

McGILL UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES
APR. NO. 1377
REF. 15-B-55

Ston March 31, 1892

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 so 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 going. New Years day was our coldest, so cold that when I attempted to take a short walk I found the wind too keen for me. Contrasted with this we had weeks of comparatively warm & wet weather, such as you have in November.

The failure of the ship & timber trade and consequent scarcity of money, made last winter rather a dull one among the gayer sort of people here. In this country where there are few who have independent fortunes the rule is that when business is brisk people are very extravagant, but when "bad time" come they are forced to be saving.

In three or four years, there has been an uncommon
 rage for speculation among our good folks. Banks
 were established, and almost any one could get credit.
 Everybody commenced building ships, and was
 certain to make a fortune. This year the tide
 has turned, & they are all half ruined. Mr
 Crear who bought 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 & 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 amusements we have
 had a nice little concert (a novelty in Pictou)
 given by a family of respectable musical talents,
 who were by the death of their father were
 reduced to rather poor circumstances. On
 New Years day we were also to have had a dis-
 play of fireworks &c. in honour of the Queen's "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
 firing. This narrated some of the most im-
 portant events in the history of our town I must
 desist from these unimportant matters of history for

Some of my own personal affairs -
 I have got a stand and case to hold some
 birds for you and Maria, and have been
 fitting them up with some of our beautiful
 proper and liches. I have already skinned
 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 & waves will permit them to reach
 you safely. — There is at present in Britain
 a very good specimen of a Hoarse Swan, Mr Robins
 he may be in Edinburgh, but was not sure, other-
 wise I should have sent a letter by him.

From you or Maria 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. I forgot to men-
 tion in my last that Messrs Oliver & Boyd would
 be sending us some books early in April and that
 you might send a letter with them. They usually
 send us a package about the 1st of April & another
 about the 1st of August.

We are all well, and have been so during
 the winter, at least with very small exceptions.
 Though I have not enjoyed so many opportunities
 of improvement as last winter, I think that
 I have acquired some little information, and

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am at least a little wiser & better than I was
 six months ago. Give my kindest respects
 to your father & mother & Marion & all your other
 relatives whom I need not here name. 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 all.

Yours affectionately
 J. W. Dawson

Knowing that I have
 left too little room for
 telling this sheet better
 a way I may feel up
 this space, reading some
 time ago an article on
 the Holly. I found it now
 found that by the time
 in its lower branches were
 lined with spines, because
 they are liable to be in-
 fested by caterpillars & other animals.

I recollect that last
 winter we noticed this pe-
 culiarity in an old Holly
 at High Hill and year
 later upon it were found
 no fewer than twenty

ordered & intelligent persons
 it might contain an amount of spines
 below a cireling fence its leaves are seen
 withered and there
 no young cattle though their picky
 can reach to wound
 and as they grow where nothing is to fear
 smooth and unmarked the pointed
 appear

thus many circumstances
 awaken pleasant remembrances
 of our excursions and conversations
 with which I may perhaps
 sometime or other fill up an
 quite altogether

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