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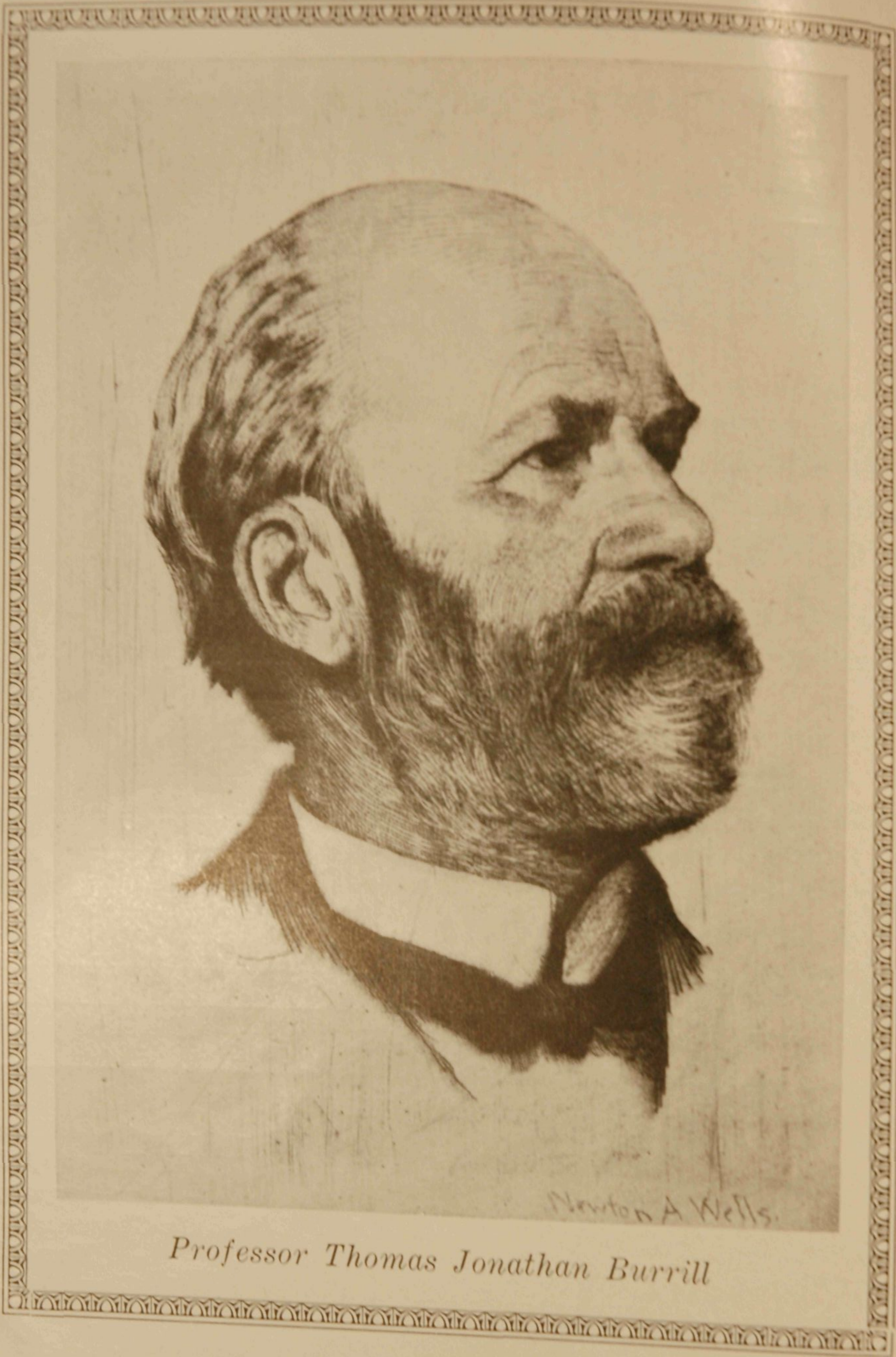


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Professor Thomas Jonathan Burrill

*From an etching made for The Illinois Magazine by
Professor Wells of the Department of Architecture.*

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AN APPRECIATION OF DR. BURRILL

ARTHUR H. GOTTSCHALK

"Spend not the remnant of thy days in thoughts and fancies concerning other men, when it is not in relation to some common good, when by it thou art hindered from some other better work."

—MARCUS AURELIUS

EVERY institution of higher learning can point to one salient figure through whose effort the institution was nursed through its stage of infancy and brought to the portal of greater usefulness. The University of Illinois looks to the late Professor Thomas Jonathan Burrill as the man through whose labor and integrity the present organization of the University is largely due. As acting regent of the institution in 1891, Dr. Burrill recommended and originated many things which have proved to be potential in insuring the successful future of the school.

Doctor Burrill's entire life was devoted primarily to education. He was born on April 25, 1838 at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and at a very early age came to the west.

After completing the course of study at the Rockford, Illinois High School, T. J. Burrill entered the Illinois State Normal School at Normal, Illinois, from which he got his first degree. Although he never attended any other colleges, several other degrees were conferred upon him by other Universities in recognition of his work in the scientific field. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy was given him by the University of Chicago; Northwestern conferred the Doctor of Laws degree in 1893 while President James was at the head of that institution. The University of Illinois also conferred the honorary law degree.

The University of Illinois first received the services of Dr. Burrill on April 20, 1868, when he left his position as the superintendent of the Urbana High School to become the instructor of Algebra at the

University. The Algebra class on April 20 evolved the young instructor into an assistant professor of Natural History and Botany three months later. At the outset, there were only four instructors including the regent, so that this distinctive advancement is in part picturesque. Assistant Professor Burrill taught classes almost all of the day and when he found a little spare time from class work he would plant trees about campus. This he considered as recreation. In fact, Dr. Burrill was kept so very busy that one account of University management at that time sees fit to comment upon it; "lest a remnant of his time should be unoccupied, he was charged by the board with the sale of a pair of mules whose labors on the South Farm showed that they were not able to stand the strenuous life as he was."

The faculty of the University was increased to six men by 1871 and in this same year Dr. Burrill was advanced to the professorship of Botany and Horticulture. In 1873, in addition to his work as a professor of Botany, he undertook the duties of corresponding secretary to the board of trustees, a position which he held until the spring of 1894.

The year 1878 marks two further advancements for the erstwhile instructor of mathematics. By appointment, Professor Burrill became the dean of the College of Science and later that year he became the acting regent of the University. With the election of the new regent, Dr. Burrill resumed his old duties, but again in 1880 he was called to act as regent. At this time there were grave doubts as to the future of the University, but the acting regent who had known University affairs intimately from the very beginning soon calmed the prevalent fears. In 1891, poor management again brought about a similar state of affairs, causing great consternation, and at the resignation of the regent, Professor Burrill was called once

more to occupy the position temporarily.

The legislature had increased the appropriations and in the year previous several new additions had been made to the faculty. Apparently the door of greater usefulness needed but to be opened by an experienced administrator and the University would be admitted to the highway of "great" universities. Acting regent Burrill took the decisive step early in September, 1891, and overthrew the dogmas and the administration policies which had been holding the University in check. The course of study was replanned, and strangely enough, the new course was not substantially different from the one Illinois has today. Professor Burrill's program included such measures as: the re-admission of the Greek letter fraternities, which had been driven out some years before; the reorganization of the department of Military so that it conformed to the work of the department today; the establishment of a law school; a summer school; the establishment of a medical school; and the appointment of a director of athletics. This enumeration shows how great the needs of the institution were and how necessary it must have been to have a man of experience and fidelity in charge of the execution of the program.

The University of Illinois was fortunate in having had Dr. Burrill at this time when good judgment in meeting responsibilities was necessary and when wisdom in action counted infinitely. Dr. Burrill remained acting regent until 1894, when the title of the office was changed to that of president and Dr. Draper elected to fill the chair. It is due to Professor Burrill himself that he was never regent of the University, because he refused the regency when it was offered to him by the trustees.

Following 1894, Dr. Burrill devoted himself entirely to scientific research in plant life. He was the first to suggest that the disease in plants and trees are caused by

bacteria. Although the theory of bacterial origin was discredited at first it is now regarded as one of the great discoveries in science. Professor Burrill continued in the service of the University until September 1, 1912, when he was retired on funds provided by the Carnegie Foundation.

Professor Burrill was active in societies related to his field. He was a member of the American Microscopical Society and served that organization in the capacity of president and also as general secretary. He was the vice-president of the American

Association for the Advancement of Science for two terms. Dr. Burrill remained active in these organizations until his death on Friday, April 14, 1916. With the death of Dr. Burrill, the University lost the last of its original corps of instructors.

Thomas Jonathan Burrill, scientist and one of the "Makers of the University", a man whom Illinois honors for "he loved people better than things, education better than science, and others better than himself."

TO A MADONNA FLORA HOTTES

Mary,
I see the still, rapt, wonder of your face,
The holy purity, the heavenly grace
That floods your virgin brow with angel's light;
Enfolded by your sacred tenderness,
The babe lies cradled in your soft caress;
You sit
Enthroned in rapture, with your prayerful eyes
In deep communion with the starry skies;
The golden halo shimmers 'round your head,
The radiant peace of motherhood is spread
And hovers o'er your presence, calm and bright.

Mary,
You knew the little Jesus, Son of God,
Must walk the shadowed way the martyrs trod.
You bore Him to a world that knew him not.
Yet from the dreaded future's dark abyss,
You seized a few brief hours of perfect bliss;
And then
You waited, sad at heart, until the doom
That sealed your Christ-child in the Easter tomb;
But in your mother's grief your pure faith soared,—
You knew him at his birth the Christ and Lord
For you remembered, when the world forgot.

