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(W. A. Johnson to Jas. Bovell Johnson)

Formula for specimens

"The Parsonage"
Weston Jan^y 23rd 1874

My dear Jimmie,

If I were near at hand I could easily put up a few hundred specimens for the microscope for you, & shew you how to do it: but how to write any more than is written in any book on the microscope, I really do not know. For dry specimens all that is necessary is a little Canada Balsam (Pure). It may be fined with Chloroform or Benzine, these make it a little thinner; but no better, rather worse; because they crystalize more or less in process of time, & thereby spoil the specimen. As an experiment try a fly's wing. Cut it off, & very carefully put it between two bits of glass to dry for a week. By this time all the air will be out of it: supposing it to be perfectly clean, if not it must be washed in a saucer full of clean water, held at the thick end by a cork point or any soft thing so as not to damage it, then wipe from union with the body towards the tip with a camels hair brush or a bit of pith of Elder; dry again, perfectly dry, a day or two will do it. Lay it on the middle of the slide, cover with one drop of clean Balsam, breathe on the top cover, & let it down gently: it will soon become flat & in a couple of days bear pressure. The air will escape in time, & it will be fit for examination. So with every thing dry object.

Soft tissues may be tied firmly with thread between two pieces of cork, then cut slices with a razor, wet with water, very very thin; drop into staining fluid for a few hours 6 or 8. a night, wash as above in Glycerine & water 1 gly. to 12 water, with one drop glacial acetic acid. Plunge into Spts Turpentine. At leisure, soak in oil of cloves to remove all trace of Glycerine &^c. Wash thoroughly in clean water to remove dirt &^c dry well & put up in Balsam as before. A little practise will make you perfect, but I could shew you more in ten minutes, than I can write in an hour. Buy "carmine fluid" (1 oz).

You were going to get some handkerchiefs &^c you did not tell me anything about them. Let me know, so as to send the "needful" by the first of Feb^y. Only Feb^y & March now: go in for work with all your heart; do not lose one moment, if you can help. Let nothing take off your attention just now. We had anice little service at the Guild on St. Agnes Day Jan^y 21st an early celebration at 7.30 A.M. I forget whether I had promised to attend to it for them before you went off, or not. Letters from Lou as usual; nothing in them, more & more barren every month. No news from Maggie. I hear Thunder Bay has been open all the year. Armstrong called & took away the scraps sketches &^c yesterday. Poddington came some time ago & bought the books, but has not taken them yet. No news in the Village worth naming. An open winter so far, very icy, & bad walking. Willie getting better. Old Fannie as usual. With much love, & great hopes for your health & success with your lectures, & ever remembering you before the Throne of Grace, believe me

Your very affect^e father

W. A. Johnson

Paddington?