

McGill College.

Montreal.

December 15/83

Dear Prof. Serley,

In answer to  
your inquiry of the 9th inst  
I may say that in pre-  
paring thin slices of the  
ordinary comb, the main  
point is careful manipulation  
so as to reduce the slices  
to great thinness. To fac-  
ilitate this I find that  
it is better to attach the  
slice to the stop after the  
surface has been made  
very smooth and true

with Marine glue rather than  
with balsam, as the former  
adds tenacity to the  
slice. When the glue  
has become very thin  
it is necessary to reduce  
it on a fine horse  
by hand with great  
care until it attains  
the required tenacity. I  
think some preparers find  
with fine horse or similar  
material at this stage.  
I have had little success

with the hard anthracites  
which seems very opaque  
and brittle; but the  
above method will do  
for any carbon or bitu-  
minous coal, except per-  
haps the more flaky or  
brittle kinds.

The method of boiling  
in nitric acid should also  
be used, especially for min-  
eral charcoal and the  
coals that contain much  
of that substance. In the  
pieces you get little to show  
structure except spines or spire  
cores but in the crushed

Coal & Mineral charcoal  
when boiled in <sup>strong</sup> nitric  
acid to try as dense  
pieces of Nitro-cell  
are given off you will  
find the fibres of wood  
and bark in a good  
state for examination. They  
should be well washed  
with distilled water and  
then examined in water  
or mounted in balsam.

I think we have  
all your reports in our library  
and by his thanks for  
your kindness in the matter.

In addition to the paper to which  
I refer there is one in Silvanus Gould  
on Spore Cases in wood with a few other  
detail facts. — (Vol. p. 18)