

To Margaret Bragg, Newcastle on Tyne. Eng^d

To Margt. Bragg,

Blithamst, Glan William 3^o 3^o Mo 1840.

My endeared friend,

Two weeks have scarcely elapsed since I despatched a letter to thy address, not then expecting so soon to have the pleasure of receiving further communications from thy own hand. On my arrival at Glan William, however, on the 20th inst. I was put in possession of thy letter bearing date 11/10 Mo 1840, the contents of w^{ch}, independent of the wish to that effect therein expressed, claim an early reply.

From the tenour of my last thou wilt by this time, I trust, have become apprised, that I still am induced to apprehend it will be right for me to proceed to V. D. Land on the completion of my religious engagements with J. Backhouse, w^{ch} now seem to be fast drawing towards a close. Thou mayst be assured this view, as a requisition of duty, has neither been lightly taken up, nor, without considerable emotion of a conflicting nature, entertained. For, strong as may seem to be the call in that quarter, claims almost equally urgent would direct my steps in the very opposite direction, where my affections & early and prolonged attachments have so long been accustomed to centre. But a variety of conflicting feelings & considerations have driven me to the alternative, if nothing else has, of endeavouring as much as possible to lay aside my own reasonings on this important matter, & simply to consider, which of the two movements yields most peace in looking forward to the period when I shall probably, & that very shortly, have to decide upon one or the other. This, my beloved friend, is the mode in w^{ch}, in thy tenderly considerate letter, thou hast counselled me to act; & I am thoroughly convinced is the alone safe one — the only one, on which the mind

can repose with satisfaction amidst the oscillating, & alternating balance, as it were, of powerful attractions. [Many circumstances however contribute to confirm me in the judgment that the decision] I have come to (so far as it is yet requisite for me to decide) [is a sound one, w^h both conscience & reason alike approve.

Five years & a half years have rolled away since I first disclosed my attachment to my friend S. B. Mather; and I do assure thee, [nothing but the unwavering conviction that in so doing I moved in the Divine fear, & that the step has been in many ways conspicuously followed by the Divine blessing, could have reconciled me to the protracted suspense in w^h we have both been thereby necessarily placed, w^h in duration has far exceeded what we either of us contemplated. So long as this is consequent on obedience to higher claims of duty we have both of us endeavoured cheerfully to make the sacrifice. It must not be supposed, however, that the surrender of our wills has involved no struggle; and the detention of J. Backhouse & myself for so many months in V. D. Land before leaving the Penal Colonies naturally tended to increase the trial. *] Yet I must say in regard to S. B. Mather, she has all along acted in a truly Christian spirit of self-renunciation; & even in one of her recent letters, referring to the uncertainty attending

* The coincidence so striking, [is perhaps worthy here of remark, that the very day on w^h we were called upon to bid each other a last farewell, for a series of years, was the Anniversary of that never-to-be-forgotten one on w^h our dear departed Mary was removed from this to a better world. Thus did the Lord see meet to prove me, by requiring me to surrender a second time, my dearest earthly treasure; a surrender w^h, in regard to the feelings it called forth, was perhaps not greatly inferior in suffer^g to what separation by even death itself w^d have occasioned.]

attending my future movements, - whether I should first proceed to England, after leaving Africa; or direct from thence to V.D. Land, - she remarks; "I am thankful to say, the subject has not unsettled my mind in the least. I am persuaded thou wilt seek right direction in that as well as other things. Do not study what I might like in the matter." [Yet while] thus [generously] setting me at liberty, & counselling me to follow best Wisdom's guidance; I feel that should the call not be imperative to return to England first, it would be unjustifiable in me to needlessly prolong the period of our separation. I am persuaded every ingenious mind would feel the same under like circumstances. Besides, [my days are swiftly passing over. I am now turned 40 years of age, I have yet to make provision for our needful wants; and to say nothing of expense in a matter wherein our tenderest feelings are concerned (though under my circumstances it was almost a matter of necessity giving it consideration) at least 8 months w^d be occupied in merely sailing to & fro. Our union would therefore be deferred, at the lowest calculation, a year longer than it otherwise need be. [There is also another consideration that has much weight with me.] My dear Sarah has long been the conductress of her father's domestic establishment, w^{ch} even in the days of his adversity was always considerable, & involving much personal exertion. Since their removal to town, the care that has devolved upon her has in some respects been increased rather than diminished, very much through the want of effective servants. And she is of that exertive disposition that, rather than any thing should be wanting in what she considers necessary attention, to matters promotive of comfort, cleanliness, &c. in the house, she will undertake what her strength is really not equal to. Consequently she has more than once brought on temporary indisposition by over-exertion: & about a year ago this was a cause of

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considerable solicitude to me, she having taken the Influenza that was then prevalent in the colony; & there was some danger, as I find by her own report of the medical man's remarks, of her sustaining permanent injury, until she consented to yield to his directions, and confine herself to her chamber for a fortnight. I have reason to believe she is now restored to health; yet I cannot but be apprehensive that her present position under all circumstances is unfavourable to her health. Nor does it appear to me to detract from the character of disinterestedness, & of self-devotion wh^{ch} I have given her, & is her due, if I add my conviction, that the continual postponement of my return, & lengthening of my absence beyond what had been anticipated, must also have an unfavourable effect on the health; & is in other respects exceedingly undesirable. It is a saying that holds good in experience, & rests on high authority; that, 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.' And though the Christian may bend to the will of Heaven, & through the strength not his own that is communicated, rise much above the feelings of nature, & keep them in subjugation; yet the conflict that is occasionally involved, especially in a case like that under consideration, has a wearing effect on the frail tenement. I have no reason to believe that J. B. Mather is otherwise than human in this respect, any more than myself. — In regard to the defaced letter supposed to allude to her declining state of health there must be some misapprehension. It must have been Jos. B. Mather to whom reference is made, who has long been in a very critical state of health, though better on the whole than his friends ever anticipated seeing him.

The views that I have endeavoured thus to throw before thee, my endeared friend; have for a considerable time past forced themselves upon my attention; & I was disposed to give them more place in my mind, or to feel the more confirmed in their propriety, by the receipt of a letter from my dear friend Geo. Richardson some time ago, in which

5 which similar views in some of the more important bearings, were thrown before me, though without absolutely advising me, as I remember, either way, yet as suggestions that would naturally present, and which would claim my serious attention. And after having weighed them well; & above all, having sought to ascertain what is the will of the Lord, in a matter wherein so much is to be urged on either hand, I feel best satisfied to look towards an immediate return to V. D. Land: though in doing so I must do violence to feelings in which thou, and others of thy ever-to-be loved family, are deeply concerned—feelings which have seemed, perhaps on natural grounds, to have gathered strength as the consideration of this important subject has been more immediately brought home to me, & Newcastle & all my loved connections & friends have again & again passed in review before me. This conclusion however, as it has become somewhat matured in my mind, has been far from affording grounds for very sanguine anticipations as to the future. The prospect of returning to V. D. Land, & to my friend & her connections, with no specific means of engaging in business for our mutual support, would sometimes lie as a dead weight on my spirits. Yet the secret trust that a way would open for at least needful provision, & at times even more,—a degree of lively faith, & exultation, that while too many have their trust placed on sublunary things, & from the abundance with which they have been favoured have been led to depend on these for comfort till they have even forgotten the Lord their Maker, & the infinitely worthy Redeemer who died for them;—a degree of exultation, I say, has sometimes been felt, that I had none but the Lord to look to; & the promise has been sweetly sealed upon my spirit, 'They that trust in the Lord shall never be confounded.' Thou mayst readily conceive, then, that the renewal of thy generous proposal, under circumstances in which I no longer hesitate to avail myself of the proffered aid,—

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believing that the hand of the Lord is indeed therein, - called forth feelings of reverent gratitude to Him, my highest Benefactor, [in the first place] and as these feelings predominated, [the emotions of gratitude to ~~the~~ those who have spontaneously come forward as his instruments, & in so affectionate & congenial a spirit] offer to administer to my necessities, far from being diminished by this first conviction, were materially strengthened, inasmuch as the gift that is received as directly from the Divine Hand, is tenfold augmented in value. - [It was] also [evident that without some assistance from my friends I should be unable to commence in any line of business on my own account; and to have entered a situation would not only have been uncongenial, unless plainly prescribed for me by Infinite Wisdom] but would likewise have materially cramped my movements should the Lord be pleased to make any further use of so utterly unworthy an instrument. - I could not divest my mind, either, of a feeling, wh^{ch} perhaps thou mayst be able to understand, - that after after having appeared in V. D. L. & the sister Colony in the character & position in wh^{ch} the great Master has been pleased to make use of me, as the Companion & fellow-labourer of my more highly gifted & devoted friend, Jas. Backhouse; to have returned thither & gone into a situation, & especially not having re-visited England, would have led some to conclude that I had in degree lost the confidence of my friends, - a view wh^{ch}, though it might have been unfounded, would not have tended in any respect to have opened my way. - I am inclined to believe that the Drapery business with wh^{ch} I am the best acquainted is that in which I shall be the most likely to succeed; but on this I need not decide definitively until my arrival on the spot; though I should be disposed to receive the proposed amount, or the greater part of it at least, in Drapery goods, which if well laid in, - that is, purchased at first hand, instead of through the medium of a merchant - the common mode by which the

trades-

tradesmen in Hobart Town are supplied, & not from commission and other drawbacks, is a material addition to the original cost, — would I have no doubt meet with a very ready market — even should I not ultimately decide upon commencing in that line. In connection with this subject I propose shortly writing to Charles Dragg, whose kind help I shall probably have to solicit, though it lay me under a further load of obligation to that already incurred. But in the mean time I have under serious consideration a proposition that it is very likely I may submit to him & you, & by which, should I ultimately make up my mind to the measure, & it meet with your concurrence, our joint interests may be materially promoted, & a family connection that has afforded me so much solid benefit, & that has tinged so many of the most vivid pictures in the book of my past life, may yet be prolonged, though under a somewhat new aspect. But whatever maybe my conclusions on this head, — and I wish to avoid precipitancy in a matter of such importance, & to know that I am moving on right, and therefore safe grounds, — my communications on the subject must be embodied in a distinct letter to dear Charles himself. — I have had frequent occasion to rejoice in thinking of the altered circumstances under which Charles is now placed in a domestic point of view, not only because, from the first moment that I heard of his connection in marriage with one altogether so suitable, I felt convinced it would materially promote his own happiness, stability, & usefulness; but also because I was equally sure it would yield abundant satisfaction to his anxiously interested parent & sister, who would be tenderly alive to the fact, that on the nature of dear Charles' selection of a Companion for life, (as on that of every young man) must depend in a very great degree his future happiness & well-being. The reflections to which this important step have always given rise, when I have thought of it, have afforded me unmingled satisfaction — whilst thy objects of affectionate interest

are increased in witnessing his dear little ones springing up, & straining already to virtue & usefulness; I can sympathise with thee & the beloved parents, who are called upon to part with such an endeared object of solici- tude as your Elizabeth. & most sincerely do I crave that her favoured Companion, in the most solemn of all earthly relations, may prove a true help-meat, & that her welfare in every sense may be promoted by the connection. I have no knowledge of her friends, but I feel the fullest confidence that Elizabeth would not give her hand to one unworthy of the boon, & much less would her friends acquiesce in such a meas- ure, was there not substantial ground to apprehend it would conduce to their mutual well-being. —

I notice thy considerate observations respecting my journal. Thou art certainly right in supposing that keeping it up as I have done involves considerable time & application; yet I have always felt best-satis- fied in transcribing, or I might almost say, compiling, from very rough & hurried notes, as mine necessarily are, to go into detail,* as it will thereby furnish the only correct record, or revised, memoranda** of my diversified experience & observations during our long travel in foreign lands; excepting only remarks on my own religious state & expe- riences that are interspersed up & down in the original, & not being inten- ded for general perusal are of course omitted in the transcript. I have
therefore.

* At the same time I am willing to admit, & believe that I am frequently more diffuse than is needful, yet often feel a difficulty what to express & what to omit: & it is really no easy matter to accommodate one's re- marks to any thing like a fixed standard as to either subject matter or quantity. I am obliged however by the kind hint & shall endeavour to bear it in remembrance.

** I have not had time even to read over, much less correct the greater, or at least a large portion of the original.

Therefore looked forward to the period when, the manuscripts having served the purpose of informing my friends of our proceedings & of yielding a measure of gratification to some, might be returned to the writer. This however is somewhat presuming on thy kindness, — for they are strictly speaking thy property; I shouldst thou condescend to my wishes in this respect, thou wilt have a fair claim on me for all expenses connected with their transfer to England, or subsequently to V. D. Land.

And now, my dear friend, my paper admonishes me that I must defer other subjects of mutual interest, wishing to devote the other side to dear R. P. in doing which I am in effect but continuing the conversation, through this only medium left us, with thyself.

With wonted & filial regard,

Believe me, thy affectionate friend,

Geo. W. Walker.
