

Union Hotel, St Andrews Square
Edinburgh 17th November 1814 (*Thursday*)

My dear Father and Mother,

We arrived here on our way for France on Monday evening last, and are to sail from Leith for London on Saturday morning. Our passage is taken in an elegant swank and we expect, if the winds are favourable, to land in the great metropolis of the empire in a few days. I am not certain that I would have written to you from this place had I not feared that you might possibly suspect that we were already at sea and have become alarmed for our safety by not hearing from me so soon as you expected. When I arrived in town I had no expectations of seeing John here but was informed that he was expected during this week. Those expectations have hitherto been disappointed and if he do not arrive before tomorrow midday I shall not see him. I should have liked very much to have seen him and Andrew both. I have got very little news to communicate. Our governess is not to accompany us to France and what is still more wonderful, Mr Hart, the lord and master of us all, remains behind. Mrs Hart is quite delighted with the idea, but I, poor I, am not. I shall have responsibility attached to me, which my shoulders, broad as they are, will be but little able to bear. Still, however, I must submit to all in order to get a Kirk from the Major. I believe it will please you equally as it did myself to learn that Mr Hart is perfectly pleased with my services, and Mrs Hart is delighted. When they were on a visit lately to their friends in and near this place, Mrs Hart talked almost constantly about ME and my poetry, in drawing rooms stuffed with lords and ladies, Knights and Honourables. A sister of our governess said to Mr Hart once, she was happy to hear that he had been so fortunate in his tutor. "Thank God Mrs Stuart", said his mayorship, he is all I could wish. I wish to God St Mungoes were vacant at this moment that I could post him into that place!! I confess to you I am much better pleased with this indirect approval than I would have been by his saying the same thing to myself. In the one case there might have been flattery, in the other I think there was only truth. This sister of Miss Comb's whom I have mentioned above was once governess in a sister of Mrs Hart's family and is almost devoured by the kindness of all her relations. Of course our Miss Comb is an object of interest in all their eyes, and they seem to have taken in mind that it was a necessary part of my duty to court Miss Comb. After all their vigilance has been unable to discover the slightest intimacy between us. They

have at length concluded that we are "both Stones" for they cannot conceive that any two people, both interesting, should have remained in the same house so long without becoming lovers. They forget to take into their calculations that I was a poor man's poor son and that my own success in life depended upon the favour and protection of another. Thus, mama, you see, I have been damned by them all to the bondage of matrimony, and have now to bear the disgraceful stigma of insensibility. I cannot remedy the evil. I dare say all this will be very uninteresting to you, except in so far as it will show you the interest they take in my welfare. For no other reason have I written it, but to prove that that is the case. May I not then fairly calculate upon being established some 6 or 7 years hence in St Mungoes? I can assure you that I am not unwilling to believe so, even tho' the teinds¹ of that parish be already exhausted. I beg you will destroy the above as soon as you have read it for surely it is not a communication that might by any possibility to be allowed to meet the eyes of the world. I know not as yet when we may be in France. It is difficult to get a vessel freighted to the very port whence we wish to go. There is a vessel taking in loading at London just now, for Marseilles, which would answer us extremely well, if she can afford us accommodation. I should not be much surprised however, if we did not reach the continent before March. When we do get there, we are to remain stationary for some time. I know not how long, and when Mr Hart joins us we are to commence the tour of France. Though I look forward with some distress to our journey and settlement and existence there, yet I expect considerable improvement from visiting that country. I shall be able to get acquainted with London and probably with Paris. If we get a proper governess then shall I be better able to enjoy myself. It will be long, however, before any stranger can be so well acquainted with Mrs Hart or so useful. I may say necessary to her, as her whom we leave very, very unwillingly behind. Mrs H is nearly as useless a being as I have ever met with. Miss Comb has had to write all her letters for her, in one word do almost every thing for her, and now when she is deprived of her services, I know not well what shall be done. Besides, as I am not very particularly acquainted with the French language I confess I am a little afraid to undertake the office of interpreter. Necessity has been ten thousand times said, to have no law, and must submit to my fate. I am very selfish I confess, for it is for my future improvement and future settlement that I do submit to all these ills. I have got my name enrolled in the Hall, but could not get any discourses given in. This does me no injury. By attending one full session after my return I shall be able to complete my studies, another I shall be looking with an eagles eye into every obituary for the death of some old superannuated clergyman. If I had once got a settlement, I may then in summer look out for a wife, but my eyes are shut till then.

1. teind (sometimes spelled tiend). A tenth part of agricultural or other produce for the support of the church or clergy.

I suppose it was the last letter I wrote, that has prevented Sarah from sending me my shirts. I must endeavour to remain satisfied with my present stock till May next, my rent day. I do now go on board pennyless and therefore must try to be contented with what clothes I have already got. Cameron sailed from Leith some time ago but told his companions he did not mean to write to them till once he was settled in France. Of course no intelligence has as yet been received from him. I shall write you immediately upon my arrival in London, and in France, as I think you will be anxious to hear of my safety. The postage from France is very high, but I must try to make up by length for the family of my communications. They will take 14 or 15 days to travel to New Galloway and perhaps as many more to you. You will not only have to pay those you address to me in France to Dover, but you will likewise have to pay those I send you from Dover. I pay likewise both those I receive and those I send off while in France. I should like you to write to me as soon as you receive this addressed to Ibbetson's Hotel, Vere Street, Cavendish Square, London. If I do not see John here before we sail I shall be extremely anxious to hear from you soon. If at any time my letters be late in arriving I beg you will not be distressed on that account, I may not at all times be able to meet with post houses on my journey, be much more the pity, as after I leave Britain till once I be fully established and permanently fixed in France I shall not be able to hear from you. I have not time to say another word. Farewell all. I am ever your affect son James.

Written on last page in different handwriting: Carsphairn Jany th 1 8815 and Dec 4th 1814 Arrived

Envelope addressed:
Mr William Campbell
Carsphairn
Ayr

and notated with a handwritten 'Single' and with postmark NOV B18A 1814