In Memoriam

WILLIAM H. STEVENSON

PRESIDENT OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA, 1910-1930

BORN JANUARY 19, 1857 — DIED SEPTEMBER 22 1930.

"We live in deeds, not years, in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives,
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best”.

We cannot better delineate the life, character and services of William H. Stevenson, who, as the President of The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, for many years wisely and successfully guided its destinies, than by adopting those words of the poet, as indicating the true value of that life; not one spent for worldly gain or honors,—not for official place, or the adulation of the rich or great; not to win laurels of a conqueror or hear the plaudits of the multitude,—but a quiet, simple, unobtrusive but always useful and unselfish one, lived for God, his Country, State and City, for his family, his friends, and, near his heart for his fellow citizens of every race, color or creed. He was born in Pittsburgh, and spent his life here in the city that he loved. It was a busy and always a useful one and when we realize the many civic activities that engaged his attention, besides the caring for his private and personal interests and his family (for he was an ideal and devoted husband and father) we are amazed that any one should, as he did,
care for the many worthy causes which called for his aid. From his young manhood to the day of his death, he carried the banner of civic righteousness and civic betterment aloft; he advocated and supported with tongue, pen and purse, every worthy cause that this great City and his native State (especially Western Pennsylvania) presented for his support.

Considering all this, we again say, that he exemplified in his own heart-of-hearts, in the great and generous soul that animated him and in the midst of all his numerous and often burdensome duties, the poet's ideal:

"We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives, Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

It can be truthfully said without adulation but in all sincerity that William H. Stevenson more nearly than any other citizen of this community measured up to the high test referred to. Who, other than he, thought more upon every subject of civic importance than did he? Who, more than he, or as fully as he did, dreamed noble dreams for the betterment of his City, his State and his fellow citizens, and who, more than he, acted the best?

It is unnecessary that we should particularly specify his general activities and refer to all the honors which were his,—simple, civic honors, fitly bestowed and modestly worn,—but, when we, his associates of this Society, meet to mourn his loss, it is proper that his splendid services for the Society should have especial mention. He gave many of the precious hours of a very busy life, covering the long period of his Presidency, to the interests and welfare of this Society; in every important matter affecting its welfare, William H. Stevenson was the most potent factor. His zeal, and his courage, never failed. He devoted the last months of his life, when tired nature demanded quiet and rest, to the final accomplishment of the project nearest his heart,—the means to assure the building of a worthy addition to our present building. Not many knew what ability, diplomacy and the readiness to utilize every opportunity to advance our cause entered into the success that crowned his efforts. It was no boys-play, but man's work, the work of a "man among men", and this Society, when it occupies the spacious and modern structure that will house its treasures and be the theatre of activities, should, so long
as our building stands and the Society exists, treasure, (and we might almost say) revere the memory of William H. Stevenson. It may truthfully be said, that his last official act for the Society, was his presiding at the meeting of the Board, just one week before he died, when the "capsheaf" of accomplishment was placed upon his cherished plan, by the signing of the contract for the erection of our addition,—(now in actual progress). Those who then saw him, almost knew that the "Angel of Death" had placed its seal upon him, that, so far as this building and its future were concerned, he had triumphed over all material difficulties, had accomplished a labor of love, and was ready to say nunc dimittis!

The new, completed building, with the equipment he anticipated and provided for,—the activities of the Society under the arrangement which he effected to extend and make the Society a lasting force in the line of Historical Research, and all the good and desirable results flowing from it, will be his monument, one worthy of a man, of whom it has been said, "He was Pittsburgh's foremost citizen"! We are in hearty accord with that appraisal,—not first in wealth or worldly attainments; not first in official rank or as wearing insignias to distinguish him from his fellow citizens,—but first in the things of the heart and soul and mind devoted in season and out of season to the work of benefiting the State and City of his birth; not in dollars, but in civic virtue,—in providing opportunities for his fellow men to rise to higher things; to further the cause of religion and education, to improve the standards of life; and in all works of charity and benevolence. In all these worthy causes he was at the fore-front of the battle, and never lost courage or lowered his banner. He was a true man,—an ideal Christian gentleman, a lovable courteous kindly friend, who earned by his life and services the distinction of being "Pittsburgh's foremost citizen".

We have refrained from detailing his numerous activities other than those connected with our Society, because they have been fully presented in the Press and in resolutions of other organizations. It is enough to say that he performed his duties in every position he occupied both well and faithfully.
It should be noted, however, that our deceased President's place in the field of Historical Research was recognized by the Governor of Pennsylvania, who appointed him Chairman of the State Historical Commission, which position he held at the time of his death.

The private life of William H. Stevenson was as admirable and worthy as was his public career. He was an affectionate husband and father and has left an honored memory as an inheritance to his family. He was a true and fervent Christian and the tribute to his virtues strikingly and feelingly delivered by his Pastor, Reverend Doctor Robert MacGowan at the funeral services held at the Bellefield Presbyterian Church on September 24, 1930, will be long recalled by the many officers and members of our Society who were present there to pay a last tribute to the memory of one we loved and honored. We, together with hosts of his fellow citizens, mourn his being called from among us. We can only bow humbly and submissively to the Divine Mandate that summoned him hence.

William H. Stevenson has gone from our ken, but he shall be always remembered by The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania and its members, not only as the President who served the Society with distinction and success for many years but as its Benefactor.

In conclusion we may say:

"His life was gentle; and the elements
So marked in him, that Nature might
Stand up
And say to all the world: This was a man!"

The Committee moves that the foregoing tribute to the memory of our deceased President, William H. Stevenson, be spread upon the minutes of our Society, and that, as an expression both of our appreciation of our late President and of deep sympathy for Mrs. Stevenson and her family, an engrossed copy of same be sent to Mrs. Stevenson.

A. B. REID,
CHARLES W. DAHLINGER,
Committee on Memorial