

Many American genera extending
into Asia and Europe diminish gradually
in species as they go Westward while
the West European genera and species
are mostly unknown in America
Two or three aquatic or bog plants are
perhaps the only N. American plants
common to W. Europe and not extending
all across Asia - the Arctic Flora
is again another category. May turn
your attention to some of these points
and particularly to the connection
between the United States (comparatively
Eastern Flora) and the Asiatic although
more or less (and how far?) interrupted
by your mountain backbone.

In my Arctic Flora I have of
course made large use of other works,
Sedgwick's Flora Rossica is excellent
but one of those of most use to me
has been your Manual not only as
supporting me in many corrections of
often repeated errors in description and
circumscription but in suggesting many
that had not occurred to me. Species
must be judged by a consideration of
the forms they affect not in one
particular spot but throughout their
geographical area.

A synopsis of *Chiton* I read the
other day at the Linnean Society show

11 Victoria Street
Westminster S.W.
April 2 1857 95

My dear Gray

I received a day or two ago a
small parcel from you containing
the figure and description of *Baptisia*
(*stipulacea* Helms) and a specimen of
a Japan *Indigofera* with the q^d "what
is it". As far as the specimen goes it is
identical with *Indigofera decorandus*,
a Chinese plant brought by Fortune.

As you requested in your last I
have sent to Torrey the proof sheets
of the remainder of my Californian
N. Torrey, not that they will be of
much use to him for I merely quote
his names where I agree with him
which is the case with nearly all. I had
no time to enter into detail or to
re-form Ker's Siliceous genera
only giving a few notes which I sent
to you in my last. I hoped long ere
this to have done with *Platanus* & *Arctostaphylos*
but the printer has kept me waiting
so long that I can only tomorrow read

Let me know what sheets are wanting to
complete your copy & those of any of your friends attend
you to return. Truly, I have
the index to pass, given it.

I have been much interested in
your letters to Mr. Hooker and in
your papers on the distributions of
your plants etc. Since I reviewed
DeCandolle's *Géographie Botanique* for
the *Edinburgh Review* I have had
my attention a good deal turned to
the distribution of plants and the
cross connections of different floras.
and General facts from one who like
yourself knows a little what a species
is are very much wanting before
any conclusion good for any thing
can be drawn - and some day or another
I think much light will be thrown
upon the subject. In the mean time
I get very angry at the confusion
into which species-mongers are plunging
the science. European *Salix*, *Heisteria*,
Rubus, & *Roras* as every one knows have
long since been undeterminable and
they are now doing their best to
place half our common genera into
the same category. This has induced me
now for some years past to devote

add time to the preparation of a
Popular British Flora and for the last
two years I have worked a good deal
with fresh living and dried specimens.
As I shall cut off a couple of hundred
species at least I must be very
cautious how I do it and shall
be obliged to draw up a separate
argumentative paper so that I
do not see my way quite yet to the
end although in the preliminary
operation I ~~have~~ come as far as
Lycium - I mention all this to
you not because the work will
be of any interest to you but because
I find it necessary to state the general
geographical area of each British
species (in order to show the Britishers
how little they know of a species if
they will only study British specimens)
and there are some curious points
connected with the distribution of those
that are common to Europe and the
United States. Most of them appear to
have come to us or gone to you - not
across the Atlantic but round by Asia
(*) I do not of course mean plants of modern
introduction.

I hope correctly that the *Alharia* 73
Clitoria acuminata is identical with
C. Mariona and *Mexicana* and mentions
one or two instances that have lately
turned up to support *Phryma* in its
vagaries - You mention I think in a
letter to Jrs. Hook. that the latter
turned up in Japan.

Another thing - Bealow is teaching
popular botany ~~and~~ with English
names - and I have agreed to put
English names to my Flora but not
the chaotic English nomenclature
commonly called English but an
attempt at generic and specific
names - which Bealow, Jrs. Hooker
and I settle in committee. Where a
popular name such as Oak Willow
must etc coincide with the genus
we adopt it as generic but where
the trivial name is specific we are
obliged to take the Latin name for
the genus occasionally anglicizing its
termination I wish you would do
something of the kind in your books
and make use of a regular English
nomenclature in your elementary
works instead of the local trivial
names which convey no idea to us
here

I made no mistake in my
charge to you for I found that
your parcel only contained 200 francs
amounting to £40.00 which
I shall get from Hoche - I have
had no time yet to distribute
any more - the arrangement of
Lemercier's plants for Cambridge
and the lagging in my own increas-
takes me up a great deal of time
I contrive to get 5 hours at New
at least 5 days in the week being
a couple of hours work at home
but that is not so much as I had
at Pontrevel.

I have just lost my only
nephew he was progressing rapidly
in his profession of Engineer
when he went out to Corica
in 1854 to superintend the laying
down the Electric Telegraph caught
the malarial fever and returned in
1855 pretty well but with frequent
relapses of fever which brought on
Bright's disease & dropsy, he suffered

much. It is now fifteen months
since he went to the bath of Prouce
as we feared in a hopeless state and
although he has frequently rallied
and even came over here in summer
for short time but we knew he
could not get over it and his suffering
have now at last been put an end to
at Verri near Geneva - he was the
only representative of our family
after myself and sister as we have
no relations - but it turned out about
six months ago that he had been
some time married to a respectable
person but very low in life - and
has left two children - what they
will turn out we know not but I
hope they may be some consolation
to my sister who is dreadfully cut up.
We expect her home from Verri
in a day or two.

With kindest remembrances
tell Gray believe me,
Ever your most sincerely
George Bentham.



Bentham, George. 1857. "Bentham, George Apr. 2, 1857." *George Bentham letters to Asa Gray*

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