



Pictou Dec 28, 1844,

Dear Margaret,

About Christmas and New Year, I always feel a strong inclination to write to you. One reason is that it is customary at that season to visit ones 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 or ^{my} dry studies, I find letter writing a very pleasant evening occupation.

You will see by papers which I send, that I have been doing in my part in attempting to enlighten the people. Lecturing on Temperance and 'Colours', the latter are very interesting subjects. I shall probably not have time to do anything more in that way this winter. 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 very far away, I should hold you quite inexcusable. This is certainly a

given idea, but really there is something ^{intrinsic} natural
 in it after all; for I can scarcely find anything
 what is agreeable whether a beautiful idea or
 a new fact in reading, or a pleasant or inter-
 esting subject of thought or inquiry, 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} study, or rather to studying merely for their own
 gratification than I am; and not many who
^{derive} derive more pleasure from thought and reading
 & 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 per-
 fect sympathy. So that it appears as if I had
 set up an image of you in my mind, as a
 repository for those thoughts and sentiments
 which I do not care to communicate to any
 one else. If I go on in this way, however,
 much longer, I shall become as mysterious

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as a German ~~trans~~ metaphysician, and besides
fill up all my paper.

I have been reading a book of which
I must say something to you, "Julian or Scenes in
Judaea". It is written by Wade an American and
then, but has been republished in Britain. It is
a tale of the times when our Saviour was on earth,
and appears chiefly intended to sketch the scenery
of Palestine and the condition of its inhabitants at
that period. It is beautifully written, with a fine
poetical feeling, and I think gives the best sketch
of the religious and intellectual condition of the
Jews and the influence of these in causing
them to reject Jesus as the promised Messiah
that I have ever seen. There are a few failures
in it but not many. I do not very often read
tales, but happening to glance at this one I found
it so attractive that I read it through, and found
myself well repaid by the beautiful and suggestive
ideas contained in it. If you read it, ^{or have read it} let
me know what you think of it.

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, and not in firmness
 or thoughtlessness. The mad quiet and dis-
 cipline so common about the end of the
 year, appear 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 happi-
 ness 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

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From these ^{inward} journals to the future we calmly
and in hope that, through the kindness of God,
I shall be able to pass through it if I am to
do so) with safety and improvement; and it
is encouraging to feel that I stand in many res-
pects on a higher level now, than at the be-
ginning 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 which 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 see
my feet on old Scotland one 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

December 28th 1744

Chair, and moralizing upon things
 in general. Such an opinion would how-
 ever be very inaccurate. During the past
 week, I have been chiefly occupied in settling
 about some ^{wrecked} goods in which my father
 was concerned, as agent for the insurers, sur-
 viving 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 & battling
 with some of the choicest rascals produced by
 our country; and to day I have been em-
 ployed all the forenoon in making out long
 sheets of accounts. I wasted ~~some~~ hours, yester-
 day afternoon, arguing with an old Roman Catholic
 who came into the shop and wished to talk of the
 beauties of his peculiar doctrines. Of such odd
 mixtures as this, is my life often made up, and
 it is agreeable enough, and presents many oppor-
 tunities 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
 W. Dawson