TRADITION LOOKS FORWARD

The University of Vermont: A History
1791—1904

By

JULIAN IRA LINDSAY

"Tradition looks forward as well as backward."
—John Dewey, Class of 1879

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So far as is known, only one piece of Professor Dean's philosophical appartus remains, a compound magnet encased in brass. It was salvaged from the fire of 1824 which destroyed the first "Old Mill" and for long years remained unidentified in the physics instrument storage room in Williams Science Hall. It was part of the apparatus purchased from John Prince, theologian and amateur maker of mathematical instruments residing in Salem, Massachusetts. In a letter dated June 30, 1806, Mr. Prince described the various items he could furnish: "a table air-pump of large size and barrels, 8 inches high. 2 plates, largest 8 inches diameter and glasses ground so as to make a joint air-tight with recesses without an oiled leather." With this there was a negative gauge plate which had "never been used." He offered an "improved windmill to show the resistance of air, instead of a feather, which experiment is not so apt to succeed,"

and a pair of hemispheres "with stop cock." The list included "a flask beam for weighing air," "a set of lead weights," "a pipe of mephitic air" (carbon dioxide), "a long glass tube with plate and collar of leather for the Torricellian experiment, a plate and piece of wood for showing the viscosity of vegetables," "Backer's apparatus showing the action of and spring of air. A model water pump of brass and glass to show action of valves. A fountain and vaccuo glass—a small beam and stand with cord and weight." Mr. Prince took pains to add: "The pump with the above articles [and some others not mentioned here] are all contained in one box to keep them from air and dampness." There followed various items of glass apparatus. The pump and apparatus had cost $227 and was offered at $30 discount, or $197. "It belongs to the estate of a gentleman deceased." There was also electrical apparatus "imported for the same gentleman." This consisted of a generator "turned by winch and very powerful, an insulating stool, large jar, thunder house, jointed discharger with glass handle, balls and wire for taking sparks, a quadrant electrometer, medical electrometer, medical bottle, medical directors, box of amalgam, clamp, and chains. The above are all fixed in one box with the machine, and the college may have it for 56 dollars, which is a very moderate price." Incidental items: "a flask for the auro Borealis"; "a set of musical bells (8) containing the gamut" at $8; magic picture, $2.25; electrical cannon for firing hydrogen gas, $5; copper plates and stand for dancing images, $2.75; a small neat battery containing nine jars, an electrical swan, a small jar for "small shocks," and an electrometer, "ordered for Cambridge College but was so long coming I furnished another," were also to be had, together with a "solar microscope in wood and brass with 3 magnifying powers made by Martin. The enlightening lens is cracked but it does not in the least injure the effect." Mirrors, a camera obscura "for drawing" and "a tripple glass megalascope in morrocco case with the magnifying powers for botanical and other uses"—all seemed important and were offered with a flourish. Just how many of these offerings and other items were purchased can not now be discovered. They were purchased privately and by vote of the Corporation on August 18, 1807, were deposited in the Philosophical Chamber of the new college edifice, completed just the month before. The final bill is no longer to be found, although it was preserved until recently.