

After a course at the Harvard Law School, he entered practice in the office of Herbert Parker, former attorney-general of Massachusetts. In 1908 he joined Frank C. Smith, Jr., to form the firm of Smith & Gaskill, six years later uniting with Charles M. Thayer under the name of Thayer, Smith & Gaskill. This partnership became one of the leading law firms in Worcester, Mr. Gaskill himself specializing in business law. He was a director of several local banks, and president of the People's Savings Bank from 1918 to 1933. He was treasurer of Worcester Academy, active in relief work during the World War, and senior warden of All Saints Church, all of which positions he gave up in 1933 at the time of his retirement from active business because of ill health.

He married, June 1, 1905, Caroline Dewey Nichols, who was the daughter of the late President of this Society, Dr. Charles L. Nichols, and who died in 1933. Mr. Gaskill died February 10, 1940, being survived by three children—Charles Francis Gaskill, Mrs. William A. Wheeler, and Caroline N. Gaskill.

Mr. Gaskill was elected to the American Antiquarian Society in 1917 and was a constant attendant at its meetings. He was also a member of the Club of Odd Volumes of Boston. Inheriting a fine library of English literature from his father, he became much interested in book collecting, especially in the publications of the Strawberry Hill press. He was popular socially and his retirement from active life seven years before his death was the cause of sincere regret on the part of his many friends. C. S. B.

EBEN FRANCIS THOMPSON

Eben Francis Thompson, one of the most interesting literary figures that Worcester has produced, died December 2, 1939. He was born in Worcester, January 29, 1859, the son of Francis Henry and Fannie H. (Thomas) Thompson. He attended the local public schools, took a short course at the Harvard Law School, and was admitted to the bar in 1884. From that time until a few years before his death he practiced in Worcester, making

a specialty of corporation law. He married, November 20, 1895, Mary L. Johnson, daughter of William W. Johnson. She died in 1907 and he was survived by two children, Rev. Harold H. R. Thompson and Mary Frothingham, wife of James H. Colton.

Although Mr. Thompson was for over half a century a lawyer, it was for his literary pursuits that he was most widely recognized. Early in his career, in 1886, he compiled *The Student's Kent, an Abridgment of Kent's Commentaries*, which he once stated was written with the temerity of youth. For years he collected the varying editions of the Persian poet, Omar Khayyam, including the immortal translation by Fitzgerald. With the full realization of the magnificence of Fitzgerald's English verse, he wondered whether he could essay a poetical translation of the Persian text, but one which would more closely follow the original. Stimulated by the advice of his friend, Nathan Haskell Dole, he began to learn Persian. By 1906 he had finished his monumental task, bringing out in a volume of 290 pages his own translation of 878 quatrains of Omar, an achievement remarkable both for his poetic ability and his diligence. This volume he followed in 1907 with a work reproducing Fitzgerald's text, the Persian original with a transliteration, and his own versified translation. Finally, in 1910, he published a little volume of verse, *The Rose Garden of Omar Khayyam, Founded on the Persian*. This trilogy of Omar books brought him into close touch with many admirers of Persian literature. In 1900 he founded the Omar Khayyam Club of America, of which he was secretary for twenty years, and later, president.

Another hobby of Mr. Thompson's was his interest in Shakespeare. As early as 1887 he had published the text of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" for public reading. Long an actor in amateur dramatics, and especially conversant with all of Shakespeare's plays, he travelled several times to England to study Shakespeare traditions and scenes, to search for manuscripts, and to acquire what early printed works his purse would allow. He owned the second and fourth folios and possessed a respectable Shakespearian library. He wrote a brochure in 1923 entitled

"Bacon Not Shakespeare, being an Argument to Show that Francis Bacon, not William Shakespeare, Wrote the Plays and Poems Commonly Attributed to the Latter, by Adam Nutt, with an Introduction by Way of Dissent by Eben Francis Thompson," which really was an ingenious and amusing refutation of the Baconian theory. In his later life, Mr. Thompson compiled for his own use what he called a "reading translation" of Shakespeare, in which he marked off all of the hundred thousand lines of Shakespeare's plays with accents to show the correct pronunciation of Elizabethan words. In 1938, the year before his death, he wrote a pamphlet entitled *Some Hints on Public Speaking*, and in the introduction referred to his early attempts to perfect himself in Shakespearian speech, modelling his pronunciation upon that of Edwin Booth. In the meetings of the Worcester Shakespeare Club, organized in 1887, he participated for over fifty years.

His third interest was miniature books. He owned a large collection, with over two hundred examples. His crowning achievement in this field was the production of the smallest printed book in the world, which in conjunction with Hamilton B. Wood of the Commonwealth Press, he issued in 1933. This tiniest of volumes, six-sixteenths by three-sixteenths inches in size, contained the printing of forty-six quatrains of *The Rose Garden of Omar Khayyam*, and can be read only with the aid of a magnifying glass. After seven years of trial and error, the book was produced, a triumph of printing, but chiefly the result of Mr. Thompson's imagination and persistence.

Mr. Thompson belonged to many Worcester social organizations. He was secretary of the Worcester Club for a total period of twenty-five years. He revived the Worcester Association of Mutual Aid in Detecting Thieves, which was formed in 1795, but had lapsed into a rather passive state, and almost alone conducted its meetings for many years. He published an interesting historical sketch of the Society in 1929. He also arranged for the meetings of the Rufus Putnam Memorial Association, and wrote in 1930 *A Brief Chronicle of Rufus Putnam and his Rutland*

Home. He was elected to the American Antiquarian Society in 1933 and maintained a constant interest in the Society.

C. S. B.

JOHN WOODBURY

Our associate John Woodbury died on January 4, 1940. His was one of the oldest of American names, for he was a direct descendant of the John Woodbury who was sent to Cape Ann by the Dorchester Company in 1624. He was born in Lynn on January 26, 1856, a son of John Page and Sarah Elizabeth (Silsbee) Woodbury. He was prepared by a private tutor for Harvard, where he gathered a good collection of honors and was graduated in 1880. Harvard Law School followed, but one gathers that it interested him much less than the Dante Society of which he was secretary for nine years while it was under the guidance of Longfellow, Lowell, and Norton.

Mr. Woodbury settled down to the practice of law in Boston and on February 18, 1885, married Jennie Russell Churchill. His varied interests are illustrated by the fact that he was at one time president of the Lynn Board of Trade, and an active member of such institutions as the Boston Art Club, the Archaeological Institute of America, and the Young Men's Democratic Club. In 1897 he became secretary of the Class of 1880, and he served many times on Harvard visiting committees. For thirty-one years he was one of the trustees of the public reservations of Massachusetts. In 1896 he relinquished his law practice to become secretary and executive officer of the Metropolitan Park Commission, and for some time he was a member of the Massachusetts State Board of Publication. He retired from the Park Commission in 1911, thinking to spend the rest of his life serving as a trustee of private estates and practicing in the probate courts. The unexpected development of income tax complexities kept him busier than he had expected. Among his various trusts the Bemis Library was one of the more important. In 1924 Frank B. Bemis

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