November 29th 1844

PAID

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Miss Margaret A. G. Mercer,
6 Moorside St,
Edinburgh

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N.S.

I trust always be an agreeable amusement to me; and if it never bring me any further advantage, I should not be disappointed.

I remember your friend Dr Kennedy as a sensible intelligent man. I saw him once or twice only. It is really a startling to reflect on the number of changes & deaths which have occurred among my Edinburgh acquaintances in three years.

It is amusing to think of your mother fearing that the Indian boxes I 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; and certainly they are not of so great amount as to make any great figure there, when compared with all the kindness I have received from you all.

Most sorry should I be to grieve your good mother (who is almost as dear to me as my own), and just as sorry to think that you could heedlessly do so. These and similar considerations have occurred to me long ago, and have had an influence, though perhaps not their due influence on my conduct. They make me rejoice to call you my friend, and to be called yours; and although while I do so,

"— the little fay
Lies darned within my heart this many a day"

may perhaps not chose to be suddenly banished but had rather wait in hope of more favourable circumstances, there can be no harm in it. The rule which I would wish to follow in all such matters, is to take that course which present duties indicate, and if that does not lead to what we wish, it certainly will lead to what is best.

You say that you are liberal in your religious opinions; it is a right spirit and one that I am happy to see gaining ground in the world. I believe the church of Christ to be scattered among all sects; and while I have formed decided views of my own, I cannot trust in them as infallible; and can easily understand how others, influenced by a sincere desire for truth, may think differently and arrive at conclusions very different, especially in points less fully revealed, which after all are those which build up most of the walls of separation between sects. I can also find in nearly every sect many things to admire, many which I could wish to see present in greater degree among those whose doctrinal views are the same with my own. What a pity it is that ~~all~~ christians of all sects cannot unite to advance the interests of their common faith. That they should do so only requires some more charity and christian forbearance.

In selecting books for your reading, I have no doubt that you can judge better than I. One book which I have lately read I may however venture to recommend. "The harmony of Christian faith and Christian character" by John Abercrombie M.D. It is a very small book, but gives some good illustrations of the connection between christianity and the structure of the mind.

You say that if you looked over your letters you might be inclined to destroy them. I cannot have the same feeling, perhaps with more cause, but I am reassured when I think that you will interpret my epistles 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 feel in all that concerns my dear friends in Edinburgh, 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 to you all; remember me to your father & mother and all your relatives. May your own health and strength be soon and completely restoblished

Your affectionate friend

J W Dawson