

Washington May 6' 1854

My Dear Mr. Marsh,

I acknowledge with humblest penitence the receipt of the third letter from you this day (the last of April 10) without a single line in reply. My excuse must be that, hoping from day to day that the vexed questions of Smithsonian operations and policies would be speedily settled, I decided to write you in full on the subject. The business has however dragged on week after week until the present time, and nothing yet done. The committee on the compromise has had but two meetings on the subject.

I do not know how far you may be packed up on this business, but the affair is now in an exceedingly complicated condition. The committee about two months ago called upon Prof. Sewell and myself to communicate what we might have to say, in writing through the Secretary. I made a brief statement and sent it in. Prof. Sewell however drew up an elaborate memorial, involving a discussion of all the points at issue, and covering some 60 pp. of manuscript. This was sent in on Tuesday, and on Wednesday, a meeting of the committee was to be held. The Chairman (Mr. Pease) however on Wednesday morning notified the committee that a communication had been received from Prof. Sewell of so extraordinary a character as to require a reference to Prof. Henry for answer, and accordingly ^{postponed} ~~adjourned~~ the meeting until this should be received. Six weeks elapsed without action when a call for a meeting was signed by Messrs. Meacham, Stuart and English, and held a week ago (April 29). The committee apologized for and excused its delay, but promised faithfully to report next Saturday, May 13. Mr. Choate came on on Saturday night, of April 29, too late for the meeting, but will possibly be back next Saturday. How the matter will turn out, "Niels Sabe" as we Mexicans say; much will doubtless depend on Mr. Choate's presence.

Prof. Sewell and Prof. Henry are in a condition of apparently irreconcilable warfare; the committee