

Dr. Aue

4 Addison Gardens
Kensington 14th April 1888

Dear Sir William

I have been some days
in receipt of your esteemed favor
of the 28th Ult. and first let me
say that I thank you very much for
your making arrangements for
having my paper on the peculiarities
of birds or of some birds of Hudsons Bay
read before the Natural History Socy,
of which through your kindness
I am an Hon^d Member - I should
prefer this even to your Royal Society
not from any fear for what that

Noor Scurrilous creature Dr Bell
might say or think, but it seems
more suitable, if worth anything
at all, for the former than for the
latter - There has been recently here
as you may have seen in "Nature", a
sharp discussion of the Mammoth
remains found in Siberia, of which
two very opposite opinions have been
expressed - My own views differ
a good deal from those of others, being
founded on what I ~~see~~ have seen
of Carcases of animals drifted down
some of the great Rivers of America -

Perhaps you will permit me
to send you a copy, although it
may not be worth reading or

publishing any where —

I find some, ^{of} our great scientific men have have very peculiar views ^{some} on ^{some} subjects, because they carry on their observations in the laboratory instead of studying the workings of nature.

I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance a day or two ago of Professor Grant, who appears to be a very pleasant and extremely intelligent man, with an intense admiration of your son the Geologist, a subject in which we fully agreed — Mr Grant is going, by advice of the medical men, on a voyage to Australia, and expects to leave in about a fortnight, but is kind enough to say that he will give us the pleasure of his company at dinner before leaving.

The says Mr Sandford Fleming may
possibly accompany him -

We have had a most disagree-
-able ~~spring~~ season up to the last
few days, which have been compara-
tively warm, making vegetation
take a great start, not too soon as
Stock - sheep in particular, - were ill
provided for, all kinds of fodder
being extremely scarce -

Yes - the Hudson's Bay route scheme
has so far turned out, much as I
thought it would, in spite of being
bolstered up by any amount of false
information - one of its great supporters
Captain Macbrien R. N. still professes
to think it practicable for five months
in the year if not more - His on the
Strength

Hoopth of have had an experience of
 Hudsons Strait for 21 days in July, during
 which the handy little Steamer "Alert"
 which can steam in smooth open water
 8 knots an hour - took 9 days to go 250 m.
 - less than 30 miles a day - owing to ice
 obstruction, during which her screw was
 broken, but replaced in a few hours -
 so there was no material detention on
 this account - What then is the value
 of the Captain's opinion? Well, for he has
 a habit of speaking or writing wildly -
 ex. g. In his ledge journey towards the
 Pole on the Hayes Expedition he said
 the snow over which they walked "was
 so deep that it was generally up to the
knee sometimes up to the waist -"

His Companion Lieut Penn. speaking
 on the same subject said, the snow was

was usually about 2 or 3 miles deep
sometimes up to the knee - Any one who
knows anything of an ice sledge travelling
must be aware that to move at all through
snow such as Macklean sheets of, would
have been quite impossible with sledges
loaded to 200 lbs or more per man and
these men disabled by scurvy.

Another thing he said or wrote after
a visit to Nova Zembla, where several
best reindeer were killed with an inch
or two of fat on their rumps - With a
perfect ignorance of natural history, he
theorized on the use of this great amount
of fat, and came to the conclusion that
it was provided for the sustenance of
of the animal during the winter when
all the grasses and mosses on which it
feeds are withered and frozen up and

therefore devoid of nourishment -

This is a tissue of the most gross blunders that ever was penned - In the first place the mosses - which are the chief almost only food of the reindeer in winter, retain all their nourishing qualities during the winter however cold it may be, again before the winter fairly begins say the end of November the buck deer has lost every scrap of his fat, dewing his long passages with his haven of does - so much is this the case that his leg bones, a month or so before, full of beautiful marrow, now contain nothing but some bloody serum -

Now over if Markham's theory had a particle of truth in it what was to become of all the mother does and fawns that are received very thin and fatless in the Autumn - It is writers such as this man who cause half the confusion on subjects in this world - they start

a theory and people as ignorant
as themselves believe it to be a fact.
I could repeat a good many tales
of similar kind taken from the
Narratives of our Royal Navy Arctic
Explorers, and when I want to leave
a good laugh, I can almost invariably
find the required stimulus in one or
other of these volumes -

Excuse this long scrawl
and with our united kindest
regards to Lady Dawson and your
family ever believe me

Very sincerely yours

Sir William Dawson F.R.S.
McGill College

John Rae

P.S. My wife orders me to say her love
and her thanks to Lady & Miss Dawson *JR*