

# BOTANICAL GAZETTE.

VOL. X.

JUNE, 1885.

No. 6.

## An Autobiography and Some Reminiscences of the Late August Fendler. I.

EDITED BY WM. M. CANBY.

AUGUSTUS FENDLER (1813-1883), PROFESSIONAL PLANT COLLECTOR  
SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE WITH GEORGE ENGELMANN

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daylight peeps through the branches, I rise from my heap of leaves, the dry splinters brought with me from home are kindled, and, in addition to a few grains of quinine, a good cup of strong coffee without sugar soon revives my chilly frame. Having packed up my things, I again scramble along river and ravine gathering ferns and flowering plants. Thus occupied I turn gradually homeward in a round-about way. \* \* \* \* This is all very well in dry weather. But in the rainy season it is not quite so pleasant. \* \* \*

But these excursions were sometimes not unattended with risk if the following is to be believed: "It is well known that in Trinidad there is no scarcity of serpents, but I was not prepared for the following which I read the other day, and which happened in a remote district near a cacao plantation, hidden and isolated in the midst of extensive, low and level primeval forests, where shade and dampness reign forever, and where, at times, I roamed about and had the pleasure of gathering many a rare fern: 'On the 9th of December some men, at work in a cacao plantation, on the river Manco, belonging to Mr. Augustine, heard cries of alarm. On reaching the spot from whence the cries had come, they saw a man enveloped in the folds of a monstrous serpent. They were not sufficiently armed, but presently returned in larger numbers, and with cutlasses chopping the snake through at several of the folds, killed it and disengaged the man's body. The man was dead and was stretched by the enormous pressure of the serpent's embrace to the length of seven feet.'" Whether Fendler thought this a mere "snake story" or not, he prudently concluded, "Now, however, if I go to these and similar woods again, I shall take along a more effective knife than the one I usually carry."

Here is the relation of another event which may serve to illustrate the character of the people by whom he was surrounded: "Having ascended one of the highest ridges of the Saut d'eau mountains, about ten miles from town, I took occasion to visit a man known all about as Popo Fernand (though his real name is Joseph Isidore), in order to inquire of him about a piece of land that was offered for sale in his neighborhood. On my way thither I was astonished to find that in and beyond the village of Maraval every man, woman and child knew where the man lived, though his cabin was miles away in the mountains in an out-of-the-way place. When I at last reached his premises I found no one there, but noticed, as something unusual, a great number of beehives stuck all around his cabin and outhouses, the first beehives I have seen in Trinidad. After a while a woman came up and called aloud Fernand's name. He soon made his appearance. Neither he nor any of his neighbors could speak English and I could not speak their language. \* \* \* \* The man seemed, however, to be courteously disposed. In order to see how the land lay, I exposed my little pocket compass in his presence, when at once he seemed to become alarmed, and made me understand that he thought the instrument was intended to show the spot where money was hid in the ground. Of this notion I tried to disabuse him. Soon after he invited me into his room and, as is customary here, he asked me \* \* \* to help myself to the contents of a small bottle he set before me. Not to show any signs of distrust, I poured out about two thimblefuls of the liquor, mixing it with plenty of water, but became somewhat suspicious after drinking it on noticing that Fernand himself had not taken any of the bottle's contents. About ten minutes later, on my way back, I experienced a strange state of mind such as never before I had happened to be in. There were neither dizziness, stupefaction nor exhilarating symptoms. Visions and strange incoherent thoughts flashed across my mind continually and vanished at once as quickly as they came. Any theme I made an effort to think upon slipped from my memory, and instead thereof quite a different theme presented itself with the same futile result, until I became frightened at my own thoughts and terrified at my condition of mind. After a two hours brisk and steady walk this unpleasant irritation of mind gradually subsided. \* \* \* \* What would have been the result had I taken a little more of that liquor?"