

"ATLANTIC
Courtship." —
being
Authentic letters
from
William Dawson to MARGA
AND
MARGARET MERCER TO
William Dawson.

1841 — 1847.

from microfilm reel #226

"Sir William and Lady Dawson memorials,
by Lois Winstow-Sprague."

Glasgow, Feby 24, 1841.

" O there's the postman, that's a letter from Mr Dawson " so it is, and you may be thankful that it is not a sheet of blank paper, for there are no adventures to be found in travelling in these times, I got to Glasgow without even a railway accident, and found my way easily to Mrs Nelsons, but she will not find me a very profitable lodger, for before I had been in Glasgow two hours, I had two invitations from friends of my fathers to live with them during my stay here. I have not escaped the music by coming to Glasgow, for at the house where I am there are two young ladies who play both on the pianoforte and accordian, one of them touches off some of Straus's waltzes beautifully - Glasgow is a much more beautiful place - not than Edinburgh so don't be jealous - but than I expected. It is a bustling place, more like an American town than Edinburgh.

I believe I have nothing more to say about myself, and I have no time to be poetical or sentimental; so I shall not trouble you to spell any more of my horrid scrawling - with the hope then that you will not be very dull in consequence of wanting my pleasant company for the long space of three days

I am that " good creature "

J.W.Dawson.

Glasgow May 11th. 1841.

Marion and Margaret,

My Dear Friends,

I have but little time for letter writing, but I cannot deny myself the pleasure of using the only means of conversing with you that are now left me. I cannot write a merry letter, but must try to prevent it from being a dull one, which it certainly would be if written according to the present state of my feelings. I cannot tell you how I felt as I saw the last glimpse of Arthur's Seat - I thought of the friends I had left beside it - next to parting with you, it was the most melancholy thing I had seen for a long time - It produced the same depressing feeling of loneliness that I felt when I left home six months ago.

But I must change my subject, travelling by the canal is very monotonous, but there is nothing particularly terrible about it, although one

or two young folks on board were seasick, and some older ones seemed very much frightened - We arrived rather late at the railway in consequence of the strength of the wind. . . . I dined in the coach upon the sandwiches which your mother put into my pocket - in this I only followed the example of my neighbours; one had biscuits, another bread a leg of chicken and some salt in a paper bag.

We arrived safely at Glasgow, and I have now finished my business here and will sail in an hour or two in the " Royal George " for Liverpool. This is not a very bright sort of a letter, but I hope to write better ones from the other side of the water. I need not tell you that your parents and friends have the best and kindest wishes of their grateful friend -

J.W.Dawson.

Liverpool May 17th. 1841.

Dear Margaret.

Marion has impressed me with your good intentions with respect to writing to me, I hope you will not forget them. I have been enjoying to perfection the pleasures of solitude among crowds, and maloncholy pleasures they are, compared with those of the pleasant society which I have lately enjoyed, I have indeed been labouring hard to spend time - Sometimes I stroll about either among the docks , or in Lords and Bold streets which are the Princes streets of LPool , gazing at the goods in the shop windows, or at the faces of the pasengers, but that is dull work without a companion - The only place I could find where there are green trees or anything else to make a lonely walk pleasant, is a sort of public garden connected with a cemetery, but it was too far away from my lodging to go to frequently. I went the other day to see the steamer " British Queen, which the proprietors had made a public exhibit for the benefit of the families of the crew of the President She is a fine large vessel, though not as finely finished as some of the smaller steam boats - Other portions of time I spent in reading, either at the inn or the public library (reading room) which with the exchange in connection with it presents a scene somewhat similar to your description of the hall in the parliament house on court days. One day in rummaging among my papers, I found some of the pieces containing the unsuccessful attempts at taking your likeness, I compared them with one another, and partly from them and partly from memory , sketched a profile, which perhaps in consequence of being unable to

Edinburgh May 15th. 1841.

Margaret Mercer to William Dawson.

Dear Friend:

As I think it will be too long to deny myself the pleasure of writing upon my new desk, untill I have an opportunity of answering your expected letter from Fictou and having promised to honour you with the production of my pen written upon it, I now write you a few lines as a commencement to a correspondence with a sincere desire it may not fall off on my part - if it does, I can give now no apology to offer except my old one of incapacity to compose properly, which in our conversation about it you have convinced me that ease will never be attained in it but by practise, and as you have now furnished me with every requisite convenience for writing that I can possibly desire, I have now made up my mind to write you as to a friend whom I expect will take the trouble of telling me my faults and who knows my character so well to require me to add that a very little butter by way of encouragement will not be amiss - but I think you have had enough of this.

I suppose Marion in her letter of last evening would tell you that the cleaning has been going on without intermission since you left us, until last evening when we sat down comfortably to rest ourselves for an hour or two. Mother and Father being out to supper, we missed your pleasant company more than than any other evening previous to it. Marion filled up the blank as she best could by writing to you, but it is a poor substitute for conversation. As for me I was enjoying the fruit of my labours in viewing a very clean room, and waiting for Marion to finish her letter so I could add something to it, when she informed me that there was no space left. I determined to let you know the good intentions that I have formed. I have written one for myself this morning.

I was just going to finish with the usual phrases attached to young ladies letters - eying this scrawl I thought it quite beneath my dignity to use any affected phrase, so allow me to subscribe myself,

Your sincere friend

Margaret Mercer.

P.S. I have heard it said, that a letter without a post script was like a shorn head without a wig, and as I would not like the bad organ of my epistle to be so very visable I shall clothe it with a request that you will not be too severe with your criticism, and that you will burn it as soon as you have read it. M. M.

compare it with the original, I consider it a very good likeness. That occupied my time for an afternoon. You will learn from Marion's letter of a change in my plans, respecting leaving this country - It will be a longer passage than of the steamers, but much less expensive and perhaps more safe.

This is probably the last letter that I shall write you from this side of the Atlantic - I know that you will join me in the hope, that I may be able to write good news from the other side of the long ferry - until that time you may be certain that you and my other friends at Edinburgh your beautiful city itself, will not occupy the smallest portion of my thoughts. I could write away all day such stuff as I have been writing but I have many arrangements to make and must now for the present bid you farewell, with my best and warmest wishes for your prosperity and happiness -

Your affectionate friend

J.W. Dawson.

P.S. I have just received your letter, and you cannot imagine how much pleasure it gave me - after reading it I can no more believe any pretences of inability to write and write excellently - You will excuse my answering it at least till I reach the end of my voyage, I can add no more at present - Yours
most gratefully and affectionately

Wm.

Liverpool May 19th. 1841.

Dear Margaret.

I did not expect to write you another letter from this place, contrary winds however have prevented us from sailing, and I am still idling about, scarcely knowing what to do with myself. Your letter arrived just as I was closing my last, I thank you for it most sincerely, and hope that since you have commenced writing, I shall have the pleasure of receiving many epistles from you, equally kind and equally well written. I have had few acquaintances here, the only evening that I spent out was last one when I took tea with Mr Millar, the gentleman to whom, as you recollect, I wrote for information respecting my passage. His family are very pleasant, and he has a fine and valuable collection of pictures, so that I spent the evening very happily. I am of course very anxious to be gone, but must have patience till the weather favours me, and will endeavour to spend the time of my unwilling residence in Liverpool as well as possible. You will think that my letters

come very frequently, but I have much time to spend, and it is a pleasure to write to you, even though I have little to say in which you can be interested.

My kindest respects to all my friends in Edinburgh, they and the pleasant days I have spent with them are and will be frequent subjects of my thoughts.

I hope to leave soon, as it is seldom that the wind blows long in one direction at this season - If I am detained longer than I expect, I may write again but it will scarcely be worth your while to send me letters here, as it is very probable I will be away before they could arrive.

Farewell then for the present - and be assured that whatever my fate or fortune you and your family will occupy one of the dearest places in the affection of -

J. W. Dawson.

Pictou July 30th. 1841.

Dear Margaret,

I have not, as you see, sufficient patience to wait for an answer to my letter before writing another. Indeed I had commenced one to you by last packet, but being called away while writing I could not finish it in time for post, yet I have nothing of importance to tell you, even about my constant subject - myself, except that I have been so fully employed in my occupations, that I have scarcely any time even for a walk. I have not been more than half a mile from our own door since my return. I have however a little time for reading, and have commenced studying botany, a subject of which, as you know I am profoundly ignorant. Father and Mother pay me the rather equivocal compliment of saying, that I have become a little more civilised than I was before my expedition to Britain. I am however nearly as solitary as ever. After my return I had to call on a host of people and also be called on by them, but I can scarcely find time to keep up an acquaintance with any of them, perhaps if you were here I should make a greater effort - Mother told me the other day that she should very much like a visit from Marion or you, so should I. It would be a nice little summer jaunt. If you were here now you might have loads of flower and fruit, and bright blue skies such as I am sure you seldom see. Yet I can scarcely say that Pictou is as beautiful as Edinburgh, though a very pretty little place. I have got an American rocking chair, which I intend to send over by the first opportunity - It will be at least a curiosity. A grown lad who was here a few days ago, after rocking on it for an hour declared it to be one of the most comfortable he had ever seen.

I have been filling my letter with little else than trifling thoughts, nevertheless, it will at least let you know that I do not and can not forget my friends in Edinburgh, and wish to be remembered to your father and mother and other relations, give to them my best and kindest wishes and those of my parents. I hope soon to have a letter from you. When you write tell me anything or all things that you have been doing, and do not fear that I shall not be interested, even the names of any of the places about Edinburgh which I knew, when I happen to see it in a newspaper, revives old recollections which are " Good for bring glad " as the poor Indian says of his glass of rum. When you write, be sure and do not let the distance which separates us, cause you to be more distant in your written than in your spoken conversation - It has at least no such effect upon me, for to me I think that absent friends are even more dear than when present.

I enclose this to your mother because I do not wish the young gentlemen about our post office to have your name to talk about. And now, for a little while " Good bye " in the best sence of the word " God be with you "

Yours affectionately

J.W. Dawson.

Pictou Sept. 15th. 1841.

My very dear friend:

I send you a few curiosities from this outlandish country. The first and largest is a rocking chair, not a very splendid article, but such as they are commonly made. This I send for the use and benefit of your father and mother, with the warning to be careful not to tilt it too far back or an overthrow may be the consequence - such accidents having happened to your humble servant, when too deeply engaged in his own meditations, during the process of rocking; you may imagine their effect ! There is also a box and basket for you, ornamented with porcupine quills by our Indians; and of the neatest patterns I could find. Such boxes are now much more scarce than formerly, in consequence of the destruction of the porcupine. If the large box be useless to you in its present form, you may remove the top, and use it as a table mat, for holding any ornament, a purpose for which they are often employed (they wont do to put hot dishes on) You will also find a head of Indian corn, the product of our garden last summer, I wish I could send it green that you might

taste that American luxury. I also take the liberty of enclosing a parcel of stones to Mr Rose, which you will much oblige by sending. I have filled up the box with a kind of wild everlasting flower. You must write me on receiving this as I shall feel anxious to hear of its safe arrival. Its an inducement to which, I hereby give the choice of the boxes, as well as this letter, of course far the more valuable, to whoever first answers it. The summer has been gliding away very quietly with me, most of my time has been occupied by my business, but in spare hours I have been variously employed, gathering and preserving minerals or insects or wild flowers, and of the latter I had before no idea that we had so many or so beautiful; or collecting a few mosses to send with your birds next summer, which birds are now flying no one knows where? I have also taken a few sketches and tried to finish them with ink, which I now like very much as a drawing material. I would advise you to use it rather than or instead of pencil.

I have of course been reading and by way of relaxation from dryer studies, some odd subjects. A few days ago I glanced through two or three books for the use of young ladies, entitled " Guides to Etiquette " and found in them some amusing things. Among other subjects I was much pleased by an attack on waltzing which I hope will soon go out of fashion. If writing against it however could have any effect, what Byron has said of it, would long ago have annihilated it. I have also been reading " Barnaby Rudge ", although I have lost the first part of it. There is a beautiful little sketch both in words and a woodcut, when Barnaby talks of the gold among the sunset clouds, I can fancy you and I reading and admiring it together, and that makes me like it all the more.

I am afraid I am a sad hand for writing silly letters, for I fill up my paper before I well know what I am going to say, you will however I know give me the credit of at least meaning to do well.

Your affectionate friend

J. W. Dawson.

Edinburgh November 1st. 1841.

Dear Friend:

I have long wished to write to you, but previous intention and the dread of commencing so arduous a task has prevented me. We have a few hours since received your kind presents safe and sound. Father and Mother desire me to return you their very best thanks for the rocking chair, they are quite delighted with it, so are Marion and I it has been occupied by one or other of us since its arrival, accept also of the sincere thanks of Marion and myself for the boxes, you must not think that selfish motives induce me to write to you,

both being in my opinion equally beautiful, and therefore a matter of indifference to me which I get. Mother prizes her Indian corn head highly, the more so when she learned it had been grown in your garden - it is the first any of us has seen with the leaves around it.

Father has just come into dinner, and desires me to write the following sentence to you - " Yours of the 29th. came duly to hand , and also your father's of the 30th. of the same month favored by Mr Logan, who we had not the pleasure of seeing.. much gratitude for the kindness and assistance he had received from you. Remember me to your father and mother, tell them they estimate much too highly little attentions received by you while in Edinburgh. "

M.A. M. clerk for G. Mercer.

You say the summer has been gliding away quietly with you, for me, it has been quite the opposite, since the month of June, I have spent most of my time in travelling through part of my dear native land, the more I see of it the more I regret you did not pass the summer in Scotland and visit some of those justly celebrated places, which before you left I had read and heard of, but had formed no correct idea of their beauty and grandeur.

My first tour was to the west of Scotland, Glasgow was our first stage at which place we remained for a day or two, I had never before been at any large town except Edinburgh, and having heard so much of its superiority I was astonished to find so many handsome streets and shops out on it. We visited several of the largest cotton mills and other places of interest. We sailed down the Clyde to Greenock, from there by Loch Lough to Loch Gailhead passed a wild and beautiful tract of country that brought us to Loch Fine, on the opposite side of which is situated the beautiful little village of Inverary, the combined circumstances of our approach to it has made an indelible impression on my memory. We crossed to it just as the last rays of the setting sun was casting a rich golden hue on all objects around us. The houses near the water were beautifully mirrored in its calm bosom. A little pier around which were fastened dozens of fishermans boats, the fishermen busily employed on shore in preparing for their next days labours. And on The pier several officers and gents waiting to have a look at the new arrivals. Altogether it looked more like a scene I would have met with on the continent than one so near Edin., but I must not enter into details so fully, else I shall have to write you a quire instead of a sheet of paper.

Marion has written you a discription of the jaunt I had in company with her, since our return, we have been to Stirling and the Bridge of Allan for a

few weeks, this jaunt was quite unexpected.

I have again commenced to practise my music under the superintendance of Mr Napier - it is possible I shall not attend any other classes this winter.

Having heard you express great dislike for crossed letters, I must stop. Oh Mr Dawson, if you only knew how the blood gushes to my face, when I think you will probably receive and read this epistle, and how much I feel inclined to stuff it in the fire, which duty, I hope you will perform, the moment you read it ... you would surely pity me !

Allow me again to repeat our united thanks for your presents
and believe me to remain.

yours sincerely

Margaret A.Y. Mercer.

Pictou November 29th. 1841.

Dear Margaret

I was exceedingly delighted by the receipt of your letter, both on account of its contents and because it is an evidence that you remember your promise of corresponding which I at least have not forgotten. You appear to have spent the greater part of the summer in travelling, and must now have a far higher opinion of Scotland than you ever had before, lakes and woods and rocks are beautiful objects in all countries, and in few perhaps than in yours. I can follow you only in imagination, but that is after all the easiest mode of travelling. With Glasgow, I am sure you would be pleased, it is a beautiful city but depending for its imposing appearance on a situation and arrangement altogether the opposite of those of Edin. With the feelings to which you refer in the conclusion of your letter I can sympathise because I have felt the same, How know you but at this moment I may; and indeed I should but that I am sure you are well acquainted with my little vanities and weaknesses and will place upon what I say a good construction. I cannot pity such feelings for properly exercised they are good and aimable - They preserve from evil, and are the opposite of that conceited self confidence which of all propensities is the most odious. Such feelings have been experienced by the best and greatest men, and women too, in doing and writing things worthy of all praise and honour, and far more frequently than vanity, are the companions of real excellence. But for me you need not fear, for I am not fond of picking faults, especially in what pleases me, and if I were, perhaps you would be the more acute critic of the two, else why does that organ of eventuality project so fully in the centre of

your forehead. But if I were mischievously inclined I might quarrel with the very thoughts in which you deprecate criticism; for it is when we write to the dull and unthinking that there is most need of care and precision, and thus I might construe them into an opinion anything but complimentary to me. If I were at this moment writing to a stupid person, I dare not write as I do. I would be afraid of being misunderstood, and of all sort of quibbles being raised at me, But in writing to you I know that if there be much that is insipid you will treat it indulgently, and if there be anything well said it will receive new lustre from the thoughts with which your mind will surround it.

Winter is now approaching with its cold and snow, and we have every prospect of soon hearing those most pleasant sounds of our winter the merry jingling of sleigh-bells -, and warm firesides now remind me of yours last winter and a little regret may mingle with the recollection, for this winter I cannot enjoy the society which is there, but other friends are here, and since both cannot be in one place I must be content. Your mother used to say that I would feel more lonely at home than before - as far as mere feelings are concerned perhaps she was right, if she thought I might enjoy the society of other ladies she was wrong for as far as regards the society of my equals in age, I am from choice as lonely as before. A few days ago in walking through the town, I heard the tones of a piano from an open window, in a strain that seemed very familiar to me - Listening for a moment, I recollected that it was something which I had often heard last winter, nothing very grand either, but only one of those lessons which Mr Napier used to accompany with his ' ' As I walked on, I thought that music was a pleasant thing, and then I thought of three or four houses where I might hear as much as I chose and be a welcome visitor. But then it appeared irksome to leave my own fireside and associate with people whom I cared little, and I concluded it would be better to stay at home and less trouble and read natural history or anything else. That reminds me of telling you before my paper is spent, that I have commenced reading some lectures on minerals, to a kind of Mechanics Institute or Literary Society as they call it here - at whose meetings I have often before read papers, I do not know whether they care much for the subject, but that is of little consequence as the principal benefit is to me in preparing them. I had however a good audience, among others a very respectable assortment of young ladies.

To you I must give my sincere thanks for your letter, I wish I could write an answer more worthy of it. With the wish and you will believe it a sincere one, that all good and happiness may be with you and yours.

Yours affectionately J. W. Dawson.

Dear Friend:

Your letter dated 29th. November was duly received. Mr Crerar was kind enough to deliver personally the parcel you entrusted to him, he called upon us two or three times - You mention he is a good specimen of a Nova Scotian - you are right in one respect, he is a good specimen but not of Nova Scotia, Scotland has the honor of being his birth place, so I understand, Pardon this strong language, patriotism you know is fully developed in my cranium. He has kindly offered to convey this letter to you, I have entrusted him with a verbal communication to you which I am not permitted to write. Give mother's kind regard to your mother and tell her she was much gratified by receiving a letter from her, but she must excuse her from answering it as she almost never writes. Mother has read Bushes book you sent her, and wondered after she had done so how she had patience to finish it, I cannot say so of the magazines you sent Marion and I. We return you our sincere thanks for them. I read them after supper, the only time I have for light reading, so they offer me amusement for a long time. Did you read " Self Devotion " ? I think it is one of the most interesting stories I have ever read As for me, I may safely say, there has been very little of my time this winter been spent in idleness - I have now the charge of the housekeeping department. Mr Napier continues to be a regular visitor at No. 6 - and besides all this I am studying geography, history and grammar, under the tuition of Mr Brown (Dominic) at whose house I am a regular visitor every evening at half past five, no teadrinking, no parties - no walks home have I time for.

When travelling about last summer, I collected a number of whin and broom pods, to send you the peas, in choosing the ripest, I had gathered a number of empty ones, and did not discover my mistake until now when it is too late to get any more, I shall, however, send you what I have: I hope some of them may germinate.

You will probably be surprised to learn, that Mr Gregg, your favorite is dead; he was four or five months confined to bed, he died of disease in the windpipe, Poor fellow ! he was no favorite of mine when in health, but after he was laid on the bed of sickness, I could not help taking a deep interest in him, he had not a relation in Edin. to attend him, and was removed from his lodgings to Minto House Hospital, beside our meeting House, he told mother he thought he was dying. Mr Mitchell has been ill and still has a very bad cough, I fear he is in a consumption.

You must excuse my crossing a wee bit of this letter to send you the

various compliments and respects of Mother and Father, Mr and Mrs Cleghorn, Mr and Mrs Bell and Marion. Our family are all in the enjoyment of very good health and I trust when you write me you will have it in your power to send me the same pleasant intelligence.

I had almost forgot to take notice of your having become lecturer; do you intend printing these ? if you do, I beg to remind you of your promise to send me a copy - But seriously speaking, how have you got on. I commenced this letter on a large sheet of paper but I thought I would never find enough material to fill it up, so laid it aside, and commenced on this one, and now I am too lazy to transcribe it and have to cross it ! so you must take this as excuse for

Your Friend

Margaret Ann Mercer.

Pictou March 31th.
1842.

Dear Margaret;

It is now four months since I have received a letter from you, Though I have thus nothing to which to reply, I have commenced a letter merely because I have time to write and feel very much inclined to do so - Letter writing however like arguing is but a dull affair without something to answer If then this epistle be very dry and uninteresting, you must say that it is because I have nothing from you to inspire me with more lively ideas.

We have had a very extraordinary winter, combining all the extremes of our winter and yours, New Year's day was our coldest, so cold that when I attempted to take a walk I found the wind too keen for me - contrasted with this we had weeks of comparatively warm and wet weather, much as you have in November.

The failure of the ship and timber trade and consequent scarcity of money, made last winter a rather dull one among the gayer sort of people here, For in this country where there few who have independant fortunes, the rule is that when business is brisk people are very extravagant, but when bad times come they are forced to be saving. For three or four years, there has been an uncommon rage for speculation among our good folks, Banks were established, and almost everyone could get credit. Everybody commenced building ships, and was certain to make a fortune. This year the tide has turned, and they are all half ruined. Mr Crerar, who brought you my little parcel, is one who has been deceived in this way; and as he has not been long in business, and cannot have made much, I fear that he will find it a serious affair. In consequence of all this

there have been very few parties or balls and all that sort of thing during the winter. For my part I have not spent one evening from home for the last six months (except at Society meetings) This however is nothing very unusual with me.

By way of public amusement we have had a nice little concert (a novelty) in Pictou) given by a family of respectable musical talent, who by the death of their father were reduced to rather poor circumstances. On New Years day we were also to have had a display of fireworks in honour of the " Queens Boy Baby " as the Yankee papers call him; but the day was too cold for anything except sitting by the fire, and though the fireworks were afterwards exhibited on the ice on the harbour many of them had been injured by keeping. Having thus narrated some of the most important events of our town, I will descend from these important matters of history to some of my own personal affairs. I have got a stand and case to hold some birds for you and Marion, and have been fitting them up with some of our beautiful mosses and lichens. I have already obtained a few winter birds, and as our spring ones are beginning to arrive, I hope to have the pleasure of sending you early next summer, a few choice specimens of our natural productions. I hope the winds and waves will permit them to reach you safely. -

From you or Marion I hope to have a letter soon, and if you can form any idea of the pleasure which hearing good news from you affords me, you will not deny it. Write anything or everything that you have been hearing seeing thinking or doing, and be assured that all will be interesting to me.

We are all well, and have been so during the winter - though I have not engaged in many opportunities of improvement as last winter, I think that I have acquired some information, and am at least a little wiser and better than I was six months ago. Give my kindest respects to your father and mother and all your other relatives, and may I soon learn that you have all been well and happy since I last heard from you - My father and mother also send their best wishes for you.

On looking over my letter, I think I should apologize for troubling you with so uninteresting a scrawl - Having written it, however, it must go, I shall probably not write again till I send the birds in June, before which time grant me the happiness of hearing from you.

Yours Affectionately.

J.W.Dawson.

P.S.

Finding that I have left too little room for folding this letter without a cover, I may fill up this space - reading some time ago an article on the Holly I found it mentioned that only the leaves on the lower branches were armed with spines, because they only are liable to be injured by cattle and other animals -

I recollected that last winter we noticed this peculiarity in an old holly at Craig Millar and speculated upon its use, Southey expresses it very neatly.

"Its glossy leaves
 ordered by an intelligence so wise
 As might confound an athiests sophistries
 Below, a circling fence its leaves are seen
 Winkled and keen,
 No grazing cattle through their prickly sword
 Can reach to wound,
 But as they grow where nothing is to fear
 Smooth and unmarred the pointless leaves appear "

Thus many circumstances awaken pleasant remembrances of our excursions and conversations, with which I may perhaps sometime or other fill up an epistle altogether.

Pictou May 30th. 1842.

Dear Margaret:

When I last wrote to you, I expected that my next letter would have been sent by the Isabella; but that old ship has finished her last voyage, and my parcels must wait for another conveyance. She became entangled in fields of ice after entering the Gulf of St Lawrence, and having drifted in this situation for some time was wrecked on the north point of Cape Breton. The crew and passengers succeeded in landing safely, and most of the cargo would probably also have been saved, had not the settlers on the coast (Irishmen and Highlanders) broken open and plundered everything they could obtain from the wreck. Mr Crerer finding that he could save little of his goods, came here as soon as possible, and handed me your letter for which I must sincerely thank you. He said he was much indebted to your family for their hospitality to him.. He gave me at least a hint of the intelligence to which you refer, it affords me much pleasure, because I trust that it will be an event productive of happiness to those most interested. There is something melancholy in it too for it is a beginning of change in your household, and makes me think of the possibility of my revisiting Edinburgh and finding all things different from what they were. As a set off to this however, your mother used to say that she must have some of her daughters to take care of her in her old age, and you being promoted to that office may not have flown away for some time to come.. I hope that as soon as the approaching change is passed you will write me a full and partictular account of it. In the meantime I shall say no more upon this subject, till I obtain more accurate information.

Your mother's remark on Bush's book is exactly what I expected. It is good however to see all the sides of a question. I am happy that you were pleased

with the magazines, I may send a few more if I can find any one to carry them.

I thank you for the seeds enclosed in your letter, We have here few of the evergreens which adorn your gardens and fields in winter, and I should feel very much pleased if I could naturalize the broom or whin in Nova Scotia, I'm afraid however that our winter frosts are too severe even for the hardy whin. When the broom is cultivated here, it requires to be covered with straw and matting all winter, I shall however bestow on these seeds as careful cultivation as possible both for your sake and their own. I sowed the whin seeds at our farm, on the Queen's birthday, and having taken my gun with me was so fortunate as to obtain, the same evening, three of our most beautiful birds, which I have stuffed and placed upon a pretty little moss tree, which I hope may one day find a place on your drawing room table; and with which I intend to send an account of the lives and habits of the birds which I have placed upon it, so that you may know their history and character as well as see their forms and colours.

You mention my lectures, they are but occasional contributions to the common stock of our little society; and with respect to aspiring to authorship, that is an undertaking, involving much labour and consideration, and one for which I am not prepared; especially as I know nothing respecting which I could publish anything worth reading. Don't fear but that if anything so important should happen, you would be the very first person to hear of it.

I have been lately engaged in a trade which may amuse you, an American ship lately brought here several tons of West Indian conchs, such as those on your mothers mantelpiece. A boat load about 9 or ten tons was brought to my father's wharf for sale, but the boys crowded into it in such numbers that more were stolen than sold, this induced the owner to offer them in a lot, and father thinking that they would make good lime for his farm, purchased the cargo, and they were thrown into his store. People were so anxious to obtain them for ornaments, that we were obliged to sell many of them - I believe that in two or three days we retailed four or five hundred shells at a penny each. We have still some thousands, most of them, however much broken. I do not know if these shells are scarce in Britain but if it would be worthwhile I could send you a handfull of pretty good ones - I wish you could see the pile of them, enough to fill a dozen of large carts and all of one kind and nearly the same size - They were originally gathered in one of the west India Islands, to be shipped to the U.S.A. for be ground or crushed to manure the land.

And now that my paper is about written over, I should like to tell you how often I think of you and the kind friends in Edin. and how much better I

should like to be walking and talking with you in the meadow, or the Hermitage or anywhere, than writing you a letter, and now providing it is that that large large puddle the Atlantic should prevent me from visiting you whenever I like; and how happy I am to hear that you are well, and a hundred other such things and all that crowd of thoughts and feelings which forms the happy misery of thinking of those we love when they are far distant rushes upon my mind and it is impossible to write them. With sincere wishes for the health and happiness of you and all your relations, I therefore for the present bid you most affectionately farewell.

J. W. Dawson.

Pictou June 15th.
1842.

.....My unlucky opinion about crossed letters seems never to be forgotten; never imagine that it applies to yours, If your letters were crossed over in every direction I should be all the better pleased, if I could read them at all - Yours may be crossed for another reason, they are beautifully written and easily legible, whereas mine are such miserable pieces of penmanship that they can scarcely be read when not crossed.

Your time seems to be fully occupied and I suppose that now you will have much more to do than formerly, you used to accuse me of wasting your time with talking, and now when you will be nearly as busy as I am, unless you find other time wasters, you may have more spare moments than you think for if you have any useless ones, employ them in writing a few stray thoughts upon a piece of paper, and send a bundle of them occasionally to me, I will undertake to repay at least in equal quantity.

My employments during the spring have been very commonplace, selling books and seeds, with occasional gardening and very little reading or mental improvement of any kind. Mr C. talks of visiting Scotland to purchase more goods, I envy him the pleasure of again seeing you and Edinburgh, but I must be content and bide my time.

J. W. D.

Pictou July _th. 1842.

Dear Margaret

I have now the pleasure of sending you and Marion a few stuffed birds, which I hope you will accept as tokens of my remembrance and gratitude. I have packed them as securely as possible, and hope that they will reach you in safety. If they should be in any way injured, be sure to inform me of it,

that may repair the damage, or direct you how to do so. I have placed your birds upon a stand made of Nova-Scotia maple, you must take out some of the screws and cut the twine with which it is fastened, before removing it. Two of the birds are packed in cotton in a little box and basket. One (the humming-bird) must have the wire attached to its tail inserted in a little hole at the top of the tree (marked by a wooden pin) so that its bill may be turned inwards over the tree. The other must have its tail wire inserted in another hole in the side (also marked by a pin) so that its head may hang down. The butterflies and moths may be placed any where you choose on your stand or in Marions case. When you place the shade over it, put in a few pieces of camphor to prevent the attacks of insects. You will find a piece of ribbon beneath one side of your stand, by which you can pull out a card on which the names of your birds are marked. I may now give you a few hints respecting the habits and character of your guests.

No. 1 is the Humming-bird, with its ruby throat and emerald back . How I wish that you could see its swift and fairy-like movements as it darts from flower to flower, balancing itself on humming wings before each, and seising the minute insects which form its food; then sud enly wing to a tree top and sitting for an instant to plume itself and look around. When the fruit trees are covered with their sweet scented blossoms, is the time of the humming-birds harvest, and many may then be seen in almost any orchard. In such a place I shot the one now sent, and I can assure you that, hardened as I am in bird killing, when I saw the poor fellow lie bleeding among the grass, I felt as if I had been guilty of a very bad action.

No. 2. The black capped Fly-catcher, is one of those little birds which spend their lives in hunting flies and other insects, it is an active little bird and when flitting about among the leaves has a very showy appearance.

No. 3. the yellow throat, is a very retiring bird, preferring close thickets and only now and then ascending to the top of a bush to utter its little cry. It also is a feeder on insects.

No. 4. The Redstart, which I have attempted to place in the act of flying, is a flycatcher, and has a loud and sweet, though not very varied song. The one sent is a male, the female is quite dull in colour.

No. 5. The yellow crowned warbler, one of the earliest of his family in mating in the spring. I shot him as he was alternately dashing off in pursuit of flies, and returning to his perch on a spruce tree, to sing his vernal love song - little anticipating that, instead of raising his brood in Nova Scotia, he should be sent off in his present condition to Britain, so that he provides one of the many instances of the uncertainty of earthly prospects, I have attempted to place him in the attitude of springing from his perch.

Lowest in the scale is a bird whose thick short bill shows him to be a vegetable feeder. He is the purple finch, or red linnet. His food consists of buds grains and fruits; and although he sometimes strips the buds from our trees, he atones for his sins in this way by a song more loud and sweet than that of almost any other of our birds. I cannot give you the names of the mosses and lichens at the base of your tree, but they include some of our prettiest sorts.

My birds may afford one more lesson, pleasing at least to me, that as birds of passage return every year to their native land, so absent friends may meet again. I may conclude with the most sincere good wishes and respects for you and all my other friends in Edinburgh and its neighbourhood.

Yours affectionately

J.W. Dawson

P.S. Most of your broom and whin seeds have grown and produced flourishing plants. I have sent you a few more magazines.

Edinburgh 16th. July 1842.

Mr Bell (brother in law to Margaret) to J.W. Dawson.

Dear Sir,

My Father in law being much engaged, has requested me to write you a few lines to express his great regret in the error of asking payment of an account which was previously paid..... etc.

All the family at Windmill Street are well, Miss Marion having been joined in the bands of matrimony with Mr George Primrose. Mr P. is a manufacturer of hair and hair cloth, and is a very excellent young man - the connection is every way likely to prove a happy one - Mrs Cleghorn was safely delivered of a daughter and both are continuing to do very well. There is little else to communicate that I remember, Mrs Bell with the family and Col. Mathewson are quite well. Miss Mercer requests me to acknowledge a receipt of your letter of 30th. of May, and to say that she intended to write a slip to be put into this letter but was called to go to the country and could not overtake it.

I have an engagement waiting me in a few minutes which compels me to close and wishing you and your parents health and every comfort.

Yours truly

Peter Bell.

(Mrs Bell, Mrs Cleghorn and Mrs Primrose all sisters of Margaret.)

Pictou August 16, 1842.

Dear Margaret -

I received by last packet a letter from Mr Bell, informing me of Marions marriage, and of other things interesting to me. He also informs me that you intended to write a slip to put in his letter - I hope that you will soon write a long letter instead. I have been travelling a little more than usual since I last wrote, about four weeks ago I went to Prince Edward Is, one of the most beautiful countries, in the British Provinces, and partictularly remarkable for its woods being more like those of British parks than any others I have seen. On returning from this I accompanied a picnic party to Carribou Harbour, near Pictou, my object however was to collect shells and fossils, and as soon as we landed from the steamboat, I left the party and managed to do 4 or 5 miles of walking along the coast, at the expense of being called unsocial by some of the ladies; perhaps if you had been there I might have done otherwise, unless you would go shell collecting too; however I did not say so to them and, to speak the truth, there were plenty of ladies pretty to look at, and pleasant to speak to. In a few days afterwards, Mr Lyell the geologist and his wife, who have been travelling over the States, arrived in Pictou. After showing him some of our most interesting places near Pictou, I went with him at his own request, to some other parts of the province, and enjoyed a weeks very pleasant and instructive travelling, partictularly on the river Shuben a cadie where we boated along at the foot of the cliffs, 150 feet high, and on a river where tides rise 40 feet, and rush up and down like a mill race. The white gypsum cliffs crowned with beautiful green woods, and bounded by darker sandstone rocks, form some of the most beautiful river scenery that I have ever seen Its geological interest was also very great.

We have all been well, and have had a remarkably fine summer, warmer than any for at least 13 years past - Among my other employments for spare time I have been writing one or two articles for a Halifax newspaper, a copy of which, if I can procure it, I will send you. They are terribly spoiled in some places by mistakes in printing.

I hope that before this reaches you, you will have received my box in safety, Marion's or Mrs Irimroses you will now have to send a little farther than I expected when I prepared it, but you can easily manage that. If they do not arrive safely, be sure to inform me of the extent of the damage, and above all write to me as soon as they arrive. I am beginning to long very much for a letter from you, and although I know that you will likely ^be very busy

I hope that you will take a little time to give me the pleasure of receiving one.
Give my best wishes to all your family and assure them of my constant
remembrance of their kindness to me.-

Yours affectionately

J. W. Dawson.

Edinburgh August 31st. 1842.

Dear friend:

The box with the birds has been brought to Windmill street in perfect safety, not the slightest injury has happened to any of them, they are exceedingly beautiful - I am particularly delighted with my little humming - bird. I admire the natural looking attitudes you have given them and tasteful manner in which they are placed - I have for some time been anticipating with pleasure their arrival and have enjoyed it to the full. Mother and father have been at the country for a few weeks, and I have been down with Marion, when I came home I found your letter lying for father, I knew the writing and took the liberty of opening it, I was all impatience till the box arrived, when it did, I was astonished to find you had sent me so many, you have forgotten the bargain, you were to have sent me one or two at most. I can never sufficiently thank you for your kindness - they must have cost you an immense deal of trouble before you got them shot, stuffed, placed - packed, which was securely and beautifully done. not one which appeared to have moved from their place where you had put it; Having carried out your directions and read the history of the birds, my curiosity was gratified then returned that melancholy thought which is so seldom absent from my mind, but which the excitement of the time had vanished, that my sister, my companion from infancy, was not here beside me to share my joy and I wept as I often do weep, when thought returns that she has left me forever - too often do I indulge in that selfish sorrow, why should I? when I know that she is happier, but it is the greatest loss I have ever sustained But you know I love her much so pray excuse me. She will herself thank you for your kind present. The mosses and lichens you have placed upon the stand are very pretty, they far surpass any that we have in this country. I am ashamed to own that I know more of the habits of your birds, than our own - the butterflies and moths are very lovely, one ducky looking fellow with a bright spot on either wing took my fancy, so I have appropriated it for myself, it looks as if the gold were put on artificially.

I have got my group of wax flowers nearly completed, mother talks of giving me a larger shade for them, if she does, she is going to get a maple

wood stand for it, to correspond to that of the birds.

You express in your letter that I would write you a full account of the marriage, but I presume by now you have already got it from Mr Bell..... Our visitors have now left and I am alone with my mother, who is sitting at her favorite amusement reading the papers, while I am writing to you. Mother is well and jaunting about as much as ever.

The conchs you so kindly offered to send us are not very valuable here,, I fancy the carriage would cost more than their value, we are however much obliged by your attention. I was taken recently through the ground of Sir David Milne, in the centre of his bleaching green there is an artificial pond with a jet of water spouting up in the middle, the margin fantastically decorated with rocks and conchs, water and creeping plants, it had really a beautiful effect.

Mr Crerar was wrecked on his way home, yet you mention that he talks of coming again, his courage is surely great - he said he was fond of the sea, but I thought this accident would have frightened him, I think if I was in his situation no earthly consideration would ever tempt me to enter again upon such a voyage.

You will have seen by the Scotsman that the Cattle show was in Edin. this summer, what a bustle there was for a week - Windmill street Hotel, as I daresay you have heard us call our house was well employed - nine visitors - shoke down in every corner of the house, 14 on an average for each meal. I was completely worn out.

There was a splendid Promenade at Warrenden's park near Bruntsfield links, to which I was forced to go, greatly against both my inclination and ability, I had got the length of the links, when I became so sick, that I could scarcely walk, still however they urged me on with them, the door of entrance was completely blocked up with the crowd, amongst whom I pretended to loose them, and made for home as fast as possible, got into bed, and slept myself better before they returned. What with the toil I had at Marion's marriage and company we have had since, I was very thin, but during the time I was at Musselby I have gained three pounds to my weight, I hope I will not increase much more, as I would not like to be fat!

Nothing is being talked of here at present, but the expected visit of the Queen, great preparations are making for her reception both at Holyrood and at the Duke of Buccleugh's; as also throughout the whole town. It is not to be a state visit as George the fourth was, still every demonstration of loyalty in our power is to be shown her. We are to have a magnificent bonfire on the summit of Arthur's Seat for which they are at present busily employed taking up coals - a general illumination etc. and etc.

The next sentence I intended as an apology for the careless manner in which this letter is composed, but as it is such a common thing for young ladies to conclude with I forbear - I have written you the first thoughts that came into my head, without order correction or improvements - I wish you would give me some instruction in this art in your next letter - If you take the trouble of doing so fear not that I shall be offended at any plain remarks - I now regret very much that false pride which prevented me from showing you my composition, when beside me, I might have been greatly benefited by your advice. I must allude to a sentence in one of your letters, you say that my letters are beautifully written, is this intended as a compliment ? recall to your recollection a remark you have made to me when here - that good writing was the sign of a little mind ! I am not given to carping or criticising much, but I could not help smiling as I read it, I knew you did not apply it in such a sense to me although had you been honest you would.

The weather here this summer has been most delightful, we have had bright blue skies, such as even Pictou might have boasted of.

My sister Jane's children are in Fortobello, and the rest of the family are in the enjoyment of excellent health... but mother is wearing for her tea, so I must bid you adieu for the present.

Margaret A. Y. Mercer.

Pictou November 16th. 1842.

Dear Margaret,

The barque Sesostris being about to sail hence to Glasgow, I intend to send you a small parcel of American magazines, which I hope you will favour me by accepting. I will also send a pair of mocasins or Indian shoes, made of the skin of the moose deer, by the Indian women of Canada - though in no way to be compared with the slippers which you presented me, and which I value more than any present I ever received, they may be new to you - they are sometimes though not often, worn by ladies here as house slippers (Lady Falkland I believe set the example). You may try them, and as they are durable articles, I may perhaps yet have the pleasure of seeing how they fit. I hope that I may, for this hope involves pleasant anticipation of various kinds, among them that times may mend, for at present they are so bad that it is scarcely safe to import books or anything else in any large quantity.

It has occurred to me that, in writing to you I should state more ex-

Explicitly than I have done, the impressions which our intercourse has left on my mind, and the feelings with which I in consequence regard you - The truth is, that you have excited in me an interest greater than I can feel in any other person, and this not arising from any chance or accidental impression, but gradually growing from acquaintance with you, and founded on my perceiving in you a combination of qualities more agreeable to me than any other which I have ever found. Feeling therefore for you an affection thus strong, and which is increased rather than diminished by the length of my absence, I hope you will neither be surprised or offended at the declaration of it, although made in circumstances which I know few would choose for such a purpose: and as it must convince you of the implicit confidence which I repose in you, as well as of the favourable with which I must receive any intelligence from you, I hope that it will in no way tend to embarrass our present correspondence, nor to prevent us (if we can be nothing more) from being at least as good friends as formerly. These hopes are confirmed by my reliance in your own good sense, and by my confidence, (without which I would never have written this) that whether my love be much or little valued by you, you will not regard it as either despicable or unworthy.

Our autumn this year has been unusually wet and disagreeable, Mother calls it a " Scotch Winter " and as in bad weather, there must be less hurry in business, I have had some leisure for writing and for reading and thought necessary to writing - I have little else in the way of news to tell: but when I look back upon any past period, last summer for example, I can think of a hundred new facts which I have learned and almost as many old notions which I have found to be mistaken, in those subjects which I have studied; and while this is a cheering indication of increasing wisdom both in me and the world in general, it also shows that there is much to learn.

My kindest respects to all your friends and relations. Write to me soon. With the sincere wish that all peace prosperity and happiness may attend you,

I am yours most affectionately J. W. Dawson.

Pictou November 25th. 1842.

Dear Margaret;

Before you receive this, you will have read and considered my last letter. What I have there written I could have told you, and was often disposed to have done so, before I left Scotland, but situated as I then was, a visitor who must very soon depart, I felt that it would be neither wise nor

right. I was determined therefore, whatever effort it might cost, to say nothing then. Now however the case is different, I can now hope that I may perhaps at no very distant time, see you again, and at all events, feelings which might involve much of happiness or misery to you as well as me, were not to be lightly trifled with.

I admit that in writing to you as I have done, I have no right to expect any decisive answer; like the applicants therefore at the ancient oracles, I must be content with the response, whatever it may be, sincerely hoping however that it may not be altogether inauspicious.

Two evenings ago, I read a paper to our society, on Fossil Remains, which being illustrated by a number of large drawings of rocks, and specimens of fossil shells, petrified wood etc. pleased them sufficiently well.

Mother has packed up a few jars of preserves, made of fruit produced on our own farm garden, and hopes that your mother will accept them. They will be sent by the Sesortris.

The kindest regards of my parents and myself to all your relations, and to yourself dear Margaret my most sincere good wishes.

J. W. Dawson.

Fiction December 26th. 1842.

Dear Margaret;

I take the first opportunity of replying to your letter of Dec. 2nd. I thank you for the promptitude and decision of your answer, which is so complimentary that I cannot be offended, and so just and candid that it makes me only esteem you more highly. When viewed in the manner in which you regard the subject, it is certainly the most rational answer which you could have given. I did not expect however a decisively favourable reply. Considering the nature of my declaration, and the circumstances in which it was made, it would have been ridiculous to have supposed that you would say "At your service sir" and be ready to wander "oer land and seas" at a moments notice. I am therefore not so much disappointed, as if I had entertained extravagant expectations; and am indeed well pleased that you have stated so explicitly your own views on the subject, and thus enabled me clearly to understand both my position and yours; a kindness for which I cannot be sufficiently grateful.

I shall not therefore at present say anything more on the subject, but

in one of his papers - and " all desolated lonely " have I washed till the very points of my fingers are aching. Painters and paperhangers have been my most frequent companions for the last week. We have got the diningroom papered and have removed our sitting-room to the sunny side of the house, also the nursery, alias my room which is a decided improvement, well after all, you lords of the creation are rather enviable as otherwise, you adopt a business or profession, and by giving due attention to it you become proficient. But woman ! hurries from one occupation to another seldom gets above mediocrity even in the commonplace routine of ordinary duties. I know that it is not intended we should ever enjoy that extent of capacity or strength of judgment which you do, but still by better training we might surely be made more fit companions for you. If in anything we excel it is surely in the quickness of our perception, and in conversation; for this last we get little credit, it proves too frequently a source of annoyance." I cannot help thinking that those who make a display of their imperfections, are only angling for praise " says Gray - You must not think this my motive when long

judging from my own mind and observation of others, I believe that nearly half of woman's existence is spent in a sort of dreamy consciousness ideas floating through her mind without one being definitely arranged or followed out. But what was my starting point ? whitewashing ! and how has it led me into such a train of thought as to make a comparison between the mind of man and woman ? I had better leave off before dipping too deep into a subject too obtruse for me to follow out.

Our musical meeting which I mentioned, gave great satisfaction, we have not finished our first course and we managed to sing several pieces in two or three parts. The principal object aimed at, is to enable us to sing by sight, independent of any instrument, our progress showed the efficacy of this mode of teaching.

I suppose you will have got my letter sent by this month's packet. This is the first time I have written to you without having one from you to answer - had you told me I would have done so, when you were hwer, I would not have credited it, but letter writing is not now so irksome a task to me as it used to be. The desk which you gave me has proved a very useful gift, many a line and letter I have written, which never would have been had I not had it - formerly the time and trouble needed to collect the materials necessary for writing too often prevented, but now, I have but to open my desk and everything requisite lies before me: if interrupted I close it, with the assurance that when I return I shall find all things undisturbed and safe as I left them.

You will perhaps be surprised at the light hearted strain of this letter

having lately received such a doleful one, had I written according to the general tone of my feelings it would have been a dull one indeed, but I feel my spirits particularly light tonight and I am glad of it. It vexes me when I think about having bothered you with allusions to my troubles, one can scarcely help writing in unison with the humor they are in at the time, however I have found the good oldfashioned duties of domestic employment an excellent remedy for diseases of the mind.

I hope you will find the seeds properly assorted, I got a few of the newest annuals to use up the money.

Mother and father join me in sending kind regards to your parents and self.

Yours very sincerely

Margaret A.Y. Mercer.

Pictou March 31st. 1843.

Dear Margaret,

When writing to you, I have often thought how different might be your circumstances and feelings, when the letter was received, from mine when it was written: - how ill suited what I was writing, might be, to events which might arise, even while it was voyaging over the Atlantic. This must have been the case with my letter sent by Mr Purves - When it was written, I had not heard of the loss which your family had sustained, and when I afterwards saw it in the Scotsman, I was sorry that I had written as I did, I need scarcely say that, that knowing as we do the hardships of such trials, we all most sincerely sympathise with you, particularly with your father and mother.

Your question respecting my revisiting Scotland, I can scarcely answer; as it is probable, however, that I shall have to visit the United States, early next summer, it cannot be very soon. It has, as you know, been a dream of mine that our fates might be connected, and although I knew well that its fulfilment was improbable, and that I had much to do before it could even be possible, and therefore scarcely dared to hope much with regard to it, there can be no doubt that my again seeing the modern Athens, as well as many more of my purposes, felt its influence.

Those hints which you so truly call mysterious, are of course not very intelligible to me, I think however that I can partly understand them; and shall feel anxious to learn in what way your uncertainties are solved. In the meantime I can only say that you have my most earnest prayers that whatever you decide upon, may work out for you nothing but good and happiness.

Agreatly to your request, I have destroyed your letter of December last;

though I think that doing so was altogether unnecessary, since you have no reason to be ashamed of the sentiments it contained, or of the manner in which they were expressed. This is at least my opinion, and none of your letters were, or will be, submitted by me to the criticism of any one else. The manner of your answer, and the reasons assigned for it, were in truth fitted only to make me esteem you still more highly. The only thing which I could wish to see changed, was the conclusion at which you had arrived, and this you say you are not yet disposed to alter. I strongly suspect that some of my late epistles to you, are much more worthy of being thrown into the fire than your answer; and there I suppose they better be put, since like the sacrifices of Baals prophets, they have failed to bring down a spark or burning flame.

..... I have scarcely been from home all winter, except at a place 9 miles from Pictou to assist in forming a temperance society Wishing you all happiness and that I were able to promote it -

I am your very affectionate friend

J. W. Dawson.

Edinburgh April 1st. 1843.

My dear friend,

By the last packet I was anxious to write to thank you for your kind letters, and to inform you of our having received the preserves, also the mocassins and magazines which you so kindly sent to me - but was prevented partly by the depressed state of my spirits and partly by the hope that you would write by that months packet. I now tender our warmest thanks for them - this is a common place phrase but believe it to be literally sincere. The strawberries and cherries are particularly delicious. With the mocassins I am quite pleased, the Indians have certainly displayed both ingenuity and neatness in their workmanship - I tried them on and they fit well and feel very comfortable being too dandy for every day wear, I prefer keeping them for a drawingroom curiosity and as an additional remembrance of the donor.

I presume you have received the letter containing the melancholy intelligence of my brothers death, it brought to my recollection a wish that you expressed " that it might be long before I met with any more serious bereavement than the partial loss of Marion " This you wrote just about the time he died.... In his last letter he communicated his intention of visiting us this spring, when we fondly hoped that once more in his native country that he would be induced to remain amongst us - But unscrutable are the decrees of Providence.

Mr Crerar arrived in Edin. the last night of the btgone year, your parcel

was handed to me, I was at the time busily employed finishing some part of our mournings. It was indeed a dull New Year for us. You mention how you spent your time on Christmas day, how differently was my time spent on that day, for the first time in my life, I was attired in the sombre dress which I now wear. At first I thought I would be constantly melancholy as long as I wore it, but I find it like all other things - once habituated to it, you feel quite unconcerned....

I observe you still continue to contribute to the NovaScotian, is your spare time devoted to the arranging of some longer work? believe me to be interested.

You have several times mentioned your intention of revisiting Scotland - may I ask when you intend doing so? supposing you were to come and find us as we ^{are} are now, you would perceive a great difference since your last visit, the light conversations which we used to enjoy so much in the evenings have now totally ceased, whether from want of people to chatter with I cannot tell, but I rather think it is from want of inclination. My duties are now of a more responsible nature, Mother is so very frequently away from home and father has had several severe bilious attacks this winter, so that I am hustled from one occupation to another without method or regularity. Besides for some time past there has been a net of difficulties weaving itself around me, and the more earnestly I struggle to be freed from it, the more deeply am I entangled in its meshes. This is a mysterious way of writing, but in a few months, if spared, I shall either be free, or placed in such circumstances as will render concealment unnecessary.

This is my reason for asking if you again intend coming to Scotland? in one sense I would be glad to see you but in another, I consider it would be productive of much misery to me. It is far from my intention to dictate to any of your arrangements - you will ever receive a hearty welcome here - I merely thought a hint, or rather a wish, that situated as I am at present I would I dont know how to finish this sentence.... Had I enjoyed the privilege of being

Fictou May 13th. 1843.

Dear Margaret,

I received your letter and also the parcel of seeds, which arrived in good time and in good order, I thank you for both, and indeed am disposed to feel particularly thankful when I consider that you are involved in all the horrors of "cleaning up"

I too have of late been busy. In winter I had plenty of spare time for reading, writing and other scientific amusements; but of late I hav had no time

for anything of the kind. In relating the memorable events of my career since last letter, I must not forget the most surprising - I have in that time been at one evening party, the very first I believe since I returned from Britain ! I went because I was asked in a manner which I could not refuse, and the bad effect of breaking over my rule, have since appeared in my being obliged to decline other invitations. However, I must at present, either abandon my good friends geology and the other 'ologies' or be content with a very small portion of social gratification.

Spring is now with us, and we, who scarcely see a green thing (except pines and firs) for six months know how to appreciate it. Our pretty little national emblem, the mayflower has been more than usually abundant this season; and I have been several times in the burnt barrens, and other places where they grow, gathering them. How I wish that I could show you a bed of them covered with their green leaves, and the little pinky blossoms peeping out from under their edge, or that I could send you a bunch of them rich with their delicate perfume, (I have given plenty of them to ladies whom I do not care half so much for) I must be content with sending a little dried one.

I think you greatly undervalue the importance of the duties of women. You speak of professions; but is not the business of ministers and teachers to reform and civilise minds that have grown wild, because the duties of mothers were carelessly or ignorantly performed; are not physicians employed in cobbling shattered constitutions whose ruin is often due to mothers and nurses. And are not lawyers and legislators always busy in restraining and punishing criminals, who are so from want in training in childhood. The profession of being a good mother or sister or female relative of any kind, is of more importance than the whole of them and requires, though this is yet too little thought of, a more careful education. Estimating occupations by the amount of happiness or misery depending on them, one good mother or maiden aunt ("Aunt Margaret" not excepted) is worth a whole host of professional men. I know however that you were only thinking of the more insignificant occupations of ladies; yet more depends on trifles of that kind, than upon many other things which we are accustomed to think great, and I am sure that you are too observant not to be convinced of this.

This time two years ago I was about leaving Britain, now I am standing at the little desk, in our shop, looking out on a dusty street of little Pictou with books and papers all round about me - last evening I wrote for three or four hours - and two evenings ago ran away for an hour and took a little sketch - On Saturday evening last I went away at 6 o'clock with a party gathering mayflowers

and returned by moonlight, had an interesting conversation with a clever young lady on the question whether any young ladies are as pretty as mayflowers? I said not. All the rest of the time, for last two weeks, spent in unpacking books, sending away parcels, and selling seeds, with a little gardening, Here is a medley for you, I wish you would sometimes send something of the same sort, telling whether you walk, or draw now, where the piano stands, what songs you sing, and who comes to hear them? This is certainly an odd letter, but may serve as variety - and now my dearest friend, I shall conclude as usual with wishing you, from my heart, all prosperity and happiness.

Yours affectionately

J.W.Dawson.

Pictou June 20th. 1843.

Dear Margaret

When I last wrote I had two letters of yours to answer, and I am therefore still in your debt. I wish all debts could be so pleasantly discharged, they would be much more honestly paid than at present.

I have been since April going on in my usual way, with the exception of an excursion 70 miles from home, which occupied about a week. I ascended one of our rivers nearly to its source, and travelled over a ridge of hills, not bare rugged ones like most of those in Scotland, but wooded to their very summits; and many of them commanding extensive views of forest and blue water; while others look down on level cultivated districts, with white cottages, and green fields and orchards, and clear rivers with graceful elms along their banks, winding through every valley. I saw two beautiful waterfalls, and a variety of wild flowers which I did not before know. It is one of the greatest pleasures that I know to go away for a week, rambling along rivers and through woods, in search of scenery or birds or geological information. I shall not probably have many such rambles this summer, but hope to be able to settle some geological questions connected with our province, which are still uncertain. This is of course merely by way of amusement, business must be attended to beside; but I generally contrive to mingle a little of it with my geological excursions.

How I wish that you could have some interest in my country, such as I have in Scotland, I wish that I could bring before you its appearance, its people and their manners, employments and amusements, so that you could read of them as of old and well known acquaintances; but this would be a hopeless task, nothing but seeing it could make you feel the same interest in it that I

do in your beautiful city, recalling up before me some pleasant thought or image when I hear any of its familiar names. And yet Nova Scotia is a beautiful country, as highly favoured by nature as Scotland. I shall give you a sketch of my last jaunt for a specimen of it - You may imagine me first riding in a "fly" thirty miles in a showery day, as far as the village of Tatmagouche (if you can't pronounce the name no matter) then spending an evening there calling upon some friends - Next morning walking in a constant shower about ten miles, along a river running through woods, and scrambling along steep banks, wading shallow places - or plunging through thickets with basket and hammer; and an unfortunate doctor who accompanied me, with an umbrella - dining at a farm house in the hills on tea, pork and pancakes - and returning in the evening to Tatmagouche, tired wet and dirty, after having passed through and admired as far as rain would permit much beautiful scenery. Spending next day travelling along the shore, visiting friends, and in evening riding up to an inn among the hills. Next morning early travelling a mile or two through the woods to visit a waterfall, then riding in an old tumble-down fly, with a beam tied under it, over a road of rocks and puddles alternately, stopping occasionally to examine something curious, or to glance at the extensive views from the hill tops - and in the evening descending into the lowland of Truro, a wide expanse of beautiful farms and villages. Next day travelling along the shore ten or twelve miles, returning to Truro, attending a temperance meeting, calling on a number of friends, and next day returning in a mail coach, on a beautiful road, at the rate of 10 or 12 miles an hour to Fictou. This may serve as a specimen of a geological excursion, and of the ups and downs of travelling in our country.

I have been thinking while writing now, of the tenor of my life since returning from Britain, now almost exactly two years ago, I think that since that time I have changed much, I hope for the better, though still I have many lost opportunities to regret. You too, I suppose, and many of my other friends have learned, enjoyed, suffered and changed much in that time; how much I cannot now tell till I see you all again - and when may that be ?

I hope that I may soon receive a letter from you, full of good news and interesting, as your letters always are.

Yours affectionately

J. W. Dawson.

Edinburgh August 1st. 1843.

Dear Mr Dawson :

This is now the third letter I have commenced writing to you since receiving yours dated 25th of May, various circumstances prevented me from getting them finished, I have now the additional pleasure of acknowledging a second

dated the 29th of the month - to hear from you is pleasing to me at all times, but severe illness and long confinement made the them peculiarly so; to hear you enjoyed good health and the want of it has taught me to prize it very highly) was truly gratifying. Having made such an alarming announcement I shall proceed by telling you what has been the matter. In April while mother was attending Marion, I caught cold and neglected it, going out in all sorts of weather, when mother returned on the first of May, I was so ill that I had to go to bed, finding myself getting worse, our doctor was sent for, who on seeing me said I had inflammation of my lungs, he considered it necessary to call another physician - they gave me 4 kind of drugs to take 9 times each day, I was several times bled - 8 times blistered beside many other painful applications, what with leeches liniments etc. my left side from the collarbone to the waist look as if I had stood as target to a company of archers. I was confined to bed all May and to the house till the 26th of June - the doctor wanted me then to go to the country..... after getting to the country, I gained strength so rapidly that in a few days I was able to walk a considerable distance - ... after several weeks my father came to take me home, as my mother was called to Mrs Dewar's bedside - When my doctor saw me, he again ordered me off to the country, but in another direction, this time to Allans Bridge - as mother was still unable to leave her Aunt, I went off with Jessie, leaving father to bachelorism and a servant to manage the house it seems however, that I am to be kept jaunting about as long as the weather will permit... father has promised to take me to London for the winter, as the climate is milder there. ... Once more at Windmill street I will give you a sketch of how I spend my time, at 6 in the morning I get a drink of warm milk in bed - arise at 7, breakfast, which generally consists of fruit, or barley meal po porridge or some other thing of a cooling nature, as on eating anything heating or solid I immediately become feverish. during the last four days I have resumed my household duties which occupies me till 3 o'clock, I am then sponged from top to toe with vinegar or cold water,, dress for the day, take 15 or 20 drops of vitriol to appetise me for dinner, walk out for half an hour, then dine on some light pudding, and go to bed for an hour, in the afternoon, I often take a drive..... you will see by this account that I am almost better - indeed there is nothing the matter now but weakness. The reason why such great care is being taken of me, is the fear that there might be a second attack which could lead to consumption. Good health, I fear, is a blessing I never fully appreciated, I am glad however I shall be so much from home, for there I have not a single companion scarce an acquaintance that I care for. My mind for sometime was so harassed that I could not settle to read or work -

Fiction August 30, 1843.

Dear Margaret ,

The intelligence contained in your last letter was truly startling - how strange that you, my dearest friend, should have been so ill, and I not knowing or thinking of it - so far away as not to have even an opportunity of bestowing on you a feeling of sympathy or a prayer - It is pleasant however, when I do hear of your illness to hear of your recovery also.....

For my part I have scarcely any story to tell, though my life does not flow on in perfect smoothness, it may at least be said to tumble along in a prett monotonous jumble. In health I have been well, in business, serving mammon, with customary assiduity, though whether that be too great or too small, I am not prepared to say, I hope not for either way; In society, wherever I have met with such a thing, endeavouring to be as agreeable as possible, and to add to my stock of human knowledge, I must confess however that among all my lady acquaintances in this country, I have found none exactly equal (in my estimation) to certain friends in Edinburgh, and , considering my prediliction for everything belonging to my own country, such an admission is certainly a great stretch of candour. In scientific pursuits, I have been writing some articles on agricultural chemistry, studying a little botany, but principally endeavouring to ascertain the arrangement of our coal formation and the distribution of boulder deposits, on which latter subject I may perhaps in the winter send a paper to some of your Edin. societies; all these pursuits mother sometimes tells me are ' nonsense ' for which nobody will thank me ' Generally, I have lately been taking more serious views of life, of the value of time, the responsibility connected with its employment, and the duty of employing as much of it as possible in pursuits really useful and worthy of an intelligent, moral and religious being.. Not that I have been letting

" times benumbing fingers steal

young feelings from my heart "

or becoming more dull or spiritless; but rather that I have been thinking and learning more of the true ends of human existance, and the uses which should be of it, to produce as much happiness as possible to ourselves and others.

How many things I should have to say to you, if the Atlantic were not between us, I cannot cross it however this year; but would it not be an excellent restorative for you to take a voyage over in the steam packet.

I am not quite disposed to give up my opinions respecting the beauty of flowers, because I doubt if the human form was ever intended to equal them in beauty. Flowers have only their beauty to recommend them, to us,, ladies have

as calm as a mirror, and finally passing through a wooded country as far as the village of Antigonish, which is situated in a wide level valley at the junction of several small rivers....I had a very pleasant excursion along the shore, examining the rocks, which in one place consisted of cliffs of white and red gypsum, undermined and cut into fantastic shapes by the waves. In returning to Pictou, I determined to travel part way on foot, so with hammer in hand, and basket on shoulder, I commenced my journey by walking five miles along the bed of Wright's river which in some parts was confined by rocky banks with here and there patches of shrubs and flowering plants; one of the most beautiful of which was the Solomons Seal, a relative of the Lily of the Valley though of much larger size. On leaving the river I walked twelve miles farther to a place called Arisaig where I passed the night. In the morning I set off along the shore, on which I walked, admiring and examining the rocky cliffs, till near noon, when I returned to the highway and waited for the coming of a friend who was to take me in his gig to New Glasgow, from which a short journey by railway and steamboat took me home. Notwithstanding the meagerness of my description, I can assure you that the scenery of this part of our province might afford materials for a volume, with numerous illustrations.

In my last I mentioned the changes which time and circumstances are gradually affecting in my character, one of them just now occurs to me. When I went to Britain I had a great deal of diffidence and want of self-confidence. This began to be rubbed off in Edin. and it has been leaving me ever since, so that now I am beginning to fear that I shall not have enough modesty left, but shall become so self-confident that people will think me arrogant. I must endeavour however to stop short at that point which Addison expressively calls a "modest assurance".

When I sit down to write to you, I always have a vast number of things to say, but when I attempt to reduce them to written words, one half of them evaporate, melt away like ghosts in thin air. These unsubstantial ideas would, even if written, perhaps appear little better than nonsense. Yet these fleeting thoughts, which we can scarcely fix or reduce to form, are some of those which most strongly influence us; and when they can be expressed are sometimes the most beautiful products of the mind. I should like among other things to tell you more of my present employments, intentions and prospects, and ascertain what you thought of them - but even if I could make them interesting, it would be extremely difficult to state them accurately. I must therefore for the present conclude; sincerely wishing that the storms of life may visit you gently, and that its sunshine may make you increase in wisdom, goodness and usefulness.

Yours affectly. J. " D.

Edinburgh November 1st. 1843.

My dear friend :

For the presents you have from time to time sent me I know not how to thank you, because I feel I am undeserving of your kindness - you call them remembrances, as such they are scarcely needed as I shall not soon forget one whose society and instruction afforded me so much pleasure. For the books which in safety were waiting my arrival, I thank you in the simple but sincere words, I feel grateful - the children are much pleased with their American book, as they call it and Jane desires me to thank you in their name.

Your last excellent letter dated Aug. 30th. is in my opinion amongst the best I have received from you, being at the same time instructive, entertaining and complimentary, I am perhaps hasty in applying the last term, as " certain friend " is rather an indefinite expression - But I must not write affectedly to you - I know who you meant, and you must certainly have formed a false estimate, otherwise I shall consider your American acquaintances very silly.

I perceive your leisure hours are still devoted to study - adding knowledge to your already abundant store. For my part, I am ashamed to give an account of myself, it shocks me to think of the different use we have made of our time. Mine especially for the last four months having been spent in travelling, daily equestrian exercise, idleness, and the most frivolous amusements - In these I have but obeyed my physicians orders whose aim seemed to be that I should never employ one moment in reflection, but constantly be surrounded by cheerful company. I am certainly restored almost to my former health and strength yet the retrospect does not afford me much satisfaction, and even now when home and settled in my old quiet habits, there is a lurking vanity and unsettledness of mind consequent on the display and attentions I received. These I trust are but temporary feelings, and if spared to write you again, I hope to send you more pleasing intelligence. Many, however, of my innocent enjoyments are denied me, this winter for instance I am not allowed to sing, lest it provoke a return of the disease. This is a severe disappointment, I am so fond of it and spent so much of my time last winter in cultivating my voice, neither am I allowed to go in the evenings, so that prevents me from hearing music and singing in public. I have great reason to thank God for sparing my life and restoring me to health as I had been very ill, more dangerously than I was at the time aware, and I grieve it has not left more serious impressions on my mind.

You talk of me crossing the Atlantic, a description of a voyage out in a book you sent me, is not very inviting, nevertheless had yours been a warm climat

in winter there's no saying but I might have accepted your invitation and paid a visit to your country. I am told that I am so well now that it is unnecessary for me to leave home again.

Before concluding, I will answer your question as to where the piano is now? bear in remembrance the diningroom is changed to the back, the sideboard to the right as you enter, the piano on the same side as the door; the old round table, and on it, my workbasket, desk (at which I am now seated) and 2 Pictou papers just arrived from our friend Mr Dawson. Mother intently engaged in reading them, and kindly interrupting me some half dozen times during the last half hour to read something interesting, which I tell her I would rather be excused from listening to at present "Well well" she says "I'll not read any more, only don't forget to send my remembrances to Mr and Mrs Dawson, and Mr Dawson, I mean your Mr Dawson"

Tell me when you write if the grapes ripened? As I was shopping today and feel fatigued I will now conclude without apologizing for this rignerole!

Ever very sincerely yours

Margaret A.Y. Mercer.

This letter brings to a close the year 1843.

these, and many other things of less consequence, you will recollect had to be done besides attending to my proper business of bookselling; and though I cannot say that they prevented me from often thinking of you, they have certainly delayed my letters, which is after all like some people's wits, occupied with nothing except apologies for not having come before, or apologies for coming at all.

Another year has commenced, and people have been rejoicing because it is a New Year - It would better become most to be sad, because the past might have been better spent, and the coming involves much responsibility, and more uncertainty. We have at least cause to rejoice and be thankful too, for the good enjoyed in the last year, and perhaps after all is better to go into the new one dancing and making merry, than trembling because we are entering an unknown region where evil may befall us. I spent last New Year evening writing a little article, when I had finished, I thought of my New Year in Edin. and tried to guess what you might have been doing, or where you were spending your New Year? but not being able, gave it up, and went to bed.

I have nearly filled my paper, I dare say there is enough for one epistle though if I could speak instead of writing, I would probably waste a great deal

Edinburgh March 1st. 1844.

My dear friend ;

I have now two letters from you to answer, to each of which I wish I could write a worthy reply - how truly you depict my feelings when you talk of the vast number of things you have to say yet cannot reduce half of them to written form..... I wish my ocean divided friend's clever head would discover some sympathetic mode of bringing the far distant near ! As some time may elapse ere this request may be complied with, I suppose it will be best for the present to condescend to the usual vulgar medium.

I know you will be sorry to hear, a week past mother was seized with severe pain, on calling the doctor, he declared it inflammation and bled her copiously, it fortunately checked it immediately, but has left her so weak.

I am anxious to write by this packet, as probably (God willing) I shall leave for London the beginning of next month and then prevented writing for a long time.

I am quite well but still the doctor insists upon strict obedience to the

indeed a superior and excellent girl and is one of my few intimate friends, I spent much pleasant time in her society last summer at Galashiels - one thing I regretted, she did not ride, we were thus often separated, not withstanding we managed to take a few excursions, one of the most I remember was to visit a farmer about 4 miles from Gala. We took a very early dinner then walked along with some other young folks for the destined place of rendezvous, while Mr Monteith, a gentleman who occasionally accompanied me in my riding excursions, and myself mounted and had a much longer but very beautiful road by the side of the Tweed - crossing some hills we arrived not much later than the pedestrians. After doing justice to a substantial tea, we started out to see the reapers, 30 of whom were busy at work superintended by a young gent with slouch hat and loose jacket, .. I did not then remark anything particular about him, being in a hurry to get back to the house and set off before dark. In honor of the strangers, he had hastened to change his dress, and just as I was about to mount he appeared to render his assistance, I was then struck by the remarkable resemblance he bore to you - I daresay the gent thought that I had a pair of most impudent eyes for I could not help staring at him, I afterwards asked Isabella about him, and was amused to hear that he went by the name of " The philosophical farmer ".

Mother and father unite with me in sending affectionate remembrances to and to your parents

Your very sincere friend.
Margaret A.Y. Mercer

more of your time and patience - Sincerely wishing that the New Year may be one of happiness to you and all your relations.

I am yours most sincerely

J. W. Dawson.

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Your very sincere friend,
Margaret A.Y. Mercer

Dear Margaret,

In my last letter, I stated that it might be some time before I could write again. I did not however mean that I would not answer your next letter, though I must say that, having neglected to answer it for so long a time, it does look like it; however, I have plenty of good excuses. In the first place, I put together the results of last summer's wanderings in a paper for the geological society, of the reading of which I have just received an account. Then we had a contested election, which, for four weeks, kept the whole county in a perfect bustle. Our county is nearly equally divided in politics, and we, who call ourselves reformers, were beaten at last election. In order to prevent a like catastrophe at this, exertion of every kind was required, and fortunately the opposite party had employed so badly their former success, and had used so disgraceful means to maintain their supremacy, that they were deserted by many of their most intelligent followers, and, after a keen contest, defeated. During two weeks of the election, there were 4 or 500 persons in town every night, and we always had a roomful to provide with lodging and meals. This and talking to ignorant Highlanders, trying to convert them from their doctrines inculcated by their leaders, writing a little, and the excitement and hurry kept up during the whole affair, prevented me from attending to anything else. Then, directly after the election a demand was made on me for a lecture to our Literary Society; and now I am requested by the Meads Institute to give them three lectures on geology. All these, and many other things of less consequence, you will recollect had to be done besides attending to my proper business of bookselling; and though I cannot say that they prevented me from often thinking of you, they have certainly delayed my letters, which is after all like some people's wits, occupied with nothing except apologies for not having come before, or apologies for coming at all.

Another year has commenced, and people have been rejoicing because it is a New Year - It would better become most to be sad, because the past might have been better spent, and the coming involves much responsibility, and more uncertainty. We have at least cause to rejoice and be thankful too, for the good enjoyed in the last year, and perhaps after all it is better to go into the new one dancing and making merry, than trembling because we are entering an unknown region where evil may befall us. I spent last New Year evening writing a little article, when I had finished, I thought of my New Year in Edin. and tried to guess what you might have been doing, or where you were spending your New Year? but not being able, gave it up, and went to bed.

I have nearly filled my paper, I dare say there is enough for one cristle though if I could speak instead of writing, I would probably waste a great deal

restrictions he has laid upon me, and promises that it shall be repaid by being able next winter to return to my former liberty.

Never more entertain the thought that I shall ever weary hearing of your country.... and I thank you for the love you bear to mine - you know, few things gratifies me more for I do love old N.Scotia - with all my love however, I do not think I would become an active politician - even though I could do so with propriety - for it causes one to have so many enemies. Viewing in this light, the part you took at the late contested election - I admit it is a very selfish one - I cannot rejoice with you, it seems to me so fraught with danger - unprincipled people dont seem to care what they do to advance the interests of their party. I like much better to hear of your making a discovery in geology ... or of being a successful candidate for a professorship. You mention having received an account of the reading of your papers sent to Edin. but do not tell how they were received, I guess modesty still prevails in your character- the account has been so flattering that you have withheld telling me, now I request you shall not do so again, what is pleasing to you is not is not uninteresting to me.

Miss Isabella Mathew is the name of the young lady you refer to , she is indeed a superior and excellent girl and is one of my few intimate friends, I spent much pleasant time in her society last summer at Galashiels - one thing I regretted, she did not ride, we were thus often separated, not withstanding we managed to take a few excursions, one of the m + remember was to visit a farmer about 4 miles from Gala. We took a very early dinner then walked along with some other young folks for the destined place of rendezvous, while Mr Monteith, a gentleman who occasionally accompanied me in my riding excursions, and myself mounted and had a much longer but very beautiful road by the side of the Tweed - crossing some hills we arrived not much later than the pedestrians. After doing justice to a substantial tea, we started out to see the reapers, 30 of whom were busy at work superintended by a young gent with slouch hat and loose jacket, .. I did not then remark anything particular about him, being in a hurry to get back to the house and set off before dark. In honor of the strangers, he had hastened to change his dress, and just as I was about to mount he appeared to render his assistance, I was then struck by the remarkable resemblance he bore to you - I daresay the gent thought that I had a pair of most impudent eyes for I could not help staring at him, I afterwards asked Isabella about him, and was amused to hear that he went by the name of " The philosophical farmer ".

M^other and father unite with me in sending affectionate remembrances to and to your parents

Your very sincere friend,
Margaret A.Y. Mercer

Dear Margaret :

You wish for some more expeditious way of exchanging thoughts than by letters; and write of it as if it were something hard to be discovered, yet it is the simplest thing in the world, and can be done any day; and if you have not found it out, it is only because your affection for your " ocean divided friends is not sufficiently strong to support you in those airy regions through which you might dart, swifter than lightening to the most distant regions of the earth. I have only to abstract my thoughts for an instant, from my common occupation; and, in the twinkling of an eye, I can find myself climbing on Arthur's Seat, or conversing with some of my dear friends, at your mother's fireside; or, better still talking philosophical nonsense, or it may be something wiser with your own dear self in Lover's Lane, or some equally well-remembered place., or when I am viewing anything beautiful in the scenery of my own country, I can have you there also so that the only thing necessary to realise your wish, is to think of me, as I often do of you. I would not however, by any means, have you to discontinue the usual mode of communication by letters.

Since I last wrote I have visited Halifax, our provincial seat of government. It is a wooden city of 25000 inhabitants, with a parliament, said by Dicken to resemble that of Britain seen through the wrong end of a telescope, a petty aristocracy of government officials - little scientific or literary taste - plenty, or rather more than enough, of politics - a great quantity of fopery and its accompaniments among the young men - yet a number of very pleasing and intelligent people - I gave three lectures at the Mechanics Institute, had large audiences and I believe pleased them very well. The paper mentioned in my last, was sent to the London Geological Society. Your compliment about modesty is unnecessary, for notices of these papers do not usually give an opinion of their merits. All that I know of that is, that Mr Lyell wrote to me that it excited some discussion, and in his opinion some of the facts contained in it, were important. I state this to free myself from the accusation of being modest, a sin for which my conscience does not often check me.

You are quite right about politics, they are stormy and dangerous affairs full of the bad passions and crafty designs of the worst men. They furnish however a good field of action for those who have sufficient nerve and talent to " Ride the whirlwind and direct the storm " either for their own good or that of their country - I am well aware that this is not where my strength lies.- as I mentioned before I am considering offering myself for the Ministry. This is not a new thought, but is one which I could not carry into effect without thought of the responsibility involved ; and I cannot altogether leave my father's business

as long as my attention to it may be necessary. If I do decide on this, however, I must soon take some steps towards it; I write of it now, that when you have returned from London and are at leisure, you may tell me what your good sense and friendly regard say of it.

With sincere wishes for your continued health -

Yours affectionately J.W.Dawson.

Pictou June 15th. 1844.

Dear Margaret,

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of receiving the very beautiful purse sent by you from London; and which fortunately escaped the dangers connected with the illegal conveyance by which you sent it. To receive such a present, at any time, would be agreeable; but it is peculiarly pleasing as a token that even amidst the bustle and novelties of London, your transatlantic friend is not altogether absent from your thoughts; and what is more pleasant than to know that we are present in the thoughts of absent friends, whose images are enshrined in our hearts. I thank you therefore for your pretty gift, which would, if that were necessary, be an additional souvenir of your good self.

You have now travelled almost from one end to the other of your little island of Britain; your next journey, if you are not tired of the novelty and excitement of roving, when compared with the quiet security of home, should be abroad; and if I could overcome your extraordinary preference of the old world to the new (which is very strange at present) I might hope that your next voyage would be to America. It is I am afraid, however, hopeless, since I have a recollection that you have told me already that you could not cross the Atlantic even if I went for you myself, or something very like it. Yet who knows that you are not destined to "vegetate" somewhere in the "backwoods" of America, (people in Britain always talk of America as if there were nothing in it but backwoods)

When I last wrote, winter was scarcely gone, now I may call it the height of summer, and within these few last weeks trees have come into full leaf and blossom, and the change from winter to summer, always rapid, has this spring been unusually so.

If the penmanship of this letter is even worse than usual, you must attribute it to want of time, I was unwilling, however, longer to delay acknowledging your gift - as it is however I shall wish that, when you receive my epistle, you may be in health and happiness, in the best possible humour with

yourself and all the world; and therefore disposed to judge even more leniently the faults of your true friend. I shall wait eagerly you may be sure, for an answer to my last and this or both together.

J. W. Dawson.

Edinburgh July 17th. ;844.

My dear friend :

I thank you for your two last kind letters, the first of these received in London, the other immediately after my return to Edin. having been away for three months.

Your speedy mode of travelling to far distant lands in the imagination is very beautiful, nevertheless I must own, it rather amused than satisfied me I assure you my imagination is not very deficient, but by experience, I know its fullest exercise never can supply that lack of instantaneous exchange of thought which I desire, should you, however discover some method more tangible, do not fail to put it into immediate operation! But to be serious, you ask me to give my thoughts on your change of pursuits, I feel great diffidence in making any remark on so serious a question, I agree with your opinion that the acquirement of wealth is of little comparative consequence except to use it in relieving the necessities of others which is a decided duty - once settled in a certain occupation, I doubt if it may be your duty to abandon it, especially if I am right in the supposition that it does not so wholly engross your time as to prevent your devoting part of it to more important studies, and to do good as you have opportunity, your good example in this way must show the loveliness of religion, and what a person influenced by it can accomplish - still if you are strongly persuaded in your own mind that your usefulness and happiness would be so greatly extended as to justify you in giving it up to devote your time and talents to the service of God, I can only say there are many blessed and encouraging promises to those who from sincere love to Jesus leave worldly advantage for His sake.

My jaunt to London was a very happy one I traversed it from one end to the other seeing gorgeous buildings and beautiful parks and diving into its lowest neighbourhood, where crowds of fellow creatures are seen in the most degraded state of human existence, everything is on such a scale of vastness, as for me giving a detailed description, it is far beyond my abilities. While there I had an excellent opportunity of remarking differences in character, for instance I spent 3 weeks in comparatively speaking, high life with Mr and Mr Anerby of

Sanders Lodge.

He is a silk broker, whose success in business has enabled him to surround himself and lady with much to gratify the senses but whose neglect of religion leaves them only actors of happiness instead of being the possessors.

In this short space of time while I have been away, many changes have taken place amongst my friends, and my sister Jessie gave birth to a son rather unexpectedly while on a visit to mother.

By the bye, I had all but forgotten to take notice of your having got the nurse, I never expected you would get it, at least hoped you would, I was not ashamed at the daring mode of conveyance I employed.

With good wishes and kind regards to you
Your very sincere friend

Margaret A.Y. Mercer.

Pictou August 5th. 1844.

Dear Margaret :

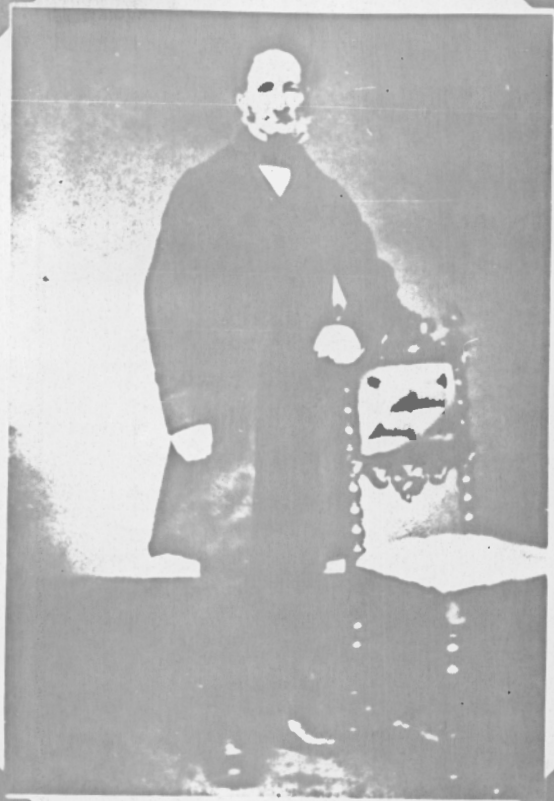
So you are not satisfied with my method of crossing the Atlantic on the wings of imagination. I must confess that in some respects it is very unsatisfactory, being somewhat like satisfying present hunger by thinking of past feasts. There are however other modes of conveyance, very commonly used by matter-of-fact people; for instance the Royal Mail steamers and timber ships of various descriptions. I am afraid there will be no other way, until the aerial machine shall take flight, or until mesmerism, to which you perhaps darkly allude in the expression "lay your brains asleep" shall, among its other wonders, discover some method for establishing an intercourse between distant minds. Perhaps what they call 'clairvoyance' includes something of this kind; so that if you had applied to Dr Elliotson, he could have sent your intellectual powers on a trip across the Atlantic, while your corporeal frame remained snugly asleep in an armchair in London. I am not however, sufficiently versed in this new science to speak very confidently of its powers; and at present it is not in my power to avail myself of the old-fashioned means of travel, further than to send this piece of paper, inscribed with a few thoughts such as I dare commit to bare and unexplained written words; but not such as I could say if I saw you face to face, as I intend sometime or other to do; but the only way to secure this is to act well in present circumstances, to perform carefully the duties which at present press on me; that as soon as possible I may, without any serious loss of duty, gratify myself by a visit, not imaginary but real and personal, to Auld Reekie. You may be sure that I look forward to this as a most desirable object to be attained, so soon as the state of my business and my duty to my parents shall permit.



An outdoor picture, sketched by Margaret
under Williams' direction -



A pencil sketch of Pitton, by William,
and sent to Margaret in Edinburgh -

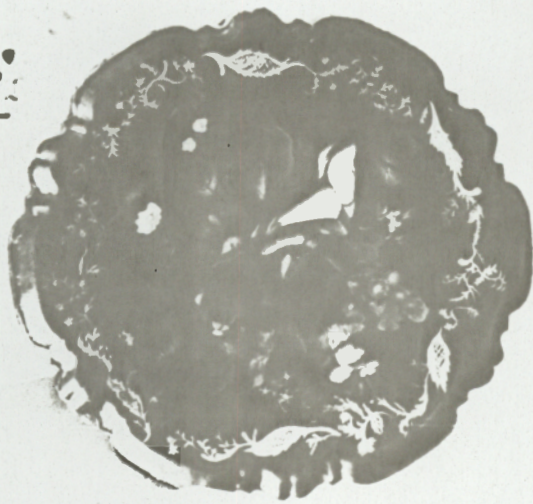


Mrs & Mr
George
Merrill
of
Edinburgh
—
Margaret
Parr



Mrs Bell and her daughters
Margaret's Sister, and niece.





Don. Juan.

Three pencil sketches by Margaret Mercer
Hand painted tray, by Margaret Mercer Dawson. Scotland.



Margaret Mercer -



Sketch of Margaret playing the piano
By J. William Dawson



Eliza Pierce - Margaret's
bridesmaid -



Margaret Mercer - her husband's favorite
photo -

I thank you sincerely for your advice in the matter which I mentioned. Your picture of the utility of a good example, and of the good that can be done amidst business associations, is a beautiful one; and I too see much good that I can try to do, even with the cares and anxieties of business, as well as my own errors and backsliding to contend with.... At present the question to be decided, whether I shall begin to avail myself of the means of preparatory study within my reach ? this would not involve any abandonment of my present business.

I send with this by Master Howard Primrose, a few little trifles of Indian workmanship, one of them is ornamented with porcupine quills, the others are worked with hair of the moose. The first is intended to have strings attached to it, and be used as a bag - one of the others was intended as a play marker or something of the kind, you will perhaps be able to find some less questionable use for it. These and the larger pincushion, you will accept for yourself, the remaining articles, I wish you to distribute among your friends, not forgetting the two Misses Bell.

I have no tale of journeys by land or sea to tell, my time has been chiefly occupied by the ordinary routine of business - I have found spare time only to make a few geological observations, gather and dry some plants, and take a few sketches, besides reading some useful books. In this way time passes quickly and smoothly, ruffled only by a few minor cares and worries; and on the whole have cause for gratitude and contentment that we have lived in comparative safety and prosperity in times of much distress and embarrassment to many; when I look forward to the knowledge which I wish to acquire, I may have too much eagerness, and I know that I have far too little patience.

I had noticed in the papers some of the changes among our mutual acquaintances which you mention. some of them have been setting us an example, which you and I may some of these days follow. It is a standing saying of Mother's when I bring in a new load of minerals or fossils " Wait till you get a wife, and you will soon see all these things flying out the window ; or turned into playthings for the children " What a fearful prospect !

Having now written a pretty long letter, I must conclude. For some reason to me not very plain, I who to everyone else am reserved, speak or write to you, like a catholic to his confessor, revealing all my thoughts and plans; you must however excuse my egotism in consideration of the confidence which it displays.

May all peace and happiness be yours.

Yours most affectionately

J. W. Dawson.

Pictou September 10th 1844.

Dear Margaret;

I do resay you were somewhat surprised by my new views respecting a profession, and perhaps have scarcely got over it yet, and are inclined to think your American friend a very odd versatile sort of person. Yet it is very easy to explain some of the reasons of it. Let me suppose that a prospect were offered to you, of entering a new and enlarged sphere of action, where it would be possible to bring all your powers and capacities of doing good into the most extended operation, where you could be a centre whence knowledge and beneficence might flow from you in all directions; where too those pursuits and studies in which you most love to engage, would be those which you were required to follow; the consequence of all being that your usefulness would be vastly extended, your means of doing good multiplied exceedingly. Such are some of the inducements which if I were certain that they would really be fulfilled would induce me to enter into the ministry. The only result of my thoughts in this matter, is that I intend to attend the lectures of our Theological Professor for a month this autumn, without of course pledging myself to do anything farther.....

There is another point in my present position which you can also understand. You and I are both left alone with our parents, who are declining towards age and infirmity - We owe much to them, more than we can repay. And so strong is this feeling of gratitude and affection with me, that I am determined never to desert them and their service as long as they require my assistance, so that in this way, I am bound to my present occupation for some time.

You know I am a great friend of Temperance, and I lately attended a meeting in the country which I may describe to you, as a specimen of the doings of our Nova Scotian teetotalers. It was a meeting rather for recreation than anything else. There was first a procession, or rather drive, in carriages and horseback, along the bank of a beautiful river, for several miles; and a train of more than 50 of the light showy vehicles sported your farmers makes no insignificant appearance. Having crossed the river, and returning along the opposite side, the whole company betook themselves to an arbour constructed of green boughs decorated with flowers, in the centre of a grove of trees. Here the people being seated on benches and chairs, tea coffee and tarts were served round, succeeded by music, speeches and singing. I never saw a better looking assembly; Nearly all were young men and women, as the old people do not favour temperance societies as much as they should - all healthy and even tastefully dressed, and very many good-looking. You may think that I am too partial to my countrymen,

and country-women; but I am convinced that few countries can show finer rural population than Nova Scotia. They are not overworked and underfed like too many of the labouring class in Britain; they are able to dress well, and have time to improve themselves, and I am happy to say that temperance and a love of information are rapidly gaining ground among them.

I have been rather busy of late, as father is engaged at his harvest. Times are bad, as people say, but I think are mending, and our bad times chiefly result from the folly and extravagance of people who can live too easily. Our apples and early plums are ripening fast, and if you lived within any reasonable distance, I would send you a bushel of them.

I do not know that I have written anything to interest you; and there is still another page very much tempting me to write something that I should not, when I am so far distant, and have so little certainty of seeing you again; but which I should be at more liberty to say, if I were so far favoured as to be able to revisit Edin. before you have gone the way of most young ladies. Mind, I do not intend to make love to you, but only to say that I have no particular desire to do so to any other person, until I have an opportunity of consulting you on the subject.

Remember me to all your relatives and friends - may all blessings be their and yours - let me soon have the pleasure of again receiving a letter from you.

Your affectionate friend.

J. W. Dawson.

Pictou November 29th. 1844.

Dear Margaret,

To receive a letter from you is always a joyful event, and on the present occasion, even more so, for it is a very long time since I had heard anything of you, and if I had received no intelligence by this packet, I should have felt much disappointed.

We are truly a pair of great travellers; our letters would now form a book of travels - I have been travelling since I last wrote to you; and in a country in almost every respect the opposite of that which has been the scene of your wanderings, the little province of Prince Edward Island, a strip of land about 100 miles in length, a country too uniformly pretty to be really beautiful. I went there chiefly for the purpose of attending for 3 or 4 weeks the lectures of the Divinity professor of our church; and also to call on several people in the Island with whom we have dealings. In these occupations, together with riding about the country - collecting shells - taking sketches - and lecturing to Mechanics Institutes, I spent a month very agreeably and profitably, in acquiring both knowledge and specimens.

Although at present I have no fixed intention to abandon my present calling, I am well pleased with the time I have spent in receiving religious instruction... Most christians, I'm afraid, devote far too little of their time to the study of the scriptures. I am sure that My knowledge of the doctrines of the bible does not at all correspond to their vast importance... thus I am determined to give as much attention as possible to this subject, that in whatever situation I may be, I have knowledge, not of that kind which puffs up, but of that kind which may make me more humble, and at the same time more useful.... I do not however intend to give up geology I have too strong a love of nature for that. it will always be an agreeable amusement to me, and if it never brings me any farther advantage, I shall not be disappointed.

It is amusing to think of your mother fearing that the Indian boxes etc. might return to America; I hope she did not suspect that they were sent in hope that they might return, or that that was the reason of sending them. She knows very well, however that all my little gifts must be put to the account of gratitude and friendship.... Most sorry should I be to grieve your good mother (who is almost as dear to me as my own) - it may be as well, at least as far as your mother is concerned that we are able to call each other just ' friends ', - and although while I call you friend " - the little fay lies damed within my heart this mony a day " may not choose to be suddenly banished !, but must wait in hope of more favourable circumstances.

You say that if you looked over your letter, you might be inclined to destroy it, I would have the same feeling, perhaps with more cause, but I am reassured when I think that you will interpret my epistle not by the light of cold criticism, but in that of friendship; and if you knew how highly I prize and esteem your letters, and how much interest I put in all that concerns my dear friend in Edin., you would be willing to send them without hesitation, even though less neat and beautiful than they are.

We are all well, and going on in our usual quiet way. Our winter has set in, and when I write, it is a bright frosty day, the ground covered with snow and sleigh bells jingling through the streets; as merrily as possible. My father and mother send their best wishes etc.

Your affectionate friend

J. W. Dawson.

Fictou Dec. 23th. ;844.

Dear Margaret;

About Christmas and New Year, I always feel a strong inclination to write to you. one reason is that that it is customary at this season to visit one's friends, and as I cannot call on you in person, I am disposed to write instead. Another reason is that the Christmas holidays are usually a gay season, a season of social parties and all that sort of thing, and as I have very few friends here for whom I care much, and am not so much disposed as at other times to engage in serious studies, I find letter writing a very pleasant evening occupation.

You will see by the papers which I send, that I have been doing my best in attempting to enlighten the people - lecturing on temperance and 'colours' the latter a very interesting subject - My lectures are usually very well attended by the ladies, yet you have never been present at any of them, If you did not live so far away, I should you quite inexcusable. This is certainly a queer idea, but really there is something natural in it after all; for I can scarcely find anything which is agreeable whether a beautiful idea or a new fact in reading an interesting subject of thought, without some thought of you connecting itself in some way with it, and making me wish that I could impart to you that which gratifies me. The truth is that, even in acquiring knowledge the mind requires sympathy and society. There are few who are more accustomed to lonely study, or or rather to studying merely for their own gratification than I am; and not many who derive more pleasure from thought and reading and observation, yet there is a want of some one, to derive pleasure from that which pleases me; and though I find many who are interested in particular parts of my thoughts and studies, I find none with whom there is a perfect sympathy. So that it appears as if I had set up an image of you in my mind, as a depositary for those thoughts and sentiments which I do not care to communicate to any one else... If I go on this way much longer, I shall become as mysterious as a German metaphysician, and besides fill up all my paper.

I must not forget to wish you and all your relations, especially your father and mother, a happy christmas and New Year, and many more of them, I do so sincerely and thoughtfully. The mad gaiety and dissipation so common about the end of the year, appears to me strange, perhaps because I have been accustomed to look on, without taking a part in it. Why people should then be gay it is not easy to tell. Perhaps some are glad because they have reached the end of another stage of life's weary pilgrimage, others perhaps are so because they think that after many unsatisfactory years, the next is that which is to crown

all hopes, and bring the happiness they have hitherto sought in vain - perhaps others wish to banish the sense which presses on them of the cares and responsibilities of the coming year, and their accountability for that which is past; and no doubt the greater part are merry because it is the custom and they like it, and think nothing more of it. I think of it in none of these ways - the past year has its faults its errors its little misfortunes, as well as its brighter spots, but I can look from these forward to the future in calmness and in hope that through the kindness of God I shall be able to pass through it with safety and improvement; and it is encouraging to feel that I stand in many respects on a higher level now, than at the beginning of last year; and that notwithstanding all the opportunities of good which I must have neglected, I have in no respect fallen back. Yet it is a solemn thing to think of what the next year may possibly bring; and it is mortifying to know that there are many things desired to which it can scarcely conduct me; one what occurs to me now is again seeing you - yet if during the next two years, I can find anything which will justify so long an absence from home, I must try to set feet on old Scotland once more; if only again to speak face to face with those who are so often in my thoughts.

If you were to judge from a letter like this, you might suppose me to be a closet philosopher seated before a fire in his rocking chair, and moralising upon things in general; Such an opinion would however be very inaccurate. During the past week, I have been chiefly occupied in settling about the insurance of some wrecked goods in which my father was concerned, Dunning people who were unwilling to pay their share of expenses of saving their property, and reasoning with those who wished extravagant sums for their services; in short settling and battling with some of the choicest rascals produced by our country; and today I have been employed making out long sheets of accounts. I wasted some hours yesterday afternoon, arguing with an old Roman Catholic who came into the shop and wished to ~~to~~ talk of the beauties of his peculiar doctrine. - Of such odd pastimes as this, is my life often made up, and it is agreeable enough, and presents many opportunities of doing good, so many that I often doubt whether any other would give me more.

May God grant, dear Margaret, that the coming year may be one of prosperity and happiness to you and yours; and may the time soon come when I may see you all again.

Yours affectionately

J. W. Dawson.

Thus the year 1844 comes to an end

Edinburgh Febr, 3rd. 1845.

My dear friend:

It is well you prize my letters, and encourage me with little bits of flattery, for notwithstanding these encouragements, each time I sit down to write to you I have to wage war against my extreme timidity or want of self-confidence.. I am its unwilling bond slave; having a strong desire to be free but without the moral courage necessary for striking off the fetters. How many opportunities have I lost by submitting to its rule.... I do not write this to J.W.D as a provocation to complement, but really in a pitiable desponding sort of state, and perhaps somewhat envious of the easy yet instructive epistles of his I have now and again the pleasure of reading..... But enough of this, notice it not, unless you can aim a blow at the root of the matter. Many thanks for the sketch of your every day existance such scenes comfort me a little and brings you nearer the capacity of a social companion instead of the esteemed but unapproachable philosopher..... I think I shall make a pause here and try to sober myself into something like propriety. so "Farewell a while, I will not leave you long "

Mr Irvine has kindly sent me the Scotsman containing what you have written in it, this to send on to you. You will see he has lost his eldest son. It is a very severe trial for them, having previously lost seven children in infancy, there are only four left. His death has affected me greatly, his having been one of my Sabbath scholars - he had an intelligence in spiritual things beyond his years and said to his mother " Don't cry for me mother I am not feared to die - Jesus makes me happy."

I cannot tell you how anxiously I desire we should be agreed with regard to the essential ordinances and doctrines, one of two opinions must be wrong..... I consider correct views to be so necessary to the establishing and upbuilding in the faith that I cannot help speaking strongly especially to those in whom I feel interested..... I rejoice in the hope of being spared to convince you , on the accomplishment of your promised visit to us, I do long to converse with you on these subjects, but I must take care not to be too confident, lest like poor Miss Trail who, in a fit of zeal, went to convert the Pope , and was herself converted to Roman Catholicism and in proof of her sincerity since her return has taken the Black veil.

..... There is something so very interesting about twins, but poor Jane is so toiled that she would have willingly dispensed with this twofold addition. These events have caused mother to be a great stranger at Windmill St. and given me such liberty of action and high ideas of my own consequence that she says there is no doing with me. Her advice this morning is no great proof however of

her sincerity. She thinks I should just remain a "Peggy Dogood all my life, and as an inducement told me Father has left me heir to all his possessions if I retain this enviable title. In days when you were young did you think so mother? - "Hem! - Experience my child"... O ye - yes I quite understand said I.

All mothers old will

tell the same unvaried tale

but

my spirit takes another tone

and sighs that it is all alone!

It is such a rare treat to get a humorous chat with mother, I am sure it makes me love her ten times better.

I apologize that I have not read the last two books which you have so kindly sent, having had others which I had to complete first - but amongst all that I have read your reflections on time in your last letter pleased me most. Even among my acquaintances, I can find a few to correspond to each class you describe.

It is almost too late to tell you what I was doing on the first day of the year, but the first part of it was spent - I think - so much to your liking that you will be pleased to hear of it. I may premise by telling you Mamma was out with Jane at that time, and for my amusement sent in six happy little nephews and nieces to a very early breakfast. At ten, I went to assist in distributing a New Years hymn and a bun to upwards of 60 of our Sabbath scholars, they consisted of the poorest most miserable looking children our city produces, so you may imagine how delighted they were with this little treat. I had to hurry home to superintend the dinner, as friends were expected from Dalkeith, I did not feel much inclined to enjoy their topics of conversation, so was glad that they left at an early hour. I felt very much fatigued, and pleaded this as my excuse for immediately leaving father to his own meditations, but once alone in my own room, at my own fireside and my thoughts allowed to follow the bend of their own inclinations it was a late hour before I thought of retiring - Such presents to you the important information how I spent this day.

I thank you for your kind wishes with regard to this year, I cannot do better than sincerely and in the same spirit hope you may enjoy the same. Many things in your two last letters remain unnoticed, but you must not on that account infer they are forgotten. It is a failing in our sex I believe to give quantity for quality.

Adieu

Margaret.

Pictou March 29th. 1845.

Dear Margaret :

I do not know whether in the introductions to your last letter you intended to deprecate or court criticism or whether you wrote it with either in 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 faultfinding is the chief pleasure of criticism. If you are dissatisfied with your composition I am inclined to suspect that the fault is in yourself rather than in your style;..... I suggest the following thoughts in the hope that any one of them will lead to the solution of the difficulty.

I am perfectly aware of the inaccuracy with which memory often pictures past events, and can therefore easily understand your somewhat mysterious hints respecting the possible disappointment of long cherished anticipations. I am not however much alarmed by the dark picture which you draw for me; not that I have **noy** cherished many bright and beautiful reminiscences of dear friends in Edinburgh; and that I may not have built airy castles in the fair fields which memory furnished for hope and imagination to revel in; but if I could know myself aright, I am disposed rather to look too much at the gloomy than at the bright side of futurity; and perhaps it might be better for me if I were less impressed than I am with the obstacles and chances which intervene between me and the attainment of objects which I desire; and if I saw less plainly lesser 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 suffering from the downfall of any such exaggerated fancies. If I remember rightly, you told me that, before my arrival in Elin., you expected to see some kind of non-descript barbarian, or a boy in a monkey jacket, and that you had been agreeably disappointed. I thought at the time that it was very lucky for me that no higher expectations had been entertained. In a second visit however I should not have that advantage, and I do feel a little apprehensive that I might suffer in consequence.

I respect your desire that we should be of one mind with respect to the institutions and doctrines of the gospel..... I too have the same feelings; I would wish every one to have the views which I have of scripture truth, but when I found men 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 essential gift of faith, and should be willing to forbear with them if I could not convince them; and so I am sure would you.....

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 employ- 56
ments 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 verty highly of you; for there is certainly no office that demands more self-sacrificing kindness than that which she would assign 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 advte, and to set at nought all the prospects of usefulness that attach themselves to the office oa " Peggy do good " so much might the merits of Margaret blind me to the virtues of PEGGY;

Your letter contains so much matter suggestive 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 the Legislature. On returning I caught a bad cold which kept me in the house for two weeks, it is now however quite gone.. We have had a mild winter, with only 3 or 4 days when the thermometer was 20 degrees below zero.... In your climate, you would think such cold unendurable. Mother desires me to say, that she has a beautiful china rose in in bloom.

Not being at all alarmed by your warnings about over anticipation, I hope I may soon see you again, and would rather, if I could say I am certain, than that I hope to do so.

Your affectionate friend

J. W. Dawson.

Haddington July 2nd. 1845

My dear friend.

Many months have rapidly passed since I last wrote to you and, God willing I hope it is just so many nearer the time when this imperfect mode of communication shall no longer be necessary, but face to face we may enjoy free interchange of thoughts and opinions. For the most part this time has been spent very little to my liking, indeed for the last 3 months, bustle and excitement so greatly prevailed at home, that I have often indulged a discontented spirit, forgetting they were events over which I had no control, and therefore I ought patiently to have borne it..... it would be tedious to detail the many things which combined to cause this, but the principal cause was a most unusual number and succession of visators, often people I cared little about. Truly much company is a great snare, at last I felt unable to stand it, it whirls me into worldly desires and pleasures and so irritates my temper that I am most unhappy. With mind and body exhausted, a few days ago I made my escape to this charming place, where the country around is exceedingly lovely - the house and its inmates so congenial to my taste that I am now able to say I enjoy the sweetest peace of

mind and placidity of temper I ever experienced. Mr and Mrs K. the friends I am visiting, are scarcely middle aged persons, with two sweet well trained children, Annie 13 and George 11. Mr K is a wealthy farmer - this house is delightfully situated near the top of a sloping hill; a large garden fringed with trees surrounds the house; beyond, on the slope, the fields extend to Haddington, which with its glistening roofs its churches and cathedral lies in the valley below ... I must tell you something about Mrs Keile, she is a christian, and I think the most heavenly minded example of a lady I ever knew..... her husband is at present absent in England, yet her servants and family are regularly assembled while she offers up the morning and evening sacrifice with a simplicity and Godly sincerity which is most refreshing..... I am not sorry of her husbands absence, as it allows us to enjoy much charming conversation on religion and other topics. It is a great pleasure to be placed in the society of christians, where experience and sympathy or feelings must prove a direct passport to each others affections.

..... I am unable to give thoughts and opinions on the subjects in your last letter, for I only hastily read your letter once over, when together with one of your magazines they disappeared - and were not to be found. I rather suspected that some of my friends think " Out of sight out of mind " is the best plan with things which come from you - would that I could whisper, I might then be induced to tell you more in connection with this subject than I dare write in plain words- Adieu to this however, as I must not again indulge in the mysterious !- altho quietly, I think you deserve that compliment returned.

Mrs Isabella Matnew was with us in March, I enjoyed her company very much especially at first, when I was just recovering from influenza. I took a fancy to have a homeopathic doctor attend me, but I doubt there is great faith required to reap much benefit from the infinitesimal doses.

There are many little incidents which I might mention, but I fear it is a sort of disrespect to Mrs K. to sit here scribbling indifferent to all that is passing around I do not intend remaining here much longer, when I plan to go to Galashiels for a month, and I will indeed be sorry to leave this delightful place and family.

I conclude with sincere wish, that by the Grace of God, we may be enabled more and more to adorn the doctrines of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Very sincerely yours

Margaret A. Y. Mercer.

Pictou July 15th. 1845

Dear Margaret;

If you were an ordinary correspondent, I should begin this letter with blaming you for not answering my last letter. Since, however, the original of our correspondence were that I should write without any promise that an answer

would be sent, I have no right to do this, but must content myself with saying, that I have hoped to receive a letter by every succeeding mail for some time past; and have hitherto been disappointed - no small disappointment either I can assure you. What can have been the reason of your long silence? have you been travelling - or overwhelmed with household cares or only very idle and not inclined to write? I hope that you have not been unwell, ... or perhaps it is only some dearer than transatlantic friend, who has occupied your thoughts too much to permit any of them to wander over the ocean, in Her Majesty's mail bags, I hope soon to learn which of all these causes is to blame?

It is now the height of our short but beautiful summer, and bright sunny skies, fields covered with waving grain or scented clover or luscious wild strawberries, and woods in their fullest luxuriance, tempt me to ramble as of old among them - as yet however, I have had little time to gratify my love of rambling.

Trade is much more lively here than last year, and most of the labour of the shop falls on me. By this I am of course anything rather than grieved; though I shall have little time this summer for study, and none for amusement except a little gardening, or perhaps a very little travelling. I have had one little jaunt and have made one or two interesting discoveries among the rocks..

The Geological Society have published two papers for me on the geology of Nova Scotia - I scarcely think it necessary to send you copies of the journals containing these?, I shall present them to you when next I pay you a visit, and I have serious thoughts of doing so or trying to do so next year.

..... You must excuse the flatness of this epistle, but not having had a letter from you, there is nothing to answer - it will however serve to show that amidst all my business pursuits and scientific trifling - and searching after true and useful knowledge - and desires to do good, I have some spare time to think of you, and neither forget, nor cease to wish for a renewal of our many pleasant and in some respects instructive rambles and conversations.... Do write soon if possible.

Give my most sincere good wishes to your father and mother and all the rest.

J. W. Dawson.

Pictou August 30th. 1845.

Dear Margaret

I received your last letter only a few days after I had posted mine to you, which I suppose you have received; and I can assure you that I felt sorry that I had not waited a little longer, till I could have thanked you for

for yours, and told you how welcome it was to me. It indeed arrived most opportunely, like a visit from a kind serious friend, who came to talk of the very things I most needed and wished to hear. Neither you nor I possess that equable phlegmatic kind of a temperment which glides quietly through the world, unexcited and unruffled. - hence we have great need of christian watchfulness over ourselves, and though perhaps not in danger of falling into very great errors are very liable to have our minds unsettled and disturbed, by a thousand things which meet us in every day life. I find the steady and constant application, and readiness to attend to numerous demands on time, required by business, the annoyance of failure or the pleasure of success in any, even ordinary, pursuit; the excitement of pursuing any favourable study enquiry or amusement, and many other causes to produce very similar effects to those which you ascribe to, too much company;.. and then I feel my need of strength from above, and am disposed to long for more of it than I have ever possessed. On the evening when I received your letter, I was very much in this state of mind..... It is indeed one of the greatest difficulties of my life properly to reconcile the necessary pursuit of worldly employments with christian progress. In theory nothing can be simpler. It is plain that diligence in business, earnest and active devotion to all the duties which arise from our relations as members of families and societies is our duty and for these and other ends, the cultivation and improvement of our rational nature are not only countenanced but enforced by christianity, and if they are neglected we cannot be consistent christians. Yet they have a constant tendency to leave their proper place and usurp that of principles to which they should be subordinates; in short to become the ends and aims of life instead of steps in a journey having a higher object.....and I therefore feel often disposed to apply to God for his assistance in the very words with which you conclude your letter, since we can adorn the doctrines of Christ only by acting well our part in the world and yet not being of the world.

I too, often wish most sincerely that written communication might give place to 'viva voce' conversation; and if by wishing I could transport myself over the Atlantic I should not send this scrap of paper - even if nothing more were required than to embark and trust myself for a month to capricious winds, I would very soon at least be on my way to Old Scotland - but there are obstacles nearer home than the winds and waves of the ocean, I can scarcely be absent from home for a day, without feeling uneasy, when I think of everything left for my father to do, especially when I know how much more happy he is when he can spend a large part of his time at his farm. It is in truth no easy matter for an only son to leave home....I have however long ago determined to embrace the first practicable opportunity for visiting Britain, and then I will willingly settle down and "veg-

itate " where ever it may be necessary. It would in truth, be much easier for you to visit America, than for me to go to Britain - and if Scottish young ladies were as fearless as some of our Nova Scotia girls, I would not despair of you. I am reminded of this by a girl who was in the shop a short time ago, she was on the point of sailing to the United States, and came to buy a bible to take with her, I asked her why she went there ? she said she was tired of Pictou it was a dull place where she could get plenty of hard work, but not such wages as she liked - Upwards of 100 good-looking girls left Pictou for the States last summer, to go into service or work in factories.

Recently I went from home for a week, to visit a portion of the country I had not seen, taking for the purpose the time of harvest when there is little business done in Pictou. I have been riding along the shores of beautiful lakes, I know not whether to be compared with those of your country, or not, but at all events very lovely. I have been climbing among granite hills, which though not so high as those of the Highlands are very precipitous and picturesque and have this farther advantage, that instead of whins and heather, they are covered with an abundance of wild berries, I might almost fill out my sheet with their names. Blueberries of two species, Blackberries, wild gooseberries, red currants and cherries and many other little fruits, these all growing in the utmost profusion on the same granite knoll. As I have just returned after 5 days of riding and walking over rough roads and am somewhat fatigued, and as the mail closes in a short time, I must conclude.

J. W. Dawson.

Edinburgh September 2nd. 1845.

Dear friend :

I presume you have long ago received my last letter posted at Haddington, also a paper I posted at Glasgow with enclosure by last packet, I need not again revert to cause of my silence - but this I ought to do apologise for passing over many things of importance contained in your letters, I am not altogether guilty of neglecting these for I often make them subjects of thought..... I do greatly feel the want of some christian friend to whom I could unbosom my feelings, doubts and difficulties.... another unfortunately is not of much help to me, as her thoughts seem entirely engrossed by the prophetic portions of scripture ... I expostulate with her on the evil of dwelling so constantly on one subject to the neglect of others, which to me, seem as important.... my father, I believe is more disposed for conversation on religious subjects, but there has been some restraining feeling of awe since childhood which prevents my opening my heart to him, as I desire to do. Can you believe that I

cannot summon up courage sufficient to tell him you intend revisiting us !

There is a young lady in our church, whose society I have enjoyed lately, By the by if you were in the way of hearing Edin. gos ip, you would probably be told, that her brother is soon to become my husband. Do you remember him? if you do, I dare say you will not think me greatly complimented, by the choice the public has made for me; perhaps, they think I have altered my opinion on this subject, and now think, that good prospects will make up for good sense - not so.

Mother Miss Gils; Christina and I set off recently for Rothesay - Isle of Bute..... the steambost connection between Bute and all the places on each side of the Clyde and with the Argylshire locks is immense, and so very cheap that we frequently enjoyed trips to many beautiful places in the neighbourhood ... Miss G and I used to wander about for hours, and when tired sit down on some hill or on the rocks on the shore and read a little of the Pilgrims Progress, which we usually took with us..... at other times we were roaring with Cristina, gathering the beautiful wild flowers and berries, singing and laughing through the woods, with as much glee as if we did not act, but actually were children - I have returned as brown as a berry, and so stout, it occurs to me, you will have to be reintroduced before you recognise your old friend ?

We were 9 days in Glasgow, while there an incident occured which will perhaps amuse you. I received a letter which having been addressed to Bute, again to Glasgow and daubed with postmarks I mistook for your writing - in haste, I opened it and commenced reading it " got safely landed on this side of the Atlantic - being in Edinburgh I took the liberty of calling at Windmill St, but to my dismay found the house shut up, learning that you were at Rothesay " etc. ... This so utterly **confounded** me I felt ready to sink with astonishment ! it was a little space before I was able to read farther, on doing so however I very soon discovered it was not from you but Mr McGregor, of New Orleans, one of the Americans I had something to do with years ago - too long a story to tell you just now ... I hope I will not be put to such another test .

Margaret.

Pictou September 30th. 1845

Dear Margaret.

I shall try to write an answer to your letter of Sept.2nd., and perhaps I better begin by giving you according to my usual custom, a running commentary on your letter; a practice which you also should follow, since from your stating that you think of some things in my letters, and form opinions which you do not mention, because you fear you could not convince me of their correctness,

I must infer that you scrutinise and condemn, without telling me your conclusions, a course which lacks something of the candour and confidence of friendship; however I must not blame you, since you say that all these things are reserved for oral communication. May I soon have an opportunity of hearing them. Seriously however, I fear that even then I shall be unable satisfactorily to answer your questions..... I feel the want of sympathy as much perhaps as you, yet when you shrink from seeking it; and it is only rarely and incidentally that, in reading or conversation, I find anything that exactly suits my wants and feelings. In the absence then of that sympathy which can feel as we feel and yet think more correctly, we should accustom ourselves to self contemplation, not to dreamy abstraction of our minds from realities, but to a rational scrutiny of our inner world..... If we can thus try and understand ourselves, we will not only have less need of advice, but be able to give it to others.....

It is perhaps just as well that I do not hear any Edin. gossip, for the mention of your husband does produce a queer sort of feeling; and at least I should not be pleased to hear your name connected with that of any one I thought unworthy of you - I hold that there are three indispensable qualifications necessary for the husband or wife of a sensible person - Piety, good sense and good health; the absence of any of them, causes much need of forbearance, leads to many trials, to which noone should willingly or without very strong reason expose him or herself .

My father has just finished his harvest, we are now enjoying the most delightful season of our year, when the temperature is moderate, the skies serene, late fruits ripe - the leaves beginning to turn to autumn's glorious colours.

May good attend you and all your relatives, give them all my kind regards.

Yours sincerely, J. W. Dawson.

ictou December 25th. 1845.

Dear Margaret :

In accordance with the usual custom of writing and bestowing good wishes upon our friends on Christmas, I have usually employed a part of the day in writing to you, and do not intend to abandon the custom - it seems rather awkward to wish you a merry Christmas, in a letter which you cannot receive till some time in **next year**, you may however, be assured by it that I did wish you a Merry Christmas, and a happy New Year also.

You have probably received a small parcel and a hastily scribbled note sent by Mr Crerar, he looked into the shop one day to say his ship would be sail-

ing in ten minutes, and he would be glad to take anything, I was unprepared, and had time only to wrap up a few little Yankee books for the children, and write a note which I think is scarcely worth the trouble of reading. Though I had nothing at hand which I judged suitable for a Christmas gift to you, I consoled myself with the hope that perhaps before another year had passed, I might be able to present you with one in person instead of sending it.

Last evening I read a lecture to our Literary Society on the scenery of Nova Scotia, a good subject, since our little dispersed province has much variety and beauty, though from its being a "new country" we have few persons who have leisure or taste to pay much attention to its beauties. I had by way of illustration a few large ink drawings of particular views and several homes - you would have thought the drawings bold enough in execution, since they were suited to be viewed across a large room without much loss of effect. Here you have an account of my mode of spending Christmas eve, and also several previous evenings, after shop-shutting time.

I thank you for the newspapers you have often sent of late, they are always welcome, especially as coming from you, though not quite so good as a letter, which I hope to receive early in the new year. You would need to be careful in the choice of the wafers (small stickers with mottoes written on them) put on the outside of your envelopes, since one sent last week put somebody connected with the post office to a little trouble. The poor man probably thought that the motto "Look within" was a hint of some unlawful correspondence being enclosed, and in consequence tore open the corner and, after examining the contents, tied it up again with a piece of twine. I must say that I am at a loss sometimes to divine the meaning of some of these same mottoes, and sometimes wonder if they are selected by chance - some of them, at all events contain very good advice, which I wish I were able to follow and that without delay.

During the past year indeed I think that I have been more seriously engaged, more involved in the actual business of life, than any previous one; and for that very reason more disposed to look seriously and thoughtfully on everything around me. Sometimes I feel disposed to ask myself to what purpose is all my thought and study, my devoting hours of leisure to serious pursuits instead of to idle pleasure, and really to give a conclusive and satisfactory answer I am unable. Yet I am firmly convinced that such measure of power and knowledge as God has given us, we are bound to use for the benefit of all, and that in this must consist much of the highest kind of happiness. Thus I can be earnest without being gloomy, and can believe that, after all, I am as happy as the gayest.

In these respects however I am nearly as I used to be in other years, ex-

cept that I can feel my mind gradually settling more firmly into a matured and fixed form, and while I have less fear of the world, and consequently more confidence in my own powers in reference to the duties of life and contact with my fellow men, I feel more and more disposed to humble myself before God, and find in his presence all my knowledge - diligence and confidence become folly and even something worse. For now when I look back even on the past year so much of neglect, omission and positive evil rises before me, that I feel no place at all left for that selfrighteousness which is so apt to creep into these deceitful hearts of ours - but enough of this, why do I write this to you at all. Some people think me a very strange sort of a person, some a very wise man, and some a very good one, and I take no pains to correct their impressions; but you; but you I seem to make my confessor, while at the same time there is no one in whose opinion I would more wish to stand high. An odd contradiction, and you must solve it when we meet again.

You must give for me such good wishes as are suited to the season, to your father and mother, to your sisters and all their families, down to the weest bairn among them; I wish all good and happiness to them all, and as much as to all put together to you dear Margaret.

J. W. Dawson.

Thus ends the year 1845.

Pictou March 27th. 1846.

Dear Margaret.

You must not feel very sure that I shall be in Edinburgh next autumn. You know enough of me to understand that, though I may sometimes be a little obstinate, I am often not very decided, and may abandon a cherished plan if any important difficulty opposes, or injurious consequence seems likely to follow it. The amount of the matter is this, that if I can, without serious injury to interests here, do so, I will revisit Britain; and I am the more inclined to do so, as I see that I am continually becoming more and more involved in work of all kinds private and public, so that every year it becomes more and more difficult to leave home. I mean to make ready as far as I can; and when Autumn comes, if I can go I will, if not I must stay. - I do not well know why you should feel as if you would "hide from rather than welcome" me. A game of hide and seek would be rather an odd reception for an old friend, and you know you and I must meet as friends, very dear friends no doubt, but at the same time very wise and serious ones. With respect to my views of future employment I do earnestly wish that I could devote myself to the cause of religion, wholly; but I cannot now see any feasible way of doing so, in consistency with my feelings towards my parents, and the duties I owe them. I intend however, if God gives me time and opportunity, to qualify myself as far as possible for the duties of a religious teacher, and thus far being as useful as possible whether I can or not ever actually discharge those duties as a pastor. If I revisit Scotland, I will probably do so with a determination to spend as much as possible of my time in the Theological seminaries and Free church. At the same time however, I see no immediate prospect of leaving my present business, and will not do so, if situated as I am at present.

For some time past, I have had too little time to do much in the way of self-education. I have been reading some Hebrew in the evenings, partly with a view to knowing something of the language, and partly for the purpose of understanding more perfectly some of the passages of the scriptures. I have also within a few weeks attended a singing class with the view of getting some additional acquaintance with the principles of music, and if possible acquiring enough skill to sing a few psalm tunes in a passable way. Perhaps I ought to place under the same head two or three evening parties which I have attended during the winter; as I do not dance, and there are not usually many cousin Margarets to be found, I only stop an hour or two to have a chat with any intelligent friends that may be present and come away. So you see I am not entirely unsocial

I thank you for your kind inquiries respecting my father's deafness. He however, views it as merely one of the infirmities of old age, and has always

been unwilling to submit to any treatment for it. At present it troubles him little, as he hears pretty well in spring and summer, winter being his worst time. Besides he has not faith in homeopathy; and as I think you remarked in a former letter, a good deal of faith is requisite to enable any one to profit by it. For my part I believe that nearly all general theories of diseases and remedies now received, not excepting either homeopathy or the more orthodox tenets of the college of surgeons, are founded on very imperfect views of the human system, and are therefore wrong in practice nearly as often as right. An intelligent person, with a good general knowledge of human physiology, and proper attention, can in ordinary circumstances take better care of himself than could be taken if he acted under the advice of a hundred physicians I have seen too many practitioners with little to recommend them except a certain solemnity of manner, and confidence in prescribing for everything, whether they understood it or not. - But I must not follow this digression any farther.

My mother has yet been very little out, but as the weather is now becoming very mild and sunny, I hope she may soon venture on a daily walk.

I am glad to observe in the paper you sent by the last packet, that the Primroses are becoming more numerous, but was very sorry to see the death of Mr. Cleghorn's child. Do not omit to remember me to all your sisters, and give my most grateful good wishes to your father and mother. It is pleasant to think of you all, and all that you say of music drawing and country walks calls up very pleasant memories, with a sigh of regret that I am so far away, Or perhaps I should rather say that you are.

It is probable that when navigation opens, some of my friends here may be taking passage for Britain, and in that case, I may send my next letter by some of them,

Your affectionate friend

J. W. Dawson.

Edinburgh May 1st. 1846.

My dear friend :

I expect to be unusually busy for sometime, and thereby perhaps prevented from writing - I write now shortly to thank you for the books which you sent to the nephews and nieces, we distributed them among the children as we thought best - I thought it would not be a bad plan, to let them have them only on loan until they had read them and could give a fairly accurate account of their content, when they would become their own property.

Accept my thanks also for your last nice long letter. When I first read it I felt a little amused by the unceremonious manner with which you treated my

fine logic; for your answers returned with a power of reasoning, which swept away my poor weak observations with as much ease as the ocean wave effaces the sand traced name, but as the receding tide leaves another opportunity of retrieving it, so when the first effects of your powerful arguments subsided, again I find a few new fears ready to arise etc. etc. - nor would you be surprised at this, did you only know half the warnings I hear about the dangers and snares to which talents and learning expose the possessor. (I cannot help thinking that this latter subject is introduced and dealt upon with design). Be that as it may, I confess that the study of the scriptures either in Hebrew or our own language can tend to evil ?. Excuse me however, affectionately reminding you ever to approach the sacred volume with childlike dispositions, desiring the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby

Col. Mathison has been in a precarious state of health for some months, until a few weeks ago, he put himself under the care of Dr. Henderson and has gradually been restored almost to his usual health, and awaits milder weather to to walk abroad again.

My next work, if all goes well presents upon the whole an agreeable prospect, though a most disagreeable process - nothing less than our removal from Windmill St. to 11 Arniston Place, Newington. This event will indeed be an epoch in my existence, it being 18 years since we came here, all my ideas and associations of home are concentrated on this spot - every nook and corner has its tale of joys and sorrows which to memory are very dear. I know not how I am to become reconciled to the change ? Considered in itself, it is a decidedly desirable change, being a better house, with a sweet flower plot in front - a few fruit trees and flower shrubs at the back. We have long sought for such a house, I trust my parents will have health and long life to enjoy it.

When you next write, please direct your communication to the aforesaid address.

Yours very sincerely,
Margaret -

Edinburgh September 2nd. 1846.

My dear friend :

It is now a long time since I heard from you and longer since I wrote; time however passes so swiftly especially in summer while we are moving about - for you know we are all very fond of jaunting, and all of us have now and again been away from home, but the drooping leaves and ripening grain remind me that that season is now come which hope has associated with your return, and

I still think of it as an uncertain event, and this principally induces me to take up the pen to inquire what your decision is respecting it? Even now I feel disappointed for I had hoped you would be in time to see our foliage in freshness and beauty, or at farthest before the fruits and grains were gathered, and the rustling leaves scattered over the fading flowers, but already the earlier trees as harbingers, announce the approaching decay of all.

My ignorance of the difficulties, if not inconsistencies, which I know many believe to exist between God's account of creation and the discoveries of modern science prevent me to intelligently sharing your joy in the satisfactory results of your study on this subject, but I can readily understand it to be more confirmative to your faith in all scripture being given by inspiration etc. and cordially unite in the hope of your being enabled to prove this truth to some of our poor fellow sinners who being wise in their own conceits, are fools in the sight of God.....

Speaking of books I lately read one you sometime ago recommended to me - "Julien or Scenes in Judea" and was well repaid by the clear understanding I now have of the condition and expectation of the Jews at the time of Christ's coming - At the same time I was forcibly struck by the strong resemblance the mistaken views the Jews had concerning the character of Christ's first coming bears to those, we, the Gentiles - now entertain regarding His second coming, but in this also what the Lord by his prophets foretold is being fulfilled. We might not perhaps agree in this comparison but as we agree respecting the truth that saves our souls, let us examine ourselves and see that we are in the faith remembering that day is approaching when we shall know even as we are known! I rejoice and tremble at the thought.

I must not omit to tell you that my friend Isabella Mathew is married to Mr Hall, a pious amiable young gent, with whom I believe she will enjoy much solid happiness - he is an architect. I was present at the important ceremony, altho' not without a little fatigue and trouble in consequence of having promised to be present at the marriage of another young friend (Miss Pirie Dundee) on the 7th. and Isabella's was on the 9th. July - thus leaving the intervening day and night to travel from Dundee to Galashiels. I went direct through by mail and reached the latter place at 4 o'clock on the morning of the 9th. - had two hours sleep and rose fresh as a daisy, nor did I even after feel any bad effects from the unusual excitement.

I might fill much paper with interesting public news such as the resuscitation of the anti-slavery question, in which I have taken a lively interest - but I presume you notice such subjects in the newspapers, so I will content my -

self by telling you all my relations are in very good health at present, this comes hoping you and yours are in like condition.

Yours sincerely
Margaret.

P.S. I should tell you, that four weeks ago a duplicate Margaret Anne has appeared in the shape of sister Jessie's little daughter.

How do you get on with your music ?

Pictou October 1st. 1846.

Dear Margaret :

I sit down to answer your last letter, without very certainly knowing what to say. Just imagine me keeping shop from morning till night, and besides the selling, bookkeeping etc., looking after tenants going out of and coming into houses, and attending to a hundred other things public and private that use up hours and minutes : and father the greater part of the time at his farm, and mother very infirm in health, and scarcely half the day out of bed; then say what likelihood there is that I can soon leave all this, even for a short time. I have truly been work, work, work with me for some time past. Nevertheless I entertain a faint hope that, towards the approach of winter, there may be a lull which may enable me to think again of a run over the water. My mother's weak health is a serious obstacle. I fear the effects of the winter on her, in her present state, and even now there are few days sufficiently fine for her to venture out, so that there is little opportunity for her to recruit herself by exercise.

There is a fine large ship now nearly ready for launching, and which will likely sail about the middle of this month -If I do not get ready to go in her, I will likely be able to let you know by next packet whether I am on the way to go. I fear it will be the latest as if there is so much work for me at home as I cannot feel easy when from home, knowing that those I left behind were overburdened.

You will think, I am sure, that I am overmuch troubled with the cares of this world, and I often think so too; but then I am so situated that almost constant attendance is required, even when there is not much being done; and generally there is a host of things pouring upon me to be done which I cannot avoid without a deviation from duty.

I have had little time of late for literary labour of any kind, but by using such portions of evenings, as I could snatch, have done something; I have however much unfinished that I would like to perfect this autumn. I had one little excursion from home, shortly after I last wrote and saw some pretty scenery, of which I hope to show you some sketches when we meet again.

I can appreciate your remarks on " J " in one respect. There is

even now a manifest tendency among professing christians to accomodate all parts of the scriptures to the views and prejudices of the day. This I suspect has always been, and is a natural fruit of the rebelliousness and perversity of human nature. It does very markedly appear in the interpretations of the prophetic parts of scripture, though in that its effects are not so mischevious as where it leads to blindness to important practical truths. In the matter of Christs second coming, it will scarcely be fair to accuse any of blindness, unless, when the event happens, they fail to recognise in it the fulfilment of prophecy, in the meantime dark views must be treated with leniency, as prophecy itself is, and I believe was intended to be, obscure. We would allow a Jew, before the first advent, to have imperfect views, which we would consider inexcusable after the apparent contradiction of the old prophecies had been reconciled by the fulfilment of all in the person of the Saviour. So that if you or I entertain unfounded expectations respecting unfulfilled prophecy, the chief danger is that we may thereby be blinded to its real fulfilment. I will give you two instances of the evil effect of such views. The first is the tendency to look for the foes of Christ only in popery and the ecclesiastical tyranny of rulers, and to overlook the anti-christian elements existing in our own churches, or those we may think most pure. The second is while we look forward with hope to the glorious things promised to the church on earth, to neglect the truth that it is only in proportion to the increasing numbers and purity of Christ's true followers, that his Kingdom can truly come, and his foes be really overthrown.

I suppose I have seen notices of the anti-slavery movements to which you refer. It is a good cause and will prevail, in spite of the contiguity of our neighbours of the southern states.

In conclusion, I do very earnestly long to see Edinburgh again, but then would it not be wrong to leave my present post if I cannot do so without injury to my father and mother, May the best blessings rest on you all.

Yours affectionately

J. W. Dawson.

So ends the year 1846, with hopes for 1847 -

24 St Patricks Square
January - Tuesday Evening - 1847

Dear Margaret:

When I last wrote, I expected that we should now have been able to speak to each other on a subject of which I did not then dare to write; and though I had made up my mind, and also promised to your father, to consult him before saying anything to you, I had no anticipation that he or your mother would not consent to our having so much communication as would enable us thoroughly to understand one another's views and purposes, in a matter in which we are surely not less concerned and likely to be affected for good or evil than they. It may be that, in so long a correspondence, we should have been more explicit ere now; if so the fault is mine, and all that I can now say in apology for it, is that was at least due to other causes than want of affection towards you. This however, renders it all the more proper, and even necessary, that we should now have an opportunity of consulting with each other. Though I believe that this is right, and should not have been opposed by your parents, I have waited in the hope that their views might be somewhat modified. I believe, however, that I have waited in vain, and in these circumstances I have determined to ask an interview with you, that we may have a few minutes conversation on what it is right for us to do in the very difficult circumstances in which we are placed. I do not know what time or place will be convenient or even possible for you, if disposed to grant this request, however, may I suggest, that if you could take a walk in the meadows on Friday or Saturday next, I will be on the north side, near the place where we used to enter them from the square behind Windmill St, on those days, from 2 O'clock till dark.

You must understand dear Margaret, that in the event of your considering it wrong to meet me in this way, or of its involving any inconvenience or risk of injury to your health, I do not wish you to attend to it, for however hard it may be to be debarred from conversation with you, I can bear that more easily than I could being the cause of any injury to you. It is also possible that there may still be some prospect that your mother and father may not always be so inflexible. If you think so, it may be better to wait a little longer than to do anything of which they may disapprove.

In any of these cases, I would of course like that you should let me know your opinions or position; but as it is possible that you may not be able easily to do even this, remember that it is better for me as well as for you, that I should have a walk in the meadows for an hour or two in vain, than that you should get into any trouble. I feel dear Margaret, that in this matter we have need of

much wisdom and moral strength; and I pray that God may grant us more than we have, I feel however confident that out of all these troubles good will come; and have even good hope that your parents may be induced to abandon the position they have taken; since if your feelings toward me are as strong as mine are and have been toward you, it would not be hard to show that their present position is a most injudicious one. This is the chief reason for my now being anxious to see you. I am fully aware of the many real sacrifices which you must make if you go with me; though I also believe that you would find many counterbalancing goods of which you can have less knowledge at present. It is the weight of these apparent sacrifices in your mind, that I have always regarded as my chief difficulty and if I should be so happy as to overcome that, I would fear others little; if that cannot be overcome, the others of course need not be meddled with.

I am yours most truly

J. W. Dawson.

Edinburgh - Friday 15th. 1847 - January.

Dear Margaret:

I thank you for your kind promptitude, and also for the thoroughly wise and right feelings which you express. I love you too well to wish you to do anything that you could ever have just cause to regret; and I have the most perfect confidence that neither I nor you can in any way be losers or be involved in greater difficulties, by having the most scrupulous regard to the rights and feelings of others. I cannot see that in this respect you have any reason to blame yourself, and I feel very sure that you are not likely to give any one just cause to blame you.

I must confess that I too have felt much uneasiness. I have worked away, with a stone heart, at my business and studies, but it has been hard and rather heartless work; and then, every part of the town is so full of objects recalling the memory of happy times when you and I could talk as much as pleased us, that it was scarcely possible to feel comfortable in the uncertainties and doubts of the present. Yet in looking back to those days, there is great reason for hope and comfort. How great have been God's mercies to us in the interval. If we were gayer then, it was only in consequence of less thought, and not of greater cause of happiness; and while we have been far apart, and have greatly changed in our views both of things temporal and eternal, our thoughts and feelings are as much in unison as before. Surely then we have now still better cause than we could then have, to take courage when we look forward to the future.

I have had a letter from home informing me that all is well, though of course they do not yet certainly know where I am. They will however know in two or three days.

I began this, merely with the view of acknowledging your note, I would have done so sooner, but have been driven about by business, which I could not neglect without incurring the charge of carelessness. Trusting to see you very soon, I conclude, as I should like you to call me -

William.

Edinburgh, January 22nd. 1847.

Dear Margaret :

A few days are, in some circumstances, a very long time, and I already feel it to be long since I heard anything of you. Another week has nearly expired, and so far as I know everything is just as it was, and what is worse I know of nothing that in present circumstances I can do to make it better. You must therefore excuse me for again writing to you ; especially as there are many things which it is right that I should tell you, and which may be as well written as spoken, perhaps better, since when written you can consider them at your leisure. The first is an idea which never occurred to me, but which I have heard hinted since I came here. That there might be between you and me some feeling of mutual obligation; that is, that though there was no actual engagement, we might feel in some way pledged to each other, and thus be induced to act in a manner different from our personal inclination. Anything of this kind would plainly be only mutual injustice, however good the motive might be, I mention it merely for the purpose of saying to you, as I have already said to your father, that I can plead no claim upon you, no encouragement received from you in all our correspondence. There has been nothing on which I could rationally found such a pretension and if there had, I should have no wish to insist upon it. Whatever your decision with respect to me, it must be a free one, the dictate of your own heart, as well as of your judgment. For my own part, I know too well for my present comfort, that my greatest earthly happiness would be in surrendering all my freedom, and permanently engaging to love you.

Our climate seems to be a great bugbear to persons here, and certainly with no good reason, I can give you a superficial idea of it in a few words. The spring is drier than yours, generally very clear and sunny but with occasional cold and raw weather. The summer is drier than that of Scotland, and for about a month somewhat warmer, its sunniness and beauty cannot be exaggerated. The autumn is generally very fine and agreeable. The beginning of winter is often very like that of this country, but so soon as the frost has fairly set in, it is bright and healthy. There is occasionally, for a week at a time weather extremely cold to those who are obliged to be much exposed, and there are a few wet thaw

days, but the greater part is such that I believe there is more driving and jaunting about among our ladies in winter than in summer. In clear weather ladies drive about in sleighs with perfect comfort, when the air is at least 20 degrees colder than you have it here. you may be assured that our climate is much more agreeable, and quite as healthy as this; and I may add that I never found any one who had experience of both, to have a different opinion.

With respect to Pictou itself, though a small place it is not to be judged of by small places here. It has a large proportion of good and comfortable houses. It has also a large proportion of very respectable and intelligent society, and many christian people, though I confess that there, as in most other places, they are the smaller number. There are literary, benevolent and religious institutions of many kinds, some of them as well managed as any here, though of course on a smaller scale. In the manners of the people there is little that is different from what is seen here; except that all are more on a level, as we have no persons of great rank or wealth, and few who are in want; and intelligence and a desire for knowledge are more universally diffused than even here.

Another important matter is my present means and prospects. It would of course be a very impudent, not to say unprincipled thing to ask you to go where you would be exposed to want, without at least warning you beforehand. In this respect I have no reason to fear. Our business which though in my father's name, may be in mine whenever I wish, it has been more than sufficient to maintain us in a position as respectable as that of any in our country, and as comfortable as that of any in the middle ranks here. We have also a considerable amount of property in land and houses, besides that which we ourselves occupy; and our trade has been increasing, and I hope to do something towards rendering it more productive while here now. On this subject however I shall obtain more full and precise testimony from home, if I find it likely to be of any service.

My parents and I, as you know, inhabit one house, which however is large and well furnished, and till lately was occupied by another family besides our own. We have two other large houses which are rented, and a little cottage on the farm which my father is desirous to furnish and occupy, as he would like to spend all or nearly all his time on his farm.

Our establishment consists of two women servants and a man servant, two horses, two cows, a riding sleigh and fly, the latter purchased last summer, for the purpose of driving about with my mother, and for carrying father to and from the farm.

With respect to myself, I am aware that my fondness for scientific pursuits, not directly connected with my business, may give persons here unfavour-

able impressions respect my attention to business when at home, I believe however, that I have occupied less time in this way, than most young men do in other amusements; and I am able and willing to give these things up if necessary. I have indeed promised, when I return to do all in my power to relieve my father altogether of the labour of business.

A more unfortunate point than any of these, is the circumstance of our being connected with different religious denominations, at least I know it weighs much with your mother. This is a matter however, for which we alone are responsible, and with which no other person has a right to intermeddle. On that very account, however, it is one which should be rightly understood. I may say for myself, that to me it is no difficulty, since I am firmly persuaded that the real distinction is between Christ's people and the world and not between one sect and another. It is far better to have a common faith than a common creed, and disregard of this truth produces as much mischief in the world as any one thing I know.

In writing of these things, I do not suppose them to be important elements in your decision; but I know that, if we would be thought by others to act wisely, such things must not be neglected. There is a kind of small wisdom which looks at little difficulties appearing on the surface, and sees nothing of reasons of infinitely greater weight, in reference to the happiness of those concerned in any course of conduct; and it is by this kind of wisdom that we must expect at least in a great measure to be judged.

I may mention how I am spending my time here, I had hoped to have spent much of it with you, but since at present I cannot do that, and it would neither be any compliment to you nor service to myself to waste it, I am endeavouring to turn it to as good account as possible. In the morning at half past eight, I go over to Elder St. to get a lesson in Hebrew. At 10, I attend the chemistry class and work in the laboratory at analysis of soils till 12. The afternoon I have for all sorts of miscellaneous business, and the evening usually for study. When I receive my letter from home by the Feb. packet, I shall have for a time at least to occupy most of the day in selecting and buying stock here and in Glasgow. The information I am obtaining in the meantime, I know I can turn to good account at home. On Sabbath, I have made arrangements for joining in communion with Mr Johnston's church, I would like sometimes to attend the meetings of your church, but cannot appear there in present circumstances.

I have always felt in relation to you, that I was hoping for more than I deserved or had a right to expect, and I never felt this more than when I asked you to meet me, that we might have some conversation on the present state of affairs. I am now however, still more desirous to see you, because if you can

at all regard my proposal with favour, I know that by writing home by the Feby mail, I can obtain much that will enable me better to meet the objections of your relatives, in so far as these are to be removed by facts. If then you can point out any way, time or place where I could see you, or if you can tell me anything which will enable me to write home with greater certainty, I will be most grateful.

William.

Edin. Thursday 28th. 1847.

Dear Margaret :

On Monday I was so thankful for seeing you at all, that I did not so much feel the disappointment of not being to converse with you, till after I had left you, In the days that have passed since, however, I have felt as if everything was quite as bad as before, with the additional aggravations that I had caused much trouble to you, and had perhaps greatly offended your mother. I fear that she will think that I spoke rashly and harshly to her; if so I am truly sorry, for I feel that I owe her too much to have any right to complain; and though I think that the right of decision belongs alone to you, you know that I have not attempted to advance my own cause by disparaging the influence which either the authority or feelings of parents ought to have. Mrs Bell informed me yesterday that it was Mr Horsburgh your mother would consult, I remember that when here before, I thought him to be a good man, and I hope that God will guide him to advise wisely. My chief reasons for writing now, one to ask you to inform me as soon as possible of the result of his advice, which I think your mother said she did not object that you should; and to say that if either your mother or you wish me to see him, either to hear his opinion, or to give him any information that I can, I am very willing to do so. - I hope too that your mother will not forget my request that I should have an opportunity of seeing her before next month.

By far the hardest part of this whole affair, to me, is that it should cause so much pain to those whom I have least wish to injure and most cause to respect and love, and especially to you. How can I hope to repay you for all the trouble you have already been put to. I cannot however, cease to hope that I will be allowed to try to do so.

William.

If your mother suspects anything treasonable in this note, you may show it to her.

Edin. Friday evening Jan. 30 -1847.

Dear Margaret.

I opened your note this evening with an anxious mind, but when I had

read it, I thanked God for what it contained; for he has brought good advice from quarters where I had no influence, at a time when I was less hopeful than ever. Mr Hasbergh has referred to the really important points; and though, as you say, they have been thought of before, they require to be thoroughly understood. I do not intend to say anything of them now, except that you may depend on my speaking to you fully and fairly, as in the presence of God, and speaking to you whose respect and affection are so very dear to me, and could not be retained, if I were found to have deceived you.

I am glad that your doctor has some real knowledge of our climate, though Chester is not one of the finest parts of my country. I know that most medical men here have much less correct views, because they are guided by reasoning from this climate, in a manner which leads them directly to the reverse of truth; and therefore I feel the more thankful that yours should have a fact leading him in the right direction. I could give you more such facts, some of them curious enough. I will not forget your caution respecting troubling your mother with a subject she does not like. You know something of my feelings toward her; and though, in whatever we do, we must try to have her consent and blessing, it would not be the best way to obtain that, any more than it would to be in accordance with my wishes, to annoy or grieve her.

Let us continue to pray, dear Margaret, that we and all connected with us may have guidance from on high, to all that is true and right.

William.

Wed. Febry. 3rd. 1847. Edinburgh.

Dear Margaret.

Last evening I finished my letter for home; saw your father, and requested him to take my message to your mother, and then finished reading Mr. Beverly's pamphlet and comparing it as far as I could with scripture. If we could take another walk tomorrow, I will tell you what I think of his views, or rather what I think the bible says of them.

If you can come, I will wait as before at Preston St., at the same hour. If I can manage to finish a piece of work I have to day at the college, I think I will take a run out to see Mrs Bell this afternoon.

Yours ever

William.

Thursday evg. Febry. 4th. Edinburgh.

Dear Margaret :

After we parted today, I thought, as I had sent a message by your father, it would be as well to consult him as to the expediency of calling this evening. He said he had intended to invite me to come tomorrow evening; but

as I told him that I was engaged to dine at Mr. Boyds , he asked me to come on Saturday. I asked him to mention to you, that for these reasons I would not come out tonight. I now write however, lest he should forget, and you should not know the reason of my absence.

The more I know of your mother's disposition and probable feelings, the more hopeful do I become that she will yet treat me very leniently, and pardon my great presumption in asking her for her daughter.

Our conversation today, though somewhat cheerful, was useful, since we touched on a great many things that may let us better know one another's views and modes of thinking. After leaving you however, my conscience did check me for being the means of leading you such a round through the snows, perhaps risking the danger of your taking cold. I trust however, that no such bad effects will follow; but that we shall have occasion, in future times, to look back on this as one of the sunny days of our lives, after the clouds whose gathering we fear shall have passed away.

William.

Monday evening - Febr. 8th. 1847. Edin.

Dear Margaret.

I received your note and I can meet you tomorrow without any scruples of conscience, since I think the circumstances in which we are placed call for mutual confidence and decision.

I called on Mr Horsburgh today, and had a few minutes conversation with him, I could not of course say much except on common place subjects, and he as I had expected did not wish to say much. The amount of what I said was - that I knew he had been consulted and that his advice was highly valued by all parties - that I knew that you, in whatever you did, wished to have the approbation of the church with which you are connected - that I wished to recognise him as an elder of that church, and desired to regard him as a christian friend - that I wished for these reasons to give him an opportunity of knowing me, and of asking or suggesting anything that he might think proper. That I had no wish to ask any interference on his part, or any information that might have been communicated to him. He did not seem to be disposed to ask anything, except about the Baptists in Pictou. I told him what I knew of them, and also that my regard for you was very much founded on my opinion of your character as a christian. What little beside was mentioned I may mention when we meet - I could not tell whether the impressio I made was favourable or not ?

I spent a good Sabbath yesterday, and I believe that the spirit of Christ was with me.

I saw you pass yesterday, and thought how happy it would be to spend the Sabbath with you, and how happy it is that you are a person of whom I can think without thinking less of God. Other less pleasant thoughts I tried to keep away.

William.

Edinburgh. Feb. 12th. 1847.

Dear Margaret

I write this note because in reflecting on what I said respecting speaking to your father, I fear that it was not as wise as it might have been and thought I am sure that in this you can act for yourself better than I can direct you, yet as what I said may mislead, you will excuse me for again troubling you with this subject.

I spoke of asking your fathers advice, it would have been nearer the mark to have said his sympathy and countenance; and if these can be obtained at all, the best way to get them will be by frankly and seriously opening your mind to him, telling him your own views and mine and desiring him to think as favourably as he can. I am sure that if you can do this, you will not regret it, even altho' you should fail in attaining any satisfactory result; and it may be a step toward extricating us from present difficulties. - You see in this case I wish you to plead for me, as well as to ask advice for yourself. I know this is scarcely a fair request, but I have hope that where I have failed you may succeed, and therefore I make bold to trouble you with this also.

I am yours sincerely

William.

Edinburgh - Monday morning - Feb ? 1847.

Dear Margaret :

Do not think me too impatient because I write so soon, asking to see you.

There cannot be anything undutiful, on your part, ingranting me this, since if you have a right to decide for yourself, and if as I understand, your parents are willing to concede this right, they surely cannot object to your informing yourself fully respecting every fact that ought to guide you. Indeed it appears to me strange that they should be averse to my calling on you at their house, at least once. After I left on Saturday, in thinking over our hurried and, on my part, rather disjointed conversation, I felt sorry that I had not asked your mother's mind on this subject.

In present circumstances, I can think of nothing better than to ask you : to renew the former appointment, for tomorrow - I will therefore, unless you give me contrary orders, come out at a quarter past eleven by the town time, and will wait for you about Preston St..... I shall be prepared to say, in as few words as possible, all I have to say on the subjects referred to in your last note, and shall not urge you to give any decision on them, till you have time to consider

them, and to ascertain the influence my answers to them may have on the mind of your mother.

It makes me all the more anxious to see you, that I am sure that many things in my views and position, in a religious point of view, are less to be objected to than your mother and even you think. If it were not so, I would perhaps not feel so very confident as I do, that you and I would be fitting helpers to each other in the pilgrimage of life.

It is a very terrible thing to me to think of difficulties that may all-together separate you and me in this world; yet they must be met and considered; and with Gods help, this shall be done in a truthful and christian spirit so that I may be worthy of being Y O U R W I L L I A M.

Globe Hotel, Glasgow - Feb. 24th. 1847.

Dear Margaret:

I have just finished my days work, after much weary tramping along the straight flat streets of this smoky town. I have however, no cause to complain since I have done a considerable proportion of my work, and have had a fine dry day. I hope to finish nearly everything tomorrow, and to get back to Edin. early Friday.

In going to my lodgings yesterday evening, I felt that I had done wrong in detaining you so long, and perhaps exposing you to blame from your father, as I know he does not like to wait longer than is proper for his supper. I did not however, feel any regret for what we had said, nor do I now, for I am fully persuaded that it is the best way for all parties, and that God will bless us in it, as He has in thinking favourably of each other hereto fore; Notwithstanding every ones opposition. I thought over it all this morning, in coming here; and several things occurred to me which might make further steps easier and which I will mention when I return. I am however, very anxious to know what you think now whether calm reflection bears you out in adhering to what we partly resolved yesterday. Whether you are less troubled or more distressed than before. It will however scarcely be worthwhile to write to me here, unless you can be sure that your letter will reach me before Friday morning - I will try to see you at any rate on Friday afternoon.

A great part of my time to day has been occupied in buying little knick-knacks in the stationary way, which take more time than things of more importance. It is a pleasant part of my work too, for however strange you may think it, I take as much pleasure in getting nice patterns and colours of perforated cards and gold ornaments, tissue papers glass seals, showy prints and all that sort of thing, as in any other study I know; and it deserves additional interest from

being one department of the study of human nature; since it involves a knowledge of the tastes and notions of the ladies who buy such things - I do not deny however that I would rather buy and sell useful books, though I see no cause to quarrel with ladies for amusing themselves with trifles, if they show good taste in them.

This morning on going to the railway I heard a little bird singing a few pretty notes, in the trees at the foot of the castle hill. He was a little fellow smaller than a sparrow, with a dusky breast and a bill I think like those of the linnet family. I would like to know the little fellows name? perhaps you can tell me. His joyful song makes me think that our Heavenly father, who cares for the sparrows, will care for us; and trust that He will deliver us from all our troubles; and not us only, but also those who are troubled on our account.

Earnestly wishing that he may give you as much peace and serenity as is possible.

I am yours sincerely

William.

Edinburgh - March 1847.

Dear Margaret :

This evening I had intended to tell you the result of my interview with your father..... Not having had an opportunity however of doing so, and thinking that it may be of consequence to you to know, in case of having any conversation with your mother on the subject, I now write a short statement of what was said.

I told him that I believed our minds were made up to proceed, under existing circumstances, and that I wished to ascertain from him how far he could go or how much he would be disposed to do towards enabling us to go on without any unnecessary discomfort or annoyance, such as might arise from our having to act in apparent opposition to his will. I also asked him if he could not take upon himself the trouble of enquiring into all matters important to your comfort, and of suggesting to me or negotiating with me, anything that he might think necessary to your security in point of maintenance and independence.

He said he was disposed to place no obstacle in our way, but feared that it would be impossible to reconcile your mother to it so far as to permit any appearance of consent on her part. That he thought our best plan would be to manage the affair for ourselves altogether, and not to ask to be married in your mothers house at all; and he explained to me what he thought would be the best mode of proceeding - I have not room to state it here.

He said he was well enough satisfied that you would not want for anything necessary with me, but said he was willing to see my father's letters when they

arrived; though he believed that no fears of any pecuniary destitution entered into his objections or Mrs Mercers.

He mentioned that he did not think your mother would give you anything in the way of outfit; but he thought you were pretty well provided. that he did not know whether or not he would give you anything himself; and that he would recomen us not to waste our money in anything unnecessary; these were subjects however, on which I was not disposed to ask questions.

I tried to impress on him that I would be very grateful for any kindness or forbearance that would make parting from them less painful to you, or could prevent us from being evil spoken of, He seemed however to think that your mother feelings on the subject, would make this very difficult.

I think I have stated as correctly as I can the account of our conversation on the subject, and I must say that I found him speak more kindly on it than I had expected.

If I cannot see you tomorrow, I will endeavour to be dispatch as many othe matters as possible, so that my time for the remainder of the week may be my own.

On Thirsday I hope to speak more fully to you of the further steps we may have to take before getting through present difficulties. May God grant you stren gth and decision for it, and bless all that we do so that we may afterwards have occasion to rejoice in looking back. It is a very long time to wait till Thursday without seeing you. If I can safely do so, I must try to call tomorrow. I hope . that you and your mother may arrive at a satisfactory understanding.

Earnestly wishing to be able to call you mine,

I am your William.

Edinburgh - March, Friday 9 o'clock.

Dear Margaret :

I saw your father again this evening; he is still of opinion that there should be as little delay as possible, and that your mother should not be troubled in any way with preparations or arrangements. I hope to see you on Saturday afternoon to speak of these things, I will go to Dalkieth at 10 tomor-row and will return either by the 12 or 2 o'clock omnibus as a short call will be as much as is desired.

I saw Dr Wielobycki (that is I think the right spelling) this agternoon and he promised to make out a list of remedies for me. He wished me to cal on Sun day to pick them up - I told him I would prefer Monday morning.

I have been walking about almost constantly since I left you at 2, and have made a number of calls, and finished several little pieces of business. I hope your fears of a sore throat were groundless, and that I will find you well tomorrow, and that your mother will continue in a good and kind spirit. When I

think of her mind experiencing any more favourable change, I cannot help feeling feeling that I can scarcely be too thankful for what has been already accomplished, we should thank God for it.

Sincerely yours

William.

Edinburgh- Tuesday - March 1847.

Dear Margaret :

I have seen your father, he is kind and reasonable as usual, but says we must manage everything ourselves, without asking any concession of your mother; and thinks the sooner the better.

I got to Glasgow in the morning. If the ship be at Glasgow, I may return early in the day; if at Greenock not till evening, I will let you know immediately on arrival.

Do not dear Margaret distress yourself with evil forebodings. Try to comfort your mother, and pray for her; she needs more light in this matter. Lay our troubles before God too; he is the only sure refuge, and knows our anxieties and fears better than we ourselves. I wish we could just trust in Him as we ought. May he guard you from all harm till I see you again.

Sincerely yours

William.

Edin. Saturday ev'g. March 1847.

Dear Margaret.

I have just finished my days work, having after leaving you been engaged all the afternoon in dispatching some minor business matters, I find that I shall have to go to Glasgow on Wednesday, to get as much done there as possible before the next packet leaves. As I may thus possibly not have any other opportunity of seeing you, before the first of the month, except on Monday, it is of consequence that that opportunity should be employed in deciding as seriously as possible on our future proceedings.

If you can with a good conscience, consent to be mine, I would at once inform myself accurately respecting any formalities that might require to be written home about. If there be such, I could not receive an answer containing the necessary certificates till the middle of April; and in that case all the ships, direct to Pictou, would have sailed; and we should have to go by way of Liverpool to Halifax, which though if we went by steamer more speedy, would be less convenient.

If no such reference to Nova Scotia were necessary, then I think it would be every way preferable not to wait so long, and I could when in Glasgow

make arrangements for accomodation direct to Pictou. In this last case, however I shall be able to reserve, after buying stock, only about a hundred pounds of the funds I have now, to pay all expenses; and I am not quite sure that I will have any additional remittance by the March packet.

In case of having to wait over April , I would have time to write for additional supplies which in that case would of course be more necessary.

All this is of course contingent on your decision; but however important to me, I do not wish you to make a resolve, without firm confidence that you ar acting rightly. I can sincerely pray that God may guide you to what is best; fo what is good to you must be good to me, and nothing that would injure can benefit me. I wish those who think differently from me, could do so to. There would then I think be less difference about it. You may call this a bread and butter billet doux, and not much even of that; but you ought to know these things, and they will be plainer and take less time when written than spoken.

If you have no objection, I would prefer calling to waiting for you on Monday, as I expect to have a copy of my map and perhaps some other things to show you.

Sincerely

Your William.

This final epistle brings to an end those written in the year 1847 - which concludes a group of letters written during the period between 1841 and 1847. This portion of time directly preceding the marriage of Margaret A.Y. Mercer to William Dawson in April. 1847.
