

1865, Almon W. Griswold, Esq., of New York, purchased of Mr. Tefft's widow both sets of the autographs of the signers of the declaration, and one of the signers of the constitution. One set of the declaration signers was subsequently sold through E. French, to the New York State Library; and the other, though not quite complete, was disposed of a few years since, through Messrs. Sabin & Sons, to Jos. W. Drexel, of New York. The remainder of Mr. Tefft's valuable collection was sold at auction in New York, in March, 1867, the catalogue filling 264 pages, and estimated to comprise some twenty-five thousand specimens.

Dr. Sprague commenced his collection apparently as early as the autumn of 1815—as soon, perhaps, as Mr. Tefft, and possibly even earlier. “To him,” says Charles F. Fisher, of Philadelphia, “more than to any other single individual in the country, are we probably indebted for the discovery and preservation of large masses of invaluable correspondence of the colonial and Revolutionary times, which in old trunks and boxes, in garrets and cellars, were fast hastening to decay, and exposed daily by accident or carelessness to destruction, until rescued by his zealous and untiring researches.”

Dr. Sprague was born at Andover, Conn., October 16, 1795, and graduated at Yale College in 1815. During the latter part of his senior year in college, he was invited, through the Hon. Timothy Pitkin and Prof. Silliman, of Yale, to go to Virginia, as an instructor in the family of Maj. Lawrence Lewis, a nephew of Gen. Washington, whose wife, *née* Eleanor Park Custis, was the granddaughter of Mrs. Washington, and the adopted daughter of the great chief. He accepted the invitation, and, accordingly, in the autumn of 1815, he set out for Maj. Lewis' country seat, Woodlawn, which had been a part of Washington's plantation, near Mount Vernon. Here he was cordially received, and remained as a tutor in the family until June, 1816.<sup>1</sup>

It was during this period—embracing probably nearly

<sup>1</sup> Charles B. Moore's "Memoir of Dr. Sprague," in *N. Y. Genealogic-Biographical Record*, Jan., 1877.