

Cambridge, Monday Evening. 31st May. 1852

My dear Prof. Henry

I have only this evening returned from a week's absence in Norfolk; and find here your kind notes of the 23rd & 27th inst. To these I wish to reply in full, answering the statements in Capt. Wilkes' Communication to the Hon. Mr. Pearce (a copy of which you enclose) which reflect so unjustly upon me. But I have to prepare for a lecture and two recitations to-morrow; and so shall have no time to write to you before to-morrow evening, when I will endeavor to place the whole matter before you, with many thanks for your kind proposition to act for me, and for the just statements which you have already made to Mr. Pearce, on one point. In respect to this I trust to show you that I have in good faith conformed to the views of the Library Committee as I understood them from a letter received from Mr. Pearce. (Which are all that I know of or have ^{had} anything to do with, except a letter of Capt. Wilkes to Dr. Jonez, which I do not recognize as instructions of the of the Committee to me.)

The other statements of Capt. Wilkes in the letter before me have caused me the profoundest astonishment.

I have only to say at present, that the English Descriptions in my Mss. do contain everything that is in the Latin characters, notwithstanding his assertion "that such is not the case." If a single idea or phrase, or even word of the Latin has not its counterpart in the English, it must be a mere slip or inadvertence, which it will be easy to correct when pointed out. And I shall be glad to have the instances indicated.

Again, nothing can be further from the truth than his assertion that I engaged that "my whole time was to be given to the preparation of the Exploring Expedition." You well know that this would be impossible for me ever to have promised. The copy of the contract I shall send will show that it has not the least foundation; I solemnly declare that the whole conversation between us at the time, upon which the contract was based, proceeded upon the contrary supposition & statement.

Further, it is not true that I have failed to fulfill my contract by declining the correction & proof-reading of the other portions of the Botany - they were never offered to me; so that I have had no chance to decline*. It is

* On the contrary I have every reason to believe that Mr. Drayton conveyed to Capt. Wilkes, the expression of my wish, in Sept. last, that the proof-sheets & Mss. of Mr. Brackenridge should be sent to me -

I rather ~~than~~ have to complain of the infraction of this part of the contract, as I always understood it, by that very action of Capt. Wilkes which has caused all this trouble.

Nor have I ever thrown any "impediment in the way" of the publication of Mr. Brackenridge's part, "except by giving my opinion when asked, in a letter to Dr. Toney, that the three-fold repetition which the plan required by Capt. Wilkes (then for the first time made known to me) involved, was not creditable, nor in good taste, nor of any use I could see, & that I could not myself adopt it -

You are right in saying that letter of mine ought not to have been laid before the Committee - It was a letter to Dr. Toney, in answer to one of his, of which I gave him leave to use my opinions there expressed; but it was plain that the letter was not intended to be used in the way it was.

You see then that I explicitly deny the three charges of which you give a summary in your favor of the 23rd. inst. & I shall be obliged if you will, on a proper occasion, state this to Mr. Pearce -

In my next I will conform my acknowledgments by proof, on all the points capable of being attested by document - For the rest, it would seem that Capt. Wilkes' memory or understanding of some things must be different from mine -

As to my bills, they have been duly presented, & attention
has been ~~drawn~~ ^{called} to the delay. The Committee must decide
whether they should be paid or not. You see that while
such charges hang over me, it is not proper that I should
urge their payment.

Tomorrow I will give you, I hope, the information
you desire, & cheerfully leave the matter in your hands.

Though I may not be so judged by others, I know that
you will fully believe that I have no unworthy motives
or selfish ends. I will thank you also to say to Mr. Pease
how far I may be deemed qualified to judge of questions
of scientific accuracy & taste or style.

It is absurd to charge me with wishing to make the
work technical, & too Latin. I have said before, that, tho'
I would not recommend it, I have no objection to writing
& printing every word in English only. I remain,

Yours faithfully & truly,

/signed/ Asa Gray



Gray, Asa. 1852. "Gray, Asa May 31, 1852 [to Joseph Henry]." *Joseph Henry letters* –.

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