

Thomas Francis Moran

An Appreciation

By STANLEY COULTER

In the recent passing of Dr. Thomas Francis Moran, education and scholarship suffered an almost irreparable loss. A profound scholar, a clear thinker, an inspiring teacher, he achieved eminence in these fields, while as a leader in civic and philanthropic movements he represented the highest type of citizenship.

This article is an attempt to reveal, in some measure at least, the personality of this rare man, something of the charm and strength that made him *facile princeps* in every field he entered.

A few facts, however, are needed to serve as a background for this appreciation. Born at Columbia, Michigan, January 9, 1866, Mr. Moran received his bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan in 1887, and that of Doctor of Philosophy from Johns Hopkins University in 1895. In 1887, he became Superintendent of Schools at Elk River, Minnesota, where he remained until 1892. Then he entered upon his candidacy for the doctorate. In 1895, he accepted the position of Professor of History and Head of the Department of History and Economics at Purdue University, remaining in that position until his sudden and untimely death in 1928.

My associations with Dr. Moran were those of a colleague in the University faculty and were intimate from the day of his appearance upon the campus. We both spoke the same language and had much the same educational ideals. Because of this affectionate intimacy, continuing uninterruptedly for more than three decades, I feel a certain restraint in attempting to characterize this radiant and dynamic personality. I leave to historians the evaluation of his work, only attempting here to interpret the man.

The first impression made upon any one meeting Dr. Moran would be that here was a man of exceptional physical and intellectual alertness and vigor. His every movement and utterance confirmed this impression and gave to him an immediate prominence in any assemblage. Added to this, there seemed to radiate from him an atmosphere of cheerfulness, of a joyous,

even jocund, outlook upon life, a confidence in himself and in the future.

But would these qualities retain their fineness in the dull routine of the class room, for after all it was in the class room that he was to justify himself. Those of us who were older in the service eagerly watched this ardent young man as with an almost debonair courage he entered upon his life work. From his very first appearance before a class, he held the confidence and the constantly growing affection of all who came under his teaching. He was something different from the student conception of a professor. He was so friendly, so full of humor, so versatile, so entirely and charmingly human, that he drew them to himself irresistibly.

In his teaching he was clear, his statements were terse and incisive, his questions searching and comprehensive. Although he possessed the charm that attracted, he was a close and exacting teacher, demanding honest work and giving his scholarship ratings because of actual achievement and not because of endeavor. No student ever selected a course under Dr. Moran as a "snap course." He daily demonstrated that it was possible to make his courses fascinatingly interesting, and yet rigidly to exact a complete fulfillment of the requirements.

His lectures and class room instruction were enriched and illuminated by his versatility, his constant habit of drawing illustrative material from widely variant sources. His memory was marvelous, and fact and source, exact quotation and reference abounded in every lecture. At times a student would doubt whether such versatility and exactness could be combined in one mind and would check back references and allusions only to find that this great teacher was as exact as he was versatile.

Thus a course in history which promised to be a dry record of some past age or civilization became a vibrantly living thing; a cross section of the life and art and literature and government of a past age it is true, and yet vitally and intimately connected with the present. His was the high art of breathing upon the dry bones of history and restoring them to life.

In speech he was eloquent and compellingly magnetic, and, whether he lectured or taught, there were always those flashes of wit and humor that made him as popular upon the public platform as in the class room.

Dr. Moran was one of the greatest teachers I ever knew. He was not merely a drill sergeant in the technique of facts and dates, but a teacher who in an exceptional way stirred his pupils to creative thought and through this to higher ideals of life. His was the power of teaching in such a way as to develop character. Possibly this was due, in part, to the fact that in Dr. Moran the pedagogue never hid the man.

His influence upon student life was not confined to his class room and *seminar*. There was no phase of student activity which did not profoundly interest him. So he studied the extra-curricular activities, and, while sympathetic to all, to some few he devoted both time and thought. A notable instance of this is found in his years as chairman of the Faculty Committee on Athletics, and his equal number of years of membership in the Big Ten Conference as the representative of Purdue University. There is no need to speak of his work, nor yet of his commanding influence in intercollegiate athletics, for both are a part of the history of athletics in the universities of the central-west. Clear headed, finely poised, unswervingly adhering to the rules as laid down by the conference, sternly just in the infliction of penalties in cases of their infraction, he taught almost as effectively as chairman of the athletic committee as in his class room in history. Here he taught, honor, truth, fair play, clean sportsmanship, and the friendliness of honest competition. Other students than those of Purdue University have profited by his teaching in this field.

It mattered little what university duty might be assigned him it was done promptly, efficiently, brilliantly. Naturally this vitality and effectiveness could not find full scope within the university walls, and so he became a "Community Servant." The demands of community and State are both numerous and varied, and it is amazing to find to how many of these Dr. Moran responded with loyal service and superb effectiveness. He was a member of the American Historical Association; of the American Political Science Association; of the Indiana Historical Commission (1921-25); of the Education Committee the National Security League; Associate Director of the Speaking Division of the Commission on Public Information during the World War. He also lectured at other Universities; at the University of Illinois in 1914; and at Lafay-

ette College in 1915, as Fred Morgan Kirby Lecturer on Civil Rights. These are but a few of his widely ranging activities.

His contributions to his own community were manifold and varied. I think Dr. Moran would have given first place to his service as Senior Warden and Lay Reader of St. John's Episcopal church, for he was deeply and devoutly religious. He was President of the Art Association; member and past President of the Rotary, Town and Gown, and Parlor Clubs; a member of both the Lafayette and West Lafayette Country Clubs, and, strangely enough for a College professor, President of a Bank. A full life he lived, yet with time enough to write many books, to give countless addresses, and to enjoy as few do his own home.

This summary is given largely to explain, in part, the reason he was a great teacher. These multiplied contacts with movements and people enriched his life. They broadened and deepened his mind, which with its keen insights, its fair judgments, its clarities of thought, was reflected in his every contact with students. Toward the close of his teaching years, he took charge of a freshman course in history, as a part of an orientation program. The class was held in the building which I then controlled. After a lecture, the four hundred freshmen would stream past my office door, all talking, and always talking of the interest and helpfulness of the course. Few heads of departments would have undertaken such a course, but Dr. Moran did and carried it supremely well. His orientation lectures in history were the most brilliantly effective teaching I ever witnessed.

Dr. J. A. Estey, his associate, says:

Dr. Moran gave his time and energies without stint to every public spirited movement. He was one of those men upon whom the whole community implicitly relies when public affairs of note have to be carried on. A man of sincere religious beliefs, a devout and loyal member of his church, cultured, discriminative in his tastes and scholarly in his judgments, Dr. Moran represented the highest type of American citizenship. His influence upon generations of students cannot be measured in mere class room instruction, for to his mastery of his subject he also brought a personal enthusiasm, an engaging sense of humor and an ability to stimulate the intellectual energies of his hearers, that raised his classes to a level best appreciated, perhaps, in later years when the student out in the world begins to assess the value of his college education.

Dr. Moran was a great teacher because he was a big man, one who saw life clearly and saw it whole. He looked out upon

it cheerfully, courageously, hopefully. To him it offered opportunity for service and this service he rendered unstintedly to the very end.

He passed away, as I believe he would have chosen to do, in the full richness of his powers, eager, expectant, joyous, ready for the higher services to which he was summoned.

Let me die, working.
Still tackling plans unfinished,
tasks undone!
Clean to the end, swift may my race
be run,
No laggard steps, no faltering, no
shirking;
Let me die,—working.

Let me die, thinking.
Let me fare forth still with an open
mind,
Fresh secrets to unfold, new truths
to find,
My soul undimmed, alert, no question
blinking;
Let me die,—thinking!

Let me die, laughing.
No sighing o'er past sins; they are
forgiven.
Spilled on this earth are all the joys
of heaven;
Let me die,—laughing.