

Andrew D. White

— Nov. 4, 1918

The following resolutions on the death of Ex-President White were prepared by a committee consisting of President Schurman, chairman, Professors Burr, Bennett, and Hammond, and although not read to the Faculty, they were approved for purpose of record:

Ripe in years and in honors, at his home on our Campus on the eve of his eighty-sixth birthday, President White quietly entered into rest. A half-century has passed since first on that Campus the Faculty of Cornell gathered about its young President; a third of a century since he laid the presidency down. Of the original Faculty not one is still in active service; of those who during his presidency joined the teaching corps there are left in it but one or two. But what he has meant to Cornell is known to us all. The University was his thought. Her fundamental documents—the charter, the plan of organization, the earliest announcements—were mainly or wholly his work. Whatever the share of others in her material foundation or in broadening the scope of her beneficence, it was he who planned her curriculum, chose her teachers, shaped her educational policies. To him she owes her breadth, her democracy, her guarantees of intellectual freedom. From his own purse he eked out her resources, enriched her library, added grace and color to her sober beginnings. All our life here has breathed the atmosphere of his thought, of his taste, and in his own person he has been to us the embodiment and interpretation of Cornell.

But Dr. White has been to us much more than a reminder of the past. Though he refused an honorary presidency, and consented to act only as a Trustee, his place in our academic life has been unique. His exceptional relation to the university, his catholic hospitality, his interest in everything and everybody pertaining to Cornell, have opened the door to acquaintance. His home, overrunning with books, abounding in art, rich with the treasure-trove of wide and life-long travel, has remained a center and inspiration to our social life. There, in his study or about his table, we have come into touch with the broader world of men and affairs; and, with his every return from the high public duties to which he has been called, he has brought back to us a riper experience, a wider acquaintance, a fresh wealth of books and of beauty. Best of all, he has brought to us himself—his charm of manner, his quiet refinement, his breadth of information, his vast store of anecdote, his zest and alertness of interest in all things human, his wide sweet outlook over men and things, his kindliness of judgment, his wise and gentle courtesy, his loftiness of soul. Few men like him have known how to be rich without waste or ostentation, learned without eruditeness, dignified without arrogance, fastidious without censoriousness, democratic without a trace of vulgarity, cosmopolitan without loss of patriotism or public spirit.

To our students, as to us, he has been an exemplar. If less than we they heard his voice or shared his acquaintance, they have read to pieces his books, memorized his public addresses, lived again under the guidance of his writings the vicissitudes of early Cornell; and this liberalizing, emancipating influence has been quickened and deepened by their glimpses of the revered figure so long a center for our loyalties.

He is gone; and with his going there ends for us an era. No record can replace that living presence. But his memory will be to us a perpetual benediction.

Source: Records, p. 1033, January 8, 1919.

Retired: June, 1885. Fac. Rec. B. pps. 112, ...