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NORTH EASTON, MASS.

July 6, 1933.

My dear Mr. Edwards:

You seem to have created a misunderstanding all your own, and express surprise that I should have endeavored to give you an opportunity to do work that you feel would be more profitable. In your letter to me of March fourth you stated that you would be able to make more money if you were to collect for several institutions. On March 18 I told you again that I had set aside thirty-six hundred dollars for your work. I say again, because although I had made this reasonably clear, to any man who does business with Harvard University, in my letter of February 22, you wrote that it was not clear that thirty-six hundred dollars budgeted for exploration in Honduras referred to you although you were then in the field and a renewal of your contract had not been denied. On March 9 (the letter you did not receive) I went into detail regarding the work you had done for us and expressed surprise that you thought you could make more money working for several institutions, my surprise being based on the amount of material you had been able to assemble for one institution in a year of field work. I say again that you could not make a living as a botanical collector if your output were to continue at its present rate. It was then, however, that I opened the way for you to work for several institutions, offering to take all of your orchids and woody plants up to three thousand dollars at fifteen cents for woody plants and twenty cents for orchids per specimen. My attitude has been one of complete fairness, my desire being, if you decide to work as a general collector to carry you along until you can establish contacts. In your letter of June third you request that I cable to you if I desire to have you go on collecting on the basis of my letter of April 11. As it is quite unnecessary for me to state my desires in view of the fact that the record is clear so far as the Arnold Arboretum is concerned I do not intend to send such a cable. It is for you to say what you intend to do. Must I say a third time that I have budgeted thirty-six hundred dollars for exploration in Honduras and that you are the one selected to work under that budget? The only suggestion of a change has come from you. I have simply been more than fair and in my letters I have offered to continue to take specimens from you provided you go afield on your own resources. If I say it would be a better business venture for the Arboretum to pay for specimens received, that does not mean that I am going to make an attempt to withdraw from the contract I have made. If you can make more money working for others, I give you the opportunity to do so. The only stipulation being that you work out any funds received from us on the established basis of botanical field rates for specimens. Another statement of yours is to have attention now: ~~See~~ Your letter of June 23 contains the statement that in my writings I have said that I cannot pay \$3,600.00 for this year; that, in other words I am withdrawing from a contract. Had I not already sent to you five hundred dollars with a promise of a thousand round July first? And in this regard I repeat that I cannot spend \$3,600.00 a year of University money for the services you are rendering. This simply means that I am going through with my proposal, but

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that I cannot renew a contract with you on the present basis for a third year.

So far as orchids are concerned it may be that you are in an unfavorable situation. But as for woody plants the situation is different. Unless you are in a sand barren, I think your output should be greater. I have no desire to prevent you from going to profitable country. I simply objected to the Guatemalan border. If you had written to say that the region round San Pedro Sula would be extremely rich and in any event you would like to try it; then I should not have objected. We cannot tell from this point what you may find the best territory. We have to depend on your judgement. We simply suggest what we think may be best. But your decision is final.

You speak of the difficulties of the game. Collecting is difficult. I have done it under exceptionally favorable conditions and I have collected when food and water were scarce. Merrill collected on Mount Halcon in Mindoro when it rained for the entire time of the fourteen days he was out. He lived on monkey flesh. He brought back beautifully dried specimens including fifty new species of orchids. Orchids were a very minor part of his collection.

The check promised for July has been sent. It was ordered to go by air-mail.

You refer to the sale of living orchids to buyers in New York. Of course that business is entirely different from what you are doing now. It would hardly prove profitable in the long run because the Honduran flora outside of two or three species is not of the type that appeals to horticulturists. If however, you feel that it would be to your advantage to deal in living plants and it would open up profitable avenues of endeavor, I should not wish to hold you to your present contract after you had given value received for the money that has been paid over to you. Indeed, if you feel that you cannot collect more than two thousand numbers a year, as a botanical collector, it would be wise for you to try something else. Two thousand numbers at fifty cents per specimen would only be \$1,000.00. Now take your pencil and see what your specimens for your first year have cost the Arnold Arboretum.

I dislike very much to have to write to you in this way, but your letters regarding your work and the greater advantages in collecting for several institutions, deserve serious comment. A dissatisfied collector is the most unprofitable assistant and institution can have. And when he feels that he knows more about his job than the men who have followed the same kind of work for over forty years, and knows more about prices and values than they, he may well expect to get enlightened. From the beginning I have tried to be fair to you. I have given you much praise for the quality of your work in making orchid specimens, although, as I have written more than once, the experts at the Arboretum do not think much of your woody plant specimens. You have done a good job as far as it goes. In the beginning I made many allowances and tried to help you with suggestions and advice. At the beginning of your second year on the Arboretum staff you should know that you still have the job of proving yourself.

Very sincerely yours
Oakes Ames



Ames, Oakes. 1933. "Ames, Oakes July 6, 1933 [to J.B. Edwards]." *Oakes Ames Orchid Herbarium correspondence files*

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