

WILLIAM CLARK DANFORTH
1878-1949

WILLIAM CLARK DANFORTH, a fellow of this society since 1920, three times a member of the Council, five times Treasurer, Vice-President in 1929, and finally President in 1942, died of coronary thrombosis on November 11, 1949, in the Evanston Hospital, Evanston, Ill.

Born in Chicago, July 30, 1878, he was the fourth generation of his family to study medicine. His father, Dr. Isaac Newton Danforth, was a prominent physician and one of the founders of the Wesley Memorial Hospital in Chicago. "Danny," as all who loved him called him, graduated as a Bachelor of Science from Northwestern University in 1900, and in medicine in 1903. After serving an internship in Cook County Hospital, he took postgraduate work in obstetrics and gynecology in Berlin and Vienna. Soon after his return from Europe, he attached himself to the Evanston Hospital and began teaching medicine at his alma mater. His tremendous energy and assiduous efforts soon brought him a large practice and recognition as an ardent teacher. He was professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Northwestern University from 1937 to 1946, when he became emeritus. He was for many years head of the department of obstetrics and gynecology at the Evanston Hospital, an institution which, largely through his efforts, was raised from a position of obscurity to one of eminence for the quality of its work. He was a Fellow and Past President of the Chicago Gynecological Society. He was a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons and a member of the Chicago Society of Medical History. He was Past President of the Institute of Medicine of Chicago, an office of especial merit and distinction. He was consulting gynecologist to the Wesley Memorial Hospital, Chicago, and to the Lake Forest Hospital, Lake Forest, Ill., and consulting obstetrician to the Chicago Maternity Hospital. He was a member of the University Clubs of Chicago and of Evanston, and of the Glenview Club. In college he was a member of Delta Upsilon, and of Nu Sigma Nu in medical school. He was a member of the following honorary fraternities: Phi Beta Kappa, Alpha Omega Alpha, Sigma Chi, Phi Kappa Epsilon, and Deru.

Of short stature and delicate frame with a large head, prominent forehead, and deep-set eyes, he verily depicted the scholar that he was. He was not given to physical exertion and the out of doors. He spoke German and French fluently and he had a satisfactory reading knowledge of Italian and Spanish. In recent years he took instruction in Spanish that he might speak it more readily. He read Latin and Greek not only with ease, but for relaxation. His reading tastes were almost entirely classical and among his most used volumes were his complete editions of Chaucer and Spenser. He had an intimate knowledge of

the Bible and he was for years a vestryman in the Episcopal Church of Evanston. He had a great flair for the specific expression and his writings reflect his knowledge of the derivation of words. He was a facile and experienced operator. His work was guided by a gentle touch, a discerning judgment, and an intimate knowledge of pathology in the living.

Dr. Danforth was a kindly and affable gentleman, mindful always of the best interests of his patients. He was forthright and corrected error as he met it, in the medical meeting or operating room. He scorned the devious approach, and met difficult situations head-on with precision and decorum. He hated "pussyfooting," though he was not disputatious. He was wise, highly intellectual, and his greatest pleasures came from the exercise of his mentality. Always generous, affable, and considerate, he was a grand and tolerant friend.

His devoted and understanding wife died in 1928. He left a son, David, his only child, who has succeeded to the Chairmanship at the Evanston Hospital, and of whom he was justly proud.

N. Sproat Heaney.