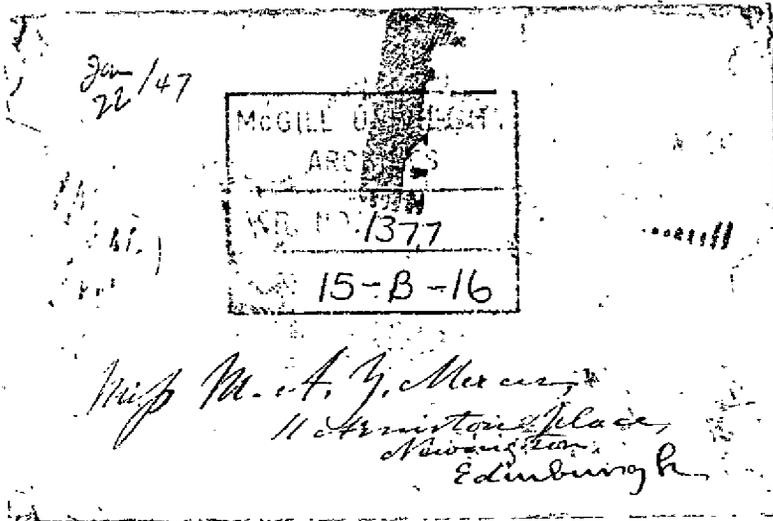


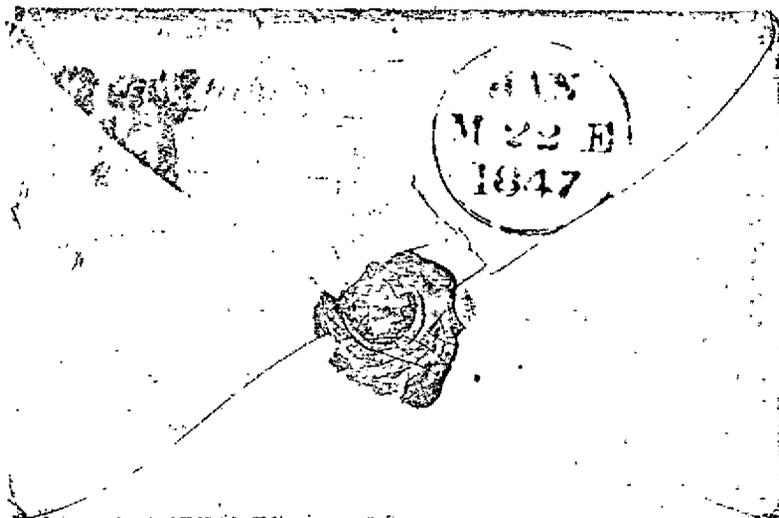
McGill Archives

Acc. 1377, Bundle 15, group B,

item 16. Letter J.W. Dawson to Margaret Mercer
stamped 22 Jan. 1847.



envelope



1377
19-B-16

Friday

Dear Madam,

"A few days" are, in some circumstances, a very long time, and I already feel it to be long since I heard anything of you. Another week has nearly expired, and so far as I know, everything is just as it was, and what is worse I know of nothing that in present circumstances I can do to make it better. You must therefore excuse me for again writing to you; especially as there are many things which it is right that I should tell you, and which may be as well written as spoken, perhaps better, since when written you can see =

dicta them at your leisure

The fact is an idea which never occurred to me, but which I have heard hinted since I came here. That there might be between you and me some feeling of mutual obligation; that is, that though there was no actual engagement, we might feel in some way pledged to each other, and thus be induced to act in a manner different from our present inclination. Any thing of this kind would plainly be only mutual injustice, however good the motive might be. I mention it merely for the purpose of saying to you, as I have already said to your father, that I can plead no claim upon you, no encouragement received

Usually very clear and sunny,
 but with occasional cold &
 raw weather. The early spring
 is considered the worst time for
 invalids, chiefly because the melt-
 ing of the snows then causes the
 air to be more loaded with
 moisture than usual. The summer
 is drier than that of Scotland,
 and for about a month some-
 what warmer, its summer
 beauty cannot be exaggerated.
 The autumn is generally
 very fine and agreeable. The be-
 ginning of winter is often very
 like that of this country, but
 so soon as the frost has fairly
 set in, it is very agreeable
 and healthy. There is occasion-
 ally, for a week at a time,

weather disagreeably cold
 to those who^{are} obliged to be
 wind exposed, and there
 are a few wet thaw days,
 but the greater part is such
 that I believe there is more
 driving and jaunting about
 among our ladies in winter
 than in summer. In clear
 weather, ladies drive about
 in sleighs with perfect com-
 fort, when the air is at
 least 20 degrees colder than
 you ever have it here. You
 may be assured that our
 climate is much more
 agreeable, and quite as
 healthy as this, and I may
 add that I never found

any one who had experience
of both, to have a different
opinion.

With respect to Pictou it-
self, though a small place it
is not to be judged of by small
places here. It has a large
proportion of good and com-
fortable houses. It has also
a large proportion of very
respectable and intelligent
society, and many Christian
people, though I confess that
there, as in most other places,
they are the smaller number.
There are libraries, benevolent &
religious institutions of many
kinds, some of them as well
managed as any here, though.

of course on a smaller scale.
 In the manners of the people
 there is little that is different
 from what is seen here: Ex-
 cept that all are more on a
 level, as we have no persons
 of great rank or wealth, and few
 who are in want; and intelligence
 and a desire for knowledge are
 more universally diffused than even
 here.

Another important matter
 is my present means & prospects.
 It would of course be a very
 impudent, not to say unprin-
 cipled, thing to ask you to
 go where you would be ex-
 pected to want, without at least
 warning you beforehand. In

This respect, I have no reason
 to fear. Our business which,
 though in my father's name,
 may be in mine whenever I
 wish it, has been more than
 sufficient to maintain us
 in a position as respectable
 as that of any in our country,
 and as comfortable as that
 of any in the middle ranks
 here. We have also a con-
 siderable amount of property
 in land and houses, besides
 that which we ourselves occupy
 and our trade has been in-
 creasing, and I hope to do
 something towards rendering ^{more productive} it
 while here now. On this sub-
 ject I shall however obtain

More full and precise testi-
mony from home, if I find
it likely to be of any service.

My parents and I, as you
know, inhabit one house,
which however is large
and well furnished, and till
late^{was} occupied by another
family besides our own. We
have two other large houses
which are rented, and a
little cottage on the farm
~~to~~ which my father is desirous
to furnish and occupy, as
he would like to spend all
or nearly all his time on his
farm.

Our establishment consists

of two women servants
and a man servant
two horses, two cows
a riding sleigh and fly,
the latter purchased last
summer, for the purpose of
driving about with my mother
after her recovery from erysipelas,
and for carrying furs to and
from his furrier.

With very respect to myself,
I am aware that
my fondness for scientific
pursuits, not directly con-
nected with my business,
may give persons here un-
favourable impressions re-
specting my attention to

I am when at home.
 I believe however that I
 have occupied less time in
 this way, than most young
 men do in other amusements,
 And I am able and willing
 to give these things up if
 necessary. I have indeed
 promised, when I return next
 spring, to do all in my power
 to relieve my father altogether
 of the labour of business.

A more important point
 than any of these, is the
 circumstance of our being
 connected with different
 religious denominations.

at least I know it weighs
much with your mother.
This is a matter however
for which we alone are
responsible, and with which
no other person has a right
to intermeddle. On that very
account, however, it is one
which should be rightly un-
derstood. I may say, for my-
self, that to me it is no
difficulty, since I am firmly
persuaded that the real dis-
tinction is between Christ's
people and the world and
not between one sect and an-
other. It is far better to have
a common faith than a
common creed, and disregard
of this truth produces as much

wisest ⁴ in the world
 as any one thing I know.
 In writing of these things,
 I do not suppose them to
 be important elements in
 your decision; but I know
 that, if we could be thought
 by others to act wisely, such things
 must not be neglected. There is
 a kind of small wisdom which
 looks at little difficulties
 appearing on the surface,
 and sees nothing of reason
 of infinitely greater weight,
 in reference to the happiness
 of those concerned in any such
 course of conduct; and it is
 by this kind of wisdom that
 we must expect at least in
 mails leave this I believe on the 10th of February.

a great measure to be judged.

I may mention how I am spending my time here. I had hoped to have spent much of it with you, but since at present I cannot do that, and it would neither be any compensation to you nor service to myself to make it, I am endeavoring to turn it to as good account as possible. In the morning, at half past 8, I go over to Elder st to get a lesson in the new art, I attend the Chemistry class, and work in the laboratory at analysis of soils till 1 or 2. The afternoon I have for all sorts of miscellaneous business, and the evening comes for study. When I receive my letters from home by the February packet, I shall have for a return

At least, to occupy most of
 the day in selecting & buying stock,
 here and in Glasgow. The information
 I am obtaining in the meantime,
 I know I can turn to good account
 at home.

On Sabbaths, I have generally
 attended some of the Socinian
 churches, and have made ar-
 rangements for joining in commu-
 nion with Mr Johnston's church. I
 would like sometimes to attend the
 meetings of your church, but can-
 not appear there in present cir-
 cumstances.

I have made few new acquaint-
 ances. The principal are, Dr Brown,
 Revd Mr Johnston, Mr Johnstone the
 bookseller and Puffery. I have
 seen some of the old ones, par-
 ticularly Mr A. Byson, whose wife
 seems to be, as I think you men-
 tioned to me, a very small person.

I have always felt, in relation to you, that I was hoping for more than I deserved & had a right to expect, and I never felt this more than when I asked you to meet me, that we might have some conversation on the present state of affairs. I am now however still more desirous to see you, because if you can at all regard my proposal with favour, I know that by writing home by the February mail, I can obtain much that will enable me better to meet the objections of your relatives, in so far as these are to be removed by facts. If then you can point-out any way, time or place (my whole time is at your disposal) where I could see you, or if you can tell me anything which will enable me to write home with greater certainty, I will be most grateful.

Williams of the Falls

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"back about 1 or 2 o'clock."
[overlap on p. 13]

"Mails leave this, I believe on the 1st of February."

[overlap of 13]