

Private

Müller 21/2/80.

The February-mail from North-
America, dear Dr Gray, brought
me your kind letter sending of
the biography of Prof Joseph Henry,
which I read with all the more
interest, as (through the Smithso-
nian Institute) I became my-
self into communication with
that illustrious man for many
years. It is a beautiful piece of
writing again, this of yours; - though
- may I venture to say so -
Ritchie, Cammstadt, Faraday and
Wheatstone might claim a place
in those the series of those, who
brought electric telegraphy about.
Thinking of the Smithsonian
Institute, may I ask, whether
any desirable volumes are mis-
sing in the ones of my own
poor publications, kept there.
At antipodal distance and
under great adversities of later
years, I may not have mana-
ged, to get volume after volume
regularly across to you, and
some may ^{now} be lost on the way.
But now to an other subject.

I did double as much phyto-graphic work in the
last season with all the facilities there, than since I am not
apt.

Some years ago, when you alluded to the fallacious remarks of Garrison Women, propounded in conversation with you, regarding my miserably changed position, you made ~~the~~ in your usual generosity the remark, "rest assured, if I cannot help you, I shall at all events not harm you". When now I read your kind review of my work on the Eucalypto, you allude ~~falling~~ to the difficulties, which beset my path of research even in a work of this kind, but you - my honored friend - neutralize completely any good effect, which a word from you might have done me by the phrase, let him consider, how much valuable time he saves for true botanical work by his riddance from the multitudinous cares, which garden-superintendence involves. I hope earnestly that this review ^{of} you will not fall into the hands of my adversaries here, as it would emasculate the strenuous efforts of myself and a few scientific friends, to reconstitute at least to a small extent my formerly illustrious & so highly useful department.

Now for a general principle, such as you lay down in the above sentence, may apply to the Garrison-administration of any University, I should not venture to pronounce. Even in such, local circumstances must greatly affect such a general proposition, and I should be loath to give on it a public opinion ^{regarding} on any institution, which I had never visited, on which I could not judge fairly at a distance, lest I might inflict - however unwillingly & however unprovoked, an injury. To the position of mine or any Gov. Botanist, the proposition or principle, which you lay down, - my generous Sir, - is utterly inapplicable, as I practically find out in the daily execution of my work! - Thought Hooker once, in disgust of Seymour's conduct, actually wanted to relinquish the New Garrison, I feel sure he is glad to have thought better of it, and I certainly, when he told me of his intention, advised Sir Joseph to remain generalissimo.

But, however that may be, Mr
Bourne should not be judged
even by Rev, as Sir Joseph
would at all events probably
have no actual hostile intru-
sion on his position, had he
merely kept the Museum,
though I cannot see, how his
Museum work can be severed
from the horticultural work
& vice versa, without causing
impediments, intrusion, mis-
understanding or in all directions.
Here my being driven out
of house & home, away from
my thousand of kinds of living
plants, from the staff trained
by me, from my laboratory &
seed magazine and indeed all
I had, except the small Govern
Bot Library and the only herbarium
room, here this senseless and
cruel measure, dictated by envy
& reputation, has had a most
disastrous effect! It took away
from me even the means of keeping
a ~~the~~ collector in the field for
the continuation of the fragments,
it stopped my introduction
of plants for forests & fields
& pastures, it led to the

* the name may be read of the export of perubtree, Surubtree seeds
 dated by me.

pulling down of my Laboratory & the withdrawal of my apparatus, it tied my hands so that I could not do a single thing for the Philadelphia Exhibition nor any other Exhibition since, though as far back as 1855 I brought out the Eucalyptus-oil for the first French Exhibition, an article the export of which up to this time (and steadily increasing, represents a sum of £15000 in the Export-trade of Melbourne already! Not even as much as an office-room was left me, my library had to be stowed away ^{for years} and I have only lately ~~bought~~ got it set up again, having bought a small cottage through a Building Society. Doubtless you (& perhaps Hooker & others) will say, that I enjoyed a splendid salary, & there ought to be no difficulty to provide for all my work. ~~It~~ out of that. Now it is nominally, not actually so. - Melbourne is an excessively costly place to live in; my income moreover

is consumed to keep the
wreck of my once illustrious
Department afloat, though I
never touch a card or billiard
ball, give no parties, love the
simples of life (forlorn life
too!), never visit races, but
do not like to be left quite behind
in the race with my comrades.
Imagine Hooker out of Kew!!
Though I have a high feeling for
professional honor, what I
say is not sentimental, but stern
reality, and if you, Professor Gray,
only for one hour visiting my
place here, you would deeply
sympathize with me, and
would do for me, what Paget,
Holland, Carpenter, Huxley, Sym-
dall, Darwin & Beatham did for
Hooker! - Let me give an instance,
only ~~this~~ two days ago I plaid
here as a member of the local
branch of the British Medical
Association for Kings new ^{Calcutta} ~~Febru-~~
ary before the members as a
cheap, but highly efficient thera-
peutic remedy for ⁱⁿ hospitals practice
& for indigents, - not crystalline
nor quite purified, but a mixture
a Quinine, Cinchonin, Cinchonidine

& Quinidine & perhaps also the
amorphous alkaloid, the Quinine
however prevailing. Why do I
mention this? - If I had not been
excluded without any fault of mine
out of my institution, I would have
had certainly Quinine from
my own trees in the Melbaum
Exhibition this year, whereas
I shall have nothing
of any kind because my hands
are kept tied, and all working
material, to give vitality to my
research, is taken from me.
Ignorance destroyed my Cin-
chonas and even so much else,
that we could grow in one or
the other region of our colony
to advantage, just as you could
grow in the South of California
in warm belt and forest glens
the Fern-Bark trees. I feel sure,
you will not argue with me
from so far a distance on what
my position here ought to be,
but perhaps you may say, let
others grow the Cinchonas! Not,
my dear Sir, I am to be the
leader here of vegetable new
industries, and I must abandon
and that daily & hourly, to
help the colonists practically,
and if I cannot do that and

make annually a good 6' row,
(look only to Hooker's New
Reports!) then I am bound to
go finally to ruin^{*} What do the
colours care about my flora
as a whole? For that they
would never for any period
maintain my position, and
as I sunk all I had in my
researches (the printing of
Wittstein cost me exempli gratia
£220 -- out of my private purse
and only about one tenth of the
copies were sold), I should be
sent adrift as for. Not a cent
without a pension, should be forced
to give up the Library & Herbarium
also & spend the last days of
my life in obscurity & poverty,
getting only once for ever under
the Civil Service Law (a com-
pensation for loss of office. Count
de Castelnau (with whom Dr
Hoddell was out) wanted me
to always according to his
unfortunate talk here^{to} he
relieved of drudgery⁹, but when
one morning he saw it ^{suddenly} announced
that I had to leave my creation
& even the House, which I built

* The daily question in this community is already: What is he doing? What is he doing? What is he doing?

in 17 years, he wrote at once
a doleful lament, though he
helped unwittingly to under-
mine my position. However,
he also numbers now with
the dead, & I was one of the
pallbearers of his Coffin this
month.

You must pardon, dear Dr
Gray, when I inflict this
long letter of sadness on you.
I fear, it is my last!
I have a presentiment that I
do not live till the end of
the year! I am since a long
time under constant incom-
mune, and if I ever sleep a
little, I am in dreams again
in my little paradise, in my
house, among my plants, among
my gardeners, who only wanted
one hour daily attention
of mine as a rule, and did
the drudgery for me, as they
are now doing for the Sydney
merryman, who is now the
Directorial College of Hooker,
Ryde, Eichler & c. If I spent
a few additional hours daily
in the garden, it refreshed my

mind, invigorated by a thorough
oxygenation of my blood my
physical strength, originated
daily new observations, not
only phyto-graphical (for
which the money-grubbing
Australian Communities do
not care), but industrial tests
also so. I am forced to leave
Melbourne at the time of
the Exhibition, - for as a dis-
carded Director and as a head
of a Department without a
Department, I cannot present
myself to the illustrious
Strangers, while an unscrupu-
lous intruder prides himself
up daily with my treasures,
on which the sonnet of my brow
adheres since the last quarter
of a century. I have said as
much to the excellent repre-
sentation of your estate in a letter
to him in Sydney, Dr. Cox. Was
I fear I may not live so long,
and then you may have still
after all that even mislead you,

a few kind words for me in
any little necrolog, you may
possibly deem me worthy of.
My God! what could I have
done to advance science in
Australia and give it a prac-
tical and useful bearing in ~~the~~
new colonies, had I been left
only with slender means in
my creation, or had only half
the sums, mostly squandered
away, since I left (and largely
increased) been at my com-
mand.

And now, good bye, dear Dr.
Gry, and may providence
watch over you also in future,
as it protected you on the
brink of an abyss lately,
and let no clouds disturb
your bright career, such as
obscure mine.

Frederick Mueller



Mueller, Ferdinand von. 1880. "Mueller, Ferdinand von Feb. 21, 1880."
Ferdinand von Mueller letters to Asa Gray

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