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JOHN MASON CLARKE (1857-1925)

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WITH the passing of John Mason Clarke, of Albany, on May 29, 1925, the world has lost not only one of its leading paleontologists, but one of its great men of all science. No paleontologist excelled him in discernment of the morphology of invertebrate Paleozoic fossils or in knowledge of the Devonian of North and South America; no philosopher has ever seen more clearly the lessons that these fossils teach or expressed them in more beautiful diction.

Clarke was born in the beautiful lake resort of Canandaigua, New York, on April 15, 1857. He was of old American stock, with the best of traditions. His father, Noah Turner Clarke, one of the pioneers of Naples, New York, and for fifty years teacher and principal in the academy at Canandaigua, was a descendant of the William Clarke who settled at Dorchester, Massachusetts, in 1663, and became later one of the founders of Northampton. His great-grandfather was a member of the Continental Congress and fought throughout the Revolutionary War. His mother was Laura Mason Merrill, of Castleton, Vermont, a descendant of the Mayflower Company, and of Governor Jonathan Trumbull, of Connecticut.

Clarke's love for nature was inborn, and from his earliest boyhood he was interested in the rocks around his home. His first geology in school he got from his father, who then sent him in 1873 to Amherst, where he came under the inspiration of that devoted teacher, B. K. Emerson. He was given the bachelor's degree in 1877, at the age of twenty. The following two years he assisted his father at the Canandaigua Academy, teaching Latin, mathematics and geology, using Dana's text-book in the last-named subject. In 1879-1880 he returned to Amherst as assistant to Emerson. During the school year 1880-1881, he taught in the Free Academy at Utica, where James D. Dana and G. H. Williams had preceded him. Through Emerson's efforts he was in 1881 appointed to teach geology and mineralogy at Smith College, holding this position until the close of the school year 1883. He was then given leave of absence to study toward a doctorate at Göttingen, under Professor von Koenen, and here he spent parts of two years. Returning to Smith in October, 1884, he remained there until the spring of 1885, when he became lecturer on geology, zoology and German at the Massachusetts Agricultural College. Then followed some months of waiting, spent at Canandaigua, where he continued

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