

August 17, 1868 (Doc. 96)

96. TO FELIX FLÜGEL

Smithsonian Institution
Washington. August 17. 1868.

My dear Sir;

In clearing off from my table the correspondence which has accumulated on account of pressing business, I find your letter¹ of July 2^d.

With regard to the "Foolscap" letter-books, we will reserve farther instructions until the sample arrives.

As to sending books in the Cases of this Institution that have been purchased for other parties, I have to say that we are obliged to be very particular in knowing exactly what is in our packages, so that, at any time, we may state definitely what articles have been passed through the Custom-House for us "free- of duty." We are gratified in being able to assist the several Departments of Government, in procuring, through our system of Exchanges, books from Europe; but, in order to transact the affair on strict business principles, we are compelled to require, in all cases where purchases are to be made by parties having the right to enter goods free of duty, that the order be transmitted through us, and, also, that the Invoice from yourself be forwarded under cover to this Institution.

I am just closing up our business preparatory to leaving Washington for five or six weeks; and indeed I feel the need of a change. Since last October I have ~~been~~ scarcely had an hours intermission, [↑]and[↓] in the course of twenty-one years, since I took charge of this Establishment, I have not had more than two or three weeks actual vacation; for when away from the Institution I am occupied with affairs connected with the Light House Board, of which I am, now, next to the oldest member.

I am happy to inform you that the prospects of the Institution are very favorable. After much labor and anxiety, I have succeeded in getting all the funds except \$72,760, in Virginia Stocks^A permanently invested in the Treasury of the United States; the interest on which is payable in gold.

Our principal encumbrance, however, is the Museum and the building connected with it. Could I succeed in transferring these to the Government, my mission in regard to the Institution would be fulfilled. In this, however, I find considerable opposition, resulting from narrow views and the difficulty of comprehending how an Institution can affect the affairs of the world and yet make no display of palpable objects.

In regarding the past history of this Establishment, I have cause to be thankful as to the dangers it has escaped and for the success which has, thus far, extended its course. It has been conducted through the War

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without injury from the conflict and in the midst of partisan strife has been kept entirely free from politics.

Yours, very truly,
Joseph Henry
Sect. S.I.

Dr. Felix Flügel,
Leipsic,
Saxony.

Letterpress Copy, RU 33, Smithsonian Archives.

In a clerk's hand, except for the signature.

1. Not found.

97. TO HARRIET HENRY

Albany Delavan House¹ Sunday August [23]^A 186[8]^B

Dearest. I arrived here last night at one o'clock and forty minutes. The train in which I left Ralston² carried me to Rochester, when I was immediately transferred to the swift train for Albany, and in the course of ten minutes was off on the wings of the wind towards the east.³ The velocity while the cars were in motion was 33 and 34 miles an hour.

...I have thus far spoken to no Albanian I have known before and have not yet decided as to whether I shall venture out this evening. In the little walk I took this morning to find the telegraph office, I was filled with a train of thoughts of persons, and events, awakened by the association of the different familiar objects which presented themselves as I passed along, familiar though changed in appearance and dimensions, they had grown older and smaller. The Capitol was not as far from the foot of State Street as it was in my younger days, and the building itself, which was once a conspicuous object, is now entirely hidden behind a large clump of trees, nothing is seen but the top of the Capitol. The effect is bad. What a change has taken place in Albany since we left it, nearly thirty-six years ago. In that time nearly $\frac{9}{10}$ ths of the adult inhabitants whom we left have gone down to the grave and Albany to us is living Albany no more. This feeling passes off when we are in a familiar house, as that of the Meads, inhabited by some of the same family. The visit to a place from which we have long been absent is like that which one might experience after having been dead. He learns how little he is missed from the busy and ever-changing throng of men.