

Monte Verde June 24th 1861

My Dear Dr

Got home yesterday tired out & very hot. I was
7 days fr. Baracoa - collecting a little on the way - my paper is
exhausted - obliged to shut my eyes on many new & interesting things
- would go back immediately a part of the way if I had fresh animals
- may do so any how within a few days. Found here yours of May 25th
& 1st June the latter containing the draft.

Now about the troubles in our beloved country. My heart is full
of sorrow & I must write. If you are a friend to the Union I am not
a whit behind you - only we take different views of the best way of pre-
serving it. You have taken some of my strong (too strong perhaps)
expressions more literally than I intended. But if they filled
you with "sorrow & surprise" what must have been mine to
find you giving utterance to such a sentiment as this "The Union
- it must be preserved at all costs of money & blood!!!" - a
sentiment which methinks Robespierre or Marat would
have choked in uttering. Who authorised you to destroy without
 stint or measure God's master work to support a human com-
 pact. The Union is nothing more - the device for safety self-
protection of good yet fallible man - but you will put it in
the scale ^{against} ~~with~~ man's God's image on earth & make the let-
ter kick the beam as a thing of no value - light as air. Great
God! - the infatuation that has possessed you! How is it that you
are so blinded. The South has said pleadingly "we have lived
many years together as brethren. Now you don't do us justice -
let us depart in peace & be friendly neighbors & we can remain
members of one family." What can be more reasonable. I shan-
der to think of following such a sentiment to its realisation.
It is horrible to think of. A thousand times better a quiet
separation than a blood-cemented Union. Unknowingly under such

circumstances the idea is absurd. As I have written before war
will never reconstruct our once prosperous & happy Union
In my lonely labors & some lonely rides I have meditated much
on the state of our country & to save my life I can see no essential
difference between the position of the South now & that of our fathers in
1776. These said they were oppressed & constituted themselves the judges
of their own cause were called rebel & traitors were fought & harassed
by ^{or similar} the same forces are enacting now. You or some of you say the Union
must be eternal - as if it was the prerogative of fellible humanity
to say how lasting will it must be any of man's devices. How
many States Kingdoms and Empires promising long duration
have passed away. So it then reason to say that ours must
necessarily be more enduring. We think it a very good Gov-
ernment. But what authority have we to affirm that it is perfect
or that it is the best yet devised. Are we infallible judges in
this matter. I think I see radical defects that require removal
We have in diverse instances acknowledged the rights of once sub-
ject States to establish themselves as independent nations
Greece for example & the various Central & South American States
The very course the South is now pursuing was never more
openly & more explicitly proclaimed as right than in a speech
by the actual President in Congress, ¹⁸⁴⁸ See Congressional Globe
30th Congress 1st Session, page 94. The President doubtless
has the right to change his mind especially when it is for
his interest to do so. Had the border states remained neutral
it is more than probable that the other states have returned
But you have driven them out of the Union & are now going to
drive them back again. It certainly puzzles me to know what
kind of a Union we will have. However the way the North
goes ^{you} destroys all my hopes of a Reconstruction. You think
"Massachusetts has saved the Capital" Perhaps so. I fear
she has by her over much zeal destroyed the Union. Permitting

as almost forgotten the etc. Nullification of Mass. Mass.
has been I believe the leader followed by 10 other States in
rendering ineffective the Fugitive Slave Law. Her troops are
spread out themselves over Eastern Virginia where they will
be likely to garner up a strong hatred in such many
years will run of havoc. I am glad to acknowledge that their
General, reflected on your state in the person of her Governor
a sneering rebuke for his fanaticism. I write in a former
letter how little regret was manifested that the country
was brought to its present deplorable condition. No expressions
of brotherly feeling greetings for glory only or for vengeance
even. Lett. Ellsworth was killed by a man in his own castle
- Saved him right. Let him keep himself & his Arabs
out of other people's houses. Hope the rest will meet the
same fate in similar circumstances. The self sacrifice
of this man ought to make you think that the conquest
of Virginia may be no easy task. The Danvers swear
vengeance. Don't you? In war passions are kindled as good & evil
rights to kill as the other. Especially hard I might to
kill an enemy who enters my house. You call the Vir-
ginians rebels. England counts them belligerents. You dare
like it. But it is the very doctrine you have always held.
You say I "have got a crotchet about Southernness" Why
should I have? The South is my birthplace: all the scenes
of childhood are there - there all my kindred - all my early
friends & friendships formed since I came to man's estate -
all my little wealth is there. Why then I ask should I
"have a crotchet about Southernness" Why? Because I have
been much among the Southern people have received much
kindness from - know their thoughts & feelings & their wrongs
No thanks there are ground for having something more
than a crotchet. You can not believe that I have any
sympathy for slavery per se. I abhor the cause

But it is a curse which the north is largely guilt
of inflicting & this should teach you charity. But let
me give you a little specimen of the northern variety of
the species. It is the closing remark of Gov. Randall of
Wisconsin "La guerre a commencée là où ^{est} Charleston:
elle doit finir là où Charleston était" He must have
made a recent visit to hell to find anything so diabolical.
Here is another thing I've found. "Le gouvernement fédéral vient
d'opérer un coup d'état assez singulier pour reconnaître
où sont ses amis et ses ennemis. Lundi, à 3h. de l'après-
midi, une descente a été opérée dans les principales
stations télégraphiques du Nord et les textes des dépêches
a été saisis en nom des Etats-Unis. That looks a little
Frenchy. You intimate too that it won't be quite sage for
me to say what I think of I come north. Perhaps it won't
& yet I should be very apt to do it. I believe it is at least un-
constitutional that a man may say what he pleases subject
to prosecution for libel slander &c of individuals not of the
Gov. I don't think our Gov. is a slanderable object.

However I am strongly disposed to follow the almost
unanimous advice of my friends there & here too & remain
where I am. You think if I were among you I would change
my mind. Possibly: yet I think that far away from the bustle
& excitement of the military with an impartial journal
to consult for the general run of passing events I am as
favorably situated as you are to form a just estimate
of them. I have not formed my opinions hastily & I doubt
if I change them in a hurry. This cursed crusade against
the South will effect the lasting alienation of that part of
the people who had still a brotherly affection for their
northern fellow-countrymen and will be productive of
success only to be broken up
violently at the first favorable opportunity.

You charge me with being prejudiced with being influenced by party & political considerations. I deny the charge. I don't care a straw about the party question. I insist solely on simple justice. By force of numbers you are overriding the South protecting their fugitive property - 11 states - more than secession numbers have nullified the law of Congress in their favor & I can't see that any other recourse remained for them.

You "know" (I am a right good fellow at bottom". That might bear a construction not altogether flattering - that I am a little weak in the upper story. Not weak enough to follow your advice & invest my money in Gov. Stocks & "so help support the country" i.e. help one part enslave the other. Now I won't believe you means to insult me. And ^{yet} if you wrote that on mature reflection having in mind the opinions I have expressed you could not have devised a grosser offense. Sooner bury it in the bowels of the earth or the bosom of the ocean than contribute ^{willingly} one farthing to that end. & my conviction is sincere & profound that the present war is a most unrighteous crusade against our Southern brethren. My little property ^{I suppose} must be taxed to support it but rest assured that the note will not be augmented by my blessing.

28th. As I have before written I get most of my information from the Courrier des Etats-Unis, an ally conducted & as I believe a very impartial journal. We have it down to the 10th inst. In this number is an able letter from Mr. Gaillardet its former editor. He expresses his opinion in which I concur that one like himself or me at a distance is in a more favorable position than yourselves to form a just estimate of the contest now going on among you. Some of my friends, Baird, Tuckerman, beside yourself think

otherwise, I am anxious to remain in my present belief
In this letter I make the following supposition. Admit
the possibility, that the Slave States should gain such a
preponderancy as to demand the admission of the "peculiar
institution" among you. What then would succeed? Perhaps you
can answer the question. And even a thought of any sort
which has often occurred to me since the breaking out of
this lamentable controversy. (You deny the "right of secession
other than revolution" (I don't know the difference I confess)
Now it is within the range of possibility, that all but one of
the States might take away many of the privileges of this
State - name for instance as putting my supposition. Sup-
pose you took up all her ports, obstruct her rivers, demoralized
her light-houses, &c. would she be justified in seceding to
Canada. You may say such a course would be an un-
constitutional. So is it and unlawful to nullify the laws of
Congress. I believe there is a limit to forbearance under
injustice & that secession or revolution or rebellion or
whatever you may please to call it may be justifiable &
that the oppressed have the right to rid themselves of the yoke
in the manner that to them seems best.

We begin to get European views of the controversy. I am
glad to see that they are better favorable to the preponderancy of
the north. I don't know how reflecting men can shut their
eyes to the utter absurdity of the supposition that they can
reduce 10,000,000 of a free people to the condition of puppets
so that they will wag their tails & lick the hand that beats
them & then be able to say they have "saved the Union". Truly

Wisdom is glad to finish, least

And men have lost their reason

I trust you now know what are my sentiments. There is
nothing in what I have written above

Pray don't throw this letter into the dust-box. read it over more
than once. Do me this favor. I have kept carefully nearly all
the letters you have ever written me. This is a longer letter
than I ever write but I couldn't well make it shorter
I can't afford to stop I don't I would be glad that some
of my friends Barn, Fackerman & others should know
that I can give a reason for the fault that is in me
Now if you see no impropriety in it I would be glad
that these friends should have the opportunity of reading
the preceding six pages. Indeed I am not ashamed of
opinions & would be glad that all who think or who
have thoughts worth of me should know what they are. I
am no enemy of my country, no rebel, no traitor. I
have no quarrel with any God-blessed her and give up
down to her rulers.

I have been going over my dead plants mainly to con-
serving them to get a temporary supply of paper for
found more on my return having taken a little with me.
They are in a very good state - some a little mouldy but
not to hurt. I have more paper in better condition
I have written. There is now no paper in port - but by the
first opportunity I shall ship. I am fast settling down
to the determination
not to go on at least just now. Perhaps matters may
take a turn for the better. God grant it. Though we are political
and enemies I still I fear & remain so we may be friends
in every thing else. I have secured very highly my
friendship & have ever shown great deference to your opinion.
I trust you exercise toward me all Christian charity
as I mean to do toward you. I will continue to write you
as heretofore contributing as much as in you lies to ame-
liorate my weary wanderings by such little pleasures as
your letters and amplettes of small compass especially fitted to

this flora will afford. And a purpose of this. Mounts Grisebach's
other work which I see quoted. Flor. Ind. Ge. be useful to me
& when may I expect the monospetalous parts of any of the
others. If you get any thing of this kind don't delay as
you have sometimes done to send them on.

About the mosses. Will they all sell & do they sell at the
same price as the other plants. I apply to you for this inform-
ation because I know no other way of getting it. I wanted
a set for presentation here in Cuba. Can I have it? Rather
a queer question I admit but perhaps its better to ask for it
besides being more polite than to claim it. Sullivan is a
"most good fellow" and all ways does what you ask him
to do. So if you will overlook my rebellion & will stand
dayman between me & Sullivan I hope to get it.

30th I have finished the pursuit of the Couriers from July ult-
4th inst some 35 pages of Journalism. So I am not in total
ignorance by any means of what has been going on among you
I have also baled up my plants - to good solid packages. There
is a box in Cuba for which I have written. It will probably
be here by the time an opportunity offers of sending. I shall unless
otherwise advised direct them thru B. Westermann Bookellers
Broadway N.Y. (I don't know their number but I suppose that is
not very important) You will be on the look out for them. I
have now about 50 dollars to go on. That will last me some
time. But I shall need more by & so when it is quite conven-
ient you may send me another 100. You will understand that
if for any cause you should fail or defer to send for some
months it will be no matter. I can always get a temporary
supply from Mr. L. who is much flattered with your letter.

As I am through my work have nearly finished my letters
read up the journals & have a few hours of leisure I feel in the
humor to scumble a little more. You say in yours of May 25th
"We count the cost." How do you count blood? Can Pierce give

you a formula for expressing its value or cost?

I think I can see some good to come out of all this evil. Some good men as you Tuckerman Sullivan!! Torrey & I hope ~~a good~~ many more don't go to the war. I would fain hope that the army is composed of nearly all bad men. It certainly must have many of the worst characters that figure in city brawls & in every scene of violence. Let us hope then that the messengers of death may pass by weak misguided men & select such as by their removal from the moral atmosphere which they have heretofore corrupted will leave it more pure for them that remain. But dear me ^{death} is not so considerate in the victims he takes. There is another thing your armies must be composed to a large extent of the laboring classes thrown out of employment. After a considerable number of them shall have been killed off there will remain fewer to do the work & your cotton lords your large manufacturers will have to grant them better pay than they have heretofore received.

Tomorrow I set out to return on the track of my late voyage so far as the road follows the coast to give it a more thorough examination than I was able on returning from Banca. I hope a week will suffice for the excursion. By that time perhaps there will be a vessel ready to take away what I now have on hand.

I am running low in many things. This paper I beggo. I have a thicker kind. My envelopes are out 2-3 excepted. If you should have books to make up a package of suit all in you would oblige me by putting in some envelopes & some overland paper.

To Yourself Mrs G. & all my friends in Cambridge & Boston kind regards from the
Self-exiled
Chas Wright



Wright, Charles. 1861. "Wright, Charles June 24, 1861." *Charles Wright correspondence with Asa Gray*

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