

W. Ship Orucennes
Hong Kong Aug. 12th 1854

My Dear Dr

Yours of July 19 found me last night absorbed in a portfolio of plants which I had just climbed the mountains to collect. I stole time however to read it at the risk of being obliged to let a portion of them lie over till today. I had become a little mulish at not hearing from you for so long a time and it is now well nigh four months since the date of my last to you and yet I gave you more credit than it seems you deserve. I did believe you had written and that your letters had miscarried as I know some that I should have received from home have not made their appearance. I have the most implicit confidence in the frequency and regularity of with which letters are sent by my brother and yet I have received but two since leaving the Co. I have guessed at every probable and improbable reason why two of the first written should have reached the place of their destination and all subsequent ones for the last four or five months should have failed or been delayed. But even so it is whatever may be the cause. I am glad the money matter turn out so well. I had begun to feel a slight uneasiness (quite groundless however I could not but admit) about the money sent by Mr. Ames. Had my brother's letters arrived he would not be likely to know any thing about it and not getting any letters from you or Baird or Mr Ames who alone would be likely to know of the circumstances I perhaps naturally felt a little uneasy about a ~~sum~~ ^{without security} of money entrusted to a man with whom I had been

at that rate Mr Desilver says I overpay them and spoil them
for others who may want their services Then another shilling
for boat hire which I don't always have to pay often finding
the ship's boat at the landing completes my daily expenses
Often I don't get a coolie but carry my portfolio myself
especially if I intend to take only a short ramble Nei
ther do I by any means go out every day - twice a week
would be probably near the truth Occasionally I send my
assistant when I generally give him a little money to buy
his dinner or to pay his boat hire - but this is not quite
so profitably spent as when I do it myself Then my liquors
don't cost me much I find them of the best quality on
shore and in the greatest abundance What I save from lux-
ury I don't consider misspent if given to science My bus-
iness and the manner in which I conduct it agree ad-
mirably with my health With the exception of a light in-
termittent fever of ~~four~~ five days continuance when we lay
at Whampoa recently I have been perfectly well since I
left our own land I have been frequently warned by our
countrymen here not to go out in the sun I answer that
I trust to Providence temperance exercise and a good
constitution and if with these to back me I take sick I
throw the responsibility on the Doctor whom I will help all
I can in effecting a cure Hong Kong has a bad reputa-
tion for its effect on health chargeable as usual on the
climate But I don't wonder that folks die who glutton-
ize and guzzle liquors and take exercise in a sedan such
people consider it a great misfortune to lose a dinner yet
I am of a different opinion considering it as the man did
a worthless dog - a good loss - occasionally

*I have found one Proteaceous shrub - either a curiosity for the Northern Tropic

The Commodore for some time back seems to have had his whole attention directed to the protection of American interests at Canton and to his multifarious improvements on board the ship. With these in mind he had but little thought to devote to Nat. Hist. Stimpson for a while hired a boat for dredging but soon the expense became a serious matter as it produced ^{no present ornaments} and the result was a good deal of stink!! (pardon the word) — so he was no longer allowed to hire a boat but at his own expense — and for many weeks he has done little or nothing in his line. I have not done much among the Algae and a while back Stimpson & myself made an exchange — he took the seaweeds and I the insects which we are respectively better able to attend to than if the zoology were strictly assigned to him and the botany to me. So there is a possibility? that I may branch off to entomology when I return to the U.S.

I have become acquainted with one gentleman a citizen of the island who has paid considerable attention to its flora — a Mr ^{de France} ~~de France~~ (a sort of German name) though he is English by birth. He has named for me a number of plants and yet a considerable proportion he was unable to identify from the dried specimens. I went out with him one day and I was brought to think from the little experience that day afforded me that he would not make a very energetic mountaineer. I am inclined to think that among the many specimens collected on the island a very small part of which only I have had means to visit especially as I have a strong proclivity for getting up hill and for snaking it about in ravines and thickets a few novelties at least may turn up. Hereafter I hope I may have opportunities of visiting shores and

islands more likely to afford a greater profusion of new and interesting things I am often asked what particular families I collect which I commonly answer by "everything". So Mr Curtis, Mr Dickermann and Mr Sullivan may feel an interest in my labors. Mr Wand has a kind of taste the antipode of yours a Compositae-phobia - and asked me to determine for him the worst common almost cosmopolitan sp. of Ageratum. The package of books came last night also - the Journal also visits me regularly. For these and all other favors many thanks I shall be obliged to ask you to look out for me generally in such matters for I put little confidence in the size of the cavity I fill in the storehouse of the memory of our good friend Dr Dooley if it is not crowded by other and more important matters to a size less than any assignable quantity as e.g. the Algalists. I must confess however that he did send me from New York to Norfolk the last bot. of South which I supposed I had already bought of Bridges. He seems to have been as parsimonious of his epistolary favors to me as you have - more so indeed as I have not heard from him except through ^{you} and Dr Barry who sent me a short letter some time ago written as he says at your suggestion. He tells me too that Dr Bigelow has not quit quibbling because I did not glorify him enough and that he has enlisted Maj Emory in his cause. I sent him a real blizzard of a letter - if it does awe him I put him in a good humor. I must give him up as incorrigible and let him take it out in growling. You may be interested to know in brief what I have been doing and how I have been able to improve my time

since our arrival here. We arrived about the 20th of November. From that time up to the 11th June I continued busily employed in making excursions on shore to various parts of the north side of the island reaching the top of the mountains & extending my rambles in a few instances a short distance down the other side. During this time I made an excursion of several days to some islands away to the eastward. No day passed that I did not find something unseen before. On the day above mentioned we got under way for Whampoa leaving Dr. Fee lay at the former place till the 16th. In this time I collected what few plants the the constant occupation or cultivation of the land for a thousand of years had suffered to retain their natural form - besides making a flying "visit" to Canton. We reached Hong Kong again the 18th. On the 22nd a sudden calling of the citizens (foreign) of Canton started the ship away again up the river leaving me behind. It would have been a happy thing for me had I been papa to a man. A message however was left me to come in the steamer which was detained by divers causes. We did not get off till about thirty hours after the other ships of the squadron. We started just at night & nearly the next morning came up with the Vincennes at anchor at Whampoa. The Commander soon repaired to the Steamer and she continued on to Canton. Here we vegetated till the 26th July & then got under way for Macao where we lay till the 2nd inst. I made but one botanical excursion here (and my on Cypra island near Macao). From this place we went to Cum-sing-moo a safe harbor where we could ride out in safety a typhoon which now threatens. Here I collected a few things mostly grasses & Cyperaceae. We left Cum-sing-moo on the 6th and anchored again here the next day. I have taken one ramble as I wrote above since my return and find the vegetation changed

Meanwhile Capt Rolando in the Poipoia sent out to rescue
some shipwrecked Chinamen on the Pratas shoals accom-
plished his purpose returning crowded with the miser-
able starving wretches and was refused assistance in
landing them by the authorities of Hong Kong. They could
lionise the officer however for that did not cost them any
bodily exertion but the expenditure of a little breath.
He was next sent out on an anti-piratical expedition in com-
pany with a Portuguese torcha and some boats with their
crews furnished by one of Her Majesty's vessels of war. They
came upon the pirates but from mismanagement or un-
avoidable circumstance they fell too far to leeward to reach
them with their guns, or to prevent them from escaping
which they did in fine style. During the hunt the previous
night Capt R. went reconnoitering in an open boat
with one officer, some men and two or more bottles
of brandy which it seems he fought more persever-
ingly than he did the pirates. In the obscurity of the
night he came very nigh being the catchee and the fight
was kept up till he was "hors du combat" and retreated to the
bottom of the boat while the other officer succeeded in con-
ducting the party back to the brig. His subordinates preferred char-
ges against him offering to withdraw them however if he would
go home. A court-martial is about being organised for the trial
of some deserters and I believe his case is to come before it also.
He was unpopular as first Lieut. of this ship and is well
calculated to be so anywhere. We have a very pleasant mess
since the recent changes my interests have advanced at least 100 p.c.
But I did not dream of spinning so long a yarn. My best wishes to all
Yours sincerely Cha' Wright

P.S. I observe that the Jan. number of Diligence has not yet come to hand though I have thus far ~~March~~ - After
the middle or last of November direct to San Francisco



Wright, Charles. 1854. "Wright, Charles Aug. 12, 1854." *Charles Wright correspondence with Asa Gray*

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