

THE CELEBRATION BY THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
OF THE TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
BIRTH OF LINNAEUS.

GUY WEST WILSON.

The two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Linnaeus, the great Swedish naturalist whom we regard as the father of modern biology, was fittingly commemorated by the New York Academy of Sciences. For some time the officials of that organization had been perfecting plans for the observance of this anniversary. Perhaps few other societies in America have at their command the resources for a celebration which would parallel this one, as the New York Academy has affiliated with it all the learned societies of the Greater City and has at its disposal for such an occasion the magnificent museums of the metropolis. It accordingly gave me no small pleasure to receive the honor which the president of the Indiana Academy of Science conferred upon me in asking me to represent this body at these exercises.

At 9:30 a. m. of the 23d of May the delegates from numerous American and foreign societies and institutions met in the trustees' room of the American Museum of Natural History, and, in company with the officers of the New York Academy, proceeded in a body to the lecture room where the initial meeting was held. About three-quarters of an hour was devoted to the reading of communications from the societies whose delegates were present, and from a few noted foreign societies which were not represented. These communications covered a wide range of topics, extending from greetings from the various societies through outlines of the character of their work and eulogies to the memory of Linnaeus to monographic considerations of some phase of the work of Linnaeus. Of these last may be mentioned the papers presented by the representatives of the Brooklyn Entomological Society and of the Maryland Academy of Science. The first of these related to the entomological work of Linnaeus and its relation to American entomology, while the second was a learned and interesting discussion of Linnaeus and the flora of Maryland. This part of the program was followed

by a learned address by Dr. T. A. Allen of New York on "Linnaeus and American Zoology," which forms a most valuable contribution to the history of zoology.

At the close of these exercises the delegates proceeded in a body to "La Hermitage," a quaint little French hotel in the Borough of the Bronx near the New York Botanical Garden. Here the party was joined by the Swedish Minister to America and the members of the Swedish Legation in New York City. After dining together the party returned to the lecture room in the Museum building of the New York Botanical Garden. The first address of the afternoon, "Linnaeus and American Botany," was delivered by Dr. P. A. Rydberg, a fellow countryman of Linnaeus. This address dealt in a masterly and interesting manner with the sources of Linnaeus' information concerning American plants, closing with a discussion of the genus *Linnaea* which was at first supposed to contain a single species, but to which subsequent exploration and study added two others. To these a fourth was added from Arctic America. The second and closing address of the afternoon was delivered by Dr. H. H. Rusby on the "Flowers of North American plants known to Linnaeus." This lecture was made doubly interesting by the fine display of lantern slides by which it was accompanied. These belonged to the Van Brunt collection of the Botanical Garden, which is one of the finest and most complete collections of hand painted lantern slides of American plants.

After these exercises a walk of about three-quarters of a mile through the magnificent natural forest of Bronx Park brought the party to the Linnaean bridge on Pelham Parkway. The party was conducted by Dr. W. A. Merrill, who pointed out a number of characteristic American trees known to Linnaeus. At the bridge a tablet to the memory of Linnaeus was unveiled. Appropriate addresses were made by several persons of note and the key to the tablet which contained various articles of scientific interest was given to the New York Historical Society for safe keeping until the 23d of May, 1957, when another anniversary celebration is to be held and the contents of the tablet examined. The members of the staff of the New York Zoological Garden then conducted the party through their grounds, showing the collections with especial reference to the American animals known to Linnaeus.

The evening program consisted of a reception at the Aquarium in Battery Park and of a series of addresses at the Brooklyn Museum of Arts

and Sciences. The first of these was of great interest as it was the first occasion upon which this magnificent collection had been viewed at night. It was also the centennial of the building which has seen a varied career of fort, amusement place, emigrant landing and repository of scientific collections. The second part of the program was taken up with several addresses, but three of which need to be mentioned. The first was by Professor E. L. Morris on the "Life of Linnaeus," and was pronounced by his hearers a masterpiece of biography. This was followed by an address upon "Linnaeus and American Natural History," by Dr. F. A. Lucas who treated his subject in a most interesting manner. The program was closed by a talk by Dr. T. A. Grout on the "Plants and Animals Known to Linnaeus," which was profusely illustrated by lantern slides.

Another feature of great interest in connection with this celebration was the series of exhibits of objects of American natural history known to Linnaeus. At the American Museum of Natural History extensive exhibits were arranged to show the American animals and the rocks and minerals known to Linnaeus and arranged according to his system of classification, a full explanation of which accompanied the exhibit. At the New York Botanical Garden there was a large collection of American plants known to Linnaeus and arranged according to his system of classification. Accompanying this exhibit was a very complete set of the botanical works of Linnaeus and a very fine series of portraits of him. Enjoyable and profitable as were all the other features of this celebration these exhibits and the lectures by Dr. Busby and Dr. Grout added much to the value and interest of the celebration and to the delightful remembrances which the delegates carried home with them.

New York City.