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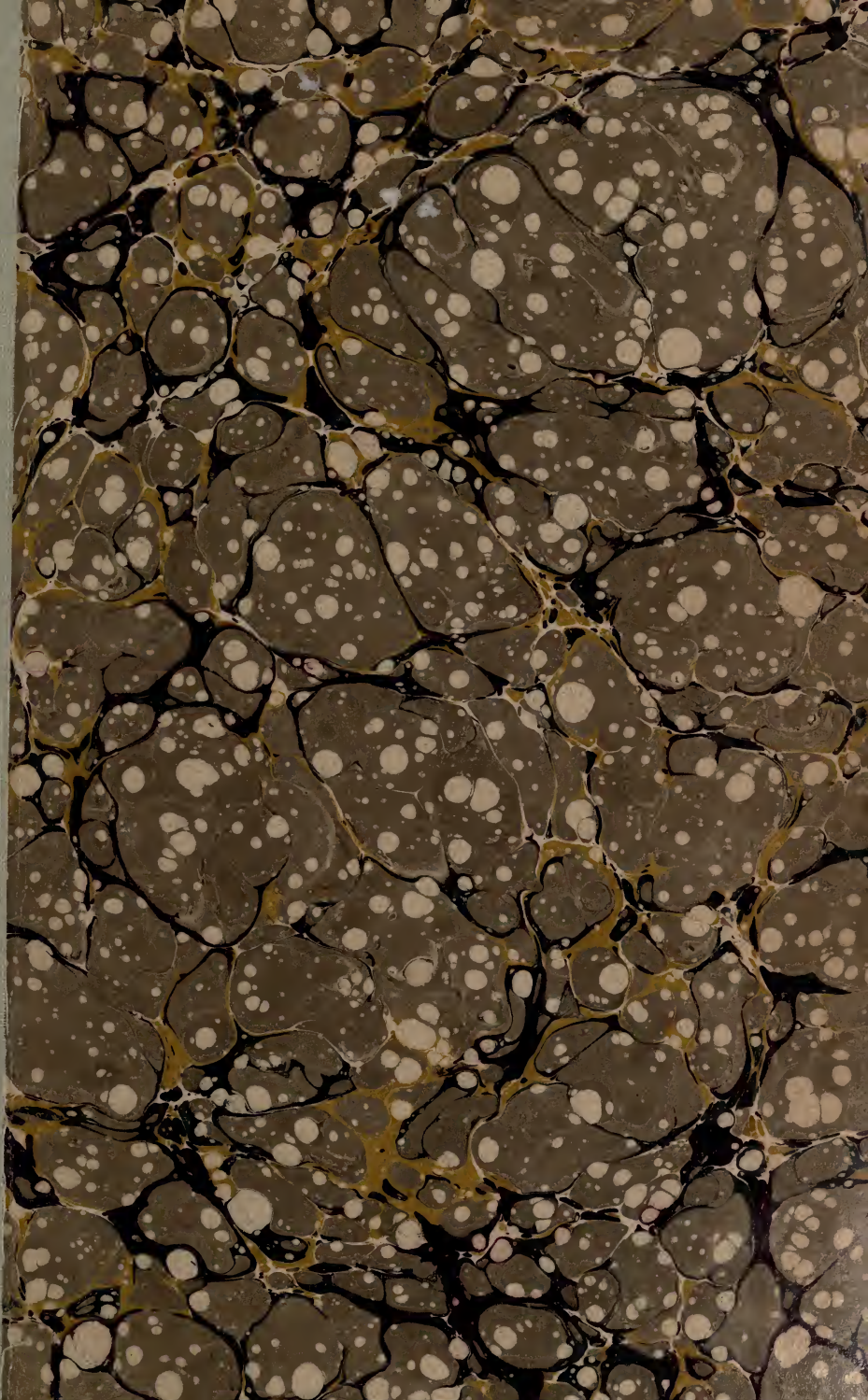
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*James Constantine Pilling*

**In Memoriam**

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**James Constantine Pilling**

**1846-1895**

*Baker, M.*



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James C. Peeling





## **JAMES CONSTANTINE PILLING.**

**1846--1895.**

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MR. JAMES CONSTANTINE PILLING, whose death occurred on July 26, 1895, was born in Washington, D. C., November 16, 1846. He was educated in the public schools and at Gonzaga College, and displayed in early boyhood that power of concentration and precision of intellectual effort which in later years distinguished his scientific work. He was employed, after his graduation, in Morrison's book store, and at the same time perfected himself in the then novel art of stenography. His ability in this direction soon became marked, and he quickly came to be regarded as one of the most expert shorthand writers in the country.

At the age of twenty he was employed as stenographer in court work, in committee work in Congress, and in various commissions established by Congress for the settlement of claims resulting from the civil war. In 1875 he joined the survey of the Rocky Mountain region, under Major J. W. Powell, which

organization gave a large share of attention to the Indian tribes, and from that time until 1880 he was almost continuously in the West among the native tribes, engaged in tabulating vocabularies of their languages and collecting tales of their weird mythology. The successful investigator in this line must spend many sleepless and weary nights, often go hungry and wet, and experience hardships in which only the enthusiasm born of a genuine love of science can sustain him, and during these years Mr. Pilling overtaxed his strength.

When, in 1881, Major Powell succeeded Mr. Clarence King in the directorship of the present United States Geological Survey, Mr. Pilling was made chief clerk of that bureau. He did not, however, abandon his ethnologic researches, but, as a member of the Bureau of Ethnology, also, he continued until his death to give to ethnologic and linguistic work all the time and strength he could command, and this sufficed to enable him to catalogue and index the literature relating to the languages of nearly all the Indian tribes of North America.

In 1885 there was issued by the Bureau of Ethnology a small edition of a volume of nearly 1,200 pages entitled "Proof-sheets of a Bibliography of the Languages of the North American Indians, by James Constantine Pilling." The compilation of this material had been begun some years previous as a card-cata-

logue for the use of members of the Bureau of Ethnology, and as a basis for a projected work by the Director, Major J. W. Powell, on the classification of the North American tribes by language. From year to year the work grew, and as material accumulated on his hands Mr. Pilling was encouraged to believe that a monograph of the subject might be compiled; the "Proof-sheets" was the result. This was considered by Mr. Pilling a preliminary, tentative, and incomplete catalogue, embodying information which he had gathered from printed and manuscript authorities, by personal visits to public and private libraries throughout the United States and Canada, and by an extensive correspondence. To this task Mr. Pilling had given the patient labor of years, and developed a genius for the work which later placed him in the foremost rank of bibliographers. His system of card-cataloguing and cross-referencing is a model for all workers in the same field.

After the issuance of the "Proof-sheets" Mr. Pilling had an opportunity to visit many of the national and private libraries of Europe, and in view of the large amount of new material thus collected, he was led to believe that a separate catalogue of the works relating to each of the more important linguistic stocks of North America might be prepared. In 1887 he began such a series of bibliographies, which occupied his attention to the time of his death. The

Eskimo was the initial volume; then followed, in order, the Siouan, Iroquoian, Muskhogean, Algonquian, Athapascan, Chinookan, Salishan, and Wakashan. Mr. Pilling's last energies were devoted to the preparation of a bibliography of the ancient Mexican languages; this he succeeded in practically completing, and it will be published as soon as indexed. Probably the most noted of these books is the Algonquian, which is regarded as one of the most important ethnological works in existence, and the portion of it published separately and devoted to Eliot's Indian Bible has attracted more attention than any other publication of the Bureau of Ethnology.

It is impossible to contemplate these great results of painstaking and technical effort—results not only of philologic and ethnologic, but of sociologic and literary interest—without admiration for the man who, in addition to exacting clerical labor, and in the face of hopeless and progressive disease, still struggled bravely on, building a monument to his name which shall endure so long as kindred minds shall seek for truth and the human heart bow before an honest life usefully spent.

The funeral services were held at 1343 Fifteenth Street, N. W., the late residence of Mr. Pilling, at eleven o'clock on the morning of Monday, July 29, 1895, Rev. Howard Wilbur Ennis officiating. At the conclusion of the services, which were in accordance



with the usual form employed by the Presbyterian Church, Mr. Marcus Baker, for twenty years a close friend of the deceased, made the following remarks:

“It is fitting that the kindly sentiments we all share towards him whose face now turns from us and whose voice is still, should be spoken at this time, when we are met to take final leave of our comrade, associate, and friend; but it is with misgiving that I have yielded to a request to be the speaker. If friendship for him or admiration of his nobility of character were the only requisites for the well doing of this labor of love, then indeed would it be well done. But such is not the case. May I not, then, have your sympathetic indulgence for a few moments while, as best I may, I attempt to voice our feelings as we gather around our friend, whose sufferings we rejoice to know are ended at last.

“Many and varied are the emotions of those assembled to pay the last tender tribute of respect to a departed friend. Around the bier gather the playmates of childhood, the companions of youth, the associates of mature years, and with them come those nearer by ties of blood, each stirred by his own peculiar emotions: the aged father, grief-stricken at the untimely cutting off of a favorite son; the fond brother and sister, proud of the achievements of a noble brother; and the devoted wife, who, after years of patient watching and care, bears her grief alone,—for who shall share her grief who for years has seen the dearest of all on earth to her under sentence

of death, walking steadily down, down into the valley of the shadow, where she must say good-bye and return alone. To her flows out the full measure of sympathy from us all, and yet how slight it all must needs be in contrast with her lonely sorrow.

“To few of us is it given to know intimately the whole life of any of our fellows. Some of us see its morning, some its evening—some more and some less—and our feelings are a reflection, as it were, of that which we have seen; hence the difficulty in forming a just estimate of the whole life of any comrade. My acquaintanceship with and affection for our friend began together some twenty years ago, and thus I knew the late middle and afternoon of his shortened life. Few of all my friendships have been more pleasant or more useful. To know him was to love him, and companionship with him was an inspiration. His ideals were lofty and ennobling. Meanness and pettiness he hated with a consuming hatred. Coarseness was intolerable to him. ‘The ladies are always present’ was a maxim and rule of his life and conversation. His affections were strong and his hatreds strong, but he hated only the hateful. Placed for years in positions of trust and responsibility, he had to do with many men. His sense of justice kept him ever watchful over the interests of the lowly faithful one, but the sluggard or the petty deceiver he despised with an indescribable intensity. His character was intense; there was nothing lukewarm or half-way about it; it was positive. His training as an executive led him to prompt conclusions, and his keen sense of justice led him, as by intuition, to decide

justly. To foreknow his decision on any question it was only needful to know the justice of the case.

“Thoroughness was a strong trait in his character. Whatever he did, he did with all his might. When as a boy he began the study of stenography, he promptly mastered the art and became prominent among the foremost experts; and when, later, he began the preparation of a catalogue of the literature relating to the languages of the North American Indians, under his enthusiastic zeal this work grew rapidly from a catalogue to a bibliography, and among bibliographies it promptly rose to foremost rank, where it now stands without a rival. Through this great work will the name of James Constantine Pilling be perpetuated and held in grateful remembrance by many who know not the author but only his name and work—a work constituting a monument more enduring than granite. To these this bibliography must seem—nay, it does seem—to be the sole work of a long and laborious life. And yet it is not so. It is less than twenty years since he entered upon its preparation, which was taken up in addition to his exacting duties as chief clerk of the Powell Survey. So skilled was he in the art of utilizing scraps of time that it was begun and carried on for about fifteen years as an addition to those duties which ordinarily consume one’s whole time and energy. During the latter part of this period he was in impaired health also, fighting an unknown disease. When some five years ago the real nature of his dread malady was discovered and its progress compelled the relinquishment of his executive duties, with

characteristic resolution and courage he with one hand fought off the arch enemy and with the other pushed on with his work. But the fight was a hopeless one, and he knew it. Great, therefore, is our admiration of the courage which he could command and the results he could achieve when so disabled. Thus, in mid-life, broken in health but unbroken in courage, his great work has ended. Our admiration for his achievement is increased by considering the circumstances under which it was accomplished.

“And now, from the house of mourning let us return to our vocations, carrying fresh inspiration for our work—inspiration gathered from the contemplation of a noble and well-spent life; with grief at our loss, but with joy that our friend is free from pain at last, and with heartfelt sympathy for the bereaved ones. Their grief will finally pass away, but their pleasure in the contemplation of so noble a life will grow with the passing years.”

Prompted by these remarks, Mr. Ennis spoke as follows:

“To have known the friend who has gone from us was not my privilege,—and I use the word in its fullness, but I count it an honor to place the period mark to the sentence his life has spoken.

“When we look about us and mark the life memories that are most revered and treasured, they are not of those who, having fought honorably and bravely, have returned from the battlefield, perhaps but rem-



nants of their former selves. Not even such worthy heroes receive the richest wreath of laurel. It is the name of the man who was granted the boon of laying his life, not falteringly, but freely, a sacrifice upon the altar of duty which the recording Angel of Fame writes high above his fellows in fadeless characters of matchless glory. And the hardest contested battle-fields are not marked by shock of armor, in the presence and with the encouragement of hosts, when chivalry and sentiment and fervor lend their succoring strengths; but when the warrior stands alone, fighting forces unseen, and accordingly vastly more subtle than armed men, denied alike the *éclat* of numbers and the enthusiasm of battle, fearful of betrayal by the weakening of his natural and best ally, the human body, buoyed up but by a consciousness of duty performed—it is then we behold the hero.

“The true badge of a manly man is his energetic desire to labor as best he has faculty and opportunity, seeking honestly to add to the general good of his kind and never questioning whose shall be the gain. Only such as he deserve place in the society and esteem of his fellows.

“If, as I believe, the good Creator was wise enough to set, and to hold in their respective orbits, the great hurtling spheres of the marvelous systems of the universe, surely when He fashioned the epitome of creation in the creature we call man, He was wise enough to appoint unto the veriest of humans a specific place and work in His surpassing plan. This special work for the performance of which he has been called into being is the profession—aye, better, the

vocation—of each of us; having found which, we may prove the temper of our manhood.

“The life that has just gone out I believe to have been such as I have described. Quick to discern his natural bent, he was no less ready to follow in that chosen path as rapidly and as long as life permitted. Delving deep in the mines of natural wisdom, he was tireless in effort to unearth treasures of truth. Dangers that would have halted brave men, he would not recognize. Bodily suffering that would fairly have incapacitated strong men, to him served but as warning that he must hasten in his life work; he needed no stronger incentive ‘to do—and die.’ Utterly unselfish, he found his greatest joy in doing for others. He had sunk his own identity in an overpowering zeal to be of service to the race. Science has indeed lost a faithful, fearless, and tireless servant.

“I am conscious that many of my hearers would disagree in part, perhaps *in toto*, with me in my beliefs. At this moment I am reminded of a beautiful mural painting I saw sometime since in a northern city. It was an allegory of wondrous depth of meaning, where each stroke of the artist’s brush had been, as it were; the moving of the pen of mystery, writing a message to men in characters of parable. In the center of the picture stood an angel of surpassing beauty and loftiness of expression, holding an open book, while the eyes were lifted above, as if seeking from the Source of all wisdom a key to the understanding of some unilluminated passage. The face, though, was lit up with a look of faith, a look ‘made all of sweet accord,’ fully confident of receiving an

answer to the prayer rising from the expectant eyes. This was the Angel of Light, Love, and Life; to and around whom in loving submission knelt figures, symbolic of lofty thought and aspiration, waiting for her as oracle to reveal the deep truths as yet thick veiled. At her feet grew the chaste lilies of the Resurrection. On either side stood two figures, those of an old and a young man. The twain on the one side—the aged, patient patriarch, Research, and the quick, strong youth, Intuition—stood for Science. The two on the other side—the hoary-headed saint, Reverence, and the sturdy, cheerful young man, Inspiration—represented Religion. Hovering near Science were the spirits of Devotion, of Labor, and of Truth; while the guardian angels of Religion were Purity, Faith, and Hope. The artist had caught and portrayed God's plan for the growth and development of His children, along lines, mental and moral. Religion and Science, aided by the highest faculties of honest research, should work patiently together to discover the combination 'sesame' that shall throw open the portals of the Temple of Knowledge, high, noble, and pure.

“Science and Religion have too long gone divorced. God meant it not so. May we in the eventide of the nineteenth century behold them each understanding the other better than in the past, recognizing that they should be as a complement one to the other, closely wedded and interdependent; Science, the guide of the twentieth century, leading men to the threshold of Bethlehem's inn; and in return, Religion with all confidence relying upon and glory-

ing in the achievements of the scientific world; and they together joining in the doxology of the ages.

“May we who stand in the solemnity of this hour go again to our tasks conscious that because of the faithful example of the friend taken from us we will strive to be better men, better women, finding our chiefest joy in the welfare of our fellows, having learned what the poetess meant when she sang:

“The man most man, with tenderest human hands,  
Works best for men, as God in Nazareth.”

After the public announcement of the death a number of letters were received from sympathizing friends. Among them was one from his life-long associate, Major J. W. Powell. Because of this relationship and the sentiments expressed in the letter, it has been selected for reproduction here as a part of this Memorial.

“GLOUCESTER, MASS., *August 12, 1895.*

“MY DEAR MRS. PILLING:

“The death of your husband and my life-long friend was not unexpected, and it came as a relief from pain that had for years made life a burden. How great this burden of pain was is known only to yourself, and perhaps to myself; to all others I believe it was concealed by such a manifestation of courage and good-will as I have never witnessed in any other person.

“Through many of the years of active life James and I were associated, in the office and in the field. Field work led us into the wilderness of mountain and canyon, of forest and desert, away from the comforts and conveniences of civilization, where life itself was preserved by a constant struggle. In all this experience my boon companion never failed nor faltered, always doing more than



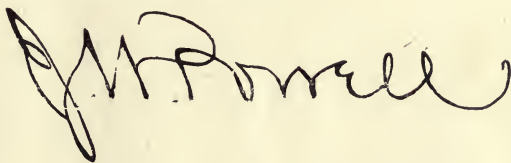
his share in the struggle for existence and in the effort necessary to fill life with joy. He never rested from his labor when labor could be of avail; he never lost courage, and courage was always in demand. He never forgot the sweet amenities of life, not even when labor and danger would seem to call for all his attention and all his energies.

"In all my life I have never known a man more steadfast to his moral and intellectual convictions, which were held with that charity for others which is possible only to those who have strong and well-founded convictions of their own. The field of research in which he was engaged was in part common ground with my own, and we were thus brought close together; and he shared with me responsibilities in financial affairs and in business operations. I thus knew him well, and I know that in everything he played a most honorable and efficient part.

"His contributions to bibliography constitute a monument to wisely directed labor, and, by reason of his great scholarship, will remain a guide to men of learning.

"Please accept this tribute from me to the great-souled man who has left us and whose loss is your loss more than that of any other person. I know well the extent of his dependence upon yourself, and of the wise care you gave to his declining years of pain and anguish. It would perhaps be presumption on my part to express my gratitude to you for the care and loving regard which you have extended to my friend, but be assured, my dear Mrs. Pilling, that it is profoundly appreciated.

"I am, yours cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. H. Powell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.



















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