

bis plain habits and self-directed routine of living, Herbert Putnam on August 14th closed bis eyes to a world in which he had moved and worked äs nothing short of a.



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Obituaries

Herbert Putnam 1861-1955

Alert and mentally ever active, unhampered in the exercise of his plain habits and self-directed routine of living, Herbert Putnam on August 14th closed his eyes to a world in which he had moved and worked as nothing short of a blessing for nearly four and ninety years. Three generations share a memory of his voice, its urging and inspiring quality ever and again having served as a call upon their best efforts and their conscience. Thousands of librarians feel the spell of his inspiration and the force of his personal example, some as alumni of the cultural center that grew to national significance under his hands and his watchful eye. Fewer, perhaps, now will call to mind the directness of his aim, the clarity of his instructions, and behind his expertly formulated wishes the latent power which scarcely if ever exploded. And then the peculiar faculty of self-effacement practiced by "the tallest little man in the world" at unexpected moments and on festive occasions when glamour was aimed at him. Quite a few will treasure, I think, the occasions when the professional cloak slipped from his shoulders and his elegant, often whimsical dialectics went into play, and plain human wisdom, spoken as between man and man, was interjected into flights of self-irony, sometimes serious, more often playful—as if he would let you know that not always had he been as sure of himself as he appeared so consistently to others.

Such was the man in whose mind the cumulated practice of age-old librarianship bloomed and bore fruit in America. The fruit may not have suited the taste of all, but the tree on which it grew yielded in time both seed and acceptable cuttings appreciated even in other lands. He happily defined our common aim as "the welfare of knowledge" and once pointed out to me that we librarians constitute one professional family and are united in and by our work, regardless of location. At one point of a long chain of events, we see Herbert Putnam standing before an opened copy of the Gutenberg Bible on vellum, at another point we hear one of his

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his plain habits and self-directed routine of living, Herbert Putnam on August 14th closed his eyes to a world in which he had moved and worked as nothing short of a, stylistic play, by definition, weakens the sound-row diethyl ether.

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