

FOUNDERS DAY CONVOCATION

Addresses honoring

GEORGE W. MARSTON

by

Charles C. Haines

and

James A. Blaisdell

POMONA COLLEGE BULLETIN

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FOUNDERS DAY CONVOCATION, OCTOBER 17, 1946
MABEL SHAW BRIDGES AUDITORIUM : CLAREMONT

Mr. George W. Marston, a founding trustee of Pomona College in 1887, and thereafter a continuous member of the Board, died at his home in San Diego on May 31, 1946. The Founders Day exercises at the College on October 17, 1946, were dedicated to Mr. Marston and his fellow members of the original Board of Trustees. Addresses were given by Judge Charles C. Haines, '02, of the Superior Court, who had worked closely with him in the civic life of San Diego, and by Dr. James A. Blaisdell, President of Pomona College from 1910 to 1928, President Emeritus of Claremont College, and Mr. Marston's lifelong friend. Through the publication of these addresses, Pomona College further expresses its gratitude to its beloved and far-sighted leader.

E. WILSON LYON,
President of Pomona College

MR. MARSTON
AS A CIVIC LEADER

by

Charles C. Haines

IT HAS fallen to me to pay a tribute today, inadequate though it be, to the worth of Mr. Marston, both as an outstanding citizen of this state and particularly as an upbuilder of the city which became his lifetime home. The story of his connection with Pomona College will presently be told by more capable lips.

Of pioneer American stock, coming to San Diego in 1870 at the age of twenty years, he early took a leading part in the development of the community. By the later eighties, his dry goods store, then established at the northeast corner of Fifth and "F" Streets in San Diego, was already the leading mercantile establishment of the city, a distinction that with two subsequent changes of location, first to the southwest corner of Fifth and "C" Streets, and, finally, to the present site, it has ever since maintained, growing and expanding with the city's growth. Always clear headed and practical, Mr. Marston gave to his business unremitting personal attention, until, in

his later years, he was able to shift the larger portion of its management to the very capable shoulders of his son, Arthur, who is its present head. Its conduct has always been characteristic of its founder—quiet, solid, conservative and yet alive to progress. It has constantly avoided all manner of cheap display. It has always had, and has always deserved, the reputation for giving to its patrons full and fair value for every charge made them. Its department heads have consistently been men of outstanding character and abilities. It has been liberal in its treatment of its employees, and if it ever encountered such a thing as labor trouble nobody ever heard of it. In fact its entire conduct has been as nearly a model of what a commercial enterprise ought to be as is humanly possible of attainment.

I have emphasized this phase of Mr. Marston's career because, in this era of industrial unrest, of impossible utopias and unrealizable dreams, it is well to remember that all sane idealism, insofar as it concerns itself with the material well-being of the community, must be built on careful planning, steady industry and conscientious attention to detail, without which all plans for social uplift are but as the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

But Mr. Marston was vastly more than a business man. He was keenly alive to every responsibility of citizenship. For several terms he served as a member of the San Diego Board of Fire Commissioners, as a member of the Board of Public Library Trustees, as a Director of the Chamber of Commerce, and for many years as a member of the Park Commission; always, of course, without compensation. Never interested, however, in partisan politics and with an instinctive contempt for the shallow artifices and histrionic appeals of one sort and

another that are often so effectual in winning votes, he twice failed of election as Mayor of his city, an office for which no one could have been more completely qualified.

His public service to San Diego, however, was in no wise limited by any occupancy of public office or quest for it. An innate feeling for the aesthetic was one of his prominent traits, and he gave it material expression, not only in the careful thought that as a public official and otherwise he expended on the development of our extensive Balboa Park, but in rescuing from oblivion, acquiring, improving and planting to trees at his own cost, the historic hillside and hilltop overlooking Old San Diego, and now known as Fort Stockton Park, which had been the site of the old Spanish Presidio, guarding the earliest settlement of Europeans within the present area of this state. To this he added in the same grounds, and also at his own cost, a museum of monumental architecture; and, after personally paying for the upkeep of the whole for some years, offered it all gratuitously to the city, whose authorities, after no little delay and with none too good a grace, were compelled by force of public opinion to accept it.

Mr. Marston sponsored the movement to provide the city with a Civic Center which should not impinge upon the distinctive use of its existing parks, and although there continues to be much difference of opinion about the suitability of the site chosen on the water front, on which has been built the structure intended for its initial and administrative unit, and though it may be possible that another location may yet be chosen for the ultimate development of the project, it can be hoped that his influence has at least finally defeated any attempt to invade our present parks for business purposes.

He was for some years a Trustee of the State Normal

School at San Diego, which has since become the State College there. He was a charter member of the San Diego University Club. He belonged through many years to the Tuesday Evening Club, a group that met monthly for the discussion of public questions and included many of the leaders in the public activities of the city. He was interested in music and a constant attendant and supporter of the Amphion Club, an organization of importance in local musical circles. He took an especial interest in the elimination of race frictions, which he recognized as one of the major dangers in our present civilization, contributed liberally to such organizations as the National Association for the Protection of Colored People, and went so far as to remember the latter in his will. He was prominently identified from the outset with the organization and maintenance of the local Y.M.C.A.; was for many years the head of that organization, and remained to the end of his life its President Emeritus. He was always a devoted member and liberal supporter of the Congregational Church and gave to its needs his especial personal attention, not only in his own community but in Southern California generally. His own preference, however, for the simplicity of its services and ministrations in no way indicated any sectarian prejudice and his sympathy and support could be counted on for any enterprise concerned with the social or the religious uplift of the community regardless of denomination or creed. In the restoration of the historic Franciscan Mission of San Diego, he was proud to have a part.

He loved to play and even to extreme old age alarmed his friends, and I have no doubt worried his family, by insisting on going to a local rink and participating in the skating.

Devoted as he was to his home city, Mr. Marston spent

most of his time in its environment. But he was not unacquainted with other scenes. A member of the Sierra Club, he delighted in the atmosphere of the mountains, and I well recollect his expression of anxiety at the height of the national enthusiasm for C.C.C. Camps, lest the haunts, the refuges and the habits of wild creatures might be too wantonly disturbed. He took great satisfaction in a visit which he made one summer to Mexico City as a member of the University Group headed by Dr. Herring, and familiar to many of you at Claremont, which before World War II used annually to go down there with the purpose of gaining and broadening contact with Latin American civilization. A number of years ago he visited Europe. I do not know how far he went, but remember a talk from him after his return, in which he told of having rented for a short time a habitation in the Vicars' Close of Wells Cathedral in England, precincts that someone has aptly termed a "place of ancient peace." He told us of the impression that the tranquility of that rural Cathedral City made upon him, and I remember his whimsical complaint that he tried on a business day to get a cobbler to repair a pair of shoes but was told that he had gone to sing at one of the daily services in the Cathedral choir and that he must call again.

These, of course, are but isolated episodes, but they illustrate the breadth of his contacts and his interests.

His was an open and a tolerant mind. Intellectually he was a liberal, but on what he considered matters of principle, Mr. Marston was adamant. Conservative as were his own tastes and his conduct, he was highly sensitive to anything that savored of coercion or repression, especially in any interference with the free expression of opinion upon political or economic subjects; and he hesitated not at all to withdraw from organiza-

tions to which, by right of birth and education, he was entitled to belong, when he found that positions which they took were in any way inimical to the right of everyone fully to express his views.

Anyone who knew Mr. Marston through a period of years could go on almost indefinitely with a catalogue of his activities and his benefactions; but not all of these put together could suffice to picture what he really was. His was one of those rare spirits who go through life, with all of its perplexities, its vexations and its vicissitudes, with the sincere purpose of doing what one person may do to raise the level of human happiness, but who, for all of that, refuse to take themselves too seriously. He had that subtle and delicate sense of humor, for want of which so many serious minded people wear to the breaking point the patience and the nerves of those with whom they have to deal. Not so with him. He was, in veriest truth, a gentleman. He was a gentleman in the old sense; that is, one who possessed of fortune, refinement and some modicum of leisure, devotes his wealth, his talents and his time to the service of his fellow men. He was all of that. But he was a gentleman, also, in the more current meaning of that term — one who is sympathetic and understanding in his dealings with the great and the humble alike and is possessed of that saving grace so aptly described in the familiar words of St. Paul in the chapter from the New Testament that this College has appropriated as its own, which:

“. . . Suffereth long, and is kind . . . envieth not . . . vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; Doth not behave itself unseemly: Seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth . . .”

For many months, of course, Mr. Marston had realized that his sojourn in this world could not be greatly prolonged; and now, in the fullness of his years, he who was the friend of all of us has quietly left us, trusting himself without regret and without fear to One in whom "is no darkness at all."

MR. MARSTON:
THE INVESTMENT OF A LIFE

by

James A. Blaisdell

A VERY great and seemingly indispensable leader of many years ago in leaving his alarmed and dismayed followers is reported to have amazed them by saying that it was "expedient" for them that he go away. Whether he actually said these words or whether they belong to the discernment of one who later pondered in astonishment over the gathering influence of this vanished leader, they display a profound insight into the permanent effectiveness of life and the form of its greatest dynamics.

Let us understand this. While a friend walks with us we are occupied simply with the happiness of his presence. The details of our companionship satisfy us. We see him simply in an aura of good will — an experience, to be sure, very rich and rewarding. But when he finally leaves us, then it is something different for we then begin to think of him in his whole personality. We see him now for the first time as a complete figure against the back-ground of his day and our sense of

values. We say: This was the man and thus and so he wrought upon us. Now he is of the timeless. What he was belongs now to the permanent.

It is in this perspective that I would speak of our friend who has gone from us and yet lives in us. And I have in mind, as my subject suggests, this matter of the way in which a man may become a timeless influence or, if you please, the strategy of effective living. For I am persuaded that this man who was so uniquely influential and productive among us and in his generation has something to share with us in the manner and method of this investment of himself. And I am also sure that there is no thoughtful man desiring to make his years something more than the mere passage of time who is not concerned to give thought to the way in which great men put out their lives into the world as the most precious possibility with which they are endowed.

The manner of the investment of life — let me first of all make the common-place observation that men have very varied ways of using their stock-in-trade of life. To some men, but not to any college man, the years are just a series of casual events, just a catch-as-catch-can. Such men merely take life as it comes and accept it as the moment permits. There *is* no program of long purpose.

But of the men who interest us there are some who are quite otherwise. They feel that life must have its definite tactics, that it must be shrewdly mobilized into an accurate plan of campaign — interrupted, of course, by circumstances — but nevertheless a premeditated design. Such men forecast their future in the utmost possible detail — profession, location and in a multitude of far more subtle matters as, for example, just how many years shall emphasize the matter of

intake and when that should change to or combine with the matter of outgo. And, having done this, this man has from there on a steel framework for all the years ahead. Now you will not think that I minimize the value of such a life when I point out that George Marston was not this manner of a man.

For I am persuaded that there is a still greater strategy of life to which some men attain. I refer to the man who is so native to the opportunities and nobilities of his universe that he quite instinctively and almost unconsciously finds his way into the maximum investment of himself. I do not think that I can give more clearly the portrait of our friend than to say that this was the kind of a man he was. Here was no wizard's far forecasting of a definite career. Here was just a young man who, as we say, "came West" and, just because he was the man he was lived himself into his great areas of opportunity.

Let me repeat that. Here was a man who just because he *was* such a man lived himself instinctively into his great areas of opportunity. Let me define what I mean. First of all here was a man who lived himself into his home. What an area of influence a home is if a prince of men just simply and naturally puts himself into it! The hope of the world is in its homes. It never ceased to thrill me, as president of this college, when an alumnus proudly brought his son to succeed him in these college halls. Now, I have said to myself, this college has proved itself. That is an historic day when a man and a woman say to themselves not simply: "We will be happy together" but also: "In and through this home we will live ourselves into an endless influence." Some of you have perhaps known the home of George and Anna Mars.on — its beauty, its simplicity, its culture, its hospitality, its mutual devotion, its radiance. In that home a man and a woman

made great investment of themselves and their line has already gone far out into the world and wherever it shall yet go this man and woman will be immortal.

Then there was the area of business in which this man was just himself. I must not stop here for you will fill out my meaning. Mr. Marston once declined to admit to me that he was "a great business man." I will not quibble with words but I will say that whether or not he was what is commonly called "a great business man" he was far more than that for he was a *great man in business*, and that, being just that, he left standards of rectitude and honor for his whole commercial world. He made his business the vehicle of permanent influence.

Then there was the city into which as Judge Haines has recounted this man invested himself. Cities, cities — what a means they are for the possible immortality of a citizen. In his citizenship lies a possibility that he may live on forever. So Pericles lives through Athens, the Medici through Florence, Christopher Wren through the rebuilding of London, Jane Addams through Chicago. And if five hundred years from now someone shall wish to know of George Marston he will need only to go to San Diego and look about him.

I have left myself but a scant moment in which to speak of the still larger area in which George Marston lived his life. He lived in his home but beyond it; and he lived in his community but beyond it. He was one of the first to recognize the greatest opportunity. He became a citizen of this whole new world of the Pacific-West.

How swiftly — and yet how slowly — our West is coming into its own! Engineers, traders, masons and builders — yes. Local idealists — yes. Railroads, bridges, harbors, buildings —

yes. But how few have seen this South-west or this West as a whole — its length and breadth and the altitude of its possibilities. How few are as yet the cosmopolitan citizens of the civilization which can be among us. How much they are needed! What an area of possible investment of unselfish and envisioned men and women.

Of this all-too-small company George Marston was a pioneer. He was interested not only in San Diego but also in all the roads which led out of San Diego and in all the varied places in which they terminated. He was devoted to his local Christian Association but he was equally devoted to his State Association. For fifty years he invested himself in this college, all in all one of the greatest of college trustees in America, and for fewer years he gave similar concern to the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. Up and down this State he was known everywhere as a champion of free speech, of a free press, and of the right of men to hear and to think. I do not forget that his interests transcended even this area — that the flags were at half-mast in a little city of far off Bulgaria when he passed — but I shall always think of him as having made the largest investment of his life in this Western area — that West which waits — waits for other men who like George Marston shall become immortal in it.

This then was the man, who being such a man as he was, made of life a great opportunity by investing himself in his home, his business, his city and, most notably of all, in his commonwealth. And of such lives it is still true that they do not die. For there is now only a new expediency as, in their going and by their going they gather with each passing year a new sacredness and a new increment of power. For it is of such men that we say: "We are their heirs."

And this, therefore, also is the manner of the man who loved these colleges and, most of all, this college. In the hour of poverty he gave it his courage. In the hours of trouble he gave his wisdom. In the Quadrangle which he endowed he will ever declare his love of beauty. In his eager spirit and in the wealth which he bestowed upon this college he will ever challenge us to face fearlessly and faithfully an ever-unfolding world of truth and duty.

Unwittingly, it may be, but nevertheless genuinely every college man enters into a certain *noblesse oblige*. By accepting as his own the gathered and gathering honor of his college he becomes partner in the obligation to preserve these treasures. This life then is ours — to keep — that a thousand years from now a young student — inheritor from us — saluting the blue and white as it climbs to its place in the morning sunshine shall sense in it still the same challenge to the things which this man loved and for which he made investment of himself in his world and in us.

Perhaps I should stop right here but I cannot tell the whole story or give you the whole picture of this man without one more sentence and you will pardon me if it is very personal. For I must remind you that this unconscious wisdom in the investment of life is itself a product. If we would know its sources for ourselves we must find them. So I only add this — that if you had asked our friend how he came by this instinctive wisdom which led him into all this influence he would at first have minimized the fact and then, smiling at you, he would have said: “Well, if it is true it is due, I suppose, to my inheritance” (here was the family again, you see) and then, very modestly, “Well you know, too, that we have had a great Master.”