

Dawson Turner to Ellen Hutchins: 17th October 1810

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A letter to Miss Hutchins written not in answer to either of hers nor even noticing these, but merely with the intention to get another from her if possible!

Yarmouth 17th October 1810
The day before my thirty fifth birthday

I do not know, my dear Madam, how to thank you sufficiently for the two most kind & interesting letters & for the rich parcel that I have received since last I had the pleasure of writing to you; but this I do know to my cost, that, as he who thanks quickly thanks twice, so, by a parity of reason, he who is slow about it does not do it more than half, & I stand self convicted of coming under this latter description. I write, indeed, even now for no other purpose than to express my thanks; for tho' I know you will be surprised to hear it & with reason, it is nevertheless most true that since I received your parcel I have been enabled to do no more than admire its contents, without having had the opportunity of examining anything besides the lichens & half a dozen of the Confervae, so fully have I been taken up & am likely still to be for three weeks to come. Upon the lichens I do not say a word; for I sent them almost as soon as they arrived, above a fortnight ago, to Mr Borrer, requesting he would return them as soon as he could & let me know how far his opinion coincides with mine, till I hear which I shall be silent, and I should otherwise probably have to fill my next letter in contradicting the contents of my present one. I wonder much he has not already complied with my request, & I fear I must conclude from his not having done it, that the illness still continues on the part of Mrs Borrer, which caused him to abridge his stay in Scotland. Your drawings I trust I have always admired & prized as I ought to do, but those you have last sent me appear so infinitely to excel all I had received from you before, that I cannot but doubt whether I valued the others as I should have done. Of Conferva paradoxa I had before no idea. It seems to be evidently related in structure to the small varieties (if varieties they be) of Ulva compressa & to be one of the most extraordinary plants possible. Assuredly, as you say, it has no right to a place among the Conferva, unless we join Dr Roth, & perhaps we cannot do better, in referring every thing that is tubular to that genera. The little Ulva, No 13, is no less wonderful in my eyes, & here as in a thousand other instances, Nature sets at defiance all our puny attempts at arrangement, showing us most clearly that it is possible for a jointed & unjointed structure to exist, not only in the same species, but in the same individual. Whether Ulva or Conferva it is unquestionably new & must & ought to be described as such. Mr Brown has been of late continually urging me to put together & publish my ideas upon the subject of the genera of submerged algae without delay, but I cannot help wishing to put it off as long as I can, in the full persuasion of my own inability to do it satisfactorily, & indeed being a great sceptic how far such [?] processes as we call genera have existence in nature. Is this a subject to which you have ever turned your attention? If you have, you will in the highest degree oblige & serve me by a communication of your ideas. Tell me how to distribute the British species, & I shall have such a foundation as I can easily build my system upon. I am writing as you must have perceived, without referring to your parcel; for indeed I have even now so much to do that I scarcely know how to write at all, tho' in constraining myself to be silent to you I really deprive myself of one of the greatest pleasures of my life. I cannot tell you with how much delight I always

receive your letters, nor how anxiously I look for the time when I may see you in Yarmouth. Sir Thomas Gage has, if possible, still more wetted the desire I feel to be personally acquainted with you. He says in a letter that I have this moment before me from him; "I have had the good fortune to make acquaintance with Miss Hutchins: her science is only equalled by her liberality." – what every body says, you know, my dear Madam, must be true; with this trite remark & with the prayer that you may have many years to increase your science & to exercise your liberality ends this sad scrawl of your ever most truly D.T.

I heard the other day 3 charades, written by a man of note, which as they entertained me I venture to send you to amuse for half an hour in a winter's evening your friends at Bantry.

My first, tho' your house, nay your life it defends,
You ungratefully name as the wretch you despise:
My second, I speak it with grief, comprehends
All the great & the good, & the learn'd, & the wise:
Of my whole I have little or nothing to say
Except that it tells the departure of day.

—

[In a box in the right hand corner]

Can you read this French puzzle?

[See photo]

My first & my second resemble each other,
And my first calls for ever my second his brother:
To catch either would be difficult, they're both on the watch;
But to catch both together would be a bad catch.

My first leads to triumph & fame;
My second to joy or vexation;
My third tho' it has but a name,
when it pleases, can lead the whole nation;

My whole has a lead too; but hark
My charade is already too clear,
It put the whole court to a blush,
When his Majesty made it appear /a peer

How a pun is shrift to write