

355 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Mass. November 20, 1921.

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My dear Mr. Powell:

I sent off to you by the afternoon mail on Monday last another package of reprints. Two of these were written by my former laboratory assistant, Dr. R. G. Leavitt. His paper on the genus *Eria* was the result of painstaking studies of the types in European herbaria and will give you an idea of the methods I have adopted in doing my work. When we undertook the study of Philippine orchids for the Bureau of Science at Manila in 1905 I had a very inferior collection of Malayan types. Not a single Cuming specimen was available in this country and Lindley's types were at Kew, Blume's at Leiden, and Reichenbach's available types were here and there in different European collections. I took up this work with reluctance and dread. I was not in a position to determine anything outside of the usual horticultural species from Java and Borneo. My collection of living orchids, some 200 genera and 2,000 species, was inadequate even for a beginning. It was during an absence that my fate in this undertaking was sealed! Dr. Leavitt on his own responsibility accepted the invitation of the Philippine botanists to handle Philippine orchids. When I realized my predicament I ordered Leavitt and my other assistant, Mr. Eaton, to assemble all of my material of Malayan orchids, to pack up all of the critical literature in the library, to provide three dissecting microscopes with complete equipment and to make ready three cameras. I told them to be ready to accompany me to Europe at the end of two weeks. I assigned to Dr. Leavitt the genus *Eria*. We went to Europe on scheduled time. First we exhausted the British Museum collections. Every Cuming sheet was studied, photographed and described. Camera lucida sketches were made of moistened flowers. Many Reichenbachian identifications and types or duplicate types were found. Then we went to Kew. What we

missed there, the Director kindly supplied later, in the way of tracings from types. We obtained a complete photographic record of the orchids in the Linneaeum Herbarium. Then Leavitt went to Leiden to consult, draw and photograph Blume's types of Javan species. Eaton went to Paris and worked like a slave with pencil and camera. Some of the photographs he obtained served a useful purpose in Fascicle IV of Orchidaceae. I remained at Kew and found recreation in a close study of American types. Now--- in sixteen years I have handled the collections of some forty or fifty collectors who have ranged from Palawan to the islands north of Luzon. From about two hundred species I have increased the number of species known to come from the Philippines to about one thousand. My herbarium of Philippine orchids is unrivaled and material is coming in from new and unexplored regions pretty frequently. Untouched specimens fill over one hundred herbarium pigeon holes!

I knew Rolfe well. He wanted very much to enter into joint authorship with me on the Philippine venture. Hemsley refused to let him do this as he was anxious to have Rolfe concentrate on the British Guiana flora. A little story about Rolfe may interest you at this time. When I was at Kew in October 1905 he frequently came to my table to talk about orchids and was very much interested in my methods of work. He always expressed an interest in my microscope with camera lucida attachment with which I made records of types. One day he brought to me an analysis of a new species and asked to be allowed to use my equipment. He got on famously and presented to me the results of his efforts. On my last afternoon at Kew I called to Rolfe and told him that if he would relieve me of the trouble of lugging my microscope and attachments back to the States he could have them. Shortly after my return to North

Easton I received from Rolfe a complete set of camera lucida drawings of the Kew types of a genus in which I was very much interested.

Your promise of specimens is delightful. Whatever you send to me will be treasured and serve a useful purpose. In making specimens it is always well to include foliage, as flowers are, by themselves, very unsatisfactory. If dipt in boiling water for a few minutes or if subjected to heat the fleshy parts of orchids dry very well and the leaves adhere better to the stems. The flowers should not be put in water, but a little experience in the application of heat through several thicknesses of thick blotting paper with an ordinary flat-iron will enable you to keep the colors pretty well. Notes as to color, outline sketches of foliage where it is inconvenient to spare actual material are most useful, and then any notes as to locality and time of collecting are necessary to make a specimen botanically good.

When you receive the model herbarium specimen you asked for you will note that each genus is given a special cover with the name of the genus at the lower left hand corner on the outside. The number of the genus is placed first, and the genus covers are filed in cases of the proper size, according to the numerical sequence adopted. A card catalogue of the genera alphabetically arranged will make it possible to turn to any given genus. If you wish any more information as to herbarium methods please let me give it to you.

By this time my set of Orchidaceae must have reached you. If by any chance it goes astray another set will be forwarded at once. Vols. 4, 5 and 6 are very beautiful specimens of printing and for that reason should be of interest for you if botanically they fall outside the realm of your immediate interests.

Yours very sincerely,

OA.



Ames, Oakes. 1921. "Ames, Oakes Nov. 20, 1921 [to C.W. Powell]." *Oakes Ames Orchid Herbarium correspondence files*

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