

bought Sapeloe Island, an extensive tract eleven miles long and four miles broad, and built there a modern Spanish home, where he entertained many notable guests, including President Coolidge, President Hoover and Colonel Lindbergh. It was on a visit to his house in 1929 that President Coolidge had his portrait painted by Salisbury. After the death of his wife, he developed in 1934 a fine residential property on Sea Island in Brunswick Bay. He also became actively concerned in business again through his attempt to establish the cotton industry on a firm footing, and was one of the founders of Southeastern Cottons, a dominant corporation in the textile field. Mr. Coffin married Matilda V. Allen of Battle Creek, Michigan, October 30, 1907, and after her death on February 26, 1932, he married Gladys Baker of New York, daughter of A. Herbert Baker, who survived him. He had no children.

Mr. Coffin received the honorary degrees of Eng.D. from Michigan in 1917, LL.D. from Mercer University in 1929, and Sc.D. from Georgia School of Technology in 1931. Although not a man of cultural aspirations, he was interested in scholarship and historical research. It was due to the suggestion of his friend Mr. Coolidge, then President of this Society, that he was elected a member of the American Antiquarian Society in 1931. He visited the Library with Mr. Coolidge in the summer of that year, and thereafter manifested much interest in the Society.

C. S. B.

WILBERFORCE EAMES

When the day's work brings to light a new piece of bibliographical information or a hitherto unknown seventeenth century imprint, I think at once: "How delighted Mr. Eames will be when I send this find to him," and then I remember—and the new discovery loses much of its charm, for the most distinguished of

all American bibliographers has made his last collation and those who sat at his feet have lost their greatest teacher and most understanding friend. I like to remember the shy, half-quizzical smile with which he greeted the friends who came to his office at the New York Public Library and the gleam in his blue eyes as he examined a treasured volume submitted to the library and perhaps said: "We must buy this important book, for American scholars need it. The only other copy is in the Strahov Monastery at Prague and lacks the folded plate and the last four pages of the appendix."

An editorial in the *New York Herald-Tribune* paid him this tribute: "It probably is not too much to say of Dr. Wilberforce Eames, as some of his admirers did, that he was the best educated man in America and one of the four or five best educated men in the world." Though Mr. Eames would have denied that he merited such praise, it was not far from the truth. He was a Renaissance scholar in our modern world, for his learning embraced something of all human knowledge. He is remembered as an outstanding authority upon the literature of American history because his daily work was chiefly within this field, but Mr. Eames was as familiar with the Gutenberg Bible as with the Eliot Indian Bible which, now that he is dead, no one can read. He knew obscure native African languages and it was not uncommon to find him enjoying the news of the day from the pages of a Chinese newspaper. In fact, he read with ease all of the usual and many of the unusual languages of the earth. One evening a lady came to the reference desk of the library and said: "I am planning to give a party for thirty guests and wish to have this simple phrase written in a different language on the place card of each. My friends and I have filled in the half dozen easy and obvious languages. Is there anyone here who can help me with the others?" I took her to Mr. Eames who smilingly agreed to help her out. Pen in hand, he tackled the formidable pile

of place cards and in a few moments had written out the phrase on each, in Chinese, Japanese, Sanscrit, Eskimo, Natick Indian and other primitive dialects as well as in the more familiar languages of Europe. On the back of each card he noted, in his clear and precise hand, the language in which it was written, handed the cards back to their owner with a smile and returned to his studies. Not many knew how Mr. Eames spent his holidays and few would have guessed that he might be found at the New York Historical Society classifying and translating their collection of Assyrian and Babylonian tablets or that he had at his Brooklyn home the largest private library of these cuneiform inscriptions in America.

As Mr. Eames travelled in his reading from country to country and from continent to continent, he learned the languages of the far corners of the world so that he might read their literatures. He liked to own the books he read and so his library grew, but only after he had finished a volume did he write his name on the upper corner of its fly leaf, for he felt that he could not really claim it as his own until he knew its contents. But after he had read the book through and had made his notes from it, the volume lost interest for him unless it was a reference work which he would need to consult again. If Mr. Eames had kept his library together it would probably be the largest and most scholarly private library in America today. But his modest Brooklyn home would eventually become crowded to the door and he would sell twenty thousand volumes at auction or a few thousand specialized works to form the foundation of a new collection in some library or university and so make room for his current accessions. In this way he disposed of one library after another although he never forgot what he had learned from the books that were gone. He finally left a house full of his most treasured tracts and folios and his priceless lifetime's accumulation of historical and bibliographical notes to the library which he had served so long and so well.

Although Mr. Eames never left his own country, his acquaintance with scholars was world wide. Those in America came to him, those abroad wrote to him and all of them were in his debt for painstaking assistance cheerfully given. He was too busy helping others and adding to his own store of knowledge to publish more than a couple of dozen titles under his own name but hundreds of prefaces in other men's books pay eloquent tribute to the assistance he gave to the scholarly world. The unskilled novice from the library school, still damp behind his bibliographical ears, the unkemp East Side book peddler seeking information which would enhance the value of a recent find, the wealthy collector inquiring into the intricacies of states and issues or the historian in search of a lost rare edition, all found the same modest, patient, half humorous welcome, and all went away with their problems solved. Always ready to drop his own important work to help another, his knowledge was exact and complete and if his visitor found a book which Mr. Eames had never seen, he could be sure that he had a treasure rarer than those "unknown to Lowndes."

The Honorable Al Smith and Wilberforce Eames had one thing in common, in addition to their sense of humor and their honorary degrees from Harvard, and that was their lack of formal education. But one had a genius for government and the other for historical research and no lack of schooling could keep them from becoming eminent in their chosen fields. If Al could refer to the Fulton Fish Market as his university, so Mr. Eames might have said that his alma mater was Gillespie's bookstore in Brooklyn for there his real education began.

Wilberforce Eames was the only surviving child of a Yankee schoolteacher whose paternal great-grandfather had fought at Lexington. When Mr. Eames was born, on October 12, 1855, his family was living in Newark, New Jersey, but they soon moved to

Brooklyn, New York, where he lived in frugal contentment among his books the rest of his long and useful life. His formal schooling ended at the age of thirteen when he went to work, first as a printer's devil, then as a postal clerk and mail carrier and finally, in 1873, as a clerk in Edward R. Gillespie's bookstore. Here, he began his "university course" at the age when more favored but less talented youths were entering Harvard. He graduated from one bookstore to another, learning much from the books in his care and from the scholars and collectors whom he met. He served as a book peddler at Methodist camp meetings, compiled catalogs for store and auction sales and waited on customers who were not slow to notice the remarkable knowledge of this modest young bookman.

After a dozen years in the book trade, Mr. Eames was discovered by Dr. George H. Moore, head of the Lenox Library, who carried him off to become his personal assistant. When Mr. Moore died in 1892, Mr. Eames became Assistant Librarian and was promoted to the librarianship in 1893. Here he worked happily at the great task of organizing the magnificent private library of Americana and incunabula collected by James Lenox into a modern public reference library for scholars. The collection grew rapidly under his skilled direction and became famous among historical students the world over. In 1911, the Lenox Library was joined to the older Astor Library and the Tilden Trust to form the present New York Public Library and Mr. Eames, now installed in the new building at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-Second Street, became the chief of the American History Division which included the library's collections of rare books, maps and manuscripts. Wishing to be relieved of administrative duties, the post of Bibliographer was created for him in 1916. In this position he spent the last 21 years of his life, giving daily assistance to scholars and to his library. He seldom ventured very far afield, though he paid weekly visits to the New

York Historical Society and frequently dropped in on his old friend Lathrop C. Harper across the street or spent an hour in the sumptuous office of Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach up by St. Patrick's. Once a year he spent a day at the John Carter Brown Library at Providence, and occasionally was lured a few miles away from Manhattan to visit the private library of Thomas W. Streeter or some other collector friend. It was fitting that his last scholarly enterprise was the preparing of a catalogue of the library of the late Herschel V. Jones, the greatest collection of Americana still in private hands. This he had just finished, with the introduction partially completed when, on December 6, 1937, the word "Finis" was added to the final chapter of his useful life.

Few people thought of Mr. Eames as a lover of the out-of-doors but L. Nelson Nichols or Henry F. DePuy, if he were alive, could tell of happy days on fishing trips or on long hikes through rain or shine along the rugged trails of the Adirondacks, with nights of bookish conversation around the camp fire. From these summer vacations in the woods and mountains, Mr. Eames brought back hundreds of beautiful photographs which, neatly labeled, fill many albums in testimony of his love of nature and of the simple joys of lake and hill and sky.

Though a bachelor, living alone among his books, Mr. Eames was a great lover of children. For years, the youngsters of his neighborhood in Brooklyn counted him their staunch and understanding friend. He often gave them apples and pennies when they called to see him, for they were always welcome, and some of them, years later, loyally followed him to his final resting place in Evergreen Cemetery in Brooklyn.

Mr. Eames' most important scholarly publication was his continuation of Joseph Sabin's "Dictionary of Books Relating to America," the most ambitious and the most useful aid to the study of Americana ever attempted. This great work had been begun by a

learned bookseller in 1867 and he had completed the alphabet as far as "Pennsylvania" when he died in 1881. Mr. Eames, with no thought of reward other than the knowledge he would gain in the process, volunteered to continue the work. This he did single handed until he was forced by pressure of his library duties to set the task aside in 1892 while working on the "Smiths." In 1927, he took up the work where he had left it 35 years before. Three years later, the principal burden of editing the dictionary was shifted to younger shoulders, though Mr. Eames' invaluable advice aided the project to the end and he was entirely responsible for the section devoted to Vespuccius. The task was finally finished in 29 volumes in 1936 and Mr. Eames had the satisfaction of signing the preface to the last volume. Many of the intricate bibliographical studies which Mr. Eames contributed to this work could never have been completed without his vast knowledge, his painstaking and exact scholarship. These include his descriptions of the various editions of the Bay Psalm Book, Ptolemy, Sir Walter Raleigh, Captain John Smith and Vespuccius. His other notable bibliographical works include his study of John Eliot's translations into the Natick Indian language, and two important papers which he prepared for this Society: "Early New England Catechisms," 1897, and a study of the publications of Benjamin Franklin's interesting nephew: "The Antigua Press and Benjamin Mecom," 1928.

The American Antiquarian Society takes great pride in the fact that it was the first learned body to recognize Mr. Eames' abilities in his chosen field. On the recommendation of Dr. Samuel A. Green, Librarian of the Massachusetts Historical Society, he was elected to membership in our Society in April, 1893, just after he had become Assistant Librarian of the Lenox Library. At the time of his death he was the second senior member of the society. He was a member of many other learned societies here and abroad. Perhaps no honor ever made him happier than when he

was given the gold medal of the Bibliographical Society of England, for he was the first American to receive this award. He was also given the gold medal of the New York Historical Society and on the same occasion his oil portrait, painted for the Society by Dewitt M. Lockman in 1931 (by far his finest portrait), was unveiled. He was one of the founders of the Bibliographical Society of America and its librarian from 1905 to 1909, a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, an Honorary Officer of the Academie d'Instruction Publique des Beaux Arts et des Cultes of the French Republic and an honorary member of the Grolier Club, to name only a few of his distinctions. He was the recipient of three honorary degrees: the M.A. of Harvard in 1896, the LL.D. of Michigan and the Litt.D. of Brown in 1924. R. W. G. V.

CHESTER NOYES GREENOUGH

Chester Noyes Greenough, son of William Smith and Elizabeth Macfarland (Noyes) Greenough, was born at Wakefield, Massachusetts, June 29, 1874, and died at his home in Belmont, February 26, 1938. After courses in the Wakefield public schools, he entered Harvard, from which he was graduated with the degree of A.B. in 1898, followed by A.M. in 1899 and Ph.D. in 1904. He served as instructor in English at Harvard until 1907 when he was elected professor of English at the University of Illinois. Here he remained until 1910, when he returned to Harvard as assistant professor of English, to become full professor five years later. In 1919, he assumed the post of acting dean of the college, and two years later was appointed dean, thus to serve until 1927. As professor of English A, the required course for Harvard freshman, and as dean, he was known to thousands of students and alumni, inspiring in them a spirit of friendliness, a respect for his quality of decision and an admiration for his genius in organization. He was active in the develop-

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