

# THE VARSITY

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## Editorial Comments.

SIR DANIEL WILSON.

DIED AUGUST 6TH, 1892.



THOUGH entering upon a new year of her life, our Alma Mater is in mourning. A few weeks ago there was laid to rest the venerable man who, as Professor and President of this University, brought her no slight degree of fame and honor, and to whom in a large measure are due both her present greatness and even her present existence. Thankless and unworthy will be the graduate who ceases to cherish with pride the memory of Sir Daniel Wilson.

Sir Daniel's career was a fitting exemplar for the youth of the country in which the best days of his life were spent. Very delicate as a boy, he yet succeeded, by careful attention to the laws of physical health, in developing a remarkably vigorous and healthy manhood, and in passing beyond the Psalmist's limit of threescore years and ten. Long walks were his favorite and daily recreation, and mountain-climbing, whether in his loved Highlands of Scotland, or amid the beautiful retreats of New Hampshire, was his chief holiday delight.

But hard exercise was to him but the handmaid of hard work. It may safely be said that in the whole University no one worked harder and more faithfully than the late President. Even after the great disaster of the University fire, when his heavy correspondence was increased tenfold, not a single letter was left unanswered, but rising as was his custom at early dawn, the President had accomplished nearly a half day's work before many of his younger colleagues had entered their studies. And hard work was characteristic of Sir Daniel all his life long. Thrown as a lad upon his own resources, he toiled unceasingly with his brush or his pen; and even after winning repute and a competency he never relaxed his labors.

One secret of this capacity for work was his heartiness, his never-flagging vivacity. Sir Daniel was never bored with his manifold duties, however irksome they might be to ordinary men. Whatever he did, he did it with his might. Such a man always has more to do than others, and much of the President's work was self-imposed. How he found time for half of what he did was a marvel to his intimate friends, even though they knew he was unhappy only when idle. "Only idlers go to the theatre," was the sternest reproof he could administer to an admirer of the art of Roscius.

A cheerful and radiant disposition and an unfailing good temper characterized Sir Daniel's daily life, brightening the dulness and relieving the monotony of drudging toil. Care rested lightly on his shoulders. Such a disaster as that of the memorable fourteenth of February would have killed

many a man of his age. But not for one moment on that trying night did his spirit quail. "Don't be disheartened, Mr. President," said a Professor when the fiery fiend was doing his worst. "Disheartened, man!" replied Sir Daniel, "why, we'll have a finer building than ever before I go." Early the next morning the President was on the move and before many hours went by plans for reconstruction were entered upon and arrangements made for continuing lectures without a single omission. It is a comfort to his sorrowing friends to know that Sir Daniel lived to see his dearest wish fulfilled. "Mine has been a singularly happy life," he often said in his last hours.

But if cheerfulness and enthusiasm were characteristic of the man, no less so was the variety of his intellectual interests. Artist, littérateur and scientist, he won pronounced success in many fields and took an active interest in all spheres of mental activity. His "Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time," of which a new and magnificent edition appeared only last year, is beautifully illustrated from his own sketches, and indeed he could have made a good living in the old world with his brush. Probably his main interest lay in science. In ethnology and archæology his work is original and extremely important. He wrote "The Archæology and Prehistoric Annals of Scotland," "Prehistoric Man," "Researches into the Origin of Civilization," and several articles in the latest edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica. An unique work is that which appeared in Macmillan's "Nature Series" only last year, "The Right Hand: Left-Handedness." Keen, too, was the delight Sir Daniel took in pure literature. No man in Canada knew his Shakespeare better than he, and those who had the good fortune to hear last fall his public lecture on the bard of Avon will remember how marvellously comprehensive and rich in illustrations was that eloquent discourse. Sir Daniel's gifts as a poet were not inconsiderable and his "Spring Wild Flowers" contains many a gem. In Biography, his study of Chatterton is widely and favorably known, and a recently published memoir, "William Nelson," is a most interesting account of the life of an old Edinburgh friend.

Amongst the striking traits in Sir Daniel's character appeared his generosity, simplicity, purity, lofty sense of honor and fervent piety. At a time when a harsh materialistic philosophy prevails, casting its blighting influence over the minds of men and chilling their noblest aspirations, such lives as Sir Daniel's are rare and conspicuous in their beauty. An earnest Christian, he carried his religion into his daily life, and sought in all things to humbly follow the divine Master whom he served. A man in his position must often have disagreeable duties to perform, but our late President faced all with a noble and fearless conscientiousness which even those who may have felt aggrieved could not but respect. The childlike purity of his mind, his sweet sim-