



SAMUEL WILSON PARR

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1857-1931

On May 16, 1931, one of the notable group which organized the Illinois Academy of Science in Springfield in 1907 and gathered at the first regular meeting in Decatur in 1908, passed from our midst.

Professor Parr was born at Granville, Illinois, January 21, 1857. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1884 and received the degree of Master of Science at Cornell University in 1885. After teaching for a few years at Illinois College, he returned to the University of Illinois as Professor of Applied Chemistry and, with the exception of a year's leave of absence passed in Berlin and Zurich, he spent a long and active life in work at Urbana.

His first important scientific paper was published when he was forty years of age and he demonstrated that a man who has little opportunity for productive research in early life may do work of outstanding importance later on.

At the first regular meeting of the Academy, at Decatur in 1908, he presented a paper on the "Weathering and Deterioration of Coal", which illustrates his major interest in fuels throughout years of research.

His peroxide calorimeter has been very useful, practically, for determining the calorific value of coals and the story of the development of the alloy "Illum", as resistant as platinum to the action of dilute acids, for use in making a bomb calorimeter, reads like a romance.

Perhaps his most notable achievement was his development, with the assistance of T. E. Layng, of a process for coking coal which depends on the exothermic reaction that sets in when a dried bituminous coal is heated to redness. By this method the twelve or fourteen hours required in a by-products coking oven may be reduced to four or five.

Professor Parr's kindly and helpful personality led to very close attachments between him and his students and won for him a wide circle of friends. Employers who had occasion to consult him about men suitable for their work came to rely almost implicitly upon his judgment.

He was President of the American Chemical Society in 1928 and received many other distinguished honors.

Although he was twenty-seven when he graduated from college, he was active in athletics, especially in baseball, and he was the first President of the Athletic Association of the University. As an orator he won the University contest and represented the University at the State oratorical contest. This interest in other things as well as in his scientific work was characteristic of him throughout his life. He was in the Church choir and was long chairman of the music committee. He was one of the leaders among the Directors of the Y. M. C. A. at the University.