

## A TRIBUTE

## Hortense Scales, 1871-1956



HORTENSE SCALES

The National Button Society has suffered the loss of its best loved member with the death, on December 28, of Mrs. H. L. Scales in Hutchinson, Kansas. We of the National Button Society share very keenly the grief and the sense of bereavement which have come to Mrs. Rexroad and the other members of Mrs. Scales' family, and we earnestly hope that they will realize how completely they have our sympathy at this time.

In October Mrs. Scales participated with her customary wholehearted enthusiasm in the National Button Society's eighteenth annual meeting and show in Chicago. This gathering, indeed, took on a certain red-letter significance by affording her a source of satisfaction in addition to her usual enjoyment of such affairs. This year she, who had had cups named in her honor and who had supervised the awarding of so many trophies, broke a long-standing jinx and won for herself a cup in competition. She had with her the prospect of another

dream fulfilled, the anticipation of welcoming the National Button Society to her own state of Kansas in 1957, as she returned to her home and took up her work as Chairman of the Special Awards Committee. The completion of this exacting but—to her—rewarding task was interrupted on December 15 by a fall in her apartment which sent her to the hospital with the head of a femur cracked. There even her vitality could not keep at bay the pulmonary and circulatory complications dreaded for one of her years. Even so she was able on Christmas Day to open her gifts and to see her three great grandchildren for a few minutes. It was on December 28 that an embolism wrote a conclusion to a very gallant life.

Hortense McVey Scales was the ninth President of the National Button Society, and the years of her administration, 1949 and 1950, were among the most successful in the organization's history. Three times she served the Society as a Director, for terms ending in 1948, in 1953 and in 1956. Particularly dear to her, and of unique value to the National Button Society, has been the work to which she gave her first attention in recent years, the establishment and operation of the Special Awards Committee. Probably no complete list of her other N. B. S. titles and commissions has been compiled nor is it likely that anyone, least of all Mrs. Scales herself, ever kept track of all the offices, the chairmanships and the editorships which she cheerfully and successfully undertook for state and local clubs, particularly in "her states" of Missouri and Kansas.

Even if an accurate enumeration of offices, committees, etc., could be made, it would be more or less beside the point. At best such data could provide only a material record of her accomplishments in behalf of the Society and the hobby. Of importance far greater than all that Mrs. Scales did—surpassing entirely the sum total of all the time and the effort and the thought which she gave so bounteously—was the fact of what she was. Graciousness of personality it was that lifted her leadership far above the possibility of measurement in concrete terms. It is, of course, vain to hope that words can here evoke the radiance of that personality, but surely we cannot turn from this occasion without mentioning a few at least of the traits and qualities composing the treasured picture of Mrs. Scales which we hold in common.

We remember, and will always remember, a lady who stood as straight as a mast pine and walked in the dignity of an unconscious authority, not from any stiffness of pride but only because she had always held her head up to life and had learned that life in return always faced up to her and added a respectful nod. We remember a lady of lovely presence and of amazing youthfulness. It was a commonplace at shows to hear the remark, "Well, Hortense certainly doesn't look like a great grandmother!"—and this in spite of all the photographic evidence of great-grandmother-

hood so readily forthcoming from the handbag of her daughter, Marjorie Rexroad. Even more remarkably than in the fresh serenity of her appearance, this youthfulness manifested itself in the zest and the eagerness with which Mrs. Scales accepted that which each day brought her. We remember a lady with a twinkle in her eye and a chuckle in her voice, and, of course, we remember a lady of great kindness and courtesy.

But, first and foremost, we remember a lady blessed with the genius of friendship, as few are ever blessed. From this abounding spring of friendliness she gave without stint. Those who met her seldom failed to experience the small, sweet, warming impact of knowing themselves recognized and valued as unique individuals. Mrs. Scales had the rare ability of making a person—almost any person—conscious of himself or herself as a "very special someone" and one whom she greeted with a particular joy. Under this quickening touch of hers, one was very apt to give a bit more of oneself than was habitual, and inevitably one felt somewhat taller in the heart for this giving. Mrs. Scales' own nature was so out-going that she simply assumed the existence of a comparable spiritual generosity in others and, since one instinctively could not bear to disappoint her, some uncalculated reserve of grace was usually tapped for her. This undoubtedly was the essence of her wonderful charm and of the indefinable fragrance of happiness which seemed always to surround her.

That this great gentlewoman—and "gentlewoman" is the word which fits Hortense Scales to the very last shade of meaning—should have bestowed so much of the glowing Indian summer of her fine, full and useful life on the National Button Society constitutes for the Society an honor the like of which few organizations can boast. The National Button Society and the hobby of button collecting have been infinitely dignified by her joyous devotion and we, the fortunate ones who could share with her the work and the fun of button collecting, will always be immeasurably the richer for that sharing. We can say good-bye to her only with gratitude in our hearts, gratitude which will long outlast and eventually displace the deep sense of personal loss which we must now experience at this parting.

H. C. S.