

355 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Mass.

January 6th, 1923.

My dear Mr. Powell:

I have just had the pleasure of dropping a copy of *Schedulae Orchidianae* no. 2 in the post box for you. I am sure this number will interest you. It contains a goodly number of Central American orchids and puts on record your discovery of *Selenipedium chica* Reichb.f. The plate of this species may not be satisfactory as to fig. 5., but that, you will understand, is simply an attempt to convey some idea of the height to which the species grows. So much for that.

Epidendrum prorepens is very close to the little species represented by your 152 in the Kew Set. I do not remember that Schlechter reported on this number of your collection.

I enclose a check for one hundred and fifty dollars on account of our work. I hope it will reach you in time to keep you in funds.

Perhaps the first fruits of your explorations of Panama will not reach here before I set forth for Honduras. By April, however, I will begin to look to you for some interesting material. Please remember that several specimens of each number should be prepared. If you have any doubts as to the method of making up sets, I am sure that some of the visiting botanists will give you information. As a matter of fact, it will be well for you to seek information from any botanist who visits your garden. Every one has some new idea to impart, and it is by keeping on the watch for new ideas that your work will progress in a scientific manner. For example, I learned from Pennell on his return from Colombia that corrugated boards which work so well here, flatten out in the damp

and sometimes get on fire when suspended in the presses over a fire. Pennell secured his best results by suspending the presses, surrounded by a long cloth hood, over a charcoal fire. The hood acts as a chimney. It must be kept well away from fire. The heat is confined by the hood and passes up through the presses, thus hastening the drying process. Dipping the vegetative parts of orchids in boiling water to kill the tissues is very necessary. Pennell also recommends the use of smooth surfaced cotton batting laid on flowers to keep them from getting pressed too hard. It often pays, when the stems are very thick, to have pieces of drier to lay on leaves and flowers so as to build up a pressing thickness. Otherwise the leaves frequently shrivel because they only get a part of the pressure. What I mean will be clear if I describe the method I adopt when pressing the flowers of Asters. To make the ray florets press flat I cut out of blotting paper a circular piece just the size of the protuberant centre, and place it over the "flower". When pressure is applied the rays receive their share of it, because the thickness of the blotting paper makes up for the extra thickness of the protuberant center. The blotting paper is cut in size so that it just covers the whole flower.

I am now planning some contrivance to use in Honduras so that I can dry quantities of orchids quickly. It seems to me that one of those electric bed warming affairs might be utilized in some way. If a heater, for example, could be inserted as a part of the drying pile, I think the time necessary to dry a batch of specimens might be much shortened. If you have electric current you can usually discover odd ways in which to utilize it. Put your problem before some of your electrical experts.

I think my corrugated aluminum sheets are going to work out well. It would be wonderful if one could pass heat through a series of metal sheets by wiring and thermostats. Just think of the speed with which the work could be done!

I am very anxious to examine some of your material that is free from the restraints imposed by your former Berlin connections. I am sure that we can put out our results very promptly. And if you submit alcoholic material it will be possible to illustrate some of the more interesting and critical species.

If I have failed to answer all of your questions, or if there are points on which I have failed to enlighten you, please inform me to that effect. I try to keep up with my obligations.

Yours faithfully,

Oakes Oliver

P.S. Dr. Schlechter will probably send you the fifty copies of your Panama orchids before he gets round to sending me my copy. Will you please send me one of yours on the day you receive your supply?

O.A.



Ames, Oakes. 1923. "Ames, Oakes Jan. 6, 1923 [to C.W. Powell]." *Oakes Ames Orchid Herbarium correspondence files*

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