

U.S. Ship Vincennes

Hong Kong April 9th/54

My Dear Dr.

I am afraid you would accuse me of neglect or I believe I would even now keep silence if failing to write may be so considered I have but little of interest to communicate and if I were once under way at growing to which we are all much addicted just now I fear I should give you an overdose so I shall endeavor to give you as meager account as possible of the disagreeables which we experience Mr Storer has promised to see you and give you at length a version of the incidents of the voyage up to the present time

I will & must confess that thus far I am disappointed but not discouraged & hope for better times in future I have before written I think that not one of the regular officers takes the least interest in any branch of Nat. Hist and Mr Stimpson at the start rode his hobby too hard Hence all our messmates delight in picking at him He appears to think (and appears amazed that others do not see through his specs) that no branch of Nat. Hist is so worthy of study as marine worms and almost goes into ecstasies at times over an ^{really} ~~almost~~ shapeless mass of jelly or some ugly worm that any one else would shudder to touch

But to return to my subject When I left the Cape I was in good spirits and hardly dreamed of going to China without collecting ^{anything} for what I picked up about Sydney I count next to nothing It was very vexatious in passing across the whole breadth of the trade zone to be in sight of land every few days yet never set foot on it Had our Chief started with the predetermination to tantalise us as much

as possible he could not have accomplished his end more perfectly. More than once when close to land orders were given & cheerfully obeyed to raise up the cable and get ready to anchor. Soon however I began to put no trust in appearances. In fact we long since have given up any calculation about the future. When we are going where we are going come to be matters of a little calculation or consideration as if one were a hundred years distant and the other the circumference of the globe. We have no more idea what part of the earth or ocean we are next to visit than if we were brutes. This may all be well enough but I can't see the wisdom of being so everlasting close.

However we are anchored in the harbor of Hong Kong and I enjoy some opportunities of botanizing on a little island the flora of which has been known for many years. It has for a most villainous climate. In the first few days it was tolerable and we had more vines seen than elsewhere. But now the rainy season has set in but we get it in more fog and clouds than rain. Day after day the clouds hang heavily over the mountains descending at times nearly to the sea level making every thing damp and giving to the whole a foreboding nature a most gloomy appearance. I have made two or three ascents to the mountain tops and it is no easy task to accomplish for they are the steepest that I ever had the pleasure and the toil of climbing. ^{the vegetation} ~~the vegetation~~ is fern. I have found some old fossiliferous rocks or at least the near kindred of those so well known in our own country. One violet, one daisy and two or three *Antirrhinum*, *Lychnis viscaria*, *Xanthoxylum*, *Hyppocrepis*, *Euphorbia*, a few *Orchids*, a *Lychnis* &c. recall the vegetation of our own country while the *Dischidraceae*, *Ficus* & others show the subtropical character of the flora.

Very few facilities are offered us naturalists. Since we left the Cape of Good Hope we have had no advantage of ship's boat to go

on shore. At Sydney, we went ashore (when we had a chance) in a hired boat and this went as seldom as most times, most inconvenient ones for me either too late or too early. Here much the same here I can leave the ship at any time of the day by paying my own expenses which however here are not heavy though now the more just to fall upon one who wants to be doing his duty. The wardroom mess has a boat of their own (that is a hired one) which passes between the ship and shore at certain fixed hours. Yesterday it was doctor's ship's duty when we stood upon our privilege and refused that service to him who has control of six ships boats. It would be useless for me to attempt a description of the state of feeling existing between the Head and his subordinates and what is more extraordinary denying attending to the Purpoise where it is much more bitter than with us. Pity that a man who can be ~~so~~ so much a gentleman has not the will or ability to converse or ^{of} ~~of~~ the fear I do him injurious for personally I have been treated much better than most of the officers. I have but little to complain of but my removal to this ship which he had a perfect right to order. But it has certainly crippled my execution while it increased my expenses and diminished my freedom. Mr. Storer will be able to tell you in a very short time what it would be any thing but pleasant for me to write and what it would require some space and time to make clear.

My collection will be stored here when we leave Hong Kong. I know not when they will reach the U.S. I know not. Simpson was anxious to send home description of new species but the Commandant refused. Poor fellow he had written out a dozen or more pages (perhaps sheets) of manuscript and was ordered to rewrite the whole of it because it was not on paper of the

of a quality
exact size, to please him That is a specimen of badwalader
Ringgold One thing I have observed that according to the old
saying, "give an inch take an ell" or "the more you do the more
you may do" those who have been most obsequious have
smartered for it Those who have acted most independently -
have not bootlicked - have suffered least I have kept
aloof from him I never go near him except when I am
sent for which does not often happen I will relate one
little occurrence We spoke the Flying jist from California - an
officer was sent on board for papers and a few vegetables - The
capt gave this officer a paper to put in his pocket while he
sent a large bundle to the boat. The officer learning something
of importance to communicate to the boat, & not wishing to
trust to his memory made a minute of it on said paper
and when he returned on board pulled the paper from his pocket
to read the memorandum when the paper was taken from him
and never returned - and this on the quarterdeck in the presence
of several officers That one act taken in connection with his
other conduct on the occasion damned him in my estimation
No more of that subject I received today the Sept No. of Silli-
man's Journal I hope to get the others as well as letters from you
in a day or two when the mail arrives from Singapore when
some of my letters were directed.

Please write as often as you have anything of interest to com-
municate Your letters are always acceptable Continue to direct
to Hong Kong for nine months or a year from the present
time

My best regards to Mr. G. I remember me to Dr. Govey & family
also any other friends of mine with whom you have correspondence

I am very truly

Yours Charles Wright



Wright, Charles. 1854. "Wright, Charles Apr. 9, 1854." *Charles Wright correspondence with Asa Gray*

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

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/276904>

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>.