

# **THE MANY SIDED MAN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649234325

The Many Sided Man by Edwin A. Strong

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**MANY  
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**EDWIN A. STRONG**  
The Character Builder #

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REPRINTED FROM THE  
MICHIGAN TRADESMAN  
OF FEBRUARY 4, 1904



*E. A. Strong.*

Mich. Hist. Coll.  
12-20-1940

## Edwin A. Strong, the Character Builder

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10-27-V: C.K.

It is customary to save all the good things we know about a man until he is dead and then lavish them on his memory, smother his coffin with flowers and his grave with blossoms. The custom is a beautiful one and enjoys the distinction of having come down to us through the ages, but the Tradesman believes—and has always undertaken to act on such belief—that a little less eulogy at the funeral and a little more acknowledgment of the obligation due the individual this side of the grave are by no means out of place.

Especially is this true when applied to the life work of Edwin A. Strong, whose experience in the various channels in which he exerted himself during the twenty-five years he resided in this city is graphically described by eighteen contributors elsewhere in this week's issue.

What Mr. Strong's services were to this community others know in part; but only his associates in the schoolroom can understand the peculiar inspiration, the infectious and quickening enthusiasm, which he carries into his daily labor.

To work with him is of itself a liberal education. His praise is a sufficient guerdon; his own brilliant method at once the spur and the despair of others. As Emerson spoke of Carlyle's descending to the drudging details of his Life of Frederick from a superior height of cosmic knowledge, so Mr. Strong appears to apply himself to the questions of the hour, laden with the wisdom of the ages.

And to garnered knowledge and wide experience he adds a moral judgment which pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, so that to no man can better be applied the epitaph of Thirlwall: *Cor sapiens et intelligens ad discernendum judicium.*

To every one privileged to observe or to share his work as a teacher, his very personality is a thrilling summons. His inexhaustible fertility, his ever-renewed freshness, his indomitable spirit—falling to rise and baffled to fight better—these are among the qualities which perpetually astonish and delight those who are with him in daily association.

Mr. Strong has never talked cant. He gives simple expression in conversation, as well as in his lectures, to what he believes both practical and natural when perceived and understood. He has faith in the divine which is in every human heart, however obscured it may be by outward circumstances and environment. His judgment is not swayed by sentiment, but by the

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conviction that humanity is in a process of evolution into higher conditions; and that every effort to bring a more complete realization of possibilities must bear fruit. He gives his life to this end, never losing faith under discouragement.

As the world counts, Mr. Strong's career has not been successful, because neither money nor fame has come to him in large measure, due solely to his own modesty in not only refusing to put himself forward, but in always keeping himself in the background. Many of his best friends insist that this is a serious defect in his character—that by so doing he has deprived the world of much to which it is entitled by constantly belittling his own efforts and decrying his own knowledge—but the Tradesman believes that this characteristic is the chiefest charm in the man; that it is in thorough keeping with his sensitive conscientiousness and methodical methods and rounds out his character into a harmonious combination.

Mr. Strong's sole ambition has been to help his associates and pupils over rough places into ways of pleasantness and peace. His work is character building, and the fruits for himself—a golden harvest—are manifest on every street of Grand Rapids, in every county in Michigan, in every state of the Union. No youth who ever comes under the spell of his influence can help being benefited, strengthened and encouraged. The bad is made good and the good is made better by an unseen force which neither teacher nor pupil is able to understand or define. Nor is this unseen influence confined to a single generation. It is noted in the children and grandchildren of those who imbibed wisdom at the feet of their instructor and it will continue to be a living force as long as time lasts. The man may die and his existence be forgotten by many, but the influence he exerted over the thousands of men and women with whom he came in contact will be perpetuated through generations yet to come.

Millionaires may bequeath us money in unstinted amount to erect hospitals, libraries, art galleries and museums, but Mr. Strong performed a greater service and left a more valuable legacy to this community than any other man who ever lived here, because he devoted his life to the building of men and women and the uplifting of character. For twenty-five years he stood before the people of this city and ministered to them both as teacher and citizen. His life was an open book that all might read, and his character shone forth like a beacon light to guide his fellows in the ways of honesty, duty, faithful service and righteousness.



## The Many Sided Man



### Loving Tributes to the Sterling Worth of Edwin A. Strong, the Veteran Educator.

The following letter from the editor of the Tradesman was recently sent to eighteen of the former associates of Prof. Edwin A. Strong, of Ypsilanti:

As a student under Mr. Strong I have always felt that his career in the Grand Rapids public schools and as a high minded and exemplary citizen was never given fitting recognition of a public character by the people of this city.

I have frequently discussed this subject with friends, including Hon. Charles W. Garfield, who suggests a symposium of opinions, showing Mr. Strong as the many sided man. In pursuance of this plan we have selected the following list of topics and assignments, and will ask you to kindly cooperate with us in this matter by preparing an article for the series, which we should like to publish in our issue of Feb. 10:

1. His boyhood and early manhood—A. J. Daniels.
2. Mr. Strong as an employe—J. H. McKee.
3. His relation to the early scientists of the city—Dr. Joel C. Parker.
4. His relation to the boys who founded the K. S. I.—Hon. Chas. W. Garfield.
5. His impress on the young men—Omer H. Simonds, Duluth, Minn.
6. The religious side of his life—Rev. A. R. Merriam, Hartford, Conn.
7. His love of the classics—Prof. Calvin Thomas, New York.
8. His ideas on charity—Miss Emma Field.
9. Mr. Strong as an architect—Chas. S. Hathaway.
10. His influence over his associates—Charles Chandler, Miss Annette C. Dickinson, Miss Ellen Dean.
11. His influence over his students—E. F. Sawyer, Cadillac; Mrs. Cornelia Hulst, Miss Helen Sauers, Gaius W. Perkins.
12. Mr. Strong as a public spirited man—Anton G. Hodenpyl, New York.
13. Mr. Strong as a companionable man—Ossian C. Simonds, Chicago.

The response was even more prompt and generous than was expected. Every one invited to contribute to the series insisted that it was a privilege to be given an opportunity to pay a word of tribute to one of the most lovable men living. The result is a very gratifying one to the Tradesman and must certainly be equally so to the many friends of Mr. Strong, whose career in this community from 1858 to 1885—a period of twenty-seven years—is fragrant with good deeds, high motives and unselfish devotion to duty. Gen-

crous as the contributors are to their subject, they have not painted the picture in too glaring colors, because no pen can do justice to the massive and solid integrity, the large, warm, generous heart and the brilliant and gifted mind which are distinguishing characteristics of the man. So long as life lasts and memory lingers all who have ever enjoyed the advantage of association or companionship with Mr. Strong will cherish the recollection of his lofty spirit and his winning manners—simple, sweet and genial.

#### Mr. Strong's Boyhood and Early Manhood.

I can not remember having seen Prof. E. A. Strong until about his fifteenth year, although our birth places were not more than a mile apart. We had attended different schools and at an early age circumstances had driven me several miles away from my first home. At about the age mentioned above we were working on adjoining farms and here began that acquaintance which has become more and more intimate with advancing years and which will continue while we live.

The four preceding years Mr. Strong spent in New England with a maiden aunt with whom he pursued the studies of philosophy and chemistry, of which he became so fond in after years. I have heard him say that although they constructed the apparatus they used, the results obtained were quite as satisfactory as any experiments he made in after years.

Mr. Strong was born in the township of Otisco, about eighteen miles south of Syracuse, on Jan. 3, 1834. I know but little of his parentage save that his mother was a sister of Samuel Pomeroy, who emigrated from New England at the time of the Kansas-Nebraska troubles and afterward became U. S. Senator from Kansas. The exact place of his birth was on a plateau, near the top of a high hill, from whose summit could be seen the townships of Tully, Cardeff, Pompey, Homer and others bearing classic names. The whole country round about is made up of hills, partially covered with forests, and in the valleys between lie nestled villages and lakes bearing similar names.

Only two miles away, in the next township and in plain view but far below, was another plateau, covered with great rocks of the famous Tully limestone, over which in after years we tramped together, stepping only on the rocks separated by narrow plats of grass.

Far off to the north and east could be seen Oneida Lake and nearer the reservation of the Onondaga tribe of Indians, through which we hauled to market the products of the farms, returning late at night with loads of merchandise from the merchants in the neighboring village.

I have never seen a more beautiful and picturesque region of country than this on which he could look by going a short distance from his father's farm. He has always enjoyed visiting the old homestead and looking down upon a panorama that was always before him when a boy and which, no doubt, had some influence in giving him a love for the natural sciences and ability to appreciate the beautiful in art or landscape wherever it came to his notice.

Later, when we were together in a preparatory school and college, I came to believe that his early studies and home surroundings had been the means of placing him far in advance of any of his classmates. One characteristic of his was to obtain by his own efforts that which others were usually willing to receive in the easiest possible manner. I think I can say that he never received any aid from anyone in the solution of any problem in mathematics and I have known him to get excused from a recitation when the instructor was to explain difficulties that other members were ready to abandon.

I will say no more as I value too highly his friendship.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "A. J. Daniels". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

#### Mr. Strong As An Employee.

Prof. Strong came to the Grand Rapids High School in the fall of 1858, upon the recommendation of Professor Danforth, and was either Principal of that department or Superintendent of Schools, with the exception of a portion of one school year, until June, 1885. He was, therefore, for more than twenty-six years an employe of the school boards of this city, first of Fractional District No. 1, as then known, and, after 1871, of the Board as now organized. He served as Principal of the High School from 1858 to the fall of 1865, when he took the superintendency, and served in that capacity until his resignation in January, 1871. The fall of the same year he was recalled and took the principalship of the High School, which he retained until the end of the school year, 1884-5. During the whole of this lengthy period of service Professor Strong's work was satisfactory to the school trustees; his relations with the teachers of the different departments most pleasant, his example beneficial, and his influence encouraging to their work; his character was a model to his pupils and a constant suggestion of nobility and purity to his associates. The school boards under which he served found him invariably the quiet, graceful gentleman of the truest and highest type. He was a thorough scholar, a really erudite man. I remember distinctly, on one occasion, a marked incident in evidence of this: Professor Strong was present at a gathering of the members of the School Board, the Central School teachers, and a few others, at the residence of John Ball, to meet a gentleman from Boston, a scientist of great learning and wide repute, whose name now escapes me. He and Professor Strong were introduced and entered into conversation. I sat by as an attentive listener. I noticed the modesty, almost timidity, with which Professor Strong began to converse. At first he was only the interestedly inquisitive learner at the feet of a master, a simple, earnest, questioning student. But soon his enthusiasm began to rise and a fund of information to flow from his lips on the special