

scarcely seek to make good the ravages of this great Northern despoiler. "But," said Mr. Tefft, many years after, "never was promise more faithfully kept; my gift to Dr. Sprague was literally bread thrown on the water—it returned to me a thousand-fold; and to his steady liberality and friendship have I been indebted, more than to all others, for the value of my collection."¹

Another anecdote is related of Mr. Tefft, which illustrates how accident sometimes furnishes what the most patient inquiry had failed to supply. Visiting a gentleman's residence near Savannah—apparently after 1845—Mr. Tefft, finding the owner absent, walked out on the lawn; when a paper was blown across his path, and listlessly picking it up, he joyfully discovered it to be one of the rare autographs of a Georgia signer of the declaration—the only one he then lacked to complete his set, and of which he had long been in active pursuit. When the owner returned, and Mr. Tefft had transacted his business with him, he was asked to specify the amount of his fee. "Nothing," said Mr. Tefft, "if you will allow me to keep this piece of paper I found on your lawn." The owner replied that he was welcome to it; that its writer had once occupied the place, and his own servants had recently cleaned an old garret of papers of which this was a waif. Mr. Tefft related this circumstance with great enthusiasm, and evidently valued this prodigal more than any other of the rarities of his many years of persevering search.² This it would seem, was the autograph of Button Gwinnett, the rarest not only of the Georgia signers, but, save Lynch, of the whole immortal fifty-six.

Mr. Tefft, after having formed one full set of autographs of the signers of the declaration, and lacking only three of another, and having made a splendid collection of other notable characters of both continents, died at Savannah, June 30, 1862. He was a noble man, and liberally assisted his fellow collectors with duplicates—especially of Thomas Lynch, Jr., that rarest of autographs of the signers. In

¹ *American Antiquarian*, Aug., 1870.

² *Historical Magazine*, April, 1862; *American Antiquarian*, Nov., 1870.