

1898.

ADDRESS ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, BY S. WEIR MITCHELL,
M.D.

" I have seen in the course of my life some of the tributes laid by this city on the graves of those who smile no more at the applause of men. I can recall no such occasion when it became needful to bring together so many representative voices to express adequately our sense of large service.

" This very fact limits each of us, who has here to speak, and releases me as one from the too large task of recounting the multiplicity of services rendered by a very notable man to the city of his birth.

" I shall leave others to discuss the characteristics of this strong and ardent nature which smiled at obstacles and seemed to delight in contest with difficulties.

" Nor shall I make it my task to speak of the large charities of Dr. Pepper; nor of the liberal gifts from head and heart to all manner of scientific enterprises. I shall prefer, as representing the University of Pennsylvania and its Trustees, to ask a few minutes that I may simply relate what we owe to Dr. Pepper's broad-minded view of our needs as a great school. Even as to this I must be brief, for elsewhere in our official history what I might say is set out at length and I wish rather to express gratitude than to recount well-known services.

" The thought takes me back to a difficult hour in our University history. Phillips Brooks had reluctantly declined to become provost. Because of his great affection for this city (as I personally knew), he hesitated long. One or more among us had also thought well to refuse this office. After much consultation, William Pepper was nominated. He at first refused, and then gave later a promise to serve two years. This was in 1881. I think he found rule, authority, the field for a large constructive imagination, all to his taste. He stayed at his post until 1894. I shall confine myself strictly to this period of a notable life, and resist the temptation to go back of his time, or outside of William Pepper's work as provost.

“ His predecessor in office, Provost Stillé, had prepared and opened the path of progress by taking us out of a city byway to this more ample space. His large-minded and intelligent scholarship, since then invaluabley illustrated in our historical literature, had made itself strongly felt in this University. Provost Stillé left with us a fresh spirit of enterprise. He saw that all universities, not in cities, soon created cities around them. Seventy to one hundred thousand people lie around Harvard, Oxford, or Cambridge. We are here placed much as they are. The securing of these open spaces prefigured largeness of outlook, liberalness as to wise change.

“ Never was nobler chance well used. The place, the time and the opportunity had found the man. Before this time the University was made up of schools which lacked relating bonds. The new provost gave to the University a certain oneness of life, which has found its ultimate attainment in the materialization of his bold scheme of dormitories, never before carried out as part of the corporal system of a city university. The Academic Council, the Department of Philosophy and the better organization of the alumni have strengthened this unifying bond.

“ There were created under Provost Pepper's rule the Veterinary School, the Department of Biology, that of Hygiene, built by Henry Charles Lea ; the Veterinary Hospital, the Women's Graduate School and the library. The central light and heat building was his thought, and the Wistar Institute, the splendid gift of Isaac Wistar, belongs to this time of munificent giving, stimulated by the example of a personal generosity on the part of the provost such as has been rarely equaled in a man of moderate fortune.

“ To his restless enterprise and fostering activity we owe also the splendid museum buildings, and the wonderful collection of Assyrian records which have so singularly illustrated the progress of Oriental scholarship, and lighted up the dim horizon of historic time.

“ He taught this great city how to value this school of learning.

“ If at last we, who are so slowly proud of our past and so tardily assured of present distinction, have learned what a great University is to the State and city, we owe much of this belated virtue to William Pepper. If we have at last seen this University relating itself to the free-school system and welcoming its teachers to ever-enlarging and liberal opportunities, this, too, was in part Provost Pepper's work.

“ That his lavish giving and his personal influence inspired Legislatures and City Councils with like desire to help us is not a cause for wonder. It was hard to resist a man so buoyant, so sanguine, so sure to give with the one hand when he asked with the other.

“ As Provost Stillé left to him the temptation of ready opportunities, so has Dr. Pepper's thought and work left to Provost Harrison chances which have been energetically used.

“ Under these three reigns this University has become one of the four great American schools of learning. In some ways it has no rival. I have not time to do more than note the vast changes in legal, dental and, above all, medical education which came about under Dr. Pepper's rule. The lengthening of all these courses met with opposition such as might have been expected, and in these contests (especially in medicine) before and in his provostship, William Pepper displayed a confident courage in the future which I have good cause to thank and remember.

“ As a presiding officer in the Board of Trustees, Dr. Pepper was decisive, rapid and always the equable master of his temper.

“ Others will in time have told you of his work as a teacher and physician ; others again must speak of what this city elsewhere owes a man who craved work and enjoyed varied labor as did no other I have ever known. That he died worn out in life's prime is no wonder.

“ In the name of this University, for his associates in the Board of Trustees, for the alumni of this home of learning, I thank his memory—grateful with them for what he did, for what he gave, for what he showed his successors how to do.”