

Letter 16 Darwin to R. W. Darwin

[23 Oct 1825]

[Edinburgh]
Sunday morning.

My dear Father

As I suppose Erasmus has given all the particulars of the journey I will say no more about it, except that altogether it has cost me 7 pounds— We got into our lodgings yesterday evening, which are very comfortable & near the College— Our Landlady, by name Mrs. Mackay, is a nice clean old body, and exceedingly civil & attentive— She lives in “11 Lothian Street Edinburg”^{f2} & only four flights of steps from the ground floor which is very moderate to some other lodgings that we were nearly taking— The terms are 1£—6s . for two very nice & *light* bedrooms & a nice sitting room; by the way, light bedrooms are very scarce articles in Edinburg, since most of them are little holes in which there is neither air or light. We called on Dr. Hawley^{f3} the first morning, whom I think we never should have found had it not been a good natured Dr. of Divinity who took us into his Library & showed us a map, & gave us how find him: Indeed all the Scotchmen are so civil and attentive, that it is enough to make an Englishman ashamed of himself—

I should think Dr. Butler or any other fat English divine would take two utter strangers into his library and show them the way! When at last we found the Doctor & having made all the proper speeches on both sides we all three set out and walked all about the town; which we admire excessively; indeed Bridge Street is the most extraordinary thing I ever saw, and when we first looked over the sides we could hardly believe our eyes, when, instead of a fine river we saw a stream of people—

We spend all our mornings in promenading about the town, which we know pretty well, and in the Evenings we go to the play to hear Miss Stephens,^{f4} which is quite delightful. She is very popular here, being encored to such a degree that she can hardly get on with the play— On Monday we are going to Der Fr.^{f5} (I do not know how to spell the rest of the word)— Before we got into our lodgings we were staying at the Star Hotel in Princes St. where to my surprise I met with an old school fellow whom I like very much; he is just come back from a walking tour in Switzerland, and is now going to study for [his degree?].

The introductory lectures begin next Wednesday, and we were matriculated for them on Saturday: we pay 10s. & write our names in a book, & the ceremony is finished; but the Library is not free to us till we get a ticket from a Professor—^{f6}

We have just been to church and heard a sermon of only 20 minutes. I expected from Sir Walter Scott’s account, a soul-cutting discourse of 2 hours & a half—

I remain Yr. affectionate son | C. Darwin.

Footnotes

^{f1} Dated from the reference to lectures beginning ‘next Wednesday’. Lectures for the 1825–6 session at the University began on Wednesday, 26 October (Ashworth 1935, p. 97).

f2 The site is now occupied by the Lecture Theatre of the Royal Scottish Museum (information supplied by Mr Antony P. Shearman, City Librarian of Edinburgh).

f3 Probably Richard Maddock Hawley. The copy and Francis Darwin's version both read 'Hanley', but no doctor by that name has been located. In her letter of [26 October 1825], Catherine Darwin clearly wrote 'Hawley'.

f4 Catherine Stephens, a leading soprano of the time. During October 1825 she appeared at the Theatre-Royal, Edinburgh.

f5 *Der Freischütz* by Carl Maria Friedrich Ernst von Weber was first performed at the Theatre-Royal, Edinburgh on 29 December 1824 (Harvard College Library Theatre Collection).

f6 The anonymous author of two articles in the *St. James's Gazette*, 'Darwin in Edinburgh.-I.', 16 February 1888, and 'Darwin in Edinburgh.-II.', 17 February 1888, states that the University Library record books for 1825-6 (since lost) showed that CD and Erasmus borrowed more books than other students. The *St. James's Gazette* passage on CD's borrowing reads: 'They included Good's "Study" [Good 1822] (with which his list opened), Pemberton on Viscera [Pemberton 1806] (which Erasmus also took out), Young's Philosophy [Young 1807], Fleming's Zoology [Fleming 1822], Kerr [?Kerr 1792] and Foster [not identified], two volumes on entomology, Wood on Insects [Wood 1821], Brook's Conchology [Brookes 1815], and Newton's Optics [Newton 1704]... What may be called the only lay work he took out was Boswell's Johnson [Boswell 1791], which he seems to have read all through, carrying off a volume at a time.' (16 February 1888, p. 5). In the following session (1826-7), however, CD did not pay the library deposit and borrowed no books at all (17 February 1888, p. 7) He paid his fees for two classes 'Practice of Physic' and 'Midwifery' and attended Robert Jameson's lectures in Geology and Zoology, which he remembered as having been 'incredibly dull' (*Autobiography*, p. 52).

f7 The original of the letter has not been found. A copy made for Francis Darwin (by CD's sister, Caroline) has been compared with the text published in *ML* 1: 5-7. The copy has been followed rather than the printed text wherever Francis diverged from it to conform to the editorial style of *ML*. Where he differs from the copyist's transcription of words, his version has been adopted as more probable, unless clear evidence for an alternative rendering exists, as in the case of 'Edinburg' and 'altogether' (see letter from Catherine Darwin, [26 October 1825]). In *ML* 1: 7 'his [degree?]' was supplied in a space left blank in the copy. See also the Manuscript alterations and comments for this letter.

Letter 20 Darwin to C. S. Darwin

6 Jan 1826

Edinburgh.
Jan. 6th. | 1826—

My dear Caroline,

Many thanks for your very entertaining letter, which was a great relief after hearing a long stupid lecture from Duncan on Materia Medica— But as you know nothing either of the Lecture or Lecturers, I will give you a short account of them.— Dr. Duncan is so very learned that his wisdom has left no room for his sense, & he lectures, as I have already said, on the Materia Medica, which cannot be translated into any word expressive enough of its stupidity. These few last mornings, however, he has shown signs of improvement & I hope he will “go on as well as can be expected.”^{f1} His lectures begin at eight in the morning.— Dr. Hope^{f2} begins at ten o’clock, & I like both him & his lectures *very* much. (After which Erasmus goes to Mr. Lizars^{f3} on Anatomy”, who is a charming Lecturer) At 12, the Hospital, after which I attend Munro on Anatomy— I dislike him & his Lectures so much that I cannot speak with decency about them.^{f4} He is so dirty in person & actions.— Thrice a week we have what is called Clinical Lectures, which means lectures on the sick people in the Hospitals—these I like *very* much.—^{f5} I said this account should be short, but I am afraid it has been too long like the Lectures themselves.—

I will be a good *boy*, and tell something about Johnson again (not but what I am very much surprised that Papa should so forget himself as to call me, a Collegian in the University of Edinburgh, a boy.) he has changed his lodgings for the third time, he has got very cheap ones, but I am afraid it will not answer, for they must make up by cheating.— I hope you like Erasmus’ official news, he means to begin every letter so.—You mentioned in your letter that Emma was staying with you, if she is not gone ask her to tell Jos.^{f6} that I have not succeeded in getting any [titanium],^{f7} but that I will try again. Tell Katty and Susan I shall be very grateful if they will write to me, it is so pleasant receiving letters; and I hope, although our correspondence has begun late, you will send me many more nice affecting letters about dear little black nose. Erasmus thinks I shall have more pleasure in seeing it than all the rest of the families put together. You seem to hold the same opinion with regard to my dear little nephew.— I want to know how old I shall be next Birthday. I believe 17, & if so I shall be forced to go abroad for one year since it is necessary that I shall have completed my 21st. year before I take my degree. Now you have no business to be frowning & puzzling over this letter for I did not promise to write a good hand to you.

I remain your af— dear Caroline, | C. Darwin.

Love to Papa & tell him I am going to write to him in a few days—

Footnotes

^{f1} CD refers to Andrew Duncan, the younger. A more favourable estimate of him is cited in Ashworth 1935. For a summary of the sources and background of all that is known of CD’s student days at Edinburgh, see Shepperson 1961.

^{f2} Thomas Charles Hope.

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f3 The copy reads 'Lezars', which Francis Darwin changed to 'Sizars' (*ML* 1: 7). However, CD almost certainly referred to the surgeon John Lizars, later Professor of Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, author of *Lizars* 1822.

f4 In the *Autobiography*, p. 47, CD says of Alexander Monro, the third: '[He] made his lectures on human anatomy as dull, as he was himself, and the subject disgusted me. It has proved one of the greatest evils in my life that I was not urged to practise dissection, for I should soon have got over my disgust; and the practice would have been invaluable for all my future work. This has been an irremediable evil, as well as my incapacity to draw.'

f5 Little manuscript material survives from CD's student days at Edinburgh. Some of his lecture notes of 1825–6, on medicine and chemistry, are preserved in DAR 5, which also contains an account of a zoological walk to Portobello. DAR 129 contains a diary of zoological and botanical observations made in 1826. A notebook in DAR 118 of zoological observations made in March 1827 records his observations on *Flustra* and *Pontobdella muricata* which he reported to the Plinian Natural History Society of the University of Edinburgh on 27 March 1827 (not 1826, as CD states in the *Autobiography*, p. 50). See *Collected papers* 2: 285–91 for a complete transcription by P. H. Barrett of the notebook, and Ashworth 1935, pp. 102–5, for an account of the Plinian Society meetings and CD's membership, drawn from the minutebooks of the Society.

f6 Josiah Wedgwood III.

f7 A blank space was left in the copy after the word 'any'; 'titanium' was inserted by Francis Darwin.

Letter 68 Darwin to W. D. Fox

[15 July 1829]

[Shrewsbury]
Wednesday

My dear Fox

Many thanks for your letter, it was very good of you to write so soon, the reason of my writing now is not to fulfill my promise of a long letter, for that is, I am afraid impossible, but to tell you, that, yours & Pulleins birds skins are in my room. Mr. Aiken seemed to be rather troubled with the size of the Boxes, for indeed they quite filled his little room, so I believe he has one box, & I have two, (in one of which is the ring-Owzel), but I am sorry to say the Key is locked up in one of my drawers. But if you were to write to Impey, he could send the boxes (first getting them broken open & packed up by Mr Brett) to Osmaston—I am very sorry I have given so much trouble. But I did not think it fair to leave such Leviathan-like boxes in Mr. Aikens house.— I am also sorry to hear that some of your insects got loose. I thought I had packed them pretty tight:—

It is terrible news to me to hear that you have been idle in the good cause, but I hope soon that your zeal will be renewed. You will see my name in Stephens' last number.^{fl} I am glad of it if it is merely to spite Mr. Jenyns.— I shall like very much looking over all your insects again, & I think I shall be able to name a great number of the *genus* Colymbetes: I have a great number of insects at Cambridge for you, & you shall have the duplicates of every thing I take this summer. whenever I take any thing good, you may rely upon it, that you always are uppermost in my mind: I shall not soon forget my first entomological walks with you, & poor little Way: I cannot help often wishing to hear something about him.—I have some thoughts of going for a week into Wales again this summer: would it be impossible for you to come here & then go on with me. We should do wonders amongst the Carabi.— I told Polo to collect, but I am afraid he will never do much more as an Entomologist he is grown far too idle. You had better try your hand at him, for I despair.— You shall receive before very long, the two Martens, and my Dundiver.—

Recollect what the sum of money is that I am indebted to you, as I do not keep account, but you pretend to do, so put it to the proof, and do not forget.—

I am going to Maer next week in order to Entomolog & shall stay there a week: for the rest of this summer I intend to lead a perfectly idle & wandering life, always taking care to have as little of home & as much of Woodhouse as possible. You see I am much in the same state that you are, with this difference you make good resolutions & never keep them. I never make them, so cannot keep them: It is all very well writing in this manner, but I must read for my little Go. Graham smiled & bowed so very civilly, when he told me that he was one of the six appointed to make the examination stricter, & that they were determined they would make it a very different thing from any previous examination that from all this, I am sure, it will be the very devil to pay amongst all idle men & Entomologists. Erasmus we expect home in a few weeks time; he intends passing next winter in Paris:—

Be sure you order the 2 lists of insects, published by Stephens, one printed on both sides, & the other, only on one. You will find them very useful in many points of view.

Dear old Fox, yours | C. Darwin

Postmark: Postmark: Shrewsbury JY 16 1829

Footnotes

^{f1}It is not clear to which number of Stephens 1827–46 CD refers. The 1 June 1829 number on *Haustellata*, vol. 2, has an entry (p. 200) ‘*Graphiphora plecta*“Cambridge”.— C. Darwin, Esq.’ The number dated 15 June 1829 of *Mandibulata*, vol. 2, Appendix (p. 194) lists 13 species of beetles reported by CD. The report of the moth, if it appeared early in June, would be the first time CD’s name appeared in print, but in the *Autobiography*, p. 63, where he writes of his delight at first seeing the magic words, “captured by C. Darwin, Esq.”, his memory is of beetle collecting. Unfortunately the ‘magic words’ do not help in making a clear decision about the date or the publication; they do not occur in either list, nor have they been found elsewhere in *Illustrations of British entomology*. A total of 35 species of insects, 34 of them beetles, are listed as taken by CD. (See also Freeman 1977, pp. 19–20.)

Letter 78 Darwin to W. D. Fox

[25 Mar 1830]

[Cambridge]

Thursday

My dear Fox

I am through my little Go,!!!^{f1} I am too much exalted to humble myself by apologizing for not having written before.— But, I assure you before I went in & when my nerves were in a shattered & weak condition, your injured person often rose before my eyes & taunted me with my idleness. But I am through through through. I could write the whole sheet full, with this delightful word.— I went in yesterday, & have just heard the joyful news.— I shall not know for a week, which class I am in.— The whole examination is carried on in a different system. It has one grand advantage, being over in one day. They are rather strict; & ask a wonderful number of questions:

And now I want to know something about your plans: *of course* you intend coming up here: what fun we will have together, what beetles we will catch, it will do my heart good to go once more together to some of our old haunts: I have two very promising pupils in Entomology, & we will make regular campaigns into the Fens; Heaven protect the beetles & Mr Jenyns, for we wont leave him a pair in the whole country. My new cabinet is come down & a gay little affair it is.—

And now for the time, I think I shall go for a few days to Town, to hear an Opera & see Mr. Hope; not to mention my brother also whom I should have no objection to see.— If I go pretty soon, you can come afterwards but if you will settle your plans definitely, I will arrange mine. So send me a letter by return of post.— And I charge you let it be favourable, that is to say come directly.—

Holden has been ordained, & drove the Coach out on the Monday, I do not think he is looking very well.— Chapman wants you & myself to pay him a visit, when you come up, & begs to be remembered to you. You must excuse this short letter, as I have no end more to send off by this days post.—

I long to see you again, & till then | My dear good old Fox | I am yours most sincerely

| C. Darwin

Postmark: Postmark: Cambridge MA 25 1830

Footnotes

^{f1} The results were published in two lists: those who passed with credit, and those to whom the Examiners had *only not refused* their certification of approval. CD's name appeared in the first list (Cambridge University Archives Pass Lists, Previous Examinations 1824–83, Exam. L. 9).

Letter 98 Darwin to C. S. Darwin

[28 Apr 1831]

[Cambridge]
Thursday

My Dear Caroline,

I want to hear some Shropshire politics, & I write in the hopes of having an answer.— I will give you a short hand account of myself since I left Shrewsbury.— I spent a very pleasant week in London, but found it as I always do, very fatiguing (I expect Erasmus did also for we lived together). Through Tom's^{f2} assistance I got a ticket for the Antient music which was most admirable; but what I liked most in all London is the Zoolog: Gardens: on a hot day when the beasts look happy and the people gay it is most delightful.— Cambridge, I find, is one of the few places, where if you anticipate a great deal of pleasure you do not find yourself disappointed: every day in the Term that passes I feel a loss; and the days go so quietly that I never do half what I intend to in the morning.— I am very busy and work all morning till Henslow's lecture: in the evenings I generally go out somewhere, and occasionally dinner parties, where goodeating and good-talking make a most harmonious whole (I hope you are disgusted, I will excuse anybody till they have been to a Cam: dinner, & if they are there, and if they cry out "what a disgusting thing a good dinner is" I must give them up.) The Election here is a great bore, as Henslow is Lord Palmerston's right-hand man,^{f3} and he has no time for walks.— All the while I am writing now my head is running about the Tropics: in the morning I go and gaze at Palm trees in the hot-house and come home and read Humboldt: my enthusiasm is so great that I cannot hardly sit still on my chair. Henslow & other Dons give us great credit for our plan: Henslow promises to cram me in geology.— I never will be easy till I see the peak of Teneriffe and the great Dragon tree; sandy, dazzling, plains, and gloomy silent forest are alternately uppermost in my mind.— I am working regularly at Spanish; Erasmus advised me decidedly to give up Italian. I have written myself into a Tropical glow.

goodbye | C Darwin

tell me Gossip write soon

I took my Degree the other day:^{f4} it cost me £15: there is waste of money. Love to all you do not hear from me often, so you must excuse my being as Egotistical as Hope.— I begin to think Natural Hist: makes people Egotistical.

Footnotes

^{f1} The copyist noted 'Postmark Cambridge April 28th (?)'. The query apparently indicates that the year was illegible.

^{f2} Thomas Josiah Wedgwood.

^{f3} John Stevens Henslow, originally a Tory, followed Lord Palmerston when he changed parties in 1828. In the elections of 1831 Palmerston lost his seat as M.P. for Cambridge University because of his support of Parliamentary reform. (Jenyns 1862, p. 60.)

^{f4} Tuesday, 26 April 1831 (*LL* 1: 163 n.).

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