

May 31, 1869 (Doc. 123)

P.S.

To save bodily labour I employ an amanuensis, who writes to my dictation, but even with this help all my time is absorbed by correspondence not devoted to the other business of the Institution. J-H-

Private Letterpress, Henry Papers, Smithsonian Archives.

In a clerk's hand, except for postscript. Reply: May 25, 1869, RU 26, Smithsonian Archives.

1. A political economist on the faculty of the Columbia School of Law. Henry had known him for at least twenty, and perhaps as many as thirty-five, years. *Henry Papers*, 2:437n; *ANB*.

2. According to a letter from Lieber, Palacios was "an officer of the Spanish Engineer Corps." Lieber to Henry, May 19, 1869, RU 26, Smithsonian Archives.

3. Lieber had forwarded a request from Palacios's wife to Lieber's wife, asking for advice on the installation of lightning rods. Henry wrote up a short manuscript that he asked the secretary of state to forward to Palacios through the embassy in Madrid. Lieber to Henry, May 19, 1869 (cited above); Henry to Lieber, May 20, 1869, in same location as this letter; Henry to Hamilton Fish, May 22, 1869, Miscellaneous Letters (Letters Received), Miscellaneous Correspondence, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, National Archives; Henry to Palacios, May 22, 1869, RU 33, Smithsonian Archives.

4. In his letter of May 20, Henry had asked: "What is to be the future of our financial condition? Can our debt be paid by speculation

without national industry founded on a reduction of our circulating medium?"

Responding to Henry's letter on May 21 (RU 26, Smithsonian Archives), Lieber identified three conditions for the payment of the debt: people had to "learn not to seek for financial direction on Wall Street," had to "cease to think that any great change can be effected without somebody's wincing," and had to learn to avoid looking at money from the perspective of trade protectionists.

5. In his letter of May 21, Lieber warned there were worse problems facing the United States than its national debt. He cited the potential "reenthronement of Jesuitism and universal spread of Roman Catholicism in its worse aspect" and "the disgraceful and depraving Women's Suffrage question with female judges."

6. Henry was responding to Lieber's suggestion (May 21) that he might offer the Smithsonian a monograph on currency. In his reply of May 25, Lieber, a pioneer of political science, took Henry to task for apparently limiting the definition of science to the physical sciences.

123. TO LOUIS AGASSIZ

Smithsonian Inst^{on}

May 31st 1869.

My Dear Professor;

Schomburg's [?work]^A has been received and will be returned to you in a few days or as soon as Prof. Baird has done using it:¹ there is an atlas of plates accompanying it,² but this, according to Mr Gill,³ has no drawings of fishes and consists, principally, of sketches of scenery—

I regret that you were not present at the meeting of the Academy⁴ which I think was a pleasant one ↑although↓ not more than twenty two or three members were present. The weather was delightful and the daily audience large and respectable. Letters of resignation were received from Caswell, Frazer and Winlock. Those of the first two were acted upon

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and the resignations accepted, the other^B were ↑was↓ laid upon the table. I have come to the conclusion that without pecuniary aid the members, as a body, cannot [?attend . . .]^A two meetings a year: besides this, the meeting in summer interferes with that of the American Association with which the academy ought to harmonize: for these reasons I proposed at the session last year that there should be but one ↑annual↓ meeting and that held in Washington in the month of May. The proposition was not agreed to although I think a majority would have been in favour of it had all the members been present.

I have also arrived at the conclusion that no continued appropriation can be expected from Congress for the support of the Academy, and in this opinion I am strengthened by Mr Sumner and a number of the oldest and most experienced members of the Senate.

In the annual report of last year a list of the papers which had been read before the Academy was given and when this report was presented to the Senate by Mr. Sumner he moved that it be printed together with the papers mentioned in the list, when, however, it was explained that these papers could form a volume of transactions of the Academy the latter part of the resolution was stricken out.⁵ The truth is, Congress is unwilling, particularly in the present state of finance, to publish anything which is not of a popular character and which the members cannot distribute among their constituents as a complimentary recognition. It is true that by extraneous effort or by direct personal influence an appropriation may occasionally be obtained, but no reliance as to permanent support [?can]^A be placed upon a [?fitful]^A result of this kind. I think the experience of six years is sufficient to demonstrate the fact that the Academy, for the present, must be self-supporting—that it must make its usefulness and influence felt through the reports which it presents to Government relative to questions submitted to it for solution. Even in the faithful performance of this duty there will arise a [diffi]culty^A in obtaining an annual appropriation: the reports will in many [?eyes]^A be adverse to the views of members, either of the House or the Senate, and from this will result opposition enough to defeat any proposition in favor of the Academy. This is not a mere hypothesis, but a conclusion derived from actual experience in a case which has already occurred.⁶

A proposition has been made to me as Secretary of the Smithsonian Inst^{on} to accept for publication the second volume of the Transactions of the Academy as a part of the Smithsonian series, but after mature reflection I think the adoption of this proposition would tend to difficulties on the part of the Institution and be of little advantage in ↑the↓ way of reputation to the Academy. It would better subserve the interests of both estab-

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lishments, at least for the present, were the Inst^{on} to publish the papers separately which have received the sanction of the Academy, stating the fact of such sanction on the title page.

All the affairs of the Institution are in a prosperous condition: nothing of importance was done at the last session, the transactions principally confined to reviewing the usual reports. The business of the Inst^{on} is constantly increasing and since the middle of last October to the present time I have scarcely been absent from my desk a single day, except when engaged on Light House service.

I remain, as ever, very truly
Yours &c
Joseph Henry

Professor Agassiz,
Cambridge, Mass.

Letterpress Copy, RU 33, Smithsonian Archives.

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

1. On May 17, Henry had written Agassiz (RU 33, Smithsonian Archives), to inform him that the Smithsonian had received a collection of birds and mammals from British Guiana. He asked him to return the Smithsonian's copy of Moritz Richard Schomburgk's *Reisen in Britisch-Guiana in den Jahren 1840-1844*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1847-1848).

2. In a letter of May 24 (RU 26, Smithsonian Archives), Agassiz wrote that he had returned the book, asked if he could borrow it back once "your Birds are identified," and asked to see the accompanying atlas "if there are fishes represented in it."

3. Theodore Nicholas Gill, an ichthyologist and former Smithsonian librarian who had joined the staff of the Library of Congress when

the Smithsonian library was deposited in it. *Henry Papers*, 10:277n; *DSB*.

4. Agassiz had expressed his disappointment at missing the meeting in his letter of May 24.

5. Sumner's resolution, referred to the Committee on Printing, had called for the printing of both the report of the academy for 1867 and of the memoirs appended to the report. When the committee reported back to the Senate, it had amended the resolution to limit the printing to the "report of the operations" for 1867 to 1868. *Congressional Globe*, 40th Congress, 2d Session, July 8 (p. 3818) and 11 (p. 3954; quotation), 1868.

6. Henry may have been referring to the attacks on the committee that evaluated spirit meters. See Doc. 82.

124. TO HENRY LARCOM ABBOT¹

Smithsonian Institution,
June 17 1869.

My dear Sir;

We write to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of June 12th with the accompanying Barometric Curves.² The results exhibited are very satisfactory, indicating, as they do, not only the accuracy of the Self-registering instrument but, also, the fact of the Simultaneous change of the pressure