

Hayfield, near Louisville, Kentucky,  
June 10<sup>th</sup> 1854. 3

My dear Sir—

Your kind and obliging favour of the 24<sup>th</sup> Nov<sup>r</sup> 1854, was duly received by me, and since that time several printed documents, directed to me in your well-known hand, (among them the interesting letters of Lapeire and Linnaeus,) have reached me. For these kind reminiscences of me, one and all, I beg you to accept my hearty thanks, and especially for the long and friendly letter above referred to. And although I have no reason whatever to ask for, or expect, a larger share of your precious time, yet I must plead in my own defence, and as my apology for having so long delay'd a reply to your last, that you gave me some reason to hope that you would "write again soon", in reference to Berlandier's collection. Have you heard anything more on this subject?— I still hold myself prepared to make the purchase of this collection, (if it prove as valuable as has been represented to you,) to be placed in your hand for the benefit of American Botany.— I can readily understand the difficulties and hindrances which beset you, in the want of competent assistants and draughtsmen—the latter especially, in this country, is almost an insuperable want; and I should judge even in Europe were rare aves. Indeed, the only drawings which I meet with in English publications are done by Fitch, and Fitch alone! Can you not find some embryo artist of this kind, in some of the Calico-printing establishments of New-England?— If I could happen to have been born thirty years later, or you thirty years earlier, and if I could have had the good fortune to be bound to you in the capacity of botanico-mechanical apprentice, I think I could have render'd you a good turn, and you might possibly have made something out of me; for the most of my labour in the cause have been of the

venient



riest mechanical kind. For instance, my Herbarium consists of about  
specimens, which were mostly gathered and preserved with my own  
hands, (to say nothing of those given away,) put up in about 300 large  
folio boxes, bound book-fashion, which I have been obliged to make my-  
self, not being able to find in this country a mechanic who would make  
them as I wished!—

With the load of labour on your shoulders which you have  
enumerated, and with so few to assist you, I fear that I shall not live  
to see the completion of your "Flora of North America", which is the el-  
derion thale of my hopes. I suppose, indeed, you will now be deprived  
of what aid and comfort you had expected from our friend Carey, who,  
I understand, has an appointment in the New York Lfray Office, which  
will occupy a large portion of his time. I trust if we see to lose him  
from the ranks of Botany, that he will be at least the gainer in a monied  
point of view. Do you know what salary this Office yields him? I am  
pleased to learn from you that Carey has sent for his library and Herba-  
rium. In the ardour and interest which he manifested in the study of Ameri-  
can Botany, I hope that he may long live to enjoy that pleasure from  
his transatlantic collections, which it afforded me to contribute to them—  
"Vix oleum mercurijis quiescit."—Is he not at least twenty years older  
than yourself?—Why then should you limit the period of your "best  
labours" to the next ten years of your life, seeing that our friend is  
still so youthful and ardent as not only to pursue Botany with devotion,  
but to enter anew upon the toils of matrimony?

I learn from your late letter for the first time that you have  
no children; and perhaps you may think it strange, and perhaps unfeeling  
in me, to congratulate you on this, which the most of married people re-  
gard as a great misfortune. Of these, however, I am not one. My lot in

this particular has been very different from your own, and hence perhaps  
I am the better qualified to offer you these congratulations. Ten children have  
been born to me: of these I have buried four at the most endearing  
age of infancy; and the remaining six have, with the exception of one,  
all attained to the adult age. They are all as intelligent, affectionate, du-  
tiful and healthy children as ordinarily fall to the lot of man. Some  
of them are married, and have already presented me with twelve grand-  
children, five of whom are already consigned to the tomb. A kind  
Providence has blessed me with enough of this world's goods, to be ab-  
solved from all anxiety, on this score, in regard to the wants of  
my family. Am I not then competent to offer an opinion on the  
matter in hand?—I do then honestly and conscientiously congratulate  
you on your childless condition. It relieves you of care, anxiety,  
perplexities and solitudes, beyond enumeration. It absolves you from  
the anxious vigils attendant on the sickness of your children—the ag-  
ony of grief resulting from their death—the care and responsibilities  
connected with every period of their lives, from the cradle to the grave.

You are blessed, my dear friend with a fond and affectionate wife,  
one who must be a loving and confiding help mate. I beg you there-  
fore to be satisfied with this blessing, without refining for those which  
bring with them more pain than pleasure.

I trust that you will excuse the long homily I have  
written, and, with my kindest compliments to Mr. Gray, that you will  
believe me the best well wisher both of her and yourself.

Very Respectfully and Truly I am, my dear Sir,

Yours C. C. Short

Prof. A. Gray.



Prof. A. Gray  
Harvard University



Short, Charles Wilkins. 1854. "Short, Charles W. June 10, 1854." *Charles Wilkins Short letters to Asa Gray*

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