

Sunday, December 6th, 1931.

This morning we drove to Kenosha to place the sprays of evergreen and ruscus on the graves of Mr. and Mrs. S C Johnson. It was twelve years from the date of his death, and each year we have carried the sprays as a remembrance of him. Sometimes the men have done it and sometimes the women and always they have been glad to honor his memory in that way.

It was cold and blowy, but not as stormy as the day we laid him away. That was a real blizzard and the snow had filled the highways so that part of the way we drove over the tracks of the interurban road. There was a great company at the house and many who drove thru the storm to follow him as far as they might.

He was an old man, nearly eighty six years old, and he had lived a full life. Some one said years afterward that your father had lived more in his sixty years than his father did in eighty six. But I wonder - - a different life, to be sure, with different environment, different conditions, but who knows what the final measure of life is. "An in fancy of a day" - - -

He had been at his desk at the office seven weeks before his death. The two or three hours which he put in every morning were a real delight to him, and a real service to the organization. Not a mere putting in of the time, but a keeping in touch with all that was going on and a good word of counsel when needed.

During the last two weeks when it seemed almost too hard for him to breathe, he read in the newspaper of a shipwreck in Lake Superior and the daring rescue of many of the sailors by one man who had the courage and the stamina to go out and bring them in one by one. He showed the account to each of us as we went to see him and his comment was always the same - "It is the personal touch that counts - Not the money you give, but the actual personal service that you can render. That's what makes it worth-while."

The last day he lived when his breathing filled the house, it was so hard and labored, he still had a smile for those who came in. At eight o'clock of a Saturday night the stertorous breathing stopped and there was silence. The next morning there was great bouquet of white carnations on his pew, telling that he had gone home. This was your mother's idea and proved what your Aunt Jessie said, "Helen Johnson has more nice and ideas of doing things for folks than any one I know."

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Several years before, ten years in fact, Mr. S.C. had written a letter to your father, indicating what he would like to have him do with his estate. He had given it to me to deliver and had told me about what was in it. He said the law divided his estate about as he wished it and he would not make a will. The letter is in his own hand writing in the safe, but I am making a copy of it to go with this little sketch.

That afternoon I went over to the office and took the letter down to the house. Your father and mother were there alone before the fire and when I told him what I had brought, he insisted on reading it aloud then and there. It was almost too much for him, but he read it all thru to the end, then gave it back to me to keep. So far as I know he never read it again, but the suggestions made in the letter were carried out as he thought Mr. S.C. would have wanted it, had it been written within more recent years. He couldn't make the bequests immediately, for you know we came at once into the depression of 1920-21 and with the enlarged advertising campaign and the depressed conditions to say nothing of the loss of his father who was his balance wheel and counselor, but within two years he had carried them all out.

One of the last things that Mr. S.C. said, "Take care of my poor folks. Remember my little old ladies." That was one of the things your father was so careful to do. The second of the old ladies lived until 1927 and during all the years their check was sent to them as long as they could handle it, and then to a niece of theirs who managed their affairs for them. Not one year but eight years.

Mr. S.C. often spoke of Mr. Burnell who was the father of "my little old ladies". He said that all he knew of business methods and business ethics he learned from this good friend of his. For several years he had lost track of them and I remember the great delight he expressed when he found them again. They were living in Milwaukee, where they had been all the time. Miss Fannie had been one of the first kindergarten teachers and had made a real place for herself in that and other circles. She had many heirlooms of which she was intensely proud. As she grew older, her hearing left her and she was obliged to give up many duties which were a pleasure to her. They gave many of their treasures to the Milwaukee Museum, when they found they could not care for them as they felt they should and where they felt they would do more good than anywhere else. They had some lovely pewter, but that they said belonged to their nieces, and I suppose it was divided before they went to the Nursing Home which was their home for some years.

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These two sisters, Miss Fannie Burnell and Mrs. Hattie Northrop were charming to meet. It ~~did~~ did seem such a pity that Miss Fannie who was such a talker should become so deaf - - and Miss Hattie whose voice was as tiny as a whistle should have to strain her voice to try to tell her what was going on. When I attempted to talk I had to write it. They were always doing something for some one more needy than they - - comforters and afghans and scrap books - all interesting and helpful.

After Mr S C left us I used to go up about once a quarter to see them. They had lived in a flat on Grand Ave. for forty years or more. At first they paid about \$14.00 rent for it, but as the years went on the rent was raised, until they were paying about \$44.00 for it. They had arranged all their finances so they might care for themselves and not be a burden on anyone. They had even arranged for their funerals, tomb-stones and all. "And then", Miss Fannie said, "We went right on living." It was about this time that Mr. S.C. found them and began to do for them. One time he had them come down from Milwaukee on the train, and he met them at the station with his horses and carriage. They drove around past the office on their way over to his home and I can see her yet, as she leaned forward and bowed and smiled at the office, where "Sam" had his place of business.

Mrs Northrop was as quiet as Miss Fannie was excitable, but she told me a story that goes back now nearly a hundred years. She said the Burnells and the Johnsons were neighbors, friends and members of the same church in Elyria, Ohio. And both families had baby boys born at about the same time, and they were baptized the same day. But the preacher got the babies mixed and the Burnell baby was named Samuel Curtis and the Johnson baby, Joseph to the amusement of the families. They must have straightened it out, however, for Mr. S.C. bore the name of Samuel Curtis.

Mr. S.C. lived in Milwaukee with the Burnells when he worked for their father and he and Miss Fannie were very good friends. Whether they were engaged or not I do not know but when Mr. S.C. took a job in Kenosha he met Miss Caroline Fisk, and promptly forgot all about Miss Fannie. Mr. Lyman told me that. But whether the fact that she remained unmarried all the years was due to that or not, I do not know, but it may have had something to do with the help he gave both sisters to the end of their days.

Mr. S.C. was married on a Friday evening, took a wedding journey on Saturday and was back at work on Monday. He told us about that many times, saying that a marriage on Friday was certainly a fortunate thing for him. As for work - he was a bear for work. When he traveled, selling hardwood flooring, he would travel all week, come home on Saturday, write up his orders, get them underway, and start out again on Sunday night. Yet when he started in business for himself, he began by giving the office help their Saturday afternoons, when no one else was doing it, or even considering it.

My first recollection of Mr S C was on a Sunday morning, when he and Mrs Johnson were walking down Lake Ave. on their way to church. Some one commented on the very elegant looking couple with white hair and we all rushed to see. They were a very fine-looking couple, indeed. With hair as white as the driven snow and a most aristocratic bearing. Later we learned who they were, when they came to take their places in church work. He was for many years our Sunday School Superintendent, alternating with Ed Rapps and E W Leach. They formed sort of a self-perpetuating Superintendent. Mrs Johnson taught a class of young ladies, who all remember her gentle manner and gracious presence.

Mr S C used to tell us young teachers that we placed ourselves. If we started out to wash dishes for the church suppers, there we would set ourselves; but if we would take our places as leaders, we could keep them. That was ~~not~~ rather stange doctrine for that day when children were to be seen and not heard and young people didn't monopolize the stage.

He had very clear cut ideas on every subject. He wouldn't let Mrs S C do anything at a church supper (this was the extent of our entertainment) except to eat it. He said he would rather pay twice what they would make than have her all excited and tired out. He always felt these were very inefficient ways of earning money - and I do, too. But there is a certain amount of fun and good comradeship that comes with the making of a supper and they have continued to have a place, even in Woman's Club activities.

Sometimes I wonder about Mr and Mrs S C. They were so different. He was social-minded and she was shy and retiring. He would have liked to have a party every week and she was such a good housekeeper that she would have felt that she must clean the house each time. So they entertained very little, after I came to know them. Of course they were older then and she was not very strong. p He would stretch a story to get a laugh out of it, and to her that wasn't truthful. I have heard her say many times, with that engaging lisp of hers - Now Tham, you know it wasn't as bad as that. And he would wink as much as to say - Well I got a rise out of her. I imagine there was as much adjusting there as in any family.

How he loved to get a story on any one. He would tell it to death. I remember one he told on Mrs S C, about a time they were entertaining a minister and his wife, who were attending a Conference held at First Church. It seems that Mrs S C was all ready for church, but the Minister's wife had made no effort to change her attire, and Mrs S C in the kindness of her heart felt that her own dress might outshine that of the guest, so she slipped out and changed to her "second-best", only to find when she came back that the M W had also changed her gown and now outshone Mrs S C completely.

He was always interested in young people, trying to get them to prepare for life. Always asking children what ~~they~~ they were going to do and be when they were grown. One thing that he pushed with all his energy was the old C L S C, that university at home which meant so much to those of us who never even thot of going to college. How we studied on those old books. One year we had an American course, in literature, art, history and science. Thick books that required a lot of study. Then a year of Greeek, one of Latin and one of English history, literature are and science. We met once a week on Monday nights, at the homes of the various members and recited or answered questions and then had a game or charades and some light refreshment. We had a lot of fun and imbibed a great deal of knowledge. There are a number of folks still who remember these evenings with a great deal of delight.

He was very fond of history, and could spend an evening dilating on some perood. He loved to play Characters, pinning a slip on the back of each one with the name of an historical character, and each one was to discover who the y represented by asking certain direct questions. he did his best to get us to read biography, but it was not written in such entertaining form as it is today and we found it hard, dry work. But we worked in the Circle and acquired diplomas for completing the four years' work and seals for completing courses of various kinds thereafter.

Late in his life I heard him say that he had been interested in three activities for young people, the Sunday School the Chautauqua Literary & Scientific Circle and the Young Men's Christian Association, but that he had now confined his energies to the Y M C A.

Some day I would like to have your Aunt Jessie tell about the early years in Racine, when they lived on Washington Ave where the Racine City Bank now is, in a beautiful large h home. But she was here only a few months, for she was married in March of the year following their coming to Racine to live. Those were the times when no one had any money, but every one had a good time. I remember that Jessie Johnson taught a class in our Sunday School those months and she had the loveliest feather bonnet I ever expect to see. We all wore bonnets and called them that tho they were not so different from the close fitting hats we now wear.

Our church was the center of our lives and we almost lived there. One year they gave a series of tableaux, representing the Rogers groups of statuary. They were life-like representations, all dressed in clay colored garments and powdered with chalk dust. This gave me my first ~~glimpse~~ memory of your father as he stood in a church pew and sang from the same hymn-book with the ~~girl~~ girl in the pew ahead. He was so pleasant about it, that we all envied the girl, but I don't even remember who she was.

One time the church was behind in its finances and the minister undertook to raise the deficit on a Sunday morning. He had a large chart marked with squares to represent a certain amount, and as people subscribed the amounts he would mark an X in the square. I wasn't at all interested financially. The nickle or dime that I gave each Sunday was the extent of my resources and no amount of coaxing could get any more, but there are always some who can be persuaded to give if other folks know about it. It seemed to me that Mr S C was getting madder and madder, and finally when they had collected or subscribed to the point where he thought he could not stand it any longer, he arose in his pew and said "I will pay the balance. You certainly have earned all you got."

He said one time that he had never prospered until he began to give a tithe to the Lord. He was always quoting Mr. Colgate who began by giving a tithe, then a fifth, and a quarter and on until he was giving away his entire income. That seemed to him to be a goal greatly to be desired. He gave alike a prince, always out of proportion with his immediate income, but never foolishly. Sometimes we felt that he was being "done" by certain folks, but he stoutly maintained that no one had ever "done" by any one. He had always given just what he wanted and to whom he wished.

When the Methodist Church was built, they expected him to give the largest share, and he did. But he didn't subscribe as they thought he would or should. He gave a substantial amount for himself, then he offered to duplicate any sum given by any organization, that is if the Missionary Society would raise \$500.00, he would add to their payment \$500.00, but it would be given in the name of the society. When it came to the Sunday School, he not only matched what they raised, but he paid the entire expenses of the Sunday School, so that the entire amount raised in the School went to the Building Fund. It was a great scheme and brought out a lot of enthusiasm they were able to complete the church and enjoy it for some time before he died.

He felt that a lot of service was freely given to the Church that was not appreciated by other folks. Specially did he remark how Mary Gebhardt (nor Mrs H B Hall) had served in the Infant Room, for many years, and only two or three parents had come in to thank her for the instruction given to their children. When I think of the conscientious service given by her and all the other teachers in the Sunday Schools, given so freely without thought of any personal gain, I am glad that he had the courage and the courtesy to make a point of talking about it.

We had a crotchety old janitor for awhile at the church. There was a beautiful room back of the rostrum, which would have made an ideal room for the Primary Department and Mr S C tried his best to persuade the Board that it could be so arranged, but old Peter had always kept the coal in that room, and it would never do to use it for anything else. Such a pity, because it was a lovely room.

One thing he was very careful to inculcate in the minds of the children was the habit of reverence; he insisted on quiet and order all the time. Sometimes the children would get obstreperous and rebel - but he always kept on until they would come to his way.

You know he was 54 years old when he came to Racine, and it is a mystery to me now, how he accomplished all he did, starting and building his business, yet keeping in touch with the young people and building them up all the time. But he was always saying that you must drive your work - never let your work ~~drive~~ drive you. And I suppose that is why he could do so much. I remember he said that the first year he was in this business he went \$300.00 in the hole and that it was nip and tuck after that. But he was on the right track and it was not so many years before he could see a profit. He tried many different lines as a jobber, cut glass, mangles, copy-holders, but none of them tied in with the hardwood flooring business, except the wax. He was an inventive genius and was always thinking up new ways of doing old things, or devising new things. He invented a piano bench or stool which was a very good thing, but which he didn't push very hard.

He loved to spend his time with the children.

When I first came to work for him, it was on his 67th birthday, Christmas Eve. We worked until one o'clock that afternoon and had the rest of the day off. He gave each of the employees a gold piece, naturally that made me wish I had been there long enough to have been entitled to one. I think Jim Collier, Libbie Ticknor, your father and Mr S C comprised all the office force that day. But soon after that they began to increase our advertising and circularizing, and then more girls and boys were added. There were some salesmen, too, but we were not rushed at all although we always had enough to do. There were always circulars to fold - that was an endless job, as it would be now, if we had to do it all by hand on our own office.

He was a most careful bookkeeper. Kept them all himself for many years, in that beautiful script of his. Rather proud of the fact that he could write all day and the last letter would be signed as carefully as the first. His signature never changed in all the time that I knew him. The reason that I got my job was because the book-keeper wanted to sign his checks for him. Naturally, she had been there a long time and thought that she might have that privilege, but he didn't want anyone to sign his name for him as long as he could do it for himself. I guess there must have been something else with it, but anyway one day he came up to the Wisconsin Wheel Works where I was working and asked to see Captain Lewis who was the head of it. They had a little talk together than Mr. S.C. left and Mr. Lewis said that Mr. S.C. wanted a book-keeper, and had asked him if he would let me go. This without saying anything to me about it. Some time before I had been ill and when I was able to think about going to work I had applied for a job with Mr. Johnson, by letter, and had never heard anything from him. So I went back to my first job with the Wheel Works, where my father was the factory superintendent. Then out of a blue sky, here he came in and asked my boss if he would release me! But that was typical of the man.

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So I telephoned him that I would be glad to come, and ~~th~~ then he asked about salary, offering \$40.00 per month, but it seemed to me that I should have \$50.00 to start with, as I had reached \$75.00 when I was taken ill and had only gone back at \$40.00 in order to get a job. He said he would rather start low and then increase, but for some reason I had the courage of my convictions and began at \$50.00. Wages were not so large then. The top for a stenographer was \$65.00, but with cost of living in proportion, we lived on it, but we didn't save anything. *over*

He had been thru such hard times after the Civil War for so many years that he was careful of every little thing! Every bit of string that came in was carefully straightened and wound, ~~tying~~ ^{tying} together and making a ball of it. After his death in 1919 there was a great ball of string in his desk. Another way was to use the fronts of envelopes for scratch paper. It may seem pinch-penny or picayunish, but when you consider what he had been thru ~~and the hard way the world had come~~, it was a natural way of saving and gathering resources. And lights! None were left burning unless there was a need for them. Little things that made a big part of the foundation of the business he was starting.

Because of these careful saving habits, he was able to make such generous gifts. What a hatred he had for stinginess. Speaking of a business man, he said, That man is too stingy to get rich! And he was, too. This man who had wonderful opportunities and splendid ideas, is living in poverty, on the bounty of his children, and I believe it is largely due to the fact that he was too stingy to pay wages to his helpers and to carry out sales policies that would have made him wealthy.

One of Mr. S.C.'s favorite verses was from Proverbs, and reads "There it that withholdeth and tendeth to poverty, There is that which scattereth abroad, yet maketh many rich." He was always quoting poetry, history, the Scripture. His memory was prodigious. He was careful to repeat a story or a verse three times, to three different auditors and then he said, he never forgot it. And he didn't, either.

Funny stories were his meat. He enjoyed a joke, even if it turned on him. ~~Your father was not so fond of them and sometimes he thot there was no time for levity.~~ But Mr S C kept on with his jokes until the end. He was so proud of Mr Herbert. A perfectly justifiable pride, to be sure, but it was heartening to see him and hear him speak of "the boy". Even when they differed radically about things, there was always this feeling of respect and love between them.

One thing he insisted on and that was "I will not have Herbert hampered." He said it so many times that it became a motto. When a larger advertising program was planned than he thot the business warranted, he would simply say, "I don't believe we can do it, but I am willing to try, if you are sure you think it is the best thing." And if the plan did not bring the results - he never said "I told you so". He simply accepted the result and went ahead planninh some other way.

One day he said to me, "This business never would have grown the way it has, if Herbert hadn't been at the head of it. I have nothing of the plunger or gambler in me."

But Herbert can take long chances and make good."

For they were always trying something else, something to increase volume profitably. Once some man came in with an idea about end-grain flooring and Mr Herbert was all pepped up about it. There was an endless market, there was a fine profit &c &c. Mr S C said, Herbert I went thru all that twenty years ago. It can't be done. But Mr Herbert said All the quirks have been taken out of it. And there has been tremendous progress in these twenty years and I think we ought to take it on." Well, said Mr S C, I am willing if you say so, but I can tell you right now that it can't be done profitably." And it wasn't. But Mr. Herbert was the man who talked about it, not Mr. S.C.

Then there was the time when we had to take back about \$40000.00 worth of dye in tin. That was a heart-breaker. In 1907 things were not so bright and that was a knocker. But no one was blamed, The dye was made right and we absorbed the loss and went on again. This was before the days of private laboratories and also before the days of income taxes. We kept our books for our own information. What days those were. No tax man to come and stay with you by the week and inquire why you put this dime in this column last year and in another column the year before. We didn't know how well off we were!!

We figured our profits by adding our material, freight and labor selling and advertising, deducting our inventory, and then deducting this result from the total sales. He always loved even figures, so our profits were always made that way. The inventory took up the odd figures. Our profit was all made in the first half of the year. If we held our own the second half, that was all we expected. Reserves were not heard of. Prepaid Expenses, insurance, or anything of that kind were anathema to him. If he saw a statement of a customer listing them, he immediately felt there was something wrong with the customer. But we never kidded ourselves on inventory or accounts receivable. We always used the lowest of two figures and omitted anything that was not immediately salable.

When Mr. S.C. was almost seventy years old he moved into the house that he had planned and built. He worked out the plan on quadrille ruled paper and had a carpenter bid on it. Got it just the way he wanted it. Arranged so that Mrs. S.C. would not have to go upstairs. It was delightful as they lived in it, too and they enjoyed it. When Christmas neared, Mrs. Ticknor thought it would be a nice thing to have a shower of cards for his birthday. It was a new thing, then (twenty six years ago) and he had so many friends it wasn't difficult to get a real shower of them. It was his first Christmas in his new home and Mrs. S.C. invited Bessie and Lillian Whiteley, Mrs. Ticknor and myself to a birthday supper. It was a gala occasion combining birthday and Christmas and House-warming. I think your mother will remember, because she was there, very gracious and lovely. We had hand-painted place cards with little old fashioned cradles on them. Lillian painted them. We had to hurry away because we were all bound for the annual Christmas tree at the Church. I am wondering how we got there, but I suppose we took the street car. I remember that the Sunday School gave him a bouquet of roses and in responding he said "A man is pretty far gone when he gives roses".

It must be about 25 years since he and Mrs. Johnson went to California to spend the winter. Somewhere up in the mountains, Mrs. Johnson's heart was quite seriously affected by the altitude and for several days he did not know whether she would recover, but she grew better and after some time was able to be moved so she could be brought home. But there had been a permanent injury to her heart and for three years she suffered, growing so thin and frail. I remember that Mr S C said this unexpected expense of doctors and carriage made it necessary for him to draw a check for more money and the hotel keeper cashed it without question. He would never carry travelers checks. Carried only blank checks and filled them out as he needed them. He claimed that his face was his fortune, that the face of an honest man was all the security he needed to offer. *Out*

He had been in the habit of giving gold pieces to the office people and fine fat turkeys to the men in the factory. But as the organization grew and more folks were added in both office and factory he gave the gold pieces from the firm to the factory and to the girls in the offices he made an additional gift of books of poetry, or gloves, or the Ladies Home Journal. It was quite a job to get the sizes of gloves and the color desired, without letting the girls know they were going to receive a present. We used to keep the list from year to year, but we had quite a bit of turnover, so it didn't always work out. You can do those things when your organization is small. *Thanksgiving*

But ~~in~~ 1917 when we were marketing Freeze-Proof and making such a profit on it, and when the taxes were so terrific, Mr S C and Mr H F decided to put into practice a plan they had been cogitating over for many years, that of dividing the profits with those who had helped them make it. It was a wonderful idea and was to be a grand surprise to everybody. We paid the bonus in Liberty bonds, War Savings Stamps and cash. And was everybody delighted!! And surprised! It was almost too good to be true. I remember Mr S C telling us how delighted he was to do it, and how he would like to do it every year, but he couldn't do it unless there was a profit to divide. It depended upon profits. And we were to help all we could to make and keep the business profitable.

At that time, too we increased our advertising appropriation, because as your father said "The government will pay about 40% of it. If we don't spend it, we will have to pay the taxes on it, and if we spend it, we will make greater profits, and it will only cost us 60% to get that additional business." And so it worked out. *Out*

One time I remember we were asked to make a subscription to some Civic enterprise and Mr. S. C. asked Mr. H. F. how much other people were giving, and Mr H F replied, "What difference does that make? We figure out what we can give, what we ought to give as our proportion and let it go at that." *Out*

Mr S C was the original Prohibitionist in our town and Mr. W. A. Walker was the second. Both those men voted the Prohibition ticket twenty five years before Prohibition came to pass. I have wondered a good many times whether it was some tragedy in his own life that made him such an ardent temperance worker, or whether he had just worked it out as the basis for good business. But he worked for it and lived it, too. *Out*

These are just a few rather disconnected memories of my good friend, your grandfather, Samuel Curtis Johnson. There were many words of praise spoken at the memorial service on Christmas Day the year he died. None more grateful than those spoken by Laurance Jones, the young colored man who had started that school at Braxton, Miss. He happened to be in town that week end and made himself known and was given the opportunity of voicing his gratitude.

Others spoke of different phases of his life and character and all gave tribute to his sterling Christian character which showed itself in his upright life and his helpful way of assisting folks to make the most of their lives.

Not a perfect man, of the copy book type. but a man with a strong temper, which must have given him a lot of trouble in his younger days. An aristocratic democrat - with strong likes and dislikes, to whom nothing was too much to do for a friend or a stranger in need, and yet who looked things in the face and never hesitated to speak out if he thought plain speaking was necessary.

I have tried not to be fulsome in the statements made - he hated that so much. But I have tried to be fair and yet I realize that it is at best a silhouette - not a picture at all. For his sake I am sorry to make it so simple - but I hope the outlines are strong enough so that you may be able to fill them out, as you grow to realize something of what he and your father have meant to this community and to your own organization.

Following are copies of two letters that are full of interest and which seem to be the only ones we have about the office.