

Dawson Turner to Ellen Hutchins, 25th May 1810 (had been dated 1812)

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I have shown myself to you, my dear Madam, in a most foolish & ungrateful light, in neglecting so long to thank you for the exceedingly kind letters I have received from you & especially for those truly friendly fears & enquiries after [our] health, which have produced upon my mind an effect that I hope will never be effaced. I have been perfectly well in body, I am happy to say, never better, but far from so in mind; Mrs Turner having for the last 6 weeks been in the same alarming & debilitating state in which she was at the beginning of her pregnancy, till a few days ago she was safely brought to bed of a daughter, which, though born two months before its time, promises to live, & my wife is also better than I could either have expected or hoped. There, at the age of 34, I find myself father of 6 girls, it having pleased the Almighty to take from me 3 boys, 2 of them at so early an age that I could scarcely regret their loss, the third after he had lived long enough to show the signs of all I could have wished for in ability or disposition. I do not, however, mean to murmur: nothing is farther from my disposition or my principles, & on the contrary I thank my God most sincerely & most fervently for what he has left me: no man has more reason to feel gratitude & I would fain believe that no man does feel more. It is your own kindness, my dear Madam, & the interest you take in all that concerns me, that induces me to take the liberty of thus troubling you with details of myself & my family. In truth I have little else to fill my sheet with; for, while my mind is ill at ease, I can apply to nothing, & among the evil consequences resulting from my late inactivity I find that all my letters are become contorted & confused, so that I really do not know what I have to thank you for, or what I have to answer. To one thing alone I am sure I have not replied, which is your letter sent me 18 April through Captain Mangin. The drawings of *Conf. foetida* in this are all I could possibly wish to illustrate that most extraordinary vegetable; but it involves the necessity of your doing as much for me with respect to *C. paradoxa*. *Grimmia* No 9 is certainly *G. crispula*: about No 6 I am quite unable to satisfy myself: *Hypnum* No 18, I think with you, must be referred to *H. filicinum* of which it is an extraordinary variety. *Rivularia angulosa* I will watch attentively when it comes up here; but it has not yet made its appearance. *Conf.* No 68 & 69 I have examined attentively & can refer to none I know; but what a most extraordinary thing is No 70! How like *C. foetida*! & yet, apparently, very distinct. I am exceedingly pleased at this addition to our list of *Confervae*. There were a *Jungermannia* or two also enclosed in your letter, which Mr Hooker took away with him, & as he is now in London, I have no opportunity of learning what they are: but I recollect he said they were pretty varieties of species he was already acquainted with, & that he wished for more of them. His work on this genus is not yet with parts; having been delayed on account of the time he has given to his Iceland Tour, which he has begun to print, & will finish in about 6 weeks. It will be only given away; but you shall have it as soon as it is out. I don't want to trouble you for either *Parmelia caperata*, or *omphalodes*, or *diatrypa*, unless you can find the latter abundantly in fruit I have gathered it sparingly so in Scotland, whence I hope to receive this summer a good store of lichens, Mr Borrer intending to pass some months there. I expect every day to hear of his being married & set off with his bride. *Rosa tomentosa*, that you are so good as to offer me, I need not trouble you. [] *spinosissima* abounds with us, & you shall be sure to receive it this summer. Walter Scott has just published a new Poem, called *Lady of the Lake*, which will, if I am not mistaken, rank higher than either his *Lay of the Last Minstrel* or *Marmion* (pray

have you both these?) – it abounds in the most beautiful descriptions & pathetic passages & though the verse is regular, of the same metre as the introductions to Marmion, [yet] the story is so winning, & the whole so varied by songs, that nothing like tedium can be felt in reading it. I wish it was published in any size but Quarto, that I might send it you at once & have the satisfaction of knowing that you should have the pleasure it has given me. I am prevented by Mrs Turner's health from going this month to London, so that I see nothing of what is passing in the literary world, except as far as my own library affords me; & I hear nothing, all my friends having forsaken me, being tired of writing letters that are never answered. I do not wonder at it, nor can I complain, although I never stood in more need of the pleasure & relief their letters afford me. One merit at least (a sorry one it is) I will claim to you, which is that this is the first letter I have written. The prospect, however is, thank God, now bright before me, & you must therefore prepare for as loquacious a correspondent as can be, in my dear Madam, Your much obliged friend

Dawson Turner

Yarmouth 25 May 1810

Note on it:

Is 9 pence on this letter. J Clarke