

J. HAMMOND TRUMBULL, '42.

[Continued from 7th page.]

"Now," said Professor Gray to my brother, "if you will prepare such a paper, I will go to Toronto and read it for you. If I should write on the subject in my own name, I should feel that I was strutting in borrowed plumage, for I've learned from you the most that I know about this thing." My brother did not write the paper, but he received this credit for his helpfulness from a man who was better known to the general public because he labored in one line rather than in many.

Again there came a letter from Professor Spencer F. Baird, of the Smithsonian Institute, the United States fish commissioner, saying that he had been asked by the committee of navigation in the United States Senate to furnish needed facts concerning the history of whale fishing and of seal fishing on the northwest coast of America. "As you know a great deal more about this subject than I do, I come to you for information," said Professor Baird. My brother wrote him fully in reply, and that letter was sent to Senator Anthony, of the Senate, by Professor Baird, with these accompanying words, as I recall them: "Your request for information about the whale and seal fisheries on our northwest coast has been referred to that marvel of erudition, Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull of Connecticut, and I send you his letter herewith."

One day I met Dr. Horace Bushnell on Main street, Hartford. He said: "I've got to write a sermon for the dedication of the Park Church, and I'm going down to have a talk with your brother before I begin it. I have to depend on him for the facts in a good many lines when I'm working along them." That sermon is known as "Building Eras," in the volume that bears that name among the posthumous papers of Dr. Bushnell. When Professor Calvin E. Stowe was leading a Congregational Bible class in Hartford, I met him hurrying down toward the Watkinson Library one Saturday afternoon. "I'm hoping to catch your brother before he leaves for home," he said. "I never feel quite ready for my Bible class till I've talked the subject over with him." It was this way with many a man of whom the world knows much, as well as with many more of those who were little known. He had help for all who needed help and he was glad to give it out to those who sought it honestly, even though he had little patience with those who questioned for mere curiosity, or as triflers.

It has been often said of him, as if that were his best claim to distinction, that he was best known as the one man living who could read Eliot's Indian Bible. This was a little annoying to him, and it came about in an amusing way. It is true that he was widely known as a scholar in the Indian languages, and that he could read Eliot's Indian Bible, but, as will be seen from such facts as those I have mentioned, it was not merely for this that he was valued by American scholars. Twenty years ago, or more, a copy of Eliot's Indian Bible was old at auction in New York for eight or nine hundred dollars. The "New York Tribune," in mentioning the fact, said that whereas John Eliot, the missionary, gave the chief portion of his life to translating the Bible into the Algonquin language, then spoken by a people extending from Labrador to North Carolina, and from Newfoundland to the Rocky Mountains, there was now only one man living who could read that book, and that was Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull of Hartford.

This was something concrete and tangible. The public could grasp it. It was just what a great many had been asking for, as the key of Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull's claim to special scholarship. The newspapers took it up as a good item; it passed from one paper to another. It was repeated at every sale of an Eliot Indian Bible, or at every mention of that work. Its frequent appearance, as the years went on, became annoying to its subject. His friends knew this. The poet, Edmund C. Stedman, said to me a while ago that he enjoyed asking my brother from time to time, if it was a fact that he could read Eliot's Indian Bible. One editor remarked that it was now said that Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull not only could read Eliot's Indian Bible, but that he conducted family prayers from it. So much was said on the subject in the public prints that a confused young man in Philadelphia said to me a while ago, in honest wonder, "I see, Dr.

Trumbull, that there's been a Bible published in New York that only your brother can read. I don't quite see what was the use of publishing such a book." And it did look a little singular.

Fifty years ago I would have said that my brother's chief prominence would be as a conchologist. He began by taking an interest in the shells on the seacoast by which we lived, and in those which were brought from foreign parts by whalers and sealers sailing out from that port. He studied these carefully, and became familiar with the shells of salt water and fresh, and of the land. His classified collection came to be one of the largest in America. He was in correspondence with the prominent naturalists of the United States, and enlarged his collection by valuable exchanges and by purchase. But when, a few years later, this collection was packed and boxed for removal from his native place, he had become much interested in other branches of study to reopen it, and it has, I think, never been unpacked.

Many would still say that he was best known as a bibliographer. Certainly it was as the first librarian of the state library of Connecticut, and afterwards as the organizer and purchaser and librarian of the Watkinson Library of Hartford, that he did an important work for future generations. In the department of "Americana" he had no peer. He aided his friend, George Brinley, in the gathering of his great library in that field, and he was Mr. Brinley's literary successor in cataloging and disposing of that library. Because of his recognized superiority in this sphere it was sometimes difficult for him to purchase a book which he wanted at an auction. If he was known to want it, that was reason enough why others should. On one occasion he was at a New York book auction when other collectors were present. As he glanced at one small book among those on the counter, he saw that it was one he wanted, but he was too keen to say so. He waited in the rear of the crowd until it was put up. No one gave a bid. After several calls for an offer, the auctioneer said: "But I must sell absolutely. You can have this at your own price. Say something." "I'll give you fifty cents for it," said my brother carelessly, and it was his. George H. Moore, the librarian of the Lenox Library, who had looked at the book on the counter, and seen nothing desirable in it, came to my brother and said, "Trumbull, just what is that book?" My brother opened the book and pointed to a sentence in the preface. At this Mr. Moore started. "I'll give you a hundred dollars for that," he said. "I don't care to sell," said my brother, and he came away with his purchase.

From boyhood I was accustomed to go to my brother for information in any familiar or unfamiliar line of knowledge, and I never went in vain. His memory seemed unailing, and to be stored with whatever was called for. Before I had been to the East, or had become interested in Oriental research on my own account, I went, one morning, across the street to his home, directly opposite mine, and said: "James, I'm wanting to know something about an Eastern custom, and I don't know where to find it." Then I stated the case. He lifted his head from his writing and said, after a few seconds of thought, "Look in Southey's poems for 'Thalaba the Destroyer.' In the Notes, at the end of such a book of that poem, are references to that custom. I don't know where you can find it easier than there." And there I found what I wanted.

It is true that my brother did not write many books, but he helped many men who did. For myself, I often said to him that his brain was like a bonded warehouse, where the contents were stored in their original packages, ready for delivery for use or export to one who could prove a right to them; whereas my brain was like a peddler's pack, simply filled in for the next round among my customers—a large share of its contents drawn from that warehouse, without the payment of impost duties. It is a sincere pleasure now to confess my indebtedness to this brother in all these years, and my gratitude for myself, and for many others, that he was so long a helper to so many in so many spheres.

A concert by the Harvard Glee, Banjo and Mandolin Clubs will take place the night before the Yale game, Nov. 12, in Sander's Theater.

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