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J. Sims, Glasgow.

## AIRTHREY WELLS, BRIDGE OF ALLAN.

Edinburgh August 1<sup>st</sup> 43

Dear Mr. Dawson

This is now the third letter I have commenced writing to you since receiving yours dated 25<sup>th</sup> May - various circumstances prevented me getting them finished. I have now the additional pleasure of acknowledging a second, dated 29<sup>th</sup> June, which in consequence of the Columbia being wrecked, I did not receive till the 29<sup>th</sup> of the month. To hear from you so pleasing to me at all times but severe illness & long confinement made the task peculiarly so; to hear you enjoyed good health (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. Having a young lady on a visit to me & delighted twice more to have a companion, I 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 told Mother that it was inflammation in my lungs & he considered it necessary to call in another physician. They gave me a kind of drugs to take 9 times each day - I was

several times bled - & times blistered besides many other painful applications what with leeches liniments &c my left side from the collar bone to the waist, looks as if I had stood as target to a company of archers. I was confined to bed all May, & to the house till the 26<sup>th</sup> of June. I would have been out several days sooner had the weather permitted, but the D<sup>o</sup> wanted us to wait for a warm day & then go direct to the country. We had secured lodgings at Lupton, a well sheltered little village in the neighbourhood of Dalkeith, & this being a warm day we set off - I was so delighted at the prospect of getting out & so confident in my ability to take a long walk that I was rather surprised to find my limbs shaking so, that it was with difficulty I walked to the corner of the street to get the umbrella. After getting to the country I gained strength so rapidly that in a few days I was able to walk a considerable distance without feeling fatigued. We had been there about 5 or 6 days - (when I say we you must understand it is Mother & I. Father left the day before us on a jaunt to England where he remained two weeks - he went to Hull by that unfortunate vessel the Pegasus which was wrecked the third or fourth voyage after) when Mother received a letter from Bathgate intimating that Mrs Dewar was ill, & wished her to come out as soon as possible. She could not. ~~She~~ Mother was unwilling to leave me & yet she considered it her duty to attend her aunt, she having no other friend to take care of her - so she went, leaving me in charge of Jessie. I remained till Father returned from England. On my return home, the D<sup>o</sup>, who still directs my movements, ordered me off to the country again, but to go in a different direction. I had been so much accustomed to my dear Mother's kind attentions that I could not think of going without her, so wrote telling her I was ordered to the Bridge of Allan & would like her to go with me - in reply she told Mrs Dewar was so very ill with dropsy, that she had little hope of her recovering & unless really necessary she could not leave her. I ask Jessie to accompany me & go immediately, & if possible she would join us at the Bridge. Leaving Father to enjoy bachelorism, & a servant to manage the house as best she could. - Mr. Hoplehorn, Jessie, her baby & servant went with me. Mrs Dewar continued so ill that Mother could not leave her & she died on the 18<sup>th</sup> July at

48A

at 9 o'clock. I was very glad that Mother was beside her as it satisfied her that everything that could tend to alleviate her sufferings, or prolong her life was done, & I need not add that she was well attended to when you know who was her nurse. When Mother returned she felt so worn out & pleased to get rest & ease that she could not think of leaving it again. When Jessie & I heard this we decided to come home, which we did four days ago. It seems however I am to be kept yawning about as long as the weather will permit so the next place I go to when going to is Galashiels 32 Miles South. At the end of the season, if I am not by that time quite strong, Father has promised to let me to London (the climate being milder there) for a month or two & perhaps the whole winter. Once more at Mendmill etc. I shall give you a sketch how I spend my time there. At 6 in the morning I get a drink of warm milk in bed - rise at 7 - breakfast, which generally consists of fruit, or barley meal 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 occupy me till 10 or thereabouts - I am then sponged from top to toe, either with vinegar or cold water - dress for the day take 15 or 20 drops of Symplic of vitriol to appease me for dinner - walk out for half an hour - then dine on some light pudding & go to bed for an hour. In the afternoon I often take a drive to Musselburgh, Dalkeith, or Portobello. I was at Musselburgh yesterday; Marion & her baby are very well - he is a fine stout little fellow & makes known his wants & wishes by crying most lustily. Jane with her family are at Portobello during the holidays. You will see by this account that I am almost better: indeed there is nothing the matter now but we are aware of that I am daily getting better. The reason why such great care is taken of me is the fear of a second attack which the Dr. tells me I will be liable to for some time & that it would probably be followed by consumption. What a change this is to me who for several years now has enjoyed uninterrupted good health, a blessing I never sufficiently 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 some time was so harassed that I could not settle either to read or work. I hope all this will now vanish, now that I am freed from the importunate entreaties of one, who sanctioned

by one of my parents, & knowing that I neither esteemed nor respected him yet wanted me to become his, but this affair is now settled as I wished it. I write this in explanation of those hints I formerly gave you, it has cost me a great effort to do so, for even thinking of those things agitates me.

I have just finished reading over your last letter for the —  
 I'll not say how often. — The description of your excursion is very interesting, & to you who can boldly push through wood & water to visit waterfalls or any other beautiful scenery, it must have been delightful. I also tried to visit a fall while at the Bridge of Allan. We drove 18 miles <sup>to</sup> the <sup>vicinity</sup> Linn. The carriage took us within a mile of it & a nice footpath along the beautifully wooded banks of the Deon brought us to the top of the fall. I had not sufficient courage to look down as the others did, but anxious to see them, I got down on all fours & crept to the edge of the rock; the first glimpse made me quite sick — having, however, resolved to look — I rested, took a full breath & tried again. I did see it but on creeping back and becoming biped my poor trembling could scarcely support me & I felt sick for a considerable time after. So you see I should require my nerves strengthened before accompanying you on an excursion such as you describe. Going in search of wildflowers is what I would enjoy most being a favorite amusement of mine. — I thank you for the pretty little specimen of mayflower you sent me — pretty (as it is now, & much more so as it must have been when freshly gathered) I don't think it more so than your <sup>last</sup> besides tho' it was, it was unpardonable want of galantry in you to say so.

I would indeed like to visit your country & judge of its beauty with my own eyes but as that wish can never be gratified I must be content with imagining it. I hope you have not abandoned your intention of revisiting Scotland. It would make me sorry to think I was never to see you again. — I have seen much of my own country since you left and will be able to lay down a beautiful tour for you where you will see wooded hills as well as bare ones.

Well what a silly girl I am, the Dr. has just called, and I am so delighted with his orders that I can think or write of nothing else. In the first



STIRLING CASTLE &c.

Designed & Engraved by

J. Swan, 54 St. Vincent St.

you will be glad to hear he considers me decidedly improved since his  
 visit, & the next, he has ordered me to ride out on horseback, that I may  
 enjoy a greater variety of scene without fatigue. visions of fine horses, splendid  
 habits & Diana Vernon adventures are flitting before me. I wish you would  
 just look over & see me for I do think I shall look extremely handsome  
 on horseback - What a prett.

I thought this letter paper with the intention of writing  
 from my last packet, from Allan. It is a beautiful watering place 3 miles  
 from Stirling. We went up to the well almost every morning between 9 & 10. The  
 well is situated half way up a hill & commanding a beautiful view of Stirling  
 Stirling Castle, the valley & windings of the Forth. At the top of this sheet to the  
 left is Abbey-craig on the road to Stirling & to the right Cambuskeneth Abbey  
 below Stirling.

I must really apologise for this queer letter, it is a complete ragsmash  
 & if I read it over I am sure you will never receive it, but that would be too much  
 trouble so you will just get hold of all the it faults & all. - Mother & Father write with  
 me in sending affectionate regards to you & your parents - very sincerely yours  
 Margaret A. J. Mercer

1843

*Recd*

*Wm. Dawson  
Riding*

*Mr. J. W. Dawson*

*Proton*

*Nov. 20th*

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*Wm. Dawson*