BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR

OF

JAMES HADLEY,

1821-1872.

BY

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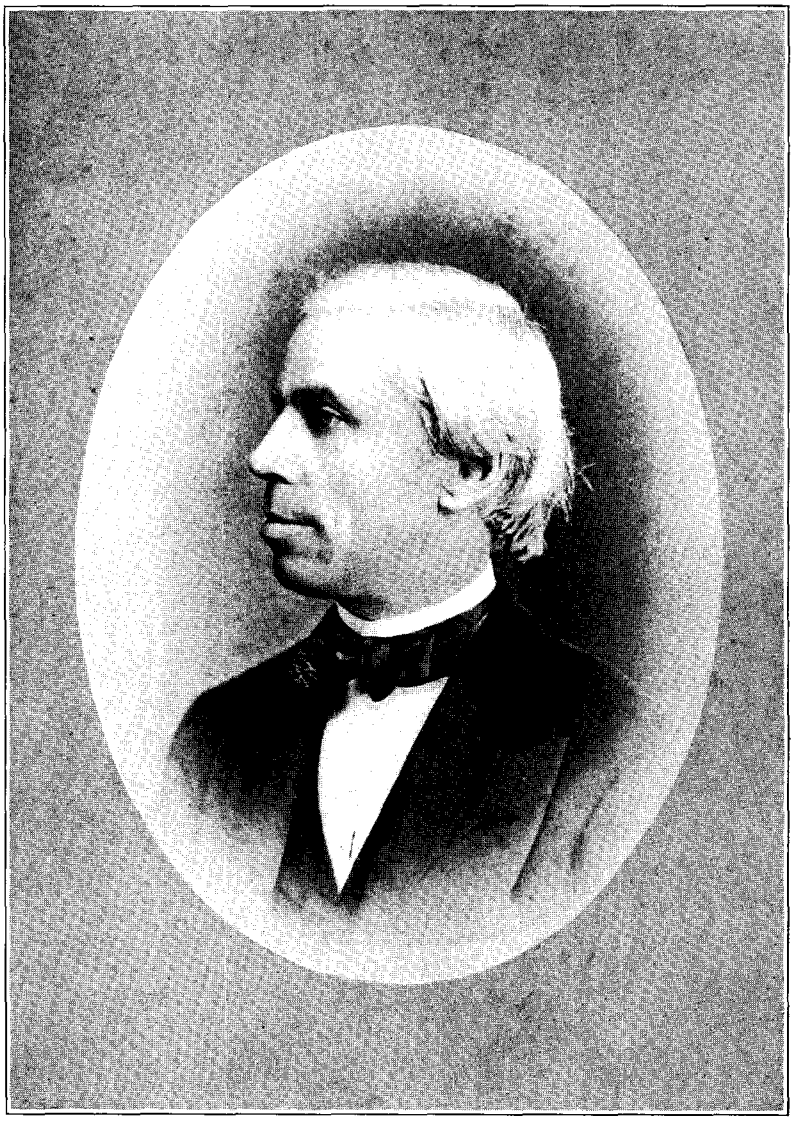

James Hadley

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR OF JAMES HADLEY.

JAMES HADLEY was born in Fairfield, Herkimer County, New York, March 30, 1821.

The little town of Fairfield, lying on the edge of the Adirondack forests, is today quite unknown, but eighty years ago it was an intellectual center of no slight importance. It was the seat of one of the best academies in New York State, and of a medical school which enjoyed a period of brief but rather brilliant prosperity. In this institution James Hadley's father was professor of chemistry and materia medica. A graduate of Dartmouth, he had a genuine enthusiasm for scientific study at a time when such study was rarer and less appreciated than it now is. It was through the influence of Professor James Hadley the elder that Asa Gray, while attending Fairfield Medical College, was turned from the practice of medicine to the pursuit of science as a calling. All of his sons who lived to maturity achieved a more than ordinary degree of success in study and teaching. The eldest, George Hadley, was for a long time professor of chemistry in Buffalo Medical College; the youngest, Henry Hadley, became professor of Hebrew in Union Theological Seminary, and was, by his untimely death in the service of the Sanitary Commission, cut off in the beginning of a career of great promise in the development of Semitic philology and Biblical criticism.

Amid such surroundings James Hadley's natural taste for study received every encouragement, and his scholarly tendencies were perhaps confirmed by an unfortunate accident to his knee-joint in boyish play, which left him lame for life and deprived him of the possibility of taking part in the sports of his fellows, which he would otherwise have so much enjoyed. After finishing the regular course at Fairfield Academy, he became an assistant in the teaching force of that institution. At the age of nineteen he entered Yale as a junior in the class of 1842, and two years later graduated with the very highest honors. He was appointed a tutor at Yale in 1845, an assistant professor of the Greek language and literature in 1848, and a full professor in 1851.

During the early period of his education he had shown no marked predilection for any one group of studies. He had a universal interest in books and a singularly catholic power of appreciating and handling every form of literature or science. His mathematical work both before and after graduation attracted great attention from Professor Peirce, who was much disappointed that Professor Hadley's final choice of lifework lay in the direction of philology rather than of mathematics. The special impulse in the direction of philological study came largely from the teaching of Mr. Edward Elbridge Salisbury. Mr. Salisbury was a scholar of the older stamp, appreciative rather than original, and content to instruct those who came in his way without seeking the wider reputation which published works might give; but he had studied under the best masters, and the Sanskrit class where he was the teacher and James Hadley and William Dwight Whitney the two pupils was not surpassed for efficiency in any of the universities of the Old World. The friendship formed in this class between Mr. Hadley and Mr. Whitney was one that lasted all through life, and furnished the very strongest means of personal enjoyment and scientific stimulus to them both. Whitney was able to continue his studies in Europe, both in the special line of Sanskrit and in the broader field of comparative philology. Hadley was kept at home by the necessities of teaching, and was led by force of circumstances to apply the results of his philological study chiefly to the problems presented by the Greek and Latin languages. This restriction was by no means an unhappy one. His teaching duties, though exacting, were congenial. He handled classes well and enjoyed doing it; and he enjoyed still more fully the opportunities of acquaintance with the individuals in each class who were able to appreciate his scholarship and be inspired by it. His marriage to Miss Anne Twining, of New Haven, was thoroughly happy, and in his home life he showed at its best the affectionateness of disposition, the calm serenity of temper, and the brilliancy of wit and power of conversation in which he stood so preëminent.

His health was habitually good, but never robust. The anxieties incident to the period of the civil war, culminating in the death of his brother Henry, with whom he had been most closely associated, led to a serious illness in the year 1865, which

interrupted his work of undergraduate teaching. From the effects of this illness he never fully recovered. In October, 1872, he was seized with a malady which baffled the discernment of his physicians and proved fatal after a very brief time. He died on November 14, 1872.

James Hadley, like William Dwight Whitney, did his philological work in the period when the students of that science were under the dominant influence of Bopp. The value of the Sanskrit grammar as a basis of comparative philology had been newly discovered. It seemed to furnish a key to the whole development of Europe, and of many parts of Asia, in the time immediately preceding historic records. In the one-sided pursuance of this idea many mistakes were naturally made by the philologists of this generation. But they were mistakes of the right kind—mistakes incident to the vigorous use of a new discovery, where much new scientific truth is being developed. Into this movement of scientific discovery Professor Hadley entered heart and soul, and he took his full share in contributing to the etymological and phonetic discoveries of the period. Of his single pieces of original work, the one which was probably most widely known (having been at once translated into German, under the direction of George Curtius, at a time when the work of American scholars was practically unknown to their German brethren), related to the nature and theory of the Greek—and incidentally of the Latin—accent. His investigations showed how a system of accents which was apparently different in the two languages, and in one of them at least quite arbitrary, could by proper analysis be reduced to certain very simple rules of musical modulation. The contrast between this treatment of the subject of accent and that which had passed current among English-speaking scholars up to that day was so great that a reviewer, comparing the work of Professor Hadley with a contemporaneous essay of Professor Blackie, of Edinburgh, on the same subject, said that it did not seem as though the two things could have been the product of the same century.

Had Professor Hadley lived in Germany, or had the America of fifty years ago been like that of today, his scientific papers would have found larger audiences than could be furnished by the Classical and Philological Club of New Haven, and perhaps more distinctively suitable ones than those of the American

Oriental Society. But nowhere in the world could he have found college classes which would have given him a better field of influence on the thoughts of a new generation. This opportunity he was able to use to the utmost. He was the first of our classical teachers who really brought home to his pupils sound ideas of word structure and word formation. The "Analysis of the Greek Verb," which he placed in the hands of freshmen at Yale, was an application of the methods of modern science to explain some of the complex phenomena of the Greek language. One or two of the propositions laid down in that Analysis have been modified by subsequent investigation; but the method remains good, and the classes who were taught by that method were grounded in scientific word study as no American classes ever were grounded before. The same ways of looking at language were applied on a larger scale in his Greek grammar, founded on the German work of Curtius, and following that work in its general arrangement, but with so many differences as to make it really an independent book. If any one will compare Hadley's Greek Grammar, published in 1859, with any of the Greek or Latin grammars used by American students before it, and with most of those which appeared for a good many years afterward, he will see the radical character of the change from old scholastic formulas to modern scientific principles which the introduction of this book involved. It was indeed too modern in conception for many of the teachers who had been trained under the old rules and formulas; but as habits of scientific study advanced, its influence was more notably felt with each recurring year.

The closing years of Professor Hadley's life witnessed the development in America of courses of graduate instruction. In these developments he took the very greatest interest. He was active both in organization and in the work of teaching. Brief as was the time of his activity in this field, it was sufficient to give him a large influence on the next generation of philologists. In the list of his graduate students in the closing years of his life were included the names of Easton, Edgren, Lanman, Learned, Luquiens, Manatt, Owen, Perrin, Sherman, and Minton Warren. A series of names like this is perhaps the best monument of the scientific work which was being done under his direction.

But it would be a mistake to assume that Professor Hadley's influence as a teacher was that of a mere philologist. With his love of the study of language he combined an equal love of the study of literature. The work of teaching Greek gave him an opportunity to manifest his power in both of these directions, and to give to men of the artistic temperament as well as to those of the scientific temperament the treasures which the study of Greek had in store for them. His translations, whether extempore or deliberate, were full of charm and preserved in a wonderful degree the rhetorical spirit of the original as well as its grammatical meaning. His reading had been phenomenally wide. When Trevelyan's Life of Macaulay appeared, English students as well as American were filled with surprise at the extent of knowledge of classical authors which he had acquired at school and at the university; but James Hadley had read as much Greek and Latin before he left Fairfield as Macaulay had read during his whole school and university life. He had studied extensively and critically in ancient jurisprudence, and, following out a natural taste for legal theories and using the singular power of lucid statement which he possessed, he wrote a series of lectures on Roman law which, published just after his death, are today in some respects the best elementary English exposition of the system of Gaius and Justinian. Nor were his literary acquirements confined to classical fields alone. He was widely read in German and in French, in Scandinavian and even in Celtic—the Welsh literature being a special favorite with him. Nor should his interest in the study of English be forgotten; for at a time when American colleges and schools were teaching foreign languages to the neglect of our own, Professor Hadley wrote his brief history of the English language, which, with some revision by Professor Kittredge, still serves as an introduction to Webster's Dictionary; and it was in no small measure through his influence that Professor Lounsbury was induced to accept and develop the chair of English in the Sheffield Scientific School to which he has since brought so much honor.

Professor Hadley was from a very early period active in the affairs of the American Oriental Society; and somewhat later, when the time was ripe for the formation of the American Philological Association, he was prominent as one of its organizers

and took constant and conspicuous part in its discussions. At the time of his death he was president of the former body and vice-president of the latter. His published papers, scattered through the transactions of the American Oriental Society and through journals whose files are less accessible, form a list too long for detailed citation. Some of the most important ones, selected with reverent care by his friend Professor Whitney, were collected under the title "Essays, Philological and Critical," and were published in New York in the year following his death. The titles of these various essays show the wide range of their author's interests, from an investigation of the original seat of the Ionians on the one hand to an examination of the prospects of republicanism in Europe on the other; from studies of Greek roots and Greek rhythms to critical appreciations of the poetry of Tennyson. Some of these essays were the product of long and careful study, others were mere accidents of his daily activity; but, whatever the circumstances of their origin, they all show the close observation, the clear deduction from premises, and the power of accurate statement which made his work as a teacher so preëminent.