress, and astronomy his prompter,
Disappointment ever succeeded his best
Endeavours; he deserved better—
Ingratitude was the reward of
His labours:
Peace to his Ashes!

A draft of this epitaph in an unknown hand further recites that "physic [was] his occasional practice" and that "affable deportment, and general philanthropy marked his character."

In his will, made shortly after his second marriage,¹ he desires his wife "to petition the right Honourable the Lords commissioners of his Majesty's treasury, praying that the whole or one half of [his] pension may be established upon her."² He also appoints four attorneys—Luke Knowlton, of Newfane, Jason Duncan, Abel Duncan, and Asa Houghton—to take

¹ 7 Dec., 1803. Marlboro District Probate Records, Brattleboro, IV, 440-442.

² "As many of the Loyalists, who received Pensions, or Annual Allowances, are since deceased, the Lords of the Treasury, by his Majesty's direction, have continued some part of those Annual Payments to their Widows." (John Eardley-Wilmot, *Historical View of the Commission for Enquiring into the Losses, Services, and Claims, of the American Loyalists*, London, 1815, p. 96.)

“every legal method to obtain compensation of the United States of America for the injuries and abuses [he has] received by being falsely imprisoned in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.”

Some items in the inventory of his estate, which was entirely personal, have a certain interest,—a Freemason’s apron; mathematical instruments; “a miniature likeness of the deceased”; Ferguson’s *Astronomy* and one or two other works on the same subject; five Dispensatories; a Greek and Latin, and a French dictionary; nine copies of Kneeland’s *Spelling Book*; about a hundred and seventy-five copies of his own “*Herbal*”; and, rather quaintly, concluding the catalogue of his “library,” “Manuscript of the deceased \$2.00—23 lb. copper \$3.83.”¹

On Mrs. Stearns’s representations to the probate court that when she “was married to the deceased [she] was possessed of a large paternal inheritance, both real and personal, which [she] through the force of natural affection was obliged to expend in the discharge of many large debts, and to liberate the deceased from prison; and to support and maintain [him] in a long and lingering sickness, by reason of which [she], at the death of [her] husband, was left destitute of many of the necessaries of life,” it was ordered in December, 1810, “that Widow Stearns have the personal estate of her late husband.”² Captain Witt, having outlived both his sons, died some two years before Dr. Stearns, at the age of eighty-seven. A legacy to his son-in-law of one hundred dollars was paid to Mrs. Stearns after her husband’s death.³

To be anybody’s relict was never Mrs. Stearns’s role for long, and in 1814 she became the wife of Warren Esterbrook, a widower, who lived till 1838, attaining the age of ninety. His widow died at Brattleboro, 9 October, 1839, in her eighty-sixth year. Of her

¹Marlboro District Probate Records, IV, 465–466.

²Marlboro District Probate Records, V, 13.

³Worcester Probate Registry, Series A, Case 66744.

three daughters, children of her first marriage, only the youngest, Mrs. Hepsey Alexander, survived her. No monument recites her praise; but, for the sake of the impractical "genius" whom for six years she succored, "Grandmother Esterbrook" merits a gesture of respect from his biographer.

Martha Houghton died in 1823, the last of Benjamin and Dinah Stearns's children. She was of the Unitarian faith, and it is told that, at her funeral, a Bolton neighbor who held by the older creed, bending over her friend's open coffin, remarked, "*She* was good enough to be an Orthodox!" Her fourth son, Jacob, a lawyer and judge of Fredonia, New York, long outlived his ten brothers and sister. "As to property," he once wrote, "I expect my friends will think of me, as we used to talk of our Uncle, Doctor Stearns, who uniformly spent his pension before he received it."

In Dr. Stearns's manuscript "Dispensatory," there is prefixed a poem written in his hand, which might well serve as his eulogy. The metrical style of the "Enconium," it may be noted, bears a marked resemblance to that of the doctor himself, illustrated by many examples of his verse in this volume. I have reluctantly retained the peculiarities of spelling. Stearns *could* spell his mother-tongue correctly, but sometimes, writing hurriedly, *did* not.)

AN ENCONIUM ON THE
AUTHOR OF THE AMERICAN
DISPENSATORY.

Written by a Lady.

America hath truely Rais'd
A Genius of her Own,
Who Realy knows as much perhaps
As any ever known

In Britain, or in France, or Spain,
Or other Distant parts,
About the Liberal Sciences
And the Ingenius Arts.

His Works in Spendid Lusture Shine
 At ev'ry One's abode
 In Places where they be Convey'd
 Upon this Earthly Globe.

They're Calculated to do good
 To those that are in Pain,
 To Raise the feeble People up
 To Health and Strength again.

May this Great Genius for his Works
 A Just Reward Obtain
 Whilst He within this Evil World
 Is Suffered to Remain.

And in that World which is to Come
 May he allways be Blest,
 With Glory, Honour, and with Peace,
 And Everlasting Rest.

STEARNS'S PUBLISHED WRITINGS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

"Before the late war," Stearns wrote of himself in 1786, "the Doctor made, and published astronomical calculations for Massachusetts, Connecticut, and the West Indies: and since that time, he annually calculates for four different governments";¹ and again (in September, 1786), "for some years past I have *Annually Calculated* for four separate Governments on the Continent."²

Stearns's use of the word "annually" is misleading. What he means is that his almanacs had, at one time or another since the beginning of the Revolution, been published in four "governments," *i.e.* (as will appear) Massachusetts, New York, and New Brunswick, with the fourth doubtful—if we suppose his connection with the Connecticut "Freebetter" almanac to have ceased entirely, as seems probable, with the issue of 1774. On the title-page of "The American Oracle"

¹"*A Short History of the Treatment that Dr. Samuel Stearns hath Met With in Massachusetts*" (1786), 22.

²*The Universal Calendar for 1787* (Boston).

(1791) he calls himself "Astronomer to his Majesty's Provinces of Quebec, and New Brunswick; also to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the State of Vermont"; but his first Vermont almanac was for 1788, and his calculations for Quebec (which await identification) probably do not antedate his travels in Canada in 1787.¹

The Stearns collector has still to seek an early almanac from his hand for some point in the British West Indies—this has probably perished,—and at least one each, I think for 1787 or 1788, for Quebec and Montreal.²

All the items here described, except Nos. 7, 17, 19, 41, 50, 53, 54, 57, 58 and 63 are in the Library of the American Antiquarian Society, at Worcester, Mass.

1. The Northamerican's/Almanack/for the year of christian æra,/1770./Being the 2nd year after bissextile or leap year./ Illustrated with an account of many things that are/very surprizing and remarkable./Calculated for the lat. 42 deg. 25 min. north:/and fitted to Boston meridian./Containing,/ephemeris; aspects; spring-tides; judgment of the/weather; feasts and fasts of the church; courts in/the four New-England governments; sun's rising and/setting; moon's place; time of high water; eclipses;/public roads, with the stages to put at &c.&c./By Samuel Stearns,/a student in the mathematicks./ Ever ince our Lord prophesied,/His good Word has been verified;/And commonly there does appear/Things that are wondrous every year;/It almost puts me in a Maze/To see the splendid Comets blaze!/One very lately did appear,/Some dire event is nigh, I fear./God's Judgments may from Heaven fall/Down on this Terrestrial Ball;/And those that do really presume/To break his Laws, they may consume./The author./ Luk. 21. ver 10, 11. *Then said he unto them, Nation shall/rise against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom: And/great*

¹"I have made and published Astronomical Calculations for several Governments in America, for upwards of twenty years, annually calculated for six meridians and latitudes" (*American Oracle*, 44-45)—which perhaps may be made to agree with his statements already quoted. Stearns's "Recommendation" prefixed to Asa Houghton's "Almanac" for 1802 adds Montreal to the places where his "productions were annually published."

²He names both places in the same list.

Earthquakes shall be in divers Places, and Famines, and Pestilences, and fearful Sights, and great Signs shall there be from Heaven./Boston: printed for, and sold by the author, at Bolton. Price 2s.8d. per dozen, and six cop-/pers single. 1770.

12mo., pp. [24].

Five pages of Roads and Houses of Entertainment are in large part from the same types, in this almanac and in two other almanacs printed in Boston for the year 1770, "Edes & Gill's North-American Almanack" and Nathaniel Ames's "Astronomical Diary."

2. The North-American's/Almanack/being, the gentlemens and ladies diary/for the year of christian æra,/1771./Being the 3d year after bissextile or leap year./And the 11th year of the reign of King George III./Calculated for the latitude 42 deg. 25 min. north,/and fitted to Boston's meridian./Containing,/the lunations, eclipses of the luminaries, aspects, spring-/tides, judgment of the weather, feasts and fasts of the/church, Quakers meetings courts in the four New/England governments, sun and moon's rising and setting,/moons place, time of high water, morning and evening,/clock equations, interest table, publick roads with the/stages to put up at; also, a variety of excellent medicines,/extracted from authors, shewing an easy way of curing/diseases, with an account of the wonderful operations/of the bite of a mad dog on the human body, and/directions for working the cure of the same, &c.&c.&c./By Samuel Stearns,/a student in the mathematicks/[Woodcut.] Boston: printed and sold by R. Draper,/T. & J. Fleet, and Edes & Gill.

12mo., pp. [24].

3. The North-American's/Almanack,/being, the gentlemens and ladies diary/for the year of christian æra,/1772./Being bissextile or leap year./Calculated for the meridian of Boston,/in New-England, lat. 42° 25' north./Containing,/the lunations, eclipses of the luminaries, planets places, aspects, spring/tides, judgment of the weather, feasts and fasts of the church, courts/in the four New-England governments, the rising, southing & setting/of the seven stars, sun and moon's rising and setting, moon's place,/time of high water morning and evening, clock equations, table of/the weight and value of

coins as they pass in New-England, publick/roads, with the intermediate miles and stages to put up at, a table of/the sun's amplitude, exhibiting nearly the points of the compass on/which the sun will rise & set at Boston, the natural cause of the wind's/rising & falling, it's changing and turning to & fro, and where it is when/it is fallen; also the natural cause of thunder & earthquakes; and an/account of sundry other things that are very instructive & entertaining./By Samuel Stearns,/a student in the mathematicks./A figure of the mariners compass./[Figure.] Boston: printed and sold by R. Draper,/T. & J. Fleet, and Edes & Gill.

12mo., pp. [24].

A figure of the mariner's compass on the title-page was engraved by Paul Revere, 2 Sept., 1771: "Mess^{rs} Edes & Gill Dr. To engraving a Compass for Almanack 0-18-0" (Paul Revere's Ms. Day. Book).

In a prefatory address to his "Kind Readers" Stearns says: "This is the third Time of my appearing before you in Things of an Astronomical Kind, and however cheap and contemptible a Thing an Almanack may seem to be, I can truly tell you, it Annually costs me much Time and hard Study to prepare for you, and it is your kind Acceptation of my Labours, that encourages me to continue in this your Service."

4. The Connecticut/Almanack,/for the year of our Lord Christ/1772;/being bissextile or leap year./And the twelfth year of the reign of King George III./Calculated for the meridian of New-London, in Con-/necticut, lat. 41 deg. 25 min. north; and 4 h. 45 m. west from the Royal Observatory at Greenwich./Containing/an ephemeris; lunations; eclipses;/aspects; spring tides;/judgment of the weather;/feasts and fasts of the church;/ courts in the four New-England governments; sun and/moon's rising and setting; moon's place; time of high/water morning and evening; clock equations; interest/table at 6 per cent.; public roads, with the intermediate/miles, and stages to put up at—also, a number of ex-/cellent medicines extracted from authors, shewing a natu-/ral and easy way of curing diseases, &c./By Edmund Freebetter,/student in physic and astronomy./Return the Kindness that you do receive,/As far as your Ability gives Leave./Nothing can be more barbarously rude,/Than a vile Temper of Ingratitude./Reason refin'd, and to Perfection brought,/By wise Philosophy, and serious Thought,/Supports the Soul beneath the pond'rous

Weight/Of angry Stars and impropitious Fate:/Then is the Time she should exert her Power,/And make us practice what she taught before./Printed and sold by T. Green, in New-London.

12 mo., pp. [24].

Under title 9 I present arguments which seem to me convincing that Stearns was the author of the earlier "Freebetter" almanacks, of which the issue for 1772 was the first. For textual evidence compare the list of contents of this almanack with that of Stearns's "North-American's almanack" for 1771, and the following extracts from each:

STEARNS, 1771.

Experienced Medicines, extracted from Authors.

* * * *

Cough—Drink at going to Bed Brandy, Treacle and Sallad Oyl, or mix Butter and brown Sugar together, and take some at going to sleep.

* * * *

Fainting—Drink the Tea or Dew of Mint.

* * * *

Head-ach—Drink often of the Tea or Rue, Sage or Betony.

* * * *

Melancholy—Eat often of Cream Tartar mixed with Honey or Treacle.

FREEBETTER, 1772.

Experienced MEDICINES extracted from Authors; shewing a natural and easy method of curing Diseases.

* * * *

Cough—*Drink at going to Bed Brandy, Treacle, and Salad Oyl.*

* * * *

Fainting—*Drink the Decoction of Mint.*

* * * *

Head-ach—*Drink often the Tea of Rue, Bitony or Sage.*

* * * *

Melancholy—*Eat often of the Cream of Tartar mixed with Honey or Treacle.*

In the preface to "Freebetter" for 1772 one finds this sentence: "If any Error should be discovered by the curious Part of my Readers, it is hoped they will excuse it," and in Stearns's "North-American's calendar" for 1773: "If any Error should be discovered in . . . any of my Calculations by the curious Part of my Readers, 'tis hoped they will excuse it." The historical chronologies, which Stearns was fond of compiling, in these two almanacks show unmistakable signs of the same hand.

5. The North-American's/Calendar/and gentlemen and ladies diary,/being an/almanack/for the year of the christian æra/1773./Calculated for the meridian of Boston, N. England, lat. 42 d. 24 m. north./[Woodcut.] A projection of the twelve/

signs of the zodiack./By Samuel Stearns./A student in the mathematicks and physick./Boston:/printed and sold by Edes & Gill, and T. & J. Fleet./Price 2s. 8d, per dozen, and six coppers single.

12mo., pp. [24].

Three cuts engraved by Paul Revere, according to his MS. Day-Books.

6. Freebetter's/New-England/Almanack,/for the year of our Lord Christ/1773;/being the first year after bissextile, or leap year./Calculated for the meridian of New-London,/in Connecticut, lat. 41 deg. 25 min. north./The frontispiece represents an eclipse of the moon; . . ./ . . ./[Figure.] New-London:/printed and sold at the Printing-Office.

12mo., pp. [24].

7. The Massachusetts Gazette: and the Boston weekly news-letter. [Published by Richard Draper.] Boston. 4 Feb., 1773 (no. 3618), *supplement*: Letter "To Mr. Samuel Stearns, student in mathematicks and physic," by "Nauticus," Newburyport, 29 Jan., 1773. 11 March, 1773 (no. 3623), *Supplement*: Reply to "Mr. Nauticus" by Samuel Stearns, Paxton, 15 Feb., 1773.

Folio.

Mass. Hist. Soc. A.A.S. has the supplement for 11 March.

This correspondence relates to the method employed in "The North-American's Calendar" for 1773 for computing the sun's rising and setting. Stearns continued the discussion in his almanack for 1774.

8. The North-American's/Almanack,/and gentlemen's and ladie's diary,/for the year of our Lord Christ,/1774./Being the second year after bissextile or leap year./And 14th year of the reign of King George the Third./Calculated for the meridian of Boston, in New-England/lat. 43 deg. 25 min. north./[Woodcut] By Samuel Stearns,/a student in the mathematicks and physick./Boston: printed and sold by/Edes and Gill, and T. and J. Fleet.

12mo., pp. [24].

The astronomical representation of the Globe, on the title-page, was engraved by Paul Revere. 9 Sept., 1773: "Mess^{rs} Edes & Gill Dr. To Engraving a leading Plate for Sterns's Almanac 0-18-0" (Paul Revere's MS. Day-Books).¹

¹For information regarding the cuts engraved by Revere for Stearns's almanacs I am indebted to Mr. C. S. Brigham, Director of the Amer. Antiq. Soc.

9. Freebetter's/Connecticut/Almanack,/for the year of our Lord Christ/1774;/ being the second after bissextile or leap year,/and the XIVth year of the/reign of King/George III./ Calculated for the meridian of New-London, in lat. 41 deg. 25 min./north, and 4 hours 45 min. west of the Royal Observatory at Greenwich./Containing, (besides what is usual in almanacks,) a great variety of useful/and entertaining pieces, in prose and verse—select sentences—useful/maxims, and good cautions; with a curious cut of his M—y's wig./The second edition./[Woodcut] [Ten lines of verse as in no. 10.] New-London: printed and sold by T. Green.

12mo., pp. [24].

Hitherto the "Freebetter" series from the beginning has been attributed to Nathan Daboll, who after a few years became the permanent author, or to Daboll and Clark Elliott in succession. To explain my conviction that Dr. Stearns was the author of the earlier issues of this famous almanack, it will be necessary to give a brief account of some other almanacks printed by Timothy Green, at this time the proprietor of the New London press.

In 1767 Clark Elliott, a mathematician and instrument-maker of New London, entered into competition with the local reprint of the popular "Ames" with an original "Connecticut Almanack." Issuing a second, with the same title, the year following, he was so unfortunate as to make an error in calculating an eclipse. Poor Elliott's blunder doubtless raised unfavourable comment in proportion to the popular belief in the "philomath's" occult knowledge. Green found a plausible excuse for declining his calculations for 1769, but published a third almanack by Elliott for 1770, which the author prefaced with an elaborate explanation of his mistake. This was the last almanack which bore Elliott's name.

Two years later Green printed a "Connecticut Almanack" for 1772, by "Edmund Freebetter, Student in Physic and Astronomy." It would be natural enough for the public to believe the mysterious "Freebetter" identical with the fallen oracle Elliott, and such a belief has passed into history. But there is no evidence that either Elliott, although a grandson of Dr. John Clark (3d), a famous Boston physician, or Nathan Daboll, of Groton, Conn., a schoolmaster and author of an arithmetic, ever studied "physic." On the other hand, Stearns, who asserts that he had calculated an almanack or almanacks for New London, was about this time entering upon the practice of medicine, and on the title-page of his acknowledged "North-American's" for 1773 calls himself "A Student in the Mathematicks and Physic."

Daboll appeared as a suppliant for favor in 1773 with a "Connecticut almanack" under his own name, which he terms in the preface "the Beginning of my Labours." Freebetter's, it will be noted, for that year

is called the "New-England Almanack," and the kind reader is addressed quite in the Stearns manner: "After the Revolution of another Year"—a favorite expression of Stearns's—"I again make my Appearance in Public, and return sincere Thanks for the kind Reception the Public was pleased to afford my former Publication of this kind . . . E. Freebetter."

In the *Connecticut Gazette* for 21 January 1774, the printer calls attention to an error in the current "Freebetter" almanack which purchasers "are desired to correct with their Pen . . . agreeable to the Copy sent to the Press. The mentioning this," he adds, "is but a Piece of Justice due from the Printer to the Editor of that Almanack, whose Calculations, under a different Signature, have for several Years been greatly approved of throughout New-England." This again points to Stearns, who had published almanacks under his own name from 1770 on, whereas Elliott had published none since 1770 and Daboll none except for 1773.

In 1774 "Freebetter" had no rival in the local trade except "Ames"; but the following year Daboll had a clear field with "Daboll's New-England Almanack," the plan of which, he says, "is similar to my other of 1773."

It was obviously good business for Green and Daboll to unite their interests in one almanack bearing the fortunate pseudonym of "Freebetter"; and this seems to have been brought about in "Freebetter's New-England Almanack" for 1776, which has the following address to the reader:

There is nothing that gives an Author greater Satisfaction than his Works being in Demand—The frequent Enquiry after my Almanack the last Year, and the great Sale of them the two preceding Years, hath given me real Satisfaction, and I am thereby induced to lay before the Public my third astronomical Production; which, as it hath cost me much Care and Pains in Compiling, I cannot but hope will meet with general Approbation.—But as nothing that I can say will recommend my own Performances to you, I desire you would be pleased to take them as some Men do their Wives, for better or for worse; some Men I say, for other some there are, who take them for better and they prove altogether worse; But this is a Digression, and if as beautiful, as true, I hope you will excuse your Humble Servant

EDMUND FREEBETTER.

The facetious twist at the end is quite unlike Stearns. If, as I suppose, the new "Freebetter" was Nathan Daboll, the confused statements in this preface are explained. He alludes to "the frequent Enquiry after my Almanack the last Year," meaning the "Freebetter," of which, as we have seen, there was no issue for 1775; but in calling this his "third astronomical Production" he is counting the two almanacks published under his own names, for '73 and '75, not the three "Freebetters" by another author.

Freebetter's "New-England Almanack" was continued till 1793, when Daboll's name appeared on the title-page. The *Connecticut Gazette* for 18 October, 1792, announced that "to Mr. Daboll, the Public have for many years been indebted for the correct Calculations of *Freebetter's Almanack*."

10. Freebetter's/Connecticut/Almanack/for the year of our Lord Christ,/1774;/being the second after bissextile, or leap year/and the XIVth year of the reign of King/George IIIId./Calculated for the meridian of New-London, in lat-/itude 41 degrees 25 minutes north, and 4 hours 45/minutes west of the Royal Observatory at Greenwich./Containing,/eclipses; spring tides; judgment of the weather; feasts/and fasts of the church; courts; sun and moon's/rising and sitting; time of high water; roads,—&c—&c—&c. Also,/a great variety of useful and entertaining pieces, in prose/and verse—select sentences,—useful maxims,—and/good cautions./By Edmund Freebetter./In vain do grov'ling Mortals toil below,/In search of that which 'tis a curse to know./Go climb the Spheres, the rouling Planets Trace,/Observe the Stars, that keep their fixed Place;/The Comets mazy, varying Path pervade,/Whence it begins its round, and whence [where?] it staid; /Thence contemplate a God, the first Great Cause,/Who made the Heav'ns, and gave all Nature Laws./Then grant this Truth's enough for Man to know,/That God Almighty governs all below./Sold by T. Green, in New London, and by Green &/Spooner in Norwich; wholesale and retail.

12mo., pp. [24].

11. The North-American's/Almanack,/and gentlemen and ladies diary,/for the year of our Lord Christ,/1775./Being the third year after bissextile or leap year,/and 15th year of the reign of King George the Third./Calculated for the meridian of Boston, in New England,/ lat. 42 deg. 25 min. north./A geometrical construction of a lunar eclipse./[Figure.] By Samuel Stearns,/a student in the mathematicks and physick./Boston: printed and sold by/Edes and Gill, and T. and J. Fleet.

12mo., pp. [24].

12. The North-American's/Almanack,/and gentleman's and lady's diary,/for the year of our Lord Christ/1776./Being bissextile, or leap year,/and the 16th year of the reign of George the IIIId./Calculated for the meridian of Boston in New England,/lat. 42 deg. 25 min. north./Containing,/the lunations, eclipses of the luminaries, spring/tides, judgment of the weather, feasts and fasts of the/church, Friends meetings,

courts in the four New-Eng-/land governments, rising, southing and setting of the/seven stars, sun and moon's rising and setting, moon's/place, time of high water morning and evening, clock/equations, public roads, and stages to put up at, an/ account of the battle of Lexington, description of a Tory,/ and a Whig, a bacchanal on the earth's drinking healths,/ receipt for the cure of the dysentery, a history shewing/how the charters in Old and New-England were taken/away in the reign of King Charles the II^d. Directions/for preserving the health of the soldiers in the camp,/Sir Richard Rum's advice to the soldiers, shewing the/good effects of spiritous liquors when they are used with/moderation, and their pernicious effects when used to ex-/cess, with a cure for drunkenness, &c. &c./By Samuel Stearns,/ student in physick and astronomy./Heaven is our guard, and innocence its care,/ Nor need the just the worst of dangers fear:/It pities the defenceless, poor man's grief,/And sends him, when he calls, help and relief:/Its arm, the surest succour, and the best;/ Delivers and revenges the distress'd./Massachusetts-Bay:/ printed by I. Thomas, in Worcester; B. Edes, in/Watertown; and S. & E. Hall, in Cambridge./[Price 6 coppers single, and 20 shillings the dozen.]

12mo., pp. [24].

This was the first almanack published at Worcester, 10 Nov., 1775, *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy* promises its appearance "next week," and 24 November it is advertised as "this day . . . published." Similar announcements of its publication appear about the same time in Edes's *Boston Gazette* and Hall's *New-England Chronicle*. The same printers severally issued Nathaniel Low's "Astronomical Diary, or Almanack" for 1776, in which the "Account of the Commencement of Hostilities between Great Britain and America" and the four pages of "Roads" are printed from the same types as in Stearns's almanack; but the various newspaper notices show that "Stearns" preceded "Low" by about two months.

13. The North-American/Almanack,/and gentleman's and lady's diary,/for the year of our Lord Christ,/1776./Being bissextile, or leap year,/and the 16th year of the reign of George the III./Calculated for the meridian of Boston in New-England,/lat. 42 deg. 25 min. north./Containing,/the luna-tions, eclipses of the luminaries, spring/tides, judgment of the

weather, feasts and fasts/of the church, Friends meetings, courts in the four/New-England governments, rising, southing and/setting of the seven stars, sun and moon's rising/and setting, moon's place, time of high water/morning and evening, clock equations, &c,/By Samuel Stearns,/student in physic and astronomy./[Same verses as in the preceding item]. Boston:/printed and sold/in Queen-Street.

12mo., pp. [16].

This almanac, the A.A.S. copy of which—perhaps unique—was purchased in London with other almanacs by the late Dr. C. L. Nichols, was undoubtedly printed in Boston during the siege. I have identified no other Queen Street¹ imprint of that period—from 19 April, 1775, to 17 March, 1776—except “A List of the Names of the Provincials who were Killed and Wounded in the Late Engagement with his Majesty's Troops at Concord” (Evans, “American Bibliography,” V, 14161), which we may assume to have been issued from the Edes & Gill press immediately after the event. Only a portion of Edes & Gill's stock was removed by Benjamin Edes in his flight to Watertown, and his partner, John Gill, stayed in Boston throughout the British occupation. Thomas says, however, that he “remained recluse” and “did no business.” (“History of Printing in America,” 1874 ed., I, 137, 139). He was imprisoned by the British from 4 August to 3 October. In the early part of 1775 Gill's brother-in-law, Daniel Kneeland, was also doing an “inconsiderable” business as a printer in Queen Street, in the part now Scollay Square.

14. The North-American's/Almanack,/for the year of our Lord, 1777./[Map of New York and vicinity]. By Samuel Stearns./State of Massachusetts-Bay,/Worcester: printed by Stearns and Bigelow.

12mo., pp. [24].

There are variations in the title-page of this almanac, with this reference of “P. 3d” on the map corrected to “P. 4th.”

The verses heading the January calendar appear for the same month in the “Freebetter” almanac for 1773, printed at New London:

Thick gatherings the gloomy clouds now make,
And down from them the Snow descends in flakes,
The keen North-Westers from the mountains blow,
Whil'st the ground lies all buried in Snow;
Upon the Seas the gallant Ships are tost
And many of them in the storms are lost.

The publishers of this almanac, William Stearns and Daniel Bigelow, were “two gentlemen of the bar” to whom Isaiah Thomas leased his Worcester press in 1776 for one year. (See “History of Printing in America,” 1874 ed., I, 181; II, 77).

¹After the siege renamed Court Street.

15. *Another issue of the same.*

This is evidently a second issue, as the title-page has the correction noted above. In contents it is identical with the preceding item, with the exception of the poetical selections, heading the calendar pages, which differ throughout. In place of harmless descriptive passages the reader is offered for the last three months of the year the following stanzas, which, whatever their patriotic appeal, hardly reflect the political opinions of Dr. Samuel Stearns.

"A Warrant of Removal of Arbitrary Power.

Hence to some hideous gloomy isles,
Where cheerful daylight never smiles,
Tyrant, from FREEMEN, haste to slavish Rome.
There by dim tapers livid light,
At the still solemn hours of night,
In pensive Musings walk o'er many a silent tomb.

Thy clanking chains, thy crimson steel,
Thy venom'd darts and barbarous wheel,
Malignant fiend, bear from this land away.
Nor dare in bondage-fetters bind,
One active freeborn generous mind,
That strives to spring indignant from thy sway.

With barbarous mind like savage beasts,
Thou snatchest infants from the breast,
Regardless of the frantic mother's woes.
Thou led'st the cruel Hessian sons,
To murderous acts on inn'cent ones,
Therefore avault! be gone to shades below!"

By reason doubtless of Stearns's unpopularity, as a Tory, the publishers placed on the market a belated "North-American's Almanack" by Isaac Warren, the title-page of which reads:

The North American's/Almanack,/ for the year of our Lord
Christ,/1777/Being the first after bissextile or leap-year/and
the second of the independency/of/North-America/Calculated
for lat. 41 deg. 25 min. north./Fitted to the meridian of Boston./
Containing/eclipses; aspects; astrological predictions of the/
weather; sun and moons rising and setting; moons/place; time of
high water; public roads, &c./Also,/many pieces entertaining,
instructive and very/important!/By Isaac Warren./Student in
astronomy./Our time consumes like smoke and posts away,/
Nor can we treasure up a Month or Day,/The sand within the
transitory Glass,/Doth haste, and so our silent minutes pass;/
Year after Year, we do consume away,/Until our debt to nature
do we pay./Worcester:/printed and sold by W. Stearns, and
D. Bigelow, also to be sold by the/author in Lancaster at
3s6 per dozen, and 8 coppers single.

The last eight pages of this almanac are made up from the same sheets as the issues bearing Stearns's name, but the astronomical part is different.

There are resemblances, apparently of no particular significance, between some issues of the "North-American's Almanac" and the

"Freebetter" almanack for 1777 (of which there are two editions printed respectively at New London and Hartford). "Freebetter's" for '77 contains the characters of the "Antient Whigs" and the "Antient Tories" published in Stearns's "North-American's" for '76. The title -page of the Hartford "Freebetter" bears a "view of the Present Seat of War at and near New York,"¹ similar to that in all editions of the 1777 "North-American's," and in Isaac Warren's almanac for 1777 the verses on the calendar page for January are the same as in "Freebetter's" for the same year.

16. The Universal/Kalendar,/comprehending the/landman's and seaman's/almanac,/for 1783./A geometrical construction of a lunar eclipse./[Figure]. Calculated for the latitude and longitude of the/city of New-York./By Samuel Stearns,/professor of the mathematics and physic.

12mo., pp. [64].

L. I. Hist. Soc. The A.A.S. copy lacks the last 20 leaves. This almanac was undoubtedly printed by Hugh Gaine.

"I . . . have not heard of any Astronomer that ever attempted to calculate and publish a Nautical Almanac. in that quarter, but myself; and I only undertook the task once. The greatness of the work, and the commotions that existed on account of the war, obliged me to discontinue it."—"The American Oracle," pp. 44-45.

17. The/Universal/Kalendar, and the/North-American's/almanack, for the year of our Lord Christ,/1784:/being bissextile or leap year./Containing,/(besides the usual astronomical calculations) the most excellent and comprehen-/sive tide tables, ever published/in North-America—observable/days—physical receipts—re-/markable events—and an ac-/count of the times the battles/have happened in the late war;/with many other things, very/useful and entertaining./Calculated for the latitude and longitude/of the City of New-York./By William Slygood, Gent./Student in physic and astronomy.

12mo., pp. [24].

N. Y. Pub. Lib.

"He [Hugh Gaine] . . . struck off . . . in 1784 the 'Universal Kalender and the North American Almanack,' written by the Tory, Samuel Stearns, but printed under the *nom de plume* of 'William Slygood'." (Paul Leicester Ford, "The Journals of Hugh Gaine, Printer," 1902, I, 33).

18. Dr. Stearns's/Petition/to his Excellency the/Gov-

¹Low's astronomical Diary for 1777 also has this map.

ernour,/and the Honourable/Council:/exhibiting/the troubles he has met with, by reason of/the appearance of false evidence/against him./Presented to the members of the/Honourable/General Court,/of the/Commonwealth of Massachusetts,/for their information./Printed at Worcester, Massachusetts,/by Isaiah Thomas./MDCCLXXXV.

12mo., pp. 12.

In a copy belonging to the late Dr. C. L. Nichols a letter recommending this petition to members of the General Court, printed *verso* of title-page, has the autograph of "O. Holman" and "W. Shaw."

19. An Astronomical/Diary,/[/or/]Almanack,/for the year of our Lord Christ/1786,/being the second after bissextile, or leap year,/wherein are contained,/the eclipses of the luminaries, moon's place/ and age, sun and moon's rising and setting,/moon's apogee and perigee, equation of time,/feasts and fasts of the church, time of high/water, &c.&c./And a variety of other matter,/useful and entertaining./Calculated for the meridian of the City of Saint/John, in the Province of New Brunswick;/but will serve, without sensible error, for any/part of said Province./By Julius Scaliger, Jun./City of St. John:/ printed by Christopher Sower,/printer to His Majesty.

12mo., pp. [36].

Free Pub. Lib., St. John, N. B.

Christopher Sower, 3d, of Germantown, Pa., was the son and grandson of noted printers of the same name. He was a Loyalist, and "went to New York with the British army, and sometime after embarked in a ship of war for England. He returned to New York, where he remained till the war was ended. He visited England again; after remaining there two years, he went with his family to New Brunswick, and there published *The Royal Gazette*."¹ He died 3 July, 1799, while on a visit to Baltimore, Md.

In an address to the public prefixed to this almanack he says: "The Printer on his arrival in this province, being informed that an Astronomical Diary or Almanack for the year 1786, was in great request, and altho' late in the season, and very sensible that such a calculation would at this time be attended with great expence, yet he ventured . . . And . . . he intends (if this his first attempt meets with sufficient encouragement) to print another Almanack for the year 1787." Stearns's own statements regarding his calculations for New Brunswick at this period, and the strong

¹Thomas's *History of Printing in America*, 1874 ed., I, 284. The year of Sower's death, 1799, is there misprinted "1777." Thomas's account of the Sowers (I, 270-363) is of great value. See also "William MacCulloch's Additions to Thomas's History of Printing," in *Proc. Amer. Antiq. Soc.*, Apr. 1921, *passim*, and Sabine's *Loyalists of the American Revolution*, II, 322-323.

resemblance between a list of "Remarkable Events" in this almanack and a similar chronology in that published under his own name for 1788 at Boston, furnish sufficient evidence of his authorship. It is obvious that Sower was under the necessity of sending for his copy to Worcester, where Stearns was confined in jail. Presumably they had become acquainted while both were refugees at New York.

20. Thomas's/Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode-/Island, New-Hampshire & Vermont/Almanack,/with an ephemeris, for the year of our Lord/1786:/ and tenth of the independence of America,/from creation according to the Scriptures, 5748./ Fitted to the latitude and longitude of the town of Boston, but/ will serve without essential variation for the adjacent states./ Containing, besides the more than usual astronomical calcula- tions, the Bill of Rights of Massachusetts; the celebrated/ Sermon on Malt, and/many matters curious, useful & enter- taining./[Vignette]. *The lofty Pillars of the Sky,/And spacious Concave rais'd on high./Spangled with Stars, a shining Frame,/ Their Great ORIGINAL proclaim./*Printed at Worcester, by Isaiah Thomas./[Price 40s. per gross. 4s. per dozen. Six-pence single.]

12mo., pp. [44].

In his brief autobiography Robert B. Thomas tells of his effort to obtain instruction in almanack-making from "Dr. S. Sternes, who, for many years calculated Isaiah Thomas's *Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Vermont Almanack*."¹ Stearns's own statement is less sweeping: his "productions," he says, "for a number of years . . . were published by Mr. ISAIAH THOMAS, in Worcester, under his own name."² My attempt here to determine the particular years for which Stearns furnished the calculations for Thomas's Almanack is based in part on the letters of certain persons to Mr. Thomas, preserved in the manuscript collection of the Amer. Antiq. Soc.

In the preface to the seventh³ number, for 1784, those "*Readers, who*

¹"The (Old) Farmer's Almanack" for 1835.

²"Recommendation" prefixed to Asa Houghton's "Almanac" for 1802.

³The previous numbers of the series are "Thomas's New-England Almanack" for 1775, by "Philomathes" (Boston); "Thomas's Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, and Connecticut Almanack" for 1779 and 1780, by "Philomathes" (Worcester); the same for 1781, preface signed "Philomathes" (Worcester); and "Thomas's Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode-Island, New-Hampshire and Vermont Almanack" for 1782 and 1783, prefaces signed "Philomathes" (Worcester). Thomas had also printed "The Massachusetts Calendar" for 1774, by Ezra Gleason (Boston). "Philomathes" must be considered the pseudonym of Thomas, as editor, rather than that of any particular author. Dr. Nichols, in his "Notes on the Almanacs of Massachusetts," ascribes all the earlier "Thomas's" almanacs to Benjamin West, and Mr. Evans, whose notes on the matter, it must be confessed, make confusion worse confounded, to Ezra Gleason. There seems, at any rate, to be no proof of West's employment by Thomas prior to the issue for 1784.

were formerly pleased with the accuracy, &c. of Bickerstaff's Boston Almanack" are informed "that the same person who calculated them has also calculated this." The reference is to Dr. Benjamin West, of Providence. This was the first of Thomas's almanacks¹ which contained an ephemeris.

In sending copy for the "Almanack" for 1785 (13 August, 1784) West expressed the hope that Mr. Thomas "would enlarge the price from last Year, otherwise I shall be bro't to the necessity of dropping my Calculations, for it must be a miserable business that won't support itself, which is the case in my Calculations." The following year (18 July, 1785) he wrote: "I have met with so many unexpected avocations, that I was first obliged to defer my Calculations till it is too late to complete them with sufficient accuracy; besides being much unwell this summer, and being obliged to lie by sometimes, I have been in daily expectation of going a Journey to Baltimore, in the State of Maryland. I should have notified you of this long before, but it seemed to carry an impropriety to give you a Negative answer before I knew you depended on a Copy. Should I again commence my Calculation, will give you early Notice that you may have a Copy if it suits you . . ."

In view of this virtual refusal of further assistance from West, we may believe that Thomas turned at once to Stearns, with whom he was well acquainted, and who was now close at hand in the jail at Worcester. Thomas had published Stearns's "North-American's Almanack" for 1776, and at this very period printed for the unhappy mathematician various petitions intended to bring about his release from prison.

"Thomas's" for 1786 came and promptly (as may be seen from the announcement in *The Worcester Magazine*) in the fourth week in October. Various changes from the "Almanack" for 1785 are noticeable. "Philomathes" makes his appearance in the preface for the last time. "*My former Almanacks,*" observes that mythical personage, "*having met with acceptance, has induced me this year to make greater exertions than usual; I have given more astronomical calculations, &c. for each month than can be contained in one page, and therefore have put them into two.*" The ephemeris, instead of appearing on a page by itself, is this year given month by month on the calendar pages, a device which was followed until 1791.

Nathaniel Low, the Boston astronomer, in his "Astronomical Diary" for 1786, had predicted a small eclipse of the sun on the 20th of December. The following letter from Stearns to Thomas is in the Thomas Correspondence in the American Antiquarian Society.

Sr:

You need not Stop your Press one Moment, for you may Rely upon it, that there will be no Eclipse in December 1786. I have made a Very Critical Examination: Dr. Low has made Such Mistakes before.

I am, Sr, your, &c.

M^r Thomas.

Sam^l Stearns.

Worcester 25th Oct. 1785.

¹That is, of the series proper; but "The Massachusetts Calendar" for 1772 and 1774, which, as before stated, were printed by Thomas, have ephemerides for each month like those in Thomas's Almanack from 1786 to 1789.

21. A/petition/for a contribution in order to relieve a distressed prisoner./To

Broadside, 12 and $\frac{3}{4}$ x 8 in., doubtless printed at Isaiah Thomas's press at Worcester.

The names printed at the end of this petition are George Dana, Jonathan Richmond, and Samuel Newton. The copy before me is addressed in Stearns's hand to "the Rev. M^r. [Peter] Whitney and his Church and Congregation at Northborough," and dated June 24, 1786. A copy addressed to the Rev. Joseph Lyman, of Hatfield, is in the A.A.S. Library.

22. A Short/History/of the treatment that/Dr. Samuel Stearns/hath met with in/[the Commonwealth of]/Massachusetts,/since the commencement of hostilities between/Great-Britain/and her/Colonies./Exhibiting/the troubles he has met with, by reason of/his loyalty, and the appearance of false evi-/dence against him./Ejus enemici persecuti sunt illum sine causa./Quum autem persequuntur vos in ea urbe, fu-/gite in aliam./Printed in the year MDCCLXXXVI.

12mo., pp. 24.

The words in brackets were inserted by Stearns with a pen in the copies which he distributed. In the A.A.S. copy the words "At I. Thomas's Office" are added in Mr. Thomas's writing at the foot of the title-page.

Items 18, 21, and 22 were printed and circulated with the object of bringing about Stearns's release from jail. All three are evidently from his own pen.

23. The/Universal Calendar,/and the/North-American/almanack,/for the year of the creation, according to/sacred writ, 5749./And of the christian æra,/1787:/being the 3d year after bissextile or leap-year, and the 11th of the independence of America./Containing, (besides the usual astronomical calculations) a variety of/things that are very useful and entertaining./Fitted to the latitude and longitude of the town of Boston,/in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; but will serve with-/out a sensible variation for the adjacent states./By Samuel Stearns./Boston:/printed and sold by Edmund Freeman, at his office/north side of the State-House.

12mo., pp. [24].

24. Thomas's/Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode-/Island, New-Hampshire & Vermont/Almanack,/with an ephemeris, for the year of our Lord/1787:/and eleventh of the independence of America,/from creation according to the

Scriptures, 5749./Fitted to the latitude and longitude of the town of Boston, but/will serve without essential variation for the adjacent states./Containing, besides the more than usual astronomical calcula-/tions, a larger quantity and greater variety, than are to be/found in any other almanack,/of matters curious, useful and entertaining./[Vignette]. The Worlds that roll above, proclaim/The Parent GOD from whom they came;/And Night to Night, and Day to Day,/Proclaim his universal sway!/Printed at Worcester, by Isaiah Thomas./[Price 40s. per gross. 4s. per dozen. Six-pence single.]

12mo., pp. [48].

A second edition was issued.

25. The/Universal Calendar,/and the North-American's/ almanack,/ for the year of the creation, according to/sacred writ, 5750;/ and of the christian æra,/1788,/being bissextile or leap year,/and the 12th of the independence of America./ Fitted to the latitude and longitude of the town of/Boston, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts;/but will serve without any essential variation, for the/adjacent states./Containing,/ astronomical calculations; observable days; remark-/able events; the number of the inhabitants of the world;/the divisions of North-America, exhibiting the lengths and/ breadths of the governments, with the number of their inhabi- tants; and the latitudes and longitudes of the/capital towns and cities, with their bearings and distances/from Philadelphia; also, chronological tables, with re-/markable events, and an account of the times the battles/have happened in the late war; with other things useful/and entertaining./By Samuel Stearns, Philom./Boston: printed by Edes and Son./N^o. 49, Marlborough-Street.

12mo., pp. [24].

26. The/Universal Calendar,/ and the/North American/ almanack,/ for the year of the creation, according to sa-/cred writ, 5750./And of the christian æra,/1788./Being bissextile or leap year,/and the 12th year of the independence of/Ver- mont and the United States./Containing,/(besides more than usual astronomical calcu/lations) a great variety of instructive and en/tertaining matter./Fitted to the latitude of 43 deg.

north, and/the longitude of the State of Vermont./By Samuel Stearns,/professor of the mathematics, natural phi-/losophy and physic./ [Printed at Be]nnington, Vermo[nt, by/Haswe]ll & [Russell].

12,mo. pp. [24].

This almanac, the only known copy, the title-page of which is somewhat frayed, was purchased by me many years ago in Dummerston, Vt. It is now in the Lib. of the Amer. Antiq. Soc.

27. Thomas's/Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode-/Island, New-Hampshire & Vermont/Almanack,/ with an ephemeris, for the year of our Lord/1788:/being bessextile or leap year, and twelfth/of the independence of America./From creation according to the Scriptures, 5750./Fitted to the latitude and longitude of the town of Boston, but/will serve without essential variation for the adjacent states./Containing besides the more than usual astronomical calcula-/tions, a larger quantity and greater variety, than are to be/found in any other almanack,/of matters curious, useful and entertain-/ing./[Vignette]. FATHER of Heaven and Earth, this Change is thine!/By Thee the Seasons in Gradations roll;/Thou great Omniscient Ruler of the World-/Thou *Alpha* and *Omega* of the whole./Printed at Worcester, by Isaiah Thomas./[Price 40s. per gross. 4s. per dozen. Six pence single.]

12mo., pp. [48].

This closely follows the method of Thomas's Almanack for the two preceding years. The following extracts from the "Concise Calendar for young Farmers and Gardeners"¹ in this almanack and "The farmer and gardener's calendar" in Stearns's "American Oracle" show a common origin:

Thomas's Almanack for 1788.
(February)

"This month be sure to prune your fruit and other trees. If the snow is off the ground and there should be a spell of moderate weather, the ground which you prepared for peas in October you may now sow. Now get your tools in order for spring work while you have leisure . . . Look over your seeds of various kinds, and see that none of them are

"American Oracle" (1791)
"FEBRUARY.

1. PRUNE your orchards and forests.
2. Sow pease, if the weather will permit.
3. Get your tools ready to do your spring work.
4. Look over your garden-seeds, and see that they are not injured by the moisture, or by the frost.
5. Cut timber for building in

¹Reprinted in "Thomas's Almanack" for 1798, 1799 and 1802.

suffering through want of care . . . This is also a good month for cutting timber, if you neglected it last month, be sure and do it this. When you have done with sleds, sleighs, &c. for this season put them carefully by, with their tacking for another."

* * *

(December)

"As very little can be done this month either in fields or gardens, visit your barns often. Thrash out your grain if neglected last month. Break and dress your flax. Repair grind, and put your tools in order while you have leisure. Kill your hogs and fat cattle . . . look after your bees and feed them if they need it . . . Prepare a few useful books to instruct and amuse you, during long evenings. . . Farewell."

the old of the moon, if you did not cut enough last month.

6. When the snow is gone, put your sleighs and sleds, with their tacking, into a dry and tight place, to prevent their being damaged by rain.

* * *

DECEMBER.

1. Take good care of your cattle.

2. Thresh out your grain.

3. Break and swingle your flax.

4. Grind your tools, and keep them in good order for use.

5. Kill your hogs and fat cattle.

* * *

7. Feed your bees, if they have not laid up honey enough to live upon.

8. In long evenings, read Theology, Geography, History, and the *American Oracle*, if you please.—Farewell! May *peace* and *prosperity* crown your labours! Amen."

28. The Universal/Calendar,/and the North-American/almanack,/for the year of the creation according to the Scriptures,/5751:/ and of the christian æra,/1789:/being the first year after bissextile, or leap year;/and the 13th of the independence of America./Containing/ astronomical calculations, and many other/things useful and entertaining./Fitted to the latitude and longitude of the town of/Boston, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts;/ but will serve without any essential variation for the/adjacent governments./By Samuel Stearns,/professor of the mathematics, natural philosophy & physic./Boston:/printed by Edes & Son,/N^o 7, State Street.

12mo., pp. [24].

29. The/Universal Calendar,/and the/North American/almanack,/for the year of the creation, according to sacred/writ, 5751./And of the christian æra,/1789./Being the first year after bissextile or leap year, and the/thirteenth of the independence of/Vermont, and the United States./Containing/more than usual astronomical cal-culations, and a great variety of useful/and entertaining matter./Calculated,/for

the latitude of 43 degrees north, and the longitude/ of the State of Vermont./ By Samuel Stearns,/ professor of the mathematics, natural philosophy and/ physic./ Time flies away! New States and Kingdom's rise:/ Happy the realm whose rulers, truly wise,/ Preserve Religion and true Liberty,/ And keep their country from oppression free;/ O may Vermont rise on the wings of fame,/ And do much honor to the Christian Name./ Printed at Bennington, Vermont,/ by Haswell & Russell.

12mo., pp. [24].

30. Thomas's/ Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode-Island, Newhampshire & Vermont/ Almanack,/ with an ephemeris, for the year of our Lord/ 1789:/ being the first year after bissextile, or leap/ year, and thirteenth of the independ-/ ence of America./ From creation, according to the Scriptures, 5751./ Fitted to the latitude and longitude of the town of Boston, but/ will serve without essential variation for the adjacent states./ Containing, beside the more than usual astronomical calcula-/ tions, a larger quantity and greater variety, than are to be/ found in any other almanack,/ of matters curious, useful and entertaining./ [Vignette]. VIEW yon majestick concave of the sky!/ Contemplate well those glorious Orbs on high-/ There Constellations shine and Comets blaze;/ Each glittering world the Godhead's pow'r displays./ Printed at Worcester, by Isaiah Thomas./ [Price 40s. per gross. 4s. per dozen. Six pence single.]

12mo., pp. [48].

Two issues. In one, probably the earlier, the characteristic cuts at the head of the calendar pages, which make their first appearance in this number, are wrongly placed. There are other slight variations. Stearns wrote to Thomas from Brattleboro, 3 March, 1788: "I rec^d Your favour of the 18th Ultimo and thank You for the same:—I have not Rec^d the 2 Doz. of Almanacks . . . I have Calculated the Place of the New Planet according to your Request, and shall have a Copy of an Almanack Ready in Good Season if nothing Strange should happen; My acc^t will be forwarded by some Convenient Opportunity."

The place of "the New Planet," Herschel (Uranus), first appears in the ephemeris for this year.

31. The Philadelphian Magazine. Jan.—Nov., 1789. n.p. [Vol. II, London, 1789.] 8 vo., pp. 416[7].

Pp. 72–3 (March): "To the editor . . . Rules to be observed

in the treatment of low-spirited and hypochondriacal persons."¹
 Pp. 169-76 (May, *supplement*): "Astronomical communications" (comets; northern lights; letter to Stearns signed "Philosophas"; letter from Stearns to "Philosophas"). P. 216 (June): "The philosopher's choice." P. 230 (July): "To the public" (on the aurora borealis). Pp. 231-2 (July): "An anecdote of Dr. Stearns." Pp. 268-9 (Aug.): "The epistle of Philadelphus." Pp. 287-8 (Aug.): "The philosopher's religion described." Pp. 314-5 (Sept.): "The second epistle of Philadelphus." Pp. 343-8 (Oct.): "To the atheists." P. 368 (Oct.): "Articles of domestic usefulness. No. I. To the cooks."

As none of the four copies of this volume which I have seen has a title-page, I assume that none was issued. Stearns appears to have been associated, for a time, with Elhanan Winchester, the Universalist, in the conduct of this magazine.

32. The Boston Gazette, and the country journal, containing the latest occurrences, foreign and domestic. [Published by Benjamin Edes and Son]. Boston, 7 Sept., 1789 (no. 1822): "Astronomical communications" (reprinted from *The Philadelphian Magazine*, May, 1789.)

Folio.

33. The Universal/Calendar,/and Northamerican/almanack,/for the year of our Lord,/1790./And from the creation of the world, according to/Sacred writ, 5752./Being the second year after bissextile, or leap year;/and the 14th of the independence of the State of/Vermont and America./Containing the usual astronomical calculations/and a great variety of matter useful and entertaining./Calculated for the latitude and longitude of the/State of Vermont./By Samuel Stearns,/professor of the mathematics, natural philosophy,/and physic./Father of Nature's universal round,/At whose command the changing seasons roll,/Whose sovereign fiat gave the seas their bound,/Whose mighty power the raging winds controul:/Inspire our souls, oh! make us truly wise,/With the NEW

¹If written by Stearns, as subject and style suggest, this was his first contribution to *The Philadelphian Magazine*. The prefatory letter to the editor is signed "Philanthropos." Cf. "The Epistles of Philadelphus," which have the signature "Philanthropus" in the *Magazine* and "Philanthropos" as reprinted in Stearns's "American Oracle."

YEAR may NEW DESIRES arise./Printed at Bennington,
(Vermont) by/Haswell & Russell.

12mo., pp. [24].

34. Thomas's/Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode-/Island
Newhampshire & Vermont/Almanack,/with an ephemeris, for
the year of our Lord/1790:/being the second year after bis-
sextile, or leap/year, and fourteenth of the independ-/ence of
America./From creation, according to the Scriptures, 5752./
Fitted to the latitude and longitude of the town of Boston, but/
will serve without essential variation for the adjacent states./
Containing, besides the more than usual astronomical calcula-
tions, a larger quantity and greater variety, than are to be/
found in any other almanack,/of matters curious, useful and
entertaining./[Vignette]. THOU Sun, great source of heat and
light,/Thou Moon, and all ye Stars of night,/To your great
Maker's glory roll,/And spread his name from pole to pole./
Printed at Worcester, by Isaiah Thomas./[Price 40s. per gross.
4s. per dozen. Six pence single].

12mo., pp. [48].

In the summer of 1789, Mr. Thomas, no doubt uncertain about the arrival of Stearns's copy from England, had made overtures to Daniel George of Portland, who replied as follows:

In your letter you request me to inform you my price for the copy of an almanack on the plan of that which you inclosed to me: also my price for the *sole right* of the copy of one in my own name. I shall be happy, Sir, to oblige you in both these particulars. I will furnish you with *both* the copies for forty dollars . . . I would be understood to make this exception only to your plan, which is, to omit the ephemeris of the planets' places, for I have not the necessary tables at present by me; but in the room of this, I will make ample compensation, by giving a table of the sun's true place for every second day in the year. This will be of much more real use than the ephemeris.

George's letter was written 15 August, 1789. In the *Spy* of 20 October the "Almanack" is announced as "Now in the Press" and 5 Nov. as "This Day published." The distinctive feature of this number is that, whilst the planet's places every sixth day appear in the usual form, separate tables are given of the sun's place every second day, an improvement that would hardly occur to George and Stearns independently. A reasonable explanation is that Thomas accepted George's terms, although his idea of publishing another almanack bearing George's name was no doubt given up; that meantime Stearns's calculations came to hand; and that Thomas edited the copy for the press, using Stearns's ephemeris and George's solar tables.

From 1791 to 1794 the "Almanack" has solar calculations for every

second day, but no ephemeris—although one is regularly announced on the title-page. For these years the sole author was undoubtedly Daniel George, who writes 15 June, 1790: "If you wish, Sir, that I should furnish you with an almanack, similar to that which you published last year (ephemeris only excepted) I would thank you to inform me, that it may be ready for you in season"; and, 8 July: "Your request with regard to the almanack shall be complied with . . . You tell me you wish to put the copy in the press by September: depend upon it, Sir, it shall be sent to your office in the course of the month of August: so that you need give yourself no further trouble concerning it"; and again, two years later (20 August, 1792): "My almanack for the ensuing year is completed, and at your service, as soon as I can convey it to you without putting you to much expence."

Stearns's unsuccessful efforts to retain his connexion with the publication are shown in two sentences from a letter which he addressed to Mr. Thomas from New York, 16 September,¹ 1791, twelve days after his return from his long absence in England: "Can furnish you with a Copy for an Almaack in a few Days if you shall need one. Am sorry to hear my Copy did not arrive in Season last Year."

With the "Almanack" for 1795 ephemerides for each month were resumed. Whoever the author, there is no reason to think that it was either George who, as we have seen, entertained an especial dislike for that class of calculations, or Stearns, whose statement made in 1801—that "for a number of years" his productions were published by Mr. Thomas—seems to refer to matters long in the past.

35. Dr. Stearns's/Tour/from/London to Paris./Containing, a description of the Kingdom of France—the customs, manners, polity, science, commerce, and agriculture of the inhabitants—its ancient form of government,—and the new—particulars concerning the Royal Family—causes of the late Revolution—proceedings and decrees/of the National Assembly—an account of the destruction of the Bastille, and of many dreadful commotions/which have happened in the nation—with a minute detail/of the late grand proceedings at the Champ de Mars.—/The whole interspersed with a variety of reflections,/humourous, moral, critical, and philosophical./ After which is delineated,/a new constitution:/with/a description of the road to liberty./"Applicans animum meum ad disquirendum & ad explorandum Sapientiam de omni eo quod fit sub caelis." Sol./London, printed:/and sold by C. Dilly, in the Poultry./M DCC XC./Price 3s. sterling./ Entered at Stationers Hall.

¹This letter is misdated 16 June.

8vo., pp. 6, 132.

Both D. L. Mansfield ("History of Dummerston") and Ledyard Bill ("History of Paxton") attributed to Stearns another "Tour"—Elkanah Watson's "Tour in Holland in MDCCLXXXIV, by an American" (which Isaiah Thomas brought out at Worcester in 1790) and, carrying out this error, assigned to Stearns some of Watson's personal adventures. Watson's book is also incorrectly attributed to Stearns by H. S. Nourse ("A Bibliography of Lancastriana," 39).

36. *Columbian Centinel*. [Published by Benjamin Russell].
Boston. 27 November, 1790 (no. 698): "Comets."

Folio.

"An American Astronomical Gentleman now in Europe, has wrote his correspondent in Boston, that the celebrated Dr. Herschell informed him that a Comet made its appearance on the evening of the 7th of Jan., 1790, but not visible to the naked eye; and that it was discovered in France about the same time, which was agreeably to the prediction made of its appearance. Its running near the sun was said to be the probable cause of its preventing its visibility to the naked eye."¹

37. *The Universal/Calendar,/and North-American/
almanack,/for the year of our Lord/1791./And of the creation,
according to the Scriptures,/5753:/being the third year after
bissextile, or leap year:/and the fifteenth of the independence
of America./Containing,/the lunations, eclipses of the lumi-
naries, sun/and moon's rising and sitting, moon's age and
place,/moon's southing, spring tides, time of high water,/judgment of the weather, the rising, southing and/setting of
the seven stars, feasts and fasts of the/church, Friends annual
meeting, sitting of the courts,/public roads, the author's
philosophical contempla-/tions; with many other things that
are useful and/entertaining./Calculated for the latitude and
longitude of the town of/Boston, in the Commonwealth of
Massachusetts/By Samuel Stearns,/professor of the mathe-
matics, natural philosophy & physic./Boston:/printed by Edes
& Son,/ No. 7, State-Street.*

12mo., pp. [28].

"This day published . . . Stearns' much approved Universal Calendar, and North-American Almanack . . ." *Boston Gazette*, 1 November, 1790. In the preface, dated at London, 2 June, 1790, the author writes: "Two and Twenty Years have revolved since I first published Astronomical Calculations . . ."

¹See *ante*, p. 38.

38. The/Universal Calendar:/and/Northamerican/almanack,/for the year of our Lord/1791;/and from the creation of the world, accord-/ing to sacred writ, 5753./Being the third year after bissextile, or leap/year; and the 15th of the independence/of the state of Vermont and/America./Containing the usual astronomical calculations, together/with a variety of matter useful and entertaining./Calculated for the meridian of Vermont,/lat. 42°20' n. long. 72°50' w./By Samuel Stearns,/professor of the mathematics, natural philosophy,/ and physic./*Seed time and harvest, while the earth remains,/And cold and heat its varying course maintains:/ 'Till day and night shall in their order cease,/All nature's DISCORD keeps all nature's PEACE./* Printed at Bennington, by Anthony Haswell./Sold by him wholesale and retail.

12mo., pp. [24].

39. An/Elegy/on the Death of/the Rev. John Wesley;/who died at London, March 2, 1791./Composed by Samuel Stearns, LL.D. [Dated at London, March 7, 1791.]

Broadside, 17½ x 11 in.

Reprinted in "The American oracle" (1791), where Stearns meticulously alters "once" to "twice" in the lines:

Sometimes he landed on the Irish shore,
And many people preached the Word before:
To Scotland too he frequently did go,
And once to Holland, with his friends also . . .

40. An Account/of/the Late Wonderful/American Vision/exhibiting/the judgments/that must shortly come to pass./Also,/an account/of some remarkable/apparitions./And it shall come to pass in the last Days, saith God, I will pour/out my Spirit upon all Flesh: and your Sons and your Daughters/shall prophesy; and your young Men shall see Visions, and your/old Men shall dream Dreams. Acts, II, 17./Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against Nation, and King-/dom against Kingdom./And great Earthquakes shall be in divers Places, and Famines, and/Pestilences; and fearful Sight, and great Signs shall there be/from Heaven. Luke, XXI, 10, 11./London:/Sold by Mr. Parsons, No. 21, Pater-Noster-Row. 1791./([Price, sixpence.]

8vo., pp. 6, 13.

At the end are announcements of "The American Oracle" and "Dr. Stearns's Observations on Animal Magnetism," and advertisements of "Dr. Stearns's Tour from London to Paris," "Two Sermons," by J. Scott, and bound volumes of "The Philadelphian Magazine." Some of the matter contained in this pamphlet was used in "The American Oracle":

"And it came to pass in the second month and upon the evening of the twenty eighth day of the second month, that I stood upon the bank of a river; and lo! a light shined round about.

And a voice spake unto me, saying: "Nathaniel! Nathaniel!" and I answered and said, "here am I."—And the voice spake again, saying, "Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things that must shortly come to pass:"—Then I ascended, and there appeared a Man, clothed in white raiment! and behold a voice spake, saying, "Take thy pen, and write the things that must shortly come to pass, and send them to the inhabitants of the world.—Then I wrote the words that the voice uttered . . ." (Pp. 1-2).

41. Dr. Stearns's/Tour/from/London to Paris./Containing/a description of the Kingdom of France.—The customs,/manners, polity, science, commerce, and agriculture of/the inhabitants—its ancient form of government,—and/the new—particulars concerning the Royal Family—/causes of the later Revolution—proceedings and decrees/of the National Assembly—an account of the destruc-/tion of the Bastille, and of many dreadful commotions/which have happened in the nation—with a minute detail/of the late grand proceedings at the Champ de Mars.—/The whole interspersed with a variety of reflections,/humourous, moral, critical, and philosophical./ After which is delineated,/a new constitution:/with/a description of the road to liberty./"Applicans animum meum ad disquirendum & ad explorandum/"Sapientiam de omni eo quod fit sub cælis." Sol./Dublin:/printed by and for W. Sleater, No. 28, Dame-/street, and J. Rice, No. 5, College-green./M DCC XCI.

12mo., pp. 4, 176.

Boston Ath.

This is a reprint of item 35.

42. The/American Oracle./Comprehending/an account of recent discoveries/in the arts and sciences,/with/a variety of religious, political, physical,/and philosophical subjects,/ necessary to be known in all families, for the promotion of/their present felicity and future happiness./By the Honourable/

Samuel Stearns, LL.D./and doctor of physic;/astronomer to His Majesty's Provinces of Quebec,/and New Brunswick;/also to the/Commonwealth of Massachusetts,/and the State of Vermont, in America./Quàm ampla sunt Opera tua, O Jehova! Quam ea omnia sapienter fecisti!/London: printed for, and sold by, J. Lackington, No. 46 and 47,/Chiswell-Street, Moorfields; and J. Parsons, No. 21,/Pater-Noster-Row, London. 1791./(Price 8s. 6d. in boards.)/[Entered at Stationers Hall.]

8vo., pp. 8, 627, 18.

The preface is dated "London, June 15, 1781," a misprint for 1791. This eccentric work contains some of Stearns's contributions to *The Philadelphian Magazine*, and other miscellaneous matter "intended to inform and improve those who think their time not unprofitably spent in its perusal, and who stand in need of information."

* * *

"Philosophy, and the Liberal Arts and Sciences which have been nurtured by its progress and improvements, and has shone out with such remarkable splendor in these modern ages, have been the objects of his early and unremitting study. The practice of Physic, and the making of Astronomical Calculations, engaged his attention for upwards of twenty years, and in the course of his travels in England, Scotland, Ireland, France, and many parts of America, he has attended Lectures upon Physiology, Chymistry, Magnetism, Electricity, Optics, Astronomy, and other Branches of Natural and Experimental Philosophy, has had a familiar acquaintance with the most approved Authors upon the Liberal and Mechanical Arts and Sciences, all of which have contributed to furnish him with the knowledge that is communicated to the Public through the medium of this Work, and enabled him to complete it in a manner that may render it productive of the good purpose for which it is intended; and although it is called *The American Oracle*, yet from the variety of subjects it comprehends, it will be found to be *The Oracle of the World*, because it contains a general account of the Universe." (Preface).

A seven-page review in the London "Critical Review" for September 1791, concludes: "The American Oracle is now to receive its final judgment from popular opinion; but, in the country, on a rainy day, we should think it an acquisition. Every one may find something to interest and instruct him; they may smile at the author's simplicity, and laugh aloud at some of his representations."

43. The Mystery/of/Animal Magnetism/revealed to the world,/containing/philosophical reflections/on the publication of a pamphlet/entitled,/A true and genuine discovery of animal electricity and magnetism;/also,/an exhibition of the

advantages and disadvantages that may/arise in consequence of said publication./And/many other curious observations never before published./By Samuel Stearns, LL.D./and doctor of physic;/ astronomer to His Majesty's Provinces of Quebec and New Brunswic; also to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,/and the State of Vermont, in America./ *Omnia probate, & quod bonum est tenete.*/London:/sold by Mr. Parsons, No. 21, Pater-Noster-Row. 1791./[Price two shillings].

8vo., pp. [4], 58, [5].

44. The/American Oracle./Comprehending/an/account of recent discoveries/in the arts and sciences,/with/a variety of religious, political, physical,/and philosophical subjects,/ necessary to be known in all families, for the promotion of their/ present felicity and future happiness./By the Honourable/ Samuel Stearns, L.L.D./and doctor of physic; astronomer to the Provinces of Quebec and/New-Brunswick; also to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,/and the State of Vermont, in America./*Quam ampla sunt Opera tua, O Jehova! Quam ea/Omnia sapienter fecisti!*/New-York;/printed for, and sold by Hodge and Campbell, Berry/and Rogers, and T. Allen./ M. DCC. XCI./The copy right of this book is secured agreeable to the act of Congress./[Price two dollars in boards].

8vo., pp. [10], 627, 18.

This volume consists of the sheets of the London edition with new title-page and preface (dated 12 September, 1791, at New York), and additional errata. On 8 September, 1791, four days after his return to this country, Stearns took out copyrights for "The American Dispensatory," which was never published, and "The American Oracle." (See New York "Evening Post," September 1791, *passim*). These were respectively the fourth and fifth copyrights entered in the New York District under the Federal copyright law of 31 May, 1790. The "Oracle" was savagely reviewed in "The Universal Asylum, and Columbian Magazine" (Philadelphia) for February, 1792.

45. The Universal/Calendar,/and the North-American/ Almanack,/for the year of the christian æra,/1792./Being bissextile, or leap year; and the/sixteenth of the independence of America./Containing,/astronomical calculations,/and a variety of things/that are useful and entertaining./Fitted to the latitude and longitude of the town/of Boston, in the

Commonwealth of Massachusetts./By the Honorable/Samuel Stearns, Esq. L.L.D./Boston:/printed and sold by B. Edes & Son./No. 7, State-Street.

12mo., pp. [24].

46. Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, for the year 1792. Vol. I, Boston, 1792.¹ 8 vo., pp. [4], 288.

Pp. 112-116 contain a paper headed: "The following particulars relating to Worcester, in the State of Massachusetts, were communicated, by Timothy Paine, William Young, Edward Bangs, Esqrs. and Dr. Samuel Stearns; to whom the Historical Society acknowledge themselves much obliged." These "Particulars" were the basis for the account of Worcester in the Rev. Peter Whitney's "History of the County of Worcester" (Worcester, 1793).

47. The/Free Mason's/Calendar,/and/continental/almanac;/for the year of our Lord/1793:/containing,/astronomical calculations,—an account of/the ancient and honorable society of Free/Masons, with other things necessary for an/almanac./By the Hon. Samuel Stearns, L.L.D./New-York:/printed and sold, wholesale and retail,/by Samuel Campbell,/N^o 37 Hanover Square./*The Copy right of this Calendar and Almanac is secured/according to Law.*

16mo., pp. [72].

48. An/Account/of the/Terrible Effects of the/Pestilential Infection/in the/City of Philadelphia./With an/elegy on the deaths of the people./Also/a song of praise and thanks-giving,/composed for those who have recovered, after having/been smitten with that dreadful contagion./By the Honourable Samuel Stearns, J. U. D.²/*Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are/thy Judgments. Psal. CXIX. 137./But when God's Judgments are abroad in the Earth, let the Inhabitants thereof learn/Righteousness./*Providence:/printed for William Child, in Johnston.

12mo., pp. [4], 8.

The preface is dated 13 November, 1793. Probably printed by Carter and Wilkinson, publishers of "The Providence Gazette." "On November

¹Also, a page for page reprint, Boston, 1806. (Boston Pub. Lib.)

²*Juris Universi Doctor*

2d, [1793], John Carter formed a partnership in Printing, Bookselling and Stationery, with William Wilkinson, his successor as Postmaster, under the firm name of Carter and Wilkinson, and the Printing Office was removed to the new Bookstore and Post-Office, opposite the Market." (Evans, "American Bibliography," IX, 139). The following advertisement appears on the last page of this pamphlet:

THE AMERICAN ORACLE,
Written by the AUTHOR of this,

Containing

A great Variety of useful and profitable Subjects, necessary to be known in all Families, may be had at the Post-Offices in Providence, Newport, and New-Haven; also of Mr. Samuel Campbell, in New-York, and of Mr. Dobson, in Philadelphia.

Likewise

The FREEMASON'S CALENDAR, for 1794, may be had at the Places already mentioned in Providence, Newport, and New-York."

No "Freemason's Calendar" for 1794 appeared.

49. The New-England/Farmer's/Almanack,/for the year of our Lord Christ,/1794;/from the creation according to scripture, 5756./Being the second year after leap year, and the/18th of the independence of the United/American States./Fitted to the latitude and longitude of the town of Bos-/-ton, but will serve without essential variation for all the/New-England States./Containing/astronomical calculations, and a large variety of/other useful subjects—more than what are usually/contained in other almanacks./Calculated by the hon. Samuel Sternes, Esq./late calculator of Thomas's much approved Almanack./PEACE, o'er the world thy wings expand,/And SCIENCE bless our fav'rite land./Printed at Springfield, Massachusetts,/by James R. Hutchings,/at his office, corner of Court-Alley.

12mo., pp. [24].

This was Stearns's last almanac. The publisher, James Reed Hutchins, established the newspaper, *The Federal Spy* at Springfield in 1792.

50. An/Account/of the/Terrible Effects of the Pestilential Infection/in the/City of Philadelphia./With an/elegy on the deaths of the people./Also/a song of praise and Thanksgiveing [sic];/composedfor [sic] those who have recover[e]d, after having/been smitten with that dreadful contagion./

By the Honourable/Samuel Stearns, J. U. D./ . . . New-York:/
printed & sold at No. 80 Cherry Street, next door/to the corner
of New-Slip./July 13, 1794.

12mo., pp. 12.

N. Y. Hist. Soc. Listed by Sabin, Part CXXXV. A reprint of item 48.

51. *American Mercury*. [Published by Elisha Babcock].
Hartford, Conn. 15 May, 1797 (Vol. XIII, no. 671): Medical
communications. Extracted principally from Dr. Smith's
Medical Looking-Glass. Containing, I. A few observations
on the rise and progress of medicine. II. On the theory and
practice of physic in America. III. On the medical productions
compiled by Dr. Stearns. IV. On the best method of spreading
medical knowledge.

Folio.

52. *The Providence Gazette*. [Published by Carter and
Wilkinson]. Providence, R. I. 8 July, 1797 (Vol. XXIV, no.
1749): Letter "To the Medical Convention of the State of
Connecticut," signed "Medicus," 26 June, 1797.

Folio.

53. [Circular letter, dated, in pen and ink, "State of Rhode
Island, Jan 25th 1798", and continuing,]

STR

YOUR being a *Member* of the Hon. the Gen. Assembly of this
State, and our taking into our serious consideration, the great
and important object of promoting the increase of medical
Knowledge in this Country, must be our Apology for troubling
you with this *Letter*.

[Etc. Signed by the following physicians: Samuel Hudson and David
Knight of Cranston, Seth Smith of Coventry, and Cyril Carpenter of
Foster. This copy, belonging to the Rhode Island Historical Society,
was addressed to "Mr. Allen"].

Broadside.

54. [A copy of the petition of Doctors Hyde and Fitch, to
the Hon. the General Assembly of Vermont. Praying for a
medical lottery. Unto which are annexed, the recommenda-
tions of sundry gentlemen; and Dr. Duncan's reasons why the
prayer of said petitioners ought to be granted. Printed in the
year 1800].

[18mo., pp. 16].

Gilman's Bibliography of Vermont.

Although fathered by "Doctors Hyde and Fitch," this petition was probably written by Stearns. I have seen no copy of it, but one may very likely be found in the Vermont State Archives at Montpelier. Items 51-54 have to do with Stearns's efforts for the establishment of a lottery, for which he also petitioned Congress, to raise money to publish his medical works.

55. The/American Herbal,/or/materia medica./Wherein/the virtues of the mineral, vegeta-/ble, and animal productions of North/and South America are laid open, so far as/they are known; and their uses in the/practice of physic and surgery exhibi-/ted./Comprehending/an account of a large number of new medical discove-/ries and improvements, which are compiled from the/best authorities with much care and atten-/tion, and/promulgated for the purpose of spreading medical/light and information in America./By Samuel Stearns, L.L.D./Solatium Afflictis./The copy right of this book is secured as the act directs./Walpole, printed by David Carlisle,/for Thomas & Thomas, and the author./1801.

12mo., pp. 360.

For an account of the printing and book-selling business carried on at Walpole, N. H., by Isaiah and Alexander Thomas and David Carlisle, see J. T. Buckingham's "Specimens of Newspaper Literature," II, 174 *et seq.*

56. The/Gentlemen's and Ladies'/Diary,/and/Almanac;/with an ephermeris, for the year of the creation,/according to sacred writ, 5764;/and of the christian era,/1802;/being the sixth after bissextile, or leap-year, and the twenty-/sixth year of the independence of United Columbia./Containing,/besides more than usual astronomical calculations,/as great a variety of/useful & entertaining matter,/as any other almanac./Fitted to the latitude and longitude of Boston, (Mass.)/but will serve for the adjoining states without sensible variation./By Asa Houghton./[Arms of the United States]. NATURE, in every part, bespeaks a GOD—/"He looks, unnumber'd WORLDS before him lie," "And NATURE lies collected in His Eye." Keene, (N. H.)—printed by and for John Prentiss,/ [the proprietor]/Price, 7 1-2 dollars per groce—75 cents Doz.—10 cents single.

12mo., pp. [48].

Prefaced by the following "Recommendation":

"TO THE PUBLIC.

This may certify, that I followed the practice of making Astronomical calculations more than thirty years ago—That I calculated for different Meridians and Latitudes, as those of Quebec, Montreal, New-Brunswick, Boston, Bennington, New-London, New-York, &c. in which places my productions were annually published, under different names, and for a number of years they were published by Mr. ISAIAH THOMAS, in Worcester, under his own name—That I have frequently perused the annual productions of other Astronomers, and those in particular made by Mr. HOUGHTON, and published annually by Mr. JOHN PRENTISS, at Keene, in the State of Newhampshire—That Mr. HOUGHTON's Calculations in general, have always appeared to me, to be as ACCURATE AS ANY EVER PUBLISHED ON THIS CONTINENT. State of Vermont, May 25, 1801. SAMUEL STEARNS, LLD.

This almanac contains explanations "of the causes of Whirlwinds, clouds, rains, hail, snow, frost, mist, fog and dew," etc., from Stearns's "American Oracle." Similar extracts from that work appear in Houghton's "Gentlemen's and Ladies' Dairy" for 1798, 1803, 1804, and 1805.

57. The/American Definition/Spelling Book:/ in which/ the words are not only rationally/divided into syllables, accurately/accented, the various sounds of/the vowels, represented by figures,/and their parts of speech properly/ distinguished, but the definition/or signification affixed to each/word;/upon a plan agreeable to/Mr. Noah Webster's easy standard./Designed/for the use of schools./By Abner Kneeland, School-Master./The first edition./Published according to act of Congress./Keene, Newhampshire,/printed by John Prentiss, for the author./1802.

12mo., pp. 180.

Brit. Mus.

Prefaced by the following "Recommendation from the Hon. Samuel Stearns, LL.D., Samuel Porter, Esq. Attorney at Law, and the Hon. Jason Duncan, Esq.":

"STATE OF VERMONT, APRIL 8, 1802.

This may certify, That we have perused the DEFINITION SPELLING BOOK, compiled by Mr. ABNER KNEELAND, and had the pleasure of finding that the Work is well arranged and executed.—That his Definition of the Words must be a great ornament to his productions; and will, in our opinion, contribute more powerfully towards promoting the increase of Learning, than any other Spelling Book we have yet seen in America. We therefore take the freedom to recommend it as a work that will be of great utility to the Public.

SAMUEL STEARNS.

SAMUEL PORTER.

JASON DUNCAN.

At the end of the book is an advertisement of Stearns's "American Herbal."

58. [The Child's Spelling Book, containing easy words from one to four syllables, intermixed with lessons of easy words to teach children to read and to know their duty. By Abner Kneeland, School Master.—Learn this book and you shall have one bigger. Keene, N. H., 1802].

This formed an introduction to Kneeland's "American Definition Spelling Book" (Keene, 1802), to which is prefixed a recommendation signed by Stearns. No copy of "The Child's Spelling Book" is known. The title is here taken from Mansfield's History of Dummerston, Vt., which gives the copyright notice under date of 1 May, 1802. The volume appears to have contained an egregious poem by Dr. Stearns, addressed "To young students," a portion of which exists in his manuscript.

Advertised with "The American Definition Spelling Book" in the Brattleboro "Reporter," 22 August, 1803, as "for sale at Doctor Hall's store in Brattleborough, Mr. Russel Mason's in Dummerston, and Messrs Chandler & Bigelow's in Putney, and other Stores in the country."

59. The/American Definition/Spelling Book;/in/which/ the words/are not only/rationally divid-/ed into syllables, ac-/curately accented, the va-/rious sounds or [sic] the vowels rep-/resented by figures, and their/parts of speech properly distinguish-/ed, but the definition or signification/affixed to each word;/upon a plan agreeable to/Mr. Noah Webster's easy standard./Designed/for the use of schools./By Abner Kneeland, School-Master./Kingsbery & Blake's first edition,/ with many corrections and improvements,/by the author./ Published according to act of Congress./Windsor, (Vermont),/ printed by Nahum Mower./1804.

12mo., pp. 249, [3].

This edition has the "Recommendation" of Messrs. Stearns, Porter, and Duncan.

60. The/Columbian Miscellany;/containing/a variety of/ important, instructive,/and/entertaining matter,/chiefly selected out of the *Philadelphian/Magazines*, published in London,/in the years 1788 and 1789,/calculated to promote/ true religion and virtue./Compiled for the use and benefit of the/followers of Christ./By Abner Kneeland./"AND GOD SAID, LET THERE BE LIGHT: AND THERE WAS

LIGHT." *BIBLE.*/Keene, Newhampshire./Printed by John Prentiss, for the Editor./1804.

12mo., pp. 408.

Contains, pp. 395-396, verses, "The Philosopher's Religion Described. By Dr. Stearns." In the list of subscribers "Hon. Samuel Stearns, L.L.D. Dummerston" is down for six copies.¹

61. *The New and Complete American Encyclopædia: or, Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences.* 7 vols. New York, 1805-1811.

Vol. VI, p. 220: "Wishing to lay before our readers everything important in science or literature, we cannot omit a hypothesis which Dr. Stearns, an American, formed, about 1788, to account for the appearances called the *aurora borealis* and *aurora australis*." Stearns's "hypothesis" is, in substance, quoted from pp. 159-160 of "The American Oracle." The compiler adds: "The hypotheses of those, however, who ascribe these phenomena to electricity, appear much more credible."

62. *History of the Town of Marlborough, Cheshire County, N. H.* by Charles A. Bemis, Boston, 1881.

Stearns's Epitaph on Patty Ward is on p. 674.

63. *The Vermont Phoenix*, Brattleboro, Vt., 8 June, 1883 (Vol. I, No. 28). *Some Brattleboro Reminiscences.* Thomas Green Fessenden and Samuel Stearns. [From a paper read before the Brattleboro Professional Club by James Conland, M.D. . . .] Folio.

The Brattleboro Pub. Lib.

It was first in this sketch that Watson's "Tour in Holland" was erroneously ascribed to Stearns. It includes his Petition to the King, 18 July, 1799, some stanzas of his "Lines Addressed to Young Students" and his Epitaph on Miss Patty Ward. In conclusion Dr. Conland says: "In what I have written there is more or less confusion of dates, which I have not had time to correct."

64. *The History of the Town of Dummerston. The First Town Settled by Anglo Saxon Descendants in the State.* By David Lufkin Mansfield. Ludlow, Vt., 1884.

¹Stearns appears also as a subscriber—"Hon. Samuel Sterns, LL.D., Brattleboro"—for the Rev. Jonathan Leavitt's "Concise View of the New Covenant" (Northampton, Mass., 1801).

Appears also in "Vermont Historical Gazetteer," Vol. V. Mansfield's account of Stearns (pp. 64-69), though not wholly accurate, supplies important facts of his life in Dummerston. It contains his Petition to the King and a piece of verse, "Advertisement. The Widower in Jail Exposed for Sale. A New Song. (By Dr. Samuel Stearns)."

65. Proceedings of the Worcester Society of Antiquity. Vol. XXIII (1907). Worcester, Mass., 1908.

In the course of a paper entitled "What Our New England Forefathers Had to Read," Ellery Bicknell Crane (pp. 94-103) gives an account of Dr. Stearns—containing some errors,—and reprints his Petition to the King from Mansfield's "Dummerston."

66. Annals of Brattleboro, 1681-1895. Compiled and edited by Mary R. Cabot. 2 vols. Brattleboro, Vt., 1921-1922.

A sketch of Stearns's life (Vol. I, pp. 221-229) includes his Petition to the King, one stanza of his "Lines Addressed to Young Students," and his Epitaph on "Polly" (*i.e.* Patty) Ward.

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