He built a ship of the largest class then employed, and went in her to the East Indies, as an owner and supercargo. With his usual energy, to lose no time, he studied navigation on various voyages and made himself master of the science and of the practice as well.

He also made himself so familiar with the Dutch language, during his various residences in Holland and her East India colonies, that he spoke it with the facility and accuracy of a native Hollander. This language was the more important at that period, as the Dutch were almost the only great commercial nation of Europe which could maintain a practical neutrality, and so engross a large portion of its most valuable commerce.

How soon the knowledge of navigation, acquired during the leisure of the long sailing voyages, was to become a deliverance to him and all who sailed with him, little anticipated. Yet, on one of these voyages, overtaken by a terrific "cyclone," the ship was brought into the greatest peril and nigh to being wrecked.

So terrible was the storm that the captain and officers of the ship gave her up for lost, renounced their commands, and desired him to save the ship if it were in his power.

Clear-headed and self-possessed, in this dreadful emergency he did not despair. He took the responsibility, inspired the crew by his own example with new hope and courage, assumed and kept the command, finished the voyage, and carried the ship, with her large and valuable cargo, safely into port.

From that day he made a resolution that he would not own nor venture his interests in a ship which he did not himself command; and his action on the occasion which led to this resolve affords but a single illustration of the superb moral and physical courage which in him were striking traits which characterized his life.

His various enterprises proving successful, and having laid the foundation of a fortune, handsome at least for those days, he retired in a great degree from active business and settled in Hartford, Conn.

There he married, in 1811, Clarissa May Davis, daughter of Major Robert Davis,* of Boston, a woman whose personal beauty was only equalled by the loveliness of her character, and whose devotion to her family and cheerful interest in society made her remarkably attractive even at the advanced age to which she lived.

Wholly indifferent to public office, Mr. Ely was a decided Federalist in his politics, but would accept no appointment unless he deemed it his duty as a citizen and saw an opportunity of doing some direct and positive good to the community.

In a similar spirit he constantly availed himself of his medical knowledge to aid by advice and assistance the suffering poor around him.

* Major of artillery in the Revolution; in service at the "siege of Boston," and an active member of "The Boston Tea Party." His resemblance to Washington was so striking that he was often mistaken for him. When the troops followed the retreating British to the outlet of the harbor, he sent to his wife, by special messenger, the earliest news of their final departure, written on part of a "barrel-head," the only stationery at hand.

He was a merchant of Boston, brother of Hon. Caleb Davis [Speaker of the House of Representatives, Massachusetts, 1790, and delegate from Boston to the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention in 1797], and of Brigadier General Amasa Davis. All the brothers resided in Boston, and were members of the "Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts."