

Acton Aug 30, 1845

Dear Margaret,

I received your last letter only a few days after I had posted one 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 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 wished and needed to hear. Neither you nor I possess that equal phlegmatic kind of temperament which glides quietly through the world, unexcited & untroubled. 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

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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 favourite study, enquiry or amusement, and many other causes to produce very similar enervating effects to those which you ascribe to much company; until I sometimes fear that I am becoming altogether worldly or trifling - and then I feel my need of strength from above, and am disposed to long for more of it than I have ever yet proposed. On the evening when I received your letter I was very much in this state of mind, thinking how profitable had been the day, how much engrossed by little trifling cares, how little improved to any great or good purpose. In such circumstances your letter formed a good illustration of those benefits of the converse of Christian friends to which you allude.

It is indeed one of the greatest difficulties of my life properly to reconcile

The necessary pursuit of worldly employ²
 ments with Christian propriety. 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, and for these
 and other ends, the cultivation and im-
 provement 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 pro-
 per place and usurp that of principles to
 which they should be subordinate; in short
 to become the ends and aims of life instead
 of mere steps in a journey having a higher
 object. To my imperfections in this respect
 I am often painfully awake, and therefore
 feel often disposed to apply to God for his assist-
 ance in the very words with which you
 conclude your letter; since we can adorn

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The doctrine 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 communications 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
dearer home than the winds or waves of the
ocean - I can scarce be absent from home
for a day, without feeling uneasy when I think
of everything left for my father to do, when
the burden of a shop is in some degree, when
advancing age and its infirmities (especially deaf-
ness to which he is very subject) render him less fit
than former for them, and 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 at all times no easy matter for an
only son to leave home, but this is especially the

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Case when he has work to do which cannot
so well be done without him. I have however
long ago determined to embrace the first practi-
cally opportunity for visiting Britain, and then I
will willingly settle down and 'vegetate' 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 Scotch
young ladies were as fearless as some of our Nova
Scotia girls, I would not despair of you. I am
reminded of this of a girl who was in the shop
a short time ago. She was on the point of sailing for
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 into wages as she liked - and so
it is with hundreds of them. Upwards of 100 girls, good-looking
well dressed lasses as you would not to see, left Pictou
for the U States last summer. to go into service or work
in factories. They are not necessitated to emigrate,
for most of them are daughters of small farmers,
who have sufficiently comfortable homes; but
they wish to make a little money for themselves
and to see a little of the world, which when
they return gives them a great advantage over

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their leg travelled acquaintance.

I began this letter and wrote thus far a week ago. I was interrupted in writing, and then I went from home for a week, to visit a portion of country which 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 & picturesque,

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and have the further advantage, that, instead of whins & heather, they are covered with abundance of wild berries, I might almost fill out my sheet with their names. Blueberries of two species, Blackberries, Raspberries, three species of cranberries, wild gooseberries, red currants & cherries; and many other little fruits, whose names I suppose would be unknown to you, and therefore not worth writing, may be found all growing, in the utmost profusion, on the same granite knoll; and cover the whole ground. As I have just returned and am somewhat fatigued after five days riding and walking over rough roads, and as the mail closes in a short time, I must conclude; and in doing so I may ^{again} adopt the prayer with which your letter closes, which expresses my most earnest wish. J. W. Lawson

August 30th 1845

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