

taken a copy of the greater portion, in order to increase the chance for their preservation - and, if thought expedient, some day, to have them published, as illustrative of the character and labors of W. M. and his correspondents, and of the times in which they lived. I had scarcely got through with transcribing the Marshall papers, when I was most unexpectedly put in possession of the entire Correspondence (so far as preserved) of John Bartram, and his Botanical Contemporaries! Here was a quarry to work in - for one so passionately fond of old original Letters, - and those, too, on my favorite topic - and written by men, too, whom I have been in the habit of revering, as the Fathers of Botany, for almost half a century! The papers are numerous (about 400 Letters) - old, of course - stained, tender, and many of them mutilated. They look as if they might have been kept, for a century, in a damp Smoke house! Parts of some, are quite illegible, - and many are so obscured, by fading, and staining, that it would require a second Cham: pollution to decipher them. Nevertheless, I am hard at it. I cannot think of losing so glorious a chance, to procure and preserve copies of the Letters received by the first Botanist in Pennsylvania, and the founder of the first Botanic Garden in the Country. It will probably require all my leisure, for the ensuing year, to get through with them; but if I live, and have luck, I mean to do it. I will transcribe every thing which interests me, - and leave you, and other friends, to prune and condense, afterwards. The last of John Bartram's lineal descendants, now left, is an elderly Lady; and if these papers are not secured by some permanent Society (as I have advised), they will undoubtedly be soon lost, after her decease. Hence my anxiety to improve the present opportunity to secure a copy of such <sup>as</sup> are yet preserved, and legible.

It is really astonishing to reflect on the labors performed, and correspondence carried on, by John Bartram - as proved by these papers: and the most remarkable of all his Correspondents, was good old Peter Collinson, the Quaker dealer in Broadcloths.

I have upwards of 150 of Peter's Letters to John - most of them of great length - and all exceedingly free, spirited, & colloquial, in their style: yet a large number are evidently missing. What is further remarkable, under the circumstances, is, that John Bartram seems to have been in the practice of keeping copies



copies of his own letters - although rather illiterate, - at least, an uneducated man. But he was intelligent, ingenious, and inquisitive - and, withal, most commendably persevering. I have a considerable number of his rough sketches to his Correspondents, which I shall copy.

To give you an idea of the persons with whom Jno. Bartram kept up an Epistolary intercourse, I will mention some of the more distinguished names. Beside E. Collinson - who was his principal Correspondent, - there were James Logan, Dillenius, Catesby, Sir Hans Sloane, Dr. Fothergill, Colden, Gronovius, John Mitchell, Kalin, Linnaeus (whose letters, unfortunately, are missing - but there <sup>are</sup> a few of John's to him), Phil. Miller, Clayton, Garden, Solander, Hope, &c. &c.

If I should be so fortunate as to get successfully through with my task - and you should not be deterred, by the magnitude of the Manuscript - I intend to give you a chance to look at the contents. I like such old documents, - because they afford such a lively and accurate idea of the views, and operations, of the men of that day - and of the difficulties with which they had to contend.

These papers present a good picture of the condition of our Country, a century since - of the state of Botanical Science, both here and in Europe - and of the indomitable zeal with which the Pioneers of Botany, in this hemisphere, prosecuted their researches. I suppose but few of this office-hunting, money-getting generation, will sympathize with my tastes, on this head; but I can't help that. I flatter myself you will take some interest in the matter, because you have already manifested a predilection that way; and I shall hope to hear from you, at some length, as soon as your engagements will any how permit.

I have run over at such an unconscionable rate, that I must now abruptly conclude - with my best respects to Mrs G. with whom I should be proud to make a personal acquaintance. Very truly, your old Friend,

Wm Darlington.

Prof. A. Gray,  
Cambridge, Mass.

} When next  
you -  
Please return  
the same





Darlington, William. 1836. "Darlington, William undated [fragment]." *William Darlington letters to Asa Gray*

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