

Hardwick Parsonage, ³⁶
May,
Dec. 30. 1865.

My dear young friend,

Thanks, very many & very cordial, for
what you have so kindly done for me in the Par-
allax affair. It would seem rather presumptuous
to hope for success where Prof. Petten "took so
little by his motion" - but Mr. Moden - the
Gloster schoolmaster - who is going to hold a pub-
lic discussion with him at Chatterbox next Wed-
nesday ^{evening} and myself, are preparing a heavy battery
between us, which I suspect will damage the
private very seriously. I am very sorry that ^{his} ~~my~~
reference to the B.S. Council report, which I
fully expected to have found a forgery, is correct - &
I am very sorry it has troubled you & good ne-
tural Mr. Williams about it - and I feel great
compunction of asking you to do anything again in
such a matter. But I think I ~~have heard~~ ^{hear}
it just possible that you might without much
inconvenience make out a little more ~~of~~ get for

me - with this distinct understanding that if
it does cause you inconvenience you are Not to
think of it whatever! - The "chap" says that
on a certain occasion Sir J. South went to
land to observe some eclipses &c &c. & there he
found an occultation of a big star coming on - the
instead of disappearing at the limb it continued to
pass apparently before the Moon, & became more
& more perceptible - that he went down to his
then observers, who laughed at him as having taken
too much whiskey, but nevertheless went to set
for themselves, & found it all true. In truth
many whereof he exhibits this kind of Discrepancy



(The star in the second position having
lost much of its light.)

After what I found at his lecture
I w^d not go near him again, but
at a prison or show I c^d depend to ask for
the source of his information. He referred to
"Constable's Miscellany, published in 1850"

I want if possible to convict the fellow of some palpable falsehood. If the Brit. Mus. had been open, I w^d. have asked if you could with perfect convenience have made search there for me - but alas! the Reading Room is closed next week (several such contrivances have happened with him.) But possibly it might be in your Univ. Coll. library, or you may know who has it without giving yourself more trouble than just a little run for exercise. If so it w^d. be curious to know what that volume really contains. I dare say a reasonable & fair account of a "projection of the baron" on the Moon's disc, twisted by this fellow into evidence of — Partial Transparency, I presume, of the Moon! — (I say "I presume" for he has wisely kept it out of his book. —)

He quotes triumphantly the following passage from "Somerville's Physical Sciences" — "No particular theory is required to calculate eclipses; & the calculations may be made with equal accuracy Independent of every theory." I write to Dampier to ascertain whether any such book as the above existed (as well as several similar queries.) He returned a most obliging reply,

I shew that one or two of the books referred to were
creatures of imagination - But in answer to the
particular query, he only sent me a list of [Mr.
Somerville's works - including of course her [Concep-
ion of the] Physical Sciences. So I have not
the nose quite as tight as I wish, yet. If you
happen to be seeing anybody who can tell you
whether such a book as "Somerville's Physical
Sciences" exists, it is? be worth the enquiry.
I fully believe it to be a "myth" -

The fellow is? well worth notice for his vio-
lating the people of Cheltenham, some of whom are
helping to maintain him there. I am told, till
the "discussion" of Wednesday comes off. - Should
you happen to come across anything of use, would you
kindly write to me - (with every circumstance so much
in detail as to satisfy a public meeting) at 19 Nor-
mington Terrace Cheltenham, where D.V. I again expect
him on Tuesday, preparatory to the tug of war on
Wednesday evening. - It is? not be worth one quarter
of your while, be it? be good fun if you? come to
hear it yourself! I give you? notice to keep your
to I'm sure should I - with every kind wish of the season
including your good Parents who I hope are well believe me,
but I am in a hurry - I. D. Webb.