

Botanic garden, April 20th '56

My dear Mr. Lowell, I am afraid when you read my letter you bid me stick to my needle & not meddle with matters I am ~~too~~ ignorant of. But if you could only know how much I have the subject at heart I am sure you would have patience with me! —

I am so anxious to have something done for our poor garden! I have waited & waited hoping other hands might take it up, but seeing nothing done I venture at last to appeal to you, knowing how much interest you take in Botany, & how much your father was interested in the establishment of the garden, & seeing something cannot be done & leave this the only Botanic garden in the United States on a better footing.

It is so miserably poor! All that can be done year after year is barely keep it in order; & that is a happy year when by the fortunate selling of some plants the income is eked out so that the capital is not encroached upon. — The fence is falling to pieces & it is a regular business after every high wind to go round & bolster up the fallen pieces. The green house wants a thorough rebuilding, & is scarcely worth the repairs it needs every

year. And yet one must say fence & green-house have done good duty when they have stood the same 45 years. That was a sufficient fund so many years ago it is easily seen is but a pittance now -

Just now seems an appropriate time to do some-
thing, for Dr. Gray has changed gardeners, & has an enter-
prising young man, a Swiss, educated in Botanical
Gardens abroad, who is better qualified to manage the
garden botanically than anyone before. And the City
are going to widen the street at the end of the garden
& take off quite a slice, obliging us to move the
gardener's house & rebuild the fence on that side.

The land that lies behind the screen has never been cultivated, but has some fine trees upon it & would make a charming arborescence were there only means

I confess too independently of the actual starving necessities, an ambitious plan floats in my head. The land opposite us & adjoining the Observatory is for sale. If those gentlemen who are so much interested in the Observatory would only buy it! Part of the Observatory grounds are already under Dr. Gray's care, & if these could be added & the Bot. Soc. could afford to take it in charge, we might have a garden & grounds of which Boston might justly be proud, & for which posterity might thank the present generation! Instead of confessing that in all the vast territory of the United States, with such a magnificent flora, the only Botanic garden can barely keep 3 1/2 acres in cultivation! And is almost dying of inanition. I cannot but feel people would be interested & ready to give if only they knew the facts & it were brought before them; and it is this, dear Mrs. Lowell, that emboldens me to address you, & ask you if some steps cannot be taken to preserve our living beauties & treasures—



Gray, Jane Loring. 1856. "Gray, Jane Apr. 20, 1856 [to J. A. Lowell]." *Asa Gray correspondence*

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