

Copy

Cambridge, Mass. Sept^r 29th. 1857

To Capt. Charles Wilke, U. S. A.
Dr. Sir

I have received your letter of the 27th. inst; and I have to regret that my well-meant endeavors towards surmounting the obstacles in respect to Mr. Sullivan's drawings &c. are not more successful.

The valuable drawings in question were placed in my hands by my friend Mr. Sullivan with the statement that they were at present his property, so that I have no option but to regard them as such.

Whether Mr. Sullivan could with propriety use them for any other purpose than that for which they were designed, is a distinct question, upon which I have no occasion to enter. But I should suppose it unquestionable that these products of his own and his paid artists' labor and skill were his own ^{property} until he has made them over to the Library Committee for whom they were destined. In his letter to you, dated August 4th. ult. he expressly declined to part with them any faster than they were wanted by the engraver — he fearing, as he states, that they, like those sent 4 or 5 years ago — two or three of

which are still missing—might be lost or misplaced.

But, upon being informed that you needed them all in order to contract properly for the engraving, Mr. Sullivan has, at my intercession, agreed to forward them all together through me, asking only that you shall give a receipt for them, and that you shall assure him that they shall be satisfactorily engraved, and arrange to have proofs sent to him by the engraver as fast as the engraving proceeds, in order that he may timely make such suggestions as may be needful or useful. This is so obviously for the benefit of the work, in the creditable character of which he feels so deep an interest—that it should not be necessary to make it a stipulation—is so obviously proper that in communication with me I understood you to accede to the request—as indeed I should suppose you would be glad to submit the proofs to the early revision of one so well skilled in the matter, and so much interested in their faithful execution.

As I understand Mr. Sullivan to decline to part with the drawings without an assurance on your part that his desires in this respect shall be regarded, as he instructed me to consider the drawings as his property, placed in my hands until suitable arrangements are made about

the engraving, and as you now, in your letter of the 27th. inst. explicitly decline to give a receipt recognizing Mr. Sullivan's present rights of property in the drawings, and also, if I mightly understand you, object to affording assurance of an opportunity for timely supervision of the proofs, I do not see that I can be of any further services in the premises.

It would be a great pity if previous time should be lost, and the work arrested at this stage on any account, and especially on so narrow a difference as there really is between Mr. Sullivan's views and your own. For while he claims the drawings to be his property, he is most willing they shall become the property of the Library Committee as soon as satisfactory arrangements are made about the engraving. Might it not be well, before returning the drawings to Mr. Sullivan, to take the sense of the Library Committee, or of its respected chairman, who probably might not think Mr. Sullivan's propositions altogether unreasonable?

Finally, as a personal matter, allow me, in all kindness, to say that I am pained to observe that the tone of parts of your last letter is not so agreeable as to render it desirable or pleasant for me to prolong this correspondence.

It becomes the more needful to mention this.

Since on a recent occasion I was obliged to vindicate myself against unjust and uncalled-for implications, or what seemed to be such, in your letter to me last but one preceding. I then expressed the hope that you did not intend what the letter appeared to imply; but in your answer of the 22^d inst I note that while referring to the matter, you did not see fit to disavow what I complained of.

I have endeavored to render you such little assistance as was in my power in respect to drawings, Mss. and proofs, left in some confusion by the late Mr. Drayton; and I will cheerfully do so still, if occasion serves, if you will be so good as to avoid expressions liable to give offence and neither required nor warranted by the occasion;—when you may rely upon me to be always

with esteem and regard

Very truly Yours

A. Hay



Gray, Asa. 1857. "Gray, Asa [to Charles Wilkes] Sep. 29, 1857." *Charles Wilkes letters related to the United States Exploring Expedition* –.

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