

Copy of Letter from Chas. T. Drury F. L. S. to
Waxm, Pres. S. F. Chaplin

"I have read with much interest Mr George E. Davenport's article on "Abnormal Forms and Hybridity in Ferns" and would ask to be permitted to point out that with reference to Mr E. F. Lowe's cross between Aspidium (Lastrea) filix-mas ~~var.~~ palea-ceum, known to fernists here as Lastrea pseudo-mas and Aspidium abbreviatum known here as Lastrea propinqua, there is absolutely no question of distinct genera, nor any connection between the latter and Cystopteris, or Polystichum except in a wide sense. The species Lastrea filix-mas has been subdivided into three — L. filix-mas, L. pseudo-mas and L. propinqua by the late Mr G. B. Wollaston, who pointed out sundry differences as regards deciduousness and other minor characters which certainly justify their classification as subspecies but no more. A cross consequently between them is less, not more, striking than one between Polystichum aculeatum and P. angulare, between which the subspecific difference is more marked. As for Cystopteris, or Polystichum, they are both absolutely outside the question. Both forms of Lastrea and Nephrodium are pure and simple, if we prefer to adopt these synonyms.

To my mind, however, there is very little evidence of a cross having taken place at all. The result of the sowing appears to have been a crop of both kinds, and as both, moreover, are given to vary, and their characters are closely akin, even a plant intermediate between the two might well be a sport per se.

With the Polydicticum cross or hybrid no such doubt exists, as two distinct varieties were taken and the peculiar cruciate characters of one species appeared on resulting plants of the other species, accompanied by a considerable loss of fertility, few spores germinating.

With regard to Polydicticum Schneiderii, considered by Prof. Bower as a good hybrid between P. aureum and P. vulgare var. elegantissimum, there is absolutely no room for doubt as to the alliance. P. aureum is a large growing species with broad pinnate glaucous fronds. P. v. elegantissimum is tripinnately cut into slender segments, but not constantly so, partially reverting here and there to the normal, sometimes entire fronds or only pinnae or parts of pinnae doing so, so that one and the same frond may display the fine cutting, intermediate coarser cutting and quite normal segments.

P. Schneiderii is leathery, gigantic, slightly glaucous P. v. elegantissimum, as large as P. aureum, with smaller but woolly rhizomes and partial revercious of precisely the same kind; large sori are produced freely, but the spores are all ~~aborted~~ aborted and the fertility fallacious.

Scolopendrium vulgare & Asplenium beterach is also a true hybrid beyond doubt. The fronds in my possession are scaleless beterach fronds, somewhat confluent at the tips; the fructification

of the upper half is purely asplenoid, in single lines; in the lower half these lines are in faced pairs, i.e. Scolopendrium beyond any doubt at all.

The nomenclature of ferns is such a plough of despond that I hardly dare refer to Mr D. B. Gilbert's article as "On the Genera of Ferns"; A Study of the tribe Aspidaceae" for fear of getting embogged.

I cannot, however, help expressing my agreement with him as regards Polytaenium. To see these lumped together with such wholly different plants as Nephrodium and Cystopteris is vile some to every actual grower of ferns, and in this country no one, except the terrible, conservative systematic

Botanists will call them anything else but
Polytrichums

11 Shaa Road, Acton, London, W.

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Druery, Chas. T. 1874. "Druery, Charles T. undated [undated copy] [to W.R. Maxon]." *George Edward Davenport correspondence*

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