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David Demaree Banta

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David Demaree Banta.

Indiana University mourns the loss of one to whom she has long been dear. Everyone knew Judge Banta, and to know him was to honor him. Bishop Spalding says that, "for the education of men, which is the highest human work, one heroic, loving, and illumined soul is worth more than all money and endowments." This expresses the relation of the life of Judge Banta to Indiana University. It is because of this that the Faculty and Students mourn, mingling their tears with those members of the Indiana Bar to whom the deceased had been an inspiration and a friend.

Judge Banta proved a true friend to Indiana University when such a friend was sorely needed. His influence went a great way toward rebuilding the University after the fire of 1833. Under his care the Law Department has grown to one of recognized merit and efficiency. The Faculty of the Law Department feels the deepest sorrow at the loss of one, who was a true friend as well as a genial co-worker. The students of the Law Department have shown their appreciation of the deceased by special tokens of regret. All Departments of the University suspended work upon receipt of the sad intelligence and all doors remained closed until Monday.

David Demaree Banta was born May 23, 1833, in Johnson county, Ind., and was educated in Franklin College. He graduated from Indiana University in the class of 1855. He received the honorary degree of L.L. D. from Franklin College in 1888. In 1857 he began the practice of law and made this his life profession. He was judge of the common pleas court, and from 1870 to 1876 was judge of the 16th judicial circuit. He was a trustee of Indiana University from 1877 to 1889. When the Law department of Indiana University was reopened in 1889, after a suspension of thirteen years, he was chosen Dean. This position he occupied until his death. He was the author of several well known works:—"History of Johnson County, Indiana," "The History of the Presbyterian Church of Franklin," and "Making of a Neighborhood," besides many smaller treatises and essays.

The whole life of Judge Banta was that of a citizen and of a student. Perhaps, in no other were these two all important phases of human activity so completely supplementary. He was a great living proof of the reciprocal possibility in the possession of scholarship and patriotism. His influence went out to this end and we know that he has not lived in vain. The life force of such a man is as lasting as the race, being handed on from individual to individual, ever magnified and intensified, until it becomes a part of the great progressive spirit of humanity.