

Marsh Anna Hunt will

THIS monumental stone, in the old burial ground in Hinsdale, N. H., beside that of her husband, Doct.^r Perley Marsh, who died Sept. 18, 1807, aged 41, attests the resting place of the founder of the Vermont Asylum for the Insane.

Mrs. ANNA MARSH
DIED
Oct 14, 1834, Aged 65
Consort of
Dr. Perley Marsh

The will containing the bequest for this purpose bears date June 3rd, 1834, and reads as follows:

" I, Anna Marsh, of Hinsdale, in the County of Cheshire, and State of New Hampshire, being weak in body, but in my own apprehension of sound and disposing mind and memory, considering the uncertainty of this mortal life, have thought it best to make, and accordingly do hereby make, this my last will and testament in manner following, that is to say, as to all my worldly estate,

I dispose of the same as follows:

" I give unto the town of Vernon, in the County of Windham, and State of Vermont, two thousand dollars, the principal to be kept at interest as a permanent fund for the support of preaching in said town, the principal to be kept entire, and the interest only to be used.

"I give unto Samuel Clark, John Holbrook, Epaphroditus Seymour, and John C. Holbrook, all of Brattleboro, in the County of Windham aforesaid, and their successors, ten thousand dollars in trust, for the purpose of erecting and supporting in the County of Windham, near Connecticut River, a hospital for the relief of insane persons, and in case of the decease of one or more of said trustees, the survivors shall from time to time fill all vacancies; and the said trustees, being four in number, shall forever hereafter have the sole superintendence and direction of said insane hospital; and it is my will that the said trustees procure an act of incorporation, as soon as may be after my decease.

"I give unto my cousins, Cynthia G. Arms, Sarah Tilden, and Helen Hunt, all residing in the State of New York, five hundred dollars each.

" I give unto Fanny Blake, wife of Dr. Blake, of Northfield, and Sally Pomeroy, wife of Medad Pomeroy, of Warwick, all my household furniture and wearing apparel, to be equally divided

between them. And as to all the rest and residue of my estate, whether real or personal not otherwise herein disposed of, I give, devise, and bequeath the same to Hunt Blake, of Vernon, in the County of Windham, and State of Vermont, to hold to him, his heirs and assigns, forever.

" And lastly, I do hereby constitute and appoint John Nevers, of Northfield, Mass., and Asa Keyes, of Brattleboro, Vermont, executors of this my last will and testament, hereby revoking all former wills by me made.

"In testimony whereof, I the said Anna Marsh, have hereunto set my hand and seal, and do declare the above to be my last will and testament, this third day of June, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-four.

" Signed, sealed, and declared by the said Anna Marsh to be her last will and testament in presence of us, who have witnessed the same in presence of the testatrix and in the presence of each other.

Adeline Richardson,
Orrin Snow,
Sally Keyes,
Asa Kkyes.

ANNA MARSH. (L. S.)

"Proved at Keene, first Tuesday of January, 1835, Sally Keyes and Orrin Snow witnesses. Notice previously published. Copy filed in Marlboro Probate District, last Wednesday of March, 1835. Notice previously published. John Nevers and Asa Keyes, executors, [appeared] and gave bonds in \$25,000. Inventory to be returned in three months. Inventory returned first Tuesday of April. Property appraised March 7, 1835, by

Jonathan Brown,
Obed Slate, Appraisers."
Timothy A. Bascom,

The inventory of the estate exhibited a total of \$21,720.49, which was largely invested in notes of hand. The first action of the trustees was to apply for a charter from the Legislature, in accordance with the request of the founder. This was granted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont in the same year in which the testatrix died, and the following is a *verbatim et literatim* copy:

The circumstances attending the bequest we have from Asa Keyes, Esq., who drew up the will, and who subsequently became one of the Trustees of the Asylum. In testimony given before a Legislative Committee in 1878, he thus gives an account of them: " Mrs. Marsh sent for me, and requested me to come to her house; the messenger told me she wanted to make a will. I went over there, and she said she did. I called for paper, and asked her to whom she wanted to will her property, and she said she would give ten thousand dollars for an Asylum for the Insane. It was new to me and I tried to divert her thoughts to other things,—suggested the Bible Society, and other things of that nature,—but she refused every one of them, and said she was determined to have an Asylum for the Insane. So I took the minutes down, and told her I would go home and write them out, and come over in the course of a week and have her will executed. When I went over there, I found that she had still the same mind about building an Asylum. Then I asked her where she would have it situated ? She said over there in Windham County, near the Connecticut River, you can find a good place. Then I told her it was necessary to have some trustees; and she wished me to name some, and I did so, and she chose them. The trustees were Dea. J. Holbrook, Epaphro' Seymour, Samuel Clark and John C. Holbrook. She died sometime in the fall after, and I was named as executor, proved her will, and went on and administered her estate, together with John Nevers, of Northfield, Mass. We settled the estate and paid over to these trustees the amount of ten thousand dollars."

The home of Mrs. Marsh was four miles below Brattleboro, on the New Hampshire side of the Connecticut River. There yet stands the square hip-roofed two-story mansion (see frontispiece), now 122 years old, typical of the better class of residences in the early part of the present century, from which during the twenty-seven years of her widowhood she dispensed a liberal hospitality, and connected with which was an estate of 400 acres, which she managed with signal ability. The place itself would have been entirely suited to the purposes of the institution which she endowed, had she chosen thus to devote it; but in determining the location of the Asylum she was decided in her preference for the Vermont side, declaring "she had already done enough for New Hampshire,"* where she resided. It is probable, however, that her preference was determined by the fact that Vermont was the home of her ancestry, as well as her own birth-place.

**Besides many contributions to worthy objects during her life-time, she gave to the town of Hinsdale, in 1828, a*

bell weighing 910 pounds and costing several hundred dollars, which was placed upon the first church in that village, and remained there as long as the building stood. It was then hired by the Universalist society, on condition that it be rung regularly three times a day, at 9 A. m , 12 M. and 9 P. M., for the benefit of the town. This church was subsequently leased to the Methodists, and while in their charge the bell became cracked. In 1873 it was sold by the town for old metal at 13 cents per pound, and the avails, \$118.30, were turned into the town treasury.

In making her bequest to the town of Vernon (directly opposite her place of residence) for the support of preaching, she remarked:

→ " They are a very godless people over there, and never go to meeting ; I want to do something to get them together on the Sabbath." When other objects were urged upon her notice as worthy of charitable consideration, as stated by Mr. Keyes, she remarked that, " Everybody gave to missionary objects, and educational interests belonged to those who had children (she had none living), but nobody cared for the poor insane ; they were neglected and shifted about, and she wanted to provide a home for them." These fragmentary reminiscences derived from Mr. Keyes in verbal conversations, go to show that her last will was the result of much deliberation upon the matter, and—coupled with the fact that Mr. Keyes was solicited by a nephew of hers to whom she had in a previous testament bequeathed the bulk of her property, to scrutinize carefully her testamentary capacity when making the alterations she might suggest—go to show that in this document she had determined to set aside considerations of relationship, and carry out, so far as she was able, her philanthropic views, which clearly were not the result of any sudden or unaccountable freak of benevolence.

The author of the History of Brattleboro, published in 1880, cites the case of Hon. Richard Whitney, who died in Hinsdale in 1806, under unfortunate circumstances, as very probably having suggested to Mrs. Marsh the need of a hospital for the insane. Mr. Whitney, who had been a man prominent in political life, became mentally deranged, and was obliged to be placed under restraint.

At that time little if anything was known in regard to the proper treatment of insane persons. The faculty were vainly groping in the dark for a potent weapon with which they could meet this mysterious enemy of human happiness, called insanity. Many, especially the devoutly religious classes, attributed this

malady to supernatural causes. Therefore they considered all remedial efforts vain, and nothing could be done but to confine the unfortunate victim, and wait for death.

A council of physicians [Dr. Marsh believed to have been one] decided upon trying for the recovery of Mr. Whitney a temporary suspension of his consciousness, by keeping him completely immersed in water three or four minutes, or until he became insensible, and then resuscitate or awaken him to a new life. Passing through this desperate ordeal, it was hoped, would divert his mind, break the chain of unhappy associations, and thus remove the cause of his disease. Upon trial, this system of regeneration proved of no avail, for, with the returning consciousness of the patient came the knell of departed hopes, as he exclaimed •' You can't drown love." But the failure of this experiment seems not to have convinced the physicians that they were upon the wrong track. Some accounts say the repetition of it terminated the life of the patient; others, and the most reliable, state that in the subsequent trial opium was selected as " the proper agent for the stupefaction of the life forces," which was essayed with a fatal result. The head-stone over the grave of Mr. Whitney, in the same burial ground with that of Dr. Marsh, bears the following inscription:

"Here rests
the mortal part of
Richard Whitney Esq,
Counsellor at law
of Brattleboro' Vermont,
Who departed this life
Sept. 9 th A. D. 1806,
Aged 39 years."

"Those who knew him not may
Learn from this Monument stone
that his virtues have rendered
his memory precious to his
bereaved friends—the sight of it
will excite a tender recollection
of his worth, in the bosoms of
those who knew him, and a tear
of regret at his early and
Untimely departure.
Let us humbly hope he is gone
where those virtues will be
fully appreciated."

No likeness of Mrs. Marsh has been preserved, but she is represented as a large, rather plain, but kindly woman, of extremely hospitable feelings. She added a wing to her house, which she fitted up as a drawing-room, with arched ceiling, and furnished with costly furniture, where she was accustomed to entertain socially invited parties from Brattleboro and vicinity. In the management of her estate, as already mentioned, she was singularly capable, and her grounds gave evidence of an appreciation of the aesthetic; her fine garden and beautiful flowers, in diamond or heart shaped beds, being the particular admiration of the neighboring children, as the accounts of those now old, but who personally remember her, attest.

Two years before her death she leased her farm, reserving to herself all the privileges she desired, including the use of any four rooms she might choose in her house, and of her horse and chaise, which were to be kept at her disposal. Later, in 1833, she surrendered the farm upon a life lease to herself. She was most probably led to this retirement from her active business life by the premonitions of that malady, a renal affection, of which she died after a short final illness,—and not because of the infirmities of age.

Mrs. Marsh was not identified in membership with any church, but every act of her life bears witness to her Christian character. In her several donations and public bequests her unsectarian spirit found expression and bore testimony to her large-heartedness. The bell upon the first meeting-house in Hinsdale village was not given by her to the church, but to the town, as is shown by the fact that when finally broken the proceeds of its sale went into the town treasury. So, also, her bequest for the maintenance of public preaching in Vernon was not made to any church organization, but to the town, and for the purpose of gathering the people together for religious exercises, thus to controvert what she observed to be a laxity in the religious habits of the people there. And, in her larger gift, for the founding of a public institution, her philanthropy was likewise unrestricted. In the spirit of the Master she humbly sought
"to provide a home for the poor insane."

Vermont Asylum
FOR THE
Insane.
ITS ANNALS
FOR
FIFTY YEARS