

13 187 [1.]

Recd Apr 27 London, 12th Feb. 1839 (Tuesday)

I shall not apologize, my dearest friend, for the haste in which my last parcel of letters was closed; but only hope that such as they are, they will reach you safely and speedily. They were sent to Liverpool among Mr. Putnam's parcels, where his agent will put them into the letter bag of the ensuing packet. They were closed on Monday, and I have very little to say of myself since that time. I was in some of the bookshops all the early part of the evening; the latter portion was spent in my own room, in looking over a file of American Newspapers as late as Jan. 16. (I did not get the Commercial Advertiser, which I prize most, not perhaps for its intrinsic superiority but because it is the sheet which comes daily under your eyes.)

I was all the morning at Lambert's, working hard among dried specimens, and as Lambert was out part of the day I had the opportunity of going on quietly, without the annoyance of his constant talk. After dinner, which was a bit of lunch taken in my own lodgings, I went down to Bentham's where I remained until 10 o'clock. It is now 11. I am fearful even another day will not see the end of Lambert's collection, and I suspect a week is none too little for the British Museum. Lady Charlotte Bury came in to Lambert's, and had a long chat with him. Such a pair of originals! She is to dine with Lambert on Sunday, but stipulated that she was to be liberated early, as she always made it a point to read Prayers to her servants on Sunday evening! 13th Feb. 9. Wednesday evening.

Rose and breakfasted at eight, which is become my regular practice; started for Lambert's at 10, where I worked incessantly till 5 P.M.; returned to my room; dressed; went to the city, where I dined, and about 8 o'clock arrived at Mr. Hairs, whose microscopical party this evening was given chiefly on my account. Some 8 or more splendid microscopes were in active use when I arrived, and the greater portion of the chief microscopic people was there. I was introduced to Stokes, Solley, Powell, Bouchbank & also Mr. Duckett, whom I knew before, and several amateurs, such as Booth, Bennett, Bentham, Don &c were present. It was a feast to me you may be sure, and I acquired some useful knowledge, and saw some strange things: - the Infusoria in flint, queer fossil wood, which are all the rage here, and are extremely curious, fibro-

cellular tissue, the most beautiful thing you can imagine.

One of the best of the Microscopists, Mr. Downbank, gave me one or two curious microscopical objects, which he had mounted for himself, and made an appointment with me and another friend to meet him on Monday evening next, to examine his microscopes and curious objects more quietly and at large than could be done in a crowd, and to prepare some specimens for myself. I am also to see the Camera lucida attached to the microscope, which I have long been desirous of. Mr. Reade, a gentle man who was invited, but was prevented from attending was so kind as to send me a copy of his paper on the Infusoria and scales of fishes found in flint, with most impressions, which are far superior to those in the Annals of Natural History.

Friday Evening.

I was all the morning yesterday at old Lambeth, but spent the evening, by appointment at Bentham's, looking over Labretia. To-day, all the morning was devoted to plants at the British Museum, and as I stopped on my return to leave my parcel at the Linnean Society for tomorrow. I met Bentham who asked me to come and dine with him, and spent the evening; which I did very willingly. I have been labelling American grasses for him.

The whole winter has been remarkably mild; but this week has been remarkably pleasant and clear; very fair sunshine and as mild as May. I hear there has been a late arrival but have received no letters. I will call on Booth tomorrow, who may have some for me, though he usually sends them at once. Bentham has been giving me plants and information for my continental tour. I can't stick free much longer, but must be in France or on the way by the first of March. Bentham, without saying anything to me about it or without solicitation on my part, has been making arrangements to get me the necessary orders for attending the House of Lords, at the Commemoration at the first interesting night. Perhaps I had forgotten to say that I received a letter from Hooker some time since, with thanks from Lady A. for the copy of Cisticus mar.

I think I have been out of the mor almost long enough, and would be glad to get back again. I live in hope; which I trust will not be very long deferred. Bon soir.

Saturday Evening, 18th Feb.

Passed the morning at the Linnean Society, where I made a commencement with the examination of the herbarium of Linnaeus, called the Brölle; saw Mr. B. No letters from home. Went to the city, got a late file of Norfolk Newspapers. Mr. Putnam returned with me to my lodgings, where we had tea, and arranged business matters &c. - Afterward I read the papers, which contained no remarkable news, which is a good sign, as I may trust all is going on well. I see that the brilliant prospects of the Medical Faculty of the Chancellor's University are sadly belated: - and they have resigned their posts! And a Dr. Clark will not be a Professor yet after all! The time for my journey to the Continent draws nigh, and the necessary arrangements occupy much of my thoughts, while at the same I fear I shall have to work extremely hard to accomplish what I ought to have done before I leave, as I have only next week, and the week after.

Tuesday Evening, Feb. 19th 1839.

Three days have passed since I have written a line for you. This suspension was occasioned by my late hours last night. After spending the morning at the Horticultural Society, then going into the city where I dined, then went far out on the Midland Road to deliver a letter entrusted to me by Mr. Satchard; then returning as far as the Bank I went again, partly by Omnibus, and partly on my legs, almost as far as the Northern Substant of the town, to spend an evening with Mr. Downbank, one of the best Microscopists in London, and own the best microscope. I found so much to see that I did not get away until past 12, and then I had a walk before me almost the whole length of London, - from New North Road to Charing Cross. I had an opportunity of seeing what was especially promised me, the Camera lucida applied to the Microscope; an invaluable invention for an awkward person like me, as I am convinced I could with a very little practice turn out very fair outline sketches of objects I might be examining. I acquired much information upon various subjects, saw some most curious and unique specimens of Vegetable structure &c, and particularly of fossil fruits of which Mr. D. possesses an invaluable collection! Capons, which we broke open, and examined not only the seed, with its testa, raphe, and funiculus, but even the pulp which surrounded it! I looked at many of his specimens of recent and fossil wood, at his unrivalled cabinet of British fossils, and what our party broke up. There was still so much left that we made an appointment for another evening.

I was exceedingly gratified yesterday at being enabled to discover, as I suppose, the address of Caroline Baker's father. I have enquired diligently for Burnett's Inn, but with no success, as you know. I find, however the address of "Richard George Baker, No. 5. Barnard's Inn, Holborn", and this I suspect is the person, and I have so arranged my affairs as to call tomorrow upon this person, and make the necessary enquiries, and if my surmises are confirmed I shall deliver the letter, obtaining at the same time all the information I well can.

I have been this morning at the British Museum, but left early, and attended a meeting of the Horticultural Society to thank Mr. Fraser for the loan of Walter's Herbarium. There was a very beautiful show of flowers to-day, finer than I ever saw in America, and I coveted not a few for your sake. I went to dine with Bartham, as we had arranged, and had an hour or two before dinner, after which, Mr. B. Mr. Brydges and myself went to the Linnean Society. The President, the Bishop of Norwich was in the chair, an amiable old gentleman. Booth, Garrell, Ward, Royle, Foster et multis aliis were present. Mr. Foster invited Dr. Booth and myself to fix a day to visit him at his residence, some miles in the country, and dine with him. He is greatly esteemed and is said to be one of the most kind-hearted and benevolent of men. I am now engaged I believe for every day and evening of this week and half of the next, and am busy enough I assure you. I received on Saturday a very kind letter from Hooker. I see I have forgotten to speak of Sunday and have little room left. I went to St. Sepulchre in the morning to hear the Rev. Mr. Melville, who is thought very highly of indeed. The church was crammed. The sermon was sound and truly evangelical, but I was a little disappointed. It was not equal to Mr. Noel. The text was Matthew 14:1-2, and the corresponding verses in Mark: the subject, the power of conscience. In the afternoon I heard a different person from what I expected in St. Margaret's; the text, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die; but the discourse was meagre and unsatisfactory. I did not go out in the evening. It is now nearly half past one and I must break off. Adieu chere amie. It is about 10 o'clock with you, and you are I venture to say still awake: perhaps thinking of your distant, but near, ever near friend and letter.



Gray, Asa. 1839. "Gray, Asa Feb. 12, 1839 [to Torrey]." *Asa and Jane Gray travel correspondence*

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/225927>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/262562>

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>.