

Ellen Hutchins to Dawson Turner, 29th November 1811

Transcription of the letter given by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.

My dear Sir

I was quite surprised to see a letter from you & should have felt not less happy when it was opened but for the wretched bile that torments my friends as well myself as you say you are not accustomed to it. I hope you may not have it again & that you now feel light & well after it.

I am much better than I have been for some time and return to my old pursuits as far as the constraints on my time to which I am subject will allow me. My mother continues weak and nervous. Her head in a very bad state and her deafness so increased as to make it distressing to speak to her. For her one cannot look forward with any hope of recovery. With her on one side and my brother who has lost the use of his limbs by a paralytic complaint and whose case is equally hopeless on the other, you will not be surprised when I say I have little spirit left to animate me in my pursuit. Nature, I believe made me more serious perhaps more melancholic than gay yet I think but for the sorrows that every hour put upon me I could be as contented as most people seem. Simple amusements & such as are attainable in my situation satisfy me at least as far as I believe it possible to be contented in this world. A book, needlework, the garden, sketching a plant or a mountain ramble all delight me. But whither am I wandering now. My little girl who I employ to assist me when I go out to the rocks has just brought me F. fruticulosus that I sent her for as I wanted a morsel to finish the drawing begun so long ago for you. She knows it by the name of 'dewy kind' & by such names brings me every species I send her out for with the most perfect accuracy. Having taken her out with me constantly she is now well trained & very useful. It is curious to mark the effect that observing plants has had on her wholly uncultivated mind. She is very intelligent & of a very sensible family. When I show her any curious contrivance in a plant its effect is expressed by "the Lord be praised". Nothing can be more impressive than feeling so simply & strongly expressed. In taste she is very unlike other peasant children admiring every thing neat & delicate looking.

I got the sheet of your Lichenographia quite safe. I was highly pleased to find it was really begun. I like the long descriptions. I do not wonder that the work should extend to three volumes, the species are so many. The only species of Variolaria that I have found are Faginea, discoidea & lactea. I don't know what No 141 & 142 are whether species or varieties, I think I have Lepraria ochracea. aeruginosa I have. I think No 124 is a Lepraria perhaps flava. I am sure the Verrucaria No 95 is a very distinct species the crust forms yellowish or rather cream gold patches on the smooth bark of holly trees. It is very pretty. I can send you plenty of it. I have plenty of Opegrapha obscura which seems to me not an Opegrapha. I can hardly think it belongs to Verrucaria. I am glad you got Gyrophora pustulata safe. No 198 is I think an Urceolaria, a beauty too. I shall attend carefully to your wishes respecting the genus Baemyces & the ?Colcamata both are puzzling particularly the former. I fear it will be very difficult to ascertain which are species & varieties. I have

never been able to find Parm. fuciformis or ?Boccilla. I wish much to hear of Mr Mackay's return to Ireland I would then send you a large parcel, many lichens I have for you. I am now able to draw a little every day. Many thanks for your kindness in sending your own Musc. Hib. I shall be very glad to do the leaves in my own [] & see your remarks. I have been of late as attentive to the Jungermanniae as I was able to any thing comparing mine with Mr Hooker's beautiful plates. It will be a sad thing if he will not publish them, how admirable they are! They are so correct they delight me every time I look at them. I enclose you a few rare species with fruit for him, that of J. nigrescens I was more pleased to find than I can tell you. I so little expected it. The fructification assists in distinguishing it from complanata from which Mr H is already satisfied that is distinct. He wished very much for the fruit. I hope he will be glad of that of J. minuta as he said the calyces were rare. You have omitted to give me his opinion of No 46 with fructifications from the under edge of the fronds. It is too precious to enclose another bit in this letter. I am watching its advancement to get perfect fruit & there are but two plants that I have ever seen. No. 43 I can't think J. scalaris, the leaves are very different being bifid they are rather of the shape of J. connivens but from that it seems to differ in the simple shoot with leaves tiled on all sides. I have a drawing of Conf. No. 80 to send you. I can't make out if it be the same as ?siliculosa from your specimen it appears to me different. I enclose two others of the same family. I have a fine Rivularia & drawing to send you, perhaps a new one. In the list of our plants I will put Nos. to the new species, pray give them names just as you please, only tell me what they are, that I may name my specimens accordingly. It is quite unnecessary that you should give yourself the trouble of consulting me on the subject. How curious & beautiful the Dawsonia is you may judge that I am highly gratified at knowing it. The paper is a very interesting one. I wish I could find Andrea rivalis here but I don't expect it. How well done it is by Mr Hooker. I am very glad to hear that My Little Ellen is well & advancing. When she can understand you, you must tell her she has another Mama in Ireland. Pray give my kind regards to Mrs Turner & believe me constantly yours

E Hutchins

November 29th 1811

I have never found any species of Calicium. What is the character of your genus Pertusaria?

Have you benefitted much by Sir Thomas Gage's lichens? I hope he has shared his specimens with you. I have got a little of Parm. flavicans. It is very rare. We have but one species of Spiloma tumidula. It is common, I can send you many specimens of the new Arthonia.