



No. 4449.. 240



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In Memoriam.

SUSAN WADDEN TURNER.

PROFESSOR WILLIAM WADDEN TURNER,
Librarian of the Patent Office, Washington, D. C.

JANE WADDEN TURNER,
*Recorder of Scientific Collections and Exchanges at the Smithsonian
Institution for thirty years, and for twenty years Assistant
Librarian to the Library of Congress.*

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Mrs. K. ...

Nov. 21, 1921

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PREFATORY NOTE.

SINCE this Memorial was written the English family of Wadden Turners has become extinct.

Miss Susan Wadden Turner, born in England in 1808, the eldest member of this family, was the last to die. By her motherly devotion she had made the scientific services of her brother and sister possible.

She died at Brooklyn, N. Y., on the 6th of January, 1898, and on the 8th her remains were laid beside those of her brother and sister in Oak Hill Cemetery, Washington, D. C.

It is on account of the extremely incorrect statements incorporated into official obituaries that the surviving friends of Professor Turner desire this Memorial to be printed.

Washington, D. C., November 1, 1898.

Memorial.

Professor WILLIAM W. TURNER.

Born in London in 1811.

Died in Washington, D. C., November 29, 1859, aged forty-eight years.

JANE WADDEN TURNER.

Born in London in 1818.

Died in Washington, D. C., February 2, 1896, aged seventy-eight years.

Probably the first woman systematically trained as a librarian.

IN 1818 an English vessel sailing from London to New York City brought to this country a very remarkable family. Robert Wadden Turner and his wife, Elisabeth Jameson, brought with them three children, survivors, we are told, of a much larger family. The eldest, Susan, was then ten years old; William Wadden, the second child, was only seven; and Jane Wadden, the subject of this notice, had been born only three months before.

Robert Turner must have come with some small capital, or at least with letters which gave him a certain credit. He had been a prosperous London builder, but having endorsed for a near relative, and having lost heavily on a block of houses recently erected there, found it necessary in those days of legal restraint to seek a support for his family in a new home. Had he been penniless he could not have entered at once, as he did, on journeys to Carolina for yellow pine, and to Havana for the rarer woods used in house building. So engaged in the winter of 1821, he took the yellow fever at Havana

and died. The mother, left alone with her little ones, opened a small shop, which she kept successfully until, in 1828, she followed her husband.

As William was at this time only seventeen, it is probable that the closing of the lumber business and sale of the shop must have afforded some ready money. Otherwise it is impossible to see how the family could have removed to Brooklyn and sustained themselves on their scanty resources.

Susan was at this time twenty-one, and became at once, what she always continued, their thrifty and motherly housekeeper.

Before this time William had quitted the school of John Walsh, long remembered as a capable instructor and cruel man. In selecting his own life work young Turner was hampered by the necessary care of his sisters. When he was only six years old he had heard his father discussing in their London home the meaning of a Scripture text, and, young as he was, he understood enough of the point at issue to determine that he would sometime study Hebrew and read the Bible for himself. This resolution he held fast, and at the time of his father's death selected the trade of a printer, as one that would help him in his intellectual development and afford opportunities he could not otherwise secure.

The life of industry and self-denial which he then entered upon had its reward. Hand-presses were still in use, and he employed a German boy as "roller," to whom he paid a trifle extra for the chance of getting, through him, a fair command of that language. Far into night he studied, mastering Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and cognate Oriental tongues by stern perseverance and such assistance as could

be rendered by Dr. Isaac Nordheimer, who was then professor of Hebrew at Columbia.

In 1830 life in Brooklyn meant life in the country and much pleasure in the open air. Jane always looked back to it as the happiest part of her life. Nothing do we know of her schooling, but a good foundation had probably been laid before her mother's death, and the trend of her studies later shows that she must even then have worked under her brother's direction.

When his sisters were comfortably established in Brooklyn, William went to New Haven to pursue his Oriental studies, a step in which he was doubtless aided by the friends he had made at Columbia, and probably supported by payments made by Dr. Nordheimer, who was about to publish his Hebrew Grammar, Chrestomathy and Concordance. Yale College possessed the only Hebrew font in the country, and Mr. Turner's principal occupation was the printing of Dr. Nordheimer's work. Here he remained for two years, with the exception of a single short visit to his sisters, when he was occupied in adjusting their affairs, a fact which seems to indicate some small resources.

When his work at New Haven was finished, he removed his family to New York, to be near Columbia, where he now found profitable employment, and probably needed the constant use of its library. This was in 1833, and in 1838 Dr. Nordheimer brought out his great work, and in his introduction gave great credit to William Turner for effectual assistance in its preparation.

At this time the young Englishman was not quite twenty-seven. The library of Columbia was being

reorganized. In 1837 the college celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its existence as the "University of the State." It purchased a valuable library from Professor Moore, and having appointed its late owner librarian, empowered him to begin a reorganization of the old library with this addition. This work took more than a year and included the preparation of a catalogue. Mr. Turner was one of Professor Moore's assistants, and when, in 1842, the professor became president of the college, his great acquirements had become widely known and he was offered the chair of Oriental Literature in Union Theological Seminary.

This position he held when he was called to Washington, in 1852. He came to organize the library of the Patent Office, undoubtedly recommended by the authorities of the university and the seminary with which he had been connected. Very soon after his arrival he sent for his sisters. He was by this time a distinguished philologist. An accomplished gentleman, such as no one but a man naturally refined and sensitive can become, his wonderful achievements challenged the attention of every one interested in such studies.

"He was a wonderful and admirable man," writes Professor Farquhar of the Columbian University. "He picked up his myriad languages Burritt-like. I always wished I might have seen him."

That was true, but much more was true also. He was no rustic, nor could he have done otherwise than inherit rare intellectual gifts, from however remote a source. He could not have been wholly untrained when, as a child of six, he determined to learn Hebrew.

In 1855, on the 13th of September, he married Mary Meade Randolph, of the old Virginia family.

She was the daughter of Colonel William B. Randolph and Sarah Lingan. She still survives him, and it is delightful to hear her talk of his exquisite smile, the tender tones of his voice, his love of children and all young creatures. Especial delight does she seem to take in referring to the wonderful illumination of his countenance when talking to his friends on subjects connected with his favorite study.

Immediately after arriving in Washington both he and his sisters became intimate in the family of the late Professor Baird, where the fine gifts of the women were appreciated as never before. In the lovely home of the professor, presided over by the genial, warm-hearted woman whom every scientist who ever knew her remembers with affection, the Turners soon became privileged inmates. Their Sundays were spent with these new friends, and Thanksgiving Days and Christmas week always found the sisters there to assist, by gentle humor and delightful gifts, in entertaining the homeless students whom Mrs. Baird always gathered around her at such times.

Professor Turner soon became the especial friend of Professor Baird's only daughter, then a mere child. "I had no other friend whom I loved half so well," she wrote very lately. "He was my teacher and companion. He taught me games and joined in my play, and was the one indispensable guest at my birthday parties. When he died I refused to be comforted, and I never wanted another birthday party."

It was in consequence of Professor Baird's very intimate knowledge of him that Professor Turner was employed to catalogue and arrange the very valuable library of the Smithsonian Institution. He was busily occupied at the Patent Office, where, on account of

the increasing delicacy of his health, he had received as an assistant the younger sister, whom he had carefully trained to library work. He now needed her at the Smithsonian. When the catalogue was completed, her fitness was so evident that he had no difficulty in securing for her the position she was to occupy for thirty years. On February, 1858, Miss Jane Wadden Turner became the Librarian of the Smithsonian, a position all the more acceptable that she owed it to a brother, most tenderly beloved.

During the year that had just closed, after Buchanan had become President, an attempt was made by Jacob Thompson, Secretary of the Interior, to remove Professor Turner and make the office of the Librarian of the Patent Office a political appointment. This was prevented by the energy and indignation of Professor Henry, then secretary of the Smithsonian, who declared that "such a removal would be a national disgrace."

In October, 1859, in a state of health which excited the liveliest anxiety on the part of all who cared for him, Professor Turner insisted on attending the meeting of the Oriental Society in the city of New York.

This society was founded in 1842, and incorporated the following year, just after Professor Turner accepted the chair at Union Theological Seminary, and it would seem probable that as "an active and honored member of it" a year or two later, he must have had a warm interest in its inception. His name, however, does not appear on the list of members until 1846.

In 1849 he read before it a paper on "A Japanese Romance." In 1853 another on "Dr. Brusck's

Achievements in connection with Demotic Inscriptions," and later two separate papers on "A Sidonian Inscription," which was then attracting great attention. He was too busy a man to write often, but he could never bear to miss a meeting.

Entirely unfit for the journey, he went to New York, bent upon a meeting with Mr. Squiers and John R. Bartlett, in connection with the studies he had been lately pursuing. He was persuaded also to consult a leading physician, who, although he detected his disease, does not seem to have discovered how very critical was his condition. He returned from New York on the 19th of November, and went to his office in a state which can hardly be described every day during the following week. On Sunday, the 26th, he was confined to his bed. On Monday he became unconscious, and at six o'clock on Tuesday morning, November 29th, passed quietly away.

Immediately after Professor Turner's death a meeting was held at the Patent Office. The Hon. William D. Bishop was called to the chair, and Judge Henry Baldwin was appointed secretary. His great acquirements were commented on, and it was mentioned that beside his active connection with the Oriental Society he was a member of the Ethnological and Historical Societies of New York, and secretary of the National Institute in Washington. It was to his untiring assiduity that the Patent Office owed the most complete technical library in the world. The "Resolutions" were forwarded to his wife and sisters, and the employees of the office wore the usual badge of mourning for thirty days.

He was buried at Oak Hill, in a lot purchased by Colonel Randolph for the purpose, and during the

funeral hours the Patent Office was closed. The respect felt for him everywhere was not merely that due to a great scholar, but that won by the gracious and accomplished gentleman.

It is rare that a man dies at so early an age as forty-eight who has accomplished so much and who has made for himself so distinguished a position, unaided by birth, wealth, or political influence. But his attainments did not satisfy himself.

Professor Turner had a clear idea of the original work which he wished to do. So long as he contributed to the support of his sisters he had to think first of work that would pay, and he had entered his career by a far from popular road. When Jane's appointment rendered this sacrifice to some extent unnecessary, Professor Turner's health had already begun to fail. More than once after his marriage he confided to his wife the sharp disappointment he was experiencing. It was the effort to pursue his private studies in addition to those connected with his office that had broken down a naturally vigorous constitution.

On the 4th of February, 1860, a meeting of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian was held. Professor Felton, at that time a professor of Greek, and a little later the president of Harvard College, after enumerating the losses that the Smithsonian had experienced by death, spoke as follows:

"I take the liberty of offering a few remarks concerning another whose death the country deplures. Professor Turner was an Englishman. During youth and early manhood he exhibited an ardent love of knowledge, and devoted every moment he could spare to its acquisition. His taste led him especially to the

study of philology, and his acquisitions were surprising. He studied not only the ancient languages, including the Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, Samaritan, Coptic, and Sanscrit, but the modern European and Oriental tongues. To these he added an extensive knowledge of the dialects of the American Indians, which are a group peculiar in their characteristics and important in their bearings on comparative philology. But Mr. Turner was not merely a student of language. His mind was of a philosophical cast; he mastered easily and rapidly the principles of comparative philology which have become in the present period the surest guides in tracing the histories and affinities of different races. This science few men have explored so thoroughly as our departed friend."

After speaking of Professor Turner's able fulfillment of the duties required at Union College and his success as librarian at the Patent Office, and mentioning the papers to which I have already drawn attention, Professor Felton continued:

"His literary activity has been various and effective. He assisted the learned Dr. Nordheimer in his critical Hebrew Grammar. He prepared the greater part of Freund's Latin and German Lexicon for the American edition. He wrote valuable papers for the *Bibliotheca Sacra* and kindred publications. A few years ago an inscription was found near the ancient Sidon, cut on the lid of the sarcophagus which had held the body of one of its kings. Transmitted to this country by the missionaries, it attracted the attention of all Oriental scholars. The discovery was important, because the inscription contains the longest continuous text in the Phœnician tongue, a language closely connected with the Hebrew. Pro-

fessor Turner's labors on this curious document were among the last of his life.

"Two of the principal philological works published by the Smithsonian took their final form from Professor Turner—the 'Dakota Grammar and Dictionary,' and the 'Grammar of the Yoruba Language.' The materials furnished to Mr. Turner were elaborated with great skill, and these two admirable volumes form a valuable addition to philological science—the 'Dakota Grammar' illustrating in a philosophical manner the characteristic peculiarities of the American type of polysynthetic languages, and the 'Yoruba' illustrating the African type of the same great division.

"Professor Turner was not only distinguished as an able scholar, or by his extraordinary capacity for labor and his great power of grasping the generalizations of the science to which he was devoted, but his private life was marked by singular purity. His manners were simple and cordial; his conversation lively and instructive. He was modest without reserve; he was unobtrusive, but always ready to impart his affluent knowledge. The loss of such a man is a loss to science and his country. I therefore move the adoption of the following Resolution:

"*Resolved*, That this Board have heard with deep regret of the death of Professor W. W. Turner, a scholar of rare gifts and large acquirements, whose abilities and learning have in many ways been of great value to the Smithsonian Institution. As a philologist, he had few equals; as an earnest laborer in the pursuit of knowledge, he was a high example to American students. As a public officer he was upright, conscientious, and prompt. His social virtues endeared him to his friends in no common measure. By his

death American scholarship has sustained a heavy loss, this institution has been deprived of an efficient colaborator, and the community of a virtuous and distinguished citizen."

In copying the remarks of Professor Felton from the report of the Board of Regents I have not only condensed them as much as possible, but I have omitted all paragraphs containing repetitions of what is already known to my readers.

The most intimate friends of Professor Turner appear to have been the Hon. Mr. Ewbank, the Commissioner of Patents who called him to Washington, the celebrated Albert Gallatin, who was distinguished for his knowledge of aboriginal dialects, and John R. Bartlett, one of the commissioners appointed to determine the boundary between Mexico and the United States, whose secretary Professor Turner would have become from 1850 to 1853 had not his duty to his family kept him at his New York and Washington desks.

A complete list of his literary remains has never been made and probably never could be. After the death of his sister Jane, a large quantity of Oriental notes and MSS. in William's handwriting were discovered among her papers, and these were entrusted to Professor Adler of the Smithsonian.

His library was sold in New York in May, 1860. There was a large attendance and the books brought good prices. That in his circumstances he should have been able to accumulate such a collection is a valuable testimony to the industry and economy which shortened a precious life.

As this paper is written as a memorial to Miss Jane Turner it may seem singular that so large a

space has been devoted to her brother. If any accurate account had ever been written of Professor Turner and his family this would not have been necessary, but neither his origin, his age, nor his occupation have hitherto been correctly stated.

Mrs. Robert Turner had been twice married. The children of her first marriage, which were much older than those brought to this country, and the correspondence with them which survived her, shows them to have been not only brilliant, but well educated. Robert Turner was no carpenter, but a prosperous contractor in London, who is found to be engaged in extensive purchases of lumber in the Southern States and Havana immediately on his arrival in this country. Nor did Professor Turner himself ever serve an apprenticeship to any trade beside that of a printer.

After his death his two sisters established a home in Washington, near to the library in which Jane was employed. During the years that followed she was never known to have a sick day, and the skill with which she assorted and recorded the various publications which came into her hands excited the admiration of the scholars and scientists who came in contact with her. Her labels were clear and accurate, an accomplishment so rare as to deserve a record.

Her sympathy with the pursuits of those who frequented her rooms, her ready help and unfailing courtesy made her the friend of all. She was, so far as her time would allow, a careful student of many of the books which passed through her hands.

After the great fire which partially destroyed the Smithsonian Library it was Professor Henry's desire to free the institution from the expense and care which its custody involved, and in 1866 Congress passed an

act by which the Government assumed the charge, and after a brief inspection at the Smithsonian, periodicals and contributions from foreign governments were deposited in the Library of Congress, Miss Turner continuing to manage the great system of exchanges. She was then appointed an assistant to Mr. Spofford, the Librarian of Congress, with a suitable salary.

Owing to the fact that the family record had been lost at the time of their removal from New York, the sisters in their later years became a little confused as to their own ages, and imagined themselves older than they were. It was Miss Jane's intention to resign her position at the close of a quarter of a century's service, but Professor Baird persuaded her to delay it, and it was not until the 27th of January, 1886, when she believed herself to be seventy years old, that her resignation was handed in. She was in reality only sixty-eight. Successive attacks of "grippe" afterwards exhausted her vitality, and she sank after a short illness, dying in her sleep, February 2, 1896, at the age of seventy-eight. Her body was laid beside that of her brother at Oak Hill.

Her life had been so quiet and uneventful, and her contact with her old friends so accidental during the last ten years, that it was difficult to secure adequate estimates of her services from those who would have hastened to give them a few years earlier.

The following extracts from a letter written by the daughter of the late Professor Baird will therefore be read with interest:

PHILADELPHIA, April 11, 1896.

I have few data in regard to Miss Jane. Indeed, hers was one of those noble, quiet, useful lives, with but little incident,

which are harder to describe than many of less value but more noise. I will give you what I can. She was the youngest of a large family of children, all of whom, with the exception of Professor W. W. Turner, and the two sisters whom we have known and loved, must have died before 1818. She was only three months old when her parents, who were English, came to this country and made a home in New York.

About 1852 Professor Turner was appointed Librarian to the Patent Office, and soon after all that remained of the family came to live in Washington.

Professor Turner was a very remarkable man. He was a philologist, and was familiar not only with the modern European and Oriental languages, and in addition to the usual Latin and Greek, with Hebrew, Chaldaic, Coptic, Syriac, Samaritan and Sanscrit, but he added to these an extensive knowledge of the dialects of the American Indians. He was much interested in comparative philology, and after his death President C. C. Felton, of Harvard University, said of him: "Comparative philology few men of his age have explored so thoroughly as our departed friend. He was a man of the highest character, lovely in disposition and unusually agreeable and witty in conversation."

Just in what year Miss Jane was appointed to the Smithsonian I do not remember. Professor Turner prepared a catalogue of the library, which was published in 1858, and it seems probable that she began her work by assisting in its preparation. My mother has more than once spoken to me of the fact that Professor Turner had himself trained his sister for the work of a librarian. This was, of course, more than forty years ago, and there were then no training schools, and there could have been few, if any, women so fitted.

When the Smithsonian Library was deposited with the Congressional Miss Jane was appointed an assistant to Mr. Spofford, and remained in charge of the work to be done at the Smithsonian. During the year previous to my father's death she resigned her position. She had proposed to take this step earlier, but my father urged her to remain, and when her resignation was finally accepted, she was felt to be a great loss.

Of her remarkable efficiency and unvarying faithfulness, of her unflinching courtesy and patience, there is no need for me to tell you. She was a woman of noble character, a firm and true friend, a sincere Christian, and most humble in her estimate of

herself. She had a great deal of quiet humor, and was one of the most delightful of companions.

Soon after Miss Jane's death the home in South B Street was broken up, but no one who had shared its modest and genial hospitality can ever forget it, or the elder sister, whose thrifty care and personal superintendence made possible the cheerful retreat and the well-served table, which kept Miss Jane in health and gave her courage to pursue her life-work.

Miss Susan Turner survives her sister, at the age of eighty-eight.

CAROLINE H. DALL. .

Washington, D. C., November, 1896.







