

Joseph Ellis Trevor

October 11, 1864 — May 4, 1941

Early Sunday morning, May 4, 1941, the death of Joseph Ellis Trevor bereft the University community of one of its notable members. Born at Lockport, New York, in 1864, and trained in the schools of that city, Trevor began a business career with brilliant success, but abandoned it at the age of twenty-four to enter Cornell. On his graduation, at which time occurred his marriage to Mary Tuft Guild of Lockport, he went abroad to continue his studies; as a pupil of Ostwald he received the doctorate from Leipsic in 1892. He returned at once to Cornell as assistant professor of chemistry; his title was changed in 1894 to assistant professor of general and physical chemistry; he became professor of the same subjects in 1900, of physical chemistry in 1903, and of thermodynamics in 1908; he retired as professor emeritus in 1934.

It was not in the nature of Trevor to seek wide popularity for his courses. He much preferred teaching and personally guiding a few exceptionally gifted men. Several of these personal disciples, now occupying important positions in the academic world, have spoken of his influence with an admiration approaching reverence.

His introductory lectures on thermodynamics found their way into his book *The General Theory of Thermodynamics* in 1927; the much more extensive material of his lectures on advanced theory and applications has not been published in book form. He contributed about thirty papers to various American, British, and German periodicals in the fields of chemistry, physics, and mathematics. Together with W. D. Bancroft he founded the *Journal of Physical Chemistry* in 1896 and served as co-editor until 1909.

Trevor was extraordinarily broad in his range of interests. Deeply grounded in his special fields of chemistry and physics, he possessed also a good background and great keenness of thought in mathematics. He was an enthusiastic musical amateur, a violinist of considerable ability and a strong supporter of the musical interests and enterprises of the community. Languages and literatures also fascinated him; he was widely read, and was a close observer of the origins, relations, and functions of words.

The outstanding feature of his personality was his attitude of active friendliness. He could not be moved to the utterance of censorious remarks except by some instance of flagrant hypocrisy, charlatanism, or unfairness. He found genuine happiness in giving pleasure to others. Directly or indirectly he frequently made it possible for needy students to continue their work.

Trevor is survived by his widow, four children, and four grandchildren. To them we extend our sympathy; and for ourselves we place on record our appreciation of the privilege of having known as our associate this kindly soul, this distinguished scholar, this student and supporter of the sciences and the fine arts.