

THOMAS WILDER DANIEL.

Born June 26, 1818.

Died January 2, 1892.



The New Year had hardly begun its course when it became a sadly memorable date in the annals, not only of our Congregation, but of all citizens of St. John. The sudden decease of our Senior Churchwarden, one who for a generation had been associated with every effort and agency in our Church, came as a warning call, soon to be followed by another and yet another in this season of trial. Already many sketches of his life have appeared in the public journals, and indeed it was a life not filled with varied or dramatic incident, but with an energy that neither hastened nor rested. There was not one charitable work in our city in which his counsel was not welcomed, there was not one righteous cause which did not claim his sympathy and his aid. In the present memorial sketch we are enabled to describe his character by the witness of those who knew him of old, as the Church worker, as the merchant, and as the citizen.

Privately educated in England, he came at an early age to the Dominion, entering the firm of which his uncle, the late Mr. Thomas Daniel, was chief. Succeeding eventually to the management of the business, he raised it to the highest position, without a rival in the Maritime Provinces. Wealth to Mr. Daniel meant greater opportunity of doing good; and during those years of prosperity his house was the harbour of the wayfarer, the refuge and rest for the overtaxed worker in the vineyard.

"He came naturally," so writes one who knew him intimately, "by his fondness for his own church and willingness to work for it. For generations his family had been church-workers, whether as ministers or laymen. In this city his work began when he became a teacher in Trinity Church, where he continued until a Sunday school was opened in connection with St. John's Church, at the appointment of Mr. Armstrong. Two years later (1854) he aided in establishing another school in the lower part of the parish. It was held in what was then the Orange Hall in Brussels Street, and was the germ of the present parish of St. Mary's. About the same time he cooperated with the Rector in the erection of the Protestant Orphan Asylum, intended to provide for the children left orphans by the cholera epidemic of that year."

And so the record proceeds. But we find the same consistency of Christian character in his business life, and here we are enabled to give the personal testimony of one of St. John's most eminent merchants:—"My earliest acquaintance with Mr. Daniel commenced in November 1850. Mr. Daniel was a very great friend of my father, and it was thought that if employment could be obtained for me in the London House, my fortune would be made. I came to St. John and lived with Mr. Daniel and his family. He used to be very particular in looking after our moral welfare, and every evening the young men belonging to the Church of England were requested to attend family prayers in his own

room with his own family. I can well remember that at the time Mr. Daniel was treasurer of the Church, and I used to bring the funds home on Sundays and hand them over to him on Monday mornings; and while referring to this, it is only a few months ago since I met Mr. Daniel in the vestry, I think he was then taking charge of the collections and probably he has continued as treasurer since 1850 until the time of his death. One of the first rules he taught us in business, was to bear strictly in mind never to tell a falsehood in order to make sales, and on that same foundation we started for ourselves and built up our business. In all the years that I was with Mr. Daniel, I have never known of anyone applying for assistance, either for building Churches, Sunday Schools, Mission Houses, or for assistance for anyone in want, without regard to their religion I have never known anyone to be refused, after proper inquiries had been made.

In years past when wood was more largely consumed here, especially by the poorer classes, it was Mr. Daniel's custom, when wood was cheap and brought to St. John on the wood boats, and loaded from the boats into carts in the Market Slip, to buy a large quantity of this wood and have it stored in the yard, and when the cold weather came on, he would sell this wood to deserving people at the price it cost him in quantity when it was cheap, and I think he paid cartage both ways.

In the work of the Diocesan Church Society, for many years he collected the subscriptions for St. Marks Parish and was always particularly anxious to keep up the amount. I also look back with pleasure to the Church of England Society, (I think that was the name,) a sort of Bible Class more than anything else, in which one or two evenings a week could be well spent. The rooms we occupied were at the top of a building known as Ritchie's building, since burned, Mr. Daniel was a very active member of this society and it was his particular desire to meet young men, members of the Church of England, and assist them in spending a profitable evening. This was about the beginning of societies in St. John, of which we now have so many useful ones, as we had then no Church of England Institute, Y. M. C. A., or any other society excepting the Early Closing and Mutual Improvement Association, in which Mr. Daniel was also very much interested.

To a young man starting out in life, a reference from Mr. Daniel was of very great value, and a reference for respectability, honesty, &c., from the great firm of which he was a partner, (Daniel & Boyd), was something which any young man might be proud to have. In the many years I was with Mr. Daniel, I never remember his being idle. If he was not working with the business of the day, he had always plenty of other matters to occupy his attention, and it was in the very many small details of an every-day busy life, that Mr. Daniel's ideas of business were put into practical use.

Another thing that originated, I think, with him, or else with his predecessor, his uncle, Mr. Thos. Daniel, was the great business principal of having only one fixed price, or what is known as having no second price, placing a fair business profit on an article and selling at that price without any abatement,