

Hardwick Parsonage, Feb. 7. / 67. <sup>53</sup>

My dear, ill-used, young friend -

You have been ill-used, there can be no doubt of it. - but not so much by your friends here as by their circumstances - I have been, since your kind letter of I-dont-know-when, much over-battered. An elephant in the shape of a 2<sup>d</sup> Edition - has been lying atop of me, & crushing out all my spirit - not to mention divers vexatious matters which have made this a very troublesome new-year's week. And to mend the matter my dear wife's teeth have been such a failure & a plague, & she has been suffering such severe pain, that I must take her to the Dentist as soon as possible - which will be, D.V. on Monday next - for the week. I suppose it would be about as likely to expect the arrival of a Great Comet, or of yourself, in London during that time. But we do long to see you again - & talk over things past (very happy things), present, & to come. - Please write to us at any rate. I

Feel time goes very fast: & we must make the most  
of the best of it.

Weather & ~~both~~ have conspired to reduce my Ob-  
servatory experience within very narrow limits. But  
after all I find it such a comfort as I little expected  
never to possess. Instead of hauling out & in, a long  
iron carronade weighing 50 or 60 lbs - a process which  
in the utter uncertainty of English definition, often  
made me rather glad of an excuse for avoiding it, I can  
run over to the Observatory in any weather when there  
is a bit of blue, get the ~~port~~<sup>port hole</sup> opened & the perch  
gun in position in 3 ms - see what I want & have  
everything banded away tight in 1 ms - more: & into  
the house again. This is charming. And you will be  
glad to hear that the speculum turns out beautifully.  
Tho' there is a little remaining spherical error, which  
with her kindly volunteered to remove, if he can do so  
without disturbing the symmetry of the curve, I shall  
have a splendid instrument, & one which I have no  
doubt beats all Cambridge (now don't you go for to  
be angry about that thin speech! for I don't say it

as an Oxford man, believing that I beat Oxford also!)  
My 2<sup>d</sup> Edit. will contain one very curious & unique thing -  
a diagram of the passage of the Comet of 1819 over the  
Sun's disc, where it appeared, utterly unlike anything  
else - a nebulous spot with a transparent centre. The  
dis. is by Pastorff, whose curious MS. vol. has been de-  
riving sent me by Sir J. Herschel for the purpose. -

You see Huggins's curious verification & extension of  
Neelie's discovery of lines of burning Hydrogen (not the  
dark but the bright bands) - in a star in Cassiopea. - I  
shall be so glad when a big Comet comes for that worthy  
man. I have heard such good of his private life, & Dis-  
senter as he is, honour him therefore. - We hope to  
call on your dear Parents in Town - & to cram all we  
can into the week. It will be an especial pleasure to  
see that good Mrs. Newcomb again. How very few have I  
ever met like her. How curious it seems, & how inter-  
esting, to look back on our pleasant time when you  
made their acquaintance, & carried me about town in  
Cabs - & we went to the Museum - & Dirts - & especially  
St. Paul's. Which I don't believe you have forgotten.

I communicated your remarks on light to Slack. She was still unsatisfied, because [he is a sick fellow] water, whose particles are continuous, affords no good analogy for the case of light. - My wife sends her very kind love, & means to write when she has a little more time than send you a little oil-painting in a letter. But she has been much occupied by her nieces, who are going away tomorrow I am sorry to say. They have been very much feted in the neighbourhood, & are very nice amiable unaffected girls. Their mamma has just had a 14th child. "And so the world goes round!"

And what have you been at, in the hurried circuit? Up? or down? or both by turns? (Hardly both at once, seeing your travels have not extended to Ireland, I believe.) I am afraid you are horribly bothered by this (or some such) equation  $(A+C+R)-(A+C+R)+(A-C+R)-A+C-R$  &c. &c. = 0. But I am not sure that a 2<sup>d</sup> Edition is not worse - please keep out of that! And believe me always with every kind wish

Yours very affectionately

J. W. Webb.

We shall be in the old quarters  
Mrs Payne's, 67 Great Russell St.