



"POMP"

Albert Monroe Wilson

1839-1904

By ARTHUR HOBSON QUINN, '94

WHEN the Chairman of the Record Committee asked me some months ago to write something about "Pomp," it was an article very different from the present one which was suggested by that request. For at that time our old friend was living and pursuing his round of duties, many of them self-appointed, which had become second nature to him, and in which lay his happiness. His death has brought more clearly before us his life and the things it stood for, and has crystalized our respect and regard into a permanent regret.

It has been a great source of pleasure to me that when the Dean of the College appointed a committee to secure the funds for a testimonial to Albert on the completion of fifty years of service, I was selected as its treasurer. It seemed a hard fate that he should die before the fund could be given to him, but I know the pleasure he took in the fact that "our old crowd" was doing something for him. As I would tell him from day to day how the fund was growing and how kindly and affectionately the donors spoke of him, his face would light up and he would chuckle in his own peculiar way. Sometimes I would open the letters in his presence, and as the names were read he would say approvingly "Oh, yes; C---- of '73. He was a right quiet little chap"; or "B----- of '68, did you say? He was one of the Ninth Street crowd. They'll come out strong." But it was more the friendship than the money that he valued, I know.

An incident which was characteristic of his devotion to the University occurred in 1893 when he paid a visit to the World's Fair at Chicago. He had three days to spend at the Fair. He came straight to the University

Exhibit and he left it that first day only for meals. On the second day he made inquiries as to the slum districts of Chicago, of which someone had told him marvellous tales, and he departed to inspect them. He appeared the next morning, disappointed, and left the exhibit again only when he returned to Philadelphia.

His interest in any University matter depended upon its age. He preserved the cornerstone of the old College building, and when the Zelosophic Society was revived in 1892 he superintended the labors of several of us who were moving the books from the basement to the society's rooms. On the way he regaled us with stories of the days when Zelo was in her glory.

"Zelo and Philo 'mounted to something in them days," he said. "Why, I remember when Dr. Pepper and Jesse Burk, the Secretary, I mean, used to take turns sleeping in Philo's rooms to keep the Zelos from breaking the furniture."

To "Pomp" the world was made up of two classes: Pennsylvania men and the rest. His treatment of the latter was dignified at times, even to the extreme. Some of them who became connected with the College he admitted to a certain degree of favor, but there was a point beyond which they could never hope to progress.

He came to the service of the University in 1854 when he was a boy of fifteen, and he did not leave it till his death. From seven in the morning till seven at night he watched over the College building as a mother over her child. Toward the latter portion of his life efforts were made to relieve him of some of his duties, but it was hard to make him understand that any of his tasks could be performed by other hands. Even at the last when he was struck down by the sickness that proved fatal, his sole thought was of the College and how it could get along without him.

It was this feeling of loyalty which was the best part of him, as it is the best part of any man. It was the recognition of this quality which brought alumni, officers, and undergraduates to the College Chapel on the day when he was brought there for the last time. It was as if each one had come to thank the dead man personally for his long service to the University. Many have brought to her service great mental powers; many have given generously of their wealth—Albert belonged to those who had nothing to give but their lives. And he gave his life in full measure, not in any one supreme act, but in the harder task of doing his duty daily with unswerving fidelity for half a century.

The College will not forget him. The money that was to have cheered his old age will be spent in establishing a scholarship as a memorial to him, and in some fitting place on the walls of the building in which he spent his life a tablet will tell those who come after us what we thought of him. But we do not need any tablet to remind us of the place that has been vacant since that day when the Chapel doors stood open because Pomp was ill and there was no one to close them.

Of how many men in this world can it be truly said that their places can not be filled? Pomp's place can not. Others may come and perform his functions, but no one can welcome the old alumni, rule the College,—Faculty and students,—with despotic sway and guard with single-hearted devotion that which has been intrusted to him as Pomp did. If loyalty, fidelity, and unswerving devotion to an ideal can secure for anyone's memory prospect of life, surely the memory of our old friend may be trusted to grow ever dearer to the sons of the College that he loved so well.

