

100 YEARS AGO

OBITUARY HENRY CLIFTON SORBY 1826-1908*

MICROSCOPICAL Science, as well as this Society, has suffered a serious loss by the death, on March 9, of Dr. Sorby. As President of the Society, in 1875-7, he contributed to our Journal two addresses of a very striking and suggestive character, while our own publications, as well as those of other scientific societies, contain many important communications from his pen, illustrating the enormous value of the Microscope as an instrument of scientific research.

Sorby's life was a singularly, and happily, uneventful one. Succeeding to a moderate fortune, and receiving a sound education in the grammar school of his native town, supplemented by private tuition, he, at a very early age, determined to devote his life to the study of science; and this devotion to scientific research was never interrupted by the duties owing to a family, by the cares of a business, or by the distractions of a profession. During his earlier years, Sorby's interest and activities were almost entirely confined to his native town of Sheffield and its scientific societies. In his later years, after the death of his widowed mother, he was in the habit of spending all the summer months on board his yacht, which, provided as it was with Mi-

croscopes and other apparatus for research, became a laboratory in which he carried on the multifarious investigations described in his numerous memoirs.

At the time that he was President of his Society, Sorby wrote as follows:—"My entire life has been spent either in scientific research or in preparation for it"—and this statement might have been justly repeated by him on his death-bed. For even during the last five years of his life, while confined to his bed by a series of accidents, he was actively engaged in completing and publishing the results of important investigations. Nor did the manifestations of his enthusiasm for research cease with the extinction of life itself- for a posthumous memoir of the highest value has just appeared in the Journal of the Geological Society; while, by the terms of his will, a large part of Sorby's fortune will go to the Sheffield University-in the foundation of which he took such an important part-and the Royal and Geological Societies receive bequests, to be devoted to the promotion of investigations of the same character as those which occupied the donor during his whole life.

*excerpt from p. 431 of the Journal of the Royal Microscopical Society (1908) with the kind permission of the Honorable Society.



Yours very truly

A. C. Sorby

[PLATE XL]