

Rev. T. O. Douglass Reaches End Of Life's Pilgrimage

One of the great men of Iowa Congregationalism, one of the stalwart souls who have embodied in their lives the spirit of the founders of Grinnell College, passed to his reward when Rev. T. O. Douglass, D. D., passed quietly from this life into death Friday morning at his home in



REV. T. O. DOUGLASS.

Claremont, Calif. The telegram announcing his death, received Saturday morning by Rev. P. A. Johnson, did not cause surprise, for it was well

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known that Dr. Douglass was failing steadily, but it did bring sincere regret over the passing of one whose life has been so upright in its living and so rich in its fruition.

A letter received this morning states that funeral services would be held in Claremont either yesterday or today. Plans for a memorial service in Grinnell are left with Rev. P. A. Johnson and one will be held probably next week. It is expected that possibly Mrs. Douglass and certainly some of the children will be present at this service.

He was born in Bethel, Bond County, Illinois, May 3, 1842. His father was John Douglass of Scotch ancestry, and his mother Jane McCord of Scotch-Irish descent. The ancestral home was in Tennessee from which state the parents moved to Illinois in the early part of the last century. He was the third child and oldest son and there was early laid upon his shoulders the responsibility of aiding in the support of the family; for the father and bread winner was in ill health and the privations of a frontier life were in evidence. The home was deeply and devoutly religious with Scotch Presbyterian background; where the Bible was read daily and the Sabbath rigidly observed. This atmosphere had its benign influence in shaping the religious life of the growing youth. When a mere child,

the parents again moved, from Illinois to Wisconsin, where a home was established in "The Timber" near Platteville. Here a log cabin was erected, but the community afforded little or no opportunity in the way of school and church; and soon another move was made nearer Platteville making these privileges easier of access. In an autobiographical sketch, Dr. Douglass bears testimony to the positive religious influence of the Platteville church. This is evidenced by the fact that five young men from this community, including the subject of this sketch, started to prepare for the Christian ministry.

In the spring of 1861 Young Douglass entered Illinois College at Jacksonville—a few days after the first shot on Fort Sumpter. The first two years of college life were filled with restlessness and uncertainty, due in large measure to war hostilities.

When the call came for Hundred Day men, Mr. Douglass enlisted, May 17, 1864, in the midst of his Junior year, and he served, most of the time as Color Sergeant, until stricken by malarial fever. He was mustered out September 23 of the same year. This army experience, though of brief duration, was long enough permanently to undermine his health, and to the day of his death he carried a thorn in the flesh in the form of a malady which at times gave him sore physical distress.

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The same year he entered the Chicago Theological Seminary, completing the three year course, and serving the church at Amboy, Illinois, during his middle year. Upon graduation in May 1868, he accepted the call to the church at Osage, Iowa, where he spent fourteen fruitful years. On June 25th of this year he was married to Miss Maria Greene of Platteville, Wisconsin. Six children were born to this happy union: Rev. Paul H. Douglass, Upper Montclair, New Jersey; Rev. Truman O. Douglass, Jr., Tempe, Arizona; M. Hale Douglass, Eugene, Oregon; Mrs. Faith Douglass Hodson, Claremont, California; Mrs. Grace Douglass Orr, Lincoln, Nebraska; Winfred Douglass, deceased. There was also an adopted daughter, Mrs. Agnes Pinkerton, Mission, South Dakota. In the rearing and training of this family the responsibility fell largely upon the mother, who with sublime courage and devotion bore her full share of this sacred task.

On October 28, 1868, he was ordained to the Christian ministry. In his own words the Osage ministry was "a hard, happy and measurably successful pastorate." A new church was built, and foundations were laid for the prosperity of the organization which have been abundantly realized in later years.

But the great work of Dr. Douglass' life began in 1882 when he became Superintendent of Home Missions in Iowa. For twenty-five years he held this post of honor, "loving and being loved, serving and being served, blessing and being blessed." This quarter of a century was a period of growth and missionary expansion, the

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story of which has been so admirably told in his annual reports to the state meetings of the Congregational churches. The responsibility of leadership was increasingly exacting, yet he bore all the hardships incident to the service, and "the care of all the churches," with the faith and courage of the Apostle Paul. The home mission churches were always his deep concern, and these he carried in his great heart with constant solicitude. The achievements of these twenty-five years he himself has summarized in the following words:

"One hundred and thirty-seven churches organized; one hundred and eighteen fostered into self-support; two hundred and twenty-two houses of worship completed and dedicated; seventy-eight thousand, nine hundred and fifty-eight added to the membership of the churches, forty-eight thousand eight hundred and thirty of these on confession of faith; the membership increased from fifteen thousand and seven hundred and eighty-seven to thirty-six thousand four hundred and eighty-three; and one million, one hundred and seventy-six thousand, two hundred and twenty-five dollars raised for missions."

Following Dr. Douglass' retirement from the Superintendency in 1907, he took a sort of a post graduate course in Home Missions. Under the direction of the National Home Missionary Society he set out on a tour of inspection of the Western and New England States. Later he visited the Theological Seminary; assisted in home mission campaigns, and Grinnell College endowment campaign. He was chosen Iowa delegate to the International Council at Edinburgh in 1908, and in that connection he and Mrs. Douglass enjoyed the privilege of a well earned vacation in visiting places of interest in England and Scotland and on the continent.

He was frequently a delegate to the National Council; a valued trustee and counselor to Grinnell College. Tabor College conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Two significant and highly valued contributions came from Dr. Douglass' pen. His book, "The Pilgrims of Iowa" is a work of genuine merit, portraying in a vivid manner the story of our home missionary achievements in Iowa. In addition to this, he busied himself for many months, and with exhausting labors and great patience, in preparing biographical sketches of men who had served in the Congregational ministry in Iowa up to the year 1900. There are nine type written volumes of these sketches, in the Grinnell College Library which will be of increasing value as reference volumes in years to come.

For a number of years Dr. and Mrs. Douglass have been living in Claremont, California. A stroke of apoplexy in the fall of 1923 was the beginning of the end. The passing months have witnessed a gradual and steady decline. The end came peacefully on the morning of September 11, 1925, at the age of 83 years, 4 months and 8 days. Having "served his generation by the will of God he fell on sleep." It can be truthfully said of Dr. Douglass that "the law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips."
