

Well it may be said of him—

‘He was a public servant without vices;  
A private citizen without wrong;  
A Christian without hypocrisy; and  
A man without guile.’

It was given to him, and richly deserved, to enjoy long golden years of a peaceful old age in the community and surroundings where he spent his lifetime in labor and service. This distinguished citizen gave the people of his district the very best he had. This is proven by the supreme confidence and esteem in which he was held.

A man possessing the elements of greatness has gone away from his associations. However, no one can doubt he will live long in the affection of those who knew him. Surely the inspiration of his life and achievements will live on, duplicating itself in the lives of others, and that is the memorial greater than any of marble or bronze; it is a memorial in the hearts of his fellow men.

Of men like him, the poet has well said:

‘Full minded, wise, and kindly just,  
Instinctively we turn to such a trust,  
Through men so stamped we grow from age to age,  
And write our progress on immortal page.’ ”

The President of the Senate recognized the Senator from Otter Tail County, Mr. Colvin G. Butler.

→ “Mr. President, Members of the Senate, and Honored Guests:

As a friend of former Senator T. H. Johnson and also as the one who preached the funeral sermon at Mr. Johnson’s request, I am doubly honored to say a few words in this memorial service.

T. H. Johnson was born in an unpretentious home of humble Swedish parents in Copenhagen, Denmark, November 1, 1876. At the age of 13 he was apprenticed as a tailor, and followed that trade in many large cities of Europe, including Berlin and London.

He emigrated to the United States in 1905. He was naturalized as an American citizen in 1913. He came to Fergus Falls in 1910 and opened a tailoring business. By skill, by industry, by attention to business and by a friendly disposition he built up a large and prosperous business.

With intuitive understanding of human nature and with high moral beliefs he made himself a positive man in deed and in character. As a new American he became conscious of his duties as a citizen and his rights as a free man in this country. He refused to 'slip along through the world like a footman or a spy'. He was one who loved his fellow man. He tried to make the battle of life a little easier for the common man. After my first election he said to me, 'Remember the little fellow.'

He served with honor and distinction one term in the House of Representatives and one term in the Senate. His years in the legislature were years of reform and progress. He was co-author of the present state income tax law. He supported the so-called mortgage moratorium law, and the old age assistance law to remove the old poorhouse. He favored more just taxation and many reform laws which distinguished the last decade and which will make that decade memorable to the people of this state for many generations.

Always loyal to Fergus Falls and Otter Tail County, Mr. Johnson did a number of things that will help perpetuate his memory. Having no children of his own, he and Mrs. Johnson in 1926 organized the annual Labor Day party for children 12 years of age and under. This annual event grew to large proportions, as many as 350 to 400 young children attended. The Johnsons loved the children and were beloved by them. Good wholesome games and candy and fruit were furnished at their own expense. Many young people who are now adults will always cherish the memory of those T. H. Johnson parties.

Mr. Johnson was a lover of sports and believed strongly in the sportsmen's code. Shortly before he was taken to the hospital he said, 'Tell the boys for me that I'll still give that five spot for that first home run again this year'. He also inaugurated the presentation of the T. H. Johnson annual award to the most valuable football player in the Fergus Falls High School football team. He left behind a goal every high school football candidate aims for and must earn, not only on his ability but his behavior, his leadership and ability as a team player. His last will provides a continuation of this award. He was one of the founders of the Fergus Falls Game and Fish Club and served as President for many years. He was a strong believer in preserving the wild life and other natural resources of the state.

For some months he knew that he would soon be following the winding trail that leads past the mists into the future. He sent for me to come and see him. He talked with me over his plans for the funeral service and requested that I officiate and preach the sermon. He said, 'I will be over there where Ma is'. She was his beloved wife who had preceded him three years before. He ended his earthly journey with few regrets and no ill will to any one.

The executors of his estate found among his papers a statement of his faith and creed in his own handwriting. A few quotations will suffice. 'Of course I believe in God. That is the sole and only article of my creed. But I do know this, no man can love and worship his God who fails to respect himself, and who forgets his duties to his neighbor and himself.'

'The pain of death is not for the dead but for the living in their spiritual desolation, their loss of bodily companionship; in the frustration of hope; in the bitterness of regret sometimes, alas! of remorse.'

Truly in the words of the sweet singer of Israel 'the end of that man is peace'.

'I shall not pass this way again,  
But far beyond earth's where and when,  
May I look back upon the road  
Where on both sides good seed I've sowed . . . . .  
I shall not pass this way again,  
May wisdom move my tongue and pen,  
And love be mine, that so I may, . . . . .  
Plant roses all along the way . . .  
May I be courteous to men,  
Faithful to friends, true to my God,  
A fragrance on the path I've trod.' "

The President of the Senate further recognized Mr. Butler.

"Mr. President, Members of the Senate, and Honored Guests:

The same day the Senate adjourned out of respect to Senator Orr, I wrote a tribute to him which was published in the St. Paul Dispatch. I wish to again remind the Senate of that sad and solemn day.

Our great leader fell in the line of duty. Beautiful flowers on his desk tell the sad story of his death. There is a strange silence in the Senate chamber because one chair is vacant.

The death of majority leader Charles N. Orr has cast a pall over the Senate. Strong men openly shed tears of sorrow. Quivering and tearful lips made motions to adjourn in honor of his memory. Old-timers say, 'no death during a session of the Legislature has ever affected the Senate like the passing of Senator Orr.'