

April 9, 1933

My dear Mr. Edwards:

I hope that by this time my letter of March 18 is in your possession and that all doubts regarding my plans for you have been removed. It seemed to me that I had made everything clear in my letter of February 22, and your interpretation of my words caused no little surprise. Everything hinged of course on the amount of money that would be available. When we were instructed to make out the budget for 1933-34, the sad news came that a still greater reduction would take place in our income, and until I had final figures I could not assure you of anything. I thought I had made this clear. Now you tell me that you can make more money by selling your services as a general collector. As to this I can not express a worth while opinion because I do not know what prizes you have been promised by other institutions. But I am surprised at what you say, because I knew of few institutions which have not suffered through the depression and I know of many that have had to eliminate their explorations. As for the Arnold Arboretum, I am in a position to inform you that I should much prefer to have you work on a "per specimen basis". We would undertake to accept all of your orchids and woody plants up to three thousand dollars at fifteen cents a specimen for woody plants and twenty cents a specimen for orchids. That would be approximately fifteen thousand specimens with a limit of four duplicates to each number. That would be some where in the vicinity of four thousand numbers. In this connection I draw your attention to the fact that in nearly a year you have only collected about four hundred numbers of orchids with very few duplicates. And of woody plants I understand that

you have not yet passed the one thousand mark. If you will estimate the cost per specimen of your collections, I am sure that you will realize that you ^{will} find every reason to be satisfied with the arrangement that has been in force, and to understand why we would much prefer to pay for specimens at a stated rate. But your reference to financial loss makes me pause. I cannot consent to let you go on working for the Arnold Arboretum at a loss to yourself. You will remember that you made your own terms and that I have paid you more than those terms called for. When you asked to have the amount raised to thirty-six hundred dollars, I agreed to make this amount the basis for Honduran exploration. Now you tell me that you will have used up all of your money before July first, when under our arrangement the first payment on the new contract would be due. That is, as our fiscal year begins on July first, the payment for the first quarter would not be mailed until July first. This puts me in another state of uncertainty. The best plan will be to send to you four hundred dollars at once and four hundred on July first, with the understanding that before that time you will have come to very definite plans with regard to the future. That is, whether you really prefer to collect for as many institutions as possible in varied fields or whether you prefer to devote all of your time to exploration for the Arnold Arboretum. In any event we cannot afford to do anything unfair or inconsiderate and it will be our aim to save you from loss while you are making up your mind to shift to another type of field work. In this connection I suggest that you send a sample collection of insects and bird skins to me. I will show these to my colleagues at the Museum of Comparative Zoology. It may be that you will find an outlet for some of your collections there. In closing our relations I should wish to feel that I had helped you in your new venture. In any event, you could count on the Arboretum for taking orchids and woody plants. But, we would not be under any obligations to identify the material purchased.

The orchids mentioned in your letter of March third have come in. These are as follows:

- 363 *Oncidium cebolleta* (Jacq.) SW.
- 364 *Laelia Wendlandii* Reichb. f.
- 365 *Epidendrum immatophyllum*

No. 364 is a good thing. We have had it before from Honduras, but in very poor condition. You have already sent in material of 363. and 365.

The specimens sent on March 25th have not yet arrived. Nor have the lost specimens turned up. Perhaps you had been able to ascertain something about them since writing your letter of March fourth.

I hope you are really feeling fit again and that all traces of your illness have vanished.

I will order a check sent to you tomorrow for four hundred dollars and address it to you at Siguatepeque.

I reached home from the West Indies on March 13. Then I went to Florida and only returned from there on April 5. I shall be here right along now through the spring and summer.

I don't want you to feel that I am unfair or unmindful of the difficulties that you encounter. It is a pure delight to handle your orchid material and I only hope that you will, after careful consideration decide to continue sending material to me. It is, of course, highly probable that you have corresponded with institutions or individuals who will pay you higher prices than usual and that under such stimulation you might collect more in a given time than you have done up to this time. But, from long experience, allow me to warn you that the per specimen basis is only profitable when you are actually in touch with people who will undertake to accept everything, in any condition. If they are at all selective, you will find it a difficult task to make both ends meet.

Very sincerely yours,

Charles C. Smith



Ames, Oakes. 1933. "Ames, Oakes April 9, 1933 [to J.B. Edwards]." *Oakes Ames Orchid Herbarium correspondence files*

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