

THE GRAY HERBARIUM OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The Gray Herbarium is one of the landmarks in American science. It acquired its initial importance under the direction of the illustrious Asa Gray at a time when the American continent was being first explored in a scientific way by government expeditions and by many enthusiastic private collectors. Great numbers of plants were described in new genera and species, records were made of ranges; these records and many of the type specimens are preserved in the Herbarium. They are the most important source of information on the exact identity of the genera and species they represent, and are, of course, now invaluable. The institution is replete with associations and its historic importance is outstanding.

Extent of the Collection.—The Herbarium now includes more than 725,000 specimens of plants. It has for many years been the most valuable collection of its kind in America, and has contributed, through the publications of its staff, more than any other establishment to the knowledge of American plants.

Scientific Services.—It is one of the regular duties of the Herbarium staff to answer gratuitously botanical questions received, and to give an expert opinion upon the identity of plants (herbaceous as well as woody, foreign as well as native) submitted to it. In this way the Herbarium renders valuable service in the various branches of applied botany, such as pharmacy, horticulture, agriculture, and forestry, since in all these an accurate classification of plants is of great importance. The Herbarium is constantly visited by monographers, research specialists, explorers, and government agricultural experts, who come again and again to consult its reference material, extensive records and invaluable library.

Constant Growth of the Collection.—In order to keep abreast with the present rapid advance of botanical exploration it is necessary to add annually a large number of carefully classified specimens to the Herbarium. Each year new regions are explored botanically and important sets of specimens are sold by the collectors. These sets, including the types of many new species, must be acquired when offered for sale, if at all, since they are quickly taken up by large herbaria. Should the Gray Herbarium be unable to secure such sets of specimens, it would suffer the same irreparable loss as a library which is obliged temporarily to suspend its purchases of restricted editions.

Condition.—It is generally conceded that the collections of the Herbarium are unsurpassed in the excellence of their preservation, completeness of their classification, their neatness, order, and ready accessibility.

Research and Exploration.—Investigations of the Gray Herbarium staff have in recent years included the floras of such diverse regions as Labrador, Newfoundland, Sable Island, the Magdalen, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Idaho, Southern California, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Curaçao, British, Dutch and French Guiana, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, the deserts of northern Chile and the Andes of northwestern Argentina, as well as Angola and Kenya Colony in tropical Africa. All these regions have yielded their quota of plants new to science and other discoveries often of practical as well as theoretical importance.

Publications.—The publications range from floras, technical monographs, and extended bibliographies of high excellence to semi-popular accounts of discoveries of surprising diversity, such as the soil-preferences of plants, the historic development of floras, botanical evidence as to the site of the early Norse settlements in America, proofs of post-glacial land-bridges along now submerged portions of the Atlantic coastal shelf, and the presence of relic floras in non-glaciated areas.

Relations.—As one of the major botanical establishments of the world the Gray Herbarium stands in relations of mutual helpfulness to such well-known institutions as the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, the British Museum, the Museum of Natural History at Paris, as well as similar establishments at Geneva and elsewhere. In recent years it has been coöperating particularly with the New York Botanical Garden and the U. S. National Museum in various enterprises of tropical exploration. It should be remarked that of all these great botanical establishments the Gray Herbarium is almost the only one which does not enjoy governmental, state, or municipal aid.

To the Patrons of the Gray Herbarium.—During the past three years thirty-two friends of the Herbarium, by subscriptions to the Asa Gray Memorial Fund, have together contributed about \$17,300 to its further endowment. This brings a measure of relief which is much appreciated. However, the income from the funds of the Herbarium has since 1914 advanced only about 15 per cent, while the cost of specimens, instruments and other equipment, mounting paper, chemicals, and all supplies, books, periodicals, and printing have advanced from 30 to more than 100 per cent. Under these

circumstances it will be readily understood that in spite of cautious management the unavoidable expenses of the establishment have now reached a point at which it will be needful to curtail the normal growth of the collections, restrict in important ways the undertakings of the staff, and, what is most regrettable, lose the services of highly trained assistants, unless its work can have somewhat increased support. Many persons have in the past aided the Herbarium by annual contributions. Without this assistance it would have been impossible for the Herbarium to have undertaken many scientific enterprises in exploration and publication which have been, with such aid, brought to successful and gratifying completion.

At this time scientific investigation in Europe is seriously crippled. This brings to American establishments an exceptional opportunity for important service in carrying forward work on problems of much interest and in many of their aspects of considerable significance to human welfare. From these considerations it is believed that the patrons who have in the past aided the Gray Herbarium will feel willing to continue and where possible *increase such assistance* during the present year, and that others may be inclined to contribute to maintain at its highest efficiency the work of this notable establishment.

Certain patrons, desiring to perpetuate the assistance rendered by their annual gifts, have capitalized them by legacy, thus conferring lasting and greatly appreciated benefit upon the establishment.

Proper form for such bequest is as follows:

"I give and bequeath to the President and Fellows of Harvard College the sum of.....dollars, the income of which is to be applied to the maintenance of the Gray Herbarium."

NATHANIEL T. KIDDER, *Chairman.*
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*Members of the Visiting Committee
of the Gray Herbarium.*

Boston, April 2, 1928.

*Remittances should be addressed and checks drawn to the Gray Herbarium,
Cambridge, Mass.*



Harvard University. 1928. "Gray Herbarium Apr. 2, 1928." *Walter Deane correspondence* –.

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