

## A Useful Paper

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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into the harbor and purposed to capture the *Virginius*, its captain demanding that the protection of the U. S. be withdrawn.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.

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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

as the most helpful work with which we are acquainted. It is the organ of the great booksellers and publishers of London, and of some in New York, Boston and Philadelphia, and always contains the latest announcements in the direction of literature. Forthcoming books find a chronicler in *The Athenaeum*. It also makes a record of all book sales by auction, and private sales, when they are of sufficient importance. As a source of general literary information we consider it without a rival in periodical literature. Many a hint which we have derived from its columns has been in a way crystallized in the Historical Department of Iowa, and the end of its usefulness is not yet. For the benefit of people who would satisfy themselves in regard to its merits, we would say that the Iowa State Library has a complete set of this periodical from the first issue, January 1, 1828, until the present time. It has not changed its form nor the style of its type. It started as the same substantial weekly which appears to-day. The binding of the set in the State Library is not uniform, but is very excellent, a large portion of it being full calf. If we were managing one of the younger libraries of the State which have sprung into existence during the past ten years, there is no publication that we would consider of as much practical utility as the weekly visits of this excellent journal. By a curious state of things, it seems to have been kept in one family during most of the period of its existence. It is now edited by a son of one of the founders, who has also published an elaborate life of his father. Its reviews, while not as extended as those in some of the great monthlies or quarterlies, are very terse, vigorous and comprehensive. It has no mercy upon any man who issues a book of historical importance without an index, and its severe criticisms in this direction should be read and heeded in this country. Its work in the direction of natural science is of the utmost value, as also are its criticisms upon art, music and the drama. We recommend it to all librarians without limitations upon our idea of its excellence and usefulness, as well as to others who would keep in touch with the best information of the day in any of the directions we have enumerated.

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