



CHICAGO
LITERARY
CLUB

IN MEMORIAM

HOSMER ALLEN JOHNSON

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HOSMER A. JOHNSON

DIED FEBRUARY 26, 1891

AT the regular meeting of the Chicago Literary Club, held June 8, 1891, the accompanying report of a Committee appointed to prepare a tribute of respect to the memory of our late fellow-member and ex-president, HOSMER ALLEN JOHNSON, was read and adopted.

FREDERICK W. GOOKIN,
Recording Secretary.

THE Chicago Literary Club in these few words records the death of HOSMER ALLEN JOHNSON. The society having been organized for the purpose of finding a place where professional men might meet each other in the name of all the themes of public thought and in the name of a nearer friendship, Hosmer A. Johnson soon came in as being a man whom none could know without passing quickly from acquaintance to admiration. Our walls contained no nobler spirit. His power and refinement were equal. He came in the nineteenth century to fulfill a rhapsody of the seventeenth.

“Oh could I flow like thee! and make thy stream
My great example, as it is my theme!
Though deep yet clear; though gentle yet not dull,
Strong without rage; without overflowing full!”

That sensibility and therefore delicacy which helped make him great as a physician made him excellent as a friend. He was

present here in these rooms only as an inspiration. He never repelled, he knew how only to attract. He had no space in his heart for carrying an enmity. He would have broken down under such a burden. He possessed that power which could carry only friendships. To him all science, all history, all art, all nature, all religion were valuable and beautiful. The books he read were reviewed calmly and fearlessly in his own mind and did not so much create him as awaken him. In his readings he could add and subtract like a mathematician. All the varied scene around him added to his own breadth. He loved that sincerity which makes diverging thoughts the many lights of many minds. He did not possess egotism enough to make him isolated and narrow. Deeply religious he would gladly have joined in kind discourse with an atheist.

The only things Hosmer A. Johnson inherited at birth were a good mind, ill health, and poverty. When a youth he engaged to keep school three months when told that he would live, perhaps, only one. But the end of the quarter found him still in the world.

He was young when this State was young and he was poor when all the West was the favorite home of poverty. Would that his heart could have been cheered in those dark days by a vision of the success, love and fame which were destined to fall to his lot in far off time! The growth of the state, the city and of the whole nation was no more rapid than the unfolding of his personal worth. He was not only the friend of each member of this Society but he was a friend of the world. Institutions of education, of science, and of charity asked help from his wisdom. He was always moving along in the path of some excellence,—excellence in his profession, or in science, or in morals, or in the common relations of man to man.

Never holding to life with any sure tenure our brother stood clothed with a certain philosophy which made him look with a calm mental sweetness upon the going away from this world. In the deeper forms of thought he was self-adequate. When baffled at the analysis of man he simply went nobly onward. We may repeat for his silent lips the words of Matthew Arnold :

“ Weary of myself and sick of asking
What am I, what I ought to be?
At the ship’s prow I stand. It bears me
Forward, forward o’er the starlit sea.”

It is seldom so much goodness can go
away from our world in one dying breath.
When Hosmer Allen Johnson died he had
traveled sixty-eight years away from his cradle.
It is with grief this brotherhood places
his name upon the roll of its dead.

DAVID SWING,
EZRA B. McCAGG,
NORMAN WILLIAMS,
Committee.