

me to do it but I really cannot go into it
just now - I am so full of General L.
I cannot write off a review at once!
must have time to study and think
over a subject - each of my Presidential
addresses was the work of about three
months and I am now getting very old
as well as out of the way of that sort of
work - though I retain my health better
than I ought to expect on entering my
eightieth year

Ever yours sincerely
George Bentham

29 Wilton Place
London SW
Nov 1/79

My dear Gray

I feel much obliged to Dr
Engelmann for his last communication
enclosed in yours of the 18th Oct. It has saved
me from what I must own was a blot in
my arrangement of Coriifera and places Regium
and other stages in a much better situation
among Taxodicea. I had not examined them
young enough. I now see that in both genera
the ovules are essentially erect but only become
more or less reversed as they grow into seed
grain when you write to him thank
Engelmann for me - I am getting lazier for
writing more letters than I can help and am
now absorbed in Orchidaceae - that is to say
three or four days in the week for the other
three or two are entirely taken up with
revising and checking the references of the
proofs of Gen. Pl. - In Orchidaceae I wish

I had some one to whom I could apply as I
did to Engelmann about *Crifera* but there
is no one now who knows much about
Orchids except Reichenbach - He knows them
thoroughly and has a splendid collection
of them - but I cannot call in his assistance
with his crabbed temper without risking
a quarrel which I should much regret.

I do not agree with some of his indications
of generic union and separation and he
generally does not commit himself to any
generic characters - his labors are chiefly
species especially horticultural species.
We have Lindley's *Orchid herb.arium* and
notes which are most valuable but he
unfortunately often took his generic
characters from a single examination of
a single species - and that sometimes of an
abnormal one as for instance his generic
character of *Masdevallia* is taken from
his *M. penetrata* which is a *Pleurothallis*.

With regard to one of your *M. American*
ones there is a curious 'jumble' *Microstylis*
is scarcely generically distinct from *Malaxis*
paleodora now regarded as the typical
Malaxis and probably Nuttall established his
genus under the idea that *Liparis* was the
typical *Malaxis* - the *M. paleodora* and
Microstylis have not the operculum another
supposed to be characteristic of *Malaxideae*
but are quite exceptional in their antler so
beautifully described by Darwin. I mention
this to you because I should like you to
examine Nuttall's *Microstylis* in a fresh state.
Reichenbach made a curious mistake in
reducing *Ophrys* to *Malaxis* from which
it differs more even than *Liparis* in habit
as well as character.

We are all much pleased with your
new textbook and if we have not yet
reviewed it it is really for want of time.
Hooker is overwhelmed with work and other



Bentham, George. 1879. "Bentham, George Nov. 1, 1879." *George Bentham letters to Asa Gray*

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/226393>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/261260>

Holding Institution

Harvard University Botany Libraries

Sponsored by

Arcadia 19th Century Collections Digitization/Harvard Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The Library considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection

License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.