

Monte Verde
May 3^d 1857

Dear D^r

I don't know that I can do better than spend a part of Sunday in holding a little friendly gossip at "long tow" as the marble players say with yourself at Cambridge. I have inflicted on you two or three or more letters from this neighborhood - nevertheless I suppose you will not be displeased with a repetition of the same infliction. I have been on this estate now nearly three weeks and have secured the mass of readily observable things on the various roads & trails within two or three miles of it in different directions. In the early part of the day I go about hatchet in hand and hew down such trees as have flowers & are not of too great size to withstand such a weapon. It rains nearly every day at least in the afternoon & the succeeding morning with the superabundant moisture of the former showers & the succeeding dew the bushes are very wet and the mosses, vines, Tillandsias & dead vegetation retain the moisture and are partially converted into something which when deposited on clothing comes so near to being mud that I might as well call it so. Well this alone even if I do not happen to be caught out in an early shower (which is no uncommon event) makes me so outrageously dirty that if I were to venture into your house in such a plight I don't

how but you would be almost justified in kicking me out
& telling me to go & consort with my proper companions
the swine. If I were to put on clean clothing every day
it would require the constant labor of one washer-woman
to keep me half-decent. This together with the difficulty
of transporting a large supply of raiment just as much
the necessity of starting on my travels in such dress
as the rag-pickers would hardly consider decent - con-
tents if I can retain in the house a change to put on
when I return so that I can appear at table & with
the family in attire that will not quite outrage all de-
cency. And now under these circumstances ~~if~~ you want
me to stay till July or August & to penetrate into the
interior and over the Savannas. Where is your conscience.
You are certainly growing hard-hearted. Moreover in
order to fulfil the wishes of Hooker & yourself I cut vines
and pieces of stems of bushes & ferns & trunks of wood
&c & bind in a load of these on my back so that in front
I ~~can~~ run against bushes & trees & collect the mud
my lower extremities collect it from the puddles in the
road and my back load of sticks deposits it abund-
antly on my back. I shall be able to collect a consid-
erable number of orchids & bromeliads at this place &
I propose to do it within a few days so that they may
go to England in the steamer for June. Such specimens
of wood palm-trees &c ferns &c as I get here I think I
shall send to you which you can divide with Hooker.
Mr Descaillie proposes to go in a few days or about the
middle of the month to another estate ten leagues on
this side of Cuba & situated like this in the mountain. I

intend to go with him. I stay there of two or three weeks
with probably sufficient for the collection of the principal
novelties. I have now no definite plan for my future
movements. This last scheme has broken up my former one
- that of returning to Cuba and gleaning there for a while.
I may do it yet. I am pretty nearly determined however
to get away from here by the last of June or early in July.
It will ~~have~~ depend somewhat on the intelligence I may
receive from Washington. I have written to Bridgman
for information as far as I may be instructed in the
appropriation for Nat. Hist. Bot. Soc. of Simpson.
He can't get hold of it he would sweat it all away as one
acquisition. He has no conscience in putting his fingers
into Uncle Sam's strong box - or he thinks he ought to have
whatever he wants cost what it may in order to do
his work in a certain style without which he thinks it
should not be done at all. I hope then will be some
arrangement by which I may have some sort of control
over a reasonable share of the appropriation if I have
the Botany to work up. I rather dread the job if
I get at it. I shall hurray it off my hands as
soon as I can. And yet I imagine it will be no light
affair. May 5th The last two or three days we
have had but very little rain. Yesterday I went
early in the wood and brought up a very bloody fern
three miles off. As often happens with me I am turned
here just a quadrangle of the circle. The impression my
mind is (though I know better) that South is east & so of the
other points. I never had fog-knowledge and in strange
places often am more or less turned so that it takes a day

firm to remove the erroneous impression & sometimes it is
never removed. Though I lived on the Placer more or less
several years I am turned some 25 degrees in respect
to true courses at that place. It is the ~~the~~ lasting impress-
ion of childhood which was passed in a house my still
cherished home facing the south. And yet it can not be
altogether owing to that for this house is ~~exactly~~ ^{exactly} situated
It must be somewhat owing to the approaches to the
place. At Sta Catalina I was so turned that East ap-
peared north. It is rather curious that some persons
should be subject to such errors. Perhaps it is a defect
in some organ of the brain which Phrenology might
illustrate - I wish it could cure it. The road is so
infernally crooked that no use can be made of a compass
~~for~~ you can hardly travel five minutes without heading
every point of it. 4 P.M. We are just at the close I hope
of a long heavy shower. I went this morning to an
adjoning estate and on the way passed along
the verge of a deep limestone cliff at the base of which
the estate is situated. I picked up some new plants
on the way & intend to return & examine it more care-
fully. It is the resort of bees which makes their hives
in its cavities. Aug 6th Today I spent in collect-
ing orchids Bromeliaceae &c for Hooker. I make out
about seventy packages including some epiphytic
ferns a Gesneraceae & a Rubiaceae and some other ^{exogenous} epi-
phytes together with a few Piperaceae & three or four
terrestrial orchids. I have done it in somewhat of a hurry
as we are making arrangements to go on the 9th
to the other estate whereas when the excursion was first
projected it was fixed for the middle of this month.

May 8th Saltdero I am thus far on my way to my new
botanizing ground It rains nearly all day today The first
light showers overtaking us about half way on our road
to town Tomorrow we make an early start & the next
day reach our destination D.T. I have packed a hog-
head full of living plants for Rew & left it to be shipped
My former remittance is on its way then The paper
you sent is here I doubt whether I shall need any of it
I have found a queer little composite in a single locality
& under circumstances such as to make me suspect
its indigeneity It is a little prostrate thing on a bank by
the roadside with white flowers Capitulum 4-flowered - two
opposite pistillate - the other two staminate or perfect - I
am not certain that I have exactly described it - only I
know that the two pairs (if you can call the opposite flowers such)
are different I don't remember the pappus I have saved but
few specimens & as I passed it today I saw a number of flowers
but I could not stop for them I shall have I hope another
opportunity of getting it

Please send a copy of Dr Baues arctic explorations to
Señor Federico Lescaille Lang Brooks & Co Santiago
de Cuba (Charge to me of course)

Yours truly

Charles Wright



Wright, Charles. 1857. "Wright, Charles May 3, 1857." *Charles Wright correspondence with Asa Gray*

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