

Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science

Volume 10 | Annual Issue

Article 7

1902

Necrology: William Miller Beardshear

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Recommended Citation

Pammel, L. H. (1902) "Necrology: William Miller Beardshear," *Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science*, 10(1), 22-25.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pias/vol10/iss1/7>

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NECROLOGY.

WILLIAM MILLER BEARDSHEAR.

BY L. H. PAMMEL.

Dr. Beardshear became a member of the Academy of Sciences soon after he was elected president of the Iowa State College. He took an active interest in its progress, though never presenting any papers. He was, however, deeply interested in building up the scientific side of every department represented by the academy. He saw the importance of science in all of its phases to human industry and education. In his death the academy loses an active friend and supporter.

The writer's acquaintance with Dr. Beardshear began when he delivered one of the Sunday morning addresses at the college chapel in 1890. This address, like others of his it was my privilege to hear, was full of noble thoughts and expressions. Early in 1891 he was elected to the presidency of the Iowa State College, and one of his first official acts was to preside at the experiment station council, at which the members of the station council had gathered for the purpose of outlining a policy of the work to be carried on by its staff. On this occasion, as in all others where he dealt in an official capacity, he was tactful and cautious. His success as an executive rests largely in his tactful way and the kind consideration he gave to all matters coming before him. This won for him the respect and confidence of his colleagues. I had the privilege also of being associated with him on the geological board, where every question was treated in a broad minded manner. As a member of the faculty I found him ever considerate for the wants

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Plate I.



WILLIAM MILLER BEARDSHEAR.

and needs of the student body. He outlined policies that were not narrow or one sided. He always worked for the full and complete development of the student. Mental training was not sufficient, but the social side of the student as well as athletics must needs receive attention. He wished the college to turn out men and women in the broadest sense.

Dr. Beardshear had two requisites for a successful college president. One was a commanding presence, which at once caused him to receive respectful consideration. He never had to resort to unusual methods as the student obediently followed his suggestions. Secondly, he had splendid executive ability. He was careful never to commit himself to a student, and by an instinctive process brought out what the student had to say. He then dealt with the student body as his conscience dictated.

Dr. Beardshear was a great lover of the beautiful in nature; the trees and flowers were an inspiration to him. He knew them from boyhood. When as a boy he had to cut trees on an Ohio farm, or afterwards roaming through the woods on a hunt, the trees and flowers became an open book to him. I remember a long talk I had with him when he returned from Montauk, New York, where he had been attending a meeting of the United States Indian Commission. The beautiful chestnut oaks on those grounds appealed to him. He had a strong affection for his old home in Ohio where his aged mother continued to reside until her death, and where he made a yearly visit. His home ties were equally strong and he had the strongest affection for his family.

The chief events of his life are as follows: He was born at Dayton, Ohio, November 7th, 1850, and his boyhood was spent on the farm. He entered the army of the Cumberland at fourteen years of age, his early education having been attained in the public schools of Ohio. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from Otterbein University in 1876, and later the degree of Master of Arts from the same school; he also received the degree of LL. D. from his alma mater. He took two years post graduate work at

Yale University. He was a minister of the United Brethren church and held pastorates at Arcanum and Dayton, Ohio. He was president of Western College, Toledo, Iowa, from 1881 to 1889, and at that time was one of the youngest college presidents in the United States. He brought Western College from an obscure institution to one of standing among the colleges of the states. He was superintendent of the city schools of Des Moines from 1889 to 1891, where he displayed unusual executive abilities. To be a successful city superintendent requires tact and ability of an unusual kind, and he had both to a marked degree. He was president of the Iowa State Teacher's Association in 1894; served a term on the executive committee of the Iowa State Teacher's Association; was director of the National Educational Association from Iowa for a number of years, and was president one year of the Department of Manual Industry and Training of that association; he was president of the Iowa State Improved Stock Breeder's Association in 1899, and delivered an annual address that will long be remembered as a powerful one. In his delivery he displayed all of his powers of oratory, combined with wit and wisdom. He was a member of the United States Indian Commission since 1897; was juror on Educational Awards at the Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, in 1901, and president of the National Educational Association, 1901-1902. He died August 5th, 1902, at Ames, Iowa.

One of his strongest addresses was delivered at the commencement exercises at Ames in June, 1902. The same month he delivered an address at Manhattan, Kansas, at the National Educational Association. Dr. Beardshear was the first president of the National Educational Association to come from the state colleges. He had worked earnestly to extend the scope of this body, as well as the association of agricultural colleges and experiment stations. In this body at the San Francisco meeting he had a resolution introduced, which was carried, looking for greater co-operation between the National Educational Association and the state colleges.

A large concourse of mourning friends attended the funeral services, held in the college chapel at Ames, on August 7th, where addresses were made by President Bookwalter, Professors Stanton and Loos, Superintendent Barrett and Mr. Boyd.

One of the best estimates of President Beardshear may be found in what President Bookwalter said in speaking of him as a man. "His strength lay as always, chiefly in his greatness of heart. His whole career was marked and made illustrious by his lofty, self-sacrificing devotion to the good of others. He literally gave himself without stint—alas, as it would seem, with too little thought of an overtaxed body—to the great interests committed to his care. But we would not have had him less the great hearted servant he was, the follower of Him who 'came not to be ministered but to minister.' What a noble soul he was. How fit and valuable a teacher and leader of the young. His life was emphatically an outpour. And what an outpour, what an overflow, watering the waste places and making everywhere the lilies to grow."

Equally noble sentiments were expressed by Prof. Stanton, in his address at the memorial services for the college students on September 7th. "Two days in college history—February 17, 1891, and August 5, 1902—stand out before me in a similar impressive way. On the one, a great and lofty soul came into touch with a great and lofty mission. On the other, undaunted, triumphant, glorified, with the spirit of a true soldier, our beloved president answered the summons which called him into higher fields of duty. Between these dates lies the greatest work of Dr. Beardshear's life, a work sanctified by such full measure of devotion, courage and self-sacrifice as lights up the grief and mystery of to-day with a far reaching, prophetic hope, and confirms our faith in the God-like possibilities of human living."