

TWO UNPUBLISHED GATTINGER LETTERS

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Late in 1932 or early in 1933 Henry N. Oakes, a graduate student at George Peabody College for Teachers, published as a master's thesis in biology a biography of Dr. Augustin Gattinger (1825-1903) of Nashville, a prominent 19th century botanist, and author of a flora of Tennessee. Most of the 152-page book is devoted to correspondence between Dr. Gattinger and other more or less prominent botanists. Mr. Oakes dug out and printed (on pp. 123-124) three letters from me, which were of no particular importance, as I was only a beginner then (not a "Doctor" as implied). He would have liked very much to have Dr. Gattinger's replies, but they were then stored in New York, with a large part of my library, and I could not very well get at them then.

But last fall I visited New York again, and had all my stored material moved to Alabama; and then I soon found my two letters from Dr. Gattinger, which had been buried, so to speak, for 51 years. As they may still be of interest to many botanists, I will reproduce them herewith with brief summaries of my letters, for the benefit of readers who may not now have access to the Oakes book. (Incidentally, Mr. Oakes did not copy my letters exactly, for I am sure I was not in the habit then—or now—of spelling out "Doctor.")

When the second edition of Gattinger's Tennessee Flora came out, in the fall of 1901, I was doing graduate work in botany at Columbia University, and specializing on the flora of Georgia. So I was naturally interested in floristic work in adjoining states. Among other things I was trying to compile a record of all previous botanical work in Georgia, and I knew that Dr. Gattinger had gone into Georgia at least far enough to discover a new *Diervilla* on Lookout Mountain. (Incidentally, I visited the locality, Lula Falls, for the first time on April 26, 1952, and found the *Diervilla* immediately. I had previously seen it on the Alabama portion of the same mountain, but am not sure that it has ever been found in Tennessee.)

I do not remember now how I first heard of his book, but I may have seen a copy at the New York Botanical Garden. I wrote Dr. Gattinger on November 17, 1901, asking how I could get a copy for myself, and for some information about his work in Georgia, and also about the distribution in Tennessee of *Taxodium distichum*, a tree in which I was then interested.

He replied promptly, on November 21 (received November 23), as follows:

I have received your letter and your publication which promises an elaborate work in the near future for Georgia. I have lived 5 years in Ducktown [18]59-64—contiguous to Ga.—Fanning [Fannin] Co.—Morganton County seat. Whatever I found there is included under Ducktown. This is a very interesting region, especially

geologically. I was physician to the mines. I never penetrated farther into Ga. Was once on Lookout and then at the Lula Falls about 10 miles south from Lookout point. There I found the *Dierphylla* [*Diervilla*] at the Fall in abundance, and recognized it directly as a novelty. [Otherwise] I have strictly confined myself to Tennessee. My means were always very limited financially and botanically—as to literature. I carried on in the years 1865-189- an interesting correspondence with Gray, Engelmann, Chapman, Vasey, Moore [Mohr?]—otherwise I had no help. I had no other books than those which I purchased from the earnings of my practice. Ten years ago a Nashville banker ruined me by swallowing up the savings of 20 years hard professional labor. My herbarium is in possession of the university of the State at Knoxville, since about 10 years I believe. I am no "State Botanist" [I must have addressed him as such] such distinction I never aspired at. I am just a common old botanist, mixed with a little medicine.

The publication of the book I herewith send you care of Prof. Lucius [Lucien] M. Underwood of Columbia University is founded upon an appropriation of \$650 by our last Gen'l Assembly. The sum sufficed for printer and binder, but not for distribution. The ornamental engravings on cover and the illustrations, and the distribution by mail and express, up to date, went at my own expense. For this reason I desire that I [it] could be arranged that the Publishers of the Torrey Botanical Club accept for gratuitous distribution amongst members and readers a liberal amount of copies—say 5-6 dozen, only paying the charge of the express, which will not be much. I have already applied to the Directors of the Adams Exp. Co. for free delivery and there would be no further expense in distribution, but what could be covered by the receivers of the copies sending post [age] stamps to the publishers of the Bulletin.

Now, in my 77th year, I can only indulge in botanical recollections, and I can feel too how happy you must have been in strolling over the checkered plains and mountains of your State.

I never knew that *Taxodium* had a variety. The finest cypress swamps I found 30 years ago along [the] Tennessee river near Johnsonville on the Nashville and St. Louis R.R., trees 200° high and 12°-15° [in diameter] near the ground. The good trees are now all "worked up." There the swamps extend up and down the stream for many miles. Those which I saw on the Mississippi grew more scatteringly.

Excuse the broadness of my foliage.

Yours truly

A. Gattinger.

The books were sent to the Torrey Botanical Club, as planned, and in the proceedings of the meeting of February 11, 1902, as reported in *Torrey*, 2:46, March, 1902, the president, Judge Addison Brown, is said to have presented them. For some reason I did not attend that meeting, but I was told afterward by one who did that the Judge praised the work extravagantly. In this letter Dr. Gattinger referred to the possibility of getting the books taken to New York free by the express company. In those days it seems to have been a fairly common practice for railroads to transport scientists and scientific materials free. From Dr. Charles Mohr's letters to Dr. Eugene A. Smith in the 80's and 90's it seems that he often rode on railroad passes (and in the preface of his *Plant Life of Alabama* he acknowledged his indebtedness to the presidents of the three railroads serving Mobile), and the railroads sometimes carried his whole herbarium free

between Tuscaloosa and Mobile when he wanted to put it in better shape.

On November 26, 1901 (date omitted by Oakes) I wrote to Dr. Gattinger again, thanking him for his book and information, and telling about some Germans I had known in and around Dalton, Georgia, ten or twelve years before, who must have come over from Germany with him in 1849.

He replied on December 15. In that letter he lapsed into German for a few lines (as he did in all his letters to Engelmann, according to Oakes); and instead of copying those passages verbatim I have translated them, and enclosed them in parentheses, to distinguish them from the rest. This will doubtless be an accommodation to most who read this.

Dr. Gattinger's second (and last) letter to me follows:

Your letter from November 26th has interested me very much. Your mother a native of Munich! What is her family name, I left there in '49 when about 25 years old. I was born in the very center of the City. (In the government building, which extends from the Schraunerplatze to the Landschaftsgässchen. [Now a new building there.] My father was chief receiving teller, and died in the year 1832. If Mr. Jaeger still lives in Dalton, he can tell you about my early misfortunes in this country.)

I had however some hard experiences of late, in 1892, when, soon after the death of my wife, a Nashville savings bank swallowed up the biggest part of nearly 30 years saving. In consequence I had to withdraw from all subscriptions to publications, and rescind my expenses in botanizing. In consequence thereof I am a little out of date in botanical news. I wish you would kindly inform me to whom I have to address myself in regard to my publication. I wish to offer to the readers of *Torrey Botanical Magazine* copies of the *Flora* for the remittance of a 10ct. poststamp, to cover the mailing expenses. I have tried to get free transportation for the book through the Adams Express, but failed to succeed.

I received from various sources appreciative addresses in behalf of the publication and am confirmed in the opinion that the addition to the *Flora* of "The Philosophy" [of Botany] was quite in its place.

Cotinus Cotinoides was found on the slopes of Cumberland [and] Mts. near Cowan by Henry Eggert last summer.

I hope soon to hear from you again.

Yours truly

A. Gattinger, M.D.

Like Dr. Gattinger, I had some money tied up in a savings bank by the panic of 1892-3, but the amount was small, and the bank (in Americus, Georgia) resumed payments in a few months; and I did not tell him about that. In my last letter, January 5, 1902, I told him something about my German ancestors, and some of the members of the German colony around Dalton.

As has already been recorded in part by Dr. Gattinger himself, and by Mr. Oakes, a small party of political refugees from Germany, after the revolution of 1848, including Dr. Gattinger and his bride, landed at Savannah in the summer of 1849, and headed for Tennessee, about which they had evidently already had good reports. But at that time the railroad then being built by the state of Georgia from Atlanta toward Chattanooga ended at Dalton; and some of the

home-seekers liked the looks of the country around there and decided that they might as well settle there. But Dr. Gattinger was one of the bolder spirits who pushed on to the "promised land," and he made his home in Tennessee the rest of his life, with the interesting consequences that we have seen.

Incidentally many other liberty-loving people left Germany about the same time, for similar reasons, and became useful citizens of the United States. Most of them landed at New York and other northern ports, and their descendants today are mostly in the North. One of them was Charles Mohr, later noted for his work on the flora of Alabama. He left Germany in August, 1848, landed at Philadelphia, and lived awhile in Indiana, California, and Mexico, before settling in Mobile in 1857.

His work paralleled that of Gattinger in several ways. He was born a few weeks before Gattinger, and died two years earlier, and likewise became a recognized authority on the flora of one of the southern states. Both published their *magnum opus* in their 77th year, in 1901. Dr. Mohr was a druggist by profession, and his title of "Dr." conferred on him informally by his friends comparatively early in his career, was not official until the University of Alabama gave him an honorary Ph.D. in 1893. But two of his sons became physicians.

Just when these two prominent botanists became aware of each other's existence is not known. Oakes (p. 121) mentions some letters from Mohr to Gattinger in 1900; but Gattinger's letters to Mohr, which must have been very interesting, probably have not been preserved.

It is probably well worth recording here that Dr. Gattinger's 1878 letter to Dr. Asa Gray, telling mostly about his recent explorations in southeastern Tennessee, printed on pages 62-63 of the Oakes book, was reproduced in part on pages 111-112 of Andrew Denny Rodgers III's "American Botany 1873-1892" (Princeton University Press, 1944). Mr. Oakes did not give the exact date, but Rodgers did. It was August 17, 1878. There are a few other references to Dr. Gattinger in the same book, as can be readily ascertained from the index.

One interesting point about Dr. Gattinger that does not seem to have been mentioned is that he was so well known in Nashville that his correspondents did not need any street address in writing to him, though the city had a population of 80,865 in 1900.