

Dear Prof

W. Point, May 23, 1857

I send by Express to day some plants which I received yesterday from R. Far West, Believing that they will be made more of in your hands than in mine, I turn them over to you. A pretty pot a full grown *Cereus giganteus* will be, if you get it to flourish! Please acknowledge receipt of the box. I copy below the account furnished by Lt. Tidball, U. S. Army of the plants he sends, viz

"The plant marked *Cereus giganteus* is found in no other place in the world than upon a strip of country near but not exactly upon the "Colorado Grande" extending from about the 35th° down into Sonora Mexico. It is very abundant there and grows to the enormous height of 60 ft. but I measured none over 45 ft. As a general thing it grows up in a single straight stalk resembling a fluted column in architecture but it often has branches; very often quite a number of them springing from the main stem, quite small at the point of attachment, gradually swelling and curving until they stand upward when they resemble in every respect, even in size, the main stem.

They often present the appearance of immense candlesticks which we see in scriptural pictures. The plant is quite small at the root & gradually swelling out until about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way when they again diminish to the top which is rounded, being the focus of the ribs which run straight up the stalk.

The whole plant is covered with strong sharp spines growing in bunches along the edge of the ridges upon the outside. I know nothing of its flower or fruit, except that

the latter is used as food by the Indians - The other
Cactus is called "Wislenius" after Dr W. who first
described and found it upon the Gila. It grows only
about 3 or 4 feet high and the spines are flat
and crooked. The plant marked Focierii [sic]
grows from 6 to 20 ft high - It springs up from
the root in a number of straight rods without
limbs but covered with sharp spines - It is said to
have a pretty flower - The smooth barked *Acacia*
(which is not an *Acacia* at all) is quite interesting in
appearance growing in a bush from 5 to 20 ft high

The bark is perfectly smooth & is a bright emerald
green. It is really a nurse and protector to the young
Cactaceae which on account of the dryness and
rocky character of the soil spring up in the shade
and decomposed limbs & leaves about the root of the
"*Acacia*", but when the ungilded youngster grows up
strong enough to take care of itself, it kills its maternal
protector, by greedily absorbing all the nourishment from
the roots or by some other unknown cause

The "*Yucca*" is an interesting plant growing 40 to
50 ft high. All these plants grow in a granite
and drift formation but exceedingly dry and barren

spring from crevices in the rocks & any place where
a hold can be obtained for the roots "

So far in Teddallian words - For myself I
now say I hope that these plants may be interesting
to you even if you do not succeed in making them
grow, but if you do succeed I shall be greatly
pleased to behold them flourishing under your auspices.

Yours with kind regard

J. W. Bailey

Prof. Asa Gray

Cambridge
Mass.



Bailey, Jacob Whitman. 1854. "Bailey, Jacob W. May 23, 1854." *Asa Gray correspondence*

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