

ton. In the volume numbered 2, belonging to this first library, the inscription reads, "This book belongs to the Book Company in Newington, 1752." It is quite likely that the credit for starting this library, which exerted a wide and potent influence, belongs to the Rev. Joshua Belden, who had been ordained as minister five years earlier. Dr. Brace, in his half-century discourse, says that Mrs. Williams, the second wife of the rector, was a member of the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge," and that through her agency Mr. Belden and other ministers in the neighborhood "were furnished with good books for distribution." A small fee was charged for the use of the books, which numbered two or three hundred, and were naturally of a strongly religious character. The first free library was the "Charity Library," which originated through a legacy of Jedediah Deming, who left sixty pounds for the purchase of "good orthodox books of divinity—of Calvinistical principles" in his will made April 14, 1787, five days before his death. Not many years later, in the neighborhood of 1800, some persons who wished to be fed on something beside a theological diet, established the "Social Library," which was composed mainly of historical and literary works.

The Young People's Literary Association, which was organized "to form a library in Newington for general circulation," founded a library of high excellence in 1877.

The new Town Library was opened to the public Saturday afternoon, October 19, 1895. The books are kept in the upper story of the town hall, and have been surprisingly well patronized. The directors have exercised wise discrimination in selecting the books, and the library has already won a permanent place among the ennobling influences of the community.

No man of national eminence has been born in Newington, though several of her sons have attained more than a local prominence. Probably the two most distinguished natives of Newington were Martin Welles and David Lowrey Seymour. Martin Welles, a lineal descendant of Gov. Thomas Welles, and eldest child of Gen. Roger Welles, was born December 7, 1788, and died January 18, 1863. He was graduated from Yale College in 1806, and was admitted to the Hartford county bar in 1810. Three years later he removed to Newburgh, N. Y., where he practiced his profession until 1820, when ill health compelled him to abandon it. He returned to Wethersfield, and until 1850 he was principally engaged in the healthful employments of a farm life. For the years 1829 and '30 he was a state senator, and during the years 1827, '28, '31 and '32 he was a representative from Wethersfield in the General Assembly. For the last two years he was elected speaker of the House, and presided with unusual ability. He was also for some years associate judge of the Hartford county court. In politics he was a strong Whig, and succeeded after several years of



JUDGE MARTIN WELLES.



arduous exertion in securing the site of the present state prison at Wethersfield. From 1850 until his death, thirteen years later, he practiced the law in Hartford. He was a man of great intellectual strength, and his masterly power as a pleader was recognized by all. Tall and massive in appearance, cultured and dignified in speech, and possessed of a stern, unbending will, he carried conviction in his utterances. Had he been endowed with a more tact-



AT LUTHER'S MILL, CLAYTON.

ful and engaging disposition, he might have reached positions of greater honor to which his abilities easily entitled him.

David Lowrey Seymour, the son of Ashbel and Mary Lowrey Seymour, was born in Newington, December 2, 1803, and died October 11, 1867. He was graduated from Yale College in 1826, and at his graduation delivered the Greek oration. He then began the study of law in the law department of his alma mater under the instruction of the celebrated David Daggett, and in 1829