

June 26, 1845

June 23 '45

My dear friend -

As usual I begin a new letter soon after dispatching my last. We shall have the cheap postage in two or three weeks, & then you will not be taxed with my epistles so dearly. I can after this month send to you a single question without filling a whole sheet. Often in studying plants I come square up against a wall, as it were - & cannot make an opening for want of means. I need more books greatly. I often think of Hooker's advantages - where he ~~can't~~ settle, easily, so many doubts, by referring to older works. I have passed over several plants that I may write to you about them when we meet. Did you ever study

Cypripedium pubescens & *parviflorum*? They stand distinct in all our books - & Hooker gives a diagnosis taken from living specimens - but which I have never been able to verify. When I looked at Cypripediums last, I could make out but one yellow-flowered species - & that seems to be the *parviflorum* of Salisbury. If *pubescens* is not distinct the former name, being the older, must stand. We have all called the common one *C. pubescens*. The upper sepal is broadly lanceolate or ovate-lanceolate in all my specimens. Did you ever study the living plant?

Then again I am bothered about *Sisyrinchium*. We only have but one species - which varies according to the soil & exposure - but what shall it be called. In Sp. Pl. (1st & 2nd Ed.) it is *S. Bermudiana* (α) (the specific name being a proper one, which seems to have originated with P. Schlecht or some other further). If the Bermuda plant is the same (which is not impossible), we must fall back on that name as Michaux has done - though

he has another species - which is only a var. according to my notes - in hand.
S. acerifolia must have begun with Cavanilles. & Muelix *reflexa* regards it as
a var. of his own *S. Bernieri*. Look at Planch. Amer. 348. t. 61, f. 2. which
Linn. (2d. 2) refers to *S. Bernieri* B. Also at Bernardiaceae. Pitt. Pitt. 58. t.
46. f. 18. another synonym.
My *S. acerifolia* from Big Lick has narrower
leaves than ours, but in other respects I see no difference. There don't seem to
be much ~~any~~ ^{any} difference in the length of the spathe. If there are two species, what
is the *S. Bernieri*? & which the *acerifolia*? - or is neither *acerifolia*? Herbarium
(Hort. B. Bern.) says "that the var. of *acerifolia* & *monanthemum* are in
really hardly distinguishable". You must look over your specimens
of this genus & tell how they stand.

Another ugly genus is *Sonata* - even the few species of New York
have troubled me not a little. The difficulty is owing not only to
the variable characters of the species, but more to the incompleteness of
descriptions of the brief descriptions in the older books. The characters often
mention ^{not} been sufficiently attended to. Chapman promised to
write a monog. of the *Sonata* kinds, & I hope he will at least
furnish me with his full notes on them.

I leave Melanthiaceae as you gave them in your Monograph
except reserving the name of *Melanthium* & *Lemianthus*. - as you
say must be done, in your N. Amer. tree paper

Princeton June 23d. 1845. My dear friend. Your letter of the 17th is
before me, & there is also a half letter (gone sent to Mrs. T. if I mistake
not) that I cannot lay my hand on at this moment - but it will turn up when I
put my tables to rights - First about our visit to Cambridge. Mrs. Long
will hardly be able to get out till next Monday - when (D. T.) it is now judged
to leave here. We had made up our minds to go on the evening of commencement

but Mrs. T. had a tolerably sharp chill to day. & although we like to break
up the year at once we would hardly be safe to leave before she has
had two or three well days. I wish we were already on our way - for
it would do us both good to recreate & enjoy your society. Remember,
however, that I am determined not to be a tax on your time. I shall
have quite enough to occupy me in looking about, & probably in doing
a little work that may be useful to both of us. Mrs. T. wishes to
go in the night train - because it is cheaper! but that I cannot agree to.
All to you want - I will bring with me enough of *Croton* &
other plants to poison all the bugs in Cambridge 2. The Malva (Nuttall)
shall be put up for you - I now am satisfied with that variable group &
parts.

3. *Croton ellipticus* of Nuttall. I had considered the same
as *C. monanthemum* (Gymnophysis you remember!) - ~~but~~ the ^{old} ~~said~~ work
of plant from Bernier, sent to be an *C. ellipt.* by N. A. (I think) certainly
the same as Nuttall's; - but hardly *C. ellipt.* of Desv. n. am. pl. Croton
ellipticus W. D. seems to be only a broad leaved form of *C. linearis*. Have
you looked in Stolz's paper on N. Amer. *Croton* from Weig. ann.
(bound up with *Tschermak* etc.). You know that W. makes greatly
nearer plant to *C. ellipticus* Nuttall's. He thinks that *C. monanthemum*
nigropurpureum Blatt. his *sympetrum* Nuttall's. He thinks that *C. monanthemum*
disjunctifl. Nutt. belongs to *Hederastrum* Schlecht. & Sust. - which I do not
- His *sympetrum* will come into *sympetrum* with a slight change of the
characters.

New of Mrs. Nuttall. & her child are with us - They
came here on Friday last & will return to Phil. on Wednesday morn. Same
around at the same time. She will probably accompany us as far as New York
I wish you more here journeys. of it more rest & enjoy in leisure. When
I had a great abundance of them I of very fine quality. If I find it
seizable I will write again before we start - Yours affectionately G. L. Gray,

BB



J. A. Gray
Harvard University
Cambridge,
Massachusetts.





BHL

Biodiversity Heritage Library

Torrey, John. 1845. "Torrey, John Jun 23, 1845." *John Torrey letters* –.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/310915>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/343071>

Holding Institution

Harvard University Botany Libraries

Sponsored by

Arcadia (Open Collections)

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.