

Boston March 29, 1846.

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Dear Margaret,

I do not know whether in the introduction to your last letter, you intended to deprecate or court criticism, or whether you wrote it with either view. At all events, I do not mean to criticise, for this very plain reason that I see scarcely anything to find fault with, and you know fault-finding is the chief pleasure of criticism. If you are chagrined with your composition, I am inclined to suspect that the fault is in yourself rather than in your style: that is that the "root of the matter" must be somewhere in your organs of Caution, Self Esteem or Love of Approbation. Does your want of confidence arise from a few

of the critical penetration of your corre-  
 spondents, and a wish to shrink from  
 the exposure of deficiencies which you  
 believe to exist; from an intense desire  
 to appear in a favourable point of  
 view; from a wish to "put the best foot  
 foremost" when you are sure that you  
 have a "good foot"; or from want  
 of satisfaction with the performances,  
 because you think that they do not  
 give sufficiently evident indications of  
 the abilities of the performer? Such  
 questions as these, fairly answered, may  
 show why you are discontented. I merely  
 suggest them to you, not pretending to fur-  
 nish the replies, or even to suggest to main-  
 tain that any of them will lead to  
 a solution of the difficulty.

I am perfectly aware of the in-  
 accuracy with which memory often  
 pictures past events, and am therefore

easily understand your somewhat  
 mysterious hints respecting the probable  
 disappointments of long cherished as-  
 pirations. I am not however much  
 alarmed by the dark picture which you  
 draw for me; not that I have not  
 witnessed many bright and beautiful  
 reminiscences of dear friends in Edin-  
 burgh; and that I may not have built  
 airy castles in the fair fields which we  
 have furnished for hope and imagination  
 to dwell in: but if I know myself  
 aright, I am disposed rather to look  
 for much at the gloomy than at the  
 bright side of futurity; and perhaps  
 it might be better for me if I were  
 less unprepared than I am with the  
 obstacles and chances which intervene  
 between me and the attainment  
 of objects which I desire; and if I saw

lep plainly leper evils which must  
accompany every earthly enjoyment.  
If it were so perhaps I might have  
more resolution and decision. I am  
however well pleased that such thoughts  
have occurred to you, as you may  
thus yourself be saved from slipping  
from the downfall of any such exag-  
gerated fancies. If I remember right,  
you told me that, before my arrival in  
Edinburgh, you expected to see some kind  
of nondescript barbarian, or a boy in  
a monkey jacket, and that you  
had been especially disappointed. I thought  
at the time that it was very lucky for  
me that no higher expectations had  
been entertained. In a second visit how-  
ever I should not have that ad-  
vantage, and I do feel a little appre-  
hensive that I might suffer in consequence.

I respect your desire that we should  
be of one mind with respect to the inter-  
pretations and ~~doctrines~~ doctrines of the gospel,  
and do not think it in the least  
bigoted or illiberal. It would be  
so, if you found that I could not be  
convinced of the correctness of ~~my~~ your  
views, and then doubted my piety, or  
called me obstinate and ill disposed,  
or ignorant and senseless, because I  
could not wholly agree with your in-  
terpretation of Scripture: That would be  
bigotry; but to desire that what you  
know and believe should be known  
and believed not only by your friends  
but by all men, is only the proper fruit  
of conscientious sincerity. I too have the  
same feeling; I would wish every one to  
have the views which I have of Scripture  
truth, but when I found men whom

I could believe to be true christians, even though they differed from me in many important points, I would be thankful that they at least had the great operative gift of faith, and should be willing to forbear with them if I could not convince them; and so I am sure would you. Instead of blessing you for liberality, I should thank you; and would be happy in return to state to you the reasons of what I believe. Perhaps we should find the difference is not so great as we suppose. I have conversed with persons of many sects, and have generally found that much of what caused them to differ, consisted rather in forms and modes, and laying up or more stress on particular points, than in actual differences of belief; these are however

Some sects, such as the Universalists and Unitarians to whom this remark will scarcely apply; and you must not suppose that I consider any scripture doctrine to be trifling or unworthy of attention, though it is of more importance that we build on the true foundation, than that our building be perfect and symmetrical in all its parts, that we follow Christ, in the Spirit of faith and love, than that we thoroughly comprehend all the words that he speaks.

I am happy to learn that you are connected with a Sabbath school; I have always found Sab. school teaching one of the most improving employments in which I could engage, and it certainly is a most useful one.

The advice given you by your mother would seem to indicate that she thinks very highly of you; for there is certainly no office that demands more self-sacrificing kindness than that which she would assign

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to you. I am very much afraid however, that if you and I were at present on the same side of the Atlantic, I should be disposed to give you a very different advice, and to set at nought all the prospects of usefulness that attach themselves to the office of a "Peggy do gooder". So much might the merits of Margaret blind me to the virtues of the amiable "Peggy".

Your letter contains so much matter for reflection of thought, that I have scarcely left room for saying anything of my own movements. About a month ago, I was called to Halifax to give some information to a committee of our Legislature about the Coal & Iron deposits. In returning I caught a bad cold which kept me in the house for nearly two weeks, it is now however quite gone. With the exception of lecturing to two temperance societies, I have done nothing else beyond my ordinary routine. We have had a very mild winter — only three or four days in which the thermometer was 20° below 0. — one of which days I had for my journey to Halifax, and being well wrapped up the drive was pleasant enough, though in your climate you would think such cold unendurable. Mother desires me to say that she has a beautiful China rose in bloom. Give my sincere good wishes to all your relations. Not being at all alarmed by your warnings about over-anticipation, I hope I may soon see them and you again, and would rather, if I could, say I am certain than that I hope to do so.

Your affectionate friend  
J. Dawson