

West Chester Dec 28th 1869

Dear Doctor,

Your letter with its good will
Christmas & New Year Message reached us in due
time. Thanks. We must cordially reciprocate to
—"you & yours". My special object in writing now
is to make a statement of my reasons for abandoning
Botany entirely - for Medicine. In 1860 I first
went to Cambridge to study Natural Science. I
had previous to this given it all my spare hours
for two years. During the time I was there I
spent all my time in Botany and labored to my
utmost capacity. I expended all the means I could
obtain for books instruments and the facilities for
study. After graduating seeing no opening by which I
could support myself I came home and most reluctant
ly took up the study of medicine. Before graduation I
was invited by Kennicott to accompany him to the W W,
I at first declined, and only accepted after you had
written me that you thought the chance a good one
- which I right to accept.

The hardships I endured whilst these and the complete failure I made as far as scientific work was concerned are only too familiar to my friends. This failure was due to no fault of mine. It did still sting and mortify me, and when anxious to return and redeem my reputation. I spent tips back and collected if only my expenses were paid. I found the science of Botany could not give me the means of doing so. Medicine was the only thing left. After graduation came my Chair at the P. A. College. How little I have accomplished, and how hard I have worked and how long I have endured my discouraging circumstances is also known. No better place offers. In view of my age, circumstances, and marriage I feel I can afford to spend no more time shifting between medicine and Botany. To make a reputation in a living or both I must confine myself now to one thing and work at it unflinchingly for the rest of my life. Some original-minded men can distinguish themselves in several departments of learning. I never can. My only chance is in hard work in some limited field. Next April my Engagement at the Penna. Ag. Coll. terminates. My resignation is already handed in. Unless I obtain a position that is honorable and permanent, and

pays a living salary I purpose at once to move to Hamburg, and ~~at once~~ give myself exclusively to medicine for the rest of my life. What else can I do. Nine years of hard work and anxious expectation have proven to me (if they have proven anything) that I cannot live by Botany alone. Science was and is my choice, but I shall have to accept the alternative fate has placed before me. Please pardon this string to you who have so often aided me I felt it was due. I send a copy of my Alaskan paper. My wife joins me in love to you and
Mrs Gray.
Ever Yours
J. W. Retznick



Rothrock, Joseph T. 1869. "Rothrock, Joseph T. Dec. 28, 1869." *Asa Gray correspondence*

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/224681>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/252587>

Holding Institution

Harvard University Botany Libraries

Sponsored by

Arcadia 19th Century Collections Digitization/Harvard Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The Library considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection

License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.