

JOHN SIMPSON, PH. D.

Rising above the heads of the mass there has always been a series of individuals, distinguished above others, who by reason of their pronounced ability and forceful personality have always commanded the homage of their fellow men and who have revealed to the world those two replendent virtues of lordly race,—perseverance in purpose and a directing spirit which never fails. Throughout all the great west have been found men who have marked with deeds the vanishing traces of swift-rolling time and whose names are kept green in the memory of those who have cognizance of their lives and accomplishments. Such a man was Professor John Simpson, who for twenty years was at the head of the Mansfield schools and placed the educational interests of the city upon the high plane which they now occupy. His work was far-

reaching in its influence and immeasurable in its benefits, and his strong individuality left the impress for good upon the lives of nearly all with whom he was associated.

Professor Simpson was born in Richland county, on the 26th of June, 1829, his parents being Samuel and Catherine Simpson. His father was born in Beaver county, Pennsylvania, November 26, 1793, and having arrived at years of maturity he married Catherine Hout, who was born in Martinsburg, Virginia, March 13, 1796. In 1818 the parents removed from Jefferson county to Richland county, Ohio, locating near Petersburg, where they built their first log cabin in the midst of a wilderness which stood in its primeval strength. There the little home stood on a spot within a few feet of the site of the substantial brick residence in which they spent their remaining days in the enjoyment of all the comforts and many of the luxuries of life. At the time of their arrival in Richland county there was only one cabin within what is now the corporation limits of Petersburg, and the county seat was a block house surrounded by probably about thirty pioneer cabin homes. The Presbyterians worshiped in a block house and the Simpson family traveled there, a distance of eight miles, making the journey through the wilderness on horseback in order to take part in its services. All the experiences of pioneer life were familiar to them, including the arduous task of developing new land in order to make it productive.

Upon his father's farm John Simpson was reared and assisted him in clearing and cultivating the fields. His early educational privileges were quite limited, and when quite young his father sent him to the Vermillion Institute at Hayesville, where he continued his studies for one term. He displayed special aptitude in his school work and manifested a strong desire to improve his scholastic opportunities. After leaving Vermillion Institute he engaged in teaching in the district schools, and thus made and saved money enough to return to the institute, where he continued his studies and at the same time served as a tutor. On leaving Hayesville he removed to Alabama, where he engaged in teaching school for three years. Not content with the privileges he had already enjoyed he next entered Jefferson College, at Cannersburg, Pennsylvania, as a member of its senior class and was graduated in 1858. Throughout his entire life he devoted his energies to educational work. On the completion of his collegiate course he taught in an academy at Millersburg, Ohio, and about 1860 he became a member of the faculty in the Vermillion Institute. In a short time he was made the professor of mathematics and astronomy and subsequently became the president of the institution, filling the position with marked ability until 1871, when he accepted

a call to the principalship of the ungraded schools of Mansfield. In 1873 he was chosen the superintendent of the Mansfield public schools, and for twenty years was in control of the educational interests of this city, filling the position with rare efficiency and ability, as is indicated by his long connection therewith. He came to the position well equipped as far as education, habits and industry were concerned, but without experience in the direction of managing a graded school, and his task was severe. He had to follow such eminent educators as Professors Henry M. Parker and J. H. Reid, but he entered upon his work with determined purpose, resolved to follow the best methods which he knew and to improve upon these as a result of his experience and observation. His connection with the schools was a period of continuous, persistent and devoted work. He was himself a most diligent student and on scientific questions kept abreast with the most advanced thinkers of the day. He had few equals in mathematics and astronomy, and his knowledge of the higher sciences was comprehensive and exact. As an instructor he was plain, direct and practical and as a disciplinarian he was firm, yet kindly, and his pupils recognized that he had their best interests at heart. The school buildings erected during his administration are objects of the city's pride and stand as monuments to the efforts of Professor Simpson, who made the schools a credit to Mansfield. He attempted to render the course of study as attractive as possible and at the same time of great benefit as a preparation for life's responsible duties. He received the hearty indorsement of the school board and of the citizens in general, and many of the students under his guidance have reason to remember him with gratitude for the aid which he gave to them. His success as an educator gained him prominence among the leading instructors of the state and the proficiency of the Mansfield schools became widely known.

The honorary degree of Ph. D. was conferred upon Mr. Simpson by Wooster University, of Wooster, Ohio.

On the 25th of December, 1862, Professor Simpson was united in marriage to Miss Millie J. Stringer, a native of Ashland county, Ohio, and a daughter of Thomas and Harriet (Potts) Stringer. For many years her father was a prominent merchant and business man of Ashland county, conducting two mercantile establishments, one of which was located in Ashland, the other in Loudonville. He also had milling interests, and was thus actively identified with industrial affairs. In 1849 he went to California, attracted by the discovery of gold there, and for three years he remained upon the Pacific slope, meeting with excellent success in his efforts as a miner, miller and merchant. In 1852 he returned to Ohio, with the intention of taking his

family to the west, but his wife objected because her children were so young, and they accordingly determined to remain in this part of the country. Mr. Stringer then again went to California to settle up his business there and two years later, when on the eve of returning to Ohio, he was murdered for his money.

To Professor Simpson and his wife were born three children: Mary Blanche, the wife of Edwin D. Baxter; Helen Augusta, a graduate of Cornell University, who is now completing her education in Europe; and Gertrude, the wife of Charles H. Keating, a prominent attorney at Mansfield. Professor Simpson was a Knight Templar Mason and a member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and was also an active representative of the Royal Arcanum, serving for some years as the secretary of Ohio Council, No. 9. He took a deep and active interest in everything pertaining to the welfare of Mansfield and withheld his support from no movement or measure which he believed would contribute to the public good. He had faith in its future and pride in its growth and attainments, and when Mansfield was little more than a village he built for himself and family an elegant home in what was then a suburb of the town but is now almost within the heart of the city. He did all in his power to promote the intellectual and moral advancement, and he enjoyed the unqualified regard of Mansfield's citizens. His earnest Christian life led others to have faith in the sovereign power of Christianity, for he daily exemplified his belief in his dealings with his fellow men, and his history is as an open book that all might read.

He was a member of the session of the Presbyterian church at Hayesville, and after locating in Mansfield was called to the same work, being for many years a member of the session of the First Presbyterian church in this city, acting as clerk of that body. He was long connected with the Mansfield Lyceum, becoming one of its charter members on its organization, more than two decades ago. During the year 1898 he was chairman of its committee upon general subjects in debate and he made the society a factor for good in the community. One of nature's noblemen, he will long be held in grateful remembrance by the people of Mansfield for his untiring labors in her behalf. What he did was done through a deep and abiding interest in his fellow men. He had a nature devoid of selfishness and characterized by careful consideration for the opinions and feelings of others. "His life was gentle and the elements so mixed in him that nature might stand up and say to all the world, This was a man."

He died Sunday, March 5, 1899.