

**MEMOIR OF REV. CHARLES
MASON, D. D. PREPARED
AGREEABLY TO A RESOLUTION
OF THE MASSACHUSETTS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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Memoir of Rev. Charles Mason, D. D. Prepared agreeably to a resolution of the Massachusetts Historical Society by A. P. Peabody

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REV. CHARLES MASON, D.D.

PREPARED AGREEABLY TO A RESOLUTION

OF THE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

BY REV. A. P. PEABODY, D.D.

With an Appendix.

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MEMOIR

OF

REV. CHARLES MASON, D.D.

CHARLES MASON was a descendant, in the fifth generation, of John Mason, the hero and historian of the Pequot War, who was born in England in 1599; was one of the first settlers of Dorchester, Conn.; was for many years Major-General of the forces of Connecticut, and for ten years Deputy-Governor; and died at Norwich in 1672. Jeremiah Mason, the grandson of John, was also distinguished in the military service of his country; having held an important command on Dorchester Heights in the early part of the war of the Revolution. His son Jeremiah, the father of the subject of this sketch, — born in Lebanon, Conn., in 1768, and a graduate of Yale College, — was well known as long the leader of the New-Hampshire Bar, as in his latter years holding a similar professional rank in Boston, and as equally versed in the science of law and the art of advocacy, — equally eminent for his skill and tact in the management of jury-trials, and for his capacity of sound and weighty argument on questions exclusively legal. He married Mary, daughter of Colonel Robert Means,

a native of Ireland,—an intelligent, high-minded, and successful merchant, and for many years a resident of Amherst, N.H. Mrs. Mason was a woman of rare gentleness, and sweetness of manner, spirit, and character; endowed with the domestic virtues to a degree seldom equalled; and with a simple, unostentatious piety, which gave grace to her speech, and beauty to her life; as a wife, mother, and friend, loved, honored, regretted, as only those can be in whom the best gifts of nature and cultivation are consecrated by Christian faith and purpose.

Charles Mason, the youngest son of Jeremiah and Mary Mason, was born in Portsmouth, N.H., on the 25th of July, 1812. His early education was conducted under the choicest home-influences, both intellectual and moral. He inherited from his father a judicial cast of mind, habits of careful and accurate thought, and the tendency to form opinions on the deliberate weighing of argument and evidence; while his mother's simplicity, modesty, and tenderness were happily blended in his boyhood with the attributes that gave presage of a genuine and self-sustaining manliness. He was fitted for college at the Portsmouth Academy, which at that period changed its preceptors annually or oftener; so that, though young Mason won the strong attachment of all his teachers, no one of them could claim a predominant part in the formation of his character as a student. About the time when he would have entered college, he was seized with a dangerous illness,—the same disease that terminated his life after an interval of thirty-five years of almost uninterrupted health. His recovery was

slow; and for several months he was so feeble, that the care and comfort of his home were deemed essential to his entire restoration. He was accordingly intrusted to the writer of this sketch, then preceptor of the Academy, as a private pupil, to be prepared for advanced standing in Harvard University. His father's library was his study and his recitation-room. His conscientious diligence and fidelity, his maturity of judgment, his frankness, probity, and purity of character, are held in grateful remembrance, and gave full promise of all that he became in subsequent years. Seldom can there have been at so early an age so symmetrical a development. The recent death of an elder brother, of distinguished ability and excellence, had impressed him deeply, and combined with the religious instructions of his childhood to form that profound yet cheerful seriousness which was hardly less the characteristic of his boyhood than of his riper years.

At the commencement of the summer term of 1829, he entered the freshman-class at Harvard. Here he assumed and maintained a high rank as a scholar, though with but little ambition for college-honors. His aim was to satisfy his own conscience by the faithful discharge of every duty, rather than to acquire a brilliant reputation. He brought to his classical studies a discriminating taste; and in these, as also in metaphysical and moral science, he manifested a peculiar aptitude and proficiency. His choice of the Hebrew language as an elective study indicated his future profession; and in this department he again, with several of the brightest and best among his classmates, came under the tuition of the writer. In this