

Monte Verde Feb 2nd 1859

Dear Dr

A raw cold drizzly morning. Prof. I am dressed in much the same clothing I wore last winter in Cambridge & yet am no more than comfortable. I have just donned a pair of woolen socks for my feet were cold. It is lightening up a little in the east.

Yesterday I found a pygmy *Verbesina* of which I send you some account & a specimen. It was growing on a rocky ledge on the feet facing the north & appeared much at home; but it seems almost impossible that its progenitor could have lived there, two or three years ago, when it was a dense forest. There are natural cliffs or "farallones" as they are called a mile or so from here which may be its home proper. I have not seen it there. See if you can recognise it by the description without seeing the specimen!

Verbesina pygmaea. Pili articulis hirti; caule brevi; foliis alternis obovatis basi angustatis. Scapis unifloris caule ^{multis} 2-8 plo longiore ^{bus} retrose adpressis setosis. Radius sub-12 ^{obovatis emarginatis} ^{latis} ^{linewosi} nervis sulcis rubris. Capitula fructifera hemisphaerica; palci apice ciliati ^{obovatis} achenis ^{sparsis villosis} ^{crasser-platis} aequilongis vel paulo longioribus. Arista exterior brevisima interior achenis longiore apice mucinata.

I have got a hundred species of ferns & can call to mind a good many more than I have not yet collected either because I have found my hand full to secure what I have or because they are not in season or because they have not been observed in this vicinity. I am sorry to say that a number of them

seen but few specimens & some only a single one. I hope
however to meet these rare or untimely ones again. There
are several *Aerostichum* growing on the trunk of trees
thus seem to produce their fertile fronds very sparingly or
in a scattering manner. Such is *A. crinitum*. I have not
yet secured a specimen. A good many of the species run
from 18-20 x 30. Of most of these I know the localities &
only need time to fill up the deficiency of numbers.

Last week I set about a systematic study of them
so far as to determine the genera in which I succeeded
pretty well. I found this to be absolutely necessary in
order to avoid the blunder of mistaking one for another
and the error of sending several things, amounting to 40
in all, in the same package, under the impression that
it contained 40 specimens of the same species. I can now
pretty readily distinguish a *Polygodium* from an *Asplenium*
and an *Asplenium* from both which I am ashamed
to say I could hardly do before. Formerly I was content to tuck
away a fern with the simple word *Filix*, & the locality, &c.
Several of the largest ferns I have secured in full number.

I ought to add perhaps respecting the little *Pelesone* I
saw that some specimens have a leafy stem of much greater
length than those in which ^{from} which seem to be the normal ^{one} form.
These will be specimens enough for distribution if you don't say
to make an angel-hair with a gimlet."

Lindley describes *Epidendrum polygonatum* n. sp. one of
the very commonest orchids hereabouts. If so common a plant
be new it would seem that the same family should furnish other, more
elusive in these woods, & such I believe to be the case. I find little
Platanthera & *Lepanthes*, which seem different from those I collected
before. They grow the orchids which gave so many new species in the former

collection would seem to merit special attention as well as the
fern. I have examined several pretty carefully without satisfying
myself that they are in my former list or rather depending for own
since one that they are not. The fact that they ^{are} the very highest
^{part} ~~region~~ of the island except Vaqueina farther west & close to the
coast ~~may~~ has never been visited by any special botanist before
my former sojourn here at a different season of the year may
afford good grounds to believe that a thorough examination
of these small epiphytic orchids will reveal several more
new species. Is *Epidendrum polygonatum* - so common here - con-
fined to this elevated region? I must take notice when I am in
lower one. The fact that many of them grow upon the highest
branches of large trees which require to be felled or climbed
(both of which I do at times), may account in some measure
for the novelty of these little plants.

I brought home before an *Ophiorhiza* or something
akin to it - a single specimen only - with a palmate sterile
frond & several ^{pendulous} fertile ones - At least such are the fern spec-
imens I have found this time. What is it? Endlicher's Ital-
icized remarks at the end of the character, if these are of any
value, would seem to exclude it. I have not examined it at
all. Was it 100 or 200 species of ferns that my former
collection contained? From what I have already collected the
former number would seem too small & the latter seem
rather too large to expect. Yet if I remember right it
was within a few units of one or the other number.

Mr. G. starts for St. Jago tonight & I must
close. Give my best wishes to Mrs. G. Write as
often as you can. I am now ten weeks away from
home & no letters yet.

Yours truly
Prof. A. Gray Charles Wright



Wright, Charles. 1859. "Wright, Charles Feb. 2, 1859." *Charles Wright correspondence with Asa Gray*

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