

Obituary.

ANOTHER of our Members gone! But the other month it was Harkness, and now it is Nicol. His very name was a prop to our society, and his eminence as a mineralogist deservedly placed his name upon the list of those who were, at its institution, deemed worthy of occupying the position of President.

Though a naturalist in the widest acceptation of the word, and for twenty-nine years a professorial teacher of it in all its branches, James Nicol early showed his predilection for Geology and Mineralogy; and his special eminence in the former of these sciences was largely due to that knowledge of petrology which his familiarity with mineral species conferred.

After some of Nicol's earlier descriptive papers had found their way as prize-essays into the Transactions of the Wernerian Society, he in 1844 published his "Geology of Scotland," which, though to a considerable extent an epitome of the work of others, yet bears evidence of a vast amount of personal labour; and, brief and sketchy though it be, is still the best general guide to the geology of the northern division of the kingdom which we possess.

As a mineralogist Nicol may be said to have taken the place left vacant by the death of Jameson. In 1849 he published his "Manual of Mineralogy," unquestionably the first work on the science which has been issued in this country, and invaluable at the time of its issue from the very full tables of analyses which it contains. In 1858 he issued a smaller work,—his "Elements"—this, which still forms the article "Mineralogy" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, has gone through a second edition.

As a practical geologist Nicol was untiring and almost untirable;—his powerful frame and lengthy stride enabled him to compass a distance, and attain, with seemingly no exertion, a speed, which even at a very recent date excited the admiration of the most stalwart walkers. Though professing "not to care much for climbing hills," he on one occasion ascended Ben Nevis in two and a half hours,—

being at the astounding rate of 1760 feet per hour, over the whole distance.

As a companion Nicol was a most lovable man ; of sterling honesty of purpose, he disdained to flatter, and he disdained to agree if he believed he should differ.

Greatly beloved by his students, and still more greatly by those whom he adopted as his friends, the return of his affection was shown in deeds, not words : for these friends—to aid them if he thought he could do so,—he regarded no expenditure of time as lost time. Those younger than himself he specially strove to aid, and it was seldom that the resources of his memory and experience failed him in the so doing.

In the midst of the great sorrow of an unexpected and truly personal loss, the writer of these lines has to record, that in one special department of his own life-work there is no man from whose writings and from whose lips he has received so much aid as from those of James Nicol.

M. F. H.