

Monte Verde

Dec. 17th 1858

Dear Dr.

This is a rainy day; and in saying this, I do not wish to detract any thing from the days which have preceded it. I believe it has rained more or less every day since my arrival. But the rains were only light, misty ones. Today, the broken clouds, in some way, besides spits of sunshine, manage to afford us quite respectable showers and not far apart. The rain, the care of my plants, and another cause, more serious than either, have kept me in the house. For the last two or three days, I have had a kind of rheumatic lameness in the loins. It hurts me in stooping; makes it painful to lift a heavy weight; & it sometimes comes on me, for an instant, with unusual severity, apparently from a mere change of position, or from some other cause of which I am ~~unaware~~ ignorant. On this account, I have rather favored myself, especially, as I have my duties all pretty well occupied. However, I have collected more or less every day. The first of the harvest will soon be over; and after the first month, a considerable part of the things met with, either in this or other localities, will allow of being passed over by.

You will judge from my exordium that I get but little benefit from direct sunshine in drying my plants. However this want is, in a manner, supplied by having the entire range of the coffee house to spread my papers in & by changing twice or at least once a day, I have succeeded in making my specimens, for the most part, retain a respectable appearance.

half inclined to suspect, that he mistook those miserable
tumble-to-pieces specimens for the ones I had sealed.
He seems to have made them all out very well, with
two or three exceptions; & why he should cry out against
my labor-saving plan, I am at a loss to know. However,
I'll compound with him in this way - by sparing the
flowers, which I was not careful to do before; but
the stems & leaves must feel the fire, unless they yield
readily to paper alone.

22nd At last, we have had a fair day. I would
be unwilling to assert that it has not rained, here;
but I have not seen ^{any}. We have had a clear, sunny day;
& we have improved it - the negroes in drying coffee,
& your humble servant in drying plants. You better
believe, I have made some of them sweat, I have had
on hand, a good while, some hard customers; but,
I, pretty well, used them up today. Orchids, Peppers,
Some ferns, one Rubiac. which I can't make out,
& Phytolaceas, had been bothering me long enough.
The latter are clever Possums. The instant you
gather them, they wilt right down; as much as
to say, "I'll dry up in a minute." But, the hyp-
ocrites - you may change them, day after day,
and they still remain cold, cold, cold. But, today,
I set all my black press board & portfolios at
work, absorbing the solar rays; & if I didn't give
some of them a sweat - then I'm no Yankee. I
think I did the business for about all of them,
unless it be the Rubiac. & one pepper.

I have begun to collect specimens of wood, vines
&c. Now about your wants, in this line. You seemed,
if I remember, more desirous of getting vines &

curious kinds of growth, than simple specimens of wood of all and any kind. These are comparatively easy to obtain; & I shall try to satisfy you in this respect; but when, it comes to cutting down trees, blocking out sections & digging them home, it gets to be hard work; & this, I don't love to do. As Hooker spoke for specimens of wood of all kinds, for a compensation, this last is an additional inducement to me to do what I would naturally for the good of science, if I could bestow upon it the time & labor necessary. If you want duplicates of all these, it will largely increase my labors; & I judge you have no Royal Garden Treasury to draw from, to give me even a small compensation. You may think it is but little more trouble to get two sections of wood than one; but, you will excuse me, if I think I am better qualified than you, to judge of the difference.

We look for Mr. L. home, day after tomorrow. I do but little talking, unless I talk to myself, & I never was very good at that. Mrs. Dalton & myself manage to communicate to each other, at least some of our thoughts by hobbling along, now on a French leg, & now, on a Spanish. We won't, doubtless, have better improve Mr. L.'s absence, but as Mr. Vinet has been here most of the time; & while the French men talk I can do little but listen, getting precious little benefit from that. So, I am most of the time in my room, attending to my plants; or in the woods, looking for new ones. Hence, if I seem to spin a long yarn, out of little or nothing, you must charge it to my

desire for a little gossip, & as I can't get much
of it here, I resort to you. So, if you find it tedious,
you can stick it in the fire & turn it over to some
one who has nothing to do to hunt for the scattering
quains among the chaff.

I am happy to say, that my rheumatic lameness
is very much abated, but not quite gone.

Dec 26. I have been looking over this letter & find
that the first part is almost illegible. It was written
with execrable ink. I wrote to Mr. G. when he went to
Cuba to get some better & then present writing. I think
will show an improvement. I hope you will be able
to make it out for I can't write it over - you know
my weakness!

Mr. G. returned at the time specified, & I now am
able to talk again.

I went under the guidance of Mr. Vinet to visit
a waterfall & farallones or rocky cliffs. These
localities afforded me a good many novelties.
It is a curious fact which I am unable to explain
that all the farallones I have visited have afforded
me plants ^{new} found in other places or not scattered
through the forest generally. On the very brink of these
cliffs grow several kinds of shrubs that I have seen
in no other localities. What the inaccessible spots
may have growing from crevices of the rocks is
more than I can tell.

Most of my first batch of scabrous plants I
have turned out of press. I found the *Physalis* still
cold, cold, cold, but I know such thin things can't
hold water enough to hurt their neighbors much.
Besides I shall keep one eye on them & give them
another baking if they show signs of deliquescence.

I have spun my yarn long enough, have used
up about all the material & will wind up by
hoping you had a "merry Christmas" & will have
a happy "New Year".

Kind regards to Mrs. G. Present my compliments
to my hostess down the street when you see her, & to
other friends in Co.

Sincerely,

Yours,

Charles Wright



Wright, Charles. 1858. "Wright, Charles Dec. 17, 1858." *Charles Wright correspondence with Asa Gray*

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