

HON. JOHN P. ELKIN, a justice of the Supreme court of Pennsylvania, was born and reared and developed in Indiana county, where he has spent most of his life. His successful career is fairly representative of the growth and development of the county and its people. Born in a log house on a farm in west Mahoning township in the early sixties, his elementary education was attended with many difficulties. The district school was located more than a mile from his home and was open for the instruction of pupils during only four months' of the year, and this in the winter season. There was no public road connection him home with the schoolhouse, and it was necessary to cross fields and travel unbeaten paths to reach the place where the old-fashioned schoolmaster taught reading, writing and arithmetic with a rod in one hand a New Testament in the other. The furnishings of the schoolroom were simple and somewhat crude; the benches were made, not beautiful in appearance, nor comfortable to sit upon; but they were substantial and answered the purpose. The teacher taught the beginner the A B C method and impressed the pupil with the disgrace of not being able to spell correctly. The methods of teaching were simple in the extreme, but as applied to the three branches taught were effective in producing satisfactory results. Pupils in the common schools in those days did learn to "spell and figure." This was the common school education of fifty or sixty years ago and it was the foundation upon which the subject of this sketch builded for the future. In his ninth year the family moved to the little village of Smicksburg, where the father engaged in the store and foundry business. Here the school was more accessible but the terms were short, not exceeding four months of the year at any time during this period. In 1872 Francis Elkin, the father of John P., associated with several friends, organized a company to manufacture tin plate in this country. This was the first enterprise of the kind launched on American soil. The manufacturing plant was built at Wellsville, Ohio, to which place the Elkin family moved in 1873. Although a boy not yet fourteen years of age young Elkin sought and secured employment in the mill, first as "hammer-boy," then as "heaver-up-at-the-muck-rolls," and finally as a finisher in the tin-house. He continued in this employment until the end of the year 1874, at which time the mill shut down. At that time the secrets of manufacturing tin plate were carefully guarded by the Welsh people and were unknown to Americans. The new industry was twenty-five years ahead of its time in this country, and it proved a failure resulting in total loss of those who had invested their money in the enterprise, including the Elkin family. It became necessary to start life over again. Young Elkin then made up his mind to secure an education and lay the foundation for a professional career. He entered the high school at Wellsville and resumed his studies with renewed vigor. Necessity taught him how to study and to apply his mind. He made rapid progress, and practically finished the high school course at the end of the school year. In the fall of 1875 the family moved back to Smicksburg, where there was a vacancy in the borough school. Young Elkin applied for the position and through the assistance of some of the old citizens who believed in him he was selected as teacher. He was then only fifteen and a half years old and he was required to teach the boys and girls who had been his schoolmates and friends. It was a trying position, but he finished the term with the approval of the patrons.

From 1876 until 1880 he attended school during the summer months and taught in the winter seasons. It was during this time that he attended the normal school at Indiana one term each year until 1879, when he borrowed sufficient funds from a friend to enable him to remain in school for the entire year. He was graduated in 1880, after which he again engaged in the profession of teaching. In the fall of 1881 he matriculated as a law student at the University of Michigan, from which institution he was graduated in 1884. He was honored by being selected as the orator of his class, a distinction sought by many but enjoyed by few. An unusual event occurred during the last year of his university course. His father, who died in December, 1882, has been mentioned as a possible candidate for the Legislature, and some of his friends conceived the idea that the son might be selected to make the contest instead of the father. As a result of correspondence on this question young Elkin decided to enter the contest and make the race. He conducted his campaign by correspondence while a student at the University at Ann Arbor, Mich. The primaries were held one week after his graduation and resulted favorably to him. The most important event in his life occurred a few weeks later. He was united in marriage, on June 17, 1884, with Adda P., daughter of John Prothero, late president of the First National Bank of Indiana, Pa. A good wife and a happy family are the richest blessings vouchsafed to man on earth. This union has been blessed with three children; Helen Prothero, born July 27, 1886; Laura Louise, born June 10, 1892; and Stanley, born July 15, 1898. The eldest daughter, Helen, is married to W. M. Armstrong, and to their union one child, Helen Elizabeth, was born Sept. 16, 1910.

Mr. Elkin served as the representative of Indiana county in the Legislature during the sessions of 1885 and 1887. In 1887, as chairman of the committee on Constitutional Reform, he had charge of the proposed constitutional amendment submitting to a vote of the people the question of prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquors in the Commonwealth. He is temperate in his habits and believes in wholesome practical laws and policies that have for their purpose the advancement of the cause of temperance. He also served on the Judiciary General, Retrenchment and Reform, and Library committees. He was admitted as a member of the bar in 1885 and began the practice of law in his native county. He took an active interest in political affairs and frequently represented his county in State and national conventions, being a delegate for the convention of 1890 which nominated George W. Delamater, for governor; and in 1891 he was permanent chairman of the convention which nominated General Gregg for auditor general and Captain Morrison for State treasurer. At all times he took an active interest in educational matters, and has been connected as pupil, student, teacher, director or trustee with the public and normal schools of the Commonwealth since the days of his boyhood. For several years he was president of the school board of Indiana and for a quarter of a century has been an active member of the board of trustees of the State normal school located there. He was elected president of the Farmers' Bank in 1893, which position he occupied until 1895, when he moved to Harrisburg in order to better perform the duties of deputy attorney general, to which position he had been appointed under the Hastings administration. In 1896 he was elected by his Congressional district

as delegate to the national convention which met at St. Louis and nominated William McKinley of Ohio as its candidate for president. He actively participated in the memorable scenes of that convention. He was a sound money man and stood with nearly all of his delegation against the heresies of the free silver propaganda, which then threatened the disruption of political parties. He witnessed the almost pathetic withdrawal of Senators Teller of Colorado, DuBois of Idaho, Cannon of Utah, and other free silver advocates from the convention and from the Republican party. Upon his return from the convention he was elected chairman of the Republican State committee of Pennsylvania and conducted an educational campaign for sound money throughout the State. This resulted in the largest plurality ever given presidential electors up to that time in our State. He served as chairman of the State committee for five years, during all of which time the political situation was very much disturbed on account of the factional strife then existing. He resigned as deputy attorney general in 1897 because of political differences with the Hastings administration. In 1898 he conducted a successful campaign for William A. Stone, who was elected governor. In 1889 he was appointed attorney general, in which official position he served for a term of four years. The Legislature of 1899 having failed to elect a senator to fill the vacancy in the United States Senate, Governor Stone appointed Senator Quay. This raised a very interesting constitutional question as to the power of a governor to fill vacancies by appointment. The opponents of Senator Quay challenged the power of the governor to appoint and denied the right of Senator Quay to take his seat in the Senate. The question was referred to the committee on Privileges and Elections, of which Senator Chandler of New Hampshire was chairman, and Senator Hoar of Massachusetts an active member. It became necessary to argue this question before the committee, and Mr. Elkin was chosen to make the argument. He represented the Commonwealth and took the position that under our system of government each State was entitled to full representation in the Senate, and if the Legislature failed to elect, it was the duty of the Governor to appoint. The opposition was represented by former Senator Edmunds, of Vermont, a recognized authority on constitutional law, and Hon. Hampton L. Carson and George Wharton Pepper, leading members of the Philadelphia bar. It was a question of importance to the public, and at the time the arguments were the subject of wide comment throughout the country. The committee sustained the contentions of Mr. Elkin and reported in favor of seating Senator Quay. The Senate after prolonged discussion by a majority of one vote refused to accept the report of the committee, with the result Senator Quay was not permitted to take his seat. The whole question was finally settled by the Legislature in 1901, when Senator Quay was elected for the full term.

In 1902 Mr. Elkin concluded to announce his name as a candidate for governor. This led to one of the most spirited political contests in the history of the Republican party in Pennsylvania. Senator Quay, then leader of the dominant party, opposed his candidacy, and in the early part of that struggle asked for an interview. Mr. Elkin complied with the request and met the Senator at the "Stratford Hotel:" in the city of Philadelphia. The Senator insisted that Mr.

Elkin should retire from the contest, which he refused to do. The result was an open breach, followed by a strenuous campaign in almost every county of the State. Elkin announced that he refused to be ordered out of the race and made his appeal direct to the people, who responded by instructing delegates in his favor in every county in which the question was submitted. Blair, Chester, Dauphin Lancaster, Northumberland and Tioga counties, the city of Wilkes-Barre, and several other large districts, instructed their delegated for him. When the convention met a Harrisburg in June, it was found that many of the instructed delegated had been induced to violate their instructions and vote for the opposition. It was a memorable convention, the scenes and incidents of which will not soon be forgotten by those who participated in it. Two thousand miners from the anthracite region with picks on their shoulders and lamps in their caps paraded the streets of the capital city carrying Elkin banners and demanding his nomination. The sentiment of the people was strongly with Elkin, but a sufficient number of weak delegates, instructed for him, yielded to the substantial and persuasive arguments of the opposition, with the result that he was defeated by a few votes. Hon. Samuel W. Pennypacker, a highly respected and able jurist of the courts of Common Pleas of Philadelphia county, who was unfamiliar with the methods employed by his friends at the convention, received the nomination and became the standard-bearer of the party. Mr. Elkin accepted the situation with as much grace as possible under the circumstances, and upon the expiration of his term as attorney general resumed the active practice of his profession during the years 1903 and 1904. he was so engaged when in April, 1904, the convention met at Harrisburg for the purpose of nominating a candidate to fill a vacancy in the Supreme Court. He was not a candidate for this position, and it was generally thought that Governor Pennypacker would receive nomination. The delegates met at Harrisburg with this understanding, but on Tuesday afternoon the Governor announced to a committee headed by the veteran David H. Lane, of Philadelphia, that he had decided to remain in the position to which the people had elected him and refused to allow his name to be submitted to the convention. In this situation the delegated looked about for a new candidate and finally determined to tender the nomination to Mr. Elkin. It was a novel situation and required quick decision. Mr. Elkin after consulting with his friends concluded to accept the nomination, which was unanimously, tendered him on the following day by the convention. At the November election there were cast for him 737,978 votes in the Republican column, the largest Republican vote ever cast in favor of a candidate for a State office in Pennsylvania. His Democratic opponent received 306,265 votes, making the plurality of Mr. Elkin 431, 713, which was the largest plurality received by an candidate for State office up to that time. Mr. Elkin assumed his judicial duties the first of January, 1905, and at this writing has been on the bench for eight years, with thirteen years of his term yet to serve. He is in the enjoyment of his full physical and mental powers and is much attached to his judicial work. In the spring of 1912 he was favorably considered by the President for appointment to a vacancy in the Supreme court of the United States. He has devoted all of his time and energy to the performance of his

judicial duties and has made a useful and intelligent member of our court of last resort.

In matters of religious faith Mr. Elkin has followed in the footsteps of his fathers, who for centuries were devout members of the Church of England and in this country of the Protestant Episcopal Church. In England and Ireland many of his ancestors were clergymen and loyal Protestants. In Indiana the parish is weak, but Mr. Elkin contributes freely of his means to support the little church whose services he attends.

Soon after his admission to the bar he began to take an interest in the development of the coal fields of Indiana county. Indeed, he may very properly be regarded as a pioneer in the development of the coal industry in this county. In connection with Henry and George Prothero he laid the foundation for opening up the mines of the Cush creek region in 1887 and has been interested in that section from that time to the present. After several years of effort they succeeded in having the Cush Creek branch of the railroad built from Mahaffey to Glen Campbell. They sold to the Glenwood Coal Company the lands operated by them near Glen Campbell, and thus began the operations which since that time have been extended in every direction in that part of the county. He believed then, and believes now, in the profitable operation of our coal lands, and has always been willing to back his faith by making investments in the different sections of the county. The future of Indiana county is bright and promising and no has greater faith in that future than the subject of this sketch. Mr. Elkin has been successful in his business affairs as well as in his professional life. His energy is untiring and his industry great. He is preeminently the architect of his own fortune, as he inherited nothing but a strong body and a good mind. He possesses the qualities of energy and decision and his success in life bears testimony to what can be accomplished by one who, possessing these qualities, knows how to use them.

Mr. Elkin is a member of the Union League of Philadelphia, of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, of the Clover Club, and of other fraternal and social organizations.

He made his first appearance as a public speaker in the campaign of 1878, when he was not yet nineteen years of age. This was at a time when the Greenback party was on the crest of the wave of popular approval all over the country. He took his position against the fallacies of the new party, and has always stood for sound money as the only bases to give substantial and enduring national and individual credit. In 1880 he stumped the county for Garfield and from that time until his retirement from political activity, in 1904, he participated in every State and national campaign. He believes that young men should cultivate the habit of public speaking, and the earlier they begin the sooner will they acquire facility of expression and ease of manner. It matters not how simple the start, or how unimportant the occasion, but there must be a beginning, if a young man ever expects to become a public speaker. The old-fashioned literary society, and the debating club of the country school, were admirably adapted for developing a taste for public speaking. Mr. Elkin, in his teaching days, always made use of the literary society and the debating club as the most available

means of creating popular interest in the cause of education in rural districts. He believes in the country boy raised on the farm, or in the homes of those who work for a living, and his experience has taught him that no boy so raised need despair of success if he has the ambition to succeed and the application necessary to work out results.