

[TRANSACTIONS OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MINING ENGINEERS.]



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THOMAS STERRY HUNT.

BY JAMES H. GLAS, NEW YORK CITY.

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No one will attribute it to the partiality of friendship in giving him for Thomas Sterry Hunt the right to a place among that little band of men whom nature has endowed with what seems an almost magical power of insight into her mysteries. But those of us who knew him well, while we never ceased to wonder at the breadth of his genius, the fertility of his imagination, and the wonderful capacity of his memory, learned that these native powers would have availed little to win him his rank in science, had they not been stimulated by ceaseless mental activity, indomitable perseverance, and unflinching industry.

Thomas Sterry Hunt was born in Norwich, Connecticut, on September 5, 1826. He came on his mother's side from that good old stock which gave to Puritan England the gentle mystic Peter Sterry and that uncompromising preacher Thomas Sterry, who wrote the notable tract, "The Rot among the Bishops" in 1667, and that gave to New England Consider and John Sterry, the mathematicians.

While he was a child the family moved to Poughkeepsie on the Hudson. There the father died when Thomas, the oldest son, was twelve. The mother and her family of six young children returned to the old home in Connecticut. For a short time Thomas attended the public school; but it was for a short time only, as he, thus early, was required to share the burden of the family support and to seek employment. This he found first in a printing-office, then with an apothecary, afterwards in a book-store. The surroundings may have been congenial, but the occupation probably was not; for he remained only six months in each situation. His next, though less attractive, proved more fortunate. It was a clerkship in a country store, where business was not brisk and whose owner was not exacting.

At that time his intention was to study medicine. Under the counter he kept a skeleton, as well as his home-made chemical apparatus. The anthracite stove was his furnace. Two local physicians assisted the brilliant boy, thus educating himself, by the loan of books. But, though a learner, his originality asserted itself; for with such a laboratory he made investigations into the properties of

Bibliothèque,  
Le Séminaire de Québec,  
rue de l'Université,  
Québec 4, QUE.