

From M. White
Dumfries
Date 31 March
Recd 12 Sept. } 1003

D/S

Dr. Dinwiddie,

College of Glasgow.

Edin

Ed. to }
London }

Dr. White



My dear fr.

Dumfries, March 31/03.

Your much esteemed favour, of June 10/04, came this day to hand. Your two other letters also arrived; & would have been immediately answered, had I not imagined that you might perhaps be on your passage to Europe, ere mine could reach India; and, thus the acknowledgements of the receipt of the bill on Mr Howat was put off from day to day. The bill was duly honoured; and, Mrs Wrought (my mother-in-law) presents her best thanks. Every account agrees that your daughter has a worthy husband.

I come now to a circumstance which gives me much pleasure: I mean — the favourable opinion which you entertain of me, evinced by your recommending the son of Capt. M'Carthy to my care: Believe me, fr. that I can never forget it; and that, nothing, on my part, shall be neglected — to make his stay here answer the expectations of his friends, — confirm, as far as I can, the propriety of your opinion of your unworthy successor here, — and, to support my own name as a teacher, which is higher than I expected, because you think well of it. Thomas M'Carthy has been here about 3 weeks; and, please to let his father know that, I think ^{him} a youth of capacity & promise. He writes, on this sheet, to his father; mentions the pursuits which have hitherto engaged him; and, as the Latin is omitted, I presume that it is to be no part of his occupation here. He attends Mr Kennedy, for writing & French; reads English to me & pursues Arith: privately, as well as at the public school; and, I propose, in May next, that he shall try Euclid: These things will engage us, till we receive farther directions. Mr. Hyslop is yet in London: Before Mr. H. got to England, Thomas was here, by Mr Hays's attention. So much for business; and, I know not that, I have forgotten aught material.

Mr. Boyd (who, on all occasions, swears by you) was the architect of the building, erected for schools, in the Moat-garden near the Town-hed: It does him great credit. The ground story is already employed for the English, the Classics, and for Writing; the upper story is neither floored nor plastered; & therefore, I yet labour in your old place — by the bye, this letter is written on your desk, — to return, — it is supposed that 300£ would finish the pile & bounding walls; but this sum, however necessary, is not at hand.

Your friend Dr. Robison is no more! I have presumed to enclose my tribute to his memory; it appeared in the Dumfries Journal & in The Star. In the year 1782, he & professor Bug Stewart examined the candidates for this school; I was appointed;

appointed: And, this circumstance led us to an occasional correspondence. I ^{had} had not the honour of being his pupil; but, his friendship increased to the moment of his death. To Mr. Playfair, his excellent successor, I am known but not personally; yet he & Dr. Robison & some other sensible characters, about a year ago, put, in my power, the Mathematical Chair of the ancient University of Vilna in Russian Poland; the salary, in roubles, was between 5 & 600 L. Ann. But, a family, good habits, &c. induced me to decline the offer. So much for self, — or rather, for my obligation to the illustrious Robison! Mr. Playfair is succeeded by a Mr. Leslie, the author of a work, just published, on light & heat: I have not seen it; but, it is said that, his theory, is supported by the subtil powers of the higher geometry.

In note (c) of the honody read "by M. Buek", an emigrant Priest; his work, alluded to, is yet a Ms. and, had Dr. Robison lived till its publication, it would have been shaken to pieces, notwithstanding the ^{author} is an expert analyst. Note (b) shows Dr. Robison's principal works: Two vols more will complete his last invaluable production. To turn again to M. Buek, —

even he, who has himself been smitten by the hand of innovation, has endeavoured to wrest from us the consolations of our forefathers. He can be attacked by only the modern analysis; and, is really exposed, when he publishes, to be analytically overthrown. Mathematical science is grounded on the laws of human judgement; and, had these laws been different, a different train of inference might have been called mathematical science. Of this, as we are constituted, we can, however, have no conception: yet, it must be admitted that, absurdity is such, merely because it is inconsistent with the laws of human judgement; and, were these laws different from what they are, and as universal as those which now guide us, what is now absurd would appear true; ^{especially the} ~~laws of matter~~ if the laws of matter had been accordingly adapted to us. Again; the laws of matter are found, by experiment, to be in harmony with those which the laws of human judgement have deduced; therefore, the philosophical atheist says that, the laws of matter are necessary & not contingent, merely because this harmony or agreement is found to obtain. Now, it is observed above that, we have no proof of what they assume as certain, viz. that, the laws which regulate our judgement could not have been other than they are: Hence this agreement, on which they rest, does not fairly admit of such an inference as necessity. Yet, it is owing to this harmony that, man has been enabled to acquire all which he knows of nature. Had the laws of matter, thus differently deduced, differed, we could have acquired no knowledge of nature; but, their agreement is surely, to the mind unworped by pride, a proof of the benevolence & wisdom of a Supreme Power, rather than of the agency of chance, or Fate.

You are not bound to read all this, neither was I under any necessity, to write it! It isavelled chiefly at D'Alembert's attempt, which is mentioned in note (c).

I shall be happy to hear from you at all times: and believe me, my dear fr,
sincerely yours

J. White.

Dumfries March 31 1804

Dear Father

I take this opportunity of writing to you, to inform you that I am arrived at Dumfries at Mr. Whites, and that I am very well and happy, and hope you are the same, as you see what I have learned, I shall not trouble you much. I learned French, arithmetic, writing, at Mr. Nestlits at Hayes and at Mr. Langfords London I am now by your desire going to learn the mathematics and drawing and I am very, it, and thank you very much. I should be glad to learn ^{how quick} you learn or not. I got very comfortably down to Dumfries a fortnight ago I shall be glad when you see,

Your

Most Dutiful Son

Thomas M'Carthy