

Euler to Wettstein
Berlin, 31 May 1755
Letter 287 (2788)

[...] Mr. Dietrich has safely arrived here and finds Berlin much to his liking, he is pleased with his surroundings that my situation has allowed me to offer him, and I have no doubt that many opportunities with greater benefits will present themselves. I am very grateful to you Sir for having found this useful man, by making the first proposals that I have taken the liberty to solicit. As soon as I received your letter of 12 April, I posted two dozen of our maps of Germany for Mr. Jeffrey by the selected route, however he will be surprised at the expensive price, that is of one ecus (of which there is a 2 gros discount), that the Academy was obligated to charge to defray the immense costs that the drawing and the engraving of this plate had cost us and that we were unable to rely on a great number of sales. I hope that the maps have arrived by this time and yesterday I received the tobacco that you had the goodness to send me along with the 3 Transactions and Mr. Collinson's and the seeds and the subscriptions for Virgil. I wish to make my most humble thanks all confused with the hardships that these requests and those of our Academy incessantly cause you. . However, the tobacco is excellent, and I ask that you express obligations to Mr. Collinson for the Mays Praecox seeds. As for the Transactions, are not so much me but rather our president and the Academy who are infinitely grateful and present their humble thanks?

Mr. Mayer of Gottingen has just told me that he has just presented himself for the prize to be provided for the discovery of the longitude, and we must all agree that no one until now has had as much right for the prize. Due to the [...] that astronomy provides towards the solution of this problem, it is without second-guessing that the moon will provide the surest method. It has first of all be realized, however that on the one hand the inequalities unknown until now in this star's movements, and on

the other hand the difficulties of this star's exact location from sea measurements have rendered all the efforts of the astronomers useless. However, Mr. Mayer has happily overcome these obstacles one by one. His lunar tables have been effectively brought to such a degree of perfection that only the sun tables have possessed, and now brought to a point we are assured that the moon's location calculated will differ by no more than 30" at the most when other tables are off by over 4'. This discovery alone deserves a reward smaller than the longitude prize due to the great troubles that the great Newton and after him all those geometers have uselessly used to obtain that goal. The ways which Mr. Mayer proposes beyond this so as to observe the real location of the moon seem to demand as much attention, and if they are sufficient so as to assure us that within 30' in such a way that the total errors would not surpass 1' one would then conclude the longitude to within a half degree, which happens to be the precision that is required for the reward of 20'000 sterling. I am very curious to know what the outcome will be, and I request, Sir, that you keep me informed and up-to-date. My entire family and all our compatriots and especially Baron de Gorgier who toasts your health provides for their very humble regards as well as to your wife [...]