

Gray Herbarium



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Dear Mr. Nelson:

I hope you will not regard the length of time which I have let elapse since I received your good letter as indicative of any lack of interest on my part. Perhaps I have had too many irons in the fire recently; at any rate, I find I have been more or less interrupted in my work and it has not been convenient before for me to turn my attention to the several matters about which you inquire, and consequently, I have put off writing from day to day.

You are forgiven, I assure you, the bother you unconsciously caused me when you asked me to check on the additional specimens. I realize now that you have a wrong impression as to the methods we employ (I hasten to add, the methods we are compelled to employ) in regard to the larger additions to the herbarium which we are constantly receiving. I believe you are aware that St. John is abroad, that Prof. Fernald both by time and inclination finds himself confined entirely to research work on the flora of the Northeast, that Dr. Robinson devotes almost his entire attention to tropical and semi-tropical problems, and ~~that~~ I, I scarcely need to add, half the time am only "half on the job". You will readily understand that it is simply impossible to attempt to check with care the determinations of the vast amount of material which is constantly being added. You will recall that one of the things we insist upon in buying specimens is that they shall be determined, at least in large part. Of course we know very well that in many cases specimens so secured are determined by a collector who frequently has not access to either adequate library or herbarium and who frequently lacks experience, so that the determinations in some part will be open to question. But the main thing after all is the securing of choice material and its incorporation in the herbarium, so that it will be accessible to ourselves and those who visit us or who borrow specimens. Sooner or later, then, every group is subjected to critical revision and any wrong identifications are corrected. Some of the great herbaria which are richly endowed are able to employ several assistants, but even in these herbaria a vast amount of material is constantly being inserted, which upon critical exam-

ination by students of a given group always will be found to yield unrecognized or wrongly placed things. This is the reason why any large herbarium furnishes such a fertile field for research; the reason why so many botanists are content to belong to the so-called "closet" fraternity, because they find as much work to do and as many novelties in the herbarium itself as they spent much time in the field.

Anthriscus Cerefolium (L.) Hoffm. is not the same as your no. 2164, and, by the way, the name which I believe should be used for this plant is Chaerefolium Cerefolium (L.) Schinz & Thell. This name, of course, is perfectly terrible. It is unfortunate that the author of the generic name did not write Chaerofolium, but there is a very definite understanding among those who follow the International Rules that the original spelling of a generic name should be changed only with great caution. Anthriscus Anthriscus (L.) Karst. of Britton & Brown is your no. 2164. I do not pretend to know anything about generic relationships in this group, but Schinz & Thell. are very careful workers who are devoted to the cause of sound taxonomy and their interpretation of this genus is to be followed, at least until someone shows that there is something wrong with it. The International Rules recommend that persons assigning generic or specific names refrain from concocting hybrids after the fashion of Chaerefolium, but every once in a while someone, generally a man of education who had ought to know better, fosters a word so formed upon botanical nomenclature. Bicknell, for instance, has proposed the name Parvecarpa (I think this is the form he uses). There is no rule in the International Code forbidding the acceptance of a generic name even tho it is formed in this fashion; consequently, we must recognize the word Chaerefolium, and since Cerefolium is the first species name for one of the elements of the genus, it must be taken up and we have the delightful binomial Chaerefolium Cerefolium! You understand, of course, that the species Anthriscus is much less common than the species Cerefolium.

i. c. ym. no. 2164.

I am sure that I could not even hazard a guess as to whether Brodiaea Howellii was introduced or native in Polk Co. At present it does not occur to me, however, why it might not be indigenous. I am dividing the material of no. 2269 with Dr. Rydberg; and enclosed you will find a copy of the description of Plantago subnuda. I have not been able to locate no. 2054. No, it is entirely possible that typical Barbarea vulgaris may be found in the West, but at the time that Prof. Fernald wrote his paper I suppose it had not been reported. By the way, in looking over some specimens of Ribes I have come across no. 1417, which I now find is R. Roezeli Reg., var. cruentum (Greene) Rehder. The variety may be distinguished from the typical form by the glabrous or glabrate hypanthium and the smoother leaves. Like the species it ranges all along the coast.

According to the International Rules the correct binomial for your Orobanche is O. comosa Hook. There is an earlier O. comosa Wallr. which, according to the American Code, necessitates a new name for the later published O. comosa Hook. Since, however, Wallroth's species is universally regarded as a synonym of O. arenaria, it does not, according to the International Rules, conflict with the use of Hooker's name for the American plant. I am glad to have the specimen of Phacelia, which represents to my way of thinking a luxuriant and perennial state of P. nemoralis, var. mutabilis. We have a similar specimen from Washington. Brand described the species as "biennial or rarely perennial".

I must say that I am very sorry to hear, indeed, that Mr. Deam is going to use an artificial key in his proposed manual. Let us hope that he at least compromises by supplying the usual key as well. This action of Deam's is just one of the many things which are tending to undermine botanical classification as a science. Your argument against it is splendidly taken.

Dr. Robinson tells me that he has written you in regard to the Toxylon difficulty and I trust that the matter is now cleared up satisfactorily. Yes, the genus Crambe was established by Tournefort in 1735 in L. Systema and also in the Species Plantarum. All of the genera for which Tournefort is accepted as the authority were taken up by Linnaeus and accordingly were published technically by him. Tournefort's own work (his Institutiones) came out in 1700.

Your remarks about Schneider are certainly interesting. He must believe that an honest confession is good for the soul, or perhaps he was looking for a confidant and you came along and appealed to him at just the psychological moment! At any rate, you seem to have gotten very close to him. I am disgusted to hear of his unconventional attitude, cynical apparently, toward those things which most of us consider sacred. Yet, to tell the truth, I am not altogether surprised. There is something about his personality, about the way in which he looks at one, I might even say about his movements, which could not, it seems to me, recommend him to even a poor student of human nature.

I shall be eager to hear how you came out in regard to the Civil Service examination and more especially what you decided to do about it, as of course I have no doubt that you passed. I understand very well, I believe, how your tastes run, but the point it seems to me is this: only extraordinarily good luck would place you in exactly the kind of a position you want. Accordingly, the thing for you to do, it seems to me, is to accept something which will enable you to live where a great library and

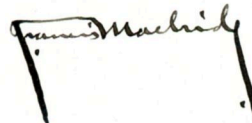
herbarium are accessible and then you will find that you will be able in your spare time to do those things which you like best, at least to some extent, and sooner or later in all probability the opportunity will come to you to work into a position which is more exactly suited to your own ability.

Miss Day tells me that Mackenzie, she believes, tho she is not certain, was originally from Kansas City. You, of course, know that he is now a lawyer in New York and follows systematic botany as a side-issue. Apparently he published the Jackson County Flora at his own expense.

Yes, of course you are disappointed in the American Journal of Botany. But you must remember that now-a-days very little attention is given to taxonomy compared with other fields. Accordingly, any magazine which represents the science as a whole must be largely devoted to other phases of the work. I would urge you to subscribe to Rhodora. Altho it is devoted primarily to this eastern flora, articles are constantly occurring in it which lap over to the western territory, in the manner of those which I have sent you.

With best wishes for an enjoyable Christmas, I am

Sincerely yours,



P.S.

The November number of Torreyia is just at hand. Our friend Piper must be feeling pretty sick by this time, and I hope that he will be able to redeem himself in the near future by a new edition of his on the whole good (so far as it goes) manual of the region. I am particularly interested in the analysis of your country from the zonal standpoint. Western Oregon is not the only locality where the idea of determining species-distribution on a zonal basis proves futile. I have long been aware of this fact in my studies on the flora of southern, particularly southwestern, Idaho, but have never gotten around to publish my opinions. I congratulate you upon having "aired" the matter in print. By the way, I notice one slight error, which I hope to goodness doesn't come back on me! There should, of course, be no period after Schinz in Schinz & Thell.