he was what might be termed profuse; but his philosophy of 
giving was different from that of other men. He would not give 
to be popular, nor because other men gave. He thought that 
common penury should be fully provided for, not by the uncer-
tain, unequal, and spasmodic gifts of private charity, but by a 
common contribution, justly levied in due proportion to men’s 
property and means; so that the rich few (so deemed by a loose 
common opinion) should not be cumbered by constant demands, 
measured by the judgment of those who ask rather than those 
who give. He cheerfully submitted to a common tax for any pur-
pose, because that was equal; but he was not willing to be at the 
mercy and dictation of every applicant for aid who might pre-
sume to gauge his pecuniary ability.

He was ambitious of an honorable standing and a good name; 
but he would not compromise, much less sacrifice, a principle for 
either. He was not adapted for the common arts of popularity 
and self-seeking. He was recluse and studious, although by no 
means of an unsocial or gloomy temperament. He was peculiarly 
nervous, and possessed of that passive courage which will face 
obloquy and misjudgment of motives with quiet endurance and 
a firm persistence in what is believed to be right, until time shall 
vindicate it.

His financial career was his pride; but, educated in a school of 
mercantile and financial integrity and of antique virtue, he did 
not advance at an equal pace with the growing looseness and 
lack of principle which, in his later years, began to pervade the 
realms of finance and wealth; when trusts were more commonly 
betrayed than kept; when ledgers began to record lying figures 
instead of honest entries; and when all the arts of fraud, in 
which he was unversed, became the study and practice of the 
favored depositaries of private and public confidence. He was 
eminently diligent, methodical, punctual, and thorough in busi-
ness, to the last moment; and no doubt the day of his death 
found all his affairs set in the most perfect order, and a large 
estate free of all complications, without anything to question or 
adjust.

He left a voluminous and well preserved correspondence with 
persons of various degrees of distinction and influence, extending 
through, at least, half a century, which more than anything else 
might show the value that was given to his opinions, and what 
confidence was reposed in his judgment and integrity, by men of 
high reputation in various departments of civil and literary life. 
He has also left an autobiography, copious, and probably com-
plete. It will be interesting, at least locally, and it will be trust-
worthy; for Mr. Johnson was not the man to fear any just 
judgment, or to disguise his peculiarities or his idiosyncracies, 
however well he might desire to stand in the opinion of men. 
He was not blind to his infirmities, but rather painfully conscious 
of them, and expected no special indulgence for them. Sensitive 
as he was, he did not seem to cherish resentments against men, 
but only against misconduct. His prejudices were not disguised; 
his friendships were not ostensibly ardent; he courted no 
man, he confided in some, but had no entangling alliances; he 
kept himself, from principle, in such a state of independence that 
no one out of his family could have a claim to demand any de-


Mr. Johnson was for many years a member of the Presbyterian, 
and more lately of the Protestant Episcopal Church.