

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN MINTO*

By WILLIAM GALLOWAY.

On this the 157th anniversary of the birth of the great Scotch poet, Robert Burns, I am asked to say something of another poet, writer and Oregon pioneer, Hon. John Minto, who never let the natal day of "Bobby" Burns pass without celebrating the occasion with song and feast.

I knew Mr. Minto intimately from my childhood and can never think of him without associating him with two other noted pioneers of Oregon born under Britain's flag—Dr. John McLoughlin, born in Canada, and Hon. F. X. Matthieu, also a native of Canada. These three pioneers were bosom friends and co-laborers in laying broad and secure the foundation of our young commonwealth. Their remains lie on the banks of the beautiful Willamette they loved so dearly, and no men more loyal to the American flag or American institutions ever breathed the pure air of heaven.

Mr. Minto was a native of England, born in 1822, crossed the plains to Oregon in 1844 and settled near Salem where in 1847 he married Martha Ann Morrison, a pioneer of 1844. Of this worthy pioneer woman it can be truly said she was of the highest stamp of American womanhood and was no man's inferior. Of this happy union there were eight children born, three only surviving, being valued residents of Salem, their native city. Minto was born of the common people, lived the life of the people he so loved and died with a last prayer for the supremacy of the plain people. He often said "We have too many paupers and too many idle rich, but not enough of the great mass of the common people who move the world civilly, morally and financially."

Our constitution written by our pioneer fathers is the most enlightened and progressive of any state constitution in the

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union. Our civil and criminal code, enacted by our early legislatures of which Mr. Minto was often a member and always a valued adviser, has done more to break down sex distinctions under the law than that of any other American state. Those pioneer legislators who had toiled for six or seven months crossing the plains with their wives and children in their ox teams, had learned the value and superiority of true womanhood, hence under the laws of Oregon there is no sex distinction in the possession of property. A woman in Oregon can hold land in her own name, can sue and be sued, can administer upon the estate of her deceased husband, and is the legal guardian of her own children, she pays taxes and has a voice in saying how those taxes shall be expended. In Oregon no sex inequality or sex inferiority is recognized by law, and it can be truthfully said that no man living or dead has done more to incorporate those sacred and inalienable rights of the people into our statutes than our departed and beloved friend, John Minto.

Mr. Minto was a most retiring man who accepted office and position of public trust as a duty imposed upon citizenship. He was eminently qualified and might have filled any office in the gift of the people of his adopted state. He preferred his muse and worked solely in developing the latent resources of his state. He was a pathfinder in searching for highways and means of communication with other sections of this great northwest and the eastern states. I believe Mr. Minto would have preferred the honor of discovering an advantageous mountain passageway for egress from and ingress to the Willamette valley or the improvement of some species of our domestic animals than the honors of a membership in Congress.

In politics Mr. Minto was a Democrat until the Civil War, when he associated himself with the Republican party, though he was never a strict partisan in any sense. He was a member of the Odd Fellows and Elk orders, and when he passed away was the oldest member of those orders in the state.

Mr. Minto was a student to the very last moment of his long and useful life. He read and wrote continuously and has

left his impress upon every page of Oregon history. He loved the birds of the air and the beasts of the forest, yes, everything in nature from the flowers of the valley to the snow-capped peak of Mount Hood. With such a soul and heart it is but natural that the writings of the great Scotch poet Burns should have held first place in his literary affections.

Mr. Minto died at the age of 92 years, beloved by all who knew him or had ever felt the inspiration of his pen and muse.