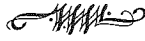


# Preface



*“A pure biography is written with no purpose other than that of conveying to the reader an authentic portrait of the individual whose life is being narrated.”<sup>1</sup>*

This is a book about Christian Science. It has to be. No disciple or crusader ever lived in more single-minded devotion to a cause or a leader than did Bliss Knapp to the Cause of Christian Science and its Leader, Mary Baker Eddy. From his seventh year on, the example of his parents, Mrs. Eddy’s students, was ever before him. He has paid tribute to this example in his book *Ira Oscar Knapp and Flavia Stickney Knapp, A Biographical Sketch* (1925). In addition, however, was Bliss Knapp’s own relationship to Mrs. Eddy from the time of her visit to the Knapp farm in Lyman, New Hampshire, in 1888, to the time of her passing in 1910. Every biographical fact presents evidence that the entire adult life of Bliss Knapp was directed by his divinely inspired mission to “preach the gospel,” that is, to spread the good news of Christian Science and the truth about its Founder and to heal the sick. One sentence from the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, which he was fond of quoting was: “The Christian Scientist wisely shapes his course, and is honest

and consistent in following the leadings of divine Mind.” (458:25–28) This statement might be taken as the keynote of his biography.

Even as Bliss Knapp said of his father Ira that he “was by nature a student,”<sup>2</sup> so it might be said of the son that he was by nature a teacher. As a teacher myself, I marveled, as I sat in Mr. Knapp’s class in Christian Science, at his successful teaching techniques. He was, first of all, a man with a powerful, deep-rich voice, a voice tempered by years on the lecture platform. I daresay no one of normal hearing, even in those days before public address systems, failed to hear every word of his lectures or of his reading in The Mother Church. Second, Mr. Knapp knew how to present an idea. He knew the necessity of repetition; he used to say that if you said something once, perhaps a third of your audience got it; if twice, about half — but if you wanted your whole audience to grasp the idea, you had to say it at least three times. Consequently, his lectures and addresses to his Students’ Association were like tapestries in which certain ideas kept reappearing like gold or crimson threads. Not only are his articles, lectures and papers superbly clear and comprehensible; they are memorable. And everything he ever said or wrote was delivered with conviction. Often a statement would be accompanied by a twinkle of his hazel eyes. Like all good teachers he knew the virtue of a sense of humor, so that even his most profound statements came across pleasantly. He felt strongly about many issues, and, again like a good teacher, was decisive in his stand. He stood for the best of the past; he had a strong historical sense. He kept abreast of world affairs and prayed over them. He consulted those among his students who had expertise along these lines, Erwin D. Canham, Editor in Chief of *The Christian Science Monitor*, and Roscoe Drummond, formerly of the *Monitor*, later a columnist of national reputation. Mr. Knapp was proud of his students; he felt gratified by their success as practitioners of Christian Science, as professional people, as church workers and effective citizens. He often made reference, in his Association papers, to “a member of this Association,” and cited the member for his accomplishments or his achievement of a position of responsibility. Like the best of teachers, Mr. Knapp not only took a genuine interest in his students but he kept in touch with them. His correspondence was very extensive, running to hundreds of letters, many of them, especially when he was on lecture tours, written by hand.

For these letters the writer is grateful, especially as many other written records were dropped in the incinerator when it was apparent to the Knapps that they would have no further use for them. Among these records was Bliss's early correspondence with Eloise Mabury, who became his wife in 1918. Also among the records destroyed were many of his papers relating to his experience on The Christian Science Board of Lectureship: itineraries, lecture engagements and letters relating to the lectures. This fact makes what remains the more precious. And we are very grateful to Mrs. Knapp for having preserved, with scrupulous care and in beautiful order, much that relates to their life together, especially her diaries or guest books, often providing detailed accounts of those who visited the Knapps at 7 Chatham Street, Brookline, at Little's Point, Swampscott (during the summer), and later at their lovely apartment in Longwood Towers.

I am especially grateful to Mrs. Knapp, who has generously put at my disposal everything in her possession relating to the history of the Knapp family.

In an article entitled "The Importance of Church Membership" (*Christian Science Sentinel*, March 2, 1946), Bliss Knapp wrote of ideal church members: "They maintain the clarity of their spiritual sense through self-discipline and adherence to Principle; and because of their fidelity to that Principle, they gain the crown of life." These lines are a capsule description of their author.

CHARLES THEODORE HOUP

1976

QUEBEC

CANADA

UNITED STATES

MAINE

VERMONT

Montpelier

Littleton  
Lyman  
Mt. Washington  
Fabyan House and  
White Mt. Chapel

Augusta

NEW  
HAMPSHIRE

Portland

ATLANTIC  
OCEAN

Concord

**Significant  
New England  
Sites In Bliss  
Knapp's Life**

Georgetown

Wayside Inn, Sudbury

Swampscott  
Brookline  
Boston

MASSACHUSETTS

Hartford

RHODE  
ISLAND  
Providence

Cape Cod

CONNECTICUT

Martha's Vineyard

Nantucket  
Island