

EDITORIALS

MORRIS LOEB.

"Cast forth thy Act, thy Word, into the ever-living, ever-working Universe; it is a seed-grain that cannot die; unnoticed to-day, it will be found flourishing as a banyan grove after a thousand years."—*Carlyle*.

Many sad happenings in this world are accepted with silent stoicism because we are, in some measure, prepared for them. There are others which strike like a thunderbolt from a clear sky. Such was the announcement of the death of Morris Loeb.

Not so many days ago, he was among us in all the intensity of his active life, eagerly busy with the success of the International Congress of Applied Chemistry; guiding us by his example, helping us by every means at his disposal, sacrificing his personal comfort, taking no rest even after the first symptoms of the illness which has carried him away made his work very difficult—ever striving not to neglect anything that might contribute to the interest or the enjoyment of the visitors to the Congress.

He passed away as he has lived: never minding himself when catering to the welfare and the comforts of others.

If I had to sum up the character of Morris Loeb, if I had to give the key to his whole life, I would call him the incarnation of the sentiment of duty and service.

Most men act by necessity; others by example; others again are animated by greed, by vanity, or other regrettable impulse. Whoever knew Morris Loeb intimately could perceive in every action, every thought, every effort, this sternly simple but sublime impulse of duty and service. Sometimes, his austerity in that direction went even to the point of disturbing his best friends, as well as heaping discomfort and sacrifice on himself.

I made his acquaintance some twenty years ago: met him regularly at our chemical meetings; then met him more intimately in the circle of his home life. The longer I knew him, the higher went my esteem, my affection for that unusual man, and the more his noble example stimulated me, as it has inspired so many others to better efforts.

I have had more than one lively discussion with him, where each of us was convinced of the strength of our own point of view; but in every instance did I leave him with greater respect and admiration. Those who saw him engaged in any action where he was combating with all the directness of his honest convictions, anything he believed was not for the best of purposes, had to know him intimately in order to grasp fully the intense underlying kindness, the consideration for the feelings of others, which he harbored in his big soul. An insincere or selfish thought never crossed his mind.

His way of doing good was different from the drowsy apathy or the contemplative attitude of some dreamy reformers; neither did he fret away his ener-

gies on ideals of the unattainable kind; his life was a life of action, of work—not of dreams, and his action was always measured with rare forethought towards a well defined purpose.

His parents, whose memory he worshiped, left him a large fortune; to their son this fortune appeared only as a large responsibility—as a power to do good—as a means to help other men to do more good.

His philanthropy was not of the kind which limits itself to signing a substantial check, or organizing a charity-festival, or other similar kinds of alm-charities which perpetuate poverty and misery and make the poor poorer and the weak more helpless. His philanthropic work went to the root of things: it meant the fulness of his own personal efforts with all the discomforts or self-abnegation this frequently implied. Then again, this same austere man could often unbend to the point of great joviality when his ever-ready wit saw a humorous point in a situation. I was never able to discover the slightest trace of vanity or conceit in him, and this made him invulnerable against scheming flatterers.

Dr. Baskerville has well described the scientist and the professor in his review of the career of our departed brother (p. 845). But what appeals to me as the greatest claim of gratitude from our profession, is the leading part Morris Loeb took in making the Chemists' Club building an accomplished fact by infusing his own idealism throughout the whole enterprise. Thus he has succeeded in making of the Chemists' Club an institution whose good influence is already reaching out near and far over the whole country; not only has it hastened the healthy development of our chemical organizations, but it is at the same time contributing to the growing importance and increased usefulness of the chemical profession to the community itself.

Whoever saw him at work in this instance, knows how he conceived and carried out practically every part of that project from the financial start to the successful operation thereof; how he attended, personally, to the most trifling details, when he thought that by doing so he might better insure the proper working of his carefully planned organization. Many a nook or corner of our Club house reminds us of his personal solicitude,—nay, of the very touch of his hands, where he helped to place a work of art or some other object of interest gathered purposely by him for the Club during his late travels.

The day of his death, October the eighth, was exactly the third anniversary of the date on which he signed the incorporation papers of the Chemists' Building Company.

Vividly do I remember the day when he first outlined to me the whole project: "It can be done," said he, "if we all work together. We can do it in such a dignified and direct way that nobody can claim that it is a one-man's affair or a gift. Neither should it be a cold-blooded business proposition, although

it ought to be carried out on business lines. I know already a few men who are willing to guarantee a substantial subscription, and who may help me to find others to help us along." With characteristic consideration, he added: "Above all, it should be well understood that he who is unable to help financially, can still be a great contributor to the success of the work, if he will aid us by any personal effort, even if it be only by his enthusiasm."

In this instance, as always, he never mentioned his own name, and tried for a while to shield his identity by referring to "his acquaintances" or "some friends of his." This was ever his favorite way of designating any financial help he intended to furnish himself.

Even after the meeting at Toch's residence, where Bogert, Baskerville, Toch and myself, were present, several did not yet fully realize that Morris Loeb was going to furnish the initial funds.

If, in this instance, he contributed freely with his money, he rendered much greater service by his continuous personal work for three full years, until he was convinced that everything was as it ought to be, and the Chemists' Club was safe and sure.

Wherever he was, he found some way of being of service or help towards others. I am told that when he went to study in Germany after graduating from Harvard, he there led the quiet, modest life of a hard-working student, and that of the allowance his rich father sent him, very little was used for his own personal comfort, but most of it found its way to help others who never knew who had assisted them. Whatever he did in the matter of money contributions, he carefully arranged everything so as to keep himself in the background, but his personal work was ever so much the more in evidence.

Another one of his traits was that great feeling of reverence and gratitude towards some of his former professors as well as to his Harvard Alma Mater; but whatever he did was done as if he were a mere incident in it; even his intimate friends, who did not belong to Harvard, learned only by accident how he and his brother had made a foundation in honor of his departed professor, Wolcott Gibbs. And when last year, he organized the Wolcott Gibbs' Memorial Day at the Chemists' Club, and presented the bust of Wolcott Gibbs on that occasion, he kept himself very much in the background, although attending painstakingly to every detail so as to make sure that nothing should mar the success of the event, which he had planned alone in his great love for his former teacher.

He abhorred any display of wealth or self-importance, and this made his company so much the more liked by his fellow chemists.

Those who knew his home life, will remember how he filled his days, alternating his devotion to his duties and philanthropies with acts of kindness and consideration to his family, and his friends: all this frequently interwoven with banter and wit.

Having no children, he and his distinguished wife gave an outlet to their natural feelings by furthering the comfort and happiness of the children of their

friends and by assisting the unfortunate children of the poor or helpless.

Of some men, it can be said: The whole world is their country, humanity is their family, and to do good is their religion. Morris Loeb was one of such men.

Whatever there was to be done, one could count on him. Whether the matter was very important or not, once he had accepted to serve, he never disappointed. When he had accepted membership on some committee or another, he was punctual at the meetings, and only very urgent matters could keep him away. Whenever he participated in anything, he gave body and soul to it.

His frank speech, simple words, direct arguments never strove for rhetorical effect, but aimed only at convincing others of his own earnest opinion. I still see him with his manly bearing, his handsome head, his deep-thinking, big, honest eyes, which flashed conviction and sincerity into every one of his arguments, and gathered respect from all who listened to him, whether they were of his opinion or not.

Noble friend, all who have known you enough have been made better by your example.

We shall miss much, yes very much, your inspiring personality.

Yet, the mention of your name will often serve to every one of us, as the guiding flash of a beacon, till we, too, shall reach the other shore.

L. H. BAEKELAND.

THE INCONGRUITIES OF AMERICAN PATENT LITIGATION.

Whoever was present at the White House Garden Party in honor of the members of the Eighth International Congress of Applied Chemistry must have been impressed by the directness of speech of President Taft.

One of our foreign visitors remarked to me: "Your President does not waste his time in pure formalities. Undaunted by his strained ankle and the hot weather, he left the comforts of Beverly to receive us here, and he gave us, at the same time, a refreshing sensation of the simple directness of your democratic government. Up till now, we were accustomed to the cut-and-dried speeches full of the usual meaningless platitudes with which royalty opened these Congresses. But the chief of your Republic gave us, in a few precise words, his opinion on what I consider one of the most important factors in the healthy industrial development of all civilized nations."

The speech of President Taft has been reported in full by THIS JOURNAL (IV, 710). The following is the most striking part of it:

"Patents have played a very great part in the development of the United States, and we have given to patentees a very valuable monopoly for the purpose of discovering by their industries new methods of accomplishing useful results. Whether we have made this monopoly too great or not is the subject of consideration by a commission provided for by Congress.

"There is certainly great room for improvement in the machinery of our patent office, and it would be well if more value could inhere in the issuing of a patent as an evidence of real property. Now, however, until a patent has been fought through the courts, people do not seem to regard it as of a great deal of monopoly value.