

January 5, 1942

Mr. C. H. Lankester
Las Cóncevas
Cartago, Costa Rica

Dear Mr. Lankester:

I found your package when I came into the Museum yesterday, *Cattleya Trianaei* var. *alba* and not the *Sobralia* which I had expected.

I am afraid that the flowers got into too much cold along the way somewhere for they were pretty well browned up when they arrived. It is possible to tell enough about them to say that the form which you have must be an exceedingly fine one as to shape. -- I am not able to tell for sure whether your flowers had a yellow spot in the throat or not, it rather looks as if they had had. I have never seen a pure white without some yellow and I can find no mention that there has been one recorded.

John Mutch of Wheeler and Company got a very fine white in an importation some 30 or 40 years. So far as I know this was the first good white of the species that there was in America. I understand that the front bulbs of this plant were sold soon afterward for \$10,000 (Recognise the figure? It crops up often.--It is also rumored that a small lot of *C. Mossiae* var. *Mrs. J. T. Butterworth* brought \$30,000 and when I mentioned this to Geo. Butterworth Sr. one day he did not deny it,-- nor confirm it). I saw the few plants of *C. Trianaei* var. *alba* owned by Mutch last spring. They are pretty fine but many a modern hybrid is better.

I do not know what these whites will do in breeding. The constitution of many of them varies considerably. I suspect that you should get a few more whites out of seed made from the plant than out of an ordinary colored one but I doubt that the percentage would be startling. Genetically it is probably far from a pure white and I guess that the white color is a recessive character.

Cattleya gigas var. *alba* or *C. gigas* var. *Firmin Lambeau*, the latter perhaps the best of the whites of the species, almost never gives white progeny and I guess that

Firmin Lambeau is practically sterile. My friend Rodney Wilcox Jones has one of the few plants of Firmin Lambeau in the country. He put the pollen from it onto a C. Mossiae var. Wagneri last spring and now has a nice plump pod, - whether the seed will be good and if good whether they produce good white progeny. I suspect that he will get a lot of C. Enid that will be difficult to tell from the ordinary run, if plants ever come through.

I have just been requested to hurry myself along so it is possible that we will leave Cambridge for the duration by the end of next week.

Regards!



Williams, Louis O. 1942. "[Williams, Louis O.] Jan. 5, 1942 [to C.H. Lankester]."
Oakes Ames Orchid Herbarium correspondence files

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