

Gift of Susan Loring June 27, 1984

Cambridge Aug 29th 1880

My dear Mr. Agassiz,

In accordance with your desire I have sought Professor Farlow and I have had a conversation with him, drawing out the whole state of his mind and the bottom of his discontent. As I, in his place, should certainly feel hurt, I can make his view quite clear to you; at the same time I can see - not that he ought ^{not} to feel so, but that there need not be any ground for it. The conversation which we had on Thursday does away with the necessity of going over the ground. I find, in short, that Prof. Farlow is not hurt because he has to live, as Professor, for a time, on less salary than he received as Assistant Professor - that he agreed to do; - that he is not bickering over a hundred dollars or two, though his salary of last year does not supply his modest wants. I find that he has no thought that the Corporation have done or would ever do him the least intentional injustice. But he suffers acutely from a sense that an apparent indignity has been put upon him, which it is hard to stand under before his friends, especially those outside of the University, and I suppose he is making up his mind as to whether

or not he ought to remain in a trying position.

The troublesome facts in the case are these, The sole reason for assigning^{to} him as Professor a salary less than that of Assistant Professor of the lowest grade, was that the College could not then give any more. I am confident that you agree with me that there was an honorable understanding that this was to be rectified as soon as possible, Now it is no cause of complaint that new professors with good salaries were this year appointed. That is the business of the Corporation, whose wisdom there is no call nor cause to question. But I believe they are younger in College rank than Farlow; they are certainly not ~~more~~ eminent. It is well known from his own statement that one of them ~~at least~~ would have freely accepted a more diminished salary at the start. The spontaneous offer of a portion of this to Dr Farlow would have made him feel that the Corporation appreciated him, and starved him only because it couldn't help it. Even without this, if the President had spoken to Farlow, ~~told~~^{told} him what was done, and assured him, as he assured me, that Farlow as a Professor was a marked success, and deserved encouragement and should be relieved from embarrassment as soon as possible, all might have been well.

At this stage I called upon the President and found that he appeared not to have thought that Farlow's sensibilities might be touched; that he had not then taken into consideration, even if int thought, the good effect which a spontaneous offer of some increase of Farlow's salary would have, as showing some consideration for an embarrassing position.

I urged that he should ask the Corporation to add \$500.-. The President thought \$300.- would do. I have had nothing further to say or do until you spoke to me on Thursday. I have ^{now} since learned, ^{from Farlow} that he had an interview ~~with~~ the President, at the latter's desire; when the matter was talked over, and the President promised to bring Dr. Farlow's request for an increase of \$500.- before the Corporation. The result Farlow has recently heard. Such as it is it cannot be helped for the present; though I will not believe that the Corporation apprehended what the whole thing would mean to Dr Farlow. It is not a question of a miserable \$200.- saved or lost in a bargain. The sum is too insignificant for Farlow and the Corporation to stickle about. A sensitive man, under the circumstances, would say to himself "This means that, at least the

President, whose approbation is so important to a
Professor does not think much either of my position
and feelings or of my value to the University -
might indeed on the whole be glad to be rid of me.
I suppose he is mistaken. But what can the man
think? The alternative is that the Corporation deem
it more important to save \$200.- than they do to
make a professor's position - after one year's excellent
service - as good as it was when assistant Professor.
If Dr. Farlow is unduly sensitive, it must be considered
that he is small in figure; and sensitiveness is apt to
be inversely as the stature; - that he had the misfortune
of some falling out with Professor Stone at the Bussey,
upon a matter in which the latter was completely in the
wrong; and that he has probably never felt sure of the
President's hearty coöperation in his appointment. His
value and importance to us he has had to prove under
considerable difficulties, I take it that he has well
come up to the expectations we had formed of him, both
as ^{an} investigator and as a teacher. I wish he could have
the opportunity of giving his heart and time to the
University free from the embarrassment and worry which,
though of an anxious temperament, he is not wholly to
blame for.

What I venture to suggest is that you - not so much
as a Fellow of the Corporation, as a fellow naturalist

2, copy of a letter to Alexander Agassiz concerning Dr. Farlow.

and scientific associate - should send him an assurance that his services are appreciated, and his natural feelings as to the position he has been put in, are respected and sympathized with. He is the kind of professor that it is desirable to encourage. Those who build up their departments by collections, and by the investigation and publication which gives such collections peculiar value, deserve some consideration. If "they also serve who only stand and wait" during vacation and ~~out~~ of the class room, ^{they} are yet more serviceable who give all their vacations and all their hours to research, collection, and publication. The usefulness of that class of professors does not die with them. Steady and long service is promoted by ^{considerate} ~~considerate~~ appreciation.

On the eve of leaving for a year or more the field of my own labors and the collections which I have brought together - and which are on the verge of three score and ten cannot very confidently expect to come back to, I take pride in knowing that the botanical department is well equipped,

or at least is well-manned, and I trust that its
force may not be diminished. There is nothing to spare;
and we certainly cannot spare one who - though he
has thrown himself into the more elementary part of
instruction with vigor and success, is particularly
adapted to that more graduate or more advanced teaching
which the University is now anxious to develop. Stan-
low's bent and training particularly adapt him to this.

If, after all, the difficulty is really one
respecting \$200.-, the botanical department cannot admit
allow itself to be crippled for that. I authorize C. W.
Long, 17 Pemberton Square, to pay on my account to
the Treasurer \$100.- on the 1st Dec prox, and another
\$100.- in August 1881, if called for, for aid in botanical
instruction, asking the Treasurer, however, to arrange that
neither my nor any name appears. Perhaps you ought
to know that if I should not return, my will be-
queaths to the Corporation the proceeds of my copyrights &
aid in the maintenance of the Herbarium.

Very sincerely yours

Asa Gray

Copied on Sept 1st
at Dr. Gray's request,
& read by him on this
date -

S. Lyndes



Gray, Asa. 1880. "Gray, Asa Aug. 29, 1880 [to L. Agassiz] [copy]." *Asa Gray correspondence with scientific societies, Harvard College, and University of Michigan*

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