

Thorington's Reply

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mission. Leaving Chattanooga the same night, the party reached Johnsonville, on the Tennessee river, next morning, where boats were taken for Pittsburg Landing. Two days were spent here on the interesting fields of Shiloh, the scene of General Grant's first great battle. One day was given to brief but intensely interesting memorial exercises at the eleven regimental monuments erected where the Iowa men were chiefly engaged.

The forenoon of the final day was given to sightseeing and revisiting the old Shiloh church, the Hornet's Nest, the Bloody Pond, the National Cemetery and other points of interest, and at 1:30 the whole surrounding country came to see and hear the final ceremony in front of the beautiful Iowa Memorial. The venerable Dr. A. L. Frisbie of Des Moines had served by invitation at the various dedications. He offered the invocation here in his beautiful spirit. Then followed an array of as brilliant addresses as ever graced any platform by Colonels Bell and Crosley, Governor Cummins, General Weaver and Speaker Kendall of Iowa, Gen. Basil Duke and Major Asquith of Kentucky and Hon. A. K. Abernethy, ex-Speaker of the Tennessee General Assembly.

This exercise completed the mission of the Governor and the Commissions in dedicating Iowa's Memorials on these historic grounds and transferring them to the final care of the general government. Iowa's work on these fields is of the noblest order throughout, and will for all time honor the State.

A. A.

THORINGTON'S REPLY.

James Thorington was for many years a prominent citizen of Davenport and frequently elected to offices of honor and trust in the city and county. He held many clerkships and was for several years sheriff of Scott county. In the year 1854 he was elected to Congress against Stephen Hempstead of Dubuque, who was then serving his last term as Governor of the State. Thorington was a brilliant campaigner, and

at that time there was much excitement in the public mind in regard to slavery extension. This found in him a sturdy and eloquent opponent. His term began January 6, 1855, and ended January 17, 1857. Mr. Thorington became unusually influential in the House of Representatives, although it was his first and only legislative service. This was out of the usual order, for young members are expected to keep still for a year or two and let older heads do the talking and managing. Hon. James Harlan and Gen. George W. Jones were the United States Senators. It was at that session that the land grants for the four parallel roads across the State of Iowa became laws. The contest was a severe one. Jones and Harlan cooperated freely in the Senate, and Thorington was as earnestly supported in the House by Augustus Hall of Keosauqua. There seems to be little on record in regard to the activity and influence of Mr. Hall, but Thorington won great credit. Senator Harlan declared in a public speech in Davenport, long after Thorington had retired from Congress, that, "of the men who had anything to do with the passage of the Iowa land grant bill, Mr. Thorington was of all others entitled to the credit." He was defeated for renomination by Hon. Timothy Davis of Dubuque, on the plea that the State needed a northern man. Davis bore an excellent reputation, but he also was retired at the end of his first term. He was succeeded by William Vandever of Dubuque. Mr. Thorington certainly deserved a re-election as an endorsement of his active and useful labors.

Thorington was of Protestant Irish descent, keen and quick-witted in repartee. Some time after his retirement from Congress he was appointed U. S. consul at Aspinwall, in the States of Colombia. The law at that time required him to be examined by the Civil Service Commission at Washington. Among the questions propounded to him was this: "How many Hessians did Great Britain send over here to subdue us during the revolution?" This would not seem to have been a very pertinent question, because few men remember figures. Mr. Thorington instantly remarked that he "had never been a good hand to recall figures, but one thing he knew concerning those Hessians, which was that a blank sight

more of them came over here than went back!" The examiner declared this answer sufficient and the supposition is that the remainder of the examination was not severe. He remained at Aspinwall eleven years and while he was there interfered to protect the steamship *Virginius*, which came into the bay of Aspinwall flying the U. S. flag. A Spanish gunboat steamed into the harbor and purposed to capture the *Virginius*, its captain demanding that the protection of the U. S. be withdrawn. This Mr. Thorington refused to do, and he gave the *Virginius* every protection in his power until she was able to steam out of the harbor and go her way. Mr. Thorington's action in this affair was heartily commended by the State Department, and elicited most favorable comment throughout the United States. It made him one of the best known consuls in the service. After he was relieved from duty at Aspinwall in 1882 he returned to Davenport, where he lived in retirement until the time of his death, which occurred in 1887.

Some of the newspapers have stated that the reply concerning the Hessians was made by a certain Missouri member of Congress who has been much before the public during the past few years. If the incident is worth relating, it should be given correctly. The prompt and witty reply was due to James Thorington.

A USEFUL PAPER.

We presume that most readers have seen the statements of writers giving the titles of books and periodicals which have been of most service to them in their life-work. It would be interesting to quote some of these statements if the authorities were convenient. But the purpose of this article is to present certain information for the benefit especially of librarians. The publication which has been of most service to the writer during the last twenty-five years is *The Athenaeum*, a weekly paper published in London, and devoted to literature, science, art, music and the drama. We have no hesitation in recommending it to practical librarians

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