

926 Grant Ave
Rockford Ills
Feb 4th / 96

Dear Dr Watson:—

There can be but one opinion about the looks of the new book: the perfect letter-press, the neatly arranged pages and the very careful proof-reading are apparent at a glance and above criticism. But I could not be content with just looking at a new edition of the Manual. And yet under the circumstances had it been almost any other book imaginable I fear I should not only have been perfectly content with a look—but even the sight of the wrapper would have sufficed. The grip has got me down.

and if even my poor drunkard
getting over the effects of a hard
spell has more of dizziness and nausea
debility and frontal headache I should
think a single experience would be
enough to lead to reformation for life.

But it is not once a year, nor once
in ten years, that we have the
pleasure of cutting the pages of a
new ed. of Gray's Manual! So Mattie
hauled a big stuffed chair up to
the window for me. I got up from
the lounge and settled myself in it.
and then stopped for a little while to
get my breath and think. Now then -
old fellow - said I to my self - prepare to
be overwhelmed with confusion! Of
late years you have been digging in
a little paddock, not stopping often
to look over the fence to see what
the world's workers have been
about in the broad fields beyond,

and in so doing fix in my mind
the later nomenclature &c Baileys
Carex evinces a firm touch and
evenness of treatment throughout
which is a great improvement over the
'Cuspectus' of a few years ago.

If I have any fault at all to
find with the excellent work of both
yourself and Prof Coulter it is that
you carry brevity of statement to
an objectionable extreme. For instance
a group of species are known to inter-
grade in the most confusing way.
Yet these species will be defined at
their centres where they are most
unlike as tersely as possible and
no words wasted to say that this is
a treatment by bold strokes and
does not faithfully report nature. As
a consequence the young student
finds a plant that agrees about as
well (or ill) with one description as

You have read meanwhile a pretty
steady stream of memoirs - papers &
magazine articles in which pretty
much every thing has been turned
to the end to and upside down
and left in a toss until in the
weakness and laziness of old age
you have given up trying to "keep
abreast with modern thought". The chances
are you will not be able to tell a
Greys Manual with all the modern
improvements from a Libra of Instruction!
Then I began cutting the paper -
Why - really! this looks very much
like the old book after all! The
changes are far from being so
formidable as I had anticipated
they readily fit into the old knowl-
edge. and I begin to think that
by & by when I feel stronger I
must post my Barbary to date

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with two or three others and I is naturally
bewildered.

Is not Scirpideya leptostachya
of Engelman - nor frax.

Of course Bottani will take
you the task for not accepting
Hickoria and I shall expect
friend Greene to fairly give you
over as sunk in the depths
of a depraved and Populus
Conservation!

Will this ed of '90 come to
an eager and expectant group of
middle aged botanists such as
welcomed the appearance of the
book of '67. I doubt it! Will it
help to arouse a fresh interest
in breezy out. of door botany. I
hope it may! It is very suggestive
of the present trend of school education
to find in our high schools a

Botanical Laboratory, ^{and} next door to
Gymnasium - Every thing, nothing
four walls!

Yours very truly
Dr. L. B. B.



Bebb, M. S. 1890. "Bebb, Michael S. Feb. 4, 1890 [to S. Watson]." *Michael Schuck Bebb letters to Asa Gray*

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