

Edw
Stirling
18 Nov. 1883

Dear Sir,

I am much obliged to you for your kind letter of 28th Oct. & also for the pamphlet - all of which have given me pleasure & profit. I can assure you that I woud very much I could see your collection of Canadian fossils - I quite sympathise with you in the want of sympathy one gets in their admiration of fossil plants.

There are really very few here who study the subject - but this has advantages of a personal nature to me, for when collectors get good things, very often they hand the specimen to me to keep - but still still I saw more geologists give the subject an intelligent study. I have by no means given up hope of visiting Canada, & hope that some day, under ^{your} guidance, I may be able to see your collection.

You are certainly very kind in offering me specimens for comparison with British species, should you have duplicates to send me & of this offer I may avail myself. For in allied species it is extremely difficult to identify or rather separate them without an actual comparison of specimens. & though I do all I can to avoid errors, errors will creep in.

There is one fossil (among very many, I am sorry to say, that is distressing my peace of mind. I have seen it in the Survey collection from many localities in the Lower Carboniferous but have not yet got certainly twisted branches, somewhat similar to what you figure in your Cyclopteris acadica & Schimper in his Triphylopteris collombi (Handbuch der Palaeont. - Zittel & Schimper. II Band, Taf. I. p. 114 & Revue d. Paleont. Végét. Vol. I. p. 479. Pl. CVII. fig. 13.) Schimper's original figure of this species is very poor & imperfect (Zell. d. Trans-
- ition der Vögel. 1862) but I have not yet seen any better

funiculus associated with my specimens at all like
yours or Schumpe's plants, which I almost think are iden-
tical; but I have found in the same beds, fragments of
a large Sphenopteris, which seems new. If however
you have any duplicates of your C. Acadica, it might
be of assistance to me as I would then be able to com-
-pare the plants satisfactorily. The best specimens
of this plant are in the Suwey collection, who have
very kindly allowed me free use of all their plants, for
description or comparison & further, send me any speci-
-mens I may wish to examine - which is certainly
a great liberty, - as I get not only specimens sent me
from the Scot., but also from the English, when
necessary, from the Irish collection also.

You will see from the papers now sent,
that I have been dabbling with the fossil spore question.
We get plenty of Sac-like bodies, but nothing like
yours S. Brasiliensis or S. bilobata. If you could
spare me a small portion of the shale containing
your species, I would like much to see it. Mr. Bence
& I intend having a paper this winter on the sub-
-ject of fossil spores -

The branch or rather group, I am specially
giving attention to, is the Lepidodendroidea - Lepidodendron
Sipilaria & Rhytidodendron (Boulenger). The various species
of Lepidodendron & Sipilaria are very difficult to deter-
-mine & do seem in many cases to run into each
other. - On my paper on Ulodendron now sent, you
will see that I unite many under the name
of L. Veltheimianum which is a most protean
plant. - In a paper just received from Weiss on
"Flora der ältesten Schichten des Harzes" Jahrb. d. K.
preuss. geol. Landesamt. Jhr 1884. p. 148, he figures as distinct

Species, L. veltheimianum, L. ferslei (Römer) & L. gracile
(Römer) = L. Lossoni Weiss. Now I have specimens
of all these plants & if we take the extremes they
make very few species, but if we possess a large
series of specimens, which by gradual transitions
pass into each other, how can they be regarded as
other than varietal forms, representing, as I
believe they do, only different ages & conditions of
growth — L. Veltheimianum is so plentiful with
as in the Carboniferous domestic series & in the
Calceiferous Soudanese series — (= Lower Carboniferous)

I would very much like to figure a series of the
species, but then when you get a small writ a
number of plates, the smaller societies cannot
afford to publish them, & the larger societies generally
keep their plates for bigger men & I cannot expect
it otherwise. & then our society, practically publish
nothing on Palaeontology as a society, though the
individuals of the staff may publish private
papers on palaeontology in the Trans. of Socet. — So you
see the subject of fossil botany in this part of
the world is just mud "between the Devil & the
deep sea" —

There are several Lycopods (Canadian) which
I am keen about, but probably like the case of L.
corrugatum, if I saw specimens of them, I would
perceive where the real difference lay. Those I
specially refer to are — L. decuratum of which I have
a small specimen from S. Wales coal field — though
I cannot be sure it is really your plant — Also I
am in doubt of the distinguishing character of
L. Pictouense & L. plicatum, which latter seems to
come very close to L. rinosum — Of Siphacis, the

There are four I would like very much to see - S. Brownii,
S. Bretonensis, S. ermensis, & S. Lorraineana, which
latter comes very close to S. Cayana ^{Schimper} or rather,
Schimper's plant is very close to yours. (See Traité d.
Palaent. végét. Atlas. Pl. LXVII. fig. 2)

I am very sorry I had not seen your paper on
the Scottish Devonian Plants before I handed in
my MS. of the Brit. Mus. Cat. of Pal. Plant. - Your
description & drawing of P. Thomsoni is altogether dif-
ferent from Carruthers' & I am sorry to say that
I have not implicit confidence in the latter
Aucher's figures - Perhaps his artist is to blame
for the inaccuracies of ^{some of} his figures, but he should
see they are correct drawn -

I am not mistaking P. robustus -
(which I believe to be Joppa's H. dechenianus)
with P. princeps - You will see in Sieber's
Geology, a woodcut of a Psilophyton in fruit
which at once I think you will recognize as P.
robustus. There are some small fragments
of a Psilophyton found for me to examine in
the Geol. Survey office, Edinburgh, which when
I saw them did not appear to me to be P. robustus
& there may turn out to be P. princeps, but
hitherto I have not seen British specimens
of P. princeps. I think it would be hopeless
to attempt in a letter, to enter into this subject -
for unless we had the specimens before us, it
would be a very difficult matter to make clear -
In the meanwhile, if you have not seen Starb's
paper "Die Silur. Flora der Gtase Fh. in Böhmen"

2) in Vol. LXXXIV, Sitzb. d. Akad. der Wissenschaft. 1 Abt.
Juli-Heft. 1881, please take a look at it + you will
see Psilophyton well "hashed up" - Also in
your remarks about about the plants Jack &
Edwards figure as Psilophyton? in the front part
of the Geol. Soc. May 1877, there are fine examples
of Arthrostephanus; I have the original specimens laid
aside for refiguring + description whenever I can
get time to do so - + further, the woodcut given by
H. Miller in his "Destiny of the Rocks. p. 25. pl. 13, of
"Fern? of Lower Old Red Sandstone, Orkney" is I think
the fruit of Arthrostephanus as described by you - The
type of Miller's figure is in the Museum of Science at
Edinburgh - I will keep a very sharp lookout
for Devonian plants - This last paper you have
sent has opened my eyes a good deal -

I am glad you have not published the
list of plants I sent you for I will very soon be able
to give you a far more complete one, so before you
want the information for your address here next
summer, give me good notice -

I must now tell you, with the object of
working out the distribution of the Carboniferous
Flora, I applied for a grant to the Roy. Soc. Grant
(Government) Committee + got me of £ 40 - So provided,
I again visited ^{the} Radstock Coal Field (W. P.M.) + from
there went to S. Wales Coal Field, then to the Forest
of Dean - In all places collecting personally
& examining Public + Private Collections - The re-
-sults of my visit to these localities are not
yet fully worked out - but I have now a very
large list of Coal measure plants - I am trying

to get all my records brought out on a list, but as there
are several short papers half done, I would like to de-
vote my time to them in the first place -

You say you think I am wise in cultivating
"the field of distribution", & besides it will not be so
much in the way of some of my friends - But the
unfortunate thing is, that this work ~~throws~~ many
specimens into my hands which shows ^{have been made} errors in its
past, & the one line of investigation runs into the
other - but the whole story is the dog in the man's
set - But this is all off the subject matter -

As to my intentions & prospects - I was in
the City Bank when it failed, & was so disgusted
did not care for more banking; - previously I had
been in mercantile office, but as everything was
so dull at the ~~the~~ time of the Bk. failure, I went
to Edinburgh & took some University classes just
to fill in my time & I was fond of botany, & from
then till now I have been working in fossil
botany, at first as out an amusement, but at
the request of Dr. Woodward, I undertook the work of
writing the catalogue of their pal. plant, which I was
informed would not take more than 6 months,
but has now taken nearly two years - Their
specimens were not unpacked when I undertook
the work, so had no means of forming any idea of
what was to do - There is no government official
- in any of the Geol. Survey Staffs, or Museums that
know anything (Except Carruthers) about fossil botany
& in regard to Fossil botany, it does not belong
to Mr. Carruthers Department - My present idea is to
return to business as soon as ever I can after I am
quite free of my British Museum work - 30 is the

limit of age of entering the British Museum, which
I am over - & moreover, I could never compete with
applicants fresh from School - as I have forgotten
many of my accomplishments !!!

I have been from home for a week &
only returned last night, so your kind letter would
have been answered sooner -

With kindest regards -

Believe me
Yours truly

Midston -

Sir Wm Dawson -
McGill College
Montreal -

P.S. Since your being knighted, I have previously addressed
you as Sir John - but a Canadian friend assures me
that you prefer the appellation of Sir William - & in
addition I have seen you referred to as Sir W. Dawson -
Kindly inform me which of these three ways you
have adopted or if it is something else all together.

RK

