

355 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Mass.

November 20th, 1922.

My dear Mr. Lankester:

Your letter of the fourth arrived this morning. Your remarks regarding the absurdity of forcing *Cattleya* into *Epidendrum* held my attention. Reichenbach did this in Walpers' *Annales*, vol. 6. At one time I thought he was off on a silly tangent, but I am not so sure about this now. If you hold a specimen of *Epidendrum rigidum* beside a specimen of *Cattleya labiata* and assert that these species represent genera which are so closely allied that taxonomic separation is difficult, the "man in the street" is justified in any sign of horror that he may experience. And yet, viewed as a whole the genera of the *Epidendrum* alliance exhibit such close interweaving of characters that attempts at generic cleavage result in the union of unlike elements. I write this feelingly, because I have been struggling for days in the effort to make a key to the Central American species and genera. I feel that *Cattleya* is distinct from *Epidendrum*, but I cannot make it so for the uninitiated, that is for the man who has no traditional convictions and who has no preconceived ideas. Try yourself to make a key that will hold. Aside from the purely taxonomic aspect of the subject, there is the perplexing nomenclatorial one. *Epidendrum* has as its type species *Epidendrum Vanilla* which is not an *Epidendrum*. Recently *Epidendrum* has been split up into numerous small genera, but I am unable to

discover the advantages in inordinate splitting. I would rather have my difficulties at one point rather than at two or more.

You ask if I really desire specimens of every Costa Rican orchid, even of the common ones. Of course I have most of the common species, but in the preparation of a flora one likes to check up ranges by the examination of actual specimens. Some species that may seem common to you are not necessarily common in herbaria. Epidendrum costaricense, for example is not at all well represented in our collections. I suppose it is common somewhere. Use your own judgement. I ask no greater favor.

Would you be interested in having my seven published volumes of ORCHIDACEAE. I could send them to you, and if they proved a burden you might deposit them in some library where they might some day prove useful. Under another cover I am sending you a little periodical that I have just started for the purpose of quick publication of new things. I hope to see some of your discoveries treated in its pages before long.

I have already forwarded a plant press and driers. I am anxious that these should reach you promptly. If you need anything from here, please feel free to ask for it.

You may ^{be} sure that I realize how R.S. ^{has rallied} the forces of Costa Rica to his aid. He is a live wire, although I sometimes think that his enthusiasm outruns his good judgement. He works rapidly. With collectors this seems to be an attractive failing.

Yours with best wishes,

Walter Oakes



Ames, Oakes. 1922. "Ames, Oakes Nov. 20, 1922 [to C.H. Lankester]." *Oakes Ames Orchid Herbarium correspondence files*

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