John Price Durbin John—An Appreciation.

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On the seventh of August of the present year passed to his reward John Price Durbin John. Were it for no other reason that that he was a charter member and an early president of our Indiana Academy of Science, it would be appropriate for us to pay tribute to his memory. There are other reasons, however, why it is befitting that we make this meeting an occasion for expressing our appreciation of the life and labors of this great man. During the present year the people of Indiana are observing in various ways the one hundredth anniversary of the admission of the state to the Union and they are recalling to the younger generation the various forces and factors that have contributed largely to our wonderful development. Indeed, the keynote of the present meeting of the Academy is Indiana's Centenary and much effort has been made to have this meeting mirror our State's growth along material and intellectual lines. Now the most conspicuous factor in a State's development is her men and few men have exerted a deeper influence on the educational and spiritual forces of our commonwealth than John P. D. John. And Dr. John was distinctively an Indiana man for all of his home life was spent in three college towns of the State: Brookville, Moores Hill, and Greencastle; and this remarkable fact is worthy of publication, while he was not a college graduate he had the unique distinction of becoming a professor in and president of the college in each of these towns. As a matter of record a brief biographical sketch will be in order.

Dr. John was born in Brookville November 25, 1843. He became a teacher in the public schools at seventeen and at twenty was elected Professor of Mathematics in Brookville College, an institution of some prominence a half century ago. He became President of the college in 1869, serving in this capacity for three years. In 1872 he became Professor of Mathematics in Moores Hill College and four years later was elected President. In 1882 he was elected Professor of Mathematics in DePauw University and in 1889 became its president. The same year he was elected President of the Indiana Academy of Science and the following year was chosen President of the Indiana College Association. He resigned the presidency of DePauw in 1895 and from that time until the year of his death he was a conspicuous figure on the lecture platform.

Dr. John's chief service to his State was in the fields of religion and education, and it was not to his own State alone that he rendered such conspicuous service for his uplifting influence was felt not only by thousands of people in Indiana but by multitudes in practically every state in the Union.

As a teacher he is said to have been original and inspiring. Dr. H. A. Gobin, a life long friend, has said of him, "His students always regarded him

as thoroughly competent in every subject that he taught and it is evident that his interest in their welfare led them to regard him as a personal friend of greatest value. He was independent and thorough going in all of his investigations. He was a master of Mathematics, Astronomy, and Philosophy and these great subjects were made to contribute to his interpretation of the Scriptures and the emphasis and beauty with which he presented the doctrines of the Christian Religion."

After a service of nine years in Moores Hill College he resigned and went to Europe, partly for the benefits of foreign travel, partly to study at close hand the educational institutions and methods of the old world. It was soon after his return that he was elected to a professorship in DePauw. During the years immediately following, he not only maintained his mastery over his specific subject of Mathematics but he became thoroughly familiar with those educational problems and possessed himself of those educational ideals that prepared him for such efficient service later as President of the University. In his inaugural address as President, delivered on June 19, 1890, he pointed the way towards a lofty goal towards which he endeavored to direct his trustees and lead his faculty. His aim was to build up a real University, backed by his church, but non-sectarian in character, broad in its sympathies, allowing great intellectual and religious freedom to student and teacher. While not detracting from the value and importance of the classical studies of Mathematics and the Ancient languages, he warmly advocated equal facilities for the study and teaching of Philosophy, Science and History. With him a cardinal doctrine was that the value of a subject depends not so much upon the subject itself as upon the method by which the subject was handled. He maintained that where rightly taught, Botany, Geology and Chemistry are as efficient a means of culture as an equal amount of Latin, Greek or Mathematics. He took the ground that the training value of any course resides chiefly in the process rather than in the subject itself and insisted that while a limited amount of mathematical, linguistic, scientific, and philosophical study should be required of all students, on the other hand, each student should be left to spend the larger part of his time in whatever department he found the most interest and from which he expected to derive his chief culture. In his own epigrammatic way of expressing it, he believed in "freedom in the pupil, freedom in the teacher, and freedom in the subject," freedom, however, "not unrestrained, but unconstrained."

Dr. John cherished great hopes of building up a conspicuous university in the heart of Indiana. At that time, DePauw was believed to be on the eve of receiving an addition of two million dollars to its endowment and prospects of expanding libraries, well equipped laboratories, and commodious dormitories were rosy indeed. In building up a great university Dr. John believed that first emphasis should be placed on the proper equipment of the college of liberal arts as the center from which might radiate the various professional schools. He stood for thoroughness, a few subjects taught by live instructors,

a few departments with thorough equipment, a small curriculum with sound methods, and he opposed everything that savored of the superficial. His first plea was for men—thoroughly live, enthusiastic, inspiring men, quite convinced that where a great teacher labors in library or laboratory there will students be gathered together. And he would not be content with teaching men, they must be producing men, men seeking after truth, investigators, ever pushing back the boundaries of the known. Regarding the relation between the college of liberal arts and the professional school he took an advanced position and advocated the introduction into the former as a part of the undergraduate course whatever subjects in the professional school were largely academic, in order that a man might shorten to a reasonable degree the time required for preparation for his chosen profession.

In the fall of 1889 Dr. John delivered the presidential address before the Indiana Academy of Science, his subject being "Religion and the Law of Continuity." Upon the evidence of certain breaks in the foundation of inductive Science—the Law of Continuity, Continuity of matter, Continuity of phenomena, Continuity of law, he proceeded to construct an argument to show that the Christian religion is at least not unscientific. His own summary will serve to illustrate the logical processes of his mind. "There are in the history of the Universe, some apparent breaches of the principle of continuity. Other apparent breaches of the principle are, therefore, equally possible. As Science demands some apparent failures of the law, any other system may equally demand failures without thereby becoming unscientific. Whether such a system be really unscientific or not is a question of fact and not necessarily of how it stands related to our conception of the law of continuity. The Christian religion, like Science, is not to be judged by its apparent strain upon this law for no finite mind completely knows the law; but, like science, it is to be judged by the ends it proposes and the means by which it seeks to achieve them."

In December 1891, in his presidential address before the Indiana College Association he spoke on "The College in the New Education," pointing out that the difference between the old and the new education lay chiefly in *method*. He took the ground that time is an important element in the attainment of culture and that continuity of effort along a single line is more efficient than an equal total amount of separate efforts along numerous lines, and that this particular line must be left largely to the student's choice. It is still a source of instruction and inspiration to read this address.

Dr. John was well aware of the increasing demands made upon the college or university in the call for more subjects, a broader, more extensive curriculum, and the greater demands made upon the teacher by the newer method, the lecture method. He saw as clearly as anyone the need of greatly increased financial resources and the necessity of providing professors with competent assistants. In advocating the lecture method in college teaching, he refused to surrender in the least the vital principle of personal contact between

teacher and student. Furthermore, he would hold each instructor under obligation to keep abreast of the tide in his own subject, intimately acquainted with the progress of research in his chosen field, not merely from year to year, but from month to month. There must be no laggards on his faculty. Each professor must be a specialist and each professor must be adequately supplied with tools for his work. To fill a college position a man must have done graduate work in the larger institutions equipped for highly specialized research and he must have become a master in some particular sphere of intellectual activity. I commend to your attention the words in which he summarized this address: "The three essentials of a great modern college are able instructors, liberal equipment, and wide differentiation of work; able men who can inspire ambitious youth by mere contact; large equipment that every subject may be comprehensively taught, and broad differentiation that every instructor may be an authority in the department for which he stands." On the roll of his faculty are found the names of Oliver P. Jenkins, now at Leland Stanford, Clarence A. Waldo, now at Washington University, and Lucien M. Underwood, late Professor of Botany in Columbia University. Men who knew Dr. John well have expressed the opinion that if he could have received the financial support upon which he had counted when accepting the presidency of DePauw, his achievement at Greencastle might have been comparable with that of President Harper at Chicago.

It was an occasion of great regret to faculty, students and alumni when, in 1895, he resigned the presidency of the University, a position which he had filled for only six years but with conspicuous success. During the brief period of his administration he placed the institution upon a higher plane and started its development long new lines. In building a university he placed the chief emphasis upon the college of liberal arts. During these years he was a great inspiration to faculty and students and his uplifting influence was felt upon the educational work of the entire state.

If Dr. John's withdrawal from this particular position gave rise to the fear that he was lost to the educational forces of the country, his rapidly increasing prominence on the public platform soon demonstrated that he had merely widened the sphere of his influence and the field of his labors. His services were in great demand and it is said that at one time he had the greatest number of engagements ever booked by a single lecturer. And it is a high tribute to his eloquence, his personal magnetism, and the forceful presentation of his arguments that for almost a quarter of a century he traveled up and down this country addressing large assemblies on such themes as "Signs of God in the World," "The Worth of a Man," "The Overlap of Science and Religion," " The Sublimity of a Great Conviction" and never for once felt the need of a joke, a harrowing story, or a stereoptican to assist him in commanding the attention of his audience. The lecture that first brought him into prominence was that entitled "Did Man make God or did God make Man?" prepared in reply to the great agnostic orator, Robert J. Ingersoll, who had coined the expression "An honest god is the noblest work of man."

In the preparation of this lecture was illustrated one of Doctor John's characteristic traits—his love of truth and fair play. In order that he might not misrepresent Mr. Ingersoll, he sent to him that part of his manuscript in which the teachings of the agnostic had been set forth and asked whether they had been fairly stated. Upon receiving an affirmative reply he proceded to expose the fallacy of his position and the result of his effort was the production of a lecture that was applauded from one end of the country to the other.

One who was intimately acquainted with Dr. John and who followed his career closely has written as follows of this period of his life: "He had an unusual voice for public speaking. With splendid modulation, a rich, deep tone, and epigrammatic literary style, he proved a master of assemblies. He sought not to be popular, but intellectually entertaining. His marvelous memory, combined with almost limitless power for sustained thought, dominated by a strong imagination and mathematical accuracy, accompanied by originality, both in thought and expression, gave him a unique place on the lecture platform." (Editor Western Christian Advocate.)

Personally, Dr. John was a very lovable man, warm hearted and generous. While his life was spent in a religious and intellectual atmosphere and while he was a man of very positive religious convictions, he was of a tolerant spirit, ever eager to lead others into what he had found to be "paths of righteousness and peace," yet never given to denunciatory methods of bringing other men to his way of thinking. That he owed much to the ideal home life with which he was blessed is mirrored forth in the dedicatory lines in one of the volumes of published addresses:

To
My Wife
Whose Devotion to Principle
Loyalty to Conviction
and
Courage in Duty
Have been my Inspiration;
Whose Gentle Womanhood
and
Tender Motherhood
Have Hallowed Our Happy Home.