

# George William Harris

— *Oct. 11, 1917*

(Retired: June, 1915, Fac. Rec. p. 675)

The following resolutions, presented by the Secretary, were adopted by rising vote:

In the death of Librarian Emeritus George William Harris, a graduate of the class of 1873, connected with the University as student and library official for nearly half a century, Cornell loses one of its most useful, loyal and valued servants. The 42 years from 1873 to 1915, during which he was Library Assistant, Acting Librarian and Librarian, were years of service unbroken by ill health or leave of absence. A Nova Scotian by birth, on transferring his legal residence to this country he identified himself whole heartedly with its political, social and educational life.

His association with academic or vocational organizations included membership in the Phi Beta Kappa Society, the American Librarians' Association, and the Bibliographical Society of London. He edited the Ten Year Book of 1888 and the Library Bulletin. He saw the Library outgrow its little home in Morrill Hall and its more extended quarters in McGraw, and almost overflow its present spacious building erected in the early part of his administration. When he began his work the Library contained 34,000 volumes and had no endowment; at the time of his retirement it contained upwards of half a million volumes, including the priceless and almost incomparable, special collections on Dante, Petrarch and Icelandic, and was endowed with funds amounting to over \$800,000.

With this immense variety of material, his devotion to work and his unusual memory made him extraordinarily conversant. He was a master of all the details relating to the acquisition and administration of books, a conscientious steward of funds and a skilful buyer. Not only was he a scrupulous guardian of what was in the Library, but he was insistently careful as to what got into it. Many a faculty member will recall his censorship of lists of books submitted for purchase.

His way of living and thinking was Spartan-like, and his speech laconic,—brief, decided, but well considered. He spared no toil in the scrutiny of minutiae, even his handwriting and every document prepared by him exhibiting that regard for exactitude which made him an exemplar for us all. No one who knew him will forget that stoic figure, without overcoat, in the coldest days of a campus winter energetically crossing to the Library. He was a lover

of nature and of poetry. To him the Library owes the foundation for the purchase of the works of the Victorian poets, a collection which his constant care made noteworthy.

The University Faculty records its grateful appreciation of his services to the University and its deep sense of loss in the passing of a beloved colleague.

*Committee: C. E. Bennett, J. E. Creighton, W. A. Hammond, Chairman*

*Source: Records, p. 926, November 14, 1917*