

**MEMORIAL OF ASA GRAY:
FELLOW, 1841 TO 1888.
CORRESPONDING
SECRETARY, 1844 TO 1850; 1852
TO 1863; PRESIDENT 1863 TO 1873**

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VARIOUS

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American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

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CAMBRIDGE:
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1888.

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BOSTON, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13, 1888.

THE Adjourned Annual Meeting, held in the Hall of the Academy this day at eight P. M., was devoted to a commemoration of the life and services of ASA GRAY, who had died on January 30th of the same year. The President, Professor Joseph Lovering, presided, and after the reading of the record opened the proceedings with the following words:—

The death of Dr. ASA GRAY has already been announced to the Academy in the usual simple manner, and the Council has discharged its duty in providing for an appropriate notice of his life and scientific work. Before calling for the reading of this paper, I desire to say a few words, and present some resolutions.

Nowhere else, except in his home, will Dr. Gray be so much missed as in this hall, and from these meetings. He was elected into the Academy on November 10, 1841,—a year before he took up his residence in Cambridge as Professor of Natural History in Harvard University. From the first, he was devoted to the scientific interests of the Academy, and active in its administration.

He was the Corresponding Secretary for seventeen years, viz. from 1844 to 1850, and again from 1852 to 1863. He was highly qualified for this office, as he had a large personal acquaintance with the scientific men of Europe. He was Chairman of the Committee of Publication for four years, viz. from 1846 to 1850, and in this capacity inaugurated the publication of the Proceedings of the Academy in octavo form, to

supplement the ponderous volumes of Memoirs. He was President for ten years, viz. from 1863 to 1873. As Corresponding Secretary and President, he was an *ex officio* member of the Council, and for six years, at other times, by election, — in all for seventeen years. But all these official duties are only the means to an end: this end is the advancement and diffusion of science. The richness of Dr. Gray's contribution to the Memoirs and Proceedings of the Academy admits of no comparison; though it was only the overflow from his abundant learning, which was circulating at the same time in numerous other channels.

In view of Dr. Gray's many and varied services to the Academy, of his devotion to his chosen science, his exalted character, and his inspiring example, I propose to the Academy to put on record the following resolutions:—

Resolved, That, as Fellows of the Academy, we are deeply sensible of the loss it has suffered by the death of one who has been associated with it for forty-seven years, who has served it zealously in many relations, and who has done much to maintain its usefulness and the honor of its name at home, and to make it respected throughout the world of science.

Resolved, That, as members of the community, we realize that it also sustains a bereavement in the death of our lamented associate which is not fully measured by his scientific work and reputation, great as these were. By his unselfish devotion to his favorite studies, by his wide sympathies, which condescended to the youngest and least knowing lover of nature, by his joyous spirit and his simple Christian life, he has shown that complete devotion to science can be reconciled with the highest interests of humanity.

Resolved, That a copy of these resolutions be sent to Mrs. Gray, his helpful companion in his life's work, with the respectful sympathies of the Fellows of the Academy.

The resolutions offered by the President were seconded by Mr. Augustus Lowell.

MR. PRESIDENT,—I have been asked to second the resolutions presented, and to offer a few thoughts suggested by the affectionate reverence with which we dwell upon the memory of our dear friend, Dr. Gray.

In recalling him, we naturally think first of the affection he inspired. We remember the charming smile, the ready grasp, the strong expressions of interest, with which he greeted us. We remember his readiness to help, his patience, his sympathy. None ever sought his aid without being impressed, first, by the certainty of his knowledge, and then by the great kindness with which he gave it. The affection of all who have ever benefited by his teaching is the highest tribute that can be paid to that side of his character.

Dr. Gray was a man of singular simplicity. That consciousness of power he had which is essential to high achievement, but so easily and almost from the start did he assume the place that he was to fill in science, that he bore about him none of the signs of conflict, but held it as a birthright. Ranking with the highest botanists of the age, he did more than perhaps any American to raise the appreciation of our scholarship abroad, while the same simple, lovable qualities which endeared him to us charmed and fascinated his co-laborers there.

But perhaps the most remarkable trait in Dr. Gray was the steadfastness of his religious convictions under a strain to which so many other minds succumbed. Early captivated with the theory of Darwin, which ended by making its author an Agnostic, and has driven into the ranks of unbelief nearly every one of its most earnest disciples, Dr. Gray preserved his religious faith, and strove to reconcile the truths of nature to what he knew to be the truth of God. Unlike Darwin, he could not be dazzled by his own processes of thought, nor could he suffer the ingenuity of any human theory to undermine his convictions of fundamental truth. We all know with what earnestness he argued to reconcile the two, and even those of us who cannot quite follow him in both directions bear witness to the nobleness of his aim, and to the essential service he performed for each.

Others better qualified than I will speak of his professional triumphs. Mine is a simple tribute to the character of one whom I honored, revered, and loved.

I ask leave, Mr. President, to second the resolutions you have offered.

After Mr. Lowell, President Eliot of Harvard University addressed the Academy.

The life of Aaa Gray always seemed to me a singularly happy one. His disposition was eminently cheerful, and his circumstances and occupations gave fortunate play to his natural disposition and capacity for enjoyment. From opening manhood he studied with keenest interest in a department of natural history which abounds in beauty, fragrance, and exquisite adaptation of means to ends, and opens inexhaustible opportunities for original observing, experimenting, and philosophizing. For sixty years he enjoyed to the full this elevating and rewarding pursuit. These years fell at a most fortunate period; for the continent was just being thoroughly explored, and its botanical treasures brought to light. Dr. Gray's labors therefore cover the principal period of discovery and of accurate classification in American botany. Merely to have one's intellectual life-work make part of a structure so fair and lasting, is in itself a substantial happiness.

His pursuit was one which took him out of doors, and made him intimate with Nature in all her moods. It required him to travel often, and so enabled him to see with delight different lands, skies, and peoples; it gave him intellectual contact with many scholars of various nationalities, whose pursuits were akin to his own. Intellectual sympathy and co-operation led to strong friendships founded securely upon common tastes and mutual services. All these are elements of happiness,—love of nature, acquaintance with the wide earth, congenial intercourse with superior minds, and abiding friendships.

Although Dr. Gray had no children, his domestic experience was one of rare felicity. His life illustrated a remark of his friend Darwin, that with natural history and the domestic affections a man can be perfectly happy. His way of living was that most agreeable to a philosopher; for it was independent, comfortable, and free alike from the restrictions of poverty and the incumbrances of luxury. With simplicity and regularity of life went health and a remarkable capacity for labor.