

7-1914

Remarks By Dr. WM. E. Leonard

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Recommended Citation

Leonard, W. E. (1914). Remarks By Dr. WM. E. Leonard. *Journal of the Minnesota Academy of Science*, Vol. 5 No.2, 95-96.

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REMARKS BY DR. WM. E. LEONARD

Mr. President and Fellow Members of the Academy :

It is not from lack of respect for the noble gentleman and eminent scientist whose memory we honor here tonight, that I do not present my remarks in manuscript form, but rather from a sense of the meagerness and personal nature of what I have to say.

My recollections of Prof. Winchell go back to my student days at the University, when in our Junior year we were required to take a course in Geology and Mineralogy, there being few electives in those days. We looked forward to a very dry time over a dry subject; but within a week, being introduced to a real teacher, we all became enthusiastic learners. Through his genius in giving to dry facts and objects lively connection with a real science, he interested us at once. He inspired us with his enthusiasm, and put life into the stones in the class-room. His untiring patience with our ignorance, his desire to make us learn thoroughly what we did learn, was in itself an education. I have forgotten all the Geology long ago, but learned to love the noble character who taught us. Thus he left an impress upon hundreds of the everyday students, besides training up a score or more of real geologists, some of whom are here tonight to pay tribute to him.

In the summer of 1875 I was chosen to accompany him on the Survey, and started out with him one June day to drive down the state, with the horse and platform wagon, which he termed the "state wagon." My numerous questions about birds and plants,—crude and ignorant as they were, no doubt, tired him, and he finally said, "You drive for a while and I'll read from this book, and then I'll drive for a while and you read." The book was Dickens' Great Expectations.

On this day and night we fared to Spring Valley, when he set me at work on field notes of railroad cuts, wells, etc., in and around that town,—in the Fillmore County, so famous geologically, as has been said here tonight. Those few notes occupy a small space in the report for that year,—a very, very meagre addition to his stupendous labors of all those years.

In a day or two, a telegram summoned him home to a sick child, and left me to drive home across the country alone, with what specimens we had accumulated. It was a long, lonely drive for a green youth. My part of the Survey ended with the delivery of the "state wagon" at Prof. Winchell's home on State Street.

Even this brief contact with the genial, modest professor was a benison to me and a sweet remembrance for all these years.

Another trait which Prof. Winchell possessed that no one has touched upon this evening, but which seems to me most worthy of mention, was his scientific devotion and self-forgetfulness, regarding the rich iron deposits of our commonwealth,—the deposits that are fast putting Minnesota at the head of all the states in natural wealth. As has been told tonight by his co-workers, he found and mapped out the best ore regions of the Mesaba Range, more than ten years before any special notice was taken of the discovery. By what is called practical shrewdness, he could have made himself at least a millionaire by securing a tract of this ore land for his own use. That he did not do it, only shows the single and high purpose of a man of science and a lover of his kind.