

To Margaret Bragg.

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Sydney New S. Wales. 3/3 Mo. 1836

My dear friend

Margt Bragg.

Since writing to thee from Kelvedon in V. Di. Land towards the latter part of last 12th Mo. I have been favoured with the receipt of thine dated 15th of 7th Mo. 1835; and may acknowledge that the expression of thy disunity with my procedure in relation to my friend S. B. Mather not a little surprised & grieved me. Perhaps the more so because, in thy previous letter, written in 1st Mo., after I had taken the steps alluded to, thy feelings of unity & sympathy were couched in more than usually strong & encouraging terms. Certainly, my friends were not then formally apprized of the circumstances that had transpired; but I indulged the hope that the feelings thou hadst experienced, in looking towards me in the light of Truth, being those of "unity and sweet feeling of comfort & hope," to use thy own words; they might be regarded by me as a confirmation (if I had needed further confirmation) that I had not infringed on the true ground of unity & religious fellowship, or different feelings would have awaited thee.

thee. Having thus presumed, thou mayst readily judge of my
 disappointment on receipt of the communication alluded to;
 & truly do I regret that my movements should have caused
 thee a moment's uneasiness. I have, however, the consoling as-
 surance to bear me up that what I did was in faith, — not
 hastily or unadvisedly — nor without the concurrence of my
 friends; and, though under these circumstances we may safely
leave consequences, hitherto these have been such as to confirm
 the conviction that my steppings have not been contrary to Di-
 vine permission & ordering. Being naturally disposed to doubt
 & to mistrust myself, & knowing my own fallibility & prone-
 ness to err, I assure thee it has cost me many close search-
 ings of heart; but, as it was with the decision I came to in
 the case of my offering myself to come out as a Companion to
 James Backhouse (in a yet shorter space of time than I was
 required to do on this occasion,) I have been preserved from
 casting away my confidence; notwithstanding the gloomy fore-
 bodings of some of my kindly interested friends; whose motives
 however I can I trust most fully appreciate.

It was but a few days before I received thy letter, that my
 dear Companion received an official ~~letter~~ communication
 from William Manley on behalf of the Committee appointed
 to correspond with Friends in the Ministry who may be travel-
 ling

ling in foreign parts, in which, as might be expected, allusion is made to the affair in question in which I am so intimately concerned. I will just transcribe a paragraph that thou mayst see that all do not take an equally discouraging view of the matter. Com^{rs} Manley's words, on behalf of the Committee, are these: "The Committee does not feel itself called upon to express any opinion on the subject of our friend George Washington Walker's matrimonial engagement; they trust, & believe it will be his and thy earnest desire & prayer, that the precious cause of Truth as committed through you may in no way or degree suffer damage thereby. I may add, however, that there appeared to be something pleasant in the view of its being possibly our friend George Washington Walker's place to remain in V. D's Land; his so doing might be a Providential opening for promoting the stability & encouragement of the little band there who profess the simple & spiritual views of Christian doctrine as held by Friends."

I anticipate no difficulty with regard to S. B. Mather not being a Member of a Monthly Meeting of Great Britain, so long as she is connected with a body here, however small, who profess the same principles, & whose Discipline is regulated by the same rules, viz: those contained in the Book of Extracts. And, evidently, the Committee do not anticipate any.

For,

For, in a subsequent part of their communication, they admit the supposition that our marriage may have taken place prior to our departure from N. D. Land, without making the least allusion to any difficulty on that score. It would be unreasonable to suppose that those who profess with Friends here, should not be at liberty to marry in the order that the Gospel approves, whether members in England, or not. But this would not in any way interfere with my resolution, to act with the concurrence both of my friends here & in England; not in reference particularly to this point of Discipline, but with regard to my release from my present engagement. When I feel myself at liberty to marry, I trust it will be with the full approval of all my friends who can judge impartially on the subject; and, what is of still greater import, with the approval & sanction of the pure Witness for God in my own conscience.

Thus my dear friend will perceive that some of my friends are disposed to take a brighter view of my present prospects than her anxious solicitude on my account has enabled her to do. But I am not without hope, indeed I might say, a persuasion, that her views by this time will have become somewhat altered, when the first surprize has a little subsided, & the anticipations of evil do not promise to be realized. I trust also, a more liberal, & shall I say? charitable view will be taken of

those exercises which my friend S. B. Mather has so undis-
guisedly depicted in the extracts I gave from her letters.
Had I anticipated the use that would be made of them,
& that my confidants were so prepared to look on the dark
side of the picture, in common justice to her feelings, & my
own, I should have quoted them with less freedom. But am
I to understand thee, my dear friend, that it is thy opinion
that the feelings of dryness & spiritual poverty of which S. B. M.
so feelingly complains, are incompatible with "the influences
& exercises of pure religion?" Because if this be true, I
have also been under a deception in supposing that they
might be coincident. Had I indeed supposed, for a moment,
that such an inference would have been drawn, I ought, at
least, to have given a few further extracts to prove, that, so far
from being evident it was the emotions of nature which the
trial of separation occasioned, "her experience could by no
fair rules of judgment be attributed to such a cause. Even in
the letter from which I quoted the passage that has been in-
terpreted so much to her prejudice, the following occurs to prove
that, along with a sincere, & certainly not unbecoming, regard
for the friend of her choice, her lively faith in the promises
of her God enabled her to rise superior to "the emotions of
nature." It would say little for the sensibilities of her nature,

or for her sincerity in any way, if the acknowledgment had never to be made that they involved, occasionally, a conflict. Alluding to the night succeeding our departure from Hobart Town as being almost unprecedentedly stormy, she observes; (7/1 Mo: 1835) "I was awakened by a noise occasioned by the wind tearing open one of my room windows. The "Henry Inezling" instantly rushed into my mind, with the thought, that the same gust of wind which had torn open my window had perhaps buried her in the relentless deep! The idea was dreadful. I could not assist you. What could I do? However, after a few minutes, I was enabled to supplicate the Lord on your behalf; & he graciously heard, & answered my feeble, though fervent cries, by presenting the words, 'I will preserve them,' so forcibly to my mind, that I could not for a moment doubt your being taken care of; nor have I doubted it since. O! how thankful I then felt, & still feel to the Giver of all good, for having thus quieted my fears by enabling me to lay hold on this promise. He is truly a God at hand, & not (only) afar off; & he will never fail to hear & answer those who trust in him."

It was forcibly impressed on my mind one evening when at Norfolk Island, that it was my duty to write to Sarah & caution her against withholding any expression that might be required

of her in Meetings for worship, or elsewhere. I did so. But before she received my letter, she had despatched one to me, describing most feelingly, the condemnation she had brought on her mind by suppressing a few words on one occasion in a Meeting for worship in Hobart Town (it was simply a Scripture text,) and at the same time mentioning some remarkable coincidences & Divine monitions which had had the effect of sealing conviction on her mind that she must not hesitate to give up, nor any more take counsel of her fears should she again be called to such service. I will not attempt to enter at length into this subject, or I might fill a sheet. I merely purpose quoting a few remarks from the letter sent in reply to mine that was admonitory on this subject. ****
"It appears to me that God graciously shews thee the state of my mind, & enables thee to give me such advice as he sees needful for me. O how much I have to be thankful for! How ought my heart to swell with gratitude to my kind and gracious Saviour for the mercies he has vouchsafed to me. And he not only has done so in times past, but he still continues to shower down blessings upon me. O what is man that He is mindful of him, or the son of man that he visiteth him!" But notwithstanding the many favours I receive from Him, I fear I am far from loving him as I ought. I desire to

to give myself up entirely to Him; to be wholly devoted to his service; to have no will but his." * * * * "O my dear friend! I love thee & thy dear Companion much; yea, far more than I can express. You were instruments in God's hands, of much good to me. May the choicest blessings of heaven rest upon you. I do not doubt they will; & that you will reap a rich reward in this world for all weariness of body, & exercise of mind you experience on account of the sins of those for whom Christ died; & in the world to come blessings at God's right hand for evermore."

I shall venture to transcribe one or two more paragraphs from some subsequent letters, which I hope may have the effect of placing S. B. Mather's real character in its true light. I trust it was nothing merely external that won my esteem & regard. Had it been so - had she been possessed of wealth, or extraordinary personal attractions, endowments that are very apt to captivate, & to mislead the judgment if the mind be off the watch, I should have had more occasion in the retrospect to call in question the grounds of my procedure or the providential disposition of the affair. But it has been far otherwise. We have neither of us sought great things for ourselves. "The fear of the Lord is his hid treasure" - that which makes truly rich; if we may but be kept in it by his preserving power.

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and the best adornment, & that with which my friend, I trust, is endowed, is that of a meek & quiet spirit; which is more to me than riches. If in the estimate I have formed of her character, I am deceived, my loss indeed will be great, and my disappointment & chagrin proportionate; but I hope I have sufficient guarantees against so fatal a deception.

In alluding to the embarrassment of her father's affairs, she thus winds up her remarks: "God knows what is best for us: he does not afflict us needlessly. I believe the losses my Father has sustained have been a blessing to the family generally. I know that the loss of my dearly beloved Mother aroused me as from a lethargy, & led me to seek comfort at that Fountain where, only, solid comfort is to be found. I felt as if I was alone in the world. In losing her I lost my all. I had none to whom I could unbosom myself: my counsellor, my guardian, my instructor, my all was gone. What could I do? I knew not where to flee. I wanted to find all that I had lost in her. I could not do without a guide, an instructor, a counsellor, to whom I could have recourse on every occasion. I knew that such a one was not to be found in this world. I also knew that in Jesus I should find all I wanted: to Him I was enabled to look; & I have not applied in vain, for he has been a very present help in every time of need. O that

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I was enabled to place more implicit confidence in him than I have ever yet done, for He is indeed a refuge from the blast, & a covert from the storm! May thou & I, my beloved friend, put our whole trust & confidence in him. May we never be permitted to doubt of his over-ruling Providence; for he hath said that, "all shall work together for good to them who love God." O let us be diligent in our duty to him! Let us love him supremely: he is a jealous God; he will have an undivided heart. We must be careful not to love the creature more than the Creator, who is Lord over all, blessed for ever more."

In the sixth month of last year, Robert Mather being in town, & also her brothers, with the exception of Samuel, a child, Sarah felt her lonely situation much: indeed such an arrangement was very injudicious, where so many assigned prisoner-servants were coming daily under her care & notice, to provide with rations &c. in a country like Van Di's Land. But this was only a fresh stimulus to her faith, & an incitement to renewed trust in an Almighty Power; under the influence of which she was enabled to write thus: "I felt light as air, & have not once been allowed to feel timid, although, sometimes, according to outward appearance, completely at the mercy of any body." * * * * "For several days after I had thus been enabled to confide so entirely in His protection, I felt such an ardent

love for him that my heart was melted into tenderness, & was full of praises to him for his great mercy to me. Sixth & Seventh days, the 26th & 27th, were indeed blessed days to me: the gracious promises he made me while waiting before him in the morning of each of those days I shall never forget, on condition of my giving myself up entirely to him, & implicitly obeying his Divine will in all things." A little further on she says; "God knows that I accepted of thy love in his fear; & in his fear have I continued to cherish it. If I had not been able to trace the finger of his providence through the different stages of our friendship, I should have flown from thee as the destroyer of my present & eternal happiness." * * * * "My continual prayer has been; Lord, thou knowest what will be the most for thy glory. Not my will, O Lord! but thine be done! O may we both ever be enabled to say so!

Observe the caution she extends, in consequence of some reference I had made to the probability of our soon meeting again: O my dear friend! do not set thy heart too much on this or any other favour the Lord may see meet to bestow upon us, for by so doing thou wilt mar the happiness of us both; as he will doubtless prevent us from enjoying any earthly thing upon which we too ardently set our affections. And remember, it will be in mercy to our never-dying souls. We must have

no other Gods but the Lord; & he is a jealous God: he will not be content with a divided heart: he will have the whole, or none. Let us then be anxiously careful for nothing, knowing that he will not fail to bestow upon us every blessing that he sees to be good for us. We have trusted him in times past, & have found him to be a kind & indulgent Parent; let us continue to do so, for he is indeed a loving & gracious Saviour."

Then alluding to the probability of our soon having to part again, she adds: "But let us not dwell upon this subject, for the Lord who graciously supported them, & continues still to do so, will, I firmly believe, enable us cheerfully to make this further sacrifice." In a subsequent letter, referring to the same subject, the following remarks occur; which I trust thou wilt admit do not bespeak an undue predominance of "natural emotions", but the disinterestedness of an ingenuous mind, which by holy discipline has learned to centre its desires in resignation to the Divine will. "O my dear friend, if you should be prevented coming (that is J.B. & myself) do not be uneasy about it. Do not murmur or repine. God knows what is most for our spiritual interest. He may see that our affections are too much placed ^{set} upon each other, & not sufficiently upon Him who is altogether lovely; & that this will be the most effectual way to draw us to himself: if so, we shall have reason to

kiss the rod with which he chastises us. Let us be resigned to whatever he may see meet to lay upon us, for he does not correct us for his own pleasure, but for our profit. My dear Mother used to say: 'God is good, supremely good, not less when he denies; even crosses from his sovereign hand, are blessings in disguise.'"

On the 2/11 Mo: after mentioning that she had been strengthened to express a few words in a meeting for worship, & the peace that had succeeded this act of dedication, yet noticing to me her fears of holding back on the one hand, or of going before her Guide on the other; Sarah proceeds: "O! I need thy prayers. I want to be able to distinguish my Master's voice, which never misleads, from my own thoughts & imaginations, & when distinctly known & heard, I want strength from on high to enable me to do all that he requires of me. How fervently do I desire that we may both be entirely devoted to his service; that we may have no will but his; that in all we do, his glory may be our only aim; & that we may be so completely his, that our every thought, word & action may tend to the advancement of his kingdom. O Lord! grant our united supplications. Send us help from thy sanctuary, & strengthen us out of Zion."

I shall conclude these quotations by an extract from a letter dated the last day of the year, & which I received only a few.

days before thy last communications reached me. S. B. M. thus comments upon the past: "When I look back upon the past year, I cannot but bless & adore the Arm that has been underneath & round about us, preserving us from many dangers seen & unseen, & supporting us under many conflicts of mind as well as afflictions of the body. Our hosannas ought indeed to be raised to God for the signal manner in which he has been with you & preserved you from imminent danger, as well as for his daily mercies. O! may thy, be raised; and may we devote ourselves afresh to his service & glory!"

O Lord! endue us with strength to fight more valiantly under thy banner during the year that we are now entering upon than we have hitherto done; & may every succeeding year find us more closely cemented to thee!"

Enough I trust has been cited to prove to thee, that if S. B. Mather's character is to be estimated by her own description of her feelings, they do not warrant the conclusion that "the emotions of nature" unduly prevail. Hadst thou, my dear friend, known her more intimately, thou wouldst have entertained very different sentiments from those, which in thy tender concern for me, I fear lest I should have misplaced my affections on an unworthy object, thou hast expressed. On the contrary, I feel assured she is so far worthy of thy esteem that a personal acquaint-
tance

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with her, had such been practicable, would have fully ensured a return of that love wh^{ch} she has long been taught to cherish for thee, & still feels, notwithstanding thy unfavourable impressions; of which I can only say, she is totally undeserving. — If I have seemed anxious to disabuse thy mind of the impressions it has imbibed with respect to S.B.M. do not attribute my concern only, or ^{even} chiefly, to my feelings of regard for her. At the distance she is situated from all my friends in England, the unfavourable opinion of those who are unacquainted with her personally, is not calculated to wound with equal poignancy as though such sentiments had been entertained by her more immediate acquaintance & friends, whose feelings tow^d her are of a totally opposite character. Still, she values the good opinion of all whom I value. And it does seem hard that she sh^d be judged of in a manner so contrary to what her friends who know her best esteem to be her desert; — at least I feel it hard. As for herself, she is quite suff^y. disposed to form a very low estimate of her own attainments & religious character, & to regard herself as unworthy of my love, but wh^{ch} is merely the effect of her humility; & I much regret that unnecessary discouragements sh^d be heaped upon a diffident, humble mind, & one that is susceptible of very acute feeling. (See a brief extract from another of S.B.M.'s letters in the Postscript. I could give thee many more such.) But the important object I have in view, in thus dwelling on a subject that I sh^d think unduly obtrusive but for this reason

reason is, to relieve thy mind of uneasiness: So long as such sentiments are fostered, & are supposed to be just, relative to S.B.M's character, I know they will have a tendency to render thy mind anxious, from the aff'te interest thou art pleased to feel in my welfare & future prospects, wh^{ch} of course, henceforward, must ever be associated with those of my friend. For my friends are quite right in supposing that I have not the power, & much less have I the wish to retract from my engagements: unless indeed the very essence & character of our friendship sh^d be changed, & we release one another by mutual consent, which, with reverence I would add, may God forbid!

4/3 Mo. 1836. I forwarded sheet No 75 of the journal on the 3rd inst. by a vessel advertiz'd to sail today. This will be sent by a ship that is to be a day or two later in sailing. As it is doubtful w^h will arrive first at its destination, I may just say that we arrived here from N.D.L. about ten days ago, & are at present staying with our kind friends J. & M. Tawell. We are in some expectation of visiting Moreton Bay, a Penal Sett^l. 500 miles to the Northw^d. of Sydney, as soon as we can get a passage in a Gov^t. vessel.

My dear Companion has had a smart attack of fever since we landed, from w^h however, I am happy to say he is nicely recov^d.; wh^{ch} is a great mercy; & also that my own health is as good as usual. I rec^d. dear R.P's. kind letter of 15/10 Mo. 35 a few days ago, & hope to reply to this &

others, shortly. So dear Mary. Foster is released from all her afflictions, the accompaniments of a frail, perishing tenement! I do hope her soul is at rest in the Lord. I am also much concerned to hear of dear Mary Gurney's affecting sudden removal, as it is to us. It must have been a severe shock to her excellent husband; & he is much to be felt for. — It is the view of my dear Companion that his labours will terminate in these Colonies towards the conclusion of the present year, that after attending the Annual Meetg. in V.D.L. we shall proceed to the Isle of France by way of Swan River & such other Sett^{ts} on the southern coast of Australia as the vessel we engage may touch at on her route. From the I. of France, where we anticipate a very short stay, we hope to proceed to the Cape, there to engage in such further service as may be clearly made known as required duty, be it little or much. What may be my own path of duty after my connection with my beloved Companion, J.P.B. terminates, I trust the Lord will enable me to apprehend & adopt, whether it be to return to England before visiting V.D.L. again, or at once to proceed thither. I hope my way will then be made clear, sh^d my life be spared until that period arrive. With these prospects pretty definitely before us, it will be well for my friends not to address letters to Sydney Post Office after the close of the 8th Mo. ensuing. And it will perhaps be better not to forward any letters to the Post Office, Cape Town, Cape of Good Hope, sooner than the commencement of 1837, after w^h period they may be addressed there, to be left till called for; or otherwise, to the care of Dr. Philip, Cape Town, w^h is perhaps the preferable plan of the two. — I have been interrupted in putting a termination

to this letter by an interesting call on my attention, viz: to witness the destruction of 5 bunches of Rum, & 2 hhds. Geneva (containing 608 gallons of Ardent Spirits above proof) by the Contents of the Casks being discharged, - in the presence of the Custom House officers & other respectable witnesses, into the waters of Sydney Harbour! The Spirits were the property of J. Sawell, to whom they had been forwarded in accordance with an old standing order that through some inadvertence had not been countermanded after J.S.'s views became altered in regard to the moral evil of using, or trafficking in the deleterious beverage. It is a noble sacrifice of pecuniary interest to principle, wh. I sh^d rejoice to see followed by many others. - We have not yet visited Hunter River, where Henry Percival (i.e. Howard Pearce) is living in assigned service. From Fra^s Mitchell however, who knows something of him, I learn, that he has not stood his ground as could have been desired. Strong drink, that constant bane to all good in this country, has been a snare to him. He has lost his place with Wm Harper, of Oswald Town, where he occupied the station of tutor to his children, it is now assigned to a person named Porteus, who keeps a flour-mill at Hunter's River, not far from Maitland. H.P. is employed as a clerk, & is tho^t by F. Mitchell, to have conducted himself more steadily of late. I wish I could give a more favourable acct. of him. We shall endeavour to obtain an interview with him & gain further particulars, when in that part of the country sh^d we live to reach it. - My last accounts rec^d give a favourable asp of thy health. I hope they may continue to be equally good. I sh^d wish my love to be given to Chas. & Susan Bragg, with the assurance of my

sincere & best wishes for their happiness. Please to extend the message of love to my many kind friends, brethren, & relatives, as they come in thy way, especially those of thy own household & family. Accept the assurance of the same towards thyself, from,

Thy very affectionate friend
George Washington Walker.

8/3rd Mo. 34.

M.B. The Governor has caused an intimation to be handed us that a vessel is to sail for Moreton Bay the end of this week: He has politely granted us a passage. Farewell! Glow.

P. S. (Extract from S.B.M's letter, referred to in page.)

"I often fear that I shall be a stumbling block to thee; & have craved, & do continue to crave, earnestly of the Lord, that such may not be the case. O! what would I not undergo? - I would endure any thing the Lord might see fit to lay upon me, rather than be a hinderance to thee in thy journey Zion-ward. May the Lord be with us, & enable us to look well to our feet, that we slip not. One single unguarded step might ruin us to all eternity. How cautious ought we then to be!" I would just add, in reference to the foregoing, that humility, faith, & a godly jealousy over herself, are effectual preservatives against the evil dreaded.
Glow.
