

Harvard University

BOTANICAL MUSEUM

George Lincoln Goodale, Honorary Curator  
5 Berkeley Street

(The Botanical Museum occupies part of the  
central section of the University Museum.  
The entrance is on Oxford Street.)



Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A.

January 30th. 1913

My dear Dr. Kennedy,

I submit herewith the reference to the Alexander Smith notes on Economic Botany, which I shall bring before our Committee on the Botanical Museum of the University, at our meeting on February 12th. Since the reference is explanatory of the use of the notes, you will be interested in it.

I hope that you will be able to look at the great collection on some day next week.

Yours faithfully, George Lincoln Goodale

(COPY)

The Museum of Economic Botany has recently received a valuable acquisition, in the form of a collection of manuscript and printed notes on Economic Plants and Plant-products, by the late Alexander Smith of London. A generous friend of the University, who desires that his name should not be announced, authorized the Curator to secure this collection, and a timely cablegram from our Library was sent. This is not the first time that this anonymous friend has enriched our special library. It will be remembered by some of the earlier members of this committee that a sum of money was placed at the Curator's disposal for the purchase of books and for binding. It was that friend who has now presented us with the Smith Collection.

The last thirty years have completely changed the face of many sciences, by the replacement of special studies by far more special studies. For instance, Economic Botany, which twenty years since was a special subdivision of Botany, is now a congeries of about twenty five specialties. It is therefore no longer possible to construct a comprehensive treatise on Economic Botany: such a treatise would be out of date the day after publication. Hereafter, special monographs must replace the general work: and a <sup>2</sup>general Museum must stand prepared, by its copious <sup>material,</sup> memoranda and notes, to answer any questions which may be brought to its attention. You can now understand the value of such a collection as that of Mr. Smith, to the in-

spection of which I now invite your attention. I trust that my statement in regard to the extreme specialisation which has not yet reached its limits, may sufficiently explain why my promised encyclopaedia of economic botany, planned by Professor Gray for my hands, can never be realized. Such a treatise was possible in 1875: it is not possible now. You have only to glance at the accumulations of special works on the multifarious subjects involved, to appreciate the absurdity of undertaking today to construct such an encyclopaedia. Even the special works on Rubber, and the periodicals devoted to its service, now number more than all the treatises on Rubber, Gums, Resins, Chicle, ~~Gutta~~<sup>^</sup>-percha, and the like, in the early seventies.

But, although a cyclopaedia is no longer to be thought of as a living force in the specialised science, every well-equipped Museum is compelled to keep abreast of the times by <sup>its specimens,</sup> its library, and by its carefully gathered notes. You can appreciate, I am sure, that we are greatly indebted to our friend for his useful gift.



Goodale, George L. 1913. "Goodale, George L. 30 Jan 1913." *George Golding Kennedy correspondence*

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