

SCIENCE

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MEMOIR OF JOHN SHAW BILLINGS¹

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It has been the custom of the National Academy of Sciences to commemorate in memoirs those whom death has removed from its ranks. Since the lives of men of science are little known except to those engaged in their own lines of research, some record is the more to be desired of one who illustrated the fact that scientific capacity may exist with varied ability for the conduct of large affairs. This combination of talents has been often found in the ranks of the Academy, although in the belief of the public, the man of science is presumed to be incapable of the successful management of commercial business.

The many tasks to which his life of work summoned the subject of this memoir have become, since his death, for the first time so widely known that it is unnecessary for me to do more than to put on paper a brief summary of his career and the reasons for his election to this distinguished body of men of science, where from 1887 to 1889 he rendered efficient service as our treasurer and served on eight important committees or as a member of our council. The life of our fellow member, in fact, needs less restatement from us, because since he died at least a half dozen men of importance have recorded their opinions of this attractive and much-loved man and of what he effected during his ever-busy existence. Moreover, a full and competent biography has been undertaken, and will, I am sure, do ample justice to one who owed nothing to newspaper notoriety. Through his mod-

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