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JAMES R. SNOWDEN.

COLONEL JAMES ROSS SNOWDEN, LL.D., a distinguished citizen of Philadelphia, who during his long and active public career filled successively the offices of Speaker of the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania, Treasurer of the State of Pennsylvania, Treasurer of the Mint and Assistant Treasurer of the United States at Philadelphia, Director of the Mint of the United States, and Prothonotary of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and who was widely known as a numismatist and the author of valuable works on medals, coins, coinage and currency, was born in Chester, Delaware County, Pennsylvania, in 1810, and died at his home, near Philadelphia, March 21, 1878. He was

a member of one of the oldest families of Pennsylvania, whose founder, John Snowden,—his great-grandfather—was the owner of land within the present limits of that State as far back as 1678, about which time branches of the family were established in Maryland and Virginia. John Snowden settled in Philadelphia as early as 1685. Developing an interest in public affairs he was chosen to fill several important political offices, and in 1715 was elevated to the bench as one of the Judges of the Court of Common Pleas of Bucks County. In 1704 he was elected an elder of the old Market Street Presbyterian Church, the original of the present First Presbyterian Church on Washington Square, and it is the opinion of those who have investigated the subject that he was the first person in the Colonies thus honored by the Presbyterian Church. His son, the Hon. Isaac Snowden, the grandfather of the subject of this sketch, was born in Philadelphia in 1732. He also attained to prominence in local affairs, sat in the City Councils, was a County Commissioner during the Revolutionary War, in which he warmly espoused the cause of the colonists and rendered valuable service as a commissary for supplying the Continental Army. His public duties after the war were no less conspicuous, as he was Treasurer for many years of the City and County of Philadelphia and also a member of the Select Council. He was likewise a Trustee of the College of New Jersey ("Princeton"), an elder in the Second Presbyterian Church, a member of the Committee,—presided over by the Rev. Dr. Witherspoon—that prepared "The Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church in the United States," and the incumbent of various other positions in the church. His son, the Rev. Nathaniel Randolph Snowden, D.D., also a native of Philadelphia, was born in 1770. At the age of seventeen he was graduated at Princeton College and for many years was engaged in educational work, having charge of several collegiate and classical institutes in Pennsylvania. He was the first Presbyterian minister at Harrisburg, to which place he removed when it was merely a hamlet. Under the careful supervision of this accomplished scholar and high-bred gentleman, James Ross Snowden, the subject of this sketch, who was his youngest son, received his early training, part of the time being a student at Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. This was while Dr. Snowden was at the head of that institution and before it passed into the hands of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Young Snowden made the best use of his exceptional educational advantages, and while yet a student developed a marked interest in and taste

for both science and literature. Deciding to adopt the profession of law he pursued the usual preliminary studies in the office of a leading law firm in Philadelphia, and having passed the regular examinations was admitted to the bar, *ex gratia*, at the early age of nineteen. Soon afterwards he removed to Franklin, Venango County, Pennsylvania, where he practiced with so much skill that he attracted the attention of the Attorney-General of the State, who appointed him a Deputy Attorney-General. Shortly after receiving this honor he entered actively into politics and was elected to the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania several terms in succession. In 1842 and again in 1844 he was chosen Speaker of the House and presided with such an honorable regard for the rights and privileges of all that no appeal was taken from any of his decisions. At the close of each session he received the unanimous thanks of the House and was specially complimented by the most distinguished of his colleagues for "his full and entire impartiality." In 1845 his name was presented in the State Legislature for the office of Senator of the United States. He belonged to the dominant party and was so well appreciated that, although under thirty-six years of age at the time, he came very near to receiving the nomination. As it was he had the highest vote cast on the first ballot, but fell a little short of obtaining the majority, which was cast subsequently for another candidate. A little later in 1845, his name was brought forward for the office of State Treasurer and was placed in nomination by a large majority on the first ballot. At the polls the nomination was heartily endorsed and he was elected. Colonel Snowden entered upon the duties of this office at a period when it was perhaps the most important in the State. The spirit of repudiation was rife among the leading men of the State, many of whom had yielded to the false and dishonorable idea that to repudiate the public debt was to benefit the people and advance their own political fortunes. Several of the most populous and intelligent counties of the State had been carried by the "Anti-Tax Party," so-called, "which would have been better named 'Repudiation Party.'" Colonel Snowden's ability in high public position had already been tested, and all recognized his incorruptible integrity. His conduct immediately upon assuming the Treasurership satisfied the most scrupulous observers that he was the proper man for the place and won the confidence of all parties. His wise, temperate, but firm policy arrested the tide of repudiation, and under his administration many of the counties which had been carried by the "Anti-Tax Party" consented to pay

their tax into the State Treasury. The effect was an immediate improvement in the credit of the State, which previously had been very low, and State bonds, which brought only thirty-six cents on the dollar at the time of his election, rapidly advanced in price and have never since declined. "The credit of the Commonwealth, before that time tarnished by non-payment of the interest on the public debt, was restored and maintained." This splendid achievement was justly lauded at the time by the leading newspapers of the State, which paid the highest compliments to Colonel Snowden's executive and financial skill and praised in no ordinary term, his energy and integrity as a public officer. At the close of his first term as State Treasurer he was re-elected and served a second term. His fine talent in finance had given him a National reputation, and when his term as State Treasurer expired President Polk voluntarily tendered him the dual position of Treasurer of the United States Mint and Assistant Treasurer of the United States at Philadelphia. Colonel Snowden accepted it and entered upon his new duties in 1847. He held both offices until the close of Polk's administration. He then resumed the practice of law and soon afterwards was appointed Solicitor of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. In 1853 he resigned this lucrative position to accept from President Pierce the appointment as Director of the Mint of the United States, succeeding Judge Pettit, who had died after a brief incumbency of the office. In this position, the duties of which demanded exceptional abilities and attainments of a special character and high order, Colonel Snowden remained for seven years, with great satisfaction to the Government and the people, and then resigned it to accept the office of Prothonotary of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, to which he had been elected by the unanimous vote of the Judges of the Court named, and in which he succeeded Robert Tyler, son of ex-President Tyler, who left Philadelphia to unite his fortunes with the Southern Confederacy. By successive re-appointments Colonel Snowden was continued as Prothonotary until September, 1873, when he again resumed the practice of law in Philadelphia, and continued in it until shortly before his death. Notwithstanding the engrossing and often laborious character of his numerous important public duties, Colonel Snowden never neglected the gratification of his scientific and literary tastes, and his achievements in these directions alone would suffice to give him a permanent and distinguished place among the leading men of the State and Nation. Besides taking a deep interest in historical research and aiding in

the work of the leading State societies for the cultivation of this and kindred subjects, he prepared and published a number of works which evince peculiar learning and research. One of the first of these to appear was published in 1860, and was entitled "A Description of Ancient and Modern Coins," and covered the fine cabinet collection of the United States Mint. A second edition of this valuable work, with plates, was issued in 1869. In 1863 he gave to the public a most valuable work entitled "A Description of the Medals of Washington; of National and Miscellaneous Medals, and of other Objects of Interest in the Museum of the Mint," which was illustrated with fac-simile engravings and biographical notices of the Directors of the Mint from its origin in 1792 to 1861. This was followed, in 1864, by a work of great value to students of Biblical history, entitled "The Coins of the Bible, and its Money Terms;" and, in 1868, by the articles on the Coins of the United States published in Bouvier's Law Dictionary. His other contributions to numismatics include a number of published addresses, pamphlets on currency, coinage and other subjects; seven annual reports of the Mint, and numerous papers contributed to periodical literature. These works were all in a department with which few are familiar and which fewer still could undertake. "Apart from their value to the numismatist, they are beautiful specimens of the printers' and engravers' art, and are universally acknowledged to be valuable additions to the scientific literature of America, and, indeed, the civilized world." One pamphlet from Colonel Snowden's pen, entitled "A Measure to secure to the People a Safe Treasury and a Sound Currency" (published by Benjamin F. Mifflin, Philadelphia, 1857,) possesses a peculiar interest from the nature of its suggestions, one of which, that providing for the issuing of coin certificates, was adopted by the Government of the United States in 1864. Colonel Snowden's original proposition was to issue certificates on the deposit of gold bullion as well as coin. Quite early in his experience as a mint official he became deeply interested in the subject of international coinage and some years prior to his death carried on a very remarkable correspondence with Lord Monteagle, ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer (Great Britain and Ireland) and Lord Overstone, in reference to the decimalization of the British coinage, in the course of which he proposed a plan for assimilating British and American coinage. This plan, as simple as it was effectual, subsequently occupied the attention of the British International Commission. It was one of the best and most elaborate defences of the decimal system ever writ-

ten and was very favorably commented upon at the time by the British press. One of Colonel Snowden's latest publications is a work which proves the truth of Scripture testimony by the coins and money terms of the Bible and by other ancient coins, and part of which originally appeared as a series of articles in the *New York Observer*. Among his various historical productions should be specially named "The Corn-Planter's Memorial, an Historical sketch of Gy-ant-wa-chia, the Corn-planter, and of the Six Nations of Indians, with the Report of Samuel P. Johnson, on the erection of the monument at Jennesdaga, to the Memory of the Corn-planter," of which an edition of one thousand copies was published by order of the Legislature of Pennsylvania. Colonel Snowden was a writer of rare perspicuity and vigor, and his high scientific and literary attainments have been fittingly honored by several leading educational institutions, among others, Jefferson College, which, in 1845, conferred upon him the degree of Master of Arts, and in 1872, that of Doctor of Laws, the latter degree being received also in the same year from Washington College. Colonel Snowden's military title was honestly won by actual service as the Commandant of a regiment. Led by natural inclination he connected himself early in life with the State Militia, organizing in Venango County an efficient company, of which he was elected and commissioned Captain. Upon the formation of a regiment he was elected its Colonel; and in 1845, while holding this rank and command, he presided at the State Military Convention held at Harrisburg. During the Rebellion he was in command of the First Regiment of the Pennsylvania Home Guard, which was prompt to offer its services to the National Government in times of emergency. Throughout his whole life he was a consistent member of the Presbyterian Church and as an elder in it took an active part in its councils and work. In all the various responsible positions which he filled he displayed the noblest qualities, and at all times enjoyed the respect and confidence of the public. It has been said of him that "he never filled a public trust but to the public advantage." Naturally modest and unobtrusive, he was always more useful than conspicuous. His life was of rare value as an illustration of virtuous success and as furnishing a splendid example for emulation, particularly in the administration of public trusts. Colonel Snowden was married in early life to Miss Susan E. Patterson, (daughter of the late General Robert Patterson of Philadelphia) who, together with six children, the issue of this marriage, survives her distinguished husband. Three of these children are sons, viz:

Robert P. Snowden, now Chief Engineer of the Amboy division of the Pennsylvania Railroad; Frank P. Snowden, of B. K. Jamison & Co., bankers, Philadelphia; and L. Randolph Snowden, Assistant Assayer at the United States Mint in Philadelphia.
