

Amund. Sept. 11

Chontera July 9th 1857

Dear Doctor

I have been thinking some time of writing to you but have put it off lest a letter directed to Cambridge might anticipate your return from Europe and being forwarded might arrive there too late. Your last letter now a very old one one placed your return in July or August and I have no intelligence from Dr Gorcey or Prof. Henry of your intentions - whether you will hasten or delay your return I have been here now fifteen days - long enough you will think perhaps - to have made something of a collection of plants & yet I have secured less than twenty species deducting a few *Cactaceae* sent to Dr Engelmann.

A friend who came here when I did on my former tour tells me that ~~no~~ no rain worth mentioning has fallen since his arrival. Hence every thing but the *Cactaceae* and hardy shrubbery is dried up & manifests but faint signs of vitality. I made one excursion to the mountains which yielded me nothing but *Cactaceae*. In the river bottom I find a *Ranunculus* of which I find no description. Today I found a *Potamogeton* probably *P. pectinatus*.

I have been till within a few days in a state of uncertainty whether I would be officially attached to the Boundary Commission or not. Now however I have received my appointment with a salary of \$500 per ann. & one ration I labored hard on my way out here - yet collected but 575 sp. including the usual proportion of duplicates. The route to the Pecos presented a pretty flourishing vegetation - but when we reached the *Tempe* which before furnished me with so great a variety of plants we found it perfectly ^{arid} ~~arid~~ a fire had swept over the whole country to the very summit of the mountains & I found only occasionally a plant worthy of notice. The same parching drought had extended to this place & how much beyond I do not know. In the valley of the R. Grande I found a very scant vegetation. What I collected I have remitted to you - I ^{procured} ~~collected~~ but few seeds for the same reasons that my collection ^{of specimens} is small. The seeds I could not well send and my plants owing to a want of time are imperfectly put up - yet I hope they will reach you without damage.

Dr. Short advanced me one hundred dollars I was for some time undecided whether to return it or not owing to the uncertainty of my position with Col. Graham's party. If I received no salary I would perhaps need it and now that

My doubts are solved ^{it} is not easy safely to presume. If I were assured that a set of my plants would be turned over to Dr. Hooker I would have no scruples on the subject. But ^{them} ~~belong~~ ^{is} very desirable that some of my plants should fall into the hands of other botanists than yourself and be published without any credit being given to the Boundary Commission. He was hardly willing to send the Liliaceae to Dr. Engelmann until I assured him that you would turn them over to him. He even doubted your claim to reputation as a botanist because you would not undertake the elaboration of all the Natural Orders. I thought therefore I said it first at least secured him by showing him that other well-known botanists did the same. I drew down what instructions he may give you relative to the ultimate ownership of the collection - I still have a claim on them I want you to reserve a set for Dr. Hooker at least. I suppose you will turn over a set to Smith, Esq. He spoke of sending a set to some scientific institution at Paris. Very well. There will then be some left and as he knows nothing of the number of specimens it will be easy to reserve some for me. This principal crush seems to be to preserve the collection in its original integrity till they are published and all due glory rests on him as head of the Scientific Corps of the Boundary Commission. If I can be assured that I will derive some benefit from my labors I will continue to collect as heretofore but if I can have no claim on the collection I shall use no very strenuous exertions to glorify him (Hooker) or others. My salary is small and my expenses considerable. Besides, unlike his this assistant who furnished nothing to the expedition I find my own horse my own paper & botanizing materials and have hardly assisted Mr. Clark the zoologist. What I have already collected within the space of two months are worth nearly or quite the whole year's salary. It is therefore reasonable that I should reap a considerable profit from the disposal of the specimens. I said above that I had collected but few seeds. I made up a small package for my sister which I sent to your care by a gentleman from Boston returning home. I might perhaps have sent the whole by him but had not time to look them over before he left. ^{and especially some of my Liliaceae} though I was able to send by Express a small package to overtake him. I was afraid if I sent them all to you my sister would get none of them. I am gathering a few seeds of Liliaceae which

are the only ones now procurable. July 12 For the last few days we have had light drizzling rains in the afternoon - taken of the commencement of the rainy season - and the shower of yesterday very gentle and moderate continued far into the night. This morning damp clouds were rolling over the brow of the mountain which forms our horizon on the east and borne by the easterly wind were thrown over towards the valley of the river when we are - but they disappeared before effecting any considerable ascent. These mountains are reported to be six miles distant though they often appear to be no more than two or three.

Considerably more than a year ago I sent a respectable collection of mosses & lichens & fungi to Dr. Torrey to be distributed about to Buckenman, Sullivant &c. - but the catalogue of localities I sent directly to Sullivant. Of the mosses contained in the package or its value I have heard not one word. Now I am not going to be treated in any such way. If I send packages of plants I want to receive at least a "thank you letter". When I shall hear something of a satisfactory nature from that collection I will be ready to make another. For this reason I did nothing with the crypt. last winter. The coming season for those plants I shall be in a new region and if any thing new or interesting should offer I will save it though I shall give myself no great trouble about it. I hope you will give me some satisfaction on this subject if you can obtain any intelligence from the gentlemen who have those crypts. I hope also you will take some pains to supply me with such lists of the plants of the region. I am about to traverse as you can perceive I write to Dr. Torrey particularly about it. I see in the few books which I have, references to papers published in scientific journals containing descriptions of the plants of the Western prairie, California, the Gila, New Mexico &c. by Nathall Torrey. Dr. Such papers would be very useful to me who now have before me the prospect of a residence in the wilderness of two years or more. Any thing for me should be sent "via Independence & Santa Fe" if possible between which is now established a monthly or semi-monthly mail and from the latter place it will be easy to get our letter & other things.

There are no mail arrangements between San Antonio & El Paso but only a private express hired by individuals and unless express arrangements are made with him our letters will still lie in the office at San Antonio.

We continue to have (July 14) light showers and I hope vegetation may so far revive during the summer & autumn that I may make a pretty collection of plants yth Write to me as soon as possible

Yours sincerely

Charles Wright

P.S. Direct your letters to me "care of Col. J. D. Graham El Paso" "via Independence" Mo.

C7r



Wright, Charles. 1851. "Wright, Charles July 9, 1851." *Charles Wright correspondence with Asa Gray*

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/257972>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/276886>

Holding Institution

Harvard University Botany Libraries

Sponsored by

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Copyright & Reuse

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

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>.