

**The
Drennan-McTier
Letters**

1776–1793

**If I survive her,
I shall have her letters
to me, written without
care of composition,
published for
distributing among
the few I love, for they
are true pictures of a
fine woman, and they
well illustrate the
still sorrows of
domestic life'**

William to Bruce

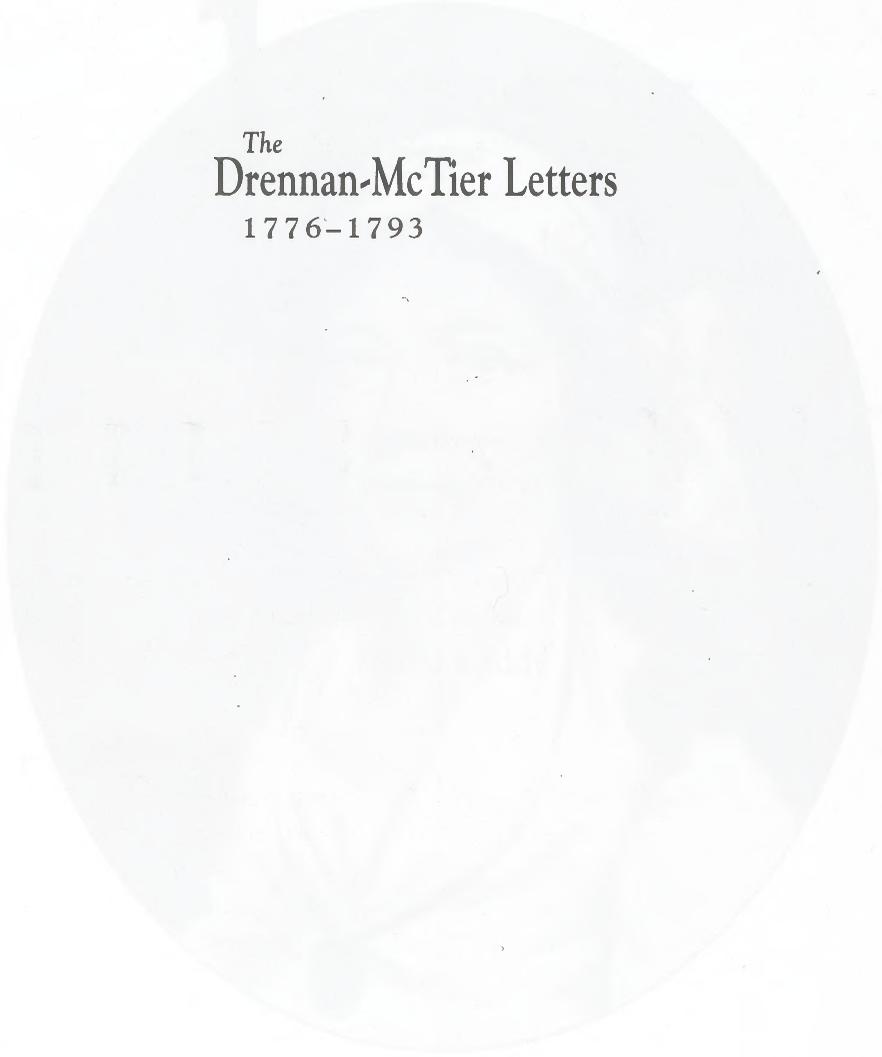


edited by
Jean Agnew

general editor
Maria Luddy

COMMISSION LAIMHEICHTHEIMNE NA hÉIREANN

The
Drennan-McTier Letters
1776-1793



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1993



Martha McTier (1742–1837),
in about 1787

COIMISIÚN LÁIMHSCRÍBHINNÍ NA HÉIREANN

1

The
Drennan-McTier
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THE WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE
IRISH MANUSCRIPTS COMMISSION
1998



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CONTENTS

FOREWORD by Seamus Brennan T.D., Government Chief Whip, Minister of State and Chairperson of the Government's 1798 Commemoration Committee	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
INTRODUCTION	xi
Martha McTier and William Drennan: a 'Domestic' History by Maria Luddy	xxix
EDITORIAL NOTES	liii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	lvii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	lviii
CHRONOLOGY	lix
The Letters	
1776–1782	1
1783	67
1784	149
1785	188
1786	246
1787	259
1788	287
1789	321
1790	345
1791	354
1792	382
1793	459
FAMILY TREE	589
INDEX OF NAMES	590

FOREWORD

An emphasis on the Ulster (especially Presbyterian) dimension of the United Irishmen, the publication of historical source material as a permanent contribution to understanding 1798, a focus on the wider intellectual rather than the narrower military aspect of the period, and a broadening of the commemorative impulse to include women as well as men were among the aims of the Government's 1798 Commemoration Committee. Because this three-volume edition of the Drennan-McTier correspondence admirably meets all these aims, my Committee was enthusiastically supportive of this complex work undertaken by the Women's History Project.

This publication is a valuable addition to the literature of the 1790s, as well as an example of the ground-breaking work in women's history being produced by the Women's History Project. Here we have almost 1,500 letters over a forty-year period, overwhelmingly between Martha McTier (1742-1837) and her brother, the well-known United Irishman, William Drennan (1754-1820). These letters between close siblings record an intensive intellectual partnership. They also offer a chronicle of domesticity in Belfast, Edinburgh, Newry and Dublin. The Drennans were at the core of the intellectual tradition of Belfast Presbyterians; their father was minister of the New Light Congregation at Rosemary Street. As well as recording their vibrant public lives, their letters cover in intimate detail their interior lives, not excluding what William called the 'still sorrows of domestic life'.

The text has been carefully edited, the modernised spelling generates a highly contemporary feel, while the meticulous editorial work of Jean Agnew has rescued from oblivion a high proportion of the three thousand individuals, many of them women, mentioned in the letters, thereby creating an invaluable context.

I want to congratulate the editors for their dedication and professional competence, Mr Michael Duffin, descendant of William Drennan, and the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, for permission to publish the letters in full, the Women's History Project and the Irish Manuscripts Commission for publishing them. I warmly welcome its appearance as both a major contribution to the Bicentenary of 1798 and a further expansion of our knowledge of the role of women in that pivotal period.

Seamus Brennan T.D., Government Chief Whip, Minister of State and
Chairperson of the Government's 1798 Commemoration Committee
September 1998

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The Women's History Project is funded by The Department of Arts, Heritage, the Gaeltacht and the Islands. We should like to thank the Minister, Sile de Valera T.D. for her support, and special thanks must also go to Brigid MacManus, Conor O'Malley, Joe Meleady and Bernie O'Connor of the Department. The Project has received much support from the Irish Manuscripts Commission, particularly from Professor Geoffrey Hand, chairman of the Commission, and Professors Mary Daly and Declan Kiberd, for which we are grateful. Thanks are also due to Margaret Clancy, secretary to the Commission. The Women's History Association of Ireland undertook the organisation of the Women's History Project in September 1997. We should like to record our thanks to the Association, and to the committee of the Women's History Project for their support and guidance.

Substantial funding from the Government's 1798 Commemoration Committee has made the publication of the Drennan-McTier letters possible. We would like to express our thanks to the chairman of the Committee, Seamus Brennan T.D., to his staff, particularly Alice Kearney, and to Dr Kevin Whelan. We are also grateful to the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society for their generous grant which has paid for the illustrations in these three volumes.

The Women's History Project owes particular thanks to Michael Duffin, great-great-grandson of William Drennan, for his generous permission to publish this correspondence.

As editors, we wish to express our gratitude to the staff of the following institutions: in Belfast, The Linen Hall Library, The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, The Queen's University Library, and The Ulster Museum; in Dublin, The National Library of Ireland and The National Gallery of Ireland.

Special thanks go to Janice Jardine, Heather Kinning and Gloria Rickard of the School of Modern History, The Queen's University of Belfast, who turned the million words of the original typed transcript into beautiful word-processing, and to Dr Diane Urquhart for her help in proof reading the final text.

The writing of the footnotes in these volumes would have been impossible without the assistance of a number of experts who have generously answered many queries about eighteenth-century art, medicine, politics, literature, and life in general. The following list is necessarily incomplete, because the research is still in progress, but thanks are due to Eileen Black (art queries), Professor Richard Clarke (physicians and medicine), Frank Ferguson, Peter Francis, Dr G. Gargett, Professor Edith Mary Johnston (members of parliament), John McCabe, Elizabeth McCrum (dress and textiles), Joseph Moore, and Dr Estelle Sheehan (Latin quotations).

Finally, Jean Agnew wishes to thank her friends who have listened patiently, her son, Giles, for his help in a number of computing crises, and her husband, Kenneth, whose support and encouragement have been the most crucial part of the entire undertaking.

Martha McTier was (as usual) right when she wrote to William Drennan, 'You are writing a little history – take care of your authorities, say nothing you cannot prove – for one wrong assertion will damn you – and never get leave to die.' Any wrong assertions are our own, although we hope they will not lead to damnation.

J.H.A.
M.L.

INTRODUCTION

Martha McTier and William Drennan were children of the Rev. Thomas Drennan and his wife Ann Lennox. Thomas Drennan, a Presbyterian minister, was born in 1696, and was minister of the First Belfast congregation in Rosemary Street from 1736 (as assistant to the Rev. Samuel Haliday) until his death in 1768. Little is known of his background. He appears to have been the clever son of a poor family, probably first generation emigrants to Ulster from Scotland. A number of poor relations are referred to from time to time in the letters, but when asked to supply biographical data about their father's origins, Martha and William were studiously vague. By contrast, they took great pride in their mother's connections. Ann Lennox's father was a prosperous Belfast merchant, and her mother, a Hamilton, had gentry cousins. When Ann married in 1741, she was twenty-three years old and Drennan forty-six, and the family story was that Drennan, regarded by his friends as a confirmed bachelor, was co-opted by her friends to escort her to Dublin to visit her cousins and proposed to her before the coach had reached Swords, on the outskirts of the city. The couple had eleven children, only three of whom, Martha (1742–1837), Nancy (1745–1825), and William (1754–1820) survived infancy.

Before moving to Belfast, Thomas Drennan had taught at a private academy in Dublin, as assistant to the Rev. Francis Hutcheson, a leading 'New Light' Presbyterian minister who later became professor of philosophy at Glasgow University. The New Light controversy, which split the Presbyterian church in Ireland, began at Belfast at the beginning of the century when a group of ministers, led by the Rev. John Abernethy of Antrim, met to discuss the interpretation of biblical texts and to pool their reading and study. Their belief that religious conviction must be based on personal conviction, derived directly from a study of the scriptures, led to schism after 1719 when the Rev. Samuel Haliday refused to subscribe to the Westminster Confessions, the definitive statement of doctrine which had been obligatory for all Irish Presbyterian clergy. The New Light or Nonsubscribing congregations, which included the First Belfast congregation, thereafter formed the most intellectual and radical wing of the Presbyterian church. Thomas Drennan was part of a group of Presbyterian intellectuals which included Hutcheson and Abernethy, the Rev. Robert Duchal, James Arbuckle, the poet, William Bruce and Gabriel Cornwall.

This New Light background was of great importance in the intellectual development of both William and Martha, and they were profoundly influenced by their father, whom they regarded almost with veneration. When in 1792, William Drennan wrote an account of an unsuccessful attempt to win him over from radicalism to write for the government cause, he stated

... I said that I had early formed my principles in politics and that my father to his last hour had desired me never to forsake them, and here, on recollecting that best of men and thinking that I saw his meek and venerable form and

face bending over me, with a placid and approving smile, I burst into tears and remained for some time much affected.¹

The influence of the Rev. Thomas Drennan was such that, at moments of crisis in their lives, William and Martha never saw any kind of moral dilemma as to the course they should pursue, and once set on any course which they believed accorded with their father's principles, they never saw any reason to abandon it. Not that their veneration of their father made them blind to his faults. Although kindly and benign, he was a melancholy man. He was permanently affected by the deaths in infancy of most of his children. At a time when this was a regular occurrence in most families, and when parents generally braced themselves to face it with as little fuss and as much fortitude as they could muster, the Rev. Thomas Drennan allowed himself to be swamped by grief in a way which was thought unnecessary and unwise, and consequently became querulous and over-sensitive. So much so that when Martha wrote to William in 1783 asking if he was in bad spirits, she added

If either they, or your health, depend on such things as hearing every week from Belfast, God help you, you are no better fitted to go through this world than your father was²

and in a letter of 1789 she wrote '... the only thing in your father I wish you not to imitate is his groaning away life'.³ There are also hints in the letters that the Rev. Thomas Drennan was not good at managing money. His wife brought a respectable marriage portion, and Martha's recollections of her girlhood suggest that they had lived in affluence, possibly beyond their means. For after Drennan's death, his widow lived very modestly, and her circumstances seem to have been straitened, although she received an income from land and a small pension as the widow of a Presbyterian minister. Ann Drennan's character was a complete contrast to that of her husband. She was lively, quarrelsome and excitable, sharp tongued and over emphatic. William resembled his father, with a leaven of his mother's common sense and resilience; he was by nature reserved, and thus appeared cold and unsociable. Martha inherited her mother's personality, but tempered by her father's intelligence. She and her mother were frequently at loggerheads, being too alike ever to live in harmony. Their sister Nancy's character was, and has remained impenetrable. William summed her up as 'silent affection'.

William received his early education in classics from his father, and later attended the Rev. Matthew Garnet's school in Belfast. Nothing is known of the education of his sisters, but since Martha knew a little Latin it may be assumed that the girls had some lessons from their father. When Drennan died in 1768, William was nearly twelve. In the following year he was sent to the University of Glasgow, which was

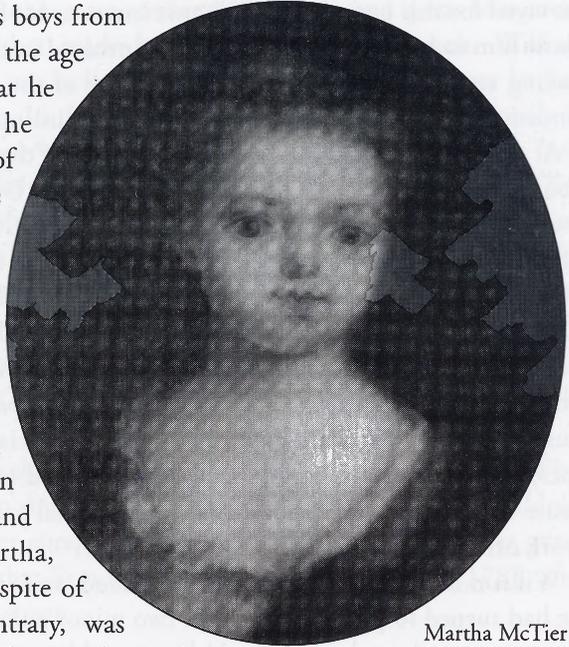
1 1 December 1792, D/591/353; all Drennan-McTier letters quoted in this introduction have been given their PRONI reference number in the series D/591; these are listed at the end of volume 3, with their page number within these volumes.

2 {1783} (D/591/63).

3 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [1789] (D/591/246C).

attended by many middle-class boys from Belfast, and he matriculated at the age of fifteen. Having decided that he wished to study medicine he enrolled at the University of Edinburgh in 1773. In the same year, Martha, who was then thirty, married Samuel McTier, a Belfast chandler, who was a widower of about thirty-five, with an eleven year old daughter.

The surviving letters begin in 1776, and were initially written between Martha in Belfast and William in Edinburgh. Martha, who enjoyed letter writing in spite of her protestations to the contrary, was deputed to write on behalf of her mother and



Martha McTier as a child

sister, with the result that William addressed most of his letters to her. Although she frequently urged him to write to their mother, who dearly loved to receive a letter, these occasional letters never developed into a proper correspondence. Mrs Drennan seldom answered them, and William preferred to write to the one member of the family who could be counted on to reply to his letters, to share his enthusiasms and to discuss his problems. This correspondence became a central part of their lives.

Although addressed to Martha, William's letters were intended to be read by the whole family. In the eighteenth century, letters were normally perused in private by the recipient, but then read aloud, in whole or in part, to the entire family, their guests and visitors, and were occasionally lent to friends or read at other people's houses. The Drennan-McTier letters contain much personal news and local gossip, but also extensive comment on literature, politics and events of the day, and it is clear that they were written to entertain and amuse, with this wider audience in mind.

In 1778 William qualified as a doctor and returned to Belfast where he set up in practice. This was not a great success as Belfast was already well supplied with doctors, the most outstanding of whom was Dr Alexander Haliday, son of the Rev. Samuel Haliday. Dr Haliday was a man of letters, a whig, a reformer, and probably the most important influence on William himself, after his father. He was also the friend and correspondent of Lord Charlemont, commander in chief of the Volunteers. Volunteer companies had been formed in 1778 to defend the country against threatened invasion by the French, but inspired by the American War of Independence, they elected delegates to Volunteer conventions and pressed for political reform. Because William and Martha were both in Belfast few letters have

survived for this period, but William's letters to his friend, the Rev. William Bruce,⁴ show him to have been enthusiastically involved in the Volunteer movement which, having secured the legislative independence of the Irish parliament in 1782, continued to agitate for further political and administrative reform.

At the end of 1782, Dr James Moody, one of the two doctors in Newry, a town about forty miles to the south of Belfast, settled in Dublin, and William immediately moved to Newry, hoping to succeed to his practice. Six months later he nearly died of a fever akin to typhus. Martha and Nancy were in Bristol, taking the waters, so William was nursed by Sam McTier who had rushed down to Newry with Mrs Drennan. His recovery was slow, but once recovered he made progress in establishing himself in Newry. In spite of the hostility of Dr John Templeton, the other Newry physician, who had expected to take over Moody's patients, there was clearly enough business for two. William gradually became financially secure, but he found Newry society provincial and boring, and he was obliged to play down his support for the cause of reform for fear of antagonising potential patients. He was able, however, to work off some of his frustration by writing.

William had written poetry from boyhood, and since his return from Edinburgh he had turned to politics. He wrote two minor political pamphlets, and his elegant prose was much in demand for Volunteer addresses. In 1783 he turned his hand to election squibs and wrote letters to the freeholders of County Down, supporting the reform candidate, Robert Stewart, the future Marquis of Londonderry. He published these anonymously, but thirsted for an opportunity to make a name for himself as a writer. By the end of 1784, much of the fire had gone out of the Volunteer movement, and in an effort to re-ignite the Volunteers' zeal for reform, he wrote the *Letters of an Irish helot*, addressing his countrymen as 'Fellow-Slaves' and urging them to elect delegates to the Volunteer convention in Dublin. He was quickly discovered to be the author and for the first time became a celebrity. Early in 1785 he went to Dublin as one of Belfast's representatives at the convention but nothing was achieved and the Volunteers were divided among themselves. In an attempt to widen the base of the movement for reform, the Volunteers, initially a middle-class Protestant body, were forming Roman Catholic corps and petitioning for some measure of Catholic emancipation. Many of the original supporters, including Charlemont himself, drew back, but William became convinced that emancipation was a moral imperative, as he could not demand political rights for himself which he would deny to others. He never subsequently swerved from this viewpoint although it caused a rift between himself and his former Volunteer associates such as William Bruce and Joseph Pollock. By the end of 1785 it was clear that the Volunteers were a spent force politically and that William's literary fame had come too late for him to take a leading role in their affairs.

In 1785 he had also proposed marriage and been rejected. It was largely at Martha's prompting that he had become attached to Margaret Jones, daughter of a wealthy Belfast merchant. But although Martha would never have suggested that he should

⁴ The Rev. William Bruce was at this date a minister in Dublin; for Drennan's letters to Bruce, see D/553 (PRONI).

pursue a penniless girl, the Drennans were not fortune hunters, and it was Margaret's intelligence and lively mind that made her appear a suitable match. William admired Margaret, but he was not in love, and after his removal to Newry he had few opportunities for courtship. In the summer of 1785, Margaret fell seriously ill with a fever, and on her recovery, William finally proposed in one of his least inspired pieces of prose and received a cool refusal. Margaret never married. When William, years later, enquired after her, her cousin William Todd Jones replied 'you are totally mistaken as to that venerable maiden's politics, for she is neither for church or state established, but a very decent cut of a bloody female rebel...'⁵ – so in fact they may have been better suited than either supposed. William spent a further four years at Newry. These were years of isolation, boredom and frustration, though financially successful. Conversely, they were some of the happiest years of Martha's life.

Martha's marriage was extremely happy. Sam adored his wife and was proud of her intellectual gifts. Both were no doubt disappointed that Martha had no children, but she channelled much of her energy into ambition and solicitude for her gifted younger brother. So much so that Sam was, for a time, jealous, and in 1783, after nursing William at Newry, he wrote:

Never, my own Matty, had my affection for you a fairer trial than since I came here and I find it as strong as ever. Oh my Matty how I do love you. I love Will too, but sometimes you have hurt me by showing too evident a partiality for him. I would not have anyone rival me in your affection, not even Will.⁶

In character, Sam was kind, good-natured, honest and reliable. Unlike William, he was a popular convivial man. He could buy a horse, choose wine, and he enjoyed a good election riot. However he appears to have had limited business acumen, and in about 1781 he became bankrupt, through a combination of bad luck and poor judgment. The McTiers went to live with Mrs Drennan and Nancy, neither of whom liked Sam, and who lost no opportunity to point out his shortcomings to Martha. Martha's health suffered; she developed headaches, palpitations, and bowel and stomach upsets, and in 1782 she and William visited Scotland to consult a leading physician, who diagnosed her symptoms as largely nervous. Humiliated by her poverty and distressed by her mother and sister's perpetual pre-occupation with her health, she continued to suffer intermittently. In December 1784 William wrote to William Bruce,

My dearest sister is I believe still in the old way and when I visit her, which I intend to do with trembling hope, I shall tell you. Her husband is still office hunting. If I survive her ... I shall have her letters to me, written without care of composition, published for distributing among the few I love for they are true pictures of a fine woman, and they well illustrate the still sorrows of domestic life.⁷

5 W. T. Jones to William Drennan, 1 January 1816 (PRONI, D/456/34).

6 Sam McTier to Martha McTier, 20 June 1783 (D/591/86).

7 William Drennan to William Bruce, December 1784 (D/553/35).

The McTiers had spent the previous six months living cheaply in the country, renting a small house near Belfast, and they had enjoyed life there so much that they had determined to build a 'cabin' of their own. William was enthusiastic in support of the scheme:

I like your cabin scheme much – I think with your taste you could make it an elegant retirement and with your company an enviable retreat from the bustle of the world about you. I have always had a fanciful poetical idea of a cabin in its situation and peculiar ornaments which I never saw realised. It would be your delight and rational amusement. I earnestly wish you would look round for one that would admit of such cheap improvement as might easily be procured and then your proud competence would come into play.⁸

Helped by a loan of £50 from William, Sam bought a small farm just outside Belfast which they christened Cabin Hill, and set about building a 'cabin' or farmhouse. They moved there in 1786 and lived happily there for the next three years. Sam was appointed Ballast Master to the new Harbour Commission in Belfast in 1785, and soon after set up as a notary public, and their financial position improved. He did most of his work in Belfast, and Martha remained at Cabin Hill, reading, being visited by friends, and discovering the joys of gardening. Her happiness was only marred by her frustrated ambitions for William, and her anxiety about Nancy who, normally silent and abstracted, was clearly going through some kind of emotional crisis which she and William could only watch with helpless bafflement.

However it was Martha herself who suffered a breakdown. In the summer of 1789 her regular letters to William ceased abruptly and did not resume until 1792, although she was apparently functioning fairly normally much of the time. Her own account of her illness is unsatisfactory and only mentions panic attacks about money. William described it as a 'distressing depression of spirits'⁹ and it is likely that her childlessness and the onset of the menopause were contributing factors. Whatever the causes, she subjected herself to an appalling regime of confinement and frequent bloodletting, but emerged triumphant, and although subjected to far worse stresses in the 1790s, she never had a recurrence.

At the end of 1789 Dr James Moody had died and William had promptly moved to Dublin, once more hoping to succeed to his practice. It was a move he had been considering for some time, and although it was a financial gamble, he had considerable savings and could afford to supplement his professional earnings for several years if necessary. He moved into lodgings in Dame Street, minutes away from Parliament House, where he attended debates, and soon found himself swept into middle-class radical circles. His friendship with Thomas Addis Emmet started through professional contact with Emmet's father, a leading physician, and his literary reputation ensured him a place in a group of men who were committed to reform. Some years previously, he had written to William Bruce, propounding

8 William Drennan to Martha McTier, [1784] (D/591/152).

9 William Drennan to William Bruce, [1789] (D/553/67).

a scheme for a 'brotherhood', dedicated to work for political reform, operating within a quasi-masonic framework, and bound by an oath.¹⁰ In the summer of 1791 he sent a paper to Sam McTier outlining a scheme for such a brotherhood to be set up among the Volunteers, and this was widely circulated. In October, Wolfe Tone visited Belfast; he and Thomas Russell met the Volunteer leaders, who included Sam, and the Society of United Irishmen was set up in Belfast, a similar club being founded in Dublin a few weeks later.

There followed for William a period of intense activity and excitement as he plunged into the work of writing proposals and addresses, advocating complete and immediate emancipation for the Roman Catholics, reforms in parliamentary representation and, eventually, universal male suffrage. After years of isolation in Newry he was in the mainstream of politics, surrounded by radical reformers who were fired, as he was, by the events of the French Revolution. Nevertheless he was not a revolutionary, but believed that reform would be achieved through the means of another Volunteer convention, this time with nation-wide support stimulated by United Irish propaganda.

Martha, who had resumed their correspondence in February 1792, stung into action by criticism of the United Irishmen's oath by William Bruce (a former favourite whom she never forgave), shared William's political convictions and enthusiasm for reform but on reading his *Address to the Volunteers* written in December 1792, she immediately prophesied trouble. The Address called on the 'Citizen-Soldiers' to take up their arms and demand reform, in language which could be construed as seditious. How far William intended to threaten is debatable. It is clear that he did not see the armed Volunteers as any kind of a threat to national security, and he wrote to Sam McTier in 1794 'The fact is that if the paper had had its proper effect, there would have been an armed nation at this day, and peace without a dread of commotion'.¹¹

The government however, alarmed at the combination of militant Catholics and radical Presbyterians, launched a counter-offensive, aimed at both the United Irishmen and the Volunteers. Following the execution of Louis XVI, Britain went to war with France in February 1793, and many of those who had admired the French revolution (including Martha McTier) revised their opinions after the execution of Queen Marie Antoinette later in the year. Moreover, since the Roman Catholic church was persecuted in France, the revolution won far less admiration among the Irish Catholics, and by offering a measure of Catholic emancipation, the government was able to satisfy the demands of the more moderate Catholics. William had believed that government would not be able to withstand a nation-wide demand for reform transmitted by the Volunteers, but after the failure of the last Dungannon convention, undermined by the government's concessions to the Catholics, the Volunteers were no longer a political force. There followed a series of prosecutions and repressive legislation which were greeted with outrage and gathering gloom by both Martha and William, but the latter was for a time distracted from politics – he had fallen in love.

10 William Drennan to William Bruce, 1784-85 (D/553/20,43,45)

11 William Drennan to Sam McTier, 16 February 1794 (D/591/470)

Sarah Swanwick was a young Englishwoman who visited her married sisters in Dublin for six weeks in the summer of 1793. When she returned home William wrote to her, and they became engaged. His feelings for Sarah were, for him, so novel and so delightful that he could not bear to share them, and he baldly informed Martha that he was engaged and did not need a confidant, and gave her only the barest information about his future wife. Martha, thrown off balance and cheated of details to discuss, replied by welcoming his engagement in general terms but disapproving of his short acquaintance with the lady and, to some extent, of her Dublin connections, who included her *bête noire*, Mrs William Bruce. Moreover she was clearly hurt by his reticence and took refuge in sarcasm. Having got off on the wrong foot, neither William nor Martha was able to discuss the matter usefully. At length, knowing that he was not earning enough to support a wife, and believing that no assistance would be forthcoming from either his relations or Sarah's, William released her from their engagement.

Not only was his financial position insecure, as his savings were rapidly consumed, but in 1794, his friend Archibald Hamilton Rowan was imprisoned for distributing the *Address to the Volunteers* and William was aware that it was only a matter of time before he himself would be prosecuted. Hearing that John Pollock, the attorney who had tried to buy William's pen for the government in 1792, was attempting to manufacture evidence against him, Martha wrote to him defending her brother and threatening to make public all the underhand methods he was employing. She found she had crossed swords with a superior swordsman as Pollock replied in a letter which is a masterpiece of elegance and sarcasm.¹² Although aware she was outclassed, Martha knew that she was in the right, and besides she was enjoying herself hugely. She wrote an excellent riposte and Pollock, sensing that he was never going to get the last word, wisely let matters rest; but though diverted by the letters, he continued to put together a case for prosecution. In June 1794, William was put on trial for sedition.

William knew that he had very little chance of acquittal but he faced his ordeal with courage. However, he was tried for publishing the *Address to the Volunteers* rather than writing it, and his counsel, John Philpot Curran, was able to break down the main prosecution witness. Since it could not be proved that he had been responsible for the text as published, the jury rather unwillingly acquitted him, and William subsequently acknowledged that his trial had been fair. Anticipating a less favourable outcome, he had composed an appeal to the jury which sought to show that he was not a Jacobin, attempting to stir up a French-style revolution, but was the intellectual heir, through his father, of a tradition of Presbyterian radicalism.¹³

By 1795 however, it was clear that the opportunity for peaceful constitutional reform had passed. The United Irish Society had been suppressed in 1794, and when it re-formed it was no longer a society which advertised its meetings and

12 John Pollock to Martha McTier, 10 March 1794 (D/591/482A).

13 Drennan's proposed defence is printed in John Francis Larkin (ed.), *The trial of William Drennan* (Dublin, 1991).

published its proceedings, but a revolutionary force. William was not cut out to be a conspirator. He had considered withdrawing from the society long before his trial, but had remained a member because his political ideals remained unchanged and because he feared he would look like a coward and a deserter. He was aware, however, that his radicalism was hurting him professionally – he specialised in obstetrics, and few women wished to employ an accoucheur who was likely to be arrested at any time. He knew that he had been amazingly lucky to escape imprisonment, and that he remained a marked man. The re-organisation of the Society allowed him to withdraw painlessly, being as he put it, ‘civilly shrugged out’, while retaining the status of a martyr in the cause.

Throughout his years of political involvement, William worked closely with Sam and Martha. Through Sam, Martha was informed of the deliberations of the innermost circle of the Belfast United Irishmen, her horizons expanded, she visited Dublin for some weeks in 1793, where she enjoyed William’s celebrity status, and her new house in Belfast became a centre of United Irish activity. One regular visitor was the United Irishman Thomas Russell, whom she came to regard as another brother. As Sam’s expanding business as a notary public frequently swamped him with paperwork, Martha was often deputed to write to William on United Irish affairs. Sam claimed that his election as president was because the Belfast Society was hoping to get William to write their addresses. There was some truth in this, but Sam had considerable status of his own, and a sufficiently forceful personality to control meetings of the strong-minded Belfast patriots. In the event, William was generally too busy to write much for Belfast but would send down a few paragraphs, or even notes, telling Sam or Martha to work it up for themselves. Gradually it becomes clear through her letters, that Martha was sometimes engaged in writing or editing small pieces for publication, and she began to acquire a certain literary reputation, helped probably by the circulation of her letters to John Pollock among some of his associates. She appears never to have published anything in her own name, possibly because it might have embarrassed Sam. In spite of her growing anxiety for William’s safety, the United Irish years were, for Martha, a period of activity and contentment. This came to an end with Sam’s death in 1795 at the age of fifty-seven.

There are indications that Sam’s health had been causing concern for the previous year, but in May 1795 the McTiers set out on a jaunt to Scotland with the Drennans’ cousin Hamilton Young. Young, who had been a successful merchant in New York, had returned to Belfast in 1792, and on finding his own family reduced to one unmarried sister, had indicated that he regarded his Aunt Drennan’s children as the ultimate heirs to his fortune. Unluckily, he was subject to recurring bouts of insanity, and lapsed into one of these before he had brought himself to the point of making a will. Thereafter, Martha and Sam, with a mixture of good nature and self interest, helped his sister to find suitable attendants and occasionally took Young on jaunts around the countryside, when he sometimes became more rational. The fact that they took Young with them to Scotland shows that Sam’s complaints were not

considered life-threatening, but he was suddenly taken acutely ill near Inveraray. Martha managed to convey him one stage nearer reliable medical assistance, but he then became too ill to be moved and they were immured in a rural inn for the week it took him to die, while the summer weather dissolved into lashing rain, and Young, distressed and confused, responded to the crisis by attempting to escape through a window.

Arriving back in Belfast in June with her husband's body, Martha discovered she was in a fresh nightmare. Sam had not made a will; and instead of the life interest in his property which she expected, she found that she was only entitled to income from a third, and that her period of comparative affluence was at an end. Nor was help forthcoming from her closest relatives. William had little savings left, their mother's only suggestion was that Martha should live with herself and Nancy, and Sam's brother Dr John Mattear was more concerned to protect the interests of Margaret McTier, Sam's daughter by his first marriage. Margaret proposed that they should live together, and Martha agreed, having first fought her brother-in-law for her rights in her house, the lease of which was in her name, so that Margaret should be her tenant, rather than that she should be Margaret's. It was an arrangement that worked well enough as Margaret was as good humoured as her father, though rather more stolid. Martha accepted a small annuity from Hamilton Young's sister, and in the following year she was able to augment her income by providing a home for Grace Gordon, an orphaned young woman of good family, to whom she acted as companion and chaperone.

William's inability to help her financially demonstrates his lack of success in his profession in Dublin. In Newry he had specialised as an accoucheur; in Dublin he found that this was regarded as a separate and inferior field of medicine, sometimes undertaken by surgeons, and he experienced great difficulty in building up a general practice. Under-employed professionally, and finding that his acquittal had done little to dispel his notoriety, he became an increasingly isolated and embittered figure. He now confined his literary activities to poetry and the occasional political pamphlet. Both he and Martha were distressed by the worsening political situation as outrages committed by the increasingly active United Irishmen and Roman Catholic Defenders were matched by brutal repression by government troops.

In 1797, William Orr, a young Presbyterian farmer, was tried for administering the oath of the United Irishmen to a soldier. Although some of the evidence appears to have been suspect, and his counsel, John Philpot Curran, did his utmost to secure a reprieve, Orr was hanged at Carrickfergus. This was seen by many as little more than judicial murder, and William wrote 'The Wake of William Orr' which was enormously influential among the United Irishmen, and the last line of which, 'The day is come – arise – arise', reads like a call to rebellion.

Nevertheless, William was well aware that any involvement on his part with the United Irishmen would be suicidal and, as far as he could, he avoided the company and possible confidences of those whom he knew to be their leaders. Martha too

was careful to curb her tongue in public – although she listened hard and retailed everything she knew to William. In their letters they frequently assured each other of their ignorance and lack of information. It must be remembered that those of their letters which they sent by post (others being carried by ‘private hands’) were frequently opened and read by government agents working in the post office, so much so that Martha often added to hers a rude message to the Belfast postmaster, whom she detested. It is in one of these letters, in answer to a hint by William that she was suspected of writing for the United Irishmen’s newspaper, the *Northern Star*, that she denied categorically writing for any newspapers. It is probable, however, that their ignorance was almost as complete as they claimed.

By the spring of 1798, most of William’s friends were in prison and he compared himself to a solitary ninepin left standing when all around him had fallen. He was courageous enough to go to England to give evidence in favour of the United Irishman Arthur O’Connor who was standing trial in Kent; and soon after his return the rebellion broke out, and many of his former associates were arrested and hanged.

Among those arrested in the north was Joe Crombie, son of the Rev. James Crombie, a Presbyterian minister at Belfast, with whose family the McTiers and the Drennans were close friends. Martha wrote on his behalf to General Nugent, and as Crombie escaped, or was allowed to escape, Martha subsequently believed that her intervention had saved his life. The episode however brought her renewed grief. At the end of 1797, Martha had confided to William,

I confess to you that there is one man I would yet connect myself with, nor blush even now to do it, because he loved me thirty years ago, never I believed ceased to do so, cannot even now disguise it. Yet to quiet all your fears for the imprudent, or rather autumnal connection, rest assured he never will ask me, and that this confession of mine never did nor shall be made to a being but yourself.¹⁴

From other hints it is apparent that this man was Rainey Maxwell, a local County Down landowner, who lived near Cabin Hill. Although originally a reformer, and friend of the Volunteers, Maxwell had become increasingly conservative in the 1790s, and in 1798 he wrote to Joe Crombie’s uncle, blaming his revolutionary principles on the family’s intimacy with Sam and Martha, the latter being ‘well-known as a violent republican’, and this letter was by chance read aloud in company. Martha was deeply hurt. She and Maxwell continued as civil acquaintances, but she had lost a special friend whom she had valued.

Martha spent several months with William in Dublin in the summer of 1798, their first lengthy period together since 1793. She became increasingly worried about his melancholy and reserve. He made no secret of his loneliness and wish to marry, writing that he would gladly be a United Irishman in the conjugal sense. Early in 1798 he had had a flirtation with a young widow, but on his broaching the

14 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [1797] (D/591/685A).

subject of marriage, he was informed that he had misinterpreted civility for kindness, and that the widow had no wish to remarry. While Martha was in Dublin that summer, William discussed with her a plan of borrowing money from their mother to buy a house, and although she first pointed out all the drawbacks, she then supported the plan, perhaps hoping that this would be a diversion after the horrors of the rebellion. At the end of the year William bought a house in Marlborough Street, north of the river, which was more convenient than Dame Street for most of his clientele. Having lived in lodgings for fifteen years, he enjoyed the novelty of house-keeping and, for the first time, his letters revel in domestic details. He appears to have believed that Martha would move in with him, but she declined positively to leave Belfast.

In the spring of 1799, Martha discussed at length William's broken engagement to Sarah Swanwick, and explained that if their letters had been less encouraging than he expected this was largely his own fault in refusing to discuss the matter, and that none of them had ever been opposed to the engagement. In his reply William said, quite simply, that he wished to renew the affair, but did not know how to do it. Martha then made guarded enquiries of a cousin of Sarah's who was in Belfast, and plans were discussed for getting Sarah to visit one of her sisters in Dublin. When this proved unworkable, Martha went to Dublin and at her prompting, in early August, William wrote first to Sarah's parents and then to Sarah herself. Finally in September, urged by Martha, he went to Cheshire to see Sarah. At their first meeting they discovered that their feelings for each other were unchanged, and they became immediately engaged.

From his marriage in February 1800, William's life entered a happier phase. Sarah, then aged twenty-nine, came from an English dissenting family of liberal views, and was intelligent and well educated, having previously been a teacher at a boarding school run by her parents. Calm and good tempered, she was socially more adept than William; her only flaw seems to have been that she had no experience in housekeeping, but even the most economical housekeeper would have found it impossible to make William's income meet the demands of married life. He had gradually built up his practice among a circle of mainly Presbyterian families with Ulster connections, but had never succeeded in earning more than an average of £200 per annum, which was less than he had earned in Newry. He attributed his small practice to his political notoriety but the truth was rather that although a good doctor, with advanced views on hygiene and the prevention of infection, he lacked the easy social manner necessary for success. Disliking what he called the 'servility' of his profession, he found it difficult to ingratiate himself with potential clients.

Immediately after their marriage, he and Sarah were obliged to entertain most of their circle to repay ten years of hospitality while he was a bachelor, but even after this initial phase was over, the Drennans found it impossible to live within their income, and their expenses rose constantly due to the rapid increase in their family. In the first nine years of marriage they produced eight children, and even before the

birth of the first they were in debt. Martha responded as well as she could, reassuring Sarah, whom she regarded with warm approval, that no-one expected her to perform miracles on £200 a year, and although unable to help them financially herself, she encouraged her mother to lend them money from the modest sum which William would eventually inherit, and managed to find them a succession of rich parlour boarders. She recognised however that the only long-term solution to their problem was that the Drennans should inherit their cousin Hamilton Young's fortune.

Hamilton Young had died in 1799, without recovering his wits. In addition to the fortune which he had made in America, he had owned three quarters of a property called Cottown, near Donaghadee in County Down, the remaining quarter being owned by Mrs Ann Drennan, and being her main source of income. Cottown had been purchased in 1672 by John Hamilton, a Belfast merchant, and descended to his daughter Martha Lennox who was Ann Drennan's mother. Ann Drennan's elder sister Elizabeth married Alexander Young in 1726 and received half of the property as her dowry, the other half being intended for Ann. Unfortunately, their mother died without making a settlement on Ann, who was then eleven, and because she was intestate the remaining part of her property was by law divided equally between her daughters, leaving Elizabeth with three quarters of Cottown and Ann with only one quarter. As Elizabeth and her merchant husband did not feel morally obliged to restore Ann's dowry to her, relations between the sisters became cool, and the two families had little to do with each other. It says much for Mrs Drennan's character that her children were not brought up on a recital of her wrongs, and it took Martha some time to piece the story together.

After Hamilton Young's death, intestate, his only surviving sister Martha (also named for her grandmother Martha Lennox) inherited the estate, after fighting a claim by some distant cousins who had a will of sorts which Young had made in America during a manic phase in the 1770s. Martha Young was a benign and sensible woman; coming from a merchant background she had a good grasp of business matters, but years of living with her mother (a less pleasant version of Mrs Drennan), and latterly with her insane brother, had made her depressed, nervous and indecisive. On inheriting her brother's fortune she made presents of money to many of her relatives, including William Drennan, and she purchased the lease of Martha and Sam's old home, Cabin Hill, and moved there with another cousin in hopes of inducing Martha to join them. Martha was unwilling to give up her independence in Belfast, but was equally unwilling to offend her cousin, who spoke frequently of making William her heir, but resisted all hints that she should make her will. Consequently Martha divided her time between Cabin Hill and Belfast, where her mother, now in her mid-eighties, was in declining health. In 1803, her rather unsatisfactory situation was revolutionised by the arrival of William's eldest son Tom, a child of two, on a visit to Belfast.

Tom Drennan was a confident, affectionate and sweet natured child who immediately won the hearts of his grandmother and aunts. Not only they but their entire

circle adored him, and he soon led a complicated social life as different families begged to be allowed to entertain him. Martha took him out to Cabin Hill to enjoy fresh air and strawberries and inevitably his elderly cousins Martha Young and Ann Jane Bigger joined the ranks of his admirers. The visit was intended to be for the summer only and William had booked his seat in the coach to collect him, when rebellion, led by Robert Emmet and Thomas Russell, suddenly broke out. William had over the years produced a number of political pamphlets on reform topics, and had written a protest against the union between England and Ireland in 1800. He was still regarded with suspicion by the Dublin government and did not wish to call attention to himself by choosing to travel to the north in the period of disturbance. Although the rebellion was swiftly suppressed, the season was then so far advanced that it was agreed that it would be better for Tom to remain in Belfast for the winter.

For Martha, Tom's presence was a welcome diversion from her sorrow at the execution of Thomas Russell. She had always been fond of Russell, a man of considerable charm, and had sympathised with his hopeless passion for Bess Goddard, the daughter of one of her oldest friends. In 1794, she had attempted to get a pension for him from the Catholic leaders, and she had written to him in prison at Fort George. In Dublin too, William grieved over the fate of Robert Emmet, the brother of his friend Thomas Addis Emmet, who had emigrated to America, and whose sister had married his friend, the barrister Robert Holmes. Neither Martha nor William however had the least sympathy with the rebellion; they were as dedicated as ever to the cause of reform and the reversal of the union, but only if it could be achieved by constitutional means.

In the following summer, when Tom might have returned to his parents, Sarah was pregnant with her fourth child, his next brother William was ill, a daughter had died, and Drennan was worried over money and pre-occupied with his own bad health. Having had a weak chest since boyhood, he now suffered from endless colds and was haunted by a fear that he might be consumptive. Both his mother and Miss Young had become devoted to Tom, and resisted any idea that he should leave. Moreover William recognised that Martha's attendance on Miss Young, who was becoming increasingly deaf and feeble, was almost entirely for his own benefit, and that without Tom it might be unbearable. Without any outright decision being taken, Tom, who was full of health and spirits in the north, was allowed to remain there and it was not until April 1805 that Martha took the child back to Dublin. By this time she had become a mother to Tom, sensible, practical and unfussy, enjoying his company and writing of his exploits with delight, and William assured her

... if Thomas's return will in any degree be necessary to your happiness in your present situation we shall assent to his return, and make the sacrifice great as it is, to you, who have taken all opportunities to add to our comfort and happiness since we have been married.¹⁵

15 William Drennan to Martha McTier, 25 February 1805 (D/591/1160).

Martha stayed in Dublin for almost three months while Sarah visited her family in England. She then returned to Belfast taking little William with her. Tom was desolate. He missed Martha, he missed the freedom of Cabin Hill, his parents were almost strangers to him, and his younger brother, who might perhaps have reconciled him to life in Dublin, had taken his place in Belfast. By the autumn, his parents accepted the fact that he was not going to settle, and William brought him back to Belfast.

Once there, William realised that his mother, who would be Miss Young's next heir if she died intestate, was sinking, and that Miss Young herself was becoming increasingly crippled by rheumatism and would be soon unable to sign her will. On his return he wrote Martha a careful letter pointing out all the disagreeable circumstances that would arise if Miss Young died intestate and Martha, as was intended, read it to Miss Young, who finally consented to make her will. Mrs Drennan died in 1806, leaving William her share of Cottown. In fact, as Martha had pointed out to William, there seems to have been no reason why he should not have inherited it at his father's death, as it was not secured to his mother's use by any marriage settlement. It seems that the combination of William's youth when his father died, and his mother's forceful personality, had allowed her to resume possession of her dowry without being challenged. Her income from land amounted to £120 per annum, and when Martha Young died in May 1807, William inherited the other three quarters of Cottown and was henceforward financially independent. Martha inherited Miss Young's lease of Cabin Hill.

Having for years insisted that he disliked Belfast and that nothing would induce him to settle there, William, perhaps surprisingly, moved there within a few months of Miss Young's death. In fact there were a number of excellent reasons for his decision. Post-union Dublin no longer had the excitement and style of the 1790s; his circle of friends and patients was contracting; one of Sarah's sisters had moved to England and they were on bad terms with the other; his stay in Belfast settling Miss Young's affairs immediately after her death had been very sociable, with dinners with old friends and acquaintances; and he wished to see more of Martha and Nancy, and to reunite Tom with his brothers.

Having moved back to Belfast he lived an enjoyable life, in moderate affluence. He published his poetry and other writings, started a literary magazine and was one of the founders of the Belfast Academical Institution. In 1812, tragedy struck, and Tom died shortly before his eleventh birthday. His other four surviving children lived to old age and had distinguished careers. William himself died in 1820, Nancy in 1825, and Martha in 1837 at the age of 95.

The correspondence of Martha and William lasted for over forty years. At times it was, for each of them, a lifeline. In one of his earliest letters to Sarah, William described Martha as 'my oldest, my once dearest, my ever to be respected correspondent, my best adviser in every difficulty, in every real or supposed misfortune my best

consoler, and first friend'.¹⁶ Throughout his life he could count on Martha to look at all his problems squarely, to identify every possible solution, to discuss them all thoroughly, and to advise him at every turn. As part of the package however, he also had to accept a fair amount of unsolicited advice because Martha appears never to have believed that her younger brother was capable of acting correctly without prompting, and in fairness it must be pointed out that William occasionally acted quite crassly.¹⁷ Sometimes he suggested that it was about time that Martha ceased handing out advice to a man in his forties, but she was unstoppable. Although her letters were generally dedicated to 'soothing, raising, praising and pleasing', when she thought that William was indulging in too much self pity they could be as bracing as a bucket of cold water:

I hate croakers, and above all affected ones, and if the picture you draw of your own mind be just, you have had better fortune than you deserve. You panted for fame, you got it – you were read, praised, admired, prosecuted, cleared, and abused, what would you have more? Could you suppose that in this career you would not make enemies ...?¹⁸

She ended this letter 'By this time possibly you feel angry, but I have not given advice, have no news, and cannot always write soothing letters and never get one.' Certainly William seldom reciprocated by discussing Martha's problems, in fact he showed a marked lack of interest in her battles with her brother-in-law and her tenants, but his letters were a lifeline to her because they entertained and stimulated her. He discussed politics and literature with her as an intellectual equal and brought her into contact with the wider world in a way that none of her Belfast circle could do.

Although Martha had a wide circle of acquaintances, she disliked many of them, and she had few close friends. She was very attached to her sister Nancy and respected her judgment, asking her advice and even following it occasionally, but Nancy was both reclusive and eccentric, and at no stage in her life could she have been described as companionable. Through Martha's childlessness and her literary interests, a gulf gradually opened between her and her married contemporaries. She remained a close friend of Eliza Goddard, Rainey Maxwell's cousin, until her death in 1786, but came actually to dislike the sisters Elizabeth Crombie and Mary McCormick, who had been her friends in the 1770s and who were both married to Presbyterian ministers, saying of the former, 'she is become a mere blathering sneaking gossip and to me tiresome in the highest degree',¹⁹ and of the latter, 'her mind is soured, and narrowed by what she terms religion out of all rationality, and is a complete slave to ... fusty doctrines in religion and politics.'²⁰

Her closest friends were single women: Fanny Mussenden and her sisters were well read and intelligent, and Jenny Greg, who was suspected, probably with good

16 William Drennan to Sarah Swanwick, 26 September 1793 (PRONI, T/2884/4).

17 See for example D/591/572.

18 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [1795] (D/591/591).

19 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 6 June [1799] (D/591/779)

20 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 29 July [1800] (D/591/861).

reason, of being a United Irishwoman, was sophisticated and sharp-witted. But these were women of means who spent most of their time in Dublin or Bath, and Martha had few friends in Belfast. As long as Sam was alive her life was stimulating and rewarding, but after his death she lost her place in the world of men and, until Tom's arrival in Belfast, much of the interest went out of her life.

Over the years, she and William had quarrels; she was too quick to believe the worst of him, and her letters could be wounding. On the whole William bore up well under her bracing criticism and strongly worded advice, but occasionally, goaded beyond endurance, he would deliver the ultimate put-down by telling her that she was beginning to sound just like their mother. Both could appear quite unlikeable. At his worst, William was morose, sentimental, bigoted, self-centred and self-pitying; but he was also affectionate, honest and courageous. Martha could be censorious, intrusive, and quite gratuitously and outrageously rude, but she was brave, resilient, resourceful and loving. She was also loveable: when she wrote to William on the eve of his probable conviction for sedition, she managed to end on a buoyant note saying 'A periodical paper from Newgate would be a new thing, and open to all subjects and well executed, would be interesting. I am not advising;²¹ and on hearing from Sam that William had been acquitted, she related how she had rushed around the town all evening telling their friends, then admitted that, feeling too excited to sleep, she had sent out for two pennyworth of porter and got 'completely stupefied'.²²

For over forty years the brother and sister discussed, advised, consoled, amused, entertained, and bickered. The measure of the importance of this correspondence to both of them is that it has survived virtually intact.

Jean Agnew

21 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 28 June 1794 (D/591/510).

22 Martha McTier to Sam McTier, 5 July 1794 (D/591/513).

MARTHA MCTIER AND WILLIAM DRENNAN:
A 'DOMESTIC' HISTORY*

The richness and variety evident in the correspondence of William Drennan and Martha McTier offers the historian almost limitless possibilities. Through these letters William and Martha provide us with direct accounts of their life experiences, their domestic, social and political preoccupations. It is difficult in a short introduction to do justice to the life that is evident in this correspondence. Many historians will use these letters as a way of illuminating the politics of the last decades of the eighteenth and the first decades of the nineteenth centuries. This is an immensely significant factor in their historical importance. The correspondence provides insights into the impact of the American and French revolutions on political thought. It illuminates the rise of Irish radicalism, opens a window on both the constitutional and revolutionary ideas that were being developed in the period, highlights the politics of repression and disaffection and the enduring survival of liberalism in Irish political thought. However, in this introduction I want to make some attempt to show how the letters might be used to deepen our understanding of Irish society generally in this period. We can use these letters to explore the world of domesticity, to investigate the intimacy of marriage and personal relationships, to observe the impact and importance of reading on a woman's life, to witness the development of political views. We can investigate attitudes to servants, to health, to the profession of medicine. We can assess contemporary views on childbirth and children. Both Martha and William inhabited particular worlds defined by their gender. Martha lived her life as a daughter, sister, friend, wife, sister-in-law, adoring aunt and widow. William lived as a son, brother, professional man, friend, brother-in-law, radical writer, husband and father. The limitations placed on Martha's life experiences resulted from her sex. She lacked access to a sustained, formal education, and hence the privilege of a profession and influence in the public world of politics. But her life was no less full or fulfilling for those limitations.

Martha's and William's letters were a forum for the exchange of political ideas, family news, gossip, advice, information and emotions. The domestic world of home and family relationships formed the bedrock on which both Martha and William faced the world. The boundaries between the public and private worlds were not as marked in the eighteenth century as they were to become in the nineteenth century. The 'private' world of domesticity was still under construction. The concept of domesticity has come to be defined in terms of managing households and raising children, the 'domestic space' being the arena of such activity. In Martha's and William's world domestic space was filled with servants, children and visitors, and it was a space that had to be managed by men and women. Both Martha and William, singly and when married, were profoundly part of the world

* I would like to thank Dr Jean Agnew, Dr Virginia Crossman and Dr Mary O'Dowd for their comments on an earlier draft of this introduction.

of domesticity. They managed servants and household budgets, ordered furniture, and entertained. They created both a public and private space in their dwellings. The opportunity to create a personal domestic space came most often to women through marriage. It is difficult for historians of this period to find information that sheds light on the intimacies of marriage. The marriages of Sam and Martha, and William and Sarah, appear to have been emotionally, intellectually and physically satisfying. Sam's longing to be with Martha is evident in a teasing phrase from a letter he wrote to her from Newry in 1783. Martha was visiting Bristol at the time. Sam noted 'After this [letter] you must expect only half a sheet from me, I wish we were this moment under a whole one'.¹

In congratulating William on his engagement in 1793 Sam wrote of the value of a good marriage:

The comfort of having in a wife a second self to share in every pleasure and every pain is very great and much more than balances any rubs that occur in the matrimonial state, and were I to advise any bachelor, it should be to marry as soon as he could a woman whose mind he admired even more than her person.²

William was anxious to secure a wife. While living in Newry he believed that an income of £250 a year and a 'pleasurable wife or even companion' and a seat in parliament were his heart's desires.³ However, Martha disapproved of his apparent frivolity and encouraged William to seek a wife for her personal qualities rather than her fortune, or the immediate gratification of his desires.

For women and men, love, companionship or attraction were not always the motivations for marriage. Marriages of all types are referred to throughout the correspondence. Writing to William in December 1777, Martha told of a recent marriage in Belfast which 'caused much surprise and diversion – a young lady who has lived all her life in Belfast and of one of the best families in it, but without fortune, to an old brute of the same place, rich you may believe and above eighty, a town house, country house and carriage, and a number of angry disappointed relations'.⁴ The best kind of wife to have, as evidenced in the correspondence, was a 'sensible' one. This implied a wife who would be 'prudent' in her expenses, and who would support the endeavours of her husband, and care for him and their children.⁵

There were relationships that brought extreme sorrow in the death of a spouse. William related the story of Dr King who was 'an ingenious, literary, melancholy man who is still talking of his wife – his wife – though she has been dead these two

1 Sam McTier to Martha McTier, 20 June [17]83 (D/591/86); all Drennan-McTier letters quoted in this introduction have been given their PRONI reference number in the series D/591; these are listed at the end of volume 3, with their page number within these volumes.

2 Quoted in William Drennan to Sarah Swanwick, 10 October 1793 (PRONI, T/2884/5).

3 William Drennan to Martha McTier, [1785] (D/591/125).

4 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 8 December 1777 (D/591/16).

5 Martha wrote to William in 1792 about 'our stubborn friend Bruce [who] is a hen-pecked ninny and called so to his face by an ignorant unfeeling shrew of a wife who is hurting him in his Academy and the opinion of the world, poor fellow'. [1792] (D/591/321C).

years. Every object associates her to it in his imagination, and his mind is tinged in so deep a dye that time will have much ado to get it out, except by dipping it in the matrimonial colour a second time'.⁶ There were men and women who fought, who were violent to each other, vindictive in life and even in death. Daniel Marsden, for instance, died immensely rich but, according to Martha, had 'fixed a blot on his wife, not undeservedly, by leaving her not a penny beyond her settlement of a hundred a year and £2000 a piece to each of her daughters ...'.⁷ There was also the case of a Mrs Atkinson who had run away to marry a doctor but was 'taken mad' on her wedding night.⁸ The adulterous Mrs Fitzgerald had been confined by her husband to a private asylum for the insane, not because she was mad but so that he could keep her out of sight.⁹ There were affairs, divorce and even murder. Martha was to write to William informing him that an acquaintance had murdered his wife, for which she ironically observed, 'there is never any punishment in Belfast'.¹⁰ There was also of course a deal of fortune hunting, and money often made up for what appeared to be physical or even intellectual deficiencies. Lennox Bigger's wife was considered by Martha a 'fright, ugly and vulgar', and older than her husband. However she believed that 'money perhaps makes up for this'.¹¹ One would imagine that few fortune hunters went to the lengths of Bartholomew Macnaghten, whom Martha declared had 'affected being a fool for years, afterwards feigned fits to kill his first wife by whom he got a pretty fortune. He really succeeded in this, got a second or rather I believe a third with whom he also got some fortune, and had no more fits. He was a gambler, a man of sense and a knave'.¹²

That sympathy was given to a hard done by wife is obvious from other cases observed by Martha. Her caustic wit is evident in her portrayal of the widowed Mrs Hyde, whom Martha acknowledged as having been badly treated by her husband. Mrs Hyde was clearly making the most of any sympathy offered.

Mrs Hyde also adopts the same form since her return (not home), for in such a country she will only stay to dispose of her house in town and Cabin Hill, weep in the meeting house, and be affected at the first meeting of each acquaintance who knew she was married to a disgusting tyrant, that to the very last acted as such and left her as little as he could, though certainly in the character of a wife she was for above thirty years perfection. By her father and sister chiefly she has £800 a year, and freedom from a brute, so that I think at a convenient time, her spirits will recover.¹³

Bad marriages were as common an occurrence as good marriages. Financial considerations were a major priority for many individuals who sought to marry, particularly

6 William Drennan to Martha McTier, [1785] (D/591/171).

7 Martha McTier to Sam McTier, 29 April 1793 (D/591/418).

8 William Drennan to Martha McTier, 1785 (D/591/148).

9 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [1789] (D/591/265).

10 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [1783] (D/591/69).

11 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 1794 (D/591/527). See also, A.P.W. Malcolmson, *The pursuit of an heiress: aristocratic marriage in Ireland, 1750-1820* (Antrim, 1982).

12 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [1798] (D/591/705).

13 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [1799] (D/591/861).

for women, who required some form of financial security. It was money that decided independence, and independent choice, but it did not guarantee happiness.

The quality of domestic life was primarily dependent on one's spouse but household servants also played a significant role within the domestic sphere and influenced the domestic environment. We know little about the relationships that existed between employers and their servants in eighteenth century Ireland.¹⁴ A variety of servants make their appearance in this correspondence. There were servants who were engaged to work in the home and those who attended to individuals, such as William. There were also children's maids and wetnurses. Overall, servants are generally represented as unreliable. William had considerable difficulty acquiring a reliable and honest manservant: not only were they inclined to drink, but a number left him, at times taking some of his property with them. These were common complaints about servants.¹⁵ Writing to Martha in 1787 William noted 'I have not yet gotten a servant, and shall not fix until I get a good one I believe it will be hard to find one even in Belfast'.¹⁶ The mobility of servants is quite clear in these letters. We find servants from Belfast, for example, willing to travel to work with a master or mistress in Dublin. Martha sought to procure a suitable nursemaid from Belfast for William and Sarah's children who resided in Dublin. William and Sarah had asked Martha to be on the lookout for such a nursemaid. Martha was to inform the pair in 1801 that 'I have not been prevented inquiring about a fit person with whom to entrust your expected blessing. The woman I thought of has many material recommendations but not all. ... Yours, all alive to your interest, suggested getting Mrs B[att's] servant, who appeared to my mother agreeable. I shall inquire'.¹⁷

Letters could play an important function in the hiring of servants. Acquiring servants also meant securing recommendations. These provided an insight into the 'character' of the individual involved; they often outlined the nature and extent of their work, and also in certain cases reasons for dismissal. A request for a recommendation involved an inherent trust in the former employer and also presumed honesty on the part of that employer. In 1801 Martha informed Sarah of her efforts to secure testimonials for a servant. Sobriety and honesty were the features most often required of servants. The following reference was provided for a proposed nursemaid:

Elizabeth Misscomel¹⁸ lived with me as children's maid for one year and a half, which time she behaved herself soberly and honestly. She is very well tempered, and can work and wash very well. She is now discharged my service having no occasion for one in her place.

The nursemaid alluded to above had also been in the employment of Mr and Mrs Rainey of Greenville. In attempting to find out all she could of the young woman

14 See Marie-Louise Legg (ed.), *The Synge letters: bishop Edward Synge to his daughter Alicia, Roscommon to Dublin, 1746-1752* (Dublin, 1996), for a contemporary account of dealings with servants.

15 For attitudes towards servants in England at this time see, Amanda Vickery, *The gentleman's daughter: women's lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998), *passim*.

16 William Drennan to Martha McTier, 1787 (D/591/210).

17 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 1801 (D/591/895).

18 A variant spelling of Miscambell.

Martha requested a reference from them. The story told by Mr Rainey did not augur well. Rainey had informed Martha that he had discovered a young man and three of his female servants drinking punch. He had thrown the man out of the house but later discovered that he was a brother to Elizabeth, or Betty, his servant.

Mrs Rainey also provided Martha with a reference for Betty and informed her that the woman had been in her employment for only two months and hence she could 'not be a very good judge of her character', though she found her 'very cleanly and I have heard, and believe, she is good tempered, but whether steady enough to undertake the care of a young child I do not know. Having introduced her brother into the house for nearly two days nights in being found sitting in the garret with liquor before them was the cause of my parting with her. As far as I know of her, I think if I wanted a person to take care of a child of a year old, I would hire her'. Further references were sought and these also proved forthright:

I am really afraid to recommend her for the place you mention. It requires a person of experience and steadiness much more than a wet nurse and here she had not the charge of an infant, so that I cannot be any judge of her capability in that way, and you may tell her that I think for her own sake she had better remain in her present station or attend children more grown up.¹⁹

Martha provided all of this information for Sarah and William and requested them to make a decision. It seems that William and Sarah took on Betty, but she proved to be a difficult servant. She also had a bad effect on another servant in the household, Eliza. Eliza was a former servant of Martha's whom she had sent to Dublin to get her away from her mother's bad influence. Sarah wrote and told Martha of her trials with Betty and Martha responded by expressing little surprise at her behaviour. Martha acknowledged that she had disliked Betty's manner and appearance in Belfast. She declared that that while in Belfast Betty

tried to appear the fine lady, and carried it rather far, when she allowed her dear Tom to be carried to the playhouse by a dirty drunken trollop, who I never allowed to take him out, at the playhouse to let him sit on this girl's lap while she sat conversing with some man, and refusing to take home the child when he was frightened and cried for it, and contrary to my sister's express orders, and even since I came here Miss Y[oung] says these two women were in drink wherever they got it.²⁰

Betty was clearly not to be trusted. Martha finished her letter to Sarah by suggesting that 'a married woman will not be tempted to transgress in the same ways'.

Eliza, the other female servant in the household, was later to inform Martha that Sarah was 'not so sweet as she thought' and that she preferred her master to her mistress, a potential cause of disharmony in any household. Eliza wished to go

19 Martha McTier to Sarah Drennan, 31 January 1801 postmark (D/591/899).

20 Martha McTier to Sarah Drennan, 20 September 1804 postmark (D/591/1130).

'vagabondizing' but Martha considered her future perilous. She regretted sending Eliza to Dublin and hoped that Sarah had acquired a better servant who would 'prize [her place] more justly'.²¹ Eliza's end appears not to have been as unfortunate as had been predicted. While she may have taken to 'vagabondizing' William was to inform Martha in 1804 that Eliza had married a sailor at Whitehaven who was the father of three or four children.²²

Not all servants were unsatisfactory, and when in Dublin William recorded his pleasure at the success of the servants he had acquired. The characteristics of a successful servant were always sobriety and industriousness. It is evident from William's comments that male servants also looked after children, an occupation not generally associated with them.

We continue to like all our servants, and our manservant is a very sober, regular, and civil man, ready to oblige all in the house, and a good nurse when Betty is washing.²³

Servants could also bring considerable shame to a household. Writing to William in 1804 Martha recounted the story of the calamity that had befallen Major Wallace's family. Wallace's fifteen-year old daughter had become pregnant by a servant of the household. Wallace himself had a bad reputation and was believed to have seduced his own wife before their marriage. Martha believed Wallace had to take much of the blame for what had happened to his daughter. She noted that

The affair has been as public as possible, the boy ran off, all the other girls dispersed, the unhappy father left with the fallen one alone — locked up and just at her time. He has much to reproach himself with, for not taking the advice of friends who proposed sending the two youngest to school and having a proper female with the elder. Instead of which he kept them in the country where they were frequently for a fortnight without him and with common servants, and when he was at home exhibited them at improper hours to officers etc., when he and his company were drunk. That he should not have been more fearful is very odd. I am told he means to send the girl to an English asylum, but what he will do with the rest God knows, for even a set of ridiculous females objected to two of them going to the Fergusons. Here however the two youngest were fixed before the affair was public. They are all dashy bold girls ...²⁴

While servants could cause disruption and upheaval in households, the serenity of the domestic space often brought deep satisfaction to Martha and William. Preparing for a visit from William, which did not occur because of the outbreak of the 1803 rising, Martha's pleasure in domesticity is evident:

21 Martha McTier to Sarah Drennan, 31 October [1800] (D/591/1013).

22 William Drennan to Martha McTier, 12 April 1804 (D/591/1097).

23 William Drennan to Mrs Ann Drennan, 26 October 1801 (D/591/945).

24 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 5 February 1805 postmark (D/591/1156).

My rose beds were trimmed, and flower pots dressed, and (if possible) it should have been without green, for even the vulgarest of flowers (the orange lily) does not now raise such disagreeable ideas. My mother had on her best cap, the chicken pie was baked, and the herrings potted, when we were all disappointed, though not vexed, by your much wiser determination not to leave home at present, which was generally here thought odd and Miss Y[oung] appeared so uneasy that I was really relieved by your not coming.²⁵

Similar pleasure is evident in William's efforts to furnish his new dwelling in Dublin in 1799. In a letter to his mother he details his expenditure on furniture and prides himself on how he manages his new home.²⁶

Martha's desire for personal autonomy after the death of Sam is seen in her worry over finance and in her need to live independently from other members of her family. Sam's failure to make a will left Martha in a vulnerable financial position. Like many women of her class, and even of those above it, Martha's independence was precarious as long as her income was not secure. However, once she was financially stable she engaged in those social and philanthropic pursuits typical of a woman of her period. She was a guest at balls and parties. She attended the theatre, travelled and visited the homes of others. Her one great pleasure, like many women of the period, seems to have been cards. She reprimanded William for assuming she was reckless at cards:

Will says I would be hurt to hear it said I played more cards and at a higher rate than suited my circumstances. ... The story is like most others, partly true, partly false. I play cards not more frequently than all others. I have not now the resources I once had. My husband, my brother, my fields, my eyes, my every male friend are gone. Cards seek me, I pursue them not and while I stuck to sixpenny whist I was night after night pushed into a corner from which there was no escape, with a particular set of silly scolding virulent chiming old women. I determined to escape this bondage. I play casino unless I get to a gentleman's set where I play shillings and half crown on the rubber. It interests me. I am politely treated, not stunned with talk, play as well as any of them, and when I lose too much will quit it.²⁷

Martha also undertook some charity work. By the late eighteenth century women had begun to play a very active role in charitable enterprises.²⁸ Such work was most often directed at the needs of poor women and children and Martha became involved in the managing committee of a charity for lying-in women. The Humane Female Society for the Relief of Lying-in Women first petitioned for rooms to be granted them at the Belfast poor house. They were unsuccessful despite the fact that

25 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 2 August 1803 postmark (D/591/1047).

26 William Drennan to Mrs Drennan, 3 January [17]99 (D/591/740).

27 Martha McTier to Sarah Drennan, 19 November 1800 (D/591/885).

28 See Rosemary Raughter, 'Women's philanthropy in eighteenth-century Dublin: the female orphan house and the house of refuge', in Thomas Bardett (ed.), *History and environment* (Dublin, 1998), pp 82-93.

Sam McTier and his brother Dr Mattear, were on the poor house committee. The committee then rented a house in Donegall Street with room for six lying-in women and a hospital was eventually built in 1830.²⁹ A number of titled women acted as patrons to the charity and at least one, Lady Harriet Skeffington, sat on the committee. One of the most important initial steps that had to be taken by any charity was to secure the backing of influential individuals, in this case ladies, in the town. This would guarantee the respectability of the charity and also secure subscriptions and funding. To this end Martha asked William to draw up a petition and also to advise them on their project. William was not entirely enthusiastic and generally opposed 'all hospital institutions', and he believed that lying-in establishments allowed for the spread of infections.³⁰ He was not above promoting his own profession and observed that the money might be better spent on 'a fund dedicated for feeing professional attendance on the poor at their own houses and dispensing relief where it is really wanting'.³¹ William also offered some practical advice and suggested that the hospital be kept clean and as hygienic as possible.

Martha resigned from her role as secretary to the charity in December 1794. Her letter to William, describing her last meeting reveals with great wit the politics and personal animosities that had developed amongst the committee members. 'Her ladyship', she wrote referring to Lady Harriet Skeffington, 'met her faithful commons with a most elegant, affecting, and sensible speech from the chair containing a little history of our society, the difficulties it had to encounter, the ardour of its active members, thanks to all ...'.³² Two major issues remained unresolved by the committee, one was whether or not to allow women of 'lost reputation' to benefit from the charity, a problem faced by all charities that dealt with poorer women. The second issue was the 'envy of those midwives not employed', by the committee. This latter problem was expected to be resolved eventually by employing in turn, only those midwives recommended by a physician. The issue of allowing unmarried women to join the committee of the charity was a serious point of division amongst the committee. Those who supported their cause were, Martha noted, deemed 'democrats'. The political language of the period had found its way into the charity's committee room.

It is clear from the correspondence that medical men, such as William, who worked as obstetricians, were routinely present at births in the better-off families in both rural and urban areas. In 1793 Sam had asked William why he had chosen this branch of medicine to work in and he responded that he believed it was the only way he could ensure that he would make a living from medicine. William also observed that it was an impossible job for any man to like.³³

The domestic setting could offer comfort and safety and in Martha's case independence; it also provided the opportunity for reading. Reading was a particularly

29 R. W. M. Strain, *Belfast and its Charitable Society* (Oxford, 1965), pp 163-5.

30 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 24 December 1793 (D/591/458).

31 William Drennan to Martha McTier, 28 December [17]93 (D/591/459).

32 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 28 December 1794 (D/591/535).

33 William Drennan to Sam McTier, 1 September [17]93 (D/591/439).

important part of Martha and William's lives. Their letters provided them with a means of exchanging literary ideas, comment and criticism. While Martha's education might have been limited and informal there is no doubt that she was a learned woman. Reading formed the intellectual linchpin of Martha's communications with William. Her reading was wide ranging and included religious literature, history, biography, and travel books. She read novels, conduct books, poetry and political tracts, as well as radical newspapers and pamphlets. She could also read a little Latin and read many classical texts in translation. Her reading served a number of functions. It fed her intellectual needs, allowed her to develop and explore political ideas, and to share her thoughts with William. Martha also liked intellectual company. In 1784 she complained to William about her social life which she was finding tedious because it consisted of an

eternal round of cards, the same game, the same company, the same prattle without either fancy or inclination for anything new – I once thought our women were better than common but I recant, any of them that were so are either gone or carried away by the little fashion of the little place, where you may be for months in what is called our best company without hearing a book named, an opinion stated, or a sentiment introduced, which could give rise to a conversation interesting to anyone above a chambermaid.³⁴

Through their letters Martha and William explored the world of literature. They expounded their ideas and discussed the characters that filled the pages of their reading. They recommended books to each other, and exchanged volumes and opinions about what they read. Martha's reading was similar in range and scope to that of William. When he seemed in a particularly sentimental mood she recommended the French poet Prosper Jolyot de Cr billon, and the novel *La Princesse de Cl ves*, by the French author by Marie-Madeleine, Comtesse de La Fayette, first published in 1678.³⁵ In 1786 William and Martha discussed their reading of the novel, *Caroline of Lichfield*, by a Swiss author. William claimed it provided an 'exact delineation of a pure female mind'.³⁶ Martha loved the novel and believed it was the only one she knew which could be put into the hands of a young girl. She declared that neither the work of Henry Fielding nor Samuel Richardson was delicate enough for a young mind being as they were 'all intrigue' and full of rakes.³⁷ Reading was also an activity that could engage all members of the family. Books, like letters, were often read aloud. Martha complained in 1804 that all the books selected for reading aloud had to be completed, often to her annoyance. Her comment on this tradition also reveals her dubious opinion of the novel *Belmont Castle*, co-written by Wolfe Tone:

Sarah says we have been reading some good novels. I am sure it would be a grateful prescription here, where I am determined no uncharactered one shall

34 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 1784 (D/591/110).

35 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 1784 (D/591/126).

36 William Drennan to Martha McTier, 1786 (D/591/159); this novel was first published in 1786.

37 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 1786 (D/591/160).

ever again enter – for once begun, let it be even the very vilest of trash, Miss Young will have it finished, or it is matter of serious complaint. The last was one called *Margaret of Stafford* with Madame De Stael's name to it, which, with anecdotes of the revolution tempted me to bring out – Alas! five volumes. It beggars all description and I sometimes thought it might have been in imitation of *Belmont Castle*. One might wander over such nonsense to themselves, but to read them out and throughout is a task not to be endured – and to a deaf woman.³⁸

Thomas James Mathias published the *Pursuits of literature* in 1794 and in it he satirised many contemporary radical authors. William had suggested to Martha, much to her indignation, that she would not understand this work. Her reflections on this book reveal much about her attitude to revolution. She consistently opposed violence and believed that the practice of virtue without seeking public acclaim was a good means of developing the character of future leaders.

You set me against reading the *Pursuits of literature* when I was last in Dublin, saying I would not understand it, and this opinion of yours I quoted to the Bishop and others as my excuse. I am ashamed of having done so. There is not a note there I do not apprehend at the very first reading if it is in English – few will do so in the page of your late writings. What is more, I admire and esteem the author, as a wise sincere man, disinterestedly warm in the cause of religion, virtue and public happiness. Of his learning, etc., I am not a judge. He has been abused I believe as an aristocrat, but we have experienced much truth in his predictions, and though he could not shake my principles, he has confirmed me in much I began to suspect, the result of which is that there is not a sufficient stock of virtue to set up on any new firm, and that there is no country less fitted for it at present. Surely if all religion and order must be subverted for an experiment of what can only be a doubtful improvement at a bloody cost, it would be a wise moderation to hope from time and circumstances rather than wrest the occasion, and for every real patriot to practise for a time those virtuous independent principles in a private station which, harder to practise as they daily occur without attending fame, would educate them for more brilliant efforts and render them deserving and fit to be trusted with Liberty.³⁹

A favoured author was Maria Edgeworth. William considered her to be the best of the novelists and observed that even with just two of her novels, *Castle Rackrent* and *Belinda*, her reputation was assured.⁴⁰ Martha was keenly interested in Edgeworth's

38 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 1 April [1804] (D/591/1094).

39 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 29 November postmark [1800] (D/591/880).

40 William Drennan to Martha McTier, 11 November 1801 (D/591/947); see also William Drennan to Martha McTier, 27 February 1807 postmark (D/591/1310) where he notes, 'Miss Hamilton, without half the genius of Hannah More, has wisely and profitably studied the best way of recommending herself to the higher orders, who in their panic became mightily religious. I think Miss Edgeworth by far our first female writer since Mrs Barbauld's retirement'.

educational works. This may have resulted from her involvement in philanthropy and was also certainly determined by the presence of her nephew, Tom, in her home. Martha encouraged Sarah to read the work of Elizabeth Hamilton, a Belfast woman, on education and also Edgeworth's *Moral tales*, which appeared in 1801.⁴¹ She noted to Sarah that 'In one of Tom's little books (I believe Miss Edgeworth's) she mentions a sort of useful toy which must be very gratifying to that natural inclination of children for building houses – little bricks. I wish I could get them with dissected door frames, windows, etc. If these were each marked with their particular name, and even some little models of the different orders of architecture, it would most easily produce in play a useful and genteel knowledge'.⁴²

Martha also read the work of Edward Gibbon, but much preferred the writings of the French natural philosopher Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint Pierre. While Gibbon made little impact on her, Saint Pierre enchanted her. His articulation of the evidence of divine providence in the order and harmony of nature particularly appealed to her. She wrote to William 'for in the language of the heart or nature I think myself an adept and have long been doubtful of every other, indeed I do not understand them and believe the half of your system makers are just in the same situation'.⁴³ The works of philosophers were also popular. Martha was familiar with the writings of the English dissenters Dr Richard Price and Joseph Priestley; she discussed the work of the French *philosophes* Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau, the statesman Edmund Burke, and the philosopher David Hume.⁴⁴ She told William in 1789 that she was reading some sermons of the theologian Dr Joseph White which she found '... very elegant or rather sublime, convincing, and entertaining. They are White's on Mahometanism. You no doubt saw an account of them which more than mine would induce you to read them. They are not in the least dry nor bigoted, though the author is a Trinitarian'.⁴⁵ Martha also enjoyed plays and informed William in 1803 that she had read the dramatist William Congreve's bawdy play, 'The Way of the World', to her elderly cousins, and found 'it went down excellently'.⁴⁶ 1793 saw her reading James Boswell's *The life of Samuel Johnson* which she found very agreeable. 'It is', she wrote, 'quite charming flattery to read his weaknesses'.⁴⁷ Martha was also familiar with the work of Anna Maria Falconbridge, an abolitionist who was associated with William Wilberforce. In 1802 Martha read Falconbridge's account of the colonisation of Sierra Leone and was horrified by it.⁴⁸ Martha's reading was fairly typical of that engaged in by intellectual women of the period.⁴⁹ It is through letters like these that we can discover in great detail the intellectual lives of

41 Martha McTier to Sarah Drennan, 28 September 1802 (D/591/1007).

42 Martha McTier to Sarah Drennan, [1807] (D/591/1302).

43 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 30 March postmark 1801 (D/591/909).

44 Martha McTier to William Drennan, April 1777 (D/591/7).

45 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 1789 (D/591/268).

46 Martha McTier to Sarah Drennan, [1803] (D/591/1013).

47 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [1793] (D/591/446).

48 Anna Maria Falconbridge, *Narrative of two voyages to the river Sierra Leone during the years 1791, 1792, and 1793 ... in a series of letters* (London, 1794).

49 See for example, the reading covered by Mrs Delaney in Angeliqe Day (ed.), *Letters from Georgian Ireland* (Belfast, 1991).

Irish women of this period. Women, like Martha, clearly reflected on what they had read, were critically aware of their own opinions and where they agreed with or opposed those of the writers they read.

One of the more extensive commentaries conducted within the correspondence relates to works of contemporary political thought, particularly those of the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, and the political philosophers William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. William was more taken with the writings of Rousseau than Martha. He informed Martha that he had been reading Rousseau's *Confessions*, posthumously published in the 1780s. William thought it unsuitable for women to read 'none but men or very learned ladies ought to read. It is an unique and I believe the first confessions of the heart that were ever written but the style of the original must be delightful. He was quite mad when he wrote it but his heart was as sound as ever and a wonderful display of the heart it is. The work is certainly immodest but not terribly so. You had not better however enquire for it at first hand'.⁵⁰

William's reaction to a second reading of the *Confessions* sees him identifying with Rousseau.

I was exceedingly captivated with several parts in the original on a second perusal. Perhaps it was because at first I read it in the translation, but I think the chief reason was an idea that shot into my head, that I found some resemblance to myself in the portrait – in the reserve of countenance – the awkward timidity – the short-sightedness – the voice (Edgeworth told me the first moment he saw me, you have the voice of Rousseau) – really frank and open, apparently sullen and shut up, mild, knowing, sincere, easily temptable, social yet solitary, without address, art, dissimulation, prudence, hating vulgarity, loving the vulgar, gentle in manner, yet a stern republican, flexible in every other thing – his spirit tuned to a flat key, yet much latent enthusiasm – fonder of the fair than he appears, and hurt in his pride for being taken for what he appears....⁵¹

Rousseau was popular among women intellectuals of this period. In his pedagogical novel *Emile* published in 1762, he argued for a significant role for women within the family. His political theories did not exclude women but ultimately Rousseau's female characters were destined only to achieve a passive state of virtue. They were essentially subordinate to men with no independent personal or political aspirations. Perhaps it was for this reason that Martha was less enamoured of Rousseau's writings than William. She thought little of Rousseau's major popular success, his novel, *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Heloise*, published in 1761.⁵²

Like a number of Irish women of the period Martha was familiar with the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft. By the early 1790s Wollstonecraft was the author of two famous works: *A vindication of the rights of men*, published in 1790 in response

50 William Drennan to Martha McTier, 1784 (D/591/123).

51 William Drennan to Martha McTier, 14 October [17]94 (D/591/530).

52 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 1784 (D/591/126).

to Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, and *A vindication of the rights of woman*, published in 1792. It seems likely that Martha read both works. Wollstonecraft had written her *Vindication of the rights of woman* partly as a response to Rousseau's *Emile*. Martha encouraged William to read Wollstonecraft. On 5 January 1793 she asked 'Have you read Mrs Wollstonecraft? I suppose not, or surely you would have mentioned her to me – you ought, even as a politician, and she too conspires to make an important change. I wish they would order her book to be burned'. Martha realising that to order a book burned would immediately increase its sales.⁵³ Such a comment implies that she admired and supported Wollstonecraft's ideas.

A review of *A vindication of the rights of woman* appeared in the *Northern Star* on 22 December 1792 and it was noted as a work that '... abounds with ingenious observations... it affords a variety of judicious instruction for the early management of the female mind, and frequently, and pertinently, corrects the assumptions of the tyrant man'.⁵⁴ While the 1790s was a time when the rights of Irish men were constantly being urged there was little apparent concern with the rights of women. There were some Irish editions of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the rights of woman* and it is referred to in particular by a contemporary of Martha's, Mary Ann McCracken. Martha herself made no direct reference to the plight of women in society and was not a vocal advocate of women's rights. Wollstonecraft in her writing had placed women firmly within the arena of liberal political thought, an achievement of which Martha would surely have approved.⁵⁵ Martha seems to have been unacquainted with Mary Ann McCracken who also lived in Belfast and shared Martha's political interests and concerns. McCracken, however, was a generation younger than her and also attended a different church. We have as yet little evidence on the extent of discussion on women's rights in Ireland in the 1790s but we have some indication that McCracken was an advocate of women's rights.

The late eighteenth century witnessed a revival of discussions on the place of women in society and the rights that should be made available to them. Even within the ranks of that liberal group the United Irishmen there is only slight evidence of any concern with the rights of women. Thomas Russell was one of the few, if not the only, United Irishman who gave some consideration to the place of women in society. Or at least it appears so from the evidence of some jottings in his journal. 'Should', he pondered in 1793, 'women be made learn[e]d? Is there a difference of mind? Why not as of body? Has it ever occur[r]ed to anatomists to observe is there any difference in the brains of men and women children [sic]? Women in public offices as clever as men. ...'.⁵⁶

Mary Ann McCracken gave the matter more serious consideration. In a letter from March 1797 to her brother Henry Joy McCracken, imprisoned for his United

53 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 5 January 1793 (D/591/371); see also Sam McTier and Martha McTier to William Drennan, 27 January 1793 (D/591/379), 'Again I ask if you have read Mrs Wollstonecraft'.

54 *The Northern Star*, 22 December 1792.

55 See Virginia Shapiro, *A vindication of political virtue: the political theory of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Chicago, 1992).

56 Thomas Russell, *Journals and memoirs of Thomas Russell* ed. by C. J. Woods (Dublin, 1991), p. 86.

Irish activities, Mary Ann noted the existence of societies of United Irishwomen in Belfast and argued for the rights of women. With regard to the United Irishwomen she related that she had:

a great curiosity to visit some female societies in this town (though I should like them better were they more promiscuous as there can be no other reason for having them separate but keeping the women in the dark, and certainly it is equally ungenerous or uncandid to make tools of without confiding in them). I wish to know if they have any rational ideas of liberty and equality for themselves or whether they are contented with their present abject and dependent situation.

It is evident that her ideas directly echo those of Mary Wollstonecraft. Like Wollstonecraft she recognised that women are subordinate to men in society and that this subordination had come about through 'custom' or tradition and lack of education. Similarly she argued that both men and women were created equal and in a paraphrase of Wollstonecraft's words she noted that 'without equality of mind, there can be no friendship and without friendship there can be no happiness in society'. McCracken's letter is the fullest articulation we have yet uncovered relating to the rights of women in the late eighteenth century. She ended her letter by stating:

... is it not almost time for the clouds of error and prejudice to disperse and that the female part of the creation as well as the male should throw off the fetters with which they have been so long mentally bound and conscious of their dignity and importance of their nature rise to the situation for which they were designed ... I think the reign of prejudice is nearly at an end, and that the truth and justice of our cause alone is sufficient to support it, as there can be no argument produced in favour of the slavery of woman that has not been used in favour of general slavery and which have been successfully combatted by able writers.⁵⁷

While Martha was sympathetic to the views of Wollstonecraft she was not an advocate of women's rights in the same way that McCracken was. William was not particularly interested in any demand for women's rights, though he talked about writing an address to them in 1796.⁵⁸ There appears to have been relatively little sympathy either amongst the United Irishmen or more generally for rights being extended to women. In the context of the demand of rights for Catholics the Rev. William Bruce observed in 1792 that 'if we follow without restriction, the *theory* of human rights, where will it lead us? In its principle it requires the admission of women, of persons under age, and of paupers, to suffrage at elections; to places of office and trust, and as members of both Houses of Parliament'.⁵⁹

57 M. A. McCracken to Henry Joy McCracken in Kilmainham, 16 March 1797. Trinity College Dublin Ms 873, nos. 149, 151. The full text of the letter is available in Mary McNeill, *The life and times of Mary Ann McCracken 1770-1866: a Belfast panorama* (Belfast, 1960), pp 125-8.

58 William Drennan to Martha McTier, [1796] (D/591/ 636); whether this address was to advocate women's rights or not remains unknown.

59 From *Belfast Politics*, p. 19, quoted in John Gray, 'Mary Anne McCracken: Belfast revolutionary and pioneer of feminism', in Daire Keogh and Nicholas Furlong (eds.), *The women of 1798* (Dublin, 1998), p. 31.

However valuable and enlightening and radical Wollstonecraft's ideas were they were quickly to lose their impact, and she her reputation, with the publication of William Godwin's *Memoirs of the author of a vindication of the rights of woman* which appeared in 1798. William alerted Martha to the existence of the *Memoirs* and writing to her in March of that year he referred to it as a

book exciting, and in some measure gratifying, to male and female curiosity, and were I not afraid of sending you what is generally called, and perhaps truly, an immoral and licentious book, I should make Robert Orr the bearer of it. The print of the lady prefixed is worth the four shillings, and if you don't like the work send it back to me. A most curious philosopher this Godwin is in theory and practice.

William then continued to tell the story of Wollstonecraft's life as related by Godwin.

He [Godwin] marries a woman of 34 or 38 years of age, whom he had kept eight months as a mistress, who had been kept by another man still alive, and who with a perversity of attachment had pursued that other man after the most abominable insults, and had even, with heroic meanness, consented to live in the same house with him and his other mistress, and being refused in this gratification, had thrown herself into the Thames. Her letters which I have not yet read and some posthumous works are annexed, but the price of the whole is too high. It is said her letters are superior to Werter. I hear she was not near so handsome as her portrait represents. She had been governess in the Kingsborough family, but Miss King was then a very child.⁶⁰ She was a compound of caprice and constancy, and her example shows that the rights of women are not to be exercised for some time, without the control of man or God.⁶¹

William attempted to secure a copy of the *Memoirs* at a well known bookshop in Dublin only to be informed by the proprietor that since two of Wollstonecraft's sisters resided in Dublin he could not sell the book.⁶² William's final comment was to wonder at the effect of the *Memoirs* on Godwin's followers. 'You cannot imagine, he observes to Martha, 'how the church and state men rail against the author and the [?book].'⁶³

Martha, while complaining to William that he had a very low opinion of women, approved of Wollstonecraft's ideas and seemed to understand the troubles that beset her life. Neither did she admire Godwin for committing Wollstonecraft's life to print. She believed the book to be 'a coarse, ill-written catchpenny, hurried up at

60 For more detail on the Kingsboroughs see William Drennan to Martha McTier, 21 March [17]98 (D/591/701).

61 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [October postmark] 1801 (D/591/944).

62 William had little regard for the owner of the bookshop, whom he believed to be hypocritical. While refusing to sell the *Memoirs* the man was keeping a mistress in his house in Dublin. William Drennan to Martha McTier, 21 March [17]98 (D/591/701); Martha had a further dig at Godwin later when she noted 'Miss Hamilton's modern philosophers have gone through three editions and her desire of fame is at last gratified by cleverly and fairly raising a laugh at Godwin'. Martha McTier to William Drennan, 30 March postmark 1801 (D/591/909).

63 William Drennan to Martha McTier, 21 March [17]98 (D/591/701).

the moment favourable for gaining money and contempt to its author'. Martha admitted that Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the rights of woman* was very clever and that while Wollstonecraft 'had neither what is generally called much religion nor moral precept, but nobly did she assert her sex's independence'. Martha recognised that Wollstonecraft had a difficult life and notes 'what a miserable slave was she'. Being a slave implies that one has no control over one's fate. Martha was aware that Wollstonecraft lived an emotional life that was very much at variance with the ideals of rationality and virtue she espoused in her writings. Ultimately Martha felt that Godwin's book was beneath criticism and 'sinks its author. Such a performance', she continued, 'left to its own insignificance will do as little harm in the world, as an association to be religious and not eat hot dinners will do good – both in my opinion merit a smile of contempt'.⁶⁴

Both Martha and William were also familiar with the work of Thomas Paine. While Paine asserted the existence of universal human rights, Wollstonecraft, unlike Paine, had explicitly applied the concept to women. Paine's *The rights of man* was particularly popular and the sales of Part 1 exceeded 40,000 in Ireland. It was an extremely influential text in Irish radical circles, a fact noted by a number of Irish historians.⁶⁵ Martha observed to William, 'I never liked kings and Paine has said of them what I always suspected, truth seems to dart from him in such plain and poignant terms, that he, or *she* who runs may read...'.⁶⁶ While Martha was a supporter of some of Paine's views she, like many readers, reacted badly to his book *The age of reason* which was published in 1795. It was his opinions on religion in particular that alienated her. She asked of William in 1796

Have you read the second part of *The age of reason*? Paine is a smart, impudent, imposing writer that ought not to be despised, but well answered in his own style, for no other would be so well attended. The most of what he says on the Bible were my thoughts in childhood, and I suppose might partly be cleared up by riper years, and abler readers. But as for what he says on the New [Testament], I think he could not stagger any rational Christian. He is here indeed so very weak that he appears to hurry over his subject, rather as a matter he was predetermined to laugh at than confute, and seems well pleased to get rid of it. Who but a big ghost-ridden boy could ask such questions about the resurrection of the saints? Lazarus would in my opinion, would have answered his purpose much better.⁶⁷

The radical press was a primary influence on Martha. She noted to William in 1795 'So much have I gained by newspapers and so ardently have I seen them sought for and enjoyed by the lower orders that I intend for their good to institute a *gratis* news

64 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 11 April [1798] (D/591/703).

65 See David Dickson, 'Paine and Ireland', in D. Dickson, D. Keogh and K. Whelan (eds.), *The United Irishmen: republicanism, radicalism and rebellion* (Dublin, 1993), pp 135-150.

66 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 28 October 1792 (D/591/365).

67 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 7 February [1796] (D/591/597).

room with fire and candle, a scheme which you may laugh at, but, if followed in country towns, might have a wonderful effect in your education plan'.⁶⁸ The radical newspaper the *Northern Star* was common reading fare for Martha. The paper had been established within three months of the founding of the United Irishmen and published news, poetry, songs and prose satires. It was estimated that four thousand two hundred copies of the paper were sold regularly.⁶⁹

Newspapers were a source of information and opinion. Martha used the papers as a source to relate political or current events to William. Thus while he was in Edinburgh she could inform him of the progress, for example, of the American War. She also supplemented the information gathered in the newspapers with that acquired from letters. In 1777, for instance, she could add to her newspaper facts for William by noting, 'there are also letters from Cork which say Washington and his army are made prisoners, by having tried to make a diversion at Philadelphia at the time of the attack on Mudd Island. Every day now is big with events which seem to shock all parties here'.⁷⁰ The information gleaned from letters rounded out the whole picture. Again in reference to the American war Martha was to write to William that 'several of Burgoyne's officers are come to Ireland and the letters from their sisters or daughters are highly entertaining. Arnold's bravery, Gates's humanity and politeness is much extolled, and as there were many women with the army it gave occasion for both'.⁷¹

Reading clubs became a feature of the literary landscape by the end of the 1780s and both Martha and William supported such clubs believing that they would play an essential role in educating the lower classes. The first Belfast reading society was founded in 1788 and eventually became the Linen Hall Library. In a letter to William in 1792 Martha noted that there were '... two reading societies who for three years past have been collecting a number of the most valuable books not merely to look at, among these are the encyclop[ædia] the parliamentary statutes etc'.⁷² It appears that some of these reading clubs were open to women. Thomas Russell refers to a club possibly formed in 1770 which had a collection 'chiefly [of] history. Some few of philosophy and politicks, and novels for the women'.⁷³

Political pamphlets also formed a mainstay of Martha's reading. She read and commented on William's pamphlets, suggesting alterations to style and content. Writing to William at the close of 1794, for example, she declared that:

there is nothing I wish for more than seeing you in print, with your name to a dignified publication which might in some degree justify your past conduct, declare manly, moderate principles, wipe away prejudices, convince the

68 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 25 January [1795] (D/591/540).

69 Mary Helen Thuente, *The harp re-strung: the United Irishmen and the rise of literary nationalism* (Syracuse, 1994), p. 89.

70 Martha McTier to William Drennan, December 1777 (D/591/18).

71 *Ibid.*

72 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 28 October 1792 (D/591/345); see also Nancy Curtin, *The United Irishmen: popular politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791-1798* (Oxford, 1994), p. 177.

73 Russell, *Journals and memoirs*, p. 84.

head and affect the heart. The public are now well prepared to receive anything from your pen, your writing is, by all parties, said to be more correct and elegant than any of the present day, and R. Maxwell, after reading your description of Kirwan, told me it was worthy the pen of Dr Johnson. Do not hurry this pamphlet – bring into it all the matter you can. Perhaps twill be the last opportunity of doing it, in palatable terms, to a man in power, and I suppose it is in such you would address L[ord] F[itwilliam], unless there are reasons which I would not wish put your name to it and make it worthy to bear it'.⁷⁴

The pamphlet alluded to was William's, *A philosophical essay on the moral and political state of Ireland: in a letter to Lord Fitzwilliam*, published in January 1795. Having read it Martha observed to William,

I have read your pamphlet several times and find it, like every other of your writings, improve the longer it is read, for there is a blaze, or a something, which at first, though it does not obscure the sense, dazzles you, and pleases without it yet there is always more than at first meets the eye and such abundance of soul, that you at first do not look for the other. Indeed yours are the only political writings I ever saw heart in, and they will ever have a great power while they retain it. Your address to the People is not the happiest part of your work, nor is it in a style as if you had thought it would be ever read by them.⁷⁵

Martha also encouraged William to defend his ideas. In February 1792 Dr. William Bruce had publicly attacked the test or oath of the United Irishmen which had been written by Drennan. Martha urged a response, later published in the *Belfast News-Letter*, and cautioned William, to 'be very delicate if you can destroy his argument with force of satire or how else you please, but attack it only – be delicate as the man, even as to a friend. Let the feelings of one burst through it if propriety will any way allow of such a thing – if not it will at least dictate to be less personal than he has chose to appear'.⁷⁶ Martha also proudly defended William's writings. Her acquaintance, Lady Harriet Skeffington, asked Martha once if she had read a song called 'Erin' 'with which she was much struck and her sisters in raptures'. This was in fact, a song written by William and published anonymously in a United Irish newspaper, *The Press*, in October 1797. Another woman in the company responded that two verses were 'absolute nonsense'. Martha quickly rose to William's defence stating she knew the 'author, and that though there might be allusion or metaphor perhaps too obscure, or too much a poetical licence, yet I would venture to affirm he never wrote two verses of nonsense in his life. Still her decided and bold assertion was nonsense, absolute nonsense, and instanced "a long chain of silence" and called on me for an explanation. I said I felt its beauty without any definition and suspected

74 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 28 December [1794] (D/591/535).

75 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 25 January 1795 (D/591/540).

76 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [1792] (D/591/321C).

she was not up to it. Neither in truth was I, but being much nettled and more vexed the song should go abroad without two of its verses'.⁷⁷ The poem is essentially a call for unity amongst Irish men and, as one critic has noted, marked Drennan's growing disaffection with the United Irish movement.⁷⁸

Martha also recognised the dangers of print. In 1794 she informed William of the consequences of published matter. She noted that copies of *Belfast Politics*, 'a book now eagerly read', had been acquired by the military and militia who 'unacquainted with the resolutions and people marked in 93, and hearing of this much talked of publication that would so easily mark the inhabitants to them, have procured it, sit with it in their hands, commenting and applying its paragraphs in the coffee house and the hearing of the chief actors, in matters now dangerous to avow'.⁷⁹

Martha's reading informed her political beliefs and through the letters she expressed opinions about the state of politics. Her views were also shaped by her own background of liberal Presbyterianism, and her respect for the views of both Sam and William. Martha was not politically ambitious for herself. In December 1799 she observed 'I have often wished for a opportunity of venting my political wishes, theories, or follies, and own I would rather hear yours'.⁸⁰ Her political ambitions found expression in her support for William and Sam. In the letters and diaries of women in eighteenth century Ireland there is clear evidence of an intense interest in, and knowledge of, political affairs. However, Irish women do not appear to have published political tracts or pamphlets airing their views to any great extent. Some few Irish women did find a way to vent their political opinions publicly through the writing of verse, women such as Henrietta Battier, Mary O'Brien and Mary Birkett for example.⁸¹ It is unclear whether Martha ventured into print with her views. The evidence is ambiguous.

William wrote in 1797 to warn her of rumours that were current about her political involvement.

Mrs Orr who is a sort of hysterical politician has been just telling me with an air of great importance, that several aristocrats here have been mentioning your name as being a very busy woman in Belfast at present and that you should take care of yourself as you were supposed to write for the *Northern Star* while in existence etc., etc. There are so many lying stories gone and people wish so much to be friendly in these warnings, that I thought it better to mention it to you, as the lady who carries this and who sent me word that she was ready to be the bearer of all sedition I should choose to send, was one of those who seemed to apprehend some danger either to your house or yourself.⁸²

77 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [1798] (D/591/705).

78 Thuente, *Harp re-strung*, pp 110-111.

79 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 22 March 1794 (D/591/482).

80 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 22 December 1799 (D/591/814).

81 See Andrew Carpenter (ed.), *Verses in English from eighteenth-century Ireland* (Cork, 1998). Further details on the political role of women in Irish society are to be found in Mary O'Dowd, 'The political writings and public voice of women c.1500-1850', in *The Field Day anthology of Irish women's writing* (forthcoming, New York, 1999).

82 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 10 June 1797 (D/591/665).

Martha, aware that her correspondence was being opened by the local post-master responded to William's letter with an emphatic denial of any overt political involvement:

Strange that an obscure name, and female, could be noticed by strangers, or out of her own circle – out of a small one, I never at any time of my life, or on any subject, talked much; on those occasions I am generally the most silent woman in company. For this I make up in smaller parties – and not having any principles or opinions I thought necessary to conceal, nor observing it even proper to make any change in my ideas for [?] right and wrong, the foundation of which I find for private life to be 'doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly before God' – I have, as hitherto, reasoned from those old fashioned maxims, and I dare say cast pearls to fools, who not understanding might misrepresent even unintentionally. Yet though mixing with all parties, I never was told of one word I had said to offend any. I flatter myself I am not insignificant – enough however to be termed a neutral – though I should shrink from being any way a marked woman. You may therefore believe that except an advertisement for the Union School, and one paper in its cause, out of three wrote by Lady H[arriet], Mrs B[oisragon?] and me I never penned a single line for a newspaper in my life ... Let me here however declare that I know of no society of United I[rish]women, that I never heard it said there was one in the place, that I never even subscribed as thousands did to the charity for relief of the prisoners, that private transactions are my abhorrence, that I was never engaged in any act I should care was known either to the public or secret committee, and that the chief wish of my heart is to pass through my life without giving offence or (strange as the wish appear it is now mine) of not receiving insult.⁸³

This letter is difficult to interpret and may be intentionally misleading about Martha's real contribution to the *Northern Star*. In her following letter to William, Martha admitted that she believed that the above letter would be opened, that she wrote it on purpose and put it into the office the night before in order to give the post-master time to read it.⁸⁴ It would appear, from the correspondence, that she may have added to or tidied up pieces written by William for the press, but that she did not author articles herself. Whether she wrote for the papers or not Martha was certainly an informed and intelligent political commentator. She seems to have been content to act as William's adviser, and was not interested in entering the public domain.

Martha was keenly aware of the impact of international events on the politics of the country. She too was buoyed up by the optimism of radicalism and the hope inspired by radical thinkers. She followed the work of the United Irishmen with great interest through William's and Sam's involvement in that organisation, and she was familiar with a number of the individuals who were central to that group. In

83 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 16 June [19 June 1797 postmark] (D/591/666).

84 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [July postmark] 1797 (D/591/667A).

the eighteenth century the letter was a form of communication that was both private and public. The fact that many letters were read to a wide circle of family, friends and acquaintances and the information and opinions therein passed from person to person meant that Martha's political opinions were well known and she would have had a reputation as a political woman. She, like William, supported the rights of Catholics. She abhorred violence and, also like William, wished for political change to come about through peaceful means.

While originally supportive Martha soon lost her enthusiasm for the French revolution and its excesses. 'I am turned, quite turned, against the French, and fear that it is all farther than ever from coming to good'.⁸⁵ By 1793 she has 'given up every thought about politics. The French affairs are now got beyond my comprehension. I know not who is right or what is wrong but that their [neig]hbourhoods have no business with them and will certainly repent their interference. Ireland is sinking by a violence of bad measure in such a hurry of absurdity and tyrannick acts that it's probable the violence of the distemper will throw itself off by one effort when least expected. Government runs the risk, and the people see that nothing but arms is left'.⁸⁶

Martha supported the Volunteer Conventions and was anxious to hear news of them first hand. Writing to William in 1783 she asked

I suppose you have engaged early accounts from W[ill] Bruce of the convention – I shall be obliged to you for them as soon as possible. I think this country never met so awful, so glorious a day as this. It has been consigned to the delegates by a people who has nobly given them the opportunity and the power of commanding justice to be done their country, for it is in that strain only they will be listened to, and in [sic] by that they will meet with obedience. If they should in the least degree depart from the firm spirit which has hitherto marked them and gained them the confidence of a people, they will lose a moment glorious for themselves and for their country, perhaps never more to return. Such are not frequent. The matter they have to deliberate on is great, and both good and great are divided in their opinions upon it. I would be sorry however they would find it so vast as to determine upon nothing, or but a few inferior points. Might it not be better in firm and unanimous terms to demand one fundamental right, that the rest might grow out of, or time and experience point out, and don't you think annual parliament would do this?⁸⁷

Martha also wrote immediately to William to inform him of the happenings of the Dungannon Convention of February 1793, where Catholic emancipation was endorsed and parliamentary reform sought.⁸⁸ Before that meeting Martha had written to William to suggest a reprinting of his pamphlet *Letters of Orellana* in the *Northern Star*. The *Letters* had been published originally in 1784 and sought to

85 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [1792] (D/591/449).

86 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [1793] (D/591/446).

87 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 1783 (D/591/116).

88 Samuel Neilson and Martha McTier to William Drennan, 17 February 1793 (D/591/390A).

rekindle the zeal of the Volunteers for reform. Martha believed that the *Letters* would influence the members of the Convention. 'I am', she wrote, 'in the situation of numbers who have applied to me, I have not, nor can I get a copy. With me indeed, the sense and spirit remains, but at the time they appeared, their novelty chiefly attracted and the time was not come (in my opinion) to give them their highest relish. They indeed did serve the purpose then, and therefore might aid it now ...'.⁸⁹

Martha, like other women of the period, also acted as a witness and recorder of the political upheavals of the time. She wrote of the imposition of troops on households in Belfast in 1798 and declared that her 'doors have been locked almost ever since, and all packed up for flight if absolutely necessary'.⁹⁰ On the outbreak of the 1803 Rising she wrote to Sarah

You know my determination not to write any political news, for one reason I detest writing falsehoods – and it is long before the report of the day can be credited. Women have certainly been taken up, lodged in the Prevot and bail refused. One of these is a Miss Monroe, sister to the man who was hanged, and others of the name of Shaw. It is said they are charged with high treason and were discovered by means of the pretended French general, now believed here a servant of Major Sirr's. They are sent to C[arrick]fergus, at least Miss M— on a common car. There is something too like France in this. The gentlemen here begin to tire and complain much of the alarm kept up by which trade is destroyed and they fatigued. A remonstrance on the subject was sent from the Chamber of Commerce to General Campbell, but I believe there was little if any redress.⁹¹

Martha opposed the Act of Union. Her views on the union and those who wished it to pass were scathing. Writing to William in December 1799 she stated,

I know not whether with truth or error, but it appears to me that the meanest, most wicked and detestable set of tame, interested, cold-hearted cowards ever infested a country is the gentry of Ireland – publishing their names and infamy, the half of them with no other view but to be on a list with a lord, and what a wretched thing is an Irish lord. And does all conspire to forbid hope? Does every effort only strengthen and prolong the degrading fetters? Do the events in every other country all conspire against this, and are we not to expect even the poor satisfaction of seeing the time when truth may be brought to light while there may be an interest in its honest vindications? – laughable as the sentence may appear – if this degrading union takes place and all its cruel arbitrary consequences tamely suffered, if mind continues thus put down, I will leave a country undeserving of any such as mine, the moment duty and circumstances permit me. So let them look to it.⁹²

89 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 5 January 1793 (D/591/371).

90 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 1798 (D/591/718).

91 Martha McTier to Sarah Drennan, 1803 (D/591/1057).

92 Martha McTier to William Drennan, 22 December 1799 (D/591/814).

Martha never gave up her interest in politics, though at times her weariness with it is evident. In 1801 at the implementation of the Act of Union she wrote:

I abjure politics – the hope of my heart for thirty years is no more. I enjoyed it through dangers, and its worst consequences. I foresaw and thought them probable, yet still I clung to free and rising Ireland, to justice tempered with mercy on her base-souled betrayers, to a virtuous triumph for her and liberty's defenders. All is, and will continue, more and more reversed – and mind will sink into the dull equality of fashionable and educated insipidity or at best the energies of the big merchant. These however appear rather flattened at present – and most certainly in Belfast there did not appear a joyful face that I saw, except those who I know trembled for personal safety.⁹³

The letters of Martha and William provide us with a crucial link to the intellectual world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They are a vital source for the history of women of the period. They provide the best context for understanding women's place in Irish society because they deal with so many concerns: the political, the social, the economic and the intellectual. They also provide the broadest framework for exploring relationships between men and women, men and politics, and women and politics. Martha and William come alive through the pages of their letters, we see and recognise their humanity.

Maria Luddy
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93 Martha McTier to William Drennan, [October postmark] 1801 (D/591/944).

EDITORIAL NOTES

The Drennan-McTier correspondence was deposited in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in 1928 by William Drennan's granddaughter, Mrs Maria Duffin. The deposit (D/591) comprises some 1,460 letters. Most are between Drennan and Martha, but there is also some correspondence with their mother, with Sam McTier and Sarah Drennan, and a few related letters from friends. Sam McTier is known to have numbered William's letters in the 1790s, and there are signs that William looked over his letters in later years. However, the main work of sorting the correspondence into one chronological sequence was undertaken by his descendants, members of the Duffin family.

A selection from the letters, edited by Dr D. A. Chart, Deputy Keeper of the Records of Northern Ireland, was published in 1931.¹ Chart included lengthy extracts from many letters, but many were paraphrased, and others of equal interest were omitted. Almost half of the book is taken up by letters from just five years, 1791–95, and the whole contains a far higher proportion of letters from William than from Martha. As the collection is a major source for the history of the United Irish movement, this was a natural basis for the selection of the letters for publication, and this correspondence, published and unpublished, has been widely used by Irish historians writing about politics in the 1780s–90s.

This new edition, in three volumes, contains a full transcript of all the letters from the period 1776–1807, and virtually all those written afterwards, with the exception of a few notes from Martha McTier to her nephews and several letters to William Drennan about the affairs of the Belfast Academical Institution, which were bound with the D/591 series, having been deposited at the same time. A number of smaller deposits were also made by the Duffin family, but as these do not contain any correspondence between William and Martha, none of this material has been included in these volumes although it is referred to in the footnotes. The deposit numbered T/965 is particularly valuable because it contains William's own collection of press-cuttings.²

For this new edition, the sequence of the letters has been revised. Virtually all those written in the 1780s were undated. Using contemporary sources, particularly newspapers, it has been possible to assign dates to many of these and they have been completely re-ordered. Most letters from 1790 onwards are either dated or have a stamped postmark, initially with the day and month, but from about 1795 with the year as well. Martha's letters were generally postmarked on arrival in Dublin, so the actual date of writing may have been between one and three days earlier, depending on whether she was in Belfast or at Cabin Hill. The dating of William's letters sometimes poses problems because although his handwriting is normally clear, his

1 D. A. Chart, *The Drennan letters* (Belfast, 1931).

2 Details of these collections will be given in the bibliography in volume three.

numerals are highly idiosyncratic, his 1 and 2, 5 and 9, being more or less interchangeable, and his 3 is an invention all of his own. Moreover, when he writes both the day of the week and the day of the month, these frequently disagree, and he occasionally writes the wrong month, as is clear from the postmarks as well as the content. Where the sequence of the letters as printed here appears to contradict the date, an explanation has been given in a footnote. All letters are identified by their original number in the D/591 series in the text, and a concordance of these numbers and page numbers will be provided at the end of the third volume.

A typed transcript of the Drennan-McTier letters was made by members of the Duffin family before their deposit. A new typescript containing some amendments was then produced at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and used as the basis for the publication of 1931.³ These typescripts have been invaluable in the present work of editing the letters, but the entire text of this new edition has been checked against the originals. This has revealed that the condition of the letters deteriorated slightly after their first transcription and some small pieces of text have been lost, generally where the letters were sealed. The lamination and binding of the whole series has prevented further decay although it sometimes makes it difficult to read postmarks. However, in the process of lamination much of the dried paste which held the sealing wafers has fallen off, revealing odd words which are not in the typescripts.

The aim of this edition has been to produce a text which is both accurate and readable. For accuracy, square brackets have been used to show where the original document is damaged and words are missing. Where the missing word or words are obvious they will appear within the brackets. In other cases the brackets simply enclose a dash to indicate missing text. Occasionally a word has clearly been omitted; these have been inserted in square brackets with a footnote 'word supplied'. Few words are actually illegible; where this is the case, this is indicated in a footnote.

To make the text more readable, standard eighteenth-century contractions like *cd*, *wd*, *tho*, *comp^y*, *parl^t*, etc., have been expanded, but expansions of proper names have been shown with square brackets, i.e. Lord C[harlemon]t. Names denoted by initials have usually been given in full, i.e. Dr H[aliday], M[argaret] J[ones]. 'Tis' and 'twas' have been left, but 'etc.' has been substituted for '&c', and 'and' has replaced a variety of squiggles. Standard eighteenth-century spellings such as *chuse* and *shew* and *favor* have also been modernised. Martha's spelling was sometimes inaccurate in her early letters, and this has been corrected. By the 1790s, after some teasing by William, it had improved markedly.

In the eighteenth century, the spelling of proper names was frequently inconsistent. For example, the Drennans' cousins are spelt *Biggar* and *Bigger*, the Hincks family are also spelt *Hyncks*. To help the reader, the spelling of names has been standardised as far as possible, and modern forms, such as *Wilson* rather than *Willson*, *McTier* rather than *M'Tier*, have been preferred. *Sam* and *Martha* spelt their name

³ The Duffin typescripts have the PRONI reference T/765/1, and the PRONI typescripts have the reference T/765/2.

M'Tier, Sam's brother preferred Mattear. William used both spellings when addressing his letters to Martha. In the edited text, McTier has been reserved for Martha, Sam, and Sam's daughter Margaret. All other members of Sam's family have been spelt Mattear, and other variant spellings (i.e. McTeir, Matteer, Matier, etc.) have been changed to one or other of these forms, according to context.

The letters are heavily punctuated with dashes and commas but there are few full stops. Since this rapidly becomes tedious in printed text, the dashes between sentences have been replaced with full stops. Dashes within sentences have been retained where appropriate for emphasis but many have been replaced with commas. However, the number of commas has been reduced overall as, by modern standards, the letters are over-punctuated and many of the commas simply break up the text and obscure the meaning. Occasionally there is a clause at the end of a sentence which could equally well start the next sentence, frequently with a slight shift of meaning. In such cases the original punctuation has been left alone. A few commas have been inserted where this makes the sense clearer, punctuation having usually been omitted when the writer reached the edge of the paper.

In the original text, apostrophes are used to show omissions, i.e. in destroy'd, prais'd, etc., but not however in cant and wont. They have been inserted in the latter, and the former have been expanded, except in verse, where it affects the metre. Plurals such as address's, society's have been modernised as addresses, societies. Apostrophes have been inserted to show the possessive case where this is unambiguous. Brackets and inverted commas were used frequently but seldom in pairs, the closing one often being missing. Where these are obvious they have been inserted, otherwise the opening one has been removed. Underlining has been copied in the printed text. However, William frequently underlined part of a word, sometimes a few letters only in the middle. In general these have not been reproduced. Capital letters for common nouns have been removed and the general use of capitals standardised. Because postage was charged by the sheet, as much text as possible was packed on to a single sheet, and new paragraphs are usually indicated by a long dash. Where appropriate, long blocks of text have now been broken up into paragraphs.

Words have replaced numerals where the numbers are small, and where it makes the meaning clearer; a standard format has been introduced for pounds, shillings and pence, and the pound sign has been supplied where it was omitted. Question marks, which were then little used, have been inserted. However, the aim throughout has been to achieve a more readable text with as few changes as possible. Since the text was produced by several individuals over a period of forty years, consistency would be unnatural and has not been attempted. This has however posed problems in the writing of footnotes, particularly in the spelling of names and the use of capital letters. In general, modern or standard forms of surnames have been used in the footnotes. Readers are asked to adopt the tolerant attitude of the eighteenth century towards inconsistency.

Over three thousand individuals are mentioned in the text of the letters, and the majority have been identified. Wherever an identification has been made, brief

biographical details have been inserted, in a footnote, at the first mention of the name, and each person has been indexed under their full name. These footnotes have been repeated at the first reference to the person in subsequent volumes, and each volume has been indexed separately. Given time (and a budget stretching into the next millennium), it should have been possible to identify every person mentioned; as it is, the research has largely been confined to modern printed sources, with occasional sorties into wills, church registers and the Registry of Deeds. In addition to the footnotes about individuals, most published works mentioned in the text have been identified, and notes have been added about events referred to in many of the letters. The major sources for the latter have been the *Belfast News-Letter* and the *Northern Star*. Again, given unlimited time (an essential requirement when working on eighteenth-century newspapers) far more use could have been made of such contemporary sources, and the published footnotes are the result of the familiar compromise between ideal and realistic targets.

The main sources of information for biographical data in the footnotes are as follows: *The Dictionary of national biography*, Burke's *Peerage* and *Landed gentry of Ireland*, the *Complete peerage*, the *Belfast News-Letter* for marriages and deaths, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for foreign notables, clergy succession lists for Church of Ireland clergy, the *Fasti* for Presbyterian clergy, *King's Inn admission papers* for barristers.⁴ George Benn's *History of Belfast* and George Chambers's *Faces of change* are the main sources of information about Belfast people, and the Blackwood pedigrees at the Linen Hall Library contain details of many merchant and gentry families in Ulster. Contemporary directories have been used to identify many Dublin residents in the 1790s and 1800s, and R. B. McDowell's article in *Irish Historical Studies* has been used for notes on the United Irishmen in Dublin. Only the leaders of the United Irishmen in Belfast have been named as such. It can be taken for granted that most of the leading Presbyterians of Belfast were United Irishmen at some stage. Apart from the *Dictionary of national biography* and the Blackwood pedigrees, these sources have not generally been cited in footnotes, but references have been given to all less obvious sources, both printed and manuscript.

Research on individuals in Belfast and Dublin has made it possible to identify William's boyhood friends, his fellow students, political associates and clients, and Martha's friends and enemies. The parts of Martha's letters which appear at first sight to contain items of unrelated gossip about miscellaneous people, are now seen to have a logical sequence, detailing news of related individuals. Above all, the research has uncovered a whole inter-related network of friends, colleagues and business associates, living both in Belfast and Dublin, which adds much to the understanding of the letters and of the world in which the Drennans lived.

Jean Agnew
September 1998

⁴ A full bibliography will be published in the third volume.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Blackwood Blackwood pedigrees, Linen Hall Library, Belfast, (PRONI, MIC/315)
- BNL *Belfast News-Letter*
- DNB *Dictionary of national biography*, ed. Leslie Stephen and Sydney Lee (66 vols, London, 1885–1901; reprinted with corrections, 22 vols, London, 1908–09)
- IFR *Burke's Irish family records* (London, 1976)
- LGI Bernard Burke, *Landed gentry of Ireland* (London, 1912)
- LHL Linen Hall Library, Belfast
- PRONI Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Frontispiece: Martha McTier c.1787, probably by Robert Home. (Reproduced by permission of Mr Michael Duffin.)	xiii
1. Martha McTier as a child. (Reproduced by permission of Mr Michael Duffin.)	xiii
2. Mrs Ann Drennan, formerly Lennox (c.1719-1806), artist unknown. (Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of the Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland.)	42
3. Waddell Cunningham (c.1729-97), by Robert Home. (Photograph © Ulster Museum, reproduced with the kind permission of the Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland.)	80
4. The family of Thomas Bateson of Orangefield, by Strickland Lowry. (Photograph © Ulster Museum, reproduced with the kind permission of the Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland.)	114
5. The Rev. Dr William Bruce (1757-1841), by Joseph Wilson. (Photograph © Ulster Museum, reproduced with the kind permission of the Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland.)	192
6. The first Earl of Charlemont (1728-99). (Photograph © Ulster Museum, reproduced with the kind permission of the Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland.)	222
7. The Belfast Assembly Room. (Photograph © Ulster Museum, reproduced with the kind permission of the Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland.)	302
8. James Napper Tandy (1740-1803). (Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of the Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland.)	394
9. The Rev. Thomas Drennan (1696-1768), artist unknown. (Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of the Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland.)	434
10. The Rotunda Gardens in 1790, from Walker's <i>Hibernian Magazine</i> , July 1790. (Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of the National Library of Ireland.)	522
11. The Rev. Walter Blake Kirwan (1754-1805), preaching on behalf of the Female Orphan House, Dublin, by Hugh Douglas Hamilton. (Reproduction courtesy of the National Gallery of Ireland.)	528

CHRONOLOGY

- 1741 Rev. Thomas Drennan marries Ann Lennox.
- 1742 Birth of Martha Drennan.
- 1745 Birth of Nancy Drennan.
- 1754 Birth of William Drennan.
- 1768 Death of Rev. Thomas Drennan
- 1769 William Drennan begins his studies at the University of Glasgow.
- 1773 Martha Drennan marries Sam McTier.
- 1773–78 William studies medicine at the University of Edinburgh.
- 1775 The American War of Independence begins.
- 1778 Volunteer companies are formed to defend the country against threatened invasion by the French, but rapidly become involved in politics and press for parliamentary reform. William practices in Belfast and is involved in the Volunteer movement.
- 1780 Sam McTier visits Dublin in search of employment in the customs service.
- 1782 The first Volunteer convention is held at Dungannon. The Irish parliament becomes nominally independent of Westminster. William and Martha visit Scotland to consult Dr William Cullen about Martha's health. At the end of the year, William settles in Newry.
- 1783 Martha goes to take the waters at Bristol, accompanied by Nancy. In their absence William falls seriously ill with a fever and is nursed by Sam. Sam acts as an agent for Robert Stewart at the County Down election and William writes election squibs in his support. The Volunteer national convention meets in Dublin in November but parliament rejects their scheme for reform. The McTiers' old friend James Adair expects to be appointed Lord Chancellor of Ireland by the Duke of Portland, and promises to find a lucrative position for Sam. Their hopes are dashed however, by the fall of the Portland administration in December.
- 1784 William begins to prosper at Newry, largely through the patronage of the related Pollock and Corry families. Sam and Martha rent Castle Hill in the summer and live there until Christmas. William anonymously publishes the *Letters of an Irish helot* in November and December in an effort to revitalise the now declining Volunteer movement.
- 1785 William goes to Dublin as one of Belfast's representatives at the Volunteer convention. The Helot letters are re-published as *Letters of Orellana, an Irish helot, to the seven northern counties*. The Volunteer movement declines and the convention is disappointing. The McTiers purchase a farm near Castle Hill and start to build a 'cabin', or farmhouse. William proposes to Margaret Jones, but is rejected. Propositions for commercial union with England are rejected by the Irish parliament. Sam becomes Ballast Master to the Belfast Harbour Commission.
- 1786–89 Martha and Sam live at Cabin Hill. Sam sets up in business as a notary public and their financial position improves.

- 1788 The King becomes insane and a crisis ensues over the powers to be given to the Prince of Wales.
- 1789 William has now become financially successful but is bored and restless in Newry. The French Revolution begins. Martha suffers from ill health and becomes increasingly depressed. She stops writing to William. At her urging, she and Sam move back to Belfast and Cabin Hill is sold. At the end of the year, William moves to Dublin.
- 1790 William takes lodgings in Dame Street and starts to build up a small practice. Martha continues ill, and does not write, so William's letters are addressed to his mother and Sam McTier.
- 1791 William becomes increasingly involved in politics. In May he writes a paper about a 'brotherhood' to work for reform. Bastille Day is celebrated in Belfast, Dublin and elsewhere. Societies of United Irishmen are formed in Belfast and in Dublin. Martha's illness continues, and apart from a brief note in July she does not write.
- 1792 Dr William Bruce attacks the test or oath of the United Irishmen and this, and William's defence, are published in the *Belfast News-Letter*. A bill giving some concessions to the Roman Catholics is passed. The United Irishmen continue to support the Catholic claims for further emancipation, in particular for the elective franchise. The Society is dragged by Napper Tandy into his quarrel with John Toler, the Solicitor General. William writes United Irish propaganda and John Pollock, an attorney and a government agent, attempts to buy him off. In December William writes the *Address to the Volunteers*. Martha gradually recovers from her breakdown and by the end of the year she is writing detailed accounts of events in Belfast.
- 1793 The King of France is executed in January, and Britain goes to war with France in February. The government undermines the Volunteers' Dungannon convention by making further concessions to the Roman Catholics. Simon Butler and Oliver Bond, chairman and secretary of the Dublin Society of United Irishmen, are sent to prison for six months and fined for publishing resolutions criticising a secret committee of the House of Lords. Dr James Reynolds, a United Irishman from Co. Tyrone, is imprisoned for refusing to recognise the committee's authority to summon witnesses. In April, Martha spends a month in Dublin. The government passes measures intended to put down the United Irishmen and to disarm the Volunteers in the north, and the troops quartered at Belfast act in a repressive and violent manner. In September, William announces abruptly that he is engaged to Sarah Swanwick, a young Englishwoman, and this news meets with a cool reception in Belfast. He is by now disenchanted with politics and fears that his notoriety will prevent him from building up a profitable practice in Dublin. Depressed by his poor prospects, he releases Sarah from their engagement.

1776–1782

1 19 January [1776]

MRS MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH] [1A]¹

My dearest Will, Your New Year's gift was very agreeable and like the children's feast the last of it was best. I do not mean the direction of your letter, for as that was to Mrs McTier, High Street, I got it but at second hand, and though the first pages contained much to interest and sentiments to please me, yet my eye glanced quickly over them in pursuit of some account of the notes which had been sent you. I got it, and therefore will not scold you. Sam² does not care to risk any more in that way, but next week he will send you an English bill for twenty pounds, out of which you are to give Nancy³ what she chooses. But to return to your letter, you are determined to cure me of my prejudice in favour of the Scots. One prepossession will conquer another, and I shall be apt to set but a slight value on the good sense and discernment which cannot but see the worth of my brother and yet from a national narrowness deny him its reward. Let not any disappointment in regard to a tuition mortify you. Its being of any material service is very unlikely but as your present situation might make even a trifle convenient, I would not decline it, though to obtain it, I would not let any Scotchman think he had favoured you.

As for McC⁴ – he is a dirty blackguard – a poor time-server – such a letter as Crombie⁵ received from him a few posts ago never could come from a man possessed of one liberal sentiment. Politics and religion were the subjects he blasphemed, and prattled of a hair-brained doctor and a pack of linen drapers, to know the true value of whom it is unnecessary to set himself up as a foil. Crombie gave a proof of his contempt for the writer by showing the epistle, and indeed did not compliment himself. It has effected that dislike which was begun last summer on hearing things said in jest which now appear to be real opinions, and could not be given as such but by a man hackneyed in servility. I wish I never advised Nancy to go to P[reston]pans. It was in hope of entertainment which I cannot hear of her obtaining, but all this as secret as the grave – when we meet in my little cabin the truth will all come out, perhaps in more agreeable hours, to me they must be so, my sisterly affections have not been impaired by matrimony, they have not got the usual trial,⁶ though my faith in them is so great I would like to see them tried, but there is little wisdom in this wish and I must not give it harbour. Have you and Nancy no intercourse? You ask me why I do not write to you. The long letters I have sent to her were equally wrote to you.

1 The numbers following the address are those given to the letters by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland as part of the series D/591; for example, this letter is numbered D/591/1A.

2 Sam McTier (c.1738-95), her husband.

3 Nancy Drennan (c.1745-1825), their sister.

4 Rev. Dr Joseph McCormick (1733-99), minister at Prestonpans, a few miles east of Edinburgh (*DNB*).

5 Rev. Dr James Crombie (1730-90), minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Belfast (*DNB*), brother-in-law of McCormick.

6 i.e. by her having children.

Politics is a subject you would wish to hear of from a corner where they are treated with manly freedom, but I am not well qualified to write on this subject, and know not what would be new or old to you. A piece of private information I can give you for true, that in a letter from young Dun⁷ who is now in France, he gives a very alarming account of the preparations there, and has not a doubt of their being designed against these kingdoms. Lord Camden⁸ writes to his son-in-law⁹ an account of Lord Chatham¹⁰ that would draw tears from you. He observes his plan of accommodation with America was his last effort to save his sinking country, and speaks of his situation being so deplorable that there is no doubt but he has lost his judgment. To descend a little – the candidates for our county have begun to canvass, at least the two worthy ones for whom the lords have declared. This was done by Mr Portis¹¹ taking Mr Skeffington¹² to the door of each freeholder. They sat in the chaise and allowed the gentlemen they spoke to, to stand in the street listening to Mr Portis requesting the honour of their votes for Henry Seymour Conway¹³ and the gentleman present, who bowed with the grin which always marks their family understanding, but to speak never ventured. Sam's answer was a declaration of not giving a promise until the day of election. It was then requested he would not promise to vote against Mr Skeffington, to which he assented.

As you seem to be in a humour to be pleased with anything from Belfast, I'll enclose you an old newspaper, it contain[s] our petition and Wilson's¹⁴ addresses to the public. I cannot think you have yet seen the former or you must have thought it worth a remark, but if you have, treat it with more decency than McCormick says the King did. Ballymena¹⁵ and another dissenting congregation have in the newspaper declared their approbation of Wilson's conduct and determination to support him, and there is some thoughts of establishing a club in Belfast for that purpose. I think I now see your smile of contempt, but consider, he is the best that offers, and that it is agreeable to support that interest on which he rests his claim against a conjunction of Hertford, Antrim and Donegall,¹⁶ the latter indeed it's suspected is not much interested in the matter. Wilson has not made one application and it's thought this has been a loss to him. Next to seeing Nancy happily fixed in life, there is nothing would please me beyond your being in parliament. No riches, no title would in my estimation be set up in competition to it, because I am certain it would

7 Probably John Dunn (c.1752-1827), son of the Rev. William Dunn of Dublin, fellow student of Drennan at Glasgow, later a barrister and MP for Randalstown, 1783-97.

8 1st Earl Camden (1714-94), Lord Chancellor in Chatham's administration, 1766-70 (*DNB*).

9 Robert Stewart (1739-1821), later 1st Marquis of Londonderry, MP for Co. Down, 1769-83 (*DNB*).

10 1st Earl of Chatham (1708-78), statesman (*DNB*).

11 George Portis, collector for the port of Belfast and agent to Lord Donegall.

12 Probably Henry Skeffington (c.1744-1811), MP for Belfast, 1768-97, later 3rd Earl of Massereene.

13 General, later Field Marshall, Henry Seymour Conway (1721-95), who was MP for Co. Antrim in 1741, and an English MP, 1741-84 (*DNB*).

14 James Willson or Wilson of Purdysburn, Co. Down, MP for Co. Antrim, 1776-83, married Sophia, daughter of Rev. Skeffington Bristow; Wilson agreed to work for parliamentary reform and was supported in his campaign by the General Synod of the Presbyterian church.

15 Ballymena, Co. Antrim.

16 6th Earl, later Marquis of Antrim, 1st Marquis of Hertford, and 5th Earl of Donegall, the major landowners of Co. Antrim.

tend to your real honour, and on that one account I have sometimes wished the law had been your study as the line that might at least give a chance for such a thing coming about, but physic you seem now to have seriously determined upon; if so, be steady in it, and to that method which after much consideration appears the wisest to pursue it. I can say little on the subject, but by frequently thinking of you, and your future appearance in life, random thoughts sometimes occur, which perhaps might give a hint that might prove important, such as the following, which is to your ear alone. I have heard it alleged that Dr Mattear¹⁷ was tired of that branch of his business which he has mostly followed, and imagined it would be more for his interest to quit it entirely. Was he really to do this, the fortune of any man who would set up with his recommendation must be made; but the truth of such a point would be hard to gain as many men will talk in this way of a profitable business they would grieve to give up and the friends are yet apter to enjoy this bit of vanity. But may not this suggest a hint of forming your studies in the same manner he did, to follow either branch that might turn out most advantageous, or both. I am sure Belfast is the place you would choose to settle in, and by adapting the above plan you would have a double chance – how far it is an eligible one you may determine.

Haliday¹⁸ is mighty happy in his young wife, goes to meeting twice every Sunday and never stays out later than twelve o'clock. She is affable and unaffected, but no way striking either in looks or behaviour. I dined with them at Portis's the assembly day, with a party of twenty Blackwoods, Kennedys, etc. We went all in state to the assembly and there the Doctor eyed his bride with great appearance of triumph. The gentleman he sat beside had his attention taken up by a much finer object, viz. Miss Brice,¹⁹ who was dancing at the same time. The Doctor starting out of his reverie clapped his hand on his friend's shoulder and swore by his soul he thought her a fine woman, to which the other assented with equal warmth but hearing the Doctor remark how happy he was in having got her, dropped the subject while he was safe. Old Agnew²⁰ of Kilwaughter is dead and has made a remarkable will, but a very just one. His estate of £2,000 a year goes equally among all his relatives for eleven years, that is until Val Jones's²¹ son is of age, when he changes his name to Agnew, takes possession of it clear of all encumbrances and twelve hundred pound in cash. The two young Agnews that you may remember in Belfast get £320 a year each until that time, and if Jones dies before he is of age the estate remains mostly as it is at present divided. The females of his family he has not been so liberal to; Margaret Jones gets £3,000 thousand added to four she now has; but failing her brother the estate goes neither to her nor her heirs.

17 Dr John Mattear (c.1726-1806), her brother-in-law.

18 Dr Alexander Henry Haliday (1728-1802), physician, whig, a leading citizen of Belfast (*DNB*); he married Anne Edmonstone, as his second wife, in 1775.

19 Probably Prudence, daughter of Edward Brice of Kilroot, Co. Antrim, who married George Bateson of London in 1779.

20 William Agnew of Kilwaughter, Co. Antrim, for his will see LPC/1036 (PRONI).

21 Valentine Jones, merchant of Belfast (c.1711-1805), who married Agnew's daughter as his second wife; his children by this marriage were Edward Jones Agnew (d.1835), of Kilwaughter, MP for Co. Antrim, and Margaret Jones, to whom Drennan proposed marriage in 1785 (LHL, Blackwood 46).

You bid me mention the ladies – by which I presume there is one you hope will not escape me. If I knew who it was be assured I would be as particular as possible, and whenever you have occasion for a confidant if you will honour me so far I am certain you would have no cause to repent it. I'll call to my mind all my own youthful pleasings [sic] follies, and almost feel yours, yet let me not promise too much, were you to form a connection I thought any way unworthy of you, or even with a female of mediocrity, I fear I would not be satisfied. You hint at a secret which I don't believe you are possessed of, but your pretence to it prevented my showing my mother your letter, for trifles light as air are to her in these matters sufficient to torment her. Of Mrs Makenzie I know nothing. Grace Wallace²² is in a melancholy situation at the beck of her poor mother who has been dying by inches these two months. She is now reduced to the extremest state of decay that is possible – yet still breathes and has not done more this some weeks. No girl is mentioned but Miss Brice who is every day more and more admired. Molly Wilson²³ is thought to be in a consumption and ordered to Bristol in spring.

There are two reasons which ought to sway Nancy in her return home. One is, my mother having formed a most intimate connection with Hamilton the player who lodges just opposite to her, a few nights ago she bespoke Jane Shore²⁴ and the citizen took and disposed of tickets by the dozen. The house was crowded and Lord and Lady Antrim²⁵ happening to come that night, all passed with the players for my mother's great interest and both Hug[h]²⁶ and Andrew have got the farce ever since, they are however in great disgrace at home. Our Lamela²⁷ got drunk the day we had the Halidays, and as it was once more with his master's rum he got warning the next day and is hired with T. Saunders.²⁸ Mr Smith²⁹ and Hugh had been too cordial on Monday night, which occasioned the smash of the lanthorn and some other dire disasters which ended in warning. The storm is not yet over but has I think subsided into a little growling.

This is the consequence of your bidding me write everything. Are you not ashamed to receive such stuff? Burn it quickly I beseech you. I have not a frank for you so must direct to Nancy. My other reason for wishing her return is that Miss Nelly Stewart³⁰ of Donegall Street will quite put her nose out [in] Mr Portis's.

Write soon, my dear Will. You [hav]e b[een] very lazy and Nancy depends upon you for she never gives me a line now. I will not allow your want of franks to be an excuse so don't offer it. I am glad to find you speak warmly of your old friend

22 Grace Wallace (b.1759), later Joy, daughter of Joseph Wallace (d.1786), JP for Counties Antrim and Down; her mother, who was a Gordon of Delamont, Co. Down, died in March 1776.

23 Probably Mary Wilson of Purdysburn who died in 1776.

24 *Jane Shore*, a tragedy by Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718).

25 Letitia, Marchioness of Antrim (d.1801).

26 Hugh Patten, Mrs Drennan's servant.

27 A rascally servant in Alain René Le Sage's, *Gil Blas* (1715, 1724, 1735), a comic novel translated into English by Tobias Smollett.

28 Probably Thomas Saunders of Belfast who married the eldest daughter of Dr William Seed in the following May.

29 Brice Smith and his wife were neighbours and close friends of the Drennans.

30 Daughter of Captain William Stewart, and sister of Drennan's friend, Counsellor Alexander Stewart.

Stewart,³¹ treat him well. You never mentioned a lad that Mackay³² recommended to you. His mother has a house in Edinburgh, are you ever there? When you bought your clothes you ought to have summer into consideration and crimson will not look well the[n]. MM

2 Friday, 16 March 1776

WILLIAM DRENNAN [EDINBURGH], TO MRS [ANN] DRENNAN,³³ DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [1]

Dear Mother, You receive this from a man who told me he had seen you before he left Belfast, and as he is returning I send you a few lines along with him. I have not often received more pleasure than I had from Sam's letter. It was indeed unexpected and I had gone so far in the affair as to agree with Mr Hill³⁴ to accept of Mr Sandilands as a pupil the beginning of the summer, but as he had not mentioned it to Lady Torphichen³⁵ I got off with a candid acknowledgement of the reasons which had influenced me to change my former resolution, and an apology for troubling him before I had intimated the matter to my friends. I am happy in being freed from this engagement. Mr Stewart³⁶ had all along considered it as much too trifling for me to accept and he has given me hopes that he will have it in his power either before or at the time when I have finished my medical studies to make me an offer much more advantageous, and which may probably afford me an opportunity of visiting the Continent. I am bent therefore on seeing Ireland at the end of this session, and I thank heaven that is now approaching – never was there a person who loved Ireland and hated Scotland more than I do – and this love and hatred seem both to increase every hour that I live. I believe Nancy will travel with me. The gentleman who desired to accompany does not go till the lat[er] end of April and about that time I shall be ready myself. The Prestonpans family is at present in distress – old Mrs McCormick was taken ill about a week ago and has been so low ever since that it is not thought she can last out long. It must be disagreeable to Nancy who I believe longs for home as much as I do. She says she has gone nine long months and I cannot persuade her that less would be indecent in a lady. I hope you have had as little want of money the last winter as I. My expenses have been as great as usual but Sam has taken care that my pocket should never be empty. I am not certain whether I have received the worth of my money but I hope you have not utterly thrown it away on me. I have never been free from complaints this winter – indeed the most of them have been imaginary and my chief real one at present is a

31 Probably Dugald Stewart (1753-1828), philosopher, fellow student of Drennan's at Glasgow; during his father's illness he discharged his duties as Professor of Mathematics at Edinburgh (*DNB*).

32 Rev. James Mackay (d.1781), Presbyterian minister at Belfast.

33 Mrs Ann Drennan (1719-1806), his mother.

34 Probably George Hill, see below p.8.

35 Elizabeth Sandilands, widow of the 8th Baron Torpichen.

36 Probably Dugald Stewart.

desire for home. If you meet with James Kennedy³⁷ at any time, you may tell him I take it very much amiss that he never gave me a line in answer to a long letter I wrote to him.

I wrote to Matty before and am expecting as long and entertaining a letter as I last received from her. My compliments to Mrs Smith, Mr Smith and all friends. I am dear mother, yours etc., WILLIAM DRENNAN

I have not given the bearer anything.

3 1 April [1776]

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH] [2]

My dearest Will, Your letter to my mother by a private hand was above a fortnight on its travels which will account for the displeasure I expressed in my last. I was very anxious to hear how you had determined in regard to the young gentleman, and the more so, as I thought myself to blame in advising you so warmly to what was likely to turn out an error. I am happy to find myself freed from this reproach and in the prospect of so soon meeting my beloved friends. The convenience, however, of your being able to lessen your expenses would certainly have been very eligible even in a trifle, which I hope you fortunately miss for something more material. Let nothing therefore be wanting on your part to forward any scheme which may make the remainder of your education easier to my mother and not improper for you.

A bad headache and a touch of the vapours determined my mother lately to make her will, a step certainly very proper for her to take. J. Galt Smith³⁸ was the person she consulted, and by her desire he spoke to Sam and me as she said she wished for all our approbation. Of the £200 in Sam's hand but one³⁹ remains, which added to burdens fo[—————] Nancy, as I have go[—————] with one to mak[—————]-pans divided [—————] be sold, and go arr[—————.] as I found my[—————] subject to her [—————] was a little against you I will tell you it. I cannot help thinking it impossible for Nancy ever to live independent in the station she is in under £1,000 pound and to pay for diet and lodging (which she ought to have in her power) and to keep up a tolerable appearance, even upon that would require good management. What the salt pans⁴⁰ may be is uncertain, but with her share of that, and even half of the furniture, I fear it will not be the £1,000. As it has been your education which occasions this, would it not be hard she should be the sufferer and the one of the family on whom least has ever been expended? I therefore gave it as my opinion that you ought not to come in for any share of the chattels, without it was with a view of immediately giving you some ready money which you

37 James Trail Kennedy (1751-1832), a boyhood friend of Drennan's, son of the Rev. Gilbert Kennedy, minister of the Second Presbyterian Church of Belfast; Kennedy became a prosperous wine and spirit merchant, investing in glassmaking and brewing.

38 John Galt Smith (1731-1802), a leading Belfast merchant.

39 i.e. £100.

40 The location of these salt pans is unknown.

ought to refund, and that let you encounter what difficulties you may, Nancy's fortune ought to be as near £1,000 as possible. You may observe it is Nancy and you only I have mentioned all along and I hope you will justly infer that it was because I was not thinking of a third. By the will Nancy is left twenty guineas more than us [—————]nk quite right. [—————]ther she would make [—————] not, the will [—————]'ts probable she [—————] you are [—————] a year to nurse McCormick. I shall now try to revive your spirits by what will afford a little present comfort. There has been a dividend out of the salt pans, and a larger one to my mother than she ever received, no less than £80 pounds. She has paid Mr Sinclair⁴¹ his five and twenty guineas. He behaved with the greatest genteelity, would not accept any interest and wished to have it in his power to serve her. The rest of her debts are trifles, so that she will now have something before hand – but this was meant to be kept a grand secret from us all, so you must not seem to know it. She desires you buy a coat, fit to save your crimson and to wear with washing, waistcoat and breeches. Write immediately, and after consulting with Nancy let my mother know what money you will both want, which I am persuaded she will send you with cheerfulness. I do not wish Sam to send it, as it breaks in upon the capital, and she has sufficient by her.

Can I now make any amends for this dry disagreeable detail? Politics is a theme you like, but I am not qualified for it. If you have not read Dr Price's⁴² late performance get it directly and with it in your hand, or head, bid defiance to all the slavish arguments the greatest Scotch genius can oppose to you. Miss Wallace has paid the last duties to her poor mother with a tenderness and perseverance that placed her character in a most amiable light. Her father talks of taking her with him to England, I suppose as a jaunt for her health, after a long and very close confinement.

You may expect to see me a poor lean pale fright and my nose graced with an emblem of wisdom if you choose to call it so and with which I cannot any longer dispense. I tell you this before hand that you may not mortify me by your surprise.

Lord Donegall⁴³ is behaving very oddly and disagreeably to his tenantry by his interfering in the election and declaring he will not be satisfied with less than two votes from his tenants, and is so much out of humour with them at present that Talbot⁴⁴ writes he dare not mention navigation, church, nor anything relative to this town. Dr Haliday has wrote to Talbot giving the reasons for the people here acting contrary to his lordship's desire and the necessity there is at present for having one member that will serve and represent them. I am told the letter was clever and worthy of the writer. Of Wilson's success there is not any doubt. He has been in town for some days but does not ask a vote. He behaves in the election affair with sense and propriety, at least with great policy. Yours, MM

41 Thomas Sinclair (c.1718-98), a leading Belfast merchant.

42 Dr Richard Price (1723-91), writer on morals, politics and economics (*DNB*); the pamphlet was probably his *Observations on civil liberty and the justice and policy of the war with America* (1776).

43 5th Earl and later 1st Marquis of Donegall (1739-99), an absentee landlord.

44 Charles Talbot (1721-98), second son of Major General Sheringham Talbot of Evesham; chief agent of the Donegall estates, created baronet in 1790.

4 Wednesday, 3rd April [1776]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, NORTH STREET, BELFAST [3]

My dearest Matty, I have just now read your short letter and I hasten in the same minute to answer it, as I would not have the slightest appearance of displeasure on your side at that time which I hope will so soon show all the warmth of affection on mine, at that time when I shall see my beloved Ithaca once more. Never, never had man a more burning affection for relations, for friends, for country than I have, and the pleasure I use to feel on the first day of my return to Ireland is a sufficient reward for the pains of purgatory which I suffer here. Neglect you? – why I declare I cannot read two pages without thinking of Belfast. I am the continual joke of the lads here for making Belfast the eternal subject of my conversation. I dream of Belfast. Write? – why, I have been corresponding with you these five months by night and by day and have received but two letters in return. Dear Matty, be far from imagining I can forget my friends. Had my memory been less tenacious I might have advanced perhaps farther in my studies – yet many people and some who are most dear to me I know, think me an insensible young man. I disclaim the title. My heart is not indeed enclosed in a glass-case for every one to observe its motions, but I boast its graceful weakness as well as any other and I would not exchange that portion of pure benevolence which I may not appear to possess for the pure intelligence of a Newton. I remember my dear father,⁴⁵ when I used to walk along with him and strike down with a little stick the plants which grew the tallest as I went, rebuked me often and said ‘Let alone’. I hope I have since that time caught some of that sympathy which felt so much for the fall of a flourishing vegetable, and though I really believe you got a greater share of this flame than I did from nature, yet I make no doubt that those particular branches of knowledge which I have had most taste for, and which I have as yet perhaps too much cultivated, has served to render my sensibility of mind more exquisite than nature seemed to have at first designed. I wrote to my mother and you since I received a letter from Ireland. I told her of my being set free from the dismal doom I had set before my eyes of remaining in this place for some years. By the bye I met Professor Hill⁴⁶ about an hour ago – he looked at me and turned his head aside without deigning to speak to me. Most fortunately I did not take off my hat to the puppy, which on first seeing him I was going to do. I suppose Dr McCormick will be much in the same style though Nancy tells me the contrary. Should an Irishman bear to look⁴⁷ thus little? What would I give to see Sam for one week among them. I declare to God I am ashamed and I blush this moment at the thought of having crouched so to them. I have the pleasure once a week of venting some of my rancour in the Speculative Society⁴⁸ which I could not do in a private company, and as the most of

45 Rev. Thomas Drennan (1696-1768), minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Belfast.

46 George Hill (1750-1819), joint Professor of Greek at University of St Andrews, at 22 (*DNB*); he was a relation, probably a nephew, of Dr Joseph McCormick.

47 Word unclear.

48 The Speculative Society was a college society founded in 1764 for the improvement of literary composition and public speaking.

them take me for an American I can do it with the greater safety – I wish Hill were a member.

Nancy does not set out until the latter end of the month. She seems to have a wonderful desire of going with Mr Garbet and not inclined to wait two or three days longer for me – whether the motive be interest or a nobler passion you may judge. I proposed to her some time ago to set off from Greenock with her for Dublin where we would be in two days at farthest, the expense would be much the same and she might have an opportunity of seeing Dublin carrying her clothes with her, which perhaps she never will have again – but Mr Garbet – I have a great mind to set off the same day by the way of Glasgow, for they go by Dumfries, and be in Belfast before her without her knowledge, and get my mother's blessing before her. All this if I live, for I am still much in the vapours – my stomach complaints have returned with the spring with the addition of a headache which is pretty severe, and sometimes – you may laugh if you please – I scarce think I shall make out the three weeks which remains. I have made out my epitaph – You may tell Mr Crombie it is as follows '*moriens dulces reminiscitur Argos*'.⁴⁹

I believe Nancy is to get her travelling expenses from the Doctor. I am not certain of this but I shall write her tomorrow. I intend however to send off this letter immediately as I long to show you I can never neglect you. I am almost ashamed to say I shall want more money myself. It is astonishing what a number of trifling articles remain at the end of the season to be paid for. There is a suit of green-coloured clothes which you will probably see in Nancy's box when it arrives – it is superfine cloth, quite new, and I got it for 30 shillings. Nancy thinks them a great bargain. I shall write to Sam next week what sum I will want. I wish you could enclose me a frank to him in your next as your franks have passed.⁵⁰

A letter directed to me 'Student Edinburgh' will pass. Who wrote the Freeholder?⁵¹ Is there any mention of a militia being established? We owe the repeal of the Vestry Bill to the dispute with America. Poor America – much I do fear for it – if it be conquered, let us prepare for the universal conflagration. Was not Montgomery⁵² vanquished, superior to Wolfe the victor? I suppose you have seen his epitaph by order of the Congress – it is very good but he deserves a better. I have written to three of my friends in different parts, and have not received [one] line from one of them in return. Be good Matty, and write to me immediately on reading this. Tell me every little article you may think will be agreeable to me. I am, my dearest Matty, your ever affectionate brother, WILLIAM DRENNAN

Perhaps it may be as good to tell Sam how much I may want – I imagine it will not be less than five pounds. If any remains I can give it to Nancy or return it to him in Belfast. I always forgot to mention my being often with Mrs Vize⁵³ – she is a very good kind of a woman and I go there once a week to talk about Ireland.

49 'Dying, he remembers sweet Argos' (Virgil, *Aeneid* 10, 782).

50 Letters franked by members of parliament were carried free and counterfeit franks were widely used.

51 A series of letters to the freeholders of Co. Antrim by 'A Freeholder' (*Belfast News-Letter*, March-April 1776).

52 Richard Montgomery (1736-75), major-general in the American army, killed in an unsuccessful attack on Quebec, which had been taken by James Wolfe (1727-59) in 1759 (*DNB*).

53 Possibly the mother of John Vize, a contemporary at Edinburgh.

5 Sunday, 9 June [1776]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, MILFORD HAVEN, TO MARTHA MCTIER, NORTH STREET, BELFAST, IRELAND [33A]

My dearest Matty, I write this from Milford Haven in South Wales – look at Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* if you have not heard of the place. We were driven in here by contrary winds and as they are greatly increased since we came, the sea looking very proudly in a suit of dark blue trimmed with silver, we may remain in the state of Imogen⁵⁴ these three weeks for what I see. Bristol is but 120 miles off and I am almost tempted to set off for that place, if I knew a single person there. I was very sick at sea for the first day but have since eat, drank and slept as well as usual – my breast neither better or worse – my spirits as variable as the element I went on – they are now high. 'Tis a fine evening, the elegance of neatness is in this inn and the town tempting enough to take a walk into, and I shall go out and if my muse is gracious I will solicit her for a stanza or two. I am sure you will be surprised that I did not go to Liverpool, I really sacrificed an entertaining companion, Vaughan,⁵⁵ and I hope to see him if I go to London where I don't intend remaining three days but shall set off for Liverpool or Bristol if I find myself worse, but if better, Belfast is the place for me and no other on this earth. I shall write a long letter from London to Nancy. Ever yours, WD

6 Friday, 25 June⁵⁶ [1776]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, LONDON, TO MARTHA MCTIER, NORTH STREET, BELFAST [33B]

I write to you, my dearest Matty, from London. We arrived from Milford by a passage of eight or nine days – the weather was favourable except the last two days which were exceedingly tempestuous and made me more than once wish to die a dry death. It made me more happy than I can well express to receive a letter from Mr Mackay through Loftus Woods who is at present in London; it made me hope to have a letter from you. I waited twice yesterday on Jamy Adair⁵⁷ who was not at home, but I called again this morning and breakfasted with him at his chambers in Lincoln's Inn when I had my hopes most pleasingly gratified in reading your ever affectionate, your truly sisterly letter – how do I wish to preserve a life which my dearest sisters make so precious to me. Mr Adair was very civil and polite but had I been from Belfast a thousand years I would have been a little more warm than he appeared – but indeed he behaved as well as I could expect, except in asking me after five minutes conversation, and although he had received your letter enclosed to me and I had mentioned my name, if I was a son of Mr Drennan's. He presents

54 ? living in a cave in Wales (*Cymbeline*).

55 A Richard Vaughan became an MD at Edinburgh in 1782.

56 Friday was not the 25 June but the reference to the Co. Antrim election proves that this letter dates from 1776.

57 James Adair (d.1798), serjeant at law and MP (*DNB*); son of James Adair of Belfast who married Margaret Maxwell of Finnebrogue in 1742 (PRONI, D/1556/16/13).

his best compliments to you and Sam, and as I mentioned my desire of seeing his father, directed me to his residence in the country and told me if I did not go tomorrow he should be glad to dine with me tomorrow at a tavern. I will however go to May Place tomorrow and if his father invites me will probably stay there a day or two – but then what course shall I take? Most willingly would I have returned to Belfast when I entered the Thames, and as the House of Commons is shut and Garrick⁵⁸ no more, I have scarce any curiosity to stay here – I have seen St Paul's and Westminster Abbey – it is enough to show I have been in London. My breast never was much better on the sea. I think it is rather more so since I came here but still I dare not return and say I am well, and to enable myself to see you in complete health I believe I will go to Bristol and provided I stay no time at Adair's I shall set out the day after tomorrow. London has not a single enticement to me and I was last night with a set of Templars⁵⁹ who gave me a complete surfeit of the place. If I go to Bristol I shall probably return from that place to Belfast by sea or to the nearest port and I really hope in a fortnight or three weeks my health may be sufficiently re-established.

The sea has made me a good deal thinner but as my appetite is good I hope I shall retrieve both the flesh and the spirit in some time. Believe me, dear Matty, that I am always better than I think myself to be and set down everything I say on the favourable side. My spirits are not very good at present or I should have written you a long letter – I shall certainly write once a week. I suppose I shall get some money from Dickson and shall endeavour to see him for that purpose to-morrow – he has behaved very civilly to me. I met Mr James Brown⁶⁰ in James's Park an hour ago but did not think it worth while for the time I intend staying here to introduce myself to him. I have the greatest envy of your happiness in being present to share in the success of the election and I don't know a situation on this earth I would desire this moment so soon as Wilson's. Farewell my dearest Matty till I see you. I am happy my mother was not angry at my change of route – it was done solely with a view for health and I had not any other view whatever. You must excuse me for this hurried epistle. I write it in a coffee room in a crowd of people and confusion of tongues. Alexander Stewart⁶¹ entreats me to give his compliments to you. He was happy in seeing me here. In my next, which I hope will be from Bristol, I shall be more particular. I am as surely if every one was I ought to be, your most affectionate brother, WD

I wish I had accepted a letter which Miss Callwell was so kind as to promise me to her uncle.

58 David Garrick (1717-79), the actor, had made his last appearance a fortnight before on 10 June 1776 (*DNB*).

59 i.e. law students.

60 Probably a brother of John Brown of Peter's Hill, Belfast.

61 Alexander Stewart (c.1752-1845) was a student with Drennan at Glasgow; he was the son of Captain William Stewart, merchant of Belfast, and became a barrister.

7 27 February [1777]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [CASTLECOR, CO. CORK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [5]

Dearest Matty, I am heartily vexed that I waited for a frank, and can assure you I shall be more punctual for the future. Miss Conron has been here this week past, and is so extremely ill with a most singular complaint, that this family can neither receive or pay visits. It does not however prevent me from taking exercise on horse-back every day that is the least favourable, indeed the weather has been so wet for some time past that I find it difficult to get a ride of any length. This day was a fine one and I rode for three hours. One thing is certain if I do not recruit with my present management, you may be assured that any other mode will little avail. I have still some mementoes of the breast which raise disagreeable croakings in the rookery of my imagination. When will you cease your cawing, cursed and ill-omened sprites? Whey turns sour in my stomach. I drink some Mallow⁶² water and take some bark which agrees well with me – as there is none good to be gotten here, I wish you would enclose me an ounce. Who is the author of this Essay? Tell me what you hear of Stewart.

I beg James Kennedy would do me the honour of a line. Mrs Conron⁶³ was my patient for a few days in a slight fever and sore throat. Unfortunate Lee!⁶⁴ He was well worth 1,000 Hessians. Write me news and I will write my progress in getting health.

8 [1777]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [CASTLECOR, CO. CORK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [6]

Dear Matty, As I have not had the pleasure of a letter from any of my friends these three weeks, I suppose they will not be displeased with an equal neglect on my part. I am yours affectionately, WD

P.S. Mrs Conron's correspondent acquaints her that there are a number of chintzes in Cork at £2 7s 0d – and one very elegant one at £3 0s 0d which if you choose shall be purchased. You may if you think proper inform me of any of the West India ships belonging to Belfast which mean to touch at Cork in their return. Please to deliver the enclosed – there is nothing deadly in it. I meant to write to Sam this post, but have not left myself like all lazy people sufficient time.

9 Sunday, April [1777]

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [CASTLECOR] [7]

At last you have wrote a letter that breathes an air of cheerfulness. I shall not suppose it the forced production of a sunshine day but a pleasing evergreen, reared by

⁶² Mallow, a small spa town in Co. Cork.

⁶³ Drennan was recovering from an illness at Castlecor, Co. Cork, home of Christopher Conron, who married Ann Donaldson of Belfast in 1774 (*Hibernian Chronicle*).

⁶⁴ Charles Lee (1731-82), American major-general, captured by the British in December 1776, at which the Americans offered to exchange him for six Hessian officers of high rank (*DNB*).

reason, and which with a little care may flourish the usual time. Your description of Lady Dean⁶⁵ was one of your laboured performances upon which I would not have you value yourself. You bade me read it to Jack Hay,⁶⁶ why not to Kinlay,⁶⁷ who could do as much justice to bombast and has as high a relish for ridicule, but little Hay having denied my request to him of writing to you, with all the self-important supercilious air of a man loaded with much business, I did not choose to take up his time nor gratify his satiric taste. Dr Mattear says you know the fit remedy for that oppressive pain of the breast if it should return, viz. losing a little blood. You mention the cold bath but certainly it is much too early to think of that, and at Mallow I suppose you have no convenience for it.

We have here had a most severe and uncommon spring and two days since thunder hail and snow which covered our hills, now it must certainly become more temperate and fit either for your travelling home, or enjoying at Castlecor. By this time I suppose you have determined what stay you are to make, and when I hope what you say is truth that you are gaining health every day, I own it grieves me to think of your leaving a place that may yet be more conducive to your recovery by a warm season and opportunities of using it to advantage which you cannot have at home. What you told me were Mr and Mrs Conron's answers to you on your proposing to leave them looked kind on paper, but you must judge better, for manner speaks more than words – and if you do not think it would be agreeable to them to have you stay longer I would immediately set out. They may have some scheme of going abroad which your being with them prevents. On the contrary, if you think it will not be either disagreeable or inconvenient I would by all means stay some time longer, I am sure you can be no great restraint, and but that I fear you are too grave and take but little pains to make yourself otherwise, I would believe your company must be acceptable. Mr and Mrs Conron are both cheerful and enjoy best those who are so. Take care that you do not study to please yourself by poring over books when you ought to contribute to the entertainment of others. Some time next month Dr Wight⁶⁸ is to be here on a tour through Ireland with three young gentlemen, they are to visit the Lake of Killarney. Ralph Ward⁶⁹ and his wife I hear intend going there also in May. Some of these parties may perhaps be fortunate for you.

My mother thinks it is time for you to return but not from the least fear of what I hope Mr Conron only bantered about, having the firmest belief in his friendly attention. You must certainly want money, therefore write directly and if my gown is got tell me the price and I will remit it to you with the rest. A. Stewart⁷⁰ and his wife are arrived, have stayed here a fortnight, and are now set out to Dublin in order to his being called to the bar. I did not see either of them but Nancy spent

65 A poem by Drennan on either Charlotte, widow of Sir Robert Deane of Cork, or her daughter-in-law, Anne, wife of Sir Robert Tilson Deane, later 1st Baron Muskerry.

66 Jack Hay, son of John Hay, bookseller in Belfast, a student at Glasgow with Drennan, later went to America.

67 There was a Surgeon Kinley in Belfast at this date.

68 Possibly Dr James Campbell White, Belfast physician and United Irishman.

69 Rev. Ralph Ward (c.1744-84), Archdeacon of Down, married Eleanor Wilson of Purdysburn.

70 Stewart married Elizabeth Leigh on 20 January 1777 at St Mary Aldermanbury, London; the marriage was not a success and ended in divorce.

an evening with them at Mr Portis's. Alex asked for you with kindness and seems much the same, behaved well and with modesty, and made a tolerable figure at the whist table. His wife is a fashionable well-looking girl, smart and free and mighty fond and newfangled [*sic*] of her husband – it is not thought she and her Papa will long agree and when they return here they are advised to get a house of their own. Alex would be glad to have Davy C's⁷¹ but how he will either support it or a gay wife and perhaps a family for three years is hard to say, her allowance until she is of age being £90 a year at that time he is secure of the fortune but cannot possess it until her youngest sister is twenty-one and that will not be for eighteen years, then it will be £1,600 at least and on this he must borrow. The friends however have it in their power to add what they please to her allowance from the time she is of age but they do not incline to favour Stewart at present, he having refused to make the settlement they required, viz. her whole fortune and in case she died that it should revert to her friends, but Stewart wisely refused this unreasonable request, offered to settle the half and leave it quite in her own power – this at least after marriage was very fair.

I have not any political news, the majority here still think our injured friends (if we may yet call them so) will work out their own salvation without either fear or trembling, while some imagine ruin inevitable awaits them. Have you read Dr Price's last book? It must afford you pleasure though a melancholy one, and if his calculations are as just as his reasoning is clear and convincing, I think his book will awaken the people of England. He appears to me to have a good heart and to know human nature, which is all that in my opinion is necessary to foresee the bad effects of this cruel war. What weak quarrelsome proud female could have made a more wretched figure in politics than the K[ing] and ministry have done? I can never believe that good policy in a state and justice and common honesty must be set at variance, but that the oftener they act in consort the better, or rather that they are really one – but this I doubt has long been out of the English creed. I have just been reading Savage's⁷² works and I think I can perceive where a friend of mine has been obliged to this unfortunate man in a poem on the Eye.

What a poor figure does Hume's⁷³ last speech make, it made me melancholy for some time after I read it. From such a mind as his one might have naturally hoped for some thoughts at the close of life that would have afforded pleasure. You will say, no, but I could hope for it and yet allow him his prejudices against religion, for certainly he was not an atheist, at death there never was one, nor do I believe he would affect it – yet not a word nor thought of that God who had so happily lead him through life, of gratitude, love, confidence, or resignation, and yet like you thought it was pretty I suppose to talk a little about dying and therefore introduced Charon and his boat. To doubt all things and yet die happy is what I cannot account

71 David Conyngham (1727-88), a customs official in Belfast, later inherited the Springhill estate, Co. Londonderry, from his brother.

72 Richard Savage (d.1743), poet (*DNB*).

73 David Hume (1711-76), philosopher and atheist; his autobiography was published in 1777 and gave great offence by dwelling on his calmness in meeting death (*DNB*).

for either in geniuses or their inferiors. I suppose you heard of poor Mr Crawford's⁷⁴ generally lamented death. This day old Mrs Hyde⁷⁵ bade an eternal farewell to her substance – the young woman and [I] had a plan for spending part of the summer at Ballynahinch⁷⁶ but Hyde⁷⁷ has spoiled her part of it. Mine is thank God left to my own inclination but advised by Dr Mattear for my stomach. Write immediately and if you go to Killarney bring me some arbutus seed. Yours ever, M MCTIER

I have never sent you a frank that was not genuine so get the money returned. I bought you under-stockings but could not get them put in a cover, sure you can get them easily from Cork.

10 Monday, 4 May 1777

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [CASTLECOR, CO. CORK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [8]

Dearest Matty, Your letter agreeably disappointed me, as I had almost despaired of hearing from you any more. I really think I have stayed here, when I begin to recollect, too long a time, and yet were I not a little afraid of scorn's slow unmoving finger pointing at me, I might perhaps spend some more loitering hours in this place – but I am resolved to see you as soon as I possibly can, and determine on my future plan of life with an ardour sufficient to burn those cords which have hitherto bound me. I am persuaded that with exact regimen and regular exercise I may acquire health in the summer months as soon in Belfast as here. The great delay is to see Killarney – without a party, it is expensive, and I can hear of none. I doubt Whytt or Ward will be too late for me. My purse has been so drained by my journey, and the assizes at Cork, that I have but four guineas left. One of these I intend to divide among the servants. Mr Conron tells me you need not remit me money, but shall give me the contents of a bill which I am to pay Miss Hamilton⁷⁸ on my return. I am obliged to you for your news of Stewart and am very sorry there are no such golden harvests in this country. I never read anything relative to Savage except his poem of the Bastard, and his life by Johnson;⁷⁹ in neither of which do I remember the smallest mention of that subject, so that I still preserve my eye, though you appear to have lost your spectacles.

I have not yet seen Hume's last speech, as you call it. If ever man died an atheist, he did – and I believe many have done so. When we examine the tendency of a mind where great pride, great insensibility and great abilities happen to unite, it will be found to lead exactly to that confident self-sufficiency which led Satan, the first of this sect, to deny his Maker, and perhaps this natural presumption of the

74 James Crawford of Crawfordsburn, Co. Down, who died in April 1777.

75 Mary, widow of Samuel Hyde, merchant of Belfast, died in her 79th year in April 1777; she was the mother-in-law of both Waddell Cunningham and Thomas Greg, leading merchants of Belfast.

76 Ballynahinch, Co. Down, a small spa town.

77 Samuel Hyde the younger (1727–99), Belfast merchant; his wife Peggy was a daughter of James Hamilton of Ballymenoch (Blackwood 7).

78 A relation of Mrs Conron.

79 'The Bastard' (1728) by Richard Savage, see note 72 above; Samuel Johnson (1709–84), *Life of Mr Richard Savage* (1744).

mind was one cause why that Maker, in the formation of man, united in one mass the two extremes of created being, matter brutal and spirit pure; and in order to keep down that tendency to an opinion of self-sufficiency (which had deceived beings purely immaterial), by fastening this log of body to their ambitious souls. Hume's mind had been distorted by his own sophistry (for self-deception is the well-merited consequence of perverted reason) and his fears, the only motive to belief in him which remained, were quieted by natural insensibility and a lethargic constitution so that he might have died an atheist in belief, adding one to the numerous common herd whose ignorance of God and acquiescence in his non-existence, whose 'God bless us' is as little indicative of any real belief as Mr H's 'God d— us'. In short, the generality of men are I greatly fear only a better kind of sceptics, and though they answer 'yes', when you ask them, 'is there a God?', it is because they heard their fathers say so. How can we be said to have a notion of a thing, which was neither acquired by sense, by reflection, or by having it impressed in the original mould – the herd of mankind have it not at all – except in the manner we have ideas of written language, for which read Burke's⁸⁰ most ingenious chapter on words.

I can answer for it that sketch of L[ady] D[eane] was neither laborious nor indeed to speak impartially had it any relation to bombast. The courtly Prior⁸¹ was one of our most laborious writers, and the obscure Cowley⁸² one of the most hasty – who so laborious often as the never-blotting Shakespeare. I have often been surprised that Pope⁸³ who was so remarkable for what someone calls the condensation of thought should be so admired by females – but half an hour's production will often appear laboured and half an hour more spent on it will make it appear easy. I did not as you feared insert it in a paper, read it to a company, or present it kneeling to the object admired. I perfectly agree with your political animadversion – were I to choose an emblem for the American great seal, it should be a Hercules as yet but in cradled infancy, strangling the serpents of taxation and despotism, sent by an envious step-dame to destroy the child of heaven. I am etc., WILLIAM DRENNAN

I wrote a letter to Mr Mackay last post – it is the last self-caused melancholy epistle I intend to write. Answer this letter on the day you receive it, and tell me what it was Kennedy mentioned to you relative to me, some time ago. I borrowed a guinea from Maziere⁸⁴ in Dublin and made him pay it, not choosing to put my mother to more expense. I fear he thought it worthwhile mentioning it to you – I would be sorry if he did. Give my compliments to Mr Bryson⁸⁵ and Mr Crombie when you meet them.

80 Edmund Burke (1729-97), writer and statesman (*DNB*); see *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful* (part 5).

81 Matthew Prior (1664-1721), poet (*DNB*).

82 Abraham Cowley (1618-67), poet (*DNB*).

83 Alexander Pope (1688-1744), poet (*DNB*).

84 Bartholomew Maziere (d.1823), a Dublin merchant.

85 James Bryson (1730?-96), Presbyterian minister at Belfast (*DNB*).

11 [1777]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, CASTLECOR [9]

MR Mackay dined here this day and his complying temper could not withstand my enticements for a sight of your letter, and a mighty mournful tale it is. Like other fictions which are prettily told, it drew a tear at the first reading, and at the second glance I wondered for what. True you have lost a father, but rather than in a gloomy mood picturing to yourself what he might (had he lived) done for you, you ought to consider how he would have done in the same, how he did do in worse circumstances. But then you have had few difficulties in your education. This indeed may have been a misfortune I confess, but for which there is now no remedy. Therefore make the best of it. What a pity it is that you had not published some work which by being slighted in the world might give you the common privilege of railing at it, and then in what terms, what good set terms, and with lack-lustre eyes, would you accuse Lady Fortune, and in my opinion for youth ever to do so is unnatural, unmanly, and not to be excused, but in a love fever, which we pardon for the sake of laughing at. For God's sake, what is there in your situation so very depressing? Take care that you are not ungrateful to a kind providence, and by being unhappy with supposed misfortunes merit real ones. You can when you please take out your degree. Are you angry that you have not yet got the promise of a sufficient number of patients? Let me rather suppose you fear from a more natural thought, that from constitution and temper you will not be able to follow the profession you have been educated for, but still that education is not lost and at the worst (if I may venture to say so) you can enter into a profession for which nature will more likely befriend you, for which you never seemed to have any dislike, that may easily make you independent and by prudence keep you so. In such a situation the only thing I would fear for you would be falling in love with an amiable girl without a fortune, but as you pant for fame and in the temper you indulge at present can never obtain it, if a lady should prove cruel, or you too fond to marry with a prospect of distressing her, you will have nothing more to do than exert your utmost abilities in a love elegy, die and be famous, and if you cannot do this at your time of life with your delicacy, sensibility, etc., you have no right to complaints that only become Shenstons,⁸⁶ etc.

I am surprised to find that you have not got my last long letter, I suppose before this you have. My sentiments are the same about your stay at Mr Conron's, rather indeed more willing you should return, since I find by a letter of Mrs Conron's to Mrs Donaldson⁸⁷ that you now never ride though there is a horse always ready for you. She says you are quite well but very low-spirited. I really begin to fear they are tired of you and my mother is ashamed of your stay. Of these matters you can judge best and I expect to hear your determination before this letter reaches you. I read Nancy your letter to Mackay with some fear that she would be infected by the

⁸⁶ William Shenstone (1714-63) poet (*DNB*); Martha is presumably referring to his elegies.

⁸⁷ Mrs Conron's stepmother, the widow of Hugh Donaldson; she was a half-sister of the merchant John Galt Smith and died in 1808 aged 94.

melancholy it contained but yet I durst not conceal it. I was quite mistaken however, for if you were to complain in the numbers of a Young,⁸⁸ so it was not of your breast, it would not touch hers at present.

Yesterday Jack Greg of Parkmount⁸⁹ had a public funeral attended by a number of people who did him or his character little good by rendering it conspicuous. If Mrs Conron has not bought my chintz do not mind it as I think it's probable I will soon have to put on mourning for Brice Smith,⁹⁰ but if the gown is bought say nothing of this. I gave J. Hay the frank and suppose he has honoured you by a letter before this. Jemmy Kennedy is busy overseeing his new house. I long to hear from you, as either to know you are on your way home or that you are kindly importuned to stay longer from it, would give me pleasure. If my stomach does not grow better perhaps you will find me at Ballynahinch. MM

12 9 am Sunday, 14th November 1777, franked by W. Stewart⁹¹

WILLIAM DRENNAN, PRESTONPANS, TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [9A]

Dearest Matty, I write to you at present from Prestonpans, and on that seventh day when I have done all that I had to do, you may be assured I shall remember your desire, and I will do it the better as I shall probably be pre-occupied in the other six days. I have portioned out my time between business and exercise in such a manner as I hope may secure the advantages of both and I shall pay equal attention to my own health and to the diseases of others. I came out here on Friday and return tomorrow, when the classes are renewed, having intermitted this week past on account of the sacrament. I have waited as yet on none of the professors but Black,⁹² who received me as a stranger; and as I expected, never asked me a question about Belfast. He has one of those monstrous minds which is complimented with the name of pure intelligence, though as far removed from the perfection of our nature as the gross sensuality of a Rochester.⁹³ You may tell Nancy I drank tea with the McKnights⁹⁴ and officiated as per proxy in all the ceremonial necessary in addressing such a character as the lady of that house seems to possess, one very opposite to the unaffected warmth, the unprostituted affection of that excellent woman who sits beside me. I battled with the dry Doctor and the august Advocate McCormick on the American subject like another Orlando,⁹⁵ and was a good match both for the Law and the Gospel. I called on the Drysdals⁹⁶ and the remaining Miss Campbells, one of them having gone to lead apes⁹⁷ in the [*sic*] Edinburgh below. I drank tea

88 Edward Young (1683-1765), poet, published *The complaint: on life, death and immortality* in 1742 (DNB).

89 Parkmount, Co. Antrim.

90 Brice Smith, last survivor of the Old Volunteer Company formed in Belfast in 1715, died September 1777 in his 80th year.

91 Possibly William Stewart (1710-78), MP for Newcastle.

92 Dr Joseph Black (1728-99), chemist, member of a Belfast merchant family (DNB).

93 John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester (1647-80), lyric poet and satirist (DNB).

94 Dr James McKnight (1721-1800), biblical critic (DNB).

95 Orlando or Roland, a hero of the Charlemagne romances.

96 Probably Rev. Dr John Drysdale (1718-88) (DNB).

97 To lead apes in hell, i.e. to die an old maid.

with Mrs and Miss Kennedy who were extremely full of verbal civility, and the little lady was the perfect primer of politeness. I have taken a room at the same price but much better than what the good Mrs McKnight had engaged for me the last winter I spent here – 2s 6d per week and a shilling for coals. It is at the extremity of Nicholson's Street and very light and heartsome and not so much troubled with wind, and that not the best flavour, as this Edinburgh generally is. One might conceive it as a great unwieldy beast troubled and distressed every night with a periodical colic, and discharging at short intervals its thick and thin, its wind and water, unrestrained by decency and uninfluenced by admonitions or by punishments – Let it f— and s— away on a poor Irish American – I care not.

I shall return tomorrow and enter on my medical campaign with the caution of a Washington,⁹⁸ and I shall be an independent in physic as I am and ever will be in politics. I will fall down and bow before no Golden Calf – no Caesar in medicine shall lead me captive at the wheels of his chariot – like a lighthouse on a small but stable rock, unconnected with the world and seated in the expanded ocean, I shall guide the distressed by my native splendour and the waves of fashion and the winds of authority shall beat against it in vain. Sam told me he would get me an English bill – the sooner the more agreeable. I will soon require it and however unwillingly, must be expensive. What will the harvest be, when the manure is gold? I have not yet gotten upon a right plan with regard to my diet. The generation of my acquaintance hath passed away and I am an old student, though a young man; however I hope to supply their place with equally valuable ones and to live as comfortably as one of Swift's Strulbrugs⁹⁹ can be supposed to do. I have bought a hat made after the model of Lord Howe's¹⁰⁰ cock, and a pair of knee-buckles (would you believe it?) of solid silver. Dr McCormick is at present in Edinburgh spiritualizing bread and wine, or more properly speaking, knocking sinners down with the staff of life – I shall with him wait on the Principal¹⁰¹ some day next week.

I heard this morning a most virulent prayer to the Father of Mercies against poor America – O! how I pity such – Pray on ye men of blood – but if I ever forget thee O Jerusalem may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, may this right hand forget its cunning. Spirit, gentle spirit of my father, wouldst thou have prayed so? Dearest Matty, ever your WILLIAM DRENNAN

13 16 November 1777, franked by W Stewart

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, EDINBURGH [10 AND 12]

My dear Will, We received all your notes which were very satisfactory, especially the one which informed us that you were at Donaghadee the Tuesday that was a storm here. You were fortunate in meeting company there that would amuse you.

98 George Washington (1732-99), general, and first American president.

99 Wretched inhabitants of Luggnagg in *Gulliver's travels*, by Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) (*DNB*).

100 Richard, Earl Howe (1726-99), admiral of the fleet (*DNB*).

101 Rev. William Robertson (1721-93), historian and Principal of Edinburgh University, 1762-92 (*DNB*).

The rest of your route I did not like so well for riding the Glasgow road in bad weather was a trial of your health you ought to have avoided. I suppose you are obliged to take up with some mean stinking room by not having one bespoke. This I believe is your sixth winter in Scotland and during these seasons of youthful affection and open confidence you hoped you had found one friendly young man and he has passed away. If he had had one tender sentiment for you he would have answered the letter I honoured him too much in writing, I never saw one of his to you since he became a man that were not cold nothings. Do not be hurt by this, but let every year of your life take from your faith in friendship. Mine is so very weak that I begin to think it is above our nature except in some great sublime souls and I can even suppose this superiority of nature a loss to it, as it is only in great events and trials it deigns to shine, while the little attentions and tendernesses which are oftenest required to make life agreeable are, thank God, frequently met with, but our vanity setting us above these we aim at unalterable steady friendship where interest of no sort is its foundation. I laugh while I write these words, and without accusing these enthusiasts of insincerity can allow them one of the pleasant dreams, that helps a little to brighten life. We set out in life with open good will to all and a belief of feeling somewhat much superior to this for a friend. In a few years this friend is only to be met with in a brother, a wife, or some of those ties made strong by nature, interest and even custom.

While I am telling old unpleasant truths, you are panting for news of the public kind. There is much but so much uncertainty in it and your being in a place where you hear all and can judge better than I shall not repeat more of it than that there are a number of private letters in town with accounts of Washington's defeat and shocking slaughter[er] on both sides. This day there are packets but no accounts of it so that there is yet hope.

Hill Wallace¹⁰² has behaved with spirit in that unfortunate affair of his sister's, which he never heard of till the other night when Will Dobbs¹⁰³ and J. Greg¹⁰⁴ let him know it on his own account, as he was spoke slightly of by numbers and even Fraizer¹⁰⁵ himself for not calling him to an account. Wallace immediately sent Dobbs with a challenge which Fraizer refused to accept of, but talked over the affair and produced the affidavits of Miss Wallace's having been at his house. Wallace then went himself accompanied by Dobbs – they met F near his own house, he asks them to walk in and then W told him he was a rascal, etc., etc., had traduced his sister and that insisted on his immediately taking one of the pistols he held in his hand. F replied his cloth prevented his fighting but that it was true his sister had been in his house. Wallace then struck him in the face with such force he flew to the other side of the room where he stood tame until W went to him and giving him a stroke with a horse whip assured him that was the way he would treat him where ever he

102 Hill Wallace, later captain of 14th Foot, died 1794.

103 William Dobbs, RN, son of Rev. Richard Dobbs of Lisburn, fatally wounded in John Paul Jones's attack on the *Drake* in Belfast Lough, 1778.

104 Probably a son of Thomas Greg, merchant of Belfast.

105 Possibly William Frazer, curate at Ballyhalbert, Co. Down, in 1773; see copy letter from Drennan to Frazer (PRONI, T/965/6).

met him for the future. He stood at the door and branded Frazier with every opprobrious term while Dobbs damned him like a tar for giving them so much trouble and then to refuse fighting. They called at Newtown and upon Caldwell,¹⁰⁶ upon whom Wallace also played his whip and cautioned him against carrying any more letters to young ladies.¹⁰⁷

Your frank came safe. Do not forget to tell me if this goes so, for if it does I will enclose you some more directed for myself as it is not convenient to get my letters under cover to Mr Crombie. I would advise you to write once at least to some of the Conrons, you owe it to them and she seemed to think you would not give them up. She has a severe pen and I would be sorry it would ever make your ingratitude its theme. So you have not let me see all the performances you made public; the one upon Lady Dean in the Cork newspaper, a copy of which you left in a room of Mr Smith's, never reached me. Bruce¹⁰⁸ dined here a few days before he went to Dublin, we had some conversation on the profession he has made choice of and on my mentioning the stock of sermons he was possessed of by his father, he told me he had been offered four guineas a dozen for them. Don't you think you might make a good use of ours in that way? The very plainness of the hand and its easiness to be read would be a strong recommendation, nor do I see any reason against it if they could afford you some convenient pounds.

You did not promise to write often though I entreated it, yet I hope you will, for surely it will be easy to say how you are and what you are doing, which is all I desire from Edinburgh. How did the McCormicks receive you? What did they say of my scheme to visit them? Were you but to answer my questions you would always have subject and no occasion for leaning on your elbow. Perhaps you are in the pet at not hearing from me sooner but I shall be more so if I have not a second letter before you receive this – see what I expect. MM

14 [16 November 1777]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [11]

Dearest Matty, I shall soon get engaged and interested in the business of the winter. In consciousness of my own good intention, my good mother's assistance, and the honour of medicine have I formed my resolutions, and by the blessing of God, as Burgoyne¹⁰⁹ says, I will extend them far. I have fixed on the classes necessary for me to attend and luckily they do not interfere with those hours I choose to dedicate to exercise. I rise a little after six in the morning and am resolved (not with one of my Belfast resolutions) to continue this custom. I strike my flint, blow my tinder, and light my match with as much assiduity and celerity as John the Painter;

106 Possibly the Rev. Hugh Caldwell of Newtown, Co. Down, died 1789.

107 The remainder of this letter is on a separate sheet numbered D/591/12.

108 Rev. Dr William Bruce (1757–1841), Presbyterian minister, at this date a close friend of Drennan's although they became more distant as their politics diverged (*DNB*).

109 John Burgoyne (1722–92), dramatist and general (*DNB*).

and after preparing for my classes, at about eight o'clock, if it be a good morning, I give stretch to my legs for half an hour in the meadow which lies near my lodging. When I return I take my academical breakfast of bread and milk and then issue out to the labours of the day. From nine till one I am tossed about with the wind of doctrine through different parts of the University; from nine till ten at the practice; from ten to eleven at chemistry, my second attendance on both; from eleven till twelve at the *materia medica*, a class which treats of medicines, their nature, use and application – from twelve till one at the Infirmary from which I derive much more benefit than when last here. Yet still it is a disagreeable place to me, and I never enter it without thinking of those lines of Milton¹¹⁰ 'Despair tended the sick, busiest from couch to couch and over them triumphant Death his dart shook, but delayed to strike'. From one until three, I make it a rule to walk and chew the cud of what I have heard, and either soar to the sublime Calton where, as Johnson expresses it, I can see the dusty world look dim below, or pace along with my fellow mortals in the meadow or the park. After dinner I have seldom more than one hour's attendance at College and that is on midwifery. From half an hour after five until seven I am generally in useful and agreeable company, and from that till ten I read or write.

Saturday and Sunday are constant vacation days at College; on these days I make an Epicurean breakfast on tea and toast, then idle away an hour at a coffee-house, call on my friends, walk into the country, etc., and in the evening have some select friends whom I make as drunk as they can be with tea and warm water. This is my plan of living and I find by the effect it has as yet had upon me that motion and action is necessary to happiness – without it our minds become as it were materialized, our [?minds] indeed are debased below even body itself – for every particle of matter in this universe is in constant motion and motion may justly be called, a soul in matter. It strikes me that the excellence and perfection of created beings rises in exact proportion to the degree of the motive powers they possess. A stone has no power of this kind – a vegetable rising in the scale of creation has a more extended power, its motion or that of its component parts gives it nourishment and increases its bulk, but still it is confined like the less perfect animals to one spot. Animals, the highest order, remove with celerity from place to place and man can move from one part of this globe to another. Angels are painted with wings and all creation seems to make a constant effort to enlarge itself by motion to some degree of divine omnipresence – God alone, eternal exception to general rules, is at rest because he fills immensity. I know not whether this be a new idea, but I feel in myself the necessity of action or motion external or internal to the welfare of both my body and my mind.

I breakfasted with the Principal yesterday morning, he was very civil. He made particular enquiries about Crombie and Dr Haliday, and Nancy may set it down in pocket book that the author of Charles 5th and the History of America had her name in his mouth on the 15 of November 1777 about 43 minutes after nine in

110 John Milton (1608-74), poet (*DNB*).

the morning. I dined yesterday with the McKnights. My box is not come – I am the more surprised at it, as White's, which had the same direction on it, has arrived safe. I can do as little without it, as Howe without his camp equipage – I hope it will not be delayed much longer.

I really think I might reasonably have expected a letter from you before this, though you had as large a family as Mrs McCormick.¹¹¹ I believe I forgot to mention the children to you in my last. Poor John is in a very uncertain situation, and I almost wish he would not recover – he is a dismal contrast to what he was. You need not mention this to the Crombies. Mary the second is a beautiful girl and my favourite – Joseph the handsomest boy I have ever seen – Annie a fine little thing – the youngest has a fine face but the lower part of it much disfigured with a divided lip, it is much worse than any hare lip I have seen. Sure Shandy¹¹² said well, tis the most serious thing in life, this getting of children – upon the whole you are I believe as happy without them. I hope all friends are well with you. Distribute my compliments to them all. Dearest Matty, ever yours, WILLIAM DRENNAN

15 Sunday, 23 November 1777

WILLIAM DRENNAN, EDINBURGH, TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [13]

Dearest Matty, I received your wished-for letter on Friday last. Had you delayed much longer, I would have been tempted to believe, that you too had become a professor. The frank passed. You may therefore enclose me two or three Belfast papers in your next, that when the thoughts of home rush on my mind, I may satisfy any boyish longing which may divert my attention from objects, for the present at least, more interesting. Things have gone as usual since my last – I was wound up on Monday morning for the week, have performed my circuit and pointed to each profession with exact regularity and shall by tomorrow be screwed up to a height sufficient for running through the week to come. A letter frequently from Belfast will be of much benefit to me. If you will not write, I am resolved that I will – as Hudibras¹¹³ says 'True as the dial to the sun, Although it be not shone upon'. The winter sets in here devilish cold, if that be an orthodox expression. Every one about me is complaining, and the hawkers have begun crying their liquorice 'good for the cough and the cold and the shortness of breath'. I have escaped for the present with some slight attacks of stuffing in my head etc. – and I hope this will [be] the worst of it with me. My breast, like the ring of Amurath,¹¹⁴ gives me sometimes a twitch or two – as much as to say, live temperately and you shall live long. I spit much, whether from the lungs or not I am at a loss to determine. I eat heartily, sleep well, and feel myself as strong as usual.

111 Mary, daughter of Joseph Simson, married Dr Joseph McCormick in 1770, died in 1822; a friend of Martha McTier.

112 Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (1759-65).

113 Satirical poem by Samuel Butler (1612-80) (*DNB*).

114 Possibly an omen of death; Amurath (or Murad) was the name of several Turkish sultans who executed large numbers of their subjects.

My expenses this winter will be great. The fees I am obliged to give, preparatory to taking of a degree, amount to the sum of – ‘tell it not in Gath’¹¹⁵ – £20. The expenses of the degree are £25, or as the students generally apply to a Fellow in this University, one Brown¹¹⁶ – who spawns young physicians and surgeons, in order to speak Latin, and get a thesis written by his instructions – in this case the expense is generally nearer to £40. The examination is indeed I believe severe but less so than is said. The first, for there are three examinations, lasts always an hour where the candidate is examined singly by four professors. If he passes this fiery trial, he enters into a second along with the other candidates, some days previous to the day of election, this lasts for half an hour. The third is a matter of form and the second, I believe in a great measure. You enter into your first examination any day you fix upon before the June or September following that time you have attended all the classes of medicine in this or some other university. The day that I enter, that day shall no man know save the professors only.

The Doctor and Mrs McCormick received my story of your intended visit, more as an imaginary frolic than any real resolution; however they expressed great hopes of seeing both you and Sam in the summer when they expect a visit from the Crombies. Did Nancy send any parcel from Mrs Crombie¹¹⁷ for the McCormicks in my trunk? If she did, it has lost its way here. I supped some nights ago in company with a nephew of Dr Cleghorn’s¹¹⁸ and a son of the late Mr Plunket,¹¹⁹ both students of medicine here and very agreeable lads, but with some of that metropolitan importance which feels itself hurt in seeing a country lad as knowing as themselves.

Your notions of friendship are I fear but too just, but not on that account to actuate us in life. Life is a well-written and interesting tale, he that is least imposed upon may be the wisest, but he that is most deceived is the happiest. I am not obliged to the person who will inform me, when I forget myself in the playhouse in all the luxury of self-delusion, that this is all a fiction and that Brutus was dead 2,000 years ago – so it is in the drama of human life while the critic is reasoning whether his circumstance is an object for enjoyment, the clown really enjoys it. No one should say, there is no such thing as friendship, but a dying man or an angel. While we remain in life let us say, ‘This one will be my friend’. If you do not at length find him so, do not say you have been disappointed in the enjoyment you expected, you have had that enjoyment in the pursuit after a friend. The enjoyment of every desired object except virtue and God himself lies in the pursuit and not in the fruition – But we can only be led to this pursuit by the fancied valuation of the object in view and hence the surest way to secure our enjoyment is to realise this fancy as much as we can, for if we knew it to be imaginary we would never pursue and therefore never enjoy. It is nonsense to tell a sportsman that it is a poor triumph

115 Tell it not in Gath, i.e. don't let our enemies hear of it (2 Samuel. i. 20).

116 Probably John Brown (1735-88), MD, founder of the Brunonian system of medicine (*DNB*); he was a man of humble origins which may account for Drennan's supercilious tone.

117 Elizabeth, wife of Rev. James Crombie, sister of Mrs McCormick.

118 William Cleghorn (d.1779), nephew of Dr George Cleghorn, Professor at Trinity College, Dublin (*DNB*).

119 Patrick Plunket, MD 1779, son of Rev. Thomas Plunket (d.1776), of Strand Street, Dublin, and brother of William Conyngham Plunket (1764-1854), Lord Chancellor of Ireland (*DNB*).

over such an animal as partridge and that he can have no enjoyment in its death – his enjoyment was in the expectation of the imaginary good. A man may smile at the sports of a child and an angel may smile at the pursuits of a man, but as I think without reason – for they are both conforming to the end of their being and increasing their own happiness, the child in forming a paper kite to be torn by the wind or dissolved by the shower, and the man in seeking for a friendship which is formed but to be destroyed by caprice or to melt away in misfortune. Hill Wallace behaved very well – I do believe Frazer to be indeed a coward and he must be a liar of consequence. I wait for a decision of this campaign in America not with the cold solicitude of a good citizen, as Robertson expresses it, but with all the anxiety of one interested in the welfare of mankind. Ever yours, WD

16 26 November 1777

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH] [14]

Dear Will, You seem to have entered upon the winter's business with spirit which I hope nothing material will damp. I know no person that would agree worse with an idle life than you, your health would be lost by it, your genius would dwindle in to a little poet-tas[ter] and when the American war ended, you would almost cease to think. From such evils may activity of mind and body defend you. I had long wished you to tell me that the study of physic began to be agreeable. I have ever heard that it was the most so of the three. Strange that you speak with no partiality of the profession that has been so freely your choice. You have that enthusiasm I love, for your religion and for your country, but until it can be of service to either, cherish it for your fame in that walk of life which is friendly to genius, to humanity and, where these two are conspicuous, favourable to fortune. Riches are very desirable, but I mistake you much if you ever pant after them. There are many wishes formed in your heart which take place of one for wealth, and I do believe they are not only more laudable, but more likely to take place.

In your plan for the day I wished you to tell me of some agreeable society you had formed to dine with, for in your own lodging by yourself, or with your landlady, it cannot be pleasant. With a party of young men upon a frugal plan, you would be amused and have an opportunity of sometimes forming an agreeable hour or two in the evening which otherwise would not have been thought of. Here you may even broach politics if you please but I would not have you so fond of them as to make it your subject among your seniors and the professy tribe – you will reason better and therefore be accused of vanity at least (perhaps rudeness) by leading the subject. Have you nothing to say of Stewart? If there appears anything like his having taken offence, don't lose a friend by sullen silence, speak yourself and make him do so, then all be well, but if without cause his affection had melted away the case is quite hopeless and should be treated with contempt. The triumph of the few and fears of many begin to decline in regard to the victories in America. From Dublin we hear that there is little credit given to the various accounts of Washington's defeat, but I

have no pleasure in writing you suppositions of what will probably be certainty before this reaches you. Our winter sets out rather gayer than usual, we have already had three balls, one as a house warming at Dr Apsley's,¹²⁰ another at Captain Stewart's, and a third at Miss Turnly's,¹²¹ by the Wallaces – the officers of the *Arethusa* being here occasioned their following each other so quickly. We had also a very grand one at the Infirmary, the only one I partook of. In the county of Down there is a party formed called a coterie occasioned by Mrs Hunter of Pine Hill¹²² giving a dinner and a ball on her son's being of age. There was at it above forty people of that neighbourhood and they found it so agreeable that they agreed it should be kept up at each other's houses through the winter and last week Rainey Maxwell¹²³ gave the second – but as it was the same night of Hill W's,¹²⁴ Rainey had the fewest men. This would have been a pleasanter winter for you in Belfast than the last – and the next I suppose you must not descend to be entertained.

Dr Ross¹²⁵ has at last resigned: I suppose in favour of Dr Apsley and quit the stage with decency and fortitude, seeing so few do otherwise is a most pleasing prospect and gives us hope that at that most awful time we will not fail, and that the same God that through life has been our friend and support will give us assistance to support what I am convinced would be more than human nature could bear even befriended with the firmest virtue unless assisted by an invisible power. The boy in our shop is at present in a bad fever and poor Mrs Hamilton¹²⁶ threatened with a fatal disorder. Dr Haliday is consulted and agrees with Frank in fearing a dropsy in the breast. If this is the case she is one old harmless acquaintance you will probably see no more, and I find such a one is more apt to be regretted, than one of greater perfections, if along with these there is any one thing which gives you offence. Upon mentioning John McCormick's case, I was informed that when Mr Crombie was a child he was much in the same desperate way. His mother was advised to roll him in sheep skin, warm from the animal, which in a short time struck him out in boils in a violent manner, some of which were attended with such pain on the one side as to give him that crookedness he still retains. They however occasioned his recovery – this you perhaps will laugh at, but I insist upon your letting Mary know this, let her do with it as she pleases. MM

17 30 November 1777

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [15]

Dearest Matty, I received yours yesterday, and will get money for the bill as soon as possible. You must tell Jack Hay that on Friday I received the balance of an account

120 Robert Apsley (c.1739-1806), formerly a surgeon in the Royal Navy, physician to the Belfast Charitable Institute from 1774, medical attendant to the new Belfast Lying-in Hospital in 1794, a Burgess of Belfast.

121 Probably a sister of Francis Turnly, JP, of Downpatrick.

122 Pine Hill is in Drumbo parish, Co. Down.

123 Rainey Maxwell of Drumbo, Co. Down, friend of the McTiers, died 13 December 1811 aged 67, buried at Knockbreda, Co. Down; see R. S. J. Clarke (ed.), *Gravestone inscriptions, Co. Down, Volume 2* (Belfast, 1988).

124 Hill Wallace or Hill Wilson of Purdysburn.

125 Dr Alexander Ross of Belfast, died November 1777.

126 Mrs Francis Hamilton, died April 1778.

due to him from Edwards the bookseller here to the amount of £4 19s 8d for which I gave him my receipt, and which I shall, if he thinks proper, transmit by letter. I indeed forgot to mention Stewart particularly in my last. He has showed me the most unfriendly civility, since I came to Edinburgh – I have dined and breakfasted with him repeatedly, and I admire him more than ever. He has only committed a Scotticism in the course of our correspondence with each other; and I pass it over, for it was a bull¹²⁷ on my side to suppose that a person could be all head and all heart at the same time. If you were an anatomist you would discover that the human heart supplies itself with blood, before it parts with a single drop for the rest of the body – a striking picture of what goes on in the mind of man. I have nothing new to inform you. I have completed my weekly revolution as usual, and after spending yesterday and this day in a very agreeable manner, I am prepared for business on tomorrow.

I do assure you my mind no longer broods like a foolish hen upon addled eggs, striving to produce something real from imaginary conceptions. So many lads, as there are in this University, diligently labouring in their studies, is sufficient to give any one an elasticity of mind which is not easily relaxed. I was two or three days ago taking some notes in Black's class, and accidentally dropped my pencil. It fell into a small crevice in the seat below me, and a very genteel-looking lad who sat there spent near a minute in looking for it, found it and with a polite bow returned it to me. I enquired some time after from my next neighbour who he was and he told me the Prince Dasch-hoff¹²⁸ – he attends his classes with the greatest assiduity and has perfectly melted away all the Russian boorishness in French courtesy. I forgot in my last to take notice of what you said about my father's sermons. I for my own part can see no objection to it – at least of a few of the worst of them, but it could not well be done without my mother's knowledge, and I suppose she would never consent to it. As the franks pass I really think you might enclose two Belfast papers in each. Lord Chatham has appeared I see again in our system and perhaps for the last time. If so this speech is like the burning chariot of the translated prophet which will bear him to heaven. I am sorry for your sick list. I have had a feb[r]ile case under my care, and have been prosperous. I shall let Mrs McCormick know your cure, for I think and I hope will always do so, that it is no sufficient reason for rejecting a medicine, because I may not know in what manner it acts. Write soon – I am ever yours, W DRENNAN

18 8 December [1777]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH] [16]

Dear Will, The Howes blocked up our coffee house and the passage leading to it so closely last night, that a Washington ambassador found it hard to enter. I am

¹²⁷ A self-contradicting proposition.

¹²⁸ Prince Dashkov (d.1807), son of Princess Catherine Dashkova, Russian literary figure.

therefore not qualified to give you intelligence which however must have reached you before this. It is what both sides say they expected, and one of them appears pleased with victory¹²⁹ at any rate, while the other seems to me only to hope there will be numbers willing to lose life.

You name Lord Chatham and his last speech and yet do not seem to feel that blush which his warmest friends here felt for his having received the lie repeatedly for hearing his assertions proved to be false and not one word in reply. He certainly never before made a poor figure. I could have wept for the poor old man – perhaps Joy¹³⁰ has not done him justice.

There has been a marriage here which has caused much surprise and diversion – a young lady who has lived all her life in Belfast and of one of the best families in it, but without fortune, to an old brute of the same place, rich you may believe and above eighty, a town house, country house and carriage, and a number of angry disappointed relations – if you cannot guess them Mary McCormick will help you for she was a midnight companion of the lady's. Our gaiety here continues. Last Friday we had a most elegant ball at Mr Brown's,¹³¹ Peters Hill, there was above seventy people. The night before there was one at Dr Seed's.¹³² Nancy has been at Ballymenagh this fortnight, she is now I believe at Mr Clewlow's¹³³ and is to spend some days at Crawfordsburn. I think you ought to address some of your letters to her. She I am sure is as well pleased they come to me, but you owe her so much that not a trifle should escape you. I am very grateful to you for your regular Sunday's remembrance, but will dispense with it at any time in favour of any other you wish to write to.

Young Magee¹³⁴ has got £500 in the Belfast scheme – it has been ill-managed by which a great number of tickets remained unsold, many were subscribed to and the rest were risked by the scheme which has gained near eighteen hundred pound already. Sam will pay J. Hay the sum you received and account with my mother. I have enclosed you our two latest papers, the advertisements of one of them will amuse you. I have been repeatedly taken from you and am now bereft of everything I meant to say but that I am ever yours, MM

19 13 December 1777

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, NORTH STREET, BELFAST [17]

Dearest Matty, I received an answer yesterday to my note to Gregory,¹³⁵ and am informed in the haughty professorial style, that my request is granted. I shall endeavour therefore to graduate next September, and if I am rejected, the consequence will be an earlier visit to the other world (I mean America) than I designed

129 The battle of Brandywine, 11 September 1777, a British victory.

130 Henry or Robert Joy, proprietors of the *Belfast News-Letter*.

131 John Brown of Peter's Hill (d.1802), merchant and sovereign (or mayor) of Belfast.

132 Dr William Seed of Belfast, died 'in an advanced age' in January 1798 (*BNL*).

133 Probably Rev. James Hamilton Clewlow (c.1739-1802), vicar of Bangor.

134 Probably William Magee (1750-1827), Belfast printer, see F. J. Bigger, *The Magees of Belfast and Dublin ...* (Belfast, 1916).

135 James Gregory (1753-1821), Professor of Medicine (*DNB*).

– certain it is, that some who I firmly believe knew physic much better than I do, have been rejected. One in particular last year, after having been examined with applause, was denied his degree because he had dedicated his thesis to his uncle Dr Zubly,¹³⁶ as member of the Continental Congress; the Principal threw his roll at him and the poor fellow's laurels were blasted the same instant he had gathered them. I congratulate the people of Belfast and indeed all mankind on the late victory over Burgoyne and I charge you to give me a particular description of the manner in which the news was received by both parties with you. What a noble subject for a historical picture would the House of Commons have presented on that day when the ill-omened Germaine¹³⁷ was obliged to publish news so dreadfully, pleasing as this must have been to the minority, while Barre¹³⁸ in the front like the warrior angel poured down his wrath in that noble invective, every word of which must I think have shook horror on the ministerial crew. I am persuaded that the event of the war will turn on this great event, and it is probable that future historians will date the fall of the British Empire, from the 16th of October [17]77.

No object can be thought of, more melancholy, than a great empire that has thus outlived itself and is now degenerating into a state of political dotage, prophetic of its final dissolution. Was it for this shameful day that Sidney suffered, and that Hampden bled?¹³⁹ Were all the glories, triumphs, conquests, spoils, this nation has acquired in the defence of liberty, thus meanly to be blasted in a traitorous attempt to destroy it? I remember a singular remark made by an author which is I think very applicable both to the old-age of nations and of individuals – ‘If the sun’, says he, ‘were not to rise again, it would look greater to fall from the sky at noon, than to gain a course of four or five hours only to languish and decline in’. Marlborough¹⁴⁰ and Swift lived to an old age and became idiots. Great Britain in her dotage forgets her children and perhaps in some future day which may heaven long avert, the Herculean genius of America will be dressed up in the guise of a slave and servilely crouch at the nod of some capricious girl. I long for further particulars of this action. It is curious, that the man whom they called One Arnold¹⁴¹ should be the person who in all probability will determine the fate of the British Empire. The playhouse has been opened for some time here but no one performs that is worth going to see and I shall not probably be there this winter. Stewart repeated to me this day a pretty extempore compliment made by Mrs Barbauld¹⁴² to Mr Garrick on the last night of his performance at Drury Lane. He delivered the several parts of his dress that evening to his friends who were present as reliques of the departed actor, and among the rest his buckles to Hannah More,¹⁴³ on which Mrs Barbauld

136 John Joachim Zubly (1724-81), delegate to the American Continental Congress from Georgia, but opposed American independence.

137 Lord George Germain (1716-85), Commissioner of Trade and Plantations (*DNB*).

138 Isaac Barré (1726-1802), politician (*DNB*).

139 Algernon Sidney (1622-83), John Hampden, the elder (1594-1643) or the younger (?1656-96), all whig heroes (*DNB*).

140 John Churchill (1650-1722), 1st Duke of Marlborough, general (*DNB*).

141 Benedict Arnold (1741-1801), American general (*DNB*).

142 Anna Letitia Barbauld (1743-1825), poet and writer (*DNB*).

143 Hannah More (1745-1833), religious writer, friend of Garrick (*DNB*).

instantly exclaimed – ‘Thy buckles O Garrick another may use – But no one hereafter shall tread in thy shoes’. It was she that gave the motto to the gentle[man] for his silver candlestick you saw enscrip[—] the papers ‘Put out the Light and – then [—]’.¹⁴⁴

I am a little surprised at not hearing from you these three weeks, and am determined to put you to the expense of a letter, until you enclose me some franks. I have had a touch of the cold but am better. I received a letter lately from Kennedy which does honour to his head and his heart, the subject I am not at liberty to disclose. I wait for a frank to answer him. Ever yours, W DRENNAN

20 [December 1777]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH] [18]

My dear Will, Though you have so little regard for the Scotch newspapers yet I find you have information much sooner, and better, than any I can give you of public matters and this renders them an insipid subject. However I will try for once. The news of Belfast this day, as it comes from Dublin, may not have reached you and is interesting. Mudd Island is taken by storm and, horrible to relate, the garrison put to the sword – six hundred of the British troops killed, sixty of them officers. There are also letters from Cork which say Washington and his army are made prisoners, by having tried to make a diversion at Philadelphia at the time of the attack on Mudd Island. Every day now is big with events which seem to shock all parties here, for there does not seem any one completely wicked and foolish in their thoughts of public affairs with us but Mr Gordon, and very little attention is paid to his opinions. Several of Burgoyne’s officers are come to Ireland and the letters from their sisters or daughters are highly entertaining. Arnold’s bravery, Gates’s¹⁴⁵ humanity and politeness is much extolled, and as there were many women with the army it gave occasion for both. I suppose you do not believe that Arnold is dead, or you would have been painting his death as an enviable end. I really think to die in the field must be so, for alas, I must own reflection at that period would not be my wish, happy are they to whom it is so. Perhaps my mind may obtain strength to support itself without terror but there is at present a weakness over it in the consideration of death which humbles me much. I suspect this is oftener the case than is owned to and that at the last there is a decent degree of fortitude kindly given by heaven without which the best would fail. It is not conscience that scar[er]s me nor the fear of punishment, Oh may their terrors never be mine – it is a woman’s fears, a woman’s tenderness – to go we know not where, to leave for ever those we love, to have no demonstration of a future state, are reflections sufficiently dreadful. The latter you start at coming from me. I can’t help it, reason me out of it and make me happy, for it is not affectation but an honest confession of doubts that I imagine will sometimes

¹⁴⁴ Last word covered by seal.

¹⁴⁵ Horatio Gates (1720-1806), American general (*DNB*).

enter the mind of all those who are not in the highest or lowest class of mortals. Must our happiness depend upon our faith, yet that faith not in our own power, for how different are the minds of men formed so by nature, and yet made more so by education, and if they can be all convinced and satisfied of a future state of which there is so little of that evidence most satisfactory to such creatures as we are, or rather such sure proofs of dissolution in every thing we behold, can I believe that this ease and certainty proceeds in all these different formed creatures from thought, from conviction and well grounded faith? No, it is a heaven sent delusion to make this life at least comfortable. Perhaps it may be the one hope of man that it is not to prove deceitful. When I come on this subject with Sam his answer is short – he tells me he has done no ill to others, as much good as in his power, therefore *if* he exists after this life he shall be happy, if not he is contented, as he is sure that it is for the best. This is a composure that I hope and believe will never forsake him but his reasoning is not sufficient for me. I have looked back to see what led me to this subject and find it was General Arnold. I was led to it without design and now recollect my having once or twice before talked to you on this subject, but being in your silent mood I could not provoke you to contradiction. Answer me with your pen, it will (for many reasons) carry more force with it than arguments from authority, they are not suited to my case. Yours will be more the voice of Nature and it's her I wish to hear, for that must be the voice of God.

You surprise me by saying you have been three weeks without hearing from me as I am sure I have never been that time without writing. I fear the enclosing newspapers has hurt my franks.

You appear anxious about getting your degree. Why, when the worst is but going to America where so many seem to please themselves in the hope of ending their days? I do not know how it might answer for your profession but in some respects it would suit both your taste and abilities. The young lawyers speak with rapture of being soon there and among the rest Stewart. Rowley¹⁴⁶ has been employed with some others in defence of a man in Dublin tried for drinking 'General Washington and downfall to the Ministry' – they came off victorious and recovered a sum of money from the prosecutor. Your mention of the thesis affair makes me curious to know how you have determined, for it seems it is a material point, at least the dedication. Have you thought of Mr Mackay, Stewart, Dr Haliday etc., etc., and how have you determined? There are letters today which damp the great joy of the Crawfordsburn family on hearing Mrs Alexander¹⁴⁷ had got a son, as her own life is now in danger.

Do you remember Val Pierce in this town?¹⁴⁸ He stayed at Mr Harrison's¹⁴⁹ and went to America some time ago. He sold all the goods he had upon commission, remitted the money and immediately joined the Provincials. Young Bristow¹⁵⁰ who

146 Probably Arthur Rowley, barrister, son of Hercules Langford Rowley (d.1794), MP for Co. Londonderry.

147 Anne Crawford, married 1774, James Alexander (later 1st Earl of Caledon), and died 21 December 1777.

148 A cousin of the Jones family of Belfast.

149 Probably Robert Harrison, who married Mary Anne, daughter of Valentine Jones.

150 Skeffington Gore Bristow (d.1798) of the 75th Regt, brother of the Rev. William Bristow, vicar of Belfast.

was with General Burgoyne and lost his all writ[e]s to his brother here that he had heard of his old friend Pierce and that he was then a major of brigade. There was a Mr Sarrell here some years ago, a spirited little fellow who married Nancy Smith of Waterford.¹⁵¹ They went to live at Philadelphia where a sister Mrs Smith took with her married. Her husband joined the King's troops, Sarrell the Provincials. He commanded at Red Bank where 600 Hessians were left dead on the field and is now supposed to have lost his life at Mudd Island. In my opinion the horrors of this barbarous war is only just now beginning. We have a saying of his M[ajesty's] here (how true I cannot tell) that he would go to Hanover¹⁵² before he would give up the American War, of two great evils we may wish for the least.

I have not the least doubt but Jemmy Kennedy's letter would show what he possesses, a good head and kind heart. He spoke to me a good while ago upon [incomplete]

21 12 January 1778

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [19]

Dearest Matty, Why did you write such a note to me? I do assure you I neglected sending a letter to Belfast but one week since I came here, and then only because one Dr Cupples¹⁵³ with whom I was a little acquainted, having mentioned to me his intention of returning to Ireland and going through Belfast, I gave him a letter for Kennedy and desired him to call on you as I thought such an oddity might entertain you. He promised to do it and I suppose has forgot I had given him any such a commission. I wrote to Nancy last week, and I beg you may rest satisfied that whenever I am ill, you shall not be unacquainted with it. I write this merely as an answer to your epistle. I sometimes used to answer you with the Laconism of face, and I shall do it now by a note like your own, reserving my usual prolixity till I find myself in a better humour with your childishness than I am at present. At the first sight of your letter I thought that the half of my friends had been lost or at least some distressing event had happened. Dearest Matty, I am ever yours, WD

22 20 January [1778]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, NORTH STREET, BELFAST [20]

Dearest Matty, I thank you for Lord Chatham's speech – it pleased me extremely. I have nothing to send you in return. Nothing is going on here at present but raising regiments, to be devoted to destruction in America. Every order of men from the highest to the lowest are emptying their pockets (and what more could be asked from Scotchmen?) in the support of the war; and even the cad[d]ies of Edinburgh, or as the newspaper calls them the Respectable Society of Running Stationers, have

151 This family of Smiths originated in Belfast.

152 i.e. George III would retire to his Hanoverian kingdom.

153 Possibly Dr Thomas Cupples who became an MD in the previous year.

subscribed 30 guineas for the aid and assistance of the King of Great Britain. The Speculative Society of which I am a worthy member, subscribed 100 guineas. I was not present on the proposal, having obtained a leave of non-attendance for three months, but you may tell my mother she need not fear that this circumstance will cost me a single farthing. Every minister in the city have given what they could spare to edge the sword of war, except Dr Dick¹⁵⁴ the worthy clergyman who on the fast day preached from this text ‘How shall I curse, whom the Lord hath not cursed, How shall I judge, whom the Lord hath not condemned?’

A man was this morning brought into the Infirmary who had cut off his foot above the ankle, upon having but five guineas given to him, after being enlisted, instead of the ten which had been offered him before by the recruiting officer. I remember to have read that in the last war a gentleman going along the road heard amazing cries of distress proceeding from a house which was at some distance he came to it, looked in and saw two grenadiers belabouring a poor man with the butt end of their pieces. What are you about? says he. We are making a volunteer, answered one of the grenadiers. They have made a good many in this way, in this place.

The greatest part of the professors have given ten guineas, Stewart but two – the Principal but ten. His second son is appointed a captain having raised his quota of men before any other lieutenant. The second Miss Robertson is to be married soon, to a writer here.

So much for news – as for myself I am hearty and well, studying as earnestly as the numerous invitations of my friends will allow me – and while I am studying I am like a celebrated personage whom Milton described in his journey to the Earth through Chaos, sometimes elevated many thousand miles in the abyss of fancy by a puff of theory, and then falling plump down again as many fathoms when the airy support has given way. I am at present in a hurry and beg your excuse for my scrawl as you ladies say. What is become of Margaret¹⁵⁵ – has she forgotten me? Ask her how she likes this description of a fop which I saw in manuscript today. It was written by a lady of this place, a gentleman giving her the rhymes which she was to fill up. They are called *bouts rimées* – the rhymes were silly, lily, puff, snuff, ape, shape, dance, France, madam, Adam, simple, dimple:

With sense unencumbered, gay smirking and silly,
 His lips like the rose, and his hands like the lily
 For whiteness and lightness, his head is a puff:
 And contains nothing poignant except it be snuff
 In manners a monkey, in gesture an ape
 A burlesque on his sex, and yet vain of his shape
 A jessamy bauble, to dress and to dance,
 Like a doll that is used to bring fashions from France
 Despised by his servants, and duped by his madam
 Ye powers! can this be a son of old Adam?

¹⁵⁴ Rev. Dr Robert Dick (1722-82), minister at New Greyfriars, Edinburgh.

¹⁵⁵ Margaret McTier (1762-1845), Martha McTier's stepdaughter.

So gay and so foolish, so happy, so simple
 Ever smiling to show his white teeth and his dimple.

Send me franks.

23 25 January 1778

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH] [21]

Dear Will, I have just now received your note which (by the date) was wrote a fortnight ago, and cannot but say the Laconism of it and also its rebuke, was unmerited, as I assure you there was a month before your letter to Nancy that we had not heard from you, and had it not been for some intelligence we got of you from other people's letters I know not how bad an effect Nancy's apprehensions might have had. As it was, she was visibly the worse of her too great anxiety and every creature blamed you much. We heard of your letter to Kennedy but not by his consent, as I suppose he feared we might expect a sight of it. Mr Cupples called at my mother's but saw Hugh only. If your letters miscarried, mine may have had the same fate for you mention not three long ones which had enclosures and that, I suppose, stopped them. I also ventured a fourth with a speech of Lord Chatham's which I suppose you had not seen done justice to in Scotland, but since none of these things reach you I shall try them no longer.

If I recollect right I put many questions to you which remain unanswered. One was, why you seem determined upon taking out your degree in Edinburgh rather than Glasgow, as at the latter you could have it on so much easier terms. If by this you think it not so honourable and for that reason only, I think your objection ought to give way to economy. Are you a member of any society this winter? I believe there is always one called the medical that is useful and agreeable, but I suppose you will be turned out if you do not subscribe genteely to raise a regiment. One spark of wisdom, however, remaining in the City of London will perhaps put a stop to this mad ostentation. It is so long since I wrote to you that I forget the subjects. I have nothing to say however upon politics, as I do not remember ever hearing less upon that subject in Belfast, owing I believe to very little difference of opinion here at present. W. Cunningham¹⁵⁶ has with much difficulty got his property at New York insured at twelve guineas per cent for three months. This he tried for immediately on Burgoyne's defeat. Bristow¹⁵⁷ is kept busy praying to the sick and at present there are a great many, a tedious dangerous fever has been very general. Jack Greg¹⁵⁸ is recovered after being three weeks in great danger and Ellen is feared to be now taking it. Mrs Price¹⁵⁹ has been long ill – some say from her

156 Waddell Cunningham (c.1729-97), leading Belfast merchant and banker, first president of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, owner of an estate at Dominica, in the West Indies, and substantial property in and around Belfast, briefly MP for Carrickfergus in 1784 (George Chambers, *Faces of change, the Belfast and Northern Ireland Chambers of Commerce and Industry, 1783-1983* (Belfast, 1983), pp 35-48).

157 Rev. William Bristow (1736-1808), vicar of Belfast, burgess and sovereign.

158 Son of Thomas Greg, merchant of Belfast; his sister Ellen married James Warre of London.

159 Probably Isabella, wife of Kenneth Alexander Price and daughter of George Portis.

lungs, others from her liver. Poor Mrs Hamilton is in a melancholy hopeless way, but whether her death will be sudden or lingering cannot even be guessed at. I could not have believed I would have felt so much for that woman whose chief merit through life has been cheerfulness and inoffensiveness, doing no harm, no good, yet at the close of it she shines in resignation and patience, though at the same time sorry to leave a life she was perfectly happy in. Frank is quite softened and I do believe if this scene continues any time he will not have one of his rough corners remaining – he weeps like a woman.

You will be surprised to hear that Haliday has already consulted with Apsley. Greg's disorder having begun with a bleeding at his nose which could not be stopped, Apsley was raised to him and attended him for a week but Greg himself, fearing his disorder which had hung on him long before he was confined, desired Dr Haliday might be called. The father was out of town and the girls feared much the meeting of the faculty and observed it well. The great man was haughty, the little one more submissive than as first called he need have been, Haliday nodded, Apsley followed, and consultation was his reward. More of the matter I have not heard, nor what is thought of the Doctor's change of sentiment, if not breach of word. My own opinion is that he has treated Mattear ill, and that possibly to do so he condescended to the other. If Haliday swayed Mattear he has left him in the lurch, if the latter acted from his own judgment I believe he will be consistent. Mrs Haliday and Miss Edmon[stone]¹⁶⁰ go to Edinburgh in May and will remain there I hope as long as you do. Perhaps you will return with them in August. Will not all your trials be over then? Though you have not thought it convenient to go to Prestonpans for any time, yet in the melancholy situation poor Mary is in, a sight of you with any little news that you might have, would steal her a little from herself and be an attention you owe her. Had the Doctor¹⁶¹ preferment in view on his trip to St Andrews?

I fear much you have never wrote to the Conrons. If so you are greatly to blame, he did not allow you to be a stranger to him and if you ever become so you must be ungrateful. A genteel attention you certainly owe them and the very barest mark of it you could possibly pay was one letter after you left.

24 30 January [1778] and may the tyrant tremble at the day¹⁶²

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [22]

Dearest Matty, You had better send no more franks in Stewart's name, as I was obliged to pay 1s 9d for your last. I wish you could get some that are genuine. I want an opportunity of gulling these rascals of postmasters. I received all your letters and thank you for them. Lord Chatham's speech has circulated through all my acquaintance and is much admired. I do wish to take my degree in Edinburgh,

¹⁶⁰ Her sister.

¹⁶¹ McCormick.

¹⁶² Anniversary of the execution of Charles I.

as I think it the most creditable, and that it may be more useful to me in any situation where chance will place me, and I seriously think that after taking it I would find it most advantageous to settle at least for some years in America, as I think it more than probable that there will not be a green spot in the North where I can rest with safety; so that like the second messenger from the Ark, I may by a bolder and more stretched out flight obtain my wishes, and no longer depend on the generosity [of a]nother, however dear to me. The price of the degree is indeed very [hig]h amounting in the whole to £25, but as I have attended so [many] classes on this account otherwise not absolutely necessary, I w[ould] be sorry not to receive the benefit of them. However, if my mother thinks proper I will take it at Glasgow, and will inform her what is the difference in the expense, in my next letter. I am determined not to practice in Belfast without some tolerable prospect, if not of immediate success which I have no reason to expect, at least of some assurance of some approaching independence.

As to Apsley's affair I always thought that no physician on earth had a right to refuse a consultation with him – for if every one took the privilege of judging on the demerit of the university who gives the degree or of him on whom it is conferred, it would prevent consultation altogether; and it is both disrespectful to the patient and presumptuous in the physician to arrogate to himself such indiscriminate censure, as it must be the height of folly to despise what may be of benefit to the patient on account of the source that the information may be derived from. I have just now returned from breakfasting with the Principal who was exceedingly agreeable. I have no more to say. WD

Be active about getting franks that are genuine and when you get them I hope for many agreeable enclosures. I shall write to Mrs Conron. I scarcely hope for a letter from Nancy. Compliments to all friends.

25 8 February [1778]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, NORTH STREET, BELFAST [23]

Dearest Matty, I have nothing new to inform you either of others or myself. I continue still in good health in spite of myself, and in good spirits in spite of the Infirmary, to the distresses of which I am now grown perfectly callous, and am startled at recollecting with what composure I counted the pulse of some poor wretch in the agonies of death. I cannot say however that I have yet arrived to that pitch of scientific insensibility which Monro¹⁶³ recommends to his students when he defines surgery to be performing a piece of dissection on a living body. You will be surprised at the expression yet it contains much instruction. I think less of Belfast than I used to do – this is fortunate as I am to stay longer in Scotland. I enjoy it better – perhaps indeed somewhat too much. All my acquaintance among the students here seem to like my company so much so indeed, that I am sometimes obliged to take

163 Alexander Monro (1733-1817), Professor of Anatomy and Surgery (*DNB*).

an hour or two more in the forehead of the morning from what I spend in the heel of the evening.

There is to be a ball at Prestonpans the latter end of this week. I am invited out by Mrs McCormick and would much rather not go. It will cost me my half a guinea at least and it is but a poor recompense to dance with one of the Scotch damsels. However I believe I must go though I am confident I shall not see a handsome much less an agreeable girl there. It is greatly the fashion here to despise the students. A student of medicine is a term of contempt, but an Irish student of medicine is the very highest complication of disgrace. I believe I told you that I had waited on Miss Kennedy soon after I came here, with a hope that I might have a chance of seeing some belles there occasionally. I was received very well, and in the Scotch fashion told that I might come again whenever I chose – I did not go again. *Quere* did I do amiss? They know my lodging and yet never sent to ask me to a dish of tea.

We had a fever here which is now gone off – it was said, though I believe without reason, to arise from the Infirmary. Three or four students were attacked and one of them died. I am not of a constitution to catch fevers and I have the best preservative in the world against contagion – as I have not the least fear. Write to me soon dear Matty, and believe me ever yours, WD

You shall not hear from me if you do not send me some franks for I have nothing to write worth posting.

26 15 February [1778]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, EDINBURGH [24]

Dearest Will, I think I have wished to write to you more since I wanted franks than before and lest that desire should increase so as to be inconvenient I beg you will try where you are to obtain some directed for yourself which you may enclose in one of those I sent you as Stewart's all pass free to me and to hear often that you are well and happy is a joy you must not deprive us of. It is so unusual for you to speak with pleasure of any other place than Belfast, that though I wish you find the place you are in agreeable I felt myself jealous while I read your last, that you have a society of young men more suited to your taste and with them more rational and improving entertainment than you would meet with here I am certain, but while you are absent from us I am pleased to hear you suppose us very agreeable.

Don't you expect that I shall combat your American hint with all sisterly affection and did you not drop it on purpose? I have viewed and reviewed it as I do every scheme for you as thus – he goes to America, if it is with a design of settling there for life or that though that was not his plan at first yet, if I could suppose it would come to that, could his obtaining thousands recompense me for the loss of my brother? If he could be happy removed for ever from those he at present loves, would it not be by new connections? I can only allow it by a wife and children, and to these must I be a stranger or perhaps see them in the decline of life when you

might, with dirty unavailing cash, revisit your country to mourn over its alterations, which to you must be melancholy ones, and wondering how all your promised enjoyments were vanished, try in vain to recover. Not one moment should I hesitate in my choice if I had it in my power to determine whether you were to be settled in Ireland upon £200 a year, or in America on as many thousands, or as many as you could name, but as this is a selfish perhaps it is a wrong opinion. I hope my happiness and yours will never lie very distant. Let us hear what Dr Scott has to say for America in the way of physic, he is very intelligent and you stand high in his opinion. If you were serious in the thought of America and was to go there, I would certainly advise you to hear all Scott has to say for it is much both for and against. Some of it I will give you – in the first place it is impossible for any man, let his abilities or reputation be ever so great, to practise physic in America without keeping an apothecary's shop. It has been once or twice tried by superior spirits but always failed, and to the merest drudgery of this he must submit, until practise and fortune allow him to keep another man for the purpose, for still he must have the shop while he has a patient, not receiving fees as they do here. There the charge is all upon the medicine, unless the attendance has been extraordinary and then it is put in the bill – and like other debts often very bad, especially from the lower sort. Degrees, abilities, education, etc., is not of any consequence, and seldom inquired into. A robust constitution, a tolerable share of impudence, and indefatigable attention without any unfortunate accident will secure you success in America.

What this will amount to you will judge by what Scott with great openness told me of his affairs. He went out with the Governor of Annapoli[s] and by his means got immediately into an acquaintance with the best people there, but by degrees gained them as patients after the course of shop-drudgery etc. – however the first year he made £300 currency, a young man there being at little expense except for horses as the sociable temper of the people is such that he need seldom eat at his own expense. After this, Scott's business increasing and having got an employment, he found it necessary to take a partner in his physical trade and the year he left America upon settling their books they had made £2,000 currency, that is about £150 sterling. He still hopes to return to America, but never to practise physic and thinks he could be of great use to a young man who would go to his part of it. He desired I might present his compliments to you and looked and spoke as if he wished to serve you.

I really do believe that were you to settle in Belfast and live for some years in your mother's house (a method certainly the easiest for her) you might come into business that for a young man would be decent. This belief is founded upon Haliday's business in the country being so great as to leave the town almost entirely for Mattear. His business has also increased by Ross's death and when Ferguson¹⁶⁴ drops there will be more and I am still assured that Mattear wishes to wear out of his other branch, and I suppose that must be from the belief of there being practise sufficient in physic for more than two. He certainly at present takes White by the hand and Apsley does not appear to gain ground. One thing I am clear in that you should

164 Dr James Ferguson, died 1784.

study and practise midwifery and for that purpose attend some hospital – if Edinburgh cannot afford you an opportunity, your coming home by Dublin might answer that purpose and give you a good opportunity of looking about you. That is the place of all others I wish you settled in for your first years, next, if that would not answer, Lisburn would be my choice, but Belfast dearly as I wish it to be your home would not be brooked for some years. Your mother reads all your letters, the degree and everything else I am certain will be left to your own choice though she appears to place too high a value on that fortune for you which she always rose superior to for herself, ever acting disinterestedly.

Dr Haliday has been summoned to attend par[liamen]t upon the Antrim election, it being supposed he could give information of an agreement of A. Stewart's¹⁶⁵ with Thompson to give him a sum of money for his seat. The Doctor was called away at a very inconvenient time and gave in a petition the day he got to Dublin declaring what a number of patients he had on hand and whose lives in a great measure depended on him. He was however kept there a fortnight and being but just returned I have not heard the account of his trial. Stewart has withdrawn and in my opinion makes a poor figure. Thompson holds it out but it's thought to no purpose – he is a vain blockhead and has but just got off[f] the Fleet after having spent a great deal of money in the chase of fortune hunting. Young Blackwood¹⁶⁶ is arrived from his travels with similar accomplishments. Wilson's behaving with the most provoking meanness, absenting himself from par[liamen]t at the most critical times and calling the delegates together in order to get money – the Belfast ones I hope and believe have given him up. He has now lost that moment of his life which might have recovered his character and made it in the new. How fair, how glorious would my brother have shone in his place.

We are astonished at not having some account of John M[cormick] if he is still alive. How are you and Stewart? I was sorry not to hear Alex' name among the election lawyers. Rowley and Dobbs¹⁶⁷ were employed. Write to Mrs Conron and soon to MM

Do you know it to be a fact that the recruit cut off[f] his own foot?

27 Wednesday [February 1778]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, NORTH STREET, BELFAST [25]

My dearest Matty, I returned yesterday from Prestonpans and was much disappointed in finding no letter from Belfast on my table. Write frankless rather than not at all.

I was well entertained at the ball – many fine girls, and some I found very conversible. Mrs McCormick is well but exceedingly thin, sitting most constantly beside her poor son who is wasting away in an incurable hectic.¹⁶⁸ Miss Hill¹⁶⁹ desires

165 Alexander Stewart (1746-1831), younger brother of the future Lord Londonderry; he and Skeffington Thompson presented petitions to parliament relating to the Antrim election of 1776.

166 Probably one of the sons of Sir John Blackwood.

167 Francis Dobbs (1750-1811), barrister, later MP for Charlemont (*DNB*).

168 A hectic or a consumptive fever.

169 Probably a sister of Professor George Hill and a relation of the McCormicks.

her compliments to Nancy. I have no news. There are some lads here who want me to take a small house in the country and near the Botanical Garden along with them, next summer. They are all excellent fellows, and provided their plan be suitably economical I can have no possible objection. I am scaling through the science of physic as usual – God grant me patience in time present, and patients in time to come. I have the pleasure to tell you that it is with the utmost difficulty they can raise men either in Glasgow or Edinburgh, and it is generally agreed they have brought themselves into a very disagreeable dilemma. No more at present but conclude till a better opportunity for I am writing in the class and must return to listening. WD

28 Sunday, 1 March [1778]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, NORTH STREET, BELFAST [26]

I thank you most heartily for your letter of the 15th and wish in vain that I could render any that I write so agreeable. I am in health and high spirits – I study with pleasure in the forehead of the morning, and I relax in amusing society in the heel of the evening. I may tell you, that the lads here seem to set a value on my company, and if I durst say what opinion is entertained of me from my own judgment I would account myself an agreeable fellow. Miracles have not ceased when Lord North¹⁷⁰ made his last speech and when I have lately found that my chief talents lie in conversation – but this solely between ourselves.

As to what you have said on America, it is [—]mation. I shall not say much about it as present [—] answer with the celebrated parrot, I think the more. I must indeed acknowledge that my mind has a strange and perhaps unnatural propensity to consider the past rather than the future. I sit as it were with my back to the horses, and fasten my eyes on the country already travelled through, ignorant of and inattentive to that which is to come. When it comes, if it be agreeable, its being unexpected will make it doubly so, and if it be barren, he who expected nothing cannot be disappointed. America is indeed the promised land I would wish to view before I died; and though perhaps one pitying patriotic glance cast back on Great Britain, as it is called, might have the effect if not of wholly changing me to a salt pillar (though what better metamorphosis for a man of taste) at least of drawing from me some salt tears, which I suppose was all that happened to poor Mrs Lot, grieved to the heart, no doubt, that she had left her monkey or her lover to perish in the flames. You remember Scot. He has passed his first examination, and as our patients say, he had an easy passage. This is the first judgment – but there are many other judgments before the seal is set. He longs for the power of putting to death, and I was advising him to choose his motto from the Revelations as applicable to the medical tribe – ‘Before him went the Pestilence’. There are more agreeable young men in [the univers]ity at present than I remember – Cleghorn, Quin¹⁷¹

170 Lord North, later 2nd Earl of Guildford (1732-92), government minister (*DNB*).

171 Charles William Quin (1755-1818), MD 1779, later physician-general to the army in Ireland and physician to the Royal Hospital, Kilmalsham, Dublin.

[—] from Dublin are an hon[our] to their country; and what may appear odd to you, that awkward-looking lout Adair Crawford,¹⁷² who is at present pursuing, and will soon overtake the profession of physic, is universally esteemed the most ingenious student of medicine at present in this University.

I have no news. Jock McCormick still lingers on the stalk and his mother longs eagerly for letters from Ireland. If you enclose any for her to me in a genuine frank I shall immediately send them out, and you may also enclose some counterfeit franks for yourself as you say they pass. Do this as soon as you can. No doubt you will be surprised at the parliamentary news. I can consider North's bills in no other light than as proceeding either from malice or cowardice either with a view of disuniting to the colonies or from a fear that a treaty is already entered into between them and France – I fear a general war. We spent a pleasant evening on the fast day which the Scotch spent in humiliation and prayer. We made every science which we knew of produce a toast applicable to politics and many of them were excellent. We concluded with unanimously wishing that all the tyrants in Europe had but one neck, that neck laid on the block and one of us appointed executioner. I copy the following note of Mrs McKnight¹⁷³ and I wish Nancy as soon as possible to do what she desires. 'Mrs McKnight presents her compliments to Miss Drennan, and begs she may take the trouble to write a few lines to Mrs Thomson at Miss Boyd's, Donaghadee, to desire Mrs Thomson to ask Mr Keill what age he would choose the firs that are to be sent – whether they should be one year or two or three as the nurseryman has all sorts but [—] send them, till the age be mentioned – Miss Dren[nan —] excuse this freedom as Mrs McKnight has no frank [for M]rs Thomson.' Mrs Thomson must write immediately. Write soon to me. WD

29 [17 March 1778]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, NORTH STREET, BELFAST [27]

Dearest Matty, I have delayed for once my usual weekly epistle, as I had very little to say and was unwilling to make that little cost you eight-pence, when I expected every day an enclosure of some franks from you. I would beg you to send them immediately, were I not persuaded they must be already on the road. I am in health, and hope to enjoy the summer here very pleasantly – much more so indeed were my examinations over – and it is really scarcely possible to spend as much time in study as is requisite, abstracted as I am by my classes and agreeable companions. This is St Patrick's day and I am to dine with a chosen set, and forget medicine at least for a day. I am beginning to think about my thesis. I believe the subject of my compilation, for it will be no more, will be on blood-letting in fevers. You ask me to whom I shall dedicate – I will dedicate it to no one, because it will consist of other people's sentiment and little if anything of my own. I am not yet become a

172 Adair Crawford (1748-95), physician and chemist (*DNB*).

173 Mrs McKnight, presumably wife of Dr James McKnight.



Mrs Ann Drennan
(c. 1719–1806)

critic in medicine. The report goes here that Robertson is to be appointed secretary to the Commission, how true I can't say. Little will it avail – America will never lose by a treaty what she has gained by her blood. WD

30 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [NORTH STREET, BELFAST] [4]

Dearest Matty, I received your agreeable packet only this morning and was really beginning to be alarmed at your unaccountable delay in writing. Write often to me and write at length. Your longest letter is still to me your best. This place is so barren of event that I have some designs of getting a form of letter printed off, containing the words 'I am well – Write soon – Yours ever etc.' which shall be sent every week with all possible regularity. Remember that I stay here during the summer, and treat me accordingly.

Your account of poor Mrs Heyland's¹⁷⁴ fate struck me exceedingly, and I condole with you most heartily on the loss of a friend every way so very respectable. That he might die the last of his friends was a celebrated curse of antiquity, some degree of which it must be the lot of every one to feel, and however much you, even young as you are, may complain of such distresses, yet you should ever account it as a law imposed on everyone to weep for others, as they hope to be wept for by others. My dearest Matty, the same tears you now shed shall be returned to you four-fold one day or other, and the time will come when you shall not feel, and others only shall suffer. I am sure Sam will be much affected at the loss of his friend.

How does my mother bear up through this winter? She must feel for the approaching fate of the mother as you have done for the daughter. She herself has happily got over a critical period of female life, and I think may rest satisfied in the probability of a long and I hope comfortable old age. I am really sorry for the loss of the *Nancy*, and if a war happens with France, as appears very certain, I fear that the traffic of our family will be still more unfortunate. There is a box directed to a gentleman in Dublin, which for its safe conveyance I desired his friend here might direct to Sam, who will be so good as to transmit it, and pay the price of the freight which he is to receive from the Dublin carrier before he delivers the box, and the carrier is to be paid when the box is delivered to Dr Prosser.¹⁷⁵ We have but five weeks of the session yet remaining and I design to spend some days at the end of it with the good people at Prestonpans, and I am afraid before that time I shall be obliged to get some coarse summer coat as the turned one with which I left Belfast is now in a pitiable condition and the tailor has fairly given it up as irreparable. I am ever yours, WD

Tell me more particularly of all my friends, of Nancy, Margaret, Mrs Smith, the Mattears, Kennedy, Hay, Hugh, etc.

¹⁷⁴ Mary, wife of Hercules Heyland, died 3 March 1778; she was a close friend of Martha's; her mother was Mrs Frank Hamilton who died in the following month.

¹⁷⁵ Probably a relation of James Prosser who was a fellow student.

31 6 April [1778]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [28]

Dearest Matty, I write as usual to inform you that I am in perfect health and high spirits, just formed for a militia man, so that if you have any dread of an approaching invasion, you should send over for me immediately. If any thing can change your American politics I think the fear of a second Thurot¹⁷⁶ in Monsieur De la Motte Piquet¹⁷⁷ may have a chance of producing such a miracle. I see there is to be a militia established on a better footing – when or how is it to take place? Were it in any degree compatible with necessary avocations, I would greatly long to obtain some rank in it. You'll be so good as to ask Sam. I think I could perform my exercise tolerably well, and the better as seven Irish lads here have entered into a resolution to be taught by a Sergeant from the Castle, and he gives us hopes that we shall fire powder at least with perfect regularity in a fortnight or three weeks. We are therefore resolved if an opportunity presents on our return, to fall with our arms in our hands, in short to do anything rather than be obliged to be packed up and sent off with the women. A war is deemed here inevitable – Franklin¹⁷⁸ has been publicly received at the court of France. Great is the change from that day when he was insulted, the high priest of sacred philosophy, the saviour of a new world was trampled upon by a Scotch pettifogging scoundrel before the British council. People may now cry out what news, what news? O wondrous news – Tyranny has laid her dagger, her bow-string and her bowl in the royal seat of Britain where Alfred sat before, and Persecuted Liberty has sought for, and found refuge in the courts of France and of Spain – 'The last reason of kings' has been long a motto for the British cannon, but there is no last reason of the People. There is none – Legion, the many-headed monster lies contented in his chains, and the stupid brute, lashed as he is, will not even shake his chains or growl at his keeper, or if he does chance to lift himself up, he hears the cock of France crow and his lion heart, dies instantly within him.

I have not the smallest tittle of news about myself. Everything goes on as I wish and I am certain of an agreeable summer. Do you know that I do not feel the same sickening longings to return home that I used to do – what can be the reason? I fear it is somewhat owing to pride – I feel myself happy here because I am received in the companies I go into with pleasure, and I feel myself much oftener flattered here because I am better known, at least what I consider in me as best worth being known. Write to me soon. WD

32 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [29]

My dearest Matty, I received your letter and Sam's nearly a fortnight ago, and am ashamed I have not answered them sooner. I hope you are at length relieved from

176 François Thurot, who invaded Carrickfergus in 1760, and held it for a few days.

177 Probably a French privateer.

178 Benjamin Franklin (1706-90), American statesman and scientist.

your terrors of the sea. I was glad to hear the noble forwardness of our Belfast militia though I confess, as the day was so very fine, I think some of them might have proposed a party down the water. I was at Prestonpans for a few days. They are all in good health and even Jock is better than usual. As for my own, it is and has been perfect during this winter. I have got a shower-bath in place of Hugh¹⁷⁹ which I intend making use of during the summer, and have taken a better lodging than my former one at a cheaper rate. I am in excellent spirits and indeed can say with a safe conscience that I have not suffered a moment's depression since I left you. I no longer exist like a parenthesis in society, but am evidently related to other parts of it and would almost say that my absence would be attended with some deficiency in the sense and spirit of that portion of society I am at present connected with. I love Belfast dearly and more especially would it charm me at this season – but were it for my interest, and perhaps it is so, I could stay from it another winter – but of this no more at present. I am to give in my thesis on the first of July and am to be examined some of the first days of August. Plunket is this moment come in to tell me that Lord Chatham is no more. He has done gloriously and died in the last act of the British story in a manner that will make him immortal. I intended to have written you a long letter but I am asked to dine with Quin who goes to Belfast tomorrow and will probably be the bearer of this letter. Is the bill coming? WD

33 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [30]

Dearest Matty, I have waited with much impatience on more accounts than one for a letter from Belfast. I expected a bill a fortnight ago, and from my want of it have been exposed to as many shifts as any Irish student in Edinburgh. I entreat you may inform my mother of it immediately and get Sam to send it over as soon as he possibly can. Why don't you write to me oftener? If you cannot obtain genuine franks, send me counterfeits without enclosures. I am obliged to ferret every newspaper for Irish news, for news from Belfast. Are you and Sam on the road to Edinburgh? If you be, the excuse is sufficient. I will usher you to the assembly, the races, the play-house, the infirmary, the anatomy room, with other places of polite entertainment. I will show you the Botany Garden, demonstrate to you as modestly as I can the sexes of plants, give them better names than I am sure Adam ever did, or could have done, teach you their language, and tell you their amours. I will introduce you to the reverend divines of the General Assembly. I will take you to see the Reverend Divine,¹⁸⁰ as he must be called, of Prestonpans, who I assure you is in the Assembly a man of no small importance. I will then show you my room, my water bath, my mode of living – my armchair. I swear to you there is not a couch in the room, and the chair itself made of hard bony mahogany with not a softening pitiful piece of lining, a morsel of artificial flesh capable of compression about it. I will trim an

179 The Drennans' servant.

180 Dr Joseph McCormick.

evening fire for you, that warm friend of your heart. I will give Sam a bottle of the best port in Edinburgh and drink the health of that heroic soul who entertained the [man] that burned his splendid house and destroyed his possessions. I will [—] I entertain you with what I name my own, and [—]erent manner from what I ever shall or can do in [—] dearest mother. What the plague is come over Nancy? [Be so] good as to apply to Mrs Smith to write a line or two for her [—] me that she remembers me – if she does not, be assured I will fright [—]. Grace Wallace you tell me is ill – I am very sorry for it I [shall] lose, if she dies, an excellent resource of warm imagination in supply[ing the] pleasures of real affection, by tricking up an ideal goddess, if I cannot meet with an amiable women – but as to the bill I beg you may speak about it quickly. I am in debt to some of my acquaintance who are much more necessitated than myself. If you do not answer this immediately I shall not write again until the first of August that will either be a merry or a sad day to your humble servant, WD

34 7 July [1778]

MARTHA MCTIER, BALLYNAHINCH, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [AT] MR TULESS, MIDDLETON'S ENTRY, POTTER-RROW, EDINBURGH [31]

My dear Will, I was just reading the account of your eloquence on its favourite theme when Sam informed of the melancholy and much lamented death of his friend Polly. The smile of vanity (or at it) gave place to the tear of affection, and the account of the fondness the poor suffering poisoned brute showed for its master during two days of torment did what very few things would, spoiled my relish for your epistle at least some hours. I am very angry at you for not sending me a copy of your declamation and as for your thesis you might have been sure I would choose to have it although in Latin. From all the accounts we hear from Collegians, Mrs Haliday, Miss Edm[onstone], etc., we have such perfect faith in your health and good looks that not hearing from you now only deprives us of pleasure, it gives no pain even to Nancy whose solicitude is now transferred to me. We are both at Ballynahinch where I was tempted more by own opinion of the water and air, than advice from the doctor. I thought it would be good for my stomach and looks, the badness of which provokes me, as I have not any complaint that can account for my looking so very ill but from once having a fit of the palpitation I was before used to, and one night some twitches in my hands and feet, the doctor pronounces that the water is not fit for me and that if I use it it must be very sparingly and only before breakfast with frequent physic. This has disappointed me much as I hoped it would strengthen my stomach and give me the look of health which was all I expected from it and therefore have no thoughts of bathing as I thought that made me thinner at the White House. We have been here at Boyd's, three weeks. Mrs Holmes¹⁸¹ is also in the same house but not another creature so that it's rather dull

181 Probably Isabella, wife of John Holmes, see below, p.48.

– Mrs Price, Miss Trail and Ann Buntin¹⁸² join us next week. If you write to me immediately I shall get it while I am here and I would be glad you would and tell me your opinion of my drinking the water, from a remarkable fullness and blueness I have got under my eyes just the very same you had when you complained, I suspect the doctor thinks the water will fill me too full of blood, and is the only thing that could make me afraid to drink it as others do. Your mind I suppose is too much occupied by the prospect of your examination to look beyond it, when that is over I expect to hear from you, that you are happy in having succeeded in one design and that you are planning the material one of where and how you are to settle – a matter so much depends upon, and yet so much of chance may either make it fortunate or the reverse, that I cannot, nor would not venture to advise.

As far as I can judge our situation in Belfast admits of these advantages to you – the first a material one which both Haliday and Mattear enjoyed until they were married, living free in a parent's house. The next is that Haliday has obtained such business in the country that more has fallen to Mattear and if it continues to improve I am certain he would wish soon to give up the other branch. This however has been such an introduction for him into some of the best families that I dare say he will soon be the physician to all the genteel people so near town as to allow him to attend, few people choosing two, and this Haliday has experienced to his mortification in many families that he has lost by young women coming into them. There can be no doubt but that a third physician might get practice sufficient in Belfast for a young man and that Apsley has not yet obtained it. Ferguson must lose his and among them the gleanings might be sufficient for an unambitious patient young practitioner. Whether you are fitted for this and many rubs, perhaps more mortifying in Belfast than any other place, weigh well among other considerations.

Your friend Stewart has been in England, and has played his part so well with the old lady that he has got between three and four hundred a year settled. Tom Lyon¹⁸³ is to be married immediately to a lady in Dublin. He has taken Davy C[onyngnam]'s house, that gentleman's dignity having suffered so much by Thompson¹⁸⁴ seizing his furniture for above a hundred pound rent that he declared he would be his tenant no longer. My mother is to get what time she pleases of the house at the present rent by which I am certain she will never lose – and if she should choose to give it up and you want one, I think you would be lucky in having it in your power. Report says A. Orr¹⁸⁵ is to be married to Army Wilson and I believe it to be true. Grace Wallace is recovered and is thought a fine girl in Bristol where she has been for her health. J. Hay is quite fixed in going to America whenever he gets a good opportunity. Our volunteer companies make a good figure. Captain Banks's¹⁸⁶ is the most numerous and he is fond of showing them in marching to church, meeting, etc., a parade declined by the others, they however I am told are to fire on Sunday next.

182 Ann Buntin, daughter of Arthur Buntin, linen draper; Miss Trail was probably her cousin or an aunt.

183 Thomas Lyons (1747-1806), of Old Park, Belfast, married Sarah Armstrong on 4 July 1778 (*LGI*, p.424).

184 Probably William Thompson, who was also Mrs Drennan's landlord.

185 Alexander Orr, Belfast merchant and banker, married Arminella Wilson on 10 July 1778 in Belfast parish church.

186 Stewart Banks (c.1725-1802), several times sovereign of Belfast.

Their regimentals are blue, white waistcoats and breeches and blue covered laced hats etc. It is thought pretty and as you may possibly choose to join them, query might it not be better to defer buying a new coat where you are, not that the uniform would be convenient for you as it is only worn on field days. As J. Greg resigned when he went to America there was another officer to be balloted for in his place and Sam was chosen, a very inconvenient because an expensive honour. Rowley wrote from Dublin last post begging leave to join them. Haliday was so much mortified by not being chose their captain that he could not disguise it – he had been first lieutenant in the old Belfast company, a circumstance that was not known by J. Holmes¹⁸⁷ and Sam, who were really the persons who got Saunders appointed, from their opinion of his being a man of knowledge and bravery. Haliday attacked Sam about their choice with great warmth, was backed by Bamber¹⁸⁸ and all their patriotism exclaiming against the appearance of such a wonder as two Volunteer companies in Belfast and both Tory officers. Much was said on both sides but as usual neither was convinced but parted friends. Sam owned he had got Saunders appointed, that he never had thought of politics but wished for a man that could train or lead them with judgment and therefore did not repent of his choice. My own opinion is that Saunders would be their very fittest officer in case of service but as a female I wish they had got a cleverer looking fellow. Wilson¹⁸⁹ and Goddard¹⁹⁰ have since both declared how highly they would have thought themselves honoured by being made captain.

Remember me affectionately to Mary McCormick, tell her I think of her often here and Nancy never ceases to talk of her at the back of McCubbery's house. Give her a frank for me – you have too many – use one immediately and another the first of August. You have never wrote to Mrs Conron – she writes to Belfast every week but never names you, at least not in a way to be told. I request you will buy a pretty shagreen case for your watch before you leave Edinburgh, you cannot want it any longer. Weigh yourself and let me know how heavy you now are. Give my compliments to Mrs Haliday and request her to assist you in buying three pairs of lemon-coloured jean gloves, two of them will fit herself, one my mother – which you know must be a small hand and wide arm – let them be very long. Mrs Holmes requests you will get her a pair which must be a good size larger than would fit Mrs Haliday.

35 Wednesday, 5 August [17]78

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [EDINBURGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [32]

Dearest Matty, I am going in an hour or two to be dissected alive at Dr Hope's,¹⁹¹ the Professor of Botany, and I hope to behave to the satisfaction of all the good company of executioners who may happen to be present. I am neither very merry nor

187 Probably John Holmes (1745-1825), merchant and banker of Belfast.

188 Probably Henry Bamber, son of Richard Brown Bamber of Belmont, Co. Down (Blackwood 26).

189 Probably James or Hill Wilson of Purdysburn.

190 John Goddard (d.1807), husband of Martha's friend Eliza Rainey.

191 John Hope (1725-86), Professor of Botany, founded new Edinburgh Botanic Gardens (*DNB*).

very grave on the matter, but just in that golden mean which will secure me a kind of bashful assurance, an appearance I would imagine the most recommending of all others to my examiners. I thank heaven I never knew what it was to be terrified by such examinations as I have underwent; nay I think I rather feel a degree of callous indifference overspreading my mind just before the period of trial. It is a kindness of nature and somewhat resembles the kindness of those who draw a cap over the poor criminal's eyes, before he feels the stroke of the executioner. I have indeed a kind of recipe which in such cases never fails to refresh and invigorate me. I think of my father – I imagine I see his gracious figure smiling at the foolish irresolution of his son, and gently saying to me, why should my boy be so fearful? 'Tis but a little matter. You will, Matty, perhaps think me foolish in this, but I can assure you that a fanciful recollection of this kind has been of more of use in preserving your brother from temptations innumerable and some of them scarcely in human nature to overcome without such an artifice, during the course of my education in Scotland, where I have ever been more careful of my conduct even than when I am at home – You will think this too a little curious. Sam mentioned to me a design that he had formed of taking a trip to England. What part is he going to? He has certainly be[en] a little mistaken in the sum of money I have spent since I left you – according to my calculation the amount is exactly £85 7s 0d Irish. If he be not gone I shall send him an account of the different sums I have received and he may see if it corresponds with his. I enclose you a letter from Mrs McCormick, her son is dead at last. I design seeing her the latter end of this week, as my second examination will be to-morrow. You said you wanted to see my thesis, but it is not printed as yet and I fancy you must put off your desire till you see myself, for I do not design to send any before me to Belfast, unless one to Mr Garnet,¹⁹² which his kindness to me that I shall never forget, demands as a debt. I shall now go and dress myself and in the next page you shall hear news.

'Tis is not in mortals to command success, but we'll do, etc.' Well – I am come out of the den of lions unhurt, and with honour. I was examined fairly and genteely by every one of the five Professors and the whole continued exactly an hour and a quarter. It is a trial where every lad may have sufficient room to show his acquisitions in physic, though at the same time I believe many can pass without very great knowledge in the study. I spoke confidently and although not in elegant at least in good medical Latin, as well at least as some of my examiners. I did a thing which I hope may please you as much as it has done me. I had given in my thesis some weeks ago to Dr Gregory, Professor of Theory and Dean of Faculty, in order to have any corrections he chose made on it – I had waited on him just before the examination, and he mentioned two or three things he chose to be altered, he at the same time insinuated that he believed a Mr Brown, who often writes theses for the lads, had some hand in mine also. This he did in a joco-serious manner which nettled me exceedingly though in reality I was complimented by the supposition, however impolite it was in him that made it. I was resolved therefore to let the Faculty hear

192 Rev. Matthew Garnet (c.1730-88), headmaster at Lord Donegall's classical school in Church Lane, Belfast.

his conduct, and when we were assembled, I begged leave to mention a circumstance which happened to me a little before – I told them the circumstances. I told Dr Gregory that I had not denied the thing assuredly, at that time, because I knew that the person he supposed guilty of such a meanness, might also be guilty of falsehood. I told him that if he had known me better, he would have known that I was incapable of such a thing, and if he had known the Irish spirit better, he would have known that it was incapable of submitting in such a manner to any Scotchman upon earth. I took the liberty however in that public meeting of declaring before them all, with my hand on my heart, that no man in this university or in this world had the smallest hand either in the English or in the Latin of my dissertation. These were as well as I remember the very words I said to him and them, and I had the pleasure of seeing him look confounded foolish and at length ask my pardon. You will be surprised that I could stay at this university so long and be so little known by the Professors but scarcely any of the students are known even by name to them, and the intermission in my studies has in this particular secluded me almost entirely. I shall be examined a second time to-morrow and if I did not know Dr Gregory's sense too well, would expect no mercy from him. He is a young man of eminent genius but conceited, and professes free-thinking and free-speaking. I have scarcely anything else to say but that I am to give these Professors to-morrow £13 15s 0d, which with printing my thesis, fees to servants etc., will amount to what I told Sam. I shall write to you whenever I receive an answer to this. You must know I am not to be saluted Doctor until after the public examination which happens the middle of September. Farewell and tell me plenty of news in your next. The French have played the back-game with Keppel.¹⁹³ WD

I believe I should have addressed this letter to my mother.

36 8 September [1778]

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, EDINBURGH [33]

Dear Will, All your reproofs have come safe to hand. I own their justness and promise not to behave so again while you are in Scotland. My little talent for letter writing has indeed forsaken me, but not the family, I wish you were as sure of being heir to H[amilton] Y[oung]¹⁹⁴ as you shall willingly be to my scribbling genius – a long time since there has been any account of that unhappy man, the last was deplorable, he had made so many attacks upon his own life and with such art, that I think it's probable he has succeeded before this time. Poor Mr Beatty's son Isaac has been as ill, he got himself thrown into the sea, but being saved he has been tolerably well ever since, his affairs however are in a bad way. You remember Mrs Conron's friend Smith of Cork, his wife had been at a play, when she returned she found her husband in good spirits, he enquired about the entertainment etc., went

¹⁹³ Augustus Keppel (1725-86), admiral (*DNB*).

¹⁹⁴ Hamilton Young (d.1799), a cousin of the Drennans, at this date a merchant in New York and temporarily insane (see introduction).

to bed, but soon after complaining a little of his bowels he got up and went down stairs. She fell asleep, and some time after awaking, and not finding him in bed, was alarmed, went through the house and having searched it in vain threw up a window to enquire, when her intelligence was fatal, his body under the window having been thrown up by the tide in which he had plunged himself. His brother and hers being expected the next day on the settling of some partnership affairs, which were in a situation too desperate for him to bear the thought of having examined, was the cause of this shocking resolution. His wife was in an instant deprived of an affectionate husband and from a supposed state of affluence reduced to beggary. Her brother Bob Hamilton has behaved well both to her and a sister who are now quite dependent upon him, and his own affair in such a way by Smith's conduct, that he is but just able to keep his doors open – and all this you can believe to be the effects of a gaming table. Mrs Smith is come to her uncle's, Bob Lambert. Conron has been in the jaws of death carried to Cork in the night in all appearance dying with what the doctors there (and he had five) call a gout in his lungs. They have ordered him to Bath. She is there with him and if you will now embrace the time to write to her, you may do it with ease and propriety, an enquiry about his health being most proper from you and will be acceptable to her, so much so as to excuse former omissions. I entreat of you to write to her.

The number of people you have of late seen from this will render all my news old. We are kept in a constant state of alarm night and day, and the terrors of a visit from the French give rise to no other conversation. This is one of the things gives me no dismay, though Sam was raised at two o'clock on Sunday morning by an alarm from the coast, that assembled all our officers and put most of our women to pack up plate, etc., yet this news like most we hear, I believe was false – but as it was an express to our Collector¹⁹⁵ it merited attention.

I suppose you were very happy with your friends K[ennedy] and W, and I hope you bestowed some polite attention on Goddard and his company as they were greater strangers. He called to see my mother on his return and all accounts agree in your good looks. I fear your sisters will be your first patients – Nancy was seized with a bad colic near a month ago, and has not yet thrown off the effects of it. She looks very ill. My stomach is very well ever since I went to Ballynahinch, but I am just now much alarmed by a complaint I fear of a more serious kind – but which I cannot well describe. It is in my head and comes on whenever I go in to bed. I have no violent pain, but an uneasiness, a kind of pulse, those twitchings which you formerly laughed at, all centred in my head, so that though I am said to be sleeping you can conceive nothing more dreadful than the restless state I am in, so confused, so unhappy, that believe me when I awake I fear my head will go quite wrong. I never was frightened by any complaint before but am so situated with regard to Nancy's fears about me that I dare not own a complaint and I have had some little reasons which have deterred me from speaking to Matgear – but if it continues I will

certainly take advice. I am tolerably well all day and this alarms me the more, as I fear it might be water in some particular place of my head, which gives rise to an uneasiness in my situation when lying. So odd is the feeling I have, I would sometimes call it a lightness, at other times a heaviness in my head.

Dr Haliday had a letter lately from Dr Achmet¹⁹⁶ telling him he heard that his disgust to this country and the government was so great that he had determined to leave it and go to America, if so, he requested his interest in favour of a young man in Dublin who wished much to settle in Belfast. This was only laughed at, nothing can be more conspicuous than the great [in]crease of Mattear's business both in town and country [—] not a doubt but in a short time by the [—]in, he will make as much as ever Haliday [—] done – why don't you write me your scheme, [—] anxious, very anxious about it. Were the notes J. K[ennedy] took you convenient, will you want more? Sam heard of his going to Scotland only by accident a few moments before he went off, otherwise I would have sent a packet.

I have been much interested of late in a scheme for Sam, which want of interest I fear will prevent taking place. It is the purchase of a civil employment for which the interest of the Lord Lieutenant or his secretary is necessary. I wrote to Lady Dungannon¹⁹⁷ but had an ineffectual though most polite answer. Sam has applied to Jemmy Adair but has not yet heard from him, and there are some other channels through some of which I hope to succeed. It would be dangerous to mention more particulars – these must not escape you even to Mrs McCormick.

You will be angry I have not prattled to you about the girls. G[race] W[allace] ought to be my theme to you – she appears delicate, haughty, not improved in her looks, the present fashion in dress not being favourable to them, nor in my opinion has she taste. She dances with remarkable elegance quite in the fancy way but seldom deigns to do it, her health being an excuse to any but a man of fashion. She honoured a Major Loftus¹⁹⁸ with her hand in a minuet at the last coterie. He is said to dance one better than any man in the kingdom and her part was performed with air enough – and to say the truth with more excellence than I ever saw here. There was a formidable circle and the lady bore the observation better than either her father or brother – the former left the room. I see few gentlemen approach but Mr Skeffington,¹⁹⁹ young Blackwood and N. Brice.²⁰⁰ The girls too are kept at distance – this intended as a useful hints [*sic*] for you. If you are not soon at Prestonpans do not neglect to write a note to Mary and let her know her sister continues well, for in her present situation Mary will be anx[ious] [—] Miss P. Seed²⁰¹ and Mr Hawkshaw [—] are married. Mrs Frank Savage is dead.²⁰²

196 Dr Achmer Borumbodad, a Turkish physician who settled in Dublin in 1771 and erected medicinal baths on the Quays at Bachelors Walk; according to Sir Jonah Barrington he was actually an Irishman from Co. Kilkenny (J. H. Widdess, *History of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland*, (Edinburgh, 1963) pp 75-6).

197 Anne, Viscountess Dungannon, grandmother of the Duke of Wellington.

198 Major Nicholas Loftus, of 1st Regt of Horse, Ireland.

199 One of the sons of the 1st Earl of Massereene.

200 Probably Ned Brice of Kilroot, Co. Antrim.

201 Probably a daughter of Dr William Seed.

202 Mary, wife of Francis Savage of Glaslary, died aged 47, buried at Ardkeen, Co. Down.

37 13 December 1780, franked by James Cuff²⁰³

SAM MCTIER, DUBLIN, TO HIS WIFE, MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [36]

My dearest Matty, I am just returned from Huet²⁰⁴ more pleased than with any visit I have hitherto made him. I sat near an hour with him and he entered more seriously into the business than before, the precedent on Custom House quay is a lucky circumstance, as to Mr Leslie, they pay no attention to it, that exchange not yet being made. He took down in writing D.C.'s²⁰⁵ name and mine and what we wanted. Davy's resignation I also left with him at his request to show the Chancellor, that he might say he knew that Mr Conyngham wanted to resign, but had his promise that no improper use should be made of it. These memorandums he is to give to Lord Lifford²⁰⁶ before he goes to the Castle tomorrow to dinner, when his lordship is to mention the affair to his Excellency and on Friday morning Huet 'hopes to give me a good account of the matter', these were the most agreeable words by far I have yet heard from him – but I do not believe the Chancellor will be at all warm in his request.

I never experienced more kindness than from the Mitchells, and don't know what to say in excuse for taking her²⁰⁷ home with me. There was never such pressing, it quite distresses me and yet I'm determined not to leave her. Do you say something to make my determination appear proper and absolutely necessary, otherwise I fear giving them offence which I would be very sorry for. I have engaged myself to dine abroad for two days only and he has requested that I may not for any more. Yesterday I had a message from Mr Yelverton²⁰⁸ to dine with him, it vexed me I could not as Billy²⁰⁹ had asked some gentlemen this evening. We are all to be at the Mussendens tomorrow and Saturday I intend to take Margaret to the theatres and then I think she'll have gone the rounds. Miss Bruce²¹⁰ is very well. There are very cheap silks selling every day here just before our door by auction. What kind will you have for a gown and how many yards? I foresee my stay will be longer than I intended. Does Nancy or your mother want anything? I have a great deal of time on my hands. The report here is that the Lord Lieutenant²¹¹ goes away before Christmas, Huet says he thinks not until after the holidays.

Have I been much wanted or have you got any bills? If any accounts are wanted Thomas Harper could draw them out for you and you might take the money. I hope you go sometimes into the shop, and if you would put on your pattens you might look into the work house and see what J. Davy is doing. Has he sent the winter candles to the different people who have bespoke the quantity is entered in the memorandum book. I shall be much disappointed if I don't hear from you

203 James Cuffe (d.1821), MP for Co. Mayo, 1768-97.

204 i.e. Hewitt, a son of Viscount Lifford, see below.

205 David Conyngham was a land waiter (customs official) at Belfast.

206 Viscount Lifford (1709-89), Lord Chancellor of Ireland (*DNB*).

207 His daughter Margaret McTier.

208 Barry Yelverton (1736-1805), lawyer, at this date MP for Carrickfergus, subsequently chief baron of the Court of Exchequer and 1st Viscount Avonmore (*DNB*).

209 William Mitchell, Inspector General of Barracks in Ireland, brother of Sam McTier's first wife.

210 Probably a sister or aunt of Dr William Bruce.

211 2nd Earl of Buckinghamshire (1723-93), Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1770-80 (*DNB*).

tomorrow, you might write every day. Press Davy to get his brother²¹² to make what interest he can – if he fails in getting his place disposed of now he never will have so good an opportunity. YOUR HUSBAND

38 20 December 1780, franked by James Cuff
SAM MCTIER, DUBLIN, TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [37]

My Matty, I now sit down quietly in my own room to pay all my debts in the epistolary way and I begin with you, to whom I am most in arrear. I was this day with Hewitt to inform him of what passed between Sir Richard²¹³ and me; he says there are some more who have sold their places since he saw me, but does believe they have all to take the oath and cannot imagine how they manage it; I wished another application from the Chancellor seconding Mr O'Neill's²¹⁴ but he seems to think there is no chance, now that it is known that I am to give money, he thinks that a letter from Mr or Mrs O'Neill²¹⁵ to Mr Eden²¹⁶ to which Lord Lifford would join his request would be much more likely of success than anything that can be done with the present administration, and that he would this day talk with Lord L on that subject; for my own part I have made up my mind about the matter and think the chance of success is very small, but whilst there is any I have hopes and shall do all in my power. If we are disappointed let us not seem vexed, but treat it as a thing of no great importance, everything happens for the best and perhaps some time hence we may think so, even of a defeat now – I am well pleased with my jaunt and I think in future some good may arise from it, that will more than repay all that is past. I called upon Dr Richardson,²¹⁷ before I received yours and mentioned to him my business, this was before the Chancellor had applied. He told me not to form any hopes for I could not succeed as the Lord Lieutenant could not do [*sic*]; this you may be sure was disagreeable intelligence, but I find he was mistaken he was to go a-hunting the next day and the day after I saw him at a distance, but not since. A messenger from Lord Carlisle²¹⁸ says he will certainly be at the Head²¹⁹ this day; what a lucky thing it will be if Mr Eden goes to Shane's Castle, this or something else might certainly be done. Hewitt mentioned to me the great intimacy of the ladies he builds much upon it, but desires that money may not be mentioned.

Margaret seems very happy but does not seem inclined to stay behind me, I believe indeed on account of the expense. If she does it will only be until her uncle is returning from this market in January, when I expect he would take her down with

212 William Conyngham of Springhill (1723-84), MP for Dundalk.

213 Probably Sir Richard Heron, chief secretary.

214 John O'Neill (1740-98), of Shane's Castle, MP for Randalstown, subsequently 1st Viscount O'Neill (*DNB*).

215 Henrietta Boyle, daughter of Viscount Dungarvan, married John O'Neill in 1777.

216 William Eden (1744-1814), chief secretary to Lord Carlisle, the incoming viceroy, later 1st Baron Auckland (*DNB*).

217 Possibly Dr William Richardson (1740-1820), writer on geology and agriculture (*DNB*).

218 5th Earl of Carlisle (1748-1825), Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1780-82 (*DNB*).

219 i.e. Holyhead, Wales, preparatory to sailing for Dublin.

him. What do you mean by not saying how your head is and whether you have taken anything new for it since you saw Dr H[aliday]? If you see him soon remember me affectionately to him, etc., etc. I fear now that I'll be from you at Christmas but you'll know this before me, the separation is the longest ever we experienced and I feel that there is nothing that for any length of time could with me compensate for your company. Be happy my dearest Matty and you'll make me so. I'm sure no one here by me ever perceived that I was in the least disappointed except M[argaret] whom I often caught eyeing me, she is greatly interested.

I am much indebted to Mr Portis, his letter sooner might have been of service, by this day's or tomorrow's post I shall make my acknowledgements to him. Tell J. Holmes I would have written to him but that I supposed he would hear everything I had to say from you, his sister²²⁰ is well and I delivered his bundle safe. I was yesterday very well entertained in the Court of Chancery when I heard Yelverton, Burgh,²²¹ Kelly,²²² etc., in a very long pleading. I have not yet got into one of the Dublin taverns and although I don't lodge at William M's, I live there, excepting some breakfasts at the Exchange – past three and two letters to write before dinner, for after it there is nothing done but playing on the glasses and W. Mitchell is to have sixteen to dinner today. Adieu. Ever yours, SM

39 Sunday [24 December 1780], franked by James Cuff
SAM MCTIER, DUBLIN, TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [38]

My dearest Matty, Though there is no post tonight I am retired to my own room before ten to write to you, then smoke a pipe and think of my friends at the Washington. I was obliged to pretend a headache to get off from W.M. and family; how pleasant it is to be alone in such a bustling place, and how happy would it make me to have you at my elbow. Many a time I have wished on my own account that I had brought you and left Margaret, but that would not have done neither – last night I suppose she told you my proceedings or rather my not proceeding.

You would be surprised to see the assurance I have assumed in the Castle bustling through Lords and what they call Representatives of the People, demanding a word with Mr Eden. Your name Sir? I must speak with himself as I have a letter from Mr O, in a low voice, that must be delivered into his own hand by me, but I shall call again. I was unlucky in giving Mr Portis's letter to S.H.²²³ when he was so hurried that he could not read it, but I'll try him again and also Hewitt tomorrow to go with me to Mr Eden which would save the Chancellor the trouble of backing the request of the letter I have to present. William Mitchell says he's sure I'll not get an audience this week, I'll make a push for it on Tuesday, though I have little hopes of admission as all the grandees are fluttering round him to pay their court. It was really disgusting

220 Holmes's sister was Mary Houston (d.1824), widow of Thomas Houston, a woollen draper of Dublin.

221 Walter Hussey Burgh (1742-83), Irish lawyer, later chief baron of the Irish Exchequer (*DNB*).

222 Probably Thomas Kelly, later justice of the Court of Common Pleas.

223 Probably Sackville Hamilton, under secretary for Ireland, 1780, 1795.

to see so many and some of the first rank pressing to pay their respects to Mr E before Lord C's arrival. Mr Hamilton I fancy knew Mr Portis's direction for when I told him I had also an epistle to the Secretary, he told me it was a very bad time for me to think of seeing him, in a friendly tone I thought.

Won't you say how your head is, whether you have done anything for it? I am not so indifferent as to deserve such neglect, however be sure you send M[argaret] some of your hair that she may get a knot of it, something for Nancy, which will be agreeable to her, especially as you are in so dangerous a way. Did you ever hear of anyone recover that had three doctors attending them? But this subject is too melancholy, let me drive it from my mind and solace myself with a pipe of tolerable Virginia, therefore my Matty, goodnight – just about the time you have read so far I expect by the help of half a crown to be ushered into Mr Eden's antechamber, when I am further admitted I'll write to you or come immediately and tell you all about it. I expect nothing therefore cannot be disappointed – again goodnight.

Monday [25 December]. Send to Hu[gh] McIlwean²²⁴ by C. Roberts £2 10s, my subscription to the Annuity Company, it must be paid this week. Have you heard anything from H. Montgomery²²⁵ or has there been any letters from Mr Haliday?²²⁶ If I cannot see Mr Eden tomorrow, I intend building a line upon Mr Portis's letter to Mr Hamilton begging his assistance in obtaining an audience and will venture to say that the Chancellor or William Conyngham will second the request if it should be thought necessary. Tell this to Davy and let him write to his brother immediately to authorise me if his name should be wanted. I wish you a Merry Christmas, mine has been tolerable, but there is nothing equal to B[elfast]. Ever yours, SM

It surprises me that there could be any doubt of my answer on my second visit to the Castle, since I told you it was all over and even now I expect no better at present, but must confess to have some future expectations, I longing much to be with you, whether I shall bring M is undetermined with me though the family here seem quite fixed on her stay.

40 Friday-Saturday, 30 December 1780

SAM MCTIER, DUBLIN, TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [39]

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, so from day to day creeps on this petty pace until the last recorded syllable of time, how then can I employ half an hour so agreeably as by scribbling to my dearest Matty, especially as I have all the news that I can have tomorrow, therefore I arrest the present moment in the pleasure I have in writing to you until I am called by my landlord with who I have promised to drink some whiskey punch; but what a woeful difference is here when I am obliged to say all myself who am so accustomed to hear you in sometimes pleasing silence, that is

224 Probably the Hugh McIlwean who was secretary of the Belfast troop of Light Dragoons in 1790.

225 Hugh Montgomery (1743-1832), Belfast merchant, purchased an estate at Benvarden, Co. Antrim, in 1797, and was high sheriff of the county in 1804.

226 Sam appears to have been agent for Robert Dalway Haliday (1724-96), a brother of Dr Haliday.

when I have the pipe in my mouth. Davy need not be afraid of the great W. Conyngham's name, Member for Dundalk, being profaned, it, nor even his great friend Mr Staples²²⁷ the commissioner in the present would avail. Mr Hewitt was this day to give my letter to Mr Eden and on Sunday morning is to give me his answer, so that you can't hear until Wednesday this great man's fiat, for they are all great and honourable men. If anything new occurs Margaret shall add to this tomorrow, as I dine with Mr John Magee²²⁸ and don't know when I shall leave him as he is a great genius which is always a treat to me.

It surprises me that the Doctor should think the interest made on this occasion is thrown away. In my opinion if anything in future should offer, what has been done will strengthen the interest by adding vigour to the application, which in one point has been much wanted, and for this purpose I wished you to write the letter mentioned in my last; the watchmen tell me tis past twelve therefore shall not wait for Mr Clements, but bid you goodnight, dream of me and I'll dream of you, which by the bye I have not yet – this is strange, a summons by the *fille de chambre*,²²⁹ a plump round little girl and very assiduous in every little civility, I have not gone as far with her, as Yorick²³⁰ did with his, if I had the catastrophe might have been – but I shall return to you unsullied – the coach is engaged for Monday or Tuesday.

Yours today vexes me with regard to H. Moore, I believe the sheriff must pay a year's rent before the goods can be removed but they ought to be arrested; I wish you would get C. Roberts to look into my rent book and he'll see by Ham[ilto]n Moore's account how much he is due, by adding half a year's rent for November to the balance that now appears in the book against him, in all I suppose it will be £152 and some odds and beg of him to speak to Alexander Arthur²³¹ to do what is necessary to secure Mr Haliday. I enclose an order to distrain, which may be directed to anyone Mr Arthur pleases, but if the rent can be got without this I would be glad it was not used, as I wish to show him every lenity in my power consistent with my duty to Mr Haliday – if the order I have written is not right Mr Arthur will fill up the blank above my name with a proper one. This I suppose you will receive from me as the last from this place, which it shall be if I set out on Monday. How meddling these priests are in things they have no business with. Margaret has finished her commissions and has this day seen Lord Buckingham[shire] take his departure. The streets were lined with soldiers, and the attendants were very numerous and exceedingly gay from Lord Carlisle down to I don't know who. Adieu my wife, your affectionate husband, SM

I did not see the rent until I had turned my leaf, tis well it was to you.

227 John Staples (1736-1820), later MP for Co. Antrim.

228 John Magee (d.1809), printer and proprietor of *Magee's Weekly Packet* and the *Dublin Evening Post*, exposed government corruption (*DNB*).

229 Chambermaid.

230 A character in Laurence Sterne's, *A sentimental journey* (1768).

231 Alexander Arthur (d.1797), Belfast merchant.

41 [January 1781]

MARTHA McTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM EDEN [DRAFT OR COPY LETTER] [40]

Can Mr Eden overlook the impropriety of a stranger, and a female thus taking the liberty of addressing him? I feel it too sensibly to suppose he can, yet while forms and customs at the first glance condemn, good nature will oft-times dispense with these, and looking a little farther, and judging kindly of the intention, though it smiles at a manner, will excuse it.

What then shall I acknowledge is my motive for this intrusion? The truth in a few words as possible, an ardent desire of obtaining, by your means sir, what will very essentially contribute to the happiness of a beloved husband.

By Mr O'Neill's interest, Mr McTier had the favour of an interview with you, and although then unsuccessful in his application, yet the honour you did in approving his conduct, through the affair he then mentioned to you, and allowing him to address you by letter when he got to Belfast and consulted Mr Conyngham, joined to your expressing a wish to serve him, were circumstances so flattering, that it was not until Mr McTier saw your letter to Mr O'Neill he gave up all hope of succeeding, and determined not to trouble Mr Eden with further solicitation for what he thought improper to grant.

But a perplexed state of affairs (I am not yet use to say distressed though perhaps the juster term) has to an unusual degree emboldened me and tempted me, without Mr McTier's knowledge, or any other person's, to entreat your interest, sir, in favour of one whose character for honour, and probity will stand the strictest test, but which, well as I might be pleased Mr Eden heard from others, does not become me to delineate. There are so many instances every day, and even in this port, of resignations taking place of the same kind Mr McTier requested, that could I obtain your good offices in his favour, I cannot doubt but success would follow.

An order for taking the usual oaths, would make the matter easy to him. Indeed many ways of doing this would suggest themselves, where the kind wish was joined to the happy power of doing good – a delight you sir, I dare say, so often enjoy that I hoped by placing Mr McTier's request in this true point of view, to interest you a little more in his favour as of one [who] at least was not less conscientious than those who were more fortunate, a circumstance this of small weight with the mere statesman, but with Mr Eden it will be allowed to have its full force.

These Sir, were my inducements to take a liberty which yet I blush to think of, but from which I hoped some good might arise, as is often seen to be the case from what appears the meanest causes. If my petition is unfortunate, be so tender of its unexperienced author as not to mention her freedom, which in that case would be hardly thought of. If successful, I shall not only be excused, but my vanity or rather my gratitude allowed to tell of Mr Eden's kindness. I will not let this selfish subject encroach any longer on your time but subscribe myself with much respect, your obedient humble servant,

42 5 February 1781

WILLIAM EDEN, DUBLIN CASTLE, TO MARTHA MCTIER [41]

Madam, I have received the favour of your letter, which in addition to Mr O'Neill's wishes would certainly dispose me in Mr McTier's favour, were it possible for his request to be complied with. But you must be sensible, that government, if it could not be induced to allow a sale of office, should be particularly cautious in guarding against any evasion or dispensation of the oaths, which have been formed to prevent one. I am therefore extremely concerned, that I cannot be of any assistance to Mr McTier, for whom you are so able and so proper an advocate. I am, Madam, your most obedient servant, WILLIAM EDEN

43 19 September [1782]

MARTHA MCTIER, EDINBURGH,²³² TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [45]

My dearest Sam, The letter which I wrote to my mother, and the review week, would prevent your missing one from me. At present I have it not in my power to give you any entertainment but not for want of matter sufficient for many sheets – this I shall reserve for winter nights when nothing better I fear will offer. You will not term me lazy, when I tell you that I am now writing after a journey of forty-four miles. We left Mr Crombie's²³³ at Glasgow this morning after breakfast, and got into Edinburgh at six in the evening. Mrs McNeight²³⁴ had been at the inn looking for us in consequence of a letter from Mrs Crombie, who went with Will to the Doctor's. They were greatly vexed at not being able to give us beds, an unfortunate accident having obliged them to take down the whole front of their house, they had therefore taken a pretty neat cheap lodging for us very near themselves, got a good fire in it but nothing more, being determined we should live with them all day.

Indeed nothing can exceed the civility we everywhere meet with, it should be termed something more, rather kindness – there has been two messages this night for me to sup at the Doctor's and a visit from the lady who is a very genteel comely kind woman, but all her entreaties could not prevail on me to go out this night, nor to breakfast any place but at home, everything else is to be there – we have three rooms, for eight shillings a week – tarts and wine are already sent from Mrs McNeight and a little tea and sugar of our own providing. We lived in Campbell Town two days and two nights and took some provision on board for five shillings a piece. If we can continue to live at this rate for a few days here, all our expense except travelling ones will be over. Our stock purse was two guineas and a half and will not I hope be out while we are here – though it met with some unforeseen drains. This letter is meant to contain nothing but that I am well and have not had the least threatening of a headache ever since I left you. The sea had s[eas]oned me

232 The visit to Edinburgh was to consult Dr Cullen about Martha's health.

233 Brother of Rev. James Crombie of Belfast.

234 ? Mrs McKnight

too well to have any sickness in a chaise and both the weather and country being agreeable has made the jaunt delightful. Many things I wish to relate to you – but you may believe I am at present tired. I shall not have time for writing while I am in Scotland as Mrs Crombie talks of staying but a week at St Andrews – which will be a great disappointment to me. For God's sake write to me immediately, I shall not be as much dampened by not hearing good news – I do not expect it, for an agreeable surprise I never yet met with. The only money I have yet laid out of my private purse was a trifle which I hope will be acceptable to my dear Dr Haliday. I went to a very elegant toy shop in Glasgow and enquired for something new in the sportsman way. The only thing that appeared so to me was a belt for powder which was put over the shoulder and made to hold the shot at each end which was closed by a stopper – let me know if you choose it – a trifle purchases it. My cough is quite gone. Adieu, many times have I wished for you, do you miss me. Write me a long letter, Crombie has franks.

44 Thursday morning, September [17]82

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [ST ANDREWS], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [44]

Dear Sam, We arrived in this venerable city about twelve o'clock to-day, and we have been received with kindness and friendly welcome which we expected both from Dr and Mrs McCormick. We stayed four days in Edinburgh and during that time Matty received two visits from Dr Cullen,²³⁵ one in the evening and the other pretty early in the morning; he paid particular attention to our joint history of the origin and progress of her complaint, said he had great confidence in a favourable event, seemed [to think] the exercise of the journey and the sickness suffered in the voyage were both in some degree remedies and that these were greatly assisted by the change of air which in all periodical complaints is a powerful mean of preventing their recurrence, and which will be fully experienced in our present change of situation. The difference in respect to the state of the air according to his account, which takes place between St Andrews and Belfast, is great indeed and he adduced some curious examples to prove it. He seemed to think that her entire freedom from the headache since she left Belfast, during the voyage and the journey, was in some sort a proof that the change of situation and the consequent full exercise had some effect in protracting the interval between the attacks, and he confessed that he was willing to try how much longer this interval might continue, before he prescribed any one of those medicines which he thought directed to the complaint, in order to know exactly the real effect of the remedy already tried, and when the headache did return to make use of the medicines appropriated to the case, a time when they would operate to greatest advantage and with less ambiguity than during the interval. He thought many proper things had been tried, but that not all of them had been tried with equal vigour and constancy: the complaint certainly turned out very

235 Dr William Cullen (1710-90), physician (*DNB*).

obstinate, yet he by no means supposed that it was so confirmed even by its long duration as to withstand the patient use of well-directed medicines. Her cough continued pretty much in the same way during our voyage but has within these three or four days been much less frequent than it was, though at no time it could be called very frequent or very troublesome. Dr Cullen seemed to pay little attention to it, and thought that our first operations should be levelled at the capital complaint, and that these should be begun upon our return to Edinburgh or sooner if before that time she suffered any fresh attack of the disorder.

Although the weather has been in general bad since we left you, the time has not been past disagreeably, or without entertainment or instruction. We contrived to see most of the beauties of both Edinburgh and Glasgow – I mean in buildings and public walks, and in the last of these places we got into company either as hearers in church or as visitors at their houses, with many of the literary curiosities of the day. We supped at Dr Robertson's who with all his family entertained us with great civility and even cordiality – the Doctor paid particular attention to Matty and it was her own fault if [she] did not find the evening agreeable as he is one of the few great men in this kingdom [who] I think excels in what Johnson calls lettered hospitality. D. Stewart supped along but paid his attentions chiefly to Miss Robertson, a lady with whom as the world says and indeed as it appears he is going to be connected. He had come to town from Ayrshire the evening before on some particular business, and it was by mere accident he heard that I was in town before him. He is in good health and high reputation, is at present tutor to Lord Ancrum,²³⁶ eldest son of the Marquis of Lothian, a genteel young man for which tuition he gets £250 and it was obtained by Dr Robertson's interest with the Marquis, it is very natural for the people to suppose that he intended Stewart for his son-in-law. Miss Robertson is a sensible, handsome girl with at least £1,000 fortune, paints well (herself I mean) and will no doubt render Dugald the happiest of men. We paid a very short visit at Governor Edmonstone's²³⁷ and from the genteel manner we were received, we regretted that our time did not allow us to make it longer. The old gentleman is very polite and agreeable and Miss Dalm²³⁸ was all [—] curiosity concerning her friends in Belfast – I fancy you must have had wretched [weather] if you went to Ballymena, and as I shall not probably hear a word concerning Ireland and Irish affairs even from the public papers they get in this place, you ought to give us a full and true account of what is going on. I have picked out from some of the prints that Flood²³⁹ is made Vice-Treasurer and I see with some pleasure that J. Adair will be probably a successful candidate for Southwark. I am very curious and believe me, greatly interested to know how the Fencibles²⁴⁰ go on in Ireland. They have made some attempts at volunteering in this country, but they are rude and imperfect

236 Later 6th Marquis of Lothian.

237 Campbell Edmonstone, Lieutenant Governor of Dumbarton Castle, father-in-law of Dr Haliday.

238 His daughter, Dalmonia Edmonstone.

239 Henry Flood (1732-91), statesman and orator (*DNB*).

240 The government proposed to raise fencible regiments of paid local troops for home defence in order to undermine the politically active Volunteers.

sketches and I fear from the immeasurable distance that takes place between the gentry and commonality that what has begun among the latter will not in this nation descend to the inferior ranks with as much ease as with us it has ascended from these ranks to the superior. Time will show. I wish their Defensive and Caledonian Bands all possible success, and I am sorry to see that almost all the gentlemen I have conversed with seemed to doubt of this success.

You have no doubt done everything necessary to be done with regard to the renewal of the leases and I believe that my absence in this affair will not be wholly irreparable. I should be very happy to know Isaac's²⁴¹ opinion relative to the practicability of more exactly determining the property of the bog, but my mother and you are the best judges at present whether such an opinion would be necessary, or if a favourable opinion was given whether it would be useful to give us a prospect of what might perhaps be unattainable except by great expense both of money and of mind.

Dr McCormick has an exceedingly comfortable house in this place and is placed in the midst of his kindred, some of whom paid us a visit yesterday evening and we will no doubt have a very agreeable set of acquaintance. As for the town it[self], there are almost as many spires as chimneys, and every man you meet is either a fisherman or a professor. The post goes off at nine this morning, and not again until Sunday so that I am obliged to write in a greater hurry than I otherwise would have d[one]. Matty will write I suppose before Sunday and will be more particular. We are indeed scarcely settled here as yet, and probably our stay will be too short to know anyth[ing] more than that we have been in company with an agreeable man, a most affectionate w[ife] and a very pleasing family of lovely children. Mrs McCormick is still very thin, ex[—] active, affectionate in her remembrance of all her absent friends, and studiously attentive to her present ones. I shall write to my mother by next post, and I hope Nancy will [write] a long letter to her sister. If I thought that she would interpret anything I say in the exact meaning which I intended, I would not fail to give her an account of everything concerning Matty's ailment that I am acquainted with myself. I have mentioned to you already all that has been done concerning it. Her looks are much the same. Mrs Crombie tells me she rests extremely well – much better than she does herself, and I hope that if her complaint does return severely there will not be means wanting to counteract it. I am yours sincerely, WD

45 2 October [1782]

MARTHA MCTIER, ST ANDREWS, TO SAM MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [46]

My dearest Sam, At home, or abroad, I am to be the cause of imaginary distress to those I love, and would die to make happy. Will this strange love of self-tormenting never leave them? Better, much better, either they or I, were out of the world – for as it is, we must be ever wretched – a resolution of this kind seems to have possessed

241 Counsellor Simon Isaac of Holywood (d.1796).

them. The weather, having from the time I left home been a perfect calm, made me suppose that the delay of writing would not have been of any consequence but alas, although the weather was calm, Will might have tumbled over board. Mr Crombie gave us a dialogue which afforded much entertainment to all but me – though the idea of Will's being so heedless (which Mrs Crombie read heedless) as to fall over board, set Mrs McCormick into a fit of laughter that must infect, and if there could have been danger in laughter she certainly would have miscarried. It is long since I laughed so much as at present, a pleasure which I shall communicate better when we meet than by letter – which I suppose would not be acceptable unless taken up with Cullen etc. Will would neither tell, nor show me what he wrote, so that I shall be repeating his words, when I could entertain you with a thousand better – to it then.

Cullen paid me two visits, he is a polite fine old man, was most particular and minute in his enquiries which seemed to afford him a certainty of my disorder – and although he did not tell me so, he certainly believes it nervous, and appears to be as interested in my getting the better of it, as if I was his nearest friend. He approved much of a jaunt and change of air, particularly to that of St Andrews, and as I had been quite well during my journey, he chose to give it the fairest trial by not ordering me anything now but desired me to let him know when I returned to Edinburgh, and that as home was the most agreeable place to take any medicines he would consider most carefully my case, and give me his directions. He thought some of the things I had taken had by no means had a fair trial, particularly laudanum.

He complimented me like a young man upon my looks, and upon informing him that they were much altered by my complaint he told he should have been sorry I had not grown thinner. His first visit was in the afternoon. Will offered him two guineas – he asked what relation I was to Dr Mattear, refused the fee by saying he would consider of it, and wishing to feel my pulse in the morning, he returned at that time and then accepted the fee, which he had a good right to. He sat with me above an hour each time, was curious in regard to Irish affairs, wished for the same spirit in the Scotch who he thinks ill used and in every respect showed himself the liberal gentleman. He was particular in his enquiries about Doctors Haliday and Mattear, who he said had been with him in the year '38, and regrets the former had stopped at Glasgow the last time he was in Scotland. In this place, I heard there was at a Mr Wilson's, a bookseller's, an extreme good bust of Dr Franklin, done by Mr Wilson himself from an original. I went to his shop and to my great surprise heard there was one man among the contracted inhabitants that had fancied and taken it away – but thinking a crown rather high, he had not paid for it. I requested Mr Wilson might keep it for me if he again recovered it, the gentleman returned it, and I got it, after having the satisfaction of hearing it was a striking likeness, Mr Wilson remembering the Doctor in his father's house. I felt a pleasure in rescuing the venerable head from a land unworthy of such an honour, and by putting it into Dr Haliday's possession give it the most suitable situation I can bestow. I called upon Miss Edmonstone and was received by her with such pleasure that I regretted it was

not in my power to stay more than a few minutes, between the hours of hearing Dr Robertson, J. Blair,²⁴² Mrs and Miss Kennedy had been out of town, but kindly left word with Miss Edmonstone to let them know when we came. This I prevented, but if possible, will see them all when we return. Mrs Robertson came to see us, we supped at their house where we were most politely and agreeably entertained – no cards – which would have been a cruel interruption to the continued conversation of a most agreeable man – his civility to me was very pointed and flattering. As usual he enquired much about Dr Haliday, a subject as agreeable for me to enlarge upon as it seemed to him to listen, but I am sorry to say he was the only man I have met with in Scotland who did not name the Volunteers – though trade, the people, the country, religion, all were matters of his enquiry – and as he has a most unbounded curiosity, it was plain he was determined (for what reason I cannot tell) to avoid the subject that he well knows does us most honour. The farther I have travelled in Scotland I find this the more allowed. In Edinburgh I saw their Caledonian Band in uniform at church, and in spite of resentment, the cold contempt and sneers of age, and all the political caution of the learned clergy here, there is a spark of spirit got into the young men, which though they dare not avow, they are cherishing in secret, and while they honour the Irish they wish much to follow their example.

Nothing can exceed the ignorance, and resentment which the Glasgow people possess in regard to us – ‘what pay did our Volunteers receive and from whom?’ were common questions. They are smarting severely from the war, bemoaning their ruined trade – and while the most elegant houses etc. show what the tobacco once did for them, the notices on many of their doors prove that gain at an end. I cannot help saying I enjoyed the sight, supposing it to be only a change from purse-proud luxury to moderation. I went through a very handsome house which though not near finished, had cost £5,000 in building, the workmen were then completing it for a gentleman who had purchased it for 81 hundred.²⁴³

I met Mrs McCormick with surprise, though in her own house, and had she not by kissing her sister²⁴⁴ given me time to recollect myself, I should have felt greatly vexed at not knowing her. So altered a woman I never beheld, nor could I for some time recover the shock her appearance gave me, though prepared for it by her friends. She is however in good spirits at present, active to the greatest degree, though with child – and elated with her situation at St Andrews. She has got into a most convenient and genteel house, and everything in it bespeaks plenty and good management – a parlour and drawing room fitted up with elegance – and filled with good company every hour we have been disengaged. The Doctor is perfectly agreeable in his own house – fond of society, really a man of humour and an excellent domestic character. In politics he is now quite moderate, and when we differ he is only comical. When in company he seems inclined to draw Will out and therefore starts a subject which the other cannot resist. It gratifies the curiosity of the men in

242 Probably (Sir) James Hunter Blair (1741-87), MP for Edinburgh, later lord-provost of Edinburgh (*DNB*).

243 i.e. £8,100.

244 Mrs Elizabeth Crombie.

regard to Ireland, they listen sometimes with pleasure, always with civility – and I think Will does his favourite cause no dishonour. There is a Dr Berkeley²⁴⁵ here, son to the famous Bishop of Cloyne, so interested in everything regarding the Volunteers that he left a large company to get a sight of Will's regimentals, which he returned with in his hand saying there was the dress of the common men in the Irish Army – a matter of great amazement to the whole company. Indeed many here are warm admirers of the Volunteers – but others still lay claim to second sight and pronounce it impossible for fifty thousand men to keep arms without some mischief. We tell them their prophecies failed in the American War – although I fear it will not be so with Ireland.

I am hurt that you are no longer an Irish Volunteer, much hurt that you have lost, next to Lord Charlemont's,²⁴⁶ the most honourable post in it – and for what? I am at the same time perfectly assured that in such a case you would consider and act right, but be cautious of throwing blame on the company, though you are right it does not prove them wrong. If they are in an error, it is an excusable one and what I am more inclined to admire than condemn – perhaps their country may yet thank them for it. I cannot blame them in regard to the Fencibles²⁴⁷ – although I should never blush for your being one – yet with an independence I would have gloried in refusing it. Sure it will be peculiarly hard neither to be one or other – never name Jemmy Adair.²⁴⁸

We propose to leave this on Monday. We are to spend a few days in Ed[inburgh] and some in Glasgow – so that it will be at least a fortnight before I see you. I hope to have been able to guess by this time what was to have become [of] us, and to expect the comfort at least of an habitation we might call our own. You mention a design of going to town – I cannot blame you, your having been so long alone in the country must have been dreary and inconvenient, yet what is to be done in future? Nothing shall prevail on me to remain in Belfast in our present situation²⁴⁹ which if I supposed was to continue, I would not hesitate a moment to accept of an invitation to stay here this winter – and perhaps another letter which I hope for from you before I leave this may determine me, for sure you would write immediately after the sale at North Street. No [—] no kindness of the best of mothers, can [—] reconcile me to spend another winter as I did the last – we were then objects of pity but to continue thus would make us contemptible even in my own eyes, from this God defend me. Write at least one letter after you receive this and direct it to Mr Crombie's, Glasgow.

I meant to write to Nancy this post but I have made this so long that I have no time for the half I would say to her, and I know she does not care whether this is directed to you or her. Margaret, I hope will also excuse me. The most beautiful girl

245 Dr George Berkeley, prebendary of Canterbury, son of Bishop George Berkeley of Cloyne (1685–1753) (*DNB*).

246 1st Earl of Charlemont (1728–99), Irish statesman, commander-in-chief of the Volunteers (*DNB*).

247 Sam had announced his intention of accepting a commission in the Fencibles but a resolution of censure was passed by the Belfast Volunteers and the scheme was dropped.

248 James Adair, serjeant at law, see note 57 above; many of Martha's references to Adair are vaguely derisive.

249 They were living with Mrs Drennan after Sam's bankruptcy.

I ever beheld is Mary McCormick. Had I a house of my own, how eager would I be to take her over. The second girl Anna is pretty – the rest not promising. Her only son I fear will be a source of affliction, he has been handsome but a swelled cheek destroyed it. What a variety of ills, to wean us from this too much loved world – yet still it and you will be dear to MM

1783

46 Saturday morning [January 1783]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, AT THE REV. MR MOODY'S,¹
NEWRY [47]

My dearest Will, Though a little disappointed at not hearing from you from Newry, I congratulate you upon your arrival there; as it certainly was well timed, and you have no delay to regret, this you will find by the enclosed will be very agreeable news to your Dublin friends – and it is plain you will have every assistance a stranger requires from a sufficient number, warm in your interest, how much so you could not believe. Every person here approves of your going to Newry and seems to wish to have it in their power to contribute to making it fortunate. Many letters I am told have gone from this since you left us, unsolicited by us, although I believe J. Kennedy might be a means. As I do not know whether they were enclosed to you, I shall mention that several went from Mr Greg,² Mr Cunningham, A. Orr, and two more from Mr Portis. I hope you have some decent messenger – here your servant would have appeared best. None has yet offered, but as it is now term I suppose they soon will – but then not to be yours until February. Agreeable news from you will revive my spirits, which I find failing me in spite of all I can do.

The night you left us, I was very unwell, both in body and min[d], and counted every long hour from twelve until ten, the effect [of the] the dose I had taken, continued, with a burning h[—]titches, thirst, and universal uneasiness, w[—] the next day, you may suppose what a [—] and how pleasant a party we were – since the [—] remarkably well, been free of the stitches [—] still the heat, labouring into a sweat in [—] but a consumption in my situation would be so severe a trial, and I fear so much above my strength of mind, that I trust the best of beings will ward it off for an end less severe for us all. One of the enclosed I believe is from Cullen, but I durst not open it. I think there is some appearance like worms, or the gut of worms. I am still in town and shall remain until I am better. This I have determined on without solicitation, as I find my friends cannot be worse, and in the country, I cannot now have a sight of a brother. Whenever you have time write to J. Kennedy – a grateful letter is a just debt to him, and he calls here, impatient to hear of you. What a happiness to think how soon this may be answered. MM

P.S. Was not Dr Haliday's letter a flattering one? He intended to have wrote to you but being hurried out of town gave it to Sam to enclose to you who took it to J. Kennedy – who, thinking it would be a lost letter in that channel, his zeal determined it should be seen by some people in Newry and would therefore enclose it to a friend of his own.

1 Rev. Boyle Moody (c.1754-99), Presbyterian minister at Newry.

2 Thomas Greg (1720-96), a leading merchant and manufacturer of Belfast.

We have just seen your letter to J. K[ennedy]: 20 guineas a year for mere lodging – they have certainly taken you for a man of great fashion and fortune. No young doctor can vie with you I suppose in this respect and I suppose you were right to cut a dash at first but have you not coals, candle, etc.? With all these they are extravagant beyond anything here, as you must judge by your mother's house.

What does Cullen say of Matty?³

47 Wednesday, 1 January 1783

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET,⁴ BELFAST [49]

Dearest Matty, I wrote to my mother last night, but was too late for the post so that this letter may possibly arrive as soon. This landlady of mine, in spite of all my powers of persuasive insinuation, seems exceedingly averse from giving me my homely dinner, and if she be so with me, what will she be with a luxurious high-bred *valet de chambre*, for shame upon my mother's extravagance, she speaks of hiring one at the uncommon rate of four guineas, when humble Hugh serves herself for I suppose less than half the sum. This man of mine will never surely condescend to mount a cock-loft, and I make no doubt that from all the instructions and cautions he will get, he will condition, at the second quarter, for an additional salary as guardian and preceptor to me, his thoughtless and inconsiderate pupil.

I cannot as yet enter on the character of this place or of the different people to whom I have been introduced. I dined yesterday with a very polite Templetonian, Mr Haliday, and had letters to several others of the same unhappy disposition. They all told me their situation with respect to their family physician. I applauded their candour, spoke respectfully of the Doctor, hoped to have however the honour of their friendship, and begged them to believe I had not the least intention of interfering with a gentleman whose abilities and experience I had been taught to think so highly of. I have not yet heard of Templeton,⁵ and perhaps I should have kept the letter until I had seen him. He keeps himself in clouds at present, about perhaps to speak in thunder and lightning. I was introduced at Haliday's to a Surgeon Macartney,⁶ a decent sensible lad, who treated me the doctor with all possible respect and deference. There are six apothecary's shops in the place; the principal two are rivals and one of them complains that Dr Templeton, having put his son as apprentice to the other, has on that account shown him unjustly partiality. When the servant comes let him bring the lancet in the old fashioned box; and if you dare venture it, my father's picture.

Hush! now – Speak not a word – Well, what of her?⁷ – Have you heard anything of her since? I know well what she thinks. She thinks that I, discontented with my

3 Line added by Sam McTier.

4 The McTiers were living with Mrs Drennan and Nancy.

5 Dr John Templeton of Newry maintained a hostile attitude towards Drennan.

6 He was a relation of Templeton's (PRONI, D/553/7).

7 Drennan was at this time a suitor of Margaret Jones (1764-1848), youngest daughter of the wealthy Belfast merchant Valentine Jones (Blackwood 46); he eventually proposed to her in 1785, but was rejected.

situation, deprived of practice, fond of the town, indolent and unenterprising, had formed a secret design of commencing fortune-hunter, and she was to be the first subject of experiment. She therefore laid down her counter plan – or perhaps was directed by others – to treat me genteely, as all gentlemen who have not openly declared must be treated, yet to show me she understood my design, and smiled at it in her sleeve, with calm and self-complacent indifference. She considers me now as one forced by my friends, more active for my interest in life than I appear to be myself, from my native town to this place, where probably the first foolish girl I meet with a fortune will be the object of my warmest affections, that is to say the dupe of my hypocrisy. She is mistaken – and my greatest wish would be to have a window in my breast for her, but only for her inspection. I am attached to her from a sense of her worth, and from rational esteem by no means unsupported by passion, and though I cannot say that I should die if she refuses me or continues in her present state of indifference, I think I can safely say that should she ever alter her manner in my favour, I should live for her service. I sometimes had an idea of writing to her under an enclosure perhaps to Nancy Thomson⁸ but have dropped my design. The young ladies I have met with have as far as I attended to them not much the inferiority to those in Belfast – Miss Pollock⁹ comely, exceedingly affable, conversible, and kind, Miss Scott¹⁰ genteel, tonish, polite, and obliging, Miss Pollock, sister to my friend,¹¹ a little girl with an intelligent countenance, shrewd, pettish, and I believe agreeable. All of them improveable on acquaintance. The first lady is head of her father's house and has, along with her father given me a general invitation – He is one of the pillars of the meeting-house and I ought therefore to lean upon him.

I just now hear by a letter from Kennedy¹² to B[oyle] Moody that he is determined to come here again immediately. The Moodys and Glennys are his relations but I do not think his sanguine friends; and perhaps their kindness to me has been one reason that piqued him into his resolution. Moore¹³ has left the field a day or two ago.

I wish for my cane. I must provide for my horse and servant as well as I can – there is stabling here and a sort of room in the garret, but nothing here is to be had for nothing. I fear I shall be obliged, if this woman continues obstinate, to enter a mess at least for some time. They are gentlemen who compose it, and it will at least serve to enlarge my acquaintance although not my connections.

Write to me as often as you can and I will answer as I may. I entreat you may be particular in everything regarding yourself and the little world about you. Be sure

8 Nancy Thomson (1761-1849), daughter of Dr James Thomson of Coleraine, and niece by marriage of Margaret Jones's half-sister, Mrs John Galt Smith.

9 Elizabeth Anne Pollock (later Hartigan), daughter of John Pollock the elder of Newry (c.1718-85); all information on the Pollock family is from A. S. Hartigan, *The family of Pollock of Newry and their descendants* (Folkestone, 1901).

10 Probably daughter or sister of William Scott of Basin House, Newry.

11 Probably Annabella, sister of Joseph Pollock, see below, p.79.

12 Probably Dr Henry Kennedy, a first cousin of James Trail Kennedy; their aunt was the Rev. Boyle Moody's mother; William Glennys of Newry married Moody's sister Margaret (Blackwood 22).

13 Moore was a doctor who moved to Newry at the same time as Drennan, but left soon after.

to tell J. Kennedy that I have laid his most sensible letter to heart and that I have had time enough to correct my error. Give me all your advice. I am not perfectly settled how I should behave to Kennedy. He has certainly, considering this place as affording a vacancy but for one other physician, ventured a good deal with a certainty of injuring me somewhat and with but a probability of bettering his own situation. I dine with Mr Davis¹⁴ on Friday next. I think I see the influence of party already, but I hope when they become more acquainted with me, they shall see my resolution to meddle with none, yet if possible to be agreeable to all.

If you have heard how she received the news of my departure, tell me. I believe she was at J. Smith's¹⁵ the day I called there, some minutes before I set off. I would eagerly wish to know whether she has an esteem for me, but assured as I am of her prudent and scrupulous secrecy, I am in no hope of obtaining that knowledge.

B[etty] Kennedy¹⁶ sets off on Friday with Miss Moody. I need not tell you how our family ought to behave in this case. One of the chief differences from Belfast in the families I have met with here is the most plenteous number of children. Every house is full of them. I endeavour to get up this step-ladder to the parents' affections as quickly as I can. They are indeed almost without exception the finest children I have seen.

I shall certainly have established a respectable acquaintance before Kennedy's arrival. How far useful it will prove, time that universal tell-tale must discover. I wish you every compliment of this and every other season. I have some small debts in Belfast beside the three guineas to N. Wilson¹⁷ – a guinea to Davis,¹⁸ a crown to Mr Smith for my share of an entertainment at Newton, and the price of a ribbon at Wilson's – these are [all] I can recollect and the payment may perhaps [be] deferred until my return. Tell me how Mrs Smith weathers it out. Remember me to all my friends, and affectionately to Margaret, to ——. Adieu dear Matty for the present and believe me to be your ever affectionate brother, WD

To dine and spend the evening at Mr Scott's¹⁹ on Saturday. This is repeated civility. Kennedy is a great dancer and I suppose will exhibit at the assembly tomorrow night. I suppose when I get better acquainted, I must submit to this professional degradation also. No letters from Belfast today. I expect you have written to Cullen. I have the highest belief in his opinion and knowledge. Return his letter but you ought certainly to show it both to Dr Haliday and M[attear].

48 Tuesday night

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [50]

My dearest Will, You have already gained all you could possibly hope for in Newry, genteel and obliging acquaintance, these (if they are worthy) I am sure you will

14 James Davis of Newry, father of Jane, wife of James Holmes of Belfast (Registry of Deeds, 344 147 230495).

15 John Galt Smith was married to Margaret Jones's half-sister Jane.

16 Betty Kennedy (c.1752-1833), unmarried sister of James Trail Kennedy, and cousin of the Moodys.

17 Nathaniel Wilson (d.1788), merchant and cotton manufacturer of Belfast.

18 Probably Robert Davis, merchant, brother-in-law and partner of James Holmes.

19 William Scott of Basin House, Newry.

preserve and through them, and in time, not far off will I doubt not, come into business sufficient to secure you reputation, the chief part of your expenses, and good spirits. You have just now experienced the most flattering esteem from all who know you and there does not seem a fear for you, but from your virtue – I mean your patriotism. This I always believed to be of that cool, though steady kind, which by not being apt to flash in the face of fools or hirelings seldom offended – but when I advance this as my dependence I am smiled at, as ignorant of you.

I was engaged in an argument on this subject with Mrs Goddard,²⁰ whose sentiments I am sure are R[ainey] Maxwell's and his are most favourable of you – the point was, whether your being a Volunteer and the part you took in that cause, had not been a loss to you. This she maintained, and that a physician lost his dignity by acting so. A great deal passed not worth setting down and upon my saying I would have blushed for you if you had not done just as you did, she told me everyone knew our sentiments in all things were just alike. I looked proud, and ended our dispute by saying – he would be a disagreeable an[d] unnatural young man, who had not some wild shoots which required pruning, and of all others, those she mentioned were the most pleasing. I may justly call them so, for are there not even errors, in youth more engaging, than some qualities styled virtues in any season of life? Never will anyone be the object of tender affection that has not amiable weaknesses to milden the character. How I wander, not supposing I am now writing to a gentleman of engagements.

This Kennedy's bold step vexes me. Some business he must pick up and from you. If it is but what supports him, this will be a material loss to you, and a poor matter to him, both which I would regret – beside the delicacy and care such a situation requires, not to hurt, or seem hurt, is very unpleasant. Friends (I fear) it is not in nature for you to be. I cannot advise, because I know you will judge better. You have many advantages over him, not one of which ought to be given up, and here I cannot forbear mentioning a circumstance which must be kept sacred by both, and which pained me to hear. Dr Haliday called on me yesterday morning and after speaking with much resentment of Templeton not having waited on you (which I think he takes as an affront to himself), the conversation turned on Kennedy. He then told me, without either reserve or caution, that Kennedy had been obliged to leave Monaghan, by an unfortunate affair, of a lady having died in his hands a short time after delivery. I think her name was Envill, she had engaged Templeton, but being disappointed in him took the other, and this story, the Doctor told me, was well known in Newry, for there he heard it. I sighed from sorrow, and answered, it was an unfortunate affair for a poor young man, and might have been the same with the most experienced. Here it occurs to me to ask if you opened your last letter to me after you sealed it, for it came to me with the wax broken and perfectly open, under a cover to my mother, which was torn and sealed by the slightest tack. You have so slovenly a manner of sealing with wax, that you do not even make an impression – so, that I could not know the seal. I therefore hope this has been owing

¹⁹ Elizabeth (c.1743-86), wife of John Goddard, and cousin of Rainey Maxwell; a close friend of Martha's.

to a negligence in yourself, rather than curiosity in others, and beg you may amend it, if but for the appearance, which is abominable.

Sam wanted me to give him your letter to show at the office – but this you know I could not do – with me it was safe, and I was pleased the name you most alluded to was not mentioned. I have been but once out since I saw you, so have no way of hearing any news that can interest you. The week you left this, M²¹ went to L—n²² where she stayed until after the coterie. I believe her cousin is gone off to America. How you stand in her esteem I know not, not I suppose never shall, as to a particular one – any other, I never doubt your having nor suppose forfeiting – and I know you are a great favourit[e] with her sister S[mith]²³ who had declared her resolution of employing you, before any other, in case Mattear could not attend her; of which on the last occasion there was some doubt. Nancy Thomson is not here. I do not wish you to make that trial – nor, unless your ease of mind depends much upon it, any other. Time may either produce something favourable or occasion a different (or indifferent) view of the same matter.

Mattear is yet confined, and very unwell – looks woefully low, and a most severe cough. He took a vomit last night, but is not better. I should look on it as a misfortune to you, if anything was to happen him at present, or to tempt you back for some years. His being confined, was the occasion of my last visit from Haliday. My bowels never settled, from the day you left me. I still supposed it to be the effects of the last dose, and hoped it would carry off the heats which yet (though slight) continue, but not finding this the case I begged of Sam to mention it to Dr M and he sent Haliday. To him I mentioned all the complaints I could recollect. They are all slight but new, and although I am still assured they are not consum[ptive] I do not like them. My head keeps well, I waken always in the morning in a heat, though slight, which soon goes off. I have frequently a slight heat in my cheeks – but more than has been long natural to me, and I have (particularly) in the evenings slight stitches through my breast. The heat in the mornings dwells most and longest on my breast and stomach.

The Doctor told me he thought it probable some of the powders might yet rest within me and occasion the unnatural state of my bowels, that he would call on Mattear, and think of something for me. He wrote him a note and proposed a dose of salts – but this Mattear wa[i]ved and directed only a supper of rice and milk. My bowels are better, my spirits not bad, but though they meet with no support here, recoil at the thoughts of going to the country since you are gone – that, and the belief that it would (if possible) make my mother and Nancy more wretched because more uncertain, determined me, and without any application I told them my resolution of leaving the country, and continuing with my mother until something turned up. This I am sure gave them pleasure, though with Haliday's visit has confirmed them in their worst fears. When you write to him you may request any further satisfaction you choose. It was so long after I had got Cullen's letter before

21 Margaret Jones.

22 Possibly Larne, Co. Antrim, which was close to Margaret's brother's estate at Kilwaughter.

23 Margaret Jones's half-sister.

I saw Haliday, that I did not think of mentioning it to him, indeed it was then with Mattear. The name of a doctor, or a drug, is now hated here, and no forgiveness will be ever granted for not pronouncing August last, that I was in a consumption. Change of air is again the cry, but where or how this will be obtained, God knows.

I regret much your want of a horse. Sam has heard of one that pleases him in all respects, besides being handsome, but as not one word of this may be true, he dare not buy it upon report. He is to see him on Friday and wishes you would not fix about Moody's until Saturday, when you shall hear from him. That day, Ramage shall take a saddle, bridle, and skin cover for you, and when you are possessed of a horse, I beg you will use him daily if in your power. Now is your time – do you bathe?

Although I would not suppose that an appearance of timidity would be acceptable, yet I wish Mrs Pollock's child, was not to be inoculated while it is teething, a disorder in itself often fatal – though the instances are rare of anything fatal at present in the smallpox, yet they sometimes occur, and their being rare occasions a suspicion now that it is by some fault. Every caution on your account should be taken.

I am sorry your servant did not appear well to you, but hope he improves. We ordered him to get his hair cut, which he neglected, but you ought to make a point of and his keeping himself well dressed. If his clothes are not sufficient for this purpose, and you think he promises to be worth it, I would have you make him a suit of livery – fancy it well and it need not be fine. As for your stipend²⁴ – I think you ought to find out what is generally paid and suit yours as well as you can. I have been just called to Dr Haliday. He has ordered me a noggin of some mixture three times a day. I read in it two sorts of vitriol and a gum – it is to be taken in milk. I would have you write to him immediately and not wait for Templeton's visit which the Doctor supposes you are doing.

There is agreeable news of J. Hay²⁵ although not from himself. He is living on his lands and doing very well. Taylor set out in the privateer way, was unfortunate, lost his all and narrowly escaped being taken – tried it a second time, took several valuable prizes, and has quit that way of life.

I showed Haliday Cullen's letter. I saw in a letter from Bruce to you mention of a pamphlet which I suppose is one much spoke of as Burke's. It is yet hard to be got and if you can enclose it I will be obliged to you. Have you determined whether you will return here or not? I fear it will not be a wise step for some time, more so if K[ennedy] is determined to remain. I cannot look over this scrawl but request you will put it into the fire immediately upon reading it. I cannot be easy unless you promise to do this with all my letters.

The Newtown people will not have Campbell.²⁶ I hope to hear from you tomorrow. MM

If this frank does not pass you will have reason to be angry – let me know.

²⁴ His payment towards the salary of the Presbyterian minister.

²⁵ Jack Hay, Drennan's college friend, emigrated to America.

²⁶ The Second Newtownards Presbyterian Church did not have a minister between 1780-85; it is not clear which Campbell is meant.

49 Sunday, franked by John Blackwood²⁷

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, MR MAXWELL'S, NEWRY [65 AND 50A]

All your letters are in every sense agreeable though I hear yours to Dr Haliday is the best you ever wrote. He seemed vain of it, and showed it, though not to me, but I dare say has not a thought of answering it.

We have heard many accounts of you that are pleasing, and of your manner being quite acceptable, and young Davis, who came from Newry on Friday, says you will soon beat them all off the field. From all I hear, you never could have had comfort in Templeton, the worse he behaves therefore, the better for you. I look upon you now to be (as is said of Dunn) a rising young man – a physician has been in the House of Commons – and may yet be Sir W.D. But tell me, are you really pleased with your situation? Is Mr Moody a man that promises well for a pleasant and safe friend? This I think would add much to your satisfaction in such a place as Newry.

We long much to hear how your mare performs. She is indeed in bad case, but is thought to be good, and not to have any deformity but what good keeping may rectify. She cost but eight guineas – although the price was not the inducement, Warnock²⁸ being allowed to go higher. Sam says the price you mention is not too high for good hay. He wishes you to buy a smart bridle, and keep the one you have for a watering one.

Nancy has taken your wardrobe into consideration and finds it wants variety, and that but one dressed coat has a mean appearance. Your regimentals was therefore stripped of the gold, and ordered to get new lining, lapels, etc. This was but half accomplished when the tailor's fear of the patriot stopped his hand. He came here and represented your displeasure at this sacrilege, his certainty that you would be here at the next review, and your disappointment at finding you could not join the company. A stop was therefore put to the alteration and a new coat bought which will be sent you with A. Stewart, who goes to Newry on Wednesday. You must not be prejudiced against the colour, as it is now a determined point that physicians should in everything dress like other gentlemen, and therefore dark clothes are laid aside with the great wig. Dr Mattear got a suit of clothes off the same piece of yours – which is only a coat, and intended to be worn with florentine²⁹ and black stockings in winter and with white in summer. It is made in the newest taste, with a small lapel, which is not to be buttoned back in any part. I am quilting you a smart warm under-waistcoat which I would have you wear at all times, and there will also be a white Manchester one sent you which over an under one is genteel at any season. We want your directions about your books. If they are to go, better now, as many other things could be sent in the same trunk, and we still think that you had better get your blue coat altered and made up, as Apsley wore one of the same kind with black waistcoat etc., and your jacket may answer any volunteer purpose.

²⁷ Sir John Blackwood (d. 1799), 2nd baronet.

²⁸ Probably George Warnock of North Street, Belfast.

²⁹ Silk fabric chiefly for men's waistcoats, probably striped or twilled.

My bowels are settled, but only within these three days – I have lived upon rice, milk, eggs etc. My other complaints, heat and stitches are removed, and yet, I have had no return of the headache. Dr Haliday has left me and the family spirits are a little revived. Nancy even smiles at your letters, although she seldom lifts her eyes from a purse she is preparing for you. It cost you some time trying to make out how much five guineas a fortnight was but you failed – you have made (or earned) more than that. For the first year at least you may tell us your patients and success – after that it would be too great a task.

Robert Hyde is dead by which Nat Hyde gets about £7,000, Sam, Mrs Cunningham, Mrs Lyle and Tom, one, Sam Greg ten, and if Nat has not a son, the reversion of his fortune and the name of Hyde. He behaved unjustly to the Gregs to whom he had promised handsome fortunes.³⁰

Betty Kennedy begged I might remind you of not giving up going frequently to Mr Glenny's which she thinks will be agreeable to them and the reverse would be taken amiss. I find Gemmy was disappointed at your not answering his last letter and expressed a fear it had offended you. He still expects one and I think you ought to gratify him at least once or twice. You will see Gemmy Ferguson³¹ this week, who is directed to pay Bruce for the florentine – do you ever hear from him now? The pamphlet I³² meant was an ironical vindication of Lord Shel[bur]n[e],³³ subscribed Junius, and said to be Burke's – of which Dr Haliday is sure. It is very severe, very tiresome, and evidently full of disappointed party spirit, and I would suppose not the pen of Mr Burke. Matrear mends slowly and has not yet got abroad.

I would have you give Stewart a commission to buy you a seal with your cipher on it of a fashionable size and of the composition, which comes to a trifle. Mine is a silly one for you and if you get another send it to me.

Mrs Smith³⁴ is now with us and sends her love to you. Answer this as soon as convenient as we want to know about your books and blue coat and particularly the gaits of your horse. Don't be again frightened at the length of my letters, at least to not answering them. Is there not one of our Miss Sinclaires in Newry?³⁵ You never mention her, but I hope you therefore do not neglect her. What sort are the young men of your town? I suppose you do not make yourself particular in the honour of your hand. Though I do not ask the number of your shirt[s], matters full as trivial from you are interesting to your MM

30 Robert Hyde of Ardwick, Lancs, died 4 January 1783, his brothers were Samuel, Nathaniel and Thomas, and his sisters, Eleanor, wife of Hugh Lyle of Coleraine, Hannah, wife of Robert Batt, Peggy, wife of Waddell Cunningham, and Elizabeth, wife of Thomas Greg; Sam Greg (1758-1834) was a son of the latter (Blackwood 7).

31 James, son of Dr James Ferguson, Belfast businessman, later of Whitepark, near Ballyclare, Co. Antrim.

32 The text from this point is on a separate sheet numbered D/591/50A.

33 William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne (1737-1805), first lord of the Treasury until 24 February 1783, created 1st Marquis of Lansdowne in 1784 (*DNB*).

34 Rhoda, widow of Brice Smith; she was a sister of Mrs Drennan's brother-in-law Alexander Young.

35 One of the daughters of Thomas Sinclair of Belfast, and a sister of Mrs James Corry.

50 Tuesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [66]

Dear Matty, I have not had many opportunities of trying my horse, or rather my mare, but she seems to have an excellent travelling trot, is spirited and gentle, apt to scare a little on the road, but never dangerously, and that is a fault which the farther she travels on in the road of life, she will sooner get free of.

I rode out a day or two ago to Mr Arbuckle's³⁶ of Traymount to whose lady I had been recommended, found them a very agreeable and very sensible family. I dined with them and rode home in a lovely evening by the light of the moon. I have gotten a bridle according to Sam's directions and with good keeping I make no doubt my mare will in a short time do no discredit to her master. I rode pretty quickly home, and I thought but perhaps without reason that she appeared to a little short winded.

You flatter me much, dear Matty, anxious I suppose to keep up my spirits against my redoubtable opponent.³⁷ He appeared last Thursday in the public paper, answering an honorary resolution of the Monaghan Corps to which he formerly belonged. The answer is by no means a bad one, but not having the paper at hand, I cannot enclose it to you.

I have no objection to the alteration of my uniform as the jacket may do for any volunteer purpose, if I do attend the review; although I confess on second thoughts, if it be not already altered, I think it better to let it alone. However I leave this to yourselves. You seem all so desirous of making me the pink of my profession, that I should give up everything to your direction.

I may tell you now that the woman lately brought to bed was very much deformed; this you may suppose startled me a good deal at my first entrance, but I have a tolerable knack at silence upon this as on every other occasion, and was in a short time relieved, as well by hearing that she had borne children before (though none appeared) as from finding that the labour was likely to prove short and successful. I attended her carefully during the first week, and her husband called here a day or two ago with a guinea in his hand, which I thought fully sufficient from a mechanic who seemed just entering into life. I received but such another fee from the first man in the place, Edward Corry³⁸ esquire, with whom I dined on Friday last. He mentioned to me that he has had for these few days past a second attack of a slight inability in his articulation, accompanied with some convulsive twitchings of the muscles around his mouth. It seemed to alarm him somewhat and his lady I saw was alarmed still more. The symptom is indeed slight but respectable. I ordered some little precautionary articles rather in the way of regimen than remedy, and I shall call this morning to see how matters have gone on. He is a remarkably hale strong man, but will probably some time or other suffer a paralytic stroke.

36 James Arbuckle (d.1823), later collector at Donaghadee.

37 Probably Kennedy.

38 Edward Corry, MP for Newry 1774-76, died 5 May 1792.

You may send all the books on the ledge near my desk, and any others in the bookcase which you think proper. There are a few of the classics well-bound which may be sent, and several of a very small size in the closet on the lower shelf which I wish for.

The youngest Miss Sinclair is here. I had not an opportunity last night of dancing with her but shall on the next occasion of the kind. I like B[oyle] Moody much. He appears to be a friendly, conversible lively man, a little pedantic, is very popular in this place, sings a good song, preaches well with a Warringtonian³⁹ delivery, and is on the whole, a valuable acquisition. The young men of this town are I think, as far as I have met with them, genteel, dressy, not much cultivated by education, but very civil and obliging in general to me.

Mr Corry I find goes on a visit to Isaac's⁴⁰ and will probably take Haliday's advice. He seems to have a design of visiting Bath very soon.

George this minute informs me that the mare has a soreness and seemingly a growing speck in one of her eyes. Was she hurt any way before she came? I must consult with some of the profession about it. I am happy in hearing your complaints are removed and have much hope that even your capital will be relieved, obstinate and persevering as it may be.

Surely Kennedy ought to know me so well, as not to believe that I could disrelish the advice of such a friend. I have heard from Bruce once or twice, and he sends me introductory enclosures. I have not time to add more at present.

51 Friday, franked by Isaac Corry⁴¹

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MRS ANN DRENNAN, BELFAST [68]

I received the coat, the cravats and the purse. This cannot be called a war of economy that I am carrying on against my adversary, but I shall do my best to replenish the purse, as the nature of our profession abhors a vacuum there. Stewart sent me the things and proceeded on his journey. I saw James Ferguson the morning before, and I gave him two guineas to deliver to Bruce, which will more than pay for my florentine.

My mare goes on pretty well in her health, but she appears to grow rather too wanton to go on well on the road. The draw-bridges here, and everything around the place seems passing new and strange to her. She will soon grow more used to the road, and I shall get George to give her a rehearsal of the draw-bridges frequently for some time. Her eye is rather better, but I am apt to think that a slight degree of blindness attending the inflammation makes her less able to discern objects clearly and disposes her on that account sometimes to startle.

I have attended for these eight days past Mr Corbett,⁴² the English schoolmaster of this place, who has been lying very ill in a low miliary⁴³ fever increased by previous

39 Presumably, like William Bruce, he studied at Warrington Academy.

40 Probably Counsellor Simon Isaac of Holywood who may have been a cousin.

41 Isaac Corry (1755-1813), MP for Newry and later Chancellor of the Exchequer in Ireland (*DNB*).

42 Proprietor of Corbett's Classic, English and Mercantile Academy, Newry (*BNL*, 10-13 June 1783).

43 A fever accompanied by a rash.

bad management. He is now I think rather better after fourteen days illness, and I hope will do me no discredit, if no unfortunate relapse takes place speedily. Dr Templeton is I hear attending a Mr Townley in this place who lies ill in a fever, and I find today is most dangerously ill. I am not professional enough yet to wish for a contrast in the event of these [?cases]. Corbett is I find a man much esteemed and valued here, and yet none of his friends seemed to wish for any additional assistance, and I hope to bring him through without any. I hear nothing of Kennedy and do not meet with him in any private house I go to. I dined a day or two ago with Mr John Thomson who I hear is his greatest friend. He was not there, though the company was very large, both gentlemen and ladies.

I find that the gentlemen of the mess are disposed to relax their condition, and I shall probably attend it for a quarter. I dine there tomorrow upon invitation which will serve for a trial. I have just now gotten some oats for my mare, 23 stone 5 lb for 15s 6d. They are good. I have bought a handsome bridle with a bit and bridoon as they call it in order to set her off, and Mr Maxwell⁴⁴ says she looks five pounds better than the first day he saw her.

Always remember to tell me particularly the state of your health and what medicines they may continue to order you. I don't know what shall be done with regard to Cullen's letter. WD

When is the trunk to leave Belfast? Put up my bathing cap, and my other hat in it.

52 Monday, franked by John Blackwood

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, MR MAXWELL'S, NEWRY [69]

A total want of anything interesting either public or private has made me indifferent for some time about writing, and as you must suppose, we were all very anxious about Corbett's recovery, we supposed every post would bring us an account of him. If he is yet alive, it is a most fortunate event for you, happening at the time it did, and it was spoke of at Lord Hillsborough's⁴⁵ table above a week ago, as a matter which had gained you much credit. The Corrys also, when consulting Dr Haliday, spoke of it and you with approbation. He replied that the more they knew of you, they would like you the better, that he would have wrote to them and several of his acquaintance in your favour, but out of delicacy to Templeton, who had not seemed to deserve that attention.

Miss Sinclair also writes that you are a general favourite, and particularly agreeable to the young people. Many accounts of this kind come to us, and I question much if they can give you as much pleasure as they do to us – though they only convince me that you are already well known in Newry, which never was the case in Belfast, where I believe you had no enemies, many friends, but fewer admirers than you might have had, but for your own fault. It will never do to be ambitious

⁴⁴ Drennan lodged at Mr Maxwell's, Market Street.

⁴⁵ Lord Hillsborough, later 1st Marquis of Downshire (1718-93), Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1768-72, a leading landowner in Co. Down and supporter of the English administration (*DNB*).

of esteem only. I made twenty friends, for one either you or Nancy ever gained, and yet was conscious of not deserving them half so well. I gained them by trying to be agreeable, and if they thought so, my vanity made me ample amends. To do nothing unkind, to amuse, and be well-bred goes farther in gaining good will than the whole cardinal virtues. This I could prove (don't be frightened) without being a disciple of Lord C——d's.⁴⁶

There is a paper lying just now in our coffee house, with a number of (what are called) respectable names to it, in favour of a man esteemed by none nor ever having valued it, unfair in his dealings, acknowledged so, contemptible both in manners and appearance, unhonoured even for wealth, a proverb of infidelity to his country, and now a candidate for the voice of the patriots of Belfast to recommend him as the man of their choice, and the well known Waddell Cunningham, to Lord Donegall, as their representative in parliament.⁴⁷ Belfast, from the good sense and virtue of a very few in it, once had a character, while they had respect and influence. From the numbers now in it who have made fortunes and upon that found their consequence, that respect and influence is lost, and such men as Bryson⁴⁸ and Cunningham can obtain a majority to any measure pursued with the art and dexterity natural to them.

Mr Patterson went about with the paper on Saturday. Yesterday in the coffee house Sam was applied to by young Bradshaw,⁴⁹ he read it, and thinks it set forth Mr C's inflexible virtue. There were more names than I shall particularise, but at that time, there did not appear a Holmes, Haliday, Mattear – none of the clergy. A. Orr refused upon the principle of an agreement that every transaction of that sort was to be managed after a public notice at the m[arket]t house, N. Brice refused, and Sam, who are all I have yet heard of. J. Hamilton⁵⁰ signed it and this day J. Smith says, though it is not a thing he approves of, he also will sign it. I blush for Belfast and think it never met with an equal disgrace. Let it be forever silent as to public virtue, for sure this transaction will never be forgot. This affair has been long in agitation, even years, and for some time past Waddell has been blessed by the poor for selling cheap meal bought by the public subscriptions. All the difficulty of settling poor Sam's affairs has arisen from W.C.'s delay – a delay for which I dare say he had reasons, as no one could accuse him of being dilatory in business. What he will do now I know not. Dr Haliday told Sam he would not sign it. Mattear was as usual silent.

I hope your mare is recovered, but you are wrong to tamper with her yourself – you ought at least to consult some of your faculty.

I hope Pollock⁵¹ afforded you some pleasure while he was in Newry – you hardly mention him. He certainly is a very sensible fellow, and one whose correspondence

46 Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773), statesman, wit, and writer of letters of advice to his natural son, which were published in 1774 (*DNB*).

47 Donegall disregarded this petition and Cunningham subsequently stood for Carrickfergus (S. Shannon Millin, *Sidelights on Belfast history* (Belfast and London, 1932), pp 36-7).

48 Rev. James Bryson (c.1730-96), Presbyterian minister at Belfast (*DNB*).

49 Robert Bradshaw (d.1819), Belfast merchant and banker.

50 John Hamilton, merchant and later a banker of Belfast.

51 Joseph Pollock (d.1824), barrister, Volunteer, writer of political pamphlets, nephew of John Pollock the elder of Newry.



Waddell Cunningham (c. 1729-97)

might afford much pleasure – some little fault in his temper I fancy – proud and easily made very sore, but this temper is often attended with many amiable qualifications. Your situation with him for some time seemed rather delicate – you should not hurt him though you may not quite approve.

Dr Haliday said he would write to you by Mr Corry. Did he do it? I still wish you would write to J. Kennedy – and there is but one person more I would name for one letter to whom I know it would give particular pleasure – J. Hamilton. Some night when you have little to do give him a side of paper – he is an early friend and much interested for you. You did not tell us how you liked the colour of your coat. It was brought home at night, and the lining appeared quite unsuitable but we had not time to get it changed. A. Stewart, and Davy Gordon,⁵² who went up with him, both intended calling on you, but were delayed here so long, they were not to sleep until they got to Dublin. I [sup]pose you will see them on their return.

When the days are a little longer I intend meeting you at Banbridge for one night. I suppose you may be spared. The Mr and Mrs Arbuckle you mention were a genteel young married pair when I was in Dublin, but had not any children. He is son to the doctor who was an intimate friend of your father's and author of *Hibernicus's Letters*.⁵³ Lilburn, one of your fellow Blues, has murdered his wife – for which there is never any punishment in Belfast.

We have had the Holmeses and Davises⁵⁴ here. I like the young clergyman⁵⁵ much. He regretted having been in Newry so little since you went there. Nancy also went to see Miss Moody, the only day she was in town. Your shirts are not yet ready, but when they are your trunk will be sent off. MM

turn

Thompson⁵⁶ has not yet signed. I hope he will raise a dust. You pledged yourself for the independence of the county.

You ought to employ a farrier. I imagine tis the hokes your mare has. If she continues bad and restive, Hunter ought to take her again and George Warnock does not doubt but he will fix with J. Ferguson about her, when he returns.

How do you think the independence of the county can be now supported? Will these petitioners to Lord D in favour of W.C. dare to oppose him? Any idiot of his family would be more respectable. I never felt such indignation at any public measure. You will come to see Waddell chaired.

53 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [70]

Dear Will, We are much vexed at your disappointment in the mare. Sam seems to think if it is rust, J. Ferguson should take her, but wishes (as you like her gaits) that

52 David Gordon (1759-1837), attorney and later banker, inherited Florida Manor in Co. Down from his brother in 1797, JP and high sheriff (*LGI*, p.270).

53 Martha is confusing James Arbuckle (1700-42), the poet and author of *Hibernicus's Letters* (*DNB*), with Dr James Arbuckle of Dublin.

54 James Holmes, merchant, younger brother of John Holmes, married Jane Davis of Newry in 1782.

55 Presumably Jane Holmes's brother, the Rev. John Davis (c.1758-1836), later Chancellor of Dromore.

56 Presumably Robert Thomson/Thompson (1736-1800), Volunteer, sugar refiner and businessman.

you would take the opinion of a rough rider before you see Jemmy – though he says there is danger that she may return to her former habits when you are on her, but as she is young it is possible she might be cured. When you determine, he will do his best for another – but I think you ought to have your present one sold first, and if you could be well fixed in one, by either your own opinion, or that of a friend in Newry, it would be more convenient, as sending one up to Newry is still some expense.

I congratulate you upon Corbett's recovery as a pleasant and fortunate event, and hope he is in such circumstances as to repay you well for the anxiety and good attendance, I dare say, you gave him. But as to Townley, I wish you only an offered fee, – for him, you did not even prescribe, and though I join you, that too much easiness on these occasions has an ill effect, yet the other extreme has a much worse one. You entered a sick room, felt a dying pulse and might have caught the distemper, for which had your patient been a man of fortune, and you established in your profession, you would have been fee'd, but as it is, a little bit of honour is quite sufficient, and to make that greater, I wish you to refuse a fee should it be offered. In that respect you are fortunately situated, as no one can expect anything complimentary, except your clergyman and his family – and it has always been my opinion that physicians should be as well fee'd as possible by those who can afford it – that he should make no scruple in taking it from such, and save his character and his feelings by repaying it, not to the poor merely but to those who are suspected to be so – though perhaps struggling to be thought otherwise. Kennedy's friends here appear so anxious for his going to D[own]patrick, that I hope he will remove.

You do not write with half the indignation I expected in regard to our future representative. I never was struck so forcibly with the odium of any public measure, nor felt contempt for Belfast before. His knowledge in trade, which it seems is unrivalled, and the use he may be of to the town, are the qualifications insisted on. I have no personal pique to this man – the many, who once had, seem to have forgot it yet I do not know the being I would not think more respectable to solicit for. Think of comparing him to Mr Hartley – a man upright in his whole conduct, just in his dealings, steady in his principles – and these invariably directed to the public good – consistent in his love of liberty, both religious and political, and in private life a patron of everything wise, good, and generous.⁵⁷ This was his much respected character twenty years ago – nor has it fallen and the first affront I believe it ever met with was from the patriotic dissenters of Belfast. What a pity Mr C[unningham] had not been in parliament during the American War, the information he could have given would have done us much honour, he might also have spoken of the scalping iron and t[oma]hawk with experience and pleasure. Dr Haliday speaks out like a man. I do not know that he had an opportunity of refusing to sign as he supposes he will not have the honour of being asked. Mattear has been out of town but as he declared he would not sign the recommendation, I suppose he will not be applied to.

⁵⁷ Travers Hartley (d.1796), MP for city of Dublin.

My mother got a hundred guineas from J. Smith out of which she will pay all her debts. Mr Sinclair refused to take any interest although it came to near eight pound. Sam got another hint in regard to Burden who is now in Dublin. I wish that money was got. Sam has wrote to him. Your two last franks were charged. When you get others, have some of them directed to me. The affair of the letter that was opened was mentioned before the Davises and the post master in Newry happens to be their uncle. There was no harm done however and it may make the like not ventured on again, for I am now convinced your letter was opened, for Mr Dun[n] had experienced the same treatment during his courtship – but say not a word more of the matter.

My head begins to threaten, after a long respite. I am prepared for it and must bear up as well as I can. My bowels continue well – the heats are quite gone – but I frequently feel the stitches, which I suppose are not of any consequence.

54 Thursday night, franked by John Blackwood

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, MR MAXWELL'S, NEWRY [72]

If you wish to give me pleasure you will write often and be particular. You should consider, I have but very few sources of it. Make up for this all you can.

I wish you a pleasant and pleasing reign on Tuesday. You appear to be much in the court party – take care this does not give umbrage to the other. I only regard it as a matter of interest, for in a political sense I am now so indifferent, so disgusted, that I would as soon have you an advocate for Bob Ross, as Harry Grattan.⁵⁸ I was but lately wishing some political matter might arise upon so broad a bottom as to allow you to take a part, to do yourself credit, and the town you are in some good. It is your fort[e] and it's a pity to give it quite up – but let it go no farther than the universal inducement somehow to serve yourself.

I have been so much afraid of cold that I have never been at meeting since you left us, though I now go to other places. Last Sunday I went to church. I saw a young lady and an old one before me, who I did not know, but heard the young one, who was M[argaret] J[ones], tell Mrs Harrison,⁵⁹ Mrs McTier was behind them. They waited until I came up, were very kind, wanted me to go to their seat, etc. Margaret appears very devout. She cannot fail of hearing of you, as your acceptability and prospect of success in Newry is generally spoken of. This evening I relax in the company of little Frank and his spouse, Mrs Getty,⁶⁰ Miss Bigger⁶¹ and little Jemmy – they do not suit me – and I cannot always banish the thought, that in more senses than Mrs Ramsay, I am a lost woman. How do you and your landlady now do? Had not Reeth (who came here lately and brought a good report of you)

58 Colonel Robert Ross (1728-99), MP for Newry; Henry Grattan (1746-1820), statesman (*DNB*).

59 Mary Anne, wife of Robert Harrison; an older half-sister of Margaret Jones.

60 Possibly the widow of Robert Getty, woollen draper, who died in 1773.

61 Ann Jane Bigger (d.1816), cousin of Martha McTier, daughter of John Bigger and Margaret Lennox, half sister of Mrs Ann Drennan; the name is spelt impartially Bigger and Biggar throughout these letters.

convenient and pleasant lodgings, where he also dieted? You have certainly fixed somehow for the latter, and yet never told us how.

Agreeable letters from Mr Warre⁶² of Ellen, who is recovering well and got a daughter. There is a mannish boy here of the name of Shaw,⁶³ who stays at his sister's Mrs Potter's in Donegall Street and having got intimate at Captain Stewart's, positively refuses to return to school. He will have a pretty estate which it is believed he means to share with Miss Nelly Stewart. MM

55 Sunday morning [February 1783]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [73]

I have had a curious trial of hide and go seek with Templeton yesterday. About ten o'clock on Saturday night Mr I. Corry⁶⁴ called upon me at that time at supper in Mr Andrew Thomson's and requested that I would go along with him immediately to see Mr Montgomery,⁶⁵ a half-brother of his own who lay dangerous ill, had been first attacked with his complaint on Monday last from which time Dr T had attended him but very remissly, and as his wife and friends thought him a great deal worse they expressed their wish to Mr Corry (as he told me) that I should be called in to consult with Dr T as soon as possible. I went accordingly, found the old gentleman in the dangerous state represented, and waited until a message was sent to Dr T, the answer to which as I heard it was that he would not come, which had indeed been supposed by several of the relations before the arrival of the messenger. As the case appeared to me very urgent, I thought myself justified in taking my own measures and having ordered a large blister between his shoulders, with some other medicines, I departed, having given rather an unfavourable opinion of the event. The friends told me that the day before, Dr T had thought him better. I called again about half past twelve and found him in much the same situation. The next morning he appeared rather easier and less anxious, but the blister had risen little if any and the case seemed to be now highly dangerous; I continued my directions, and on my next visit found that Dr T had been there in the mean time, had approved of the medicines, and ordered blisters to the calves of the legs which had been applied.

I begged to speak with one of the nearest relations. I told her that it was totally unprecedented for two physicians to attend a patient, each ordering medicines which might possibly, by counteracting each other or doubling quantities necessary to be ordered, endanger the sacrifice of the patient to the doctors if not to the disease; that I was resolved to order no additional medicine unless I was apprized of Dr T's resolutions either to continue or discontinue his advice and attendance; that, on that account, if she thought it necessary to have our mutual advice on the case, she might let Dr T know my determination, and if he chose to consult I would

62 James Warre of London, husband of Ellen Greg.

63 One of Captain Stewart's daughters married a Shaw, but Nelly did not marry.

64 Isaac Corry (1724-1809); of Abbey Yard, Newry, brother of Edward Corry.

65 Son of Edward Montgomery and Caesarea Smyth, who subsequently married Isaac Corry of Newry.

attend him on the shortest warning; if he meant to prescribe without consulting I could not attend the patient any longer, and if he meant to drop attendance I was ready to continue mine whatever might be the termination for I never chose to desert one at his utmost need.

A note somewhat to this purpose was sent, and I waited at Mr I. Corry's for the answer. In about two hours, a card came to inform me that Dr Templeton had called and was gone, and seemed to think if the blisters he ordered had their effect the patient would in a short time be better. On Mr I. Corry's particular request, I called about twelve and did not find him so much better as I expected. I expressed my fears again, and said that though I could not in my situation prescribe, I thought every possible assistance was necessary. One happened to mention Dr Haliday and I instantly caught eagerly at it, not only as I said from great desire for his opinion, but from a wish of explaining my own which on his arrival I could do, and which at present I could not do, from a cause which the whole family seemed to think perfectly just and proper. I called on Mrs Scott,⁶⁶ half-sister to Mr M[ontgomery], after having given the direction to Dr Haliday and the horse and man was prepared, and she informed me that happening to be there at the time the Doctor had called, she, and most of the family, had entreated him to consult with me on the case and he swore by God he never would. I smiled with contempt at the oath and the man who made it. This morning the apothecary called while I was in bed, as I had desired him to give me an account of his situation, and sent me up word that Mr M was worse and that the messenger to Dr Haliday had been countermanded by Templeton's direction – and thus the affair stands at present. Whether the poor man dies or recovers I am not to blame and indeed, as far as I can collect, few if any but rather imagine that what I have done has been for my credit both as a man and a physician. The old gentleman himself seems attached to T and that is an additional reason for my dropping my visits at least until they be again requested.

They have been again requested by Mr Edward Corry who arrived here last night and who called upon me about an hour ago. I went as I told him unwillingly, but on his request, and found Mr Montgomery in a very low and I fear hopeless condition. T had skulked in, in the morning, and signed his death warrant which I fear will be a true one. Mr E. Corry tells me he has a letter for me from Dr Haliday which he is to show me at breakfast with him tomorrow. Mr Montgomery is an old man of seventy with a large family but grown up, one of his sons an officer daily expected from St Lucia.

I have just received my dearest Matty's letter – that cursed head of yours is beginning again. I wish you to persist scrupulously in your milk and vegetable diet. Were it not for your fine feeling I would earnestly recommend a flannel shirt, and next your skin during the day. It is to appearance a slight, but its constant operation makes it I know, a powerful remedy. Write to me about yourself as soon as you receive this. Your frank was charged and I shall be obliged to send this letter without one, waiting for some that are genuine. I have fixed for a quarter at the mess,

⁶⁶ Martha Corry, wife of William Scott of Basin House, Newry.

and as it will serve for a trial it cannot long be disagreeable. The mare I sometimes think will improve. She is still disposed to start but I get the better of her. I do not doubt that I might get my own money for her in this place, but at any rate I shall keep her for some time, though I think Sam may still be on the look out for one. I would speak a little on the topic which you seem to think so nefarious and disgraceful to the town, but your indignation has left me nothing to say. W DRENNAN

56 [undated], franked by John Blackwood

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [74]

That you would have friends wherever you went I was certain, that you would have so many as has appeared since you went to Newry I could not have supposed, but that Templeton should be the man to labour most to your advantage was to the last degree improbable – yet this has happened and his behaviour, so well suited to defeat his purpose and push you forward, creates a smile of contempt in all who hears of it.

Dr H[aliday], having left this between eleven and twelve yesterday and calling here first to know if we had any commands to you, gave us notice of someone dying in Newry. As he met a man near twenty miles from Newry informing him M[ontgomery] was dead, he returned in time for the Washington and we learned that you had been called on Friday and had ordered a blister. This day I sent the Doctor your letter and he seems desirous of knowing whether M was really dead when the express set off, and for this purpose I suppose wrote you a note, but after conning⁶⁷ over your letter very often I think you have made a mistake as to the first time you saw M, which you say was Saturday night, but we make out Friday. You certainly behaved quite right not only in Dr H's opinion but mine. Dr H's note was enclosed to Mr Edward Corry and sent by the express which brought a verbal account of M's death.

You mistook me in supposing I was on any particular diet longer than while my bowels were disordered. My head is not yet very bad and otherwise I am well, but I really am alarmed about my mother – the bleeding of her nose has increased to a very troublesome degree and generally happens twice or thrice a day. I know not what it portends but she is much paler, and her legs more swelled, and often very uneasy. If there is anything that might be even used as a precaution, I would try to get it accomplished. What a valuable life is hers, both to my affection and interest.

Your last frank and this also is both by the same hand that franked all the others. If possible write a few lines tomorrow, you did not get my last at the proper time. I suppose from Mr M's death you will lose your queen at the c[oterie] squeeze. Our public places flourish, theatre and all. The last assembly was good. M[argaret] J[ones] was not there. Crombie signed the petition. It was a loss to you Dr H did not get the length of Newry. Our linen hall and new street is all marked out and

67 i.e. poring over or studying.

goes back as far as the stone table in the castle garden and quite across the mall into the exercising f[ie]ld. Did you ever read the resolutions of the Tralee Volunteers? Dr H read them out at Dr M——s⁶⁸ to a large company. I got the start of all and boldly pronounced them manly and noble, lamenting that the Belfast sentiments had not been so well worded, and that then they would have been faultless. This seemed to be allowed.

57 Tuesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [75]

Dear Matty, I have just written a letter to Dr Haliday in answer to a letter and note which I received by Mr Corry. Mr M[ontgomery] died between one and two yesterday morning, and upon the particular request of Mr E. Corry, I saw him about three or four hours before and left him in a few minutes without doing anything, because nothing on this side the grave could be done. Friday night was the first time I saw him and I must have led you astray by a slip of the pen. The message first delivered from Mr Is[aac] Corry to Dr T[empleton] was I fancy misconstrued as I cannot conceive that any servant could deliver, much less that Mr C could send such a message. It was that Mr C gave Dr T three quarters of an hour to wait upon Mr M and to consult with Dr D[rennan] then at the hour upon the case; the answer to which as I since understand was that Dr T would not come upon such a rascally message, and he has declared that he shall never forgive Mr C for his conduct in the affair. All the Montgomery family have ever been warm Templetonians and as he, they say, has a great deal of over-ruling despotism about him, it is not unlikely that he may retain his influence over female minds who, I think, in general fear to oblige him. I attend the funeral by invitation at four this evening.

With regard to my dear mother's complaint, if the issue continue doing well, if she has no return of headache, and if she be not costive, which she should always obviate by a laxative, I would wish her to try some strengthening medicine as the infusion of the bark,⁶⁹ because these frequent bleedings may proceed from too great laxity of frame which will at the same time dispose greatly to swelling in her limbs. I wish rather to moderate than stop this evacuation from her nose, as other complaints might possibly take its place. If she pleases I shall send her a receipt or two, one to keep her body open and to be used occasionally, the other to be taken as a strengthener of her system and as a means of counteracting any excessive return of a complaint which I do not consider as dangerous in its present state. Are not her gums liable to be swelled and inflamed? I with all due respect was going to say that she might turn out somewhat of a scurvy mother on our hands.

Are any worsted stockings a knitting? Is my trunk never to arrive, my shirts never to be completed? Did Crombie sign the petition with his left or right hand? Ought

68 ? Matrear's.

69 Bark, when unspecified, generally refers to the bark of the cinchona tree, which contains quinine.

there not to be four Levites to lift up the dirty tail of the address? Are there no genuine franks to be had? I read the resolutions and like them much. We shall get an ostensible independence, but I firmly believe it never will be a real one and the collars of the Knights of St Patrick⁷⁰ will in time strangle the freedom of the nation. WD

58 ??? !!! [*sic*] Wednesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [76]

Our coterie went off with sufficient eclat, and Mrs Corry's absence gave me an opportunity of paying a compliment to two ladies. I chose Mrs James Pollock, my townswoman,⁷¹ as my vice-queen, and Mrs John Thomson, the only married lady of the other party present, as the presiding lady of the next meeting. A number of young lads were there, some of whom had I believe attended in compliment to me, and though the night was exceedingly unfavourable the company was more numerous than it had been before.

In the morning of the same day I attended at Mr Montgomery's public funeral and walked before the rest in a very disagreeable procession, preceded only by a ragged beggar-looking fellow who kept constantly jingling a little bell in his hand as if to apprise the whole town that the deceased and the doctor were just a coming. This is a constant ceremonial in funeral solemnities at this place, and not satisfied with this, there is always one of these bell ringers that go through the town informing every one by their papistical bell, who has died, at what hour, and when he is to be interred. I observe that these fellows always pull off their hats most respectfully on meeting me in the streets, as if certain of my being a future friend of theirs, and looking upon themselves as acting pretty much in the same vocation. What shall I do with the scarf and hatband which I received on this occasion?

I dined with Mr Edward Corry the chief mourner the same day, and he asked me to take a ride with him to Mourne where he has a country seat about ten miles from Newry. I would have gone had not my mare fallen totally lame with the disorder called the scratches, having gotten cold I suppose by being little accustomed to the stable. She is now much better, and though I shall be forced to hire a horse this day to dine at Mr Arbuckle's, I make no doubt she will be ready for the road in a day or two. I am not at all willing to part with her. Her eyes are now well and I flatter myself that this restiveness (which is never dangerous) will by custom with the place and the roads around it wear altogether away.

I think the flannel you use ought to be thin, and I can see little danger nor much inconvenience (if properly made) by removing it during the night, particularly if you find yourself disposed to unusual heats, and I know you lie under so many bed clothes as to make additional night clothing unnecessary, and perhaps troublesome. I wish you to be as cool during the night as you can be without risk of catching cold, and as temperately and naturally warm during the day as you can be without the

70 An order of knighthood established in 1783 and conferred on loyal members of the Irish nobility.

71 Jane Pollock (1755-95), a daughter of Thomas Sinclair of Belfast.

extreme heat of our Donegall Street parlour. You have dropped it seems the milk and vegetable diet, yet when the proper season comes in, I think morning rides and a return to that diet would be exceedingly proper. I have no notion of whey of any kind filling you too full of blood, etc. I went to Corbitt's yesterday and, after repeated and grateful thanks for my careful and successful attendance, his wife put either five or six guineas in my hand. I felt from every appearance of the place etc. that it was too much and I only took three. The man has I understand had his misfortunes, and though middle-aged is but beginning life, the much enduring condition of a schoolmaster. I had anxiety about him which was not to be compensated by treble the offered sum, but I have quite forgotten that.

My friend Bruce had informed me of poor H[arriet] Mussenden's⁷² rapidly declining condition. According to the idea I have had of her lungs, a change of climate, even some years ago, would not have had a great chance of protracting her life many years, and however carelessly she seemed to talk of her nervous cough, I knew she felt the extreme and certain danger of her life. It has been I sincerely believe a most virtuous and most amiable one. She has long been so spiritualised as to slight the cavils of this petty world, and she has my silent prayers for an easy entrance into the world of sister spirits.

I pity poor Park⁷³ and hope the affair will end better than you have represented. There are great numbers going over to America from about this place, and the exportation of men will be sufficiently great until the market be overstocked, or their own idleness and unsuccess make their remaining friends adopt the wiser plan of bringing American industry to their own home. Were I a Hayley,⁷⁴ I should write a poetical dissuasive from emigration and address it to him who has gone farthest in making his country worth inhabiting. I guess at your second article of news and I wish I could see it in print. It has my best wishes and you are a powerful agent in these affairs.

Bruce is always particular in his enquiries about you and all the family [—] says very well in his last 'I seldom see Pollock or Jones⁷⁵ — indeed this hurried place is not the abode of friendship. There is no time or space for it. Every one is busy and every place is full. If I could find a vacancy neither of these should fill it. The first is all raw and sore: one is afraid to touch him for fear of hurting him. The other is anointed with oil: he slips through your fingers. He never likes to appear but in perfect trim', etc., etc.

I have not a book case, nor as yet a writing desk. The roomy closet off my bed chamber I have used to dress in, and I suppose I shall be obliged to get some shelves put up there, and dress in the room. I have had the fortune of meeting with an excellent bath not 100 yards from my door which Mr Carlisle Pollock⁷⁶ now in America had made for his own use. It is a large and deep tub or trough placed in a

72 Harriet, sister of Daniel Mussenden of Larchfield; the Mussenden sisters were friends of Martha's.

73 Possibly James Park of Belfast.

74 William Hayley (1745-1820), poet (*DNB*).

75 Joseph Pollock and his brother-in-law, William Todd Jones (1754-1818), MP for Lisburn 1783-90, advocate of Catholic emancipation.

76 Carlisle Pollock, brother of James Pollock of Newry.

little garden house, and as convenient as possible for immersing the whole body. I have made use of it four or five times, and I rise between eight and nine (which laudable practice I hope to continue) for the sake of getting all over before the necessary business of the day. I have gotten some books down from Dublin and have written for one or two more, ??? [*sic*] W DRENNAN

Have you seen Pollock's sister at Mr Jones's? I hear she is there.⁷⁷

59 Friday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [62]

Dear Matty, I expected to have heard from you this day or two past, and have been disappointed even in the gratification of a weekly letter from Belfast. I received my trunk safely, and most of the articles I expected. I believe it will be better to get the blue uniform altered so as to wear as an everyday coat, my black having got a very poor appearance, and I am not willing to abuse either my purple or my oeil d'empereur.⁷⁸ The old clothes have been metamorphosed by George into a tolerable suit for himself, which seems to become him much better than the one he brought with him. I am chiefly in want of stockings and I think the shirts sent to me are not very well provided with stocks. I would have sent the scarf and hatband either by the Stewarts, or J. Brown⁷⁹ and H. Montgomery who called to see me, but as they did not travel in chaises I supposed the carriage of such articles would be inconvenient.

Matters go on here much in the same way. My only genteel patients at present are Mr Edward Corry and Mr Scott. I have gotten an electrical apparatus for the former gentleman, and I have paid particular attention to his alarming complaint which has been recompensed with an additional fee of two guineas. This was done not only as a fee for himself, but as a polite excuse perhaps for my not receiving one from the relations of Mr Montgomery. I observe that reward in this town is only to accompany success and that they expect a second physician should visit *gratis*, if the disease be mortal.

There is a report through town which more than one lady has mentioned to me as coming from Dr Templeton himself, that he intends leaving Newry and settling in Dublin. This I consider only as a professional stroke, that if they do not cultivate his good graces as an accoucheur⁸⁰ he will abandon all the ladies in the place to their certain fate; and indeed I believe that his reputation as a fortunate practitioner in this branch, and his influence of consequence on the females, will give this artful fetch its full effect; for I can by no means think that one who has spent so long a time in Newry with some character, could quit his house newly built in the country and venture himself and family into the capital as a new field, especially as he is a man who, I believe justly, has no great confidence in his knowledge of the

77 Probably a sister of Joseph Pollock who was married to William Todd Jones's sister.

78 Steel-blue grey.

79 Probably John Brown (c.1740-1805), Belfast merchant and banker.

80 i.e. an obstetrician.

proper business of a physician, and whose manners from all accounts would be very irreconcilable with the suppleness and insinuation necessary in Dublin practice. It is however very true that a great number of married ladies in this place are delivered at length from all fear of gentlemen in this line, and his revenue must of consequence lessen while his expenses are I should suppose on the increase.

You must tell me, if counterfeit franks can pass. If the inspector be in Belfast they will not and I can't get genuine.

Of Kennedy I hear but little, but as far as I can find he is acting like a bold adventurer, and has little design of relinquishing the field. He has I understand become a member of the two principal clubs in town which are each of distinct parties, and in one of which a single black bean excludes. I am desirous of your advice about my behaviour on this subject, for though I do not much fear that I could be admitted with equal readiness into both, and the attendance on either is pretty much at one's own option, yet I am not very fond of clubs, and were it not for a desire of making acquaintance (although club acquaintance are not generally very lucrative ones) I would wish to avoid these meetings and rather cultivate the domestic parties. The lads and men generally meet at the coffee room every night from which there is a constant adjournment to the tavern, and I find it hard to keep the proper medium between reserved distance in this custom of the place, and the too great intimacy of a soaker. I have not indeed been at any of these parties as yet on account of other engagements, but I suppose there are many who will think that I should join frequently in the Bacchanalian roar, particularly as my competitor lays claim to the title of a jolly fellow. Neither my health of body or mind will enable me to comply with this, and I must rest upon that secret esteem and respect which men of this turn involuntarily pay to temperance and unaffected regularity of life to operate in their minds for my advantage, in place of that frail and fleeting friendship which is founded only on the companionship of the bottle.

I heard from Bruce a day or two ago. He sent me some articles which were necessary in my professional way and some books which I wanted. I shall remit him their price when my purse rises a little. I should wish that receiving it from my mother, it should prove a widow's cruse, but it has kept in a state of fluctuation ever since I came, and there are a number of little drains which draw off whatever the good patients supply. I examine it now, and find in it five guineas – thirteen guineas I have received in fees, and five make eighteen which I have spent in two months and paid no rent, etc., only two guineas remitted to Bruce. I have spoken to George that I think 3s 9d per week rather much for his board wages – £9 17s per annum, but he tells me, and I think he is an honest lad, that he cannot do upon less.

Bruce tells me the Warrington Academy is shut up for want of pupils. If Crombie has any spirit he should draw up a plan for one in Belfast, at this most favourable time, and submit it to the public, but it must have a beginning without application to the public, who would foster it if some spirited individuals would originate such a truly desirable and patriotic scheme.

I think, dear Matty, you might have written to me this week when you must be conscious of my solicitude concerning you, and you must be certainly sensible of the extreme curiosity I have to hear anything which may, in my present situation, regard myself. WD

60 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [63]

Your little note did not deserve a speedy reply, and you are so laconic of late, I begin to suspect you are in bad spirits. If either they, or your health, depend on such things as hearing every week from Belfast, God help you, you are no better fitted to go through this world than your father was.

I am but low myself just now, having been listening to a long account of poor Harriet Mussenden – the repetition would give us both pain. Could you think it, Will, that a mind seemingly so fortified has these many years been indulging a concealed grief which took pleasure in the thought of death, and an unfortunate attachment has made her an early prey to it. So long ago as when she came from England in robust health, she formed a love connection with a gentleman, not remarkable (at least to those who mentioned him to me), he however hit her taste, had a passion for music and a taste for letters – and you may judge how strong her attachment was when, knowing his fortune was gone, she determined to marry and support him by taking up a school to teach young ladies music. His death however put a stop to this, and all her satisfaction here. He died of a fever and as she was desirous the world should not suspect her affection for him, although all her own family knew it except the father, she went to a ball the night he was buried [and want] of rest and continual weeping soon reduc[ed —] that a consultation of physic[ians] — of these Dr Purcell⁸¹ she ma[———] him how needless an [———] therefore to heal her mind, and induced her to interest it in many little matters, to which she appeared to give herself up from the fear he had inspired her with of living long deprived of her eyesight. You may remember when it was said she was in danger of doing so. Jenny is at present at L[arch]field, a poor worn out spectacle, expecting daily the same end of [*sic*] her sister.⁸²

Miss Pollock spent an hour here. She talks well and looks agreeable. I thought it odd and ungentle that none of the Joneses showed her the way, nor did even Miss Charlotte Jones⁸³ accompany her, to whom Nancy's visit was also paid and cards went to them all. Maria gave Margaret Mattear⁸⁴ an account of you, which came from Miss Pollock and was very flattering to you in all respects. This all the family heard, and I imagine the one you are most interested in had not failed to enquire particularly before. I do not mean of Miss P for that I do not know, but of Margaret

81 Dr John, later Sir John Purcell.

82 Jenny died in or before 1786 when her will was proved; most of the Mussenden sisters were consumptive.

83 Charlotte and Maria Jones, cousins of Margaret, and sisters of William Todd Jones.

84 Margaret Mattear i.e. McTier, Martha's step-daughter.

McTier. The young ones of that house are greatly charmed with a new relation they have got, a Captain Robertson⁸⁵ who has given uncommon proofs of constancy in a ten years attachment to Miss Gayer of Lisburn. Mrs Harrison tells me her girls are rather romantic which occasions her to take the other side even more than is real. [I was in com]pany with her three times of late [— m]ade choice of a seat next me [—] introduced Margaret and spoke [—] but lamented her backwardness of temper. She goes very little abroad and I find complains of the insipidity of the mere assembly acquaintance. Old Val⁸⁶ enquires for you, but all these times M was not present, and from what I can gather I suspect she has either some awe or opinion of me, perhaps that I know a little of your attachment, which kept her distant. Young Ned⁸⁷ is gone to America.

My mother having wrote to you, I suppose she made me much her subject which I am sorry for, because there is no one thing she would say which would give you pleasure. My heart pants to yield comfort and satisfaction to those I love but this first of blessings is denied me, and I see myself the cause of the reverse to a degree that is to me a torture. How long this it last [*sic*] God knows. [My] heart is full and I cannot go to another subject though I had many little ones for you. Rest satisfied that I have not a complaint you do not know, that you always shall, and that those I have are in no way increased since I was with you. Nor are my looks worse. That I am not well is certain but what my disorder is or what would do me good, I, nor better judges, do not know. I always did suspect I had something of a slight periodical fever, and that the uneasiness of my head was so slight as to be rather caused by that than the occasion of it. The restless state both of mind and body at the time the fit is on me, I thought looked like it – and I have always observed the morning I was ill I had a degree of it about the same hour in the afternoon, a heaviness, restlessness, and total want of colour and deadness in my eyes. This often led me to have my pulse felt at that time and being always told it was quiet I supposed the [dread]⁸⁸ of a fever must only be a fancy of my own. Some other place than this I must go to soon, but where, or how? My strength, appetite and spirits (naturally) are as good as ever. Write soon and consider nothing too trifling.

61 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [64]

Dear Matty, I have received your letter, and I think it deserves a speedy reply. I am pleased that H[arriet] M[ussenden] has honoured human nature with such proofs of female attachment, but I hope that constancy even to death is as much a masculine as a feminine quality. Captain Robertson whom you mention is an equivalent on our side, and I am sincerely sorry that the sequel of poor Harriet's attachment

85 *recte* Jonathan Bruce Roberts esq. of Co. Cork, who married Miss Gayer in March 1783.

86 Margaret Jones's father.

87 Cousin of Margaret Jones.

88 Word unclear, partly erased.

has not proved equally fortunate. I always suspected that she had, in addition to her real complaint, the consumption of a desolate and widowed heart, for in some twilight conversations which we once had together in Larchfield she seemed to be led on, unconsciously to herself, almost to a confession that her mind was ill at ease, and I saw her eyes fill repeatedly with tears which she seemed but half inclined to suppress, thinking herself I suppose almost alone when with me; or perhaps, from that sociableness which is natural to exquisite sensibility, not caring much whether her sorrows were known to an innocent and safe companion. I am not sure whether a few more such conversations might not have made her honour me with a secret which she would never have disclosed to one of my sex, though infinitely my superior, and to very few of her own sex excepting her own family. I remember I hinted that somewhat of this kind formed a part of her ailment, and though such a supposition perhaps merited a reply of no very amicable kind, yet certain it was that her feelings at that time disposed her almost to confess that my conclusion was a just one.

You may remember that Dr Cullen's idea of your complaint was exactly what you yourself have said and described as a partial periodic or intermittent fever. That your pulse does not in a very marked manner indicate the presence of fever is by no means either a sign that your head, the principal seat of this fever, may not be affected with it; nor is it a certain proof that the system in general may not be affected with it, for your pulse was almost always felt in the interval or rather a remission of the complaint, and when I did feel your arm early in the morning, your pulse was stronger and fuller though not materially more frequent than in its natural state. Most of the medicines ordered you by Cullen were ordered with a view of counteracting this febrile ailment by preventing the return of the fit, and I think that in every particular of regimen or management of yourself you ought to have this in view, as far as you can keep to it without weakening your frame, which will of itself dispose to your complaint. I think a trial of the goat's whey this summer would not be at all improper and a daily ride would be serviceable, I am sure, though in your last trial of it you seemed to think it of little service.

I am going on much in the same way. My spirits are by no means bad, and if they ever suffer occasional depressions, I can always boast of a superiority to poor Nancy in the power of appearing as usual in company. You shall not I hope ever hear that I am, as I have been, in the black list of imaginary sufferers. That I shall be in great spirits, times must alter in some little particulars, before I can promise. I took a ride on Monday to Mournie and passed the day and night at Mr Corry's – a pleasant place and well worth seeing. I went last night to the snug ball and liked it as well as I generally do such overgrown societies. George has improved so much as a friseur⁸⁹ that upon the necessary engagement of my usual one, he officiated with almost equal success, and I suppose I shall soon have him enticed from my service, if there be any place in town which he could find equally advantageous, though this I really believe he will not easily find. I wrote to you some time ago about the economical reformation of my blue uniform, but you have not told me whether it has been sent

89 Hairdresser.

to the tailor. I danced with Miss Sinclaire at the ball and that set only. I mean to attend Bennet's (Stewart)⁹⁰ assembly more frequently than the charitable because it is not only an agreeable meeting but I wish to make friends in that party.

No fees since I wrote to my mother. The mare still ill with one eye and if she be not better on a second bleeding, I must probably get a part of an excrescence under the lids which forms the disease extirpated. My watch is on the stroke of dinner hour. I dine with the Pollocks and spend the evening at Mr Davis's. Adieu. WD

62 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [71]

[incomplete] be one of the order – in short, put it on such a footing and so honourable to Lord Charlemont that he neither could, nor choose to refuse the honour which he names as inferior to that conferred upon him, when he was appointed Major General (I believe it is) to the Volunteers of Ulster.

Have you no time, no subject, nor no inclination for any publication that could do you credit, or be of any use? – something well hit of[f], that could not give offence to any and might be approved of in general, might be certainly of great use to you at present.

Miss Davis⁹¹ can give you all the theatre intelligence, etc., etc. She has been much admired here. What is really doing at the Newry linen hall? Several lots of ground are already bespoken in our new street.⁹² You are in duty bound to let your Mama hear of you every week so do not swerve from it. I suppose your mare is recovered. MM

63 Monday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [51]

Dear Sam, I called twice on Mr Walker yesterday without finding him at home, but I met with him this morning and he gives the man you mention a good character in every respect, adding I suppose as a farther recommendation that he lived for some time in the capacity of postillion to Colonel Ross, from whom perhaps he has learned all the arts and perfection of servitude. I was introduced to that gentleman yesterday at Mr John Pollock's, and I cannot say that either in his morals or manners I found him a whit better than I expected. I spend my time here agreeable enough, and flatter myself that in some time I shall acquire sufficient practice to enable me to stand in the world without much support. I am engaged about the middle of this month to Mrs Christopher Read,⁹³ and if affairs go on fortunately I do not despair of my Newry enterprise. Pollock has been here these two days past, and as far as I

90 i.e. a supporter of Alexander Stewart, brother of the future Lord Londonderry, who stood unsuccessfully in 1783 for election against the sitting MPs for Newry, Isaac Corry and Robert Ross.

91 Presumably a daughter of James Davis of Newry, and sister of Mrs James Holmes of Belfast.

92 Donegall Place.

93 Anne, formerly Taylor, wife of Christopher Read of Newry.

can judge does not seem satisfied with his situation in life, pursuing a profession without overtaking it, and seeing others infinitely less deserving, rising both in honour and emolument. If you happen to meet with Dr Haliday ask him if he has found out the meaning of the two empty franks being sent him with the Newry postmark. Tell my mother that I have gotten the scarf and that I would have sent it by N. Wilson had I thought it would be convenient for him to carry it. I expect my blue coat and the worsted stockings as soon as convenient. Yours sincerely, WD

64 Monday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [52]

Dear Matty, I have expected some lines from you daily, but have excused you, from supposing you had nothing interesting to say, and I hope you will make the same excuse for my silence in much the same situation. You mean I suppose to wean me from Belfast which is scarcely necessary at present, for unless circumstances alter much both with respect to myself and with respect to the place, I should be extremely sorry to ever return to it as a resident. Mr Scott talks sometimes of making a visit to Mr Portis during the summer for a single day and expresses his wish of having me for his companion, but it is not probable that this jaunt of mere pleasure will take place, and I hope that some engagement of business will keep me at home, for I cannot say that I yet feel much inclination to revisit your town, abstracting from the narrow circle of my relations and friends.

The only engagement I have at present, I believe I mentioned to Sam, and it is to Mrs Read. I have attended her little daughter in the measles which are extremely common here at present; and I have attended Mrs Corry⁹⁴ in a slight complaint which she has had for some days past. Kennedy proposed himself yesterday to our mess, and as you may suppose, shall meet with no opposition to his entrance on my part. I am somewhat unfortunate in having no person here confidential enough for me to enquire whether he meets with success or whether he has any engagements on his hands, but he appears to be a man of business and this perhaps will make him become one. He has certainly some friends in and about the town who have taken him warmly by the hand.

I received the coat and think it will serve for the summer exceedingly well with the help of a new black waistcoat and small clothes. I have made some morning visits already on the strength of it, but I am somewhat inclined to suspect that the Stewart party whom I call upon, are disposed to ask me if it be a turn coat. They know me little if they suspect that the wearer can be a renegade, yet this town has so much feeling in this particular, that I am sorry they do not know me more, but am at a loss to know the means of making them do so which I have not already adopted. I might perhaps publish something, but the politician would then be said to take up too much of the physician's attention. I cannot write, however I may

94 This could be Mrs Edward or Mrs Isaac Corry.

speak, as a neutral. Our linen hall will soon rise like an exhalation. The labourers are numerous and busily employed. Is Lord Donegall yet arrived to lay the foundation stone? I suppose he will make a great bustle among the town politicians, and the Volunteers of his estate will no doubt entertain him with a review. Write to me when you can, and tell me what is most agreeable. Conceal what is not, for I wish not to be unhappy. WD

I sent two or three messages for the receipt to make imperial⁹⁵ which I beg you will procure for me, as it is desired much by Mrs Scott – Mrs Haliday or Mrs McTier⁹⁶ no doubt can give it to you.

65 Sunday night

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [53]

It has not been want of matter which prevented my writing of late to my dearest Will – too much is oftener to me a prevention than a little, for there is nothing so trifling which the pen of affection cannot make acceptable. This you would be sensible of if you saw how many readings your epistles go through in this family after the public one – each has their own, and if they were as long or as general as they ought to be, your letters might take up a morning, and to while one away, in this family, is desirable. I told you once before my pleasures were very few, and that hearing from you was almost my only one – and yet you fail me, since the day you left us – I have not heard as many words from Nancy as your shortest letter holds.

But I have always avoided entering upon any subject which could hurt you and do me no good. That my situation is grown more and more irksome and mortifying cannot be thought odd – if I am supposed to be possessed of any feeling – some imaginary good has danced before me and cheated me out of sorrow and into hope for years. There is not one now that can do so but (the last I once thought I could bear) going to America, and this I would most fondly cherish if I could get Sam to set about it with spirit. I have got him to propose it to D[r] M[attear], and I do not think he is against it. He also told him he should not want money if he chose to risk it in that way, and that he did suppose the voyage would be good for me, though he could not answer for the climate, but as my plan would be such as either to stay or not as we found health and interest admit, that point would be of no consequence. I begun to mention it to my mother and Nancy but was answered with anger and contempt, supposing it to be all a finesse to cheat them out of their purpose of sending me to Bristol. Sam was to accompany me there at the expense of at least a hundred pound – consider this – put yourself for a moment in my situation and sure you will not wonder that (for the present at least) I have stood out against this attack, made through affection and ending in wrath, particularly against Sam who is most unjustly considered as hindering me, and as not having spirit to leave Belfast

95 A drink based on lemons, often used as a mild laxative.

96 Probably Martha's sister-in-law, the wife of Dr Mattear.

for any purpose. He is treated accordingly by Nancy. In hopes the goat's whey might satisfy them, I mentioned it to Dr Haliday, who approved of it. So did M[attea]r and if matters are not fixed for America, I must go some place and may as well try it. Rainey M[axwell] upon hearing this said Newry now attracted me – for that Rostrevor was the place for whey. I have heard much of it. Enquire what sort of lodgings are there, the plan, price, what you get, etc., – be very particular. I would not wish to be very near you for I cannot do you credit – but in reach of a morning's ride.

I could not avoid disobeying your last injunction, although I meant to be agreeable and tell you how you are puffed of[f] here. We hear of you as one most acceptable and generally admired and esteemed in Newry, and old Dame Pottinger⁹⁷ says she supposes you make at the rate of £600 a year – her son spoke much in your praise. Black⁹⁸ called here, but neither W. Jones, nor Mr Pollock did us that favour – the latter I saw this moment pass with Miss Greg.⁹⁹ He stopped at the door going to Carrickfergus as Nancy was at it, and she offered him a bed but he refused it.

Your last seems a boast of a superior value for Newry above Belfast. You have had great reason to like it, and I rejoice that you do, but your desire of avoiding to see us for a day looks like what I hope was over acting a part. Though I never mentioned your coming, I was not without hopes of being surprised particularly when N[athaniel] W[ilson] came down. Mr Scott's offer I would have supposed would have been accepted with joy if business allowed it – but unless you wish it, I do not. I knew long ago you were to be engaged to Mrs R[ead] and after her (if you are fortunate) to several others. No one that I enquire at knows anything of Kennedy or his having any business. I cannot think it necessary that you should be so tonguetied in general politics as that your sentiments in particular companies should not at least be deduced in particular ones. It is a dreadful situation to be so fettered, and not to be supported by a man of spirit. Get that consequence (Haliday-like) which will set you above it – and in my opinion nothing would gain [more] than something clever in print – of a nature that [would be] generally approved of and not particularly [—] offensive in these times. I think this might be hit off.

Ginger Wine

14 gallons of water, 14 pounds of sugar, 2 ounces of race g[inger], well pounded – boil all these one hour, scum it, take whites of 8 eggs well beat, to clarify it – strain it into [—] let it stand until cold, then put it into a vessel with the peel and juice of 14 large lemons – put half a spoonful of good yeast on the top – when it has done working stop the cask close – in a fortnight you may bottle it, and a fortnight after, it will be fit for drinking. Your lemons must be pared very thin and the juice strained. This is I suppose what you meant for imperial, which is so old fashioned a thing I can't get a recipe for it, but so very simple, that you may make it by putting as much cream of tartar to a gallon of water as you think safe, add sugar and rind of lemon sufficient to make it pleasant.

97 Frances, widow of Thomas Pottinger of Mount Pottinger, and aunt of Mrs James Corry.

98 Probably Rev. Robert Black (1752-1817), Presbyterian minister at Dromore and captain of Volunteers, moved to Derry in 1784 (*DNB*).

99 One of the daughters of the merchant Thomas Greg.

The little trunk you took with you is much wanted here. Remember to send it by the first cars – you may put the scarf and hatband in it. You never mentioned if you had inoculated Mr Pollock's¹⁰⁰ child. We have got two new doctors here and six more promised, all I suppose on the news of Dr Drennan's leaving Belfast. The meeting house¹⁰¹ is finished and meets with great admiration but is not to be opened until Lord Donegall comes. There is still a large debt to which the Bishop of Derry¹⁰² very genteely, and unasked, sent £50. He is at present at L[arch]field and pays Mrs Mussenden¹⁰³ adoration. Your old friend Mrs Smith is below, better than she has been these seven years, and owing, she thinks, to drinking a pint of porter to your health every day at dinner. MM

There are three pairs of stockings ready to be sent the first opportunity. Pollock called this moment. We never learned the meaning of the two blank covers to Dr H. Can you tell us?

66 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [54]

Dear Matty, I happened last night to be writing a little on the very subject which you have mentioned in the beginning of your letter, but I little thought that you yourself had thoughts of turning emigrant. I dare not give any opinion at present on this point, both because I feel myself as a brother incapable of it, and because I am scarcely able as a physician or a friend to determine whether such a resolution which, until I hear something more concerning it, appears to me at present very adventurous, would be for your health or your interest. I cannot say anything concerning it, but your own sense, your husband's sense, and the advice of those who are able to give it will I trust direct you for the best. I have made as much enquiry about Rostrevor as I can do without being on the spot. I think it not prudent to venture down as Mrs R[e]ad may find my attendance necessary the next hour, but if I find that I can do it, I shall take a ride there and make more particular enquiries. I hear the lodgings are pretty high at this place as it is the summer recess for the Newry gentry – from half a guinea to a guinea a week. You certainly may have goat's whey there with convenience, though the farther down the shore and nearer Murlough they get it in greater plenty. I shall [write]¹⁰⁴ as soon as I can get some particular accounts. The village itself is delightful for a summer residence.

I have not inoculated Mrs Pollock's daughter. Her eldest boy is now at his grandfather's¹⁰⁵ and in the measles, which are extremely common here at present, but not in general fatal – yet it is a complaint not to be trusted. I have heard nothing of the blank covers to Haliday but suppose it was some April joke. You must excuse me, dear

100 Probably James Pollock (c.1747-1816), of Newry.

101 The meeting house of the First Belfast congregation in Rosemary Street.

102 Frederick Hervey (1730-1803), 4th Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry (*DNB*).

103 Fridiswide, wife of Daniel Mussenden, of Larchfield, Co. Down.

104 Word supplied.

105 Thomas Sinclair of Belfast.

Matty, now and then for my short epistles for I am often in no humour to write and it is then most irksome to me to do it, even to those whom I love and honour most.

I told you I was attempting something of the letter kind to another person. If I had time, which an indolent man never has, I might endeavour to address some thoughts on different subjects in the garb of letters perhaps to Lord Charlemont – on emigration, volunteering, etc., and the natural interruption of letters might give relief to the reader who has not even patience to finish a sixpenny pamphlet, and assist the writer when he became tired of his subject or his subject tired of him. I shall send you a specimen which I honestly say I don't like, and I find myself every day more and more incapable of studious application. It is but a rough copy and send it back as I have no other, and then if I have leisure I shall send you more. Adieu – show this but-begun work, and which perhaps will never be even half-done work, to no one, for I do not like it. WD

67 [undated], franked by I. Corry

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [57]

Dear Matty, I am again disappointed. Bruce tells me in a letter I received last night that Mr Rowley has invited him to be his companion in an excursion to Edinburgh and London, and that he will probably come down to the North about the middle of June. I am disappointed much, as I firmly expected seeing him some day this week, but perhaps it is as well as it is, for I could not go with him to Belfast at present as I intended. Mrs Read still keeps on foot, and a Mrs Carlisle¹⁰⁶ whom you may remember at Ballynahinch is so desperately ill, that I cannot leave her while her situation is so exceedingly precarious. Dr Maxwell from Armagh and I are her physicians, though I believe neither will be of much avail. I shall not wait for Bruce, but will visit you as soon as ever I can get my foot free.

If you can tell me when my other Dublin friends comes down you will oblige me. Bruce writes in a very low-spirited manner. I greatly fear he has gotten some complaint in his breast that gives him reason for alarm, and if so, I should not think the chill air of Edinburgh or the smoke of London to be very medicinal. Colds are amazingly common here at present – I hope you have escaped them. I have had one with the rest, but it is now much better. This Mrs Read is really a very unaccountable woman, but I hope she will set me free during the course of the week. I shall then see you for a day or so, but no more, for business I think, begins to thicken on my hands. WD

68 Monday morning

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [56]

My dear Will, You are at present no doubt anxious until the affair with Mrs Read is happily over, of which I hope you will immediately inform us. I have been (and

106 The Carlises were a leading Newry family.

still am) in so perplexed a state in regard to a summer residence, and many other matters, that writing to you has been painful. I dare not determine anything by my own choice, for anything but Bristol gives offence, and this matter is taken in so serious a light that if any company should offer I fear I shall not be able to stand out – but this does not do – Sam must go, and his refusal, occasioned entirely by me, has given offence never to be forgiven. The more than double expense this would occasion, his being from this at a time when possibly by Mr Bruce's¹⁰⁷ death (soon expected), or by the Recorder coming here to sett his estate, something might offer to do us service, are two out of many reasons against my complying, and when I consider how much Ballynahinch, the last time, disagreed with me, how much expense and little good attended the Scotch jaunt, and the thought of returning after all to the same scene of discontent and cruel kindness, my heart dies at the prospect, which unless Nancy would go and consent to reap benefit from it, which that she wants more than I do is apparent to everyone, cannot in any other view be borne by me. You should get many and large fees, for all these expenses must one time be paid by you.

I shall keep your paper safe till I get a frank – still pleased with any performance you made public. I was glad to find any thing had occurred which would allow you with safety to appear in print. But I own I was surprised to find you had made choice of that side of the question which I supposed both contrary to your sentiments and interest, as far as concerned the popularity of your paper which contains many good things and pretty expressions – but like Bryson's sermons, that is all. It appears to me to want design. It does not set out with any which ought to induce either the nobleman it is addressed to, or any other person, to go on with it, but if by good language they are tempted forward, at the end they will be still more disappointed. For what is the conclusion, to what does it tend? – if to anything, to recommend (and in so loose and general a manner as if you were arguing against your own feelings) emigration. This will not please, will not be thought a fit subject for an Irish patriot, nor ever interest such – you would have done so more readily by the other side of the question. Could you by finding a fit subject and a flattering but delicate introduction to Lord C[harlemont], draw his attention and the public through a series of letters to any useful and patriotic purpose – which by being concealed as the author for some time, might gain the name of some greater, until you chose to claim it, this would, in short, it would be very agreeable, and what I recomm[end] to your serious consideration as a thing you are very equal to, if fortunate in a subject.

I spent a conversational evening lately with Jenny Greg.¹⁰⁸ She had been spending some days at Lambeg with the Joneses, upon whom, and Will,¹⁰⁹ with his present character and pursuit, the subject turned. It led to Margaret, by observing she was the only one of the friends here the other girls liked. They bestowed great praise on

107 James Bruce of Killyleagh, Co. Down, father of Mrs Mussenden, tutor to Lord Castlereagh, died 2 June 1783; all information about the Bruce family comes from William Bruce Armstrong, *The Bruces of Airth and their cadets* (Edinburgh, 1892).

108 Jane (d.1817), daughter Thomas Greg; later suspected of involvement with the United Irishmen; lived mostly in Bath from the 1790s; a friend and correspondent of Martha's.

109 William Todd Jones.

her, as of one of a much more enlarged mind and, in all matters, of a more liberal way of thinking, particularly in regard to her future settlement, which she always declared should never be in the least biased by fortune – even though her father's choice, to whom she is warmly attached, should recommend it. Jenny ended by observing she had heard from many that she was a very remarkably fine girl – and very much attached to ——. Here I must take you down by naming Will Saurin.¹¹⁰ This supposition I afterwards found she gained from the Mussen[dens] who said it was plain, and that she had had that partiality from her infancy. They gave him a great character both as to head and heart, but did not seem to think [he] had any thoughts of M[argaret] – thus far said Jenny. I know not whether this is a subject you are now interested in, or what you plan concerning it, but if it is of any importance, and that you have any thoughts of writing to her (which from something in your last, I suspect), I wish you would write to me on this subject and put your letter under cover to Mrs Crombie, directing her to keep it until I call for it.

No person here enquires so often and so particularly about you as Mr Maxwell. He appears your warm friend. The affair between young Pottinger and G[race] Wallace¹¹¹ is said to be off – after coming to settlements. It is not well known why, but as he is ordered abroad it is supposed her friends will not consent and upon them her fortune, which will be a good one, depends. She talks of going to Portugal this summer – her brother John is here.

Answorth¹¹² is dying in a consumption. There would be a comfortable employment – the Duke of Portland,¹¹³ prime minister, and Jemmy Adair – a bl——d. Remember to send the little trunk. Was the recipe for ginger wine what you wanted? You will surely think soon of spending a day in Belfast. If I should go to Bristol I cannot dispense with it. An assembly or coterie night perhaps would be the best for seeing many friends, but when Lord Donegall comes they will be fullest, at present they decline. How does your mare perform at present?

69 [undated], franked by Thomas Dawson¹¹⁴

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [61]

Dear Matty, The chief reason of my silence has been the daily expectation of Mrs Read's illness, and an anxiety about the event of it which really rendered me unable to write, until I could tell you of it. It is at length happily over, and unless something unlucky happens, she seems in a fair way of speedy recovery. I have no other engagement of a similar kind, and none of any kind (except a child or two in the measles) which would prevent me from seeing you, as you and the family must suppose I have earnestly wished to do almost from the day that I left them. I am sorry you

110 William Saurin (1757-1839), barrister, son of Rev. James Saurin, vicar of Belfast, cousin of the Mussendens, later Attorney General for Ireland (*DNB*).

111 Probably Henry Pottinger of Mount Pottinger; Grace Wallace later married George Joy.

112 Presumably James Answorth, collector at Strangford, Co. Down, who died 24 April 1783.

113 3rd Duke of Portland (1738-1809), Prime Minister from April – December 1783 (*DNB*).

114 Thomas Dawson, MP for Co. Armagh 1776-83 and Sligo 1783-90.

cannot receive this letter tomorrow as this is not a post day. Is your jaunt to Bristol by the advice of Haliday and Mattear? Let me know immediately what is fixed with regard to the place you go from. Can there be such a hurry as to render it absolutely necessary for you to set out from Dublin? I shall come down on any day, and would willingly set out to-morrow, but I hope to hear more particularly from you or on Wednesday at farthest. I think my mother might have written a line or two concerning you, for surely it is not possible my silence should be so misinterpreted as you say. Sam might have written a line.

I have no news of any kind. A son of Mr Carrothers in Dublin who stays at Mr Pollock's has been ill in the measles. I attended him and he is now recovered. Mrs R[ead], after a short and not very difficult labour, got a daughter, but she was very ill some time after the delivery. Her husband and friends seem well enough pleased with my behaviour, and it will I hope form a fortunate introduction. I trust that I shall hear somewhat from you tomorrow with regard to your intended journey. I am very anxious to know if the physicians have thought it necessary. There is no doubt a prospect that the change of air, the journey, not to mention the Bristol water itself, may be of happy effect. Is there none going but Nancy and you? This will be hard on you. I hope, dear Matty, you keep up your spirits as well at least as you have done, and I trust in God that there is no reason for despondence. WD

70 Saturday, franked Thomas Dawson

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [78]

If nothing extraordinary intervenes I shall certainly see you about twelve o'clock on Monday. I shall set out early in the morning. As it will be necessary to take a change of clothes if I go, George will accompany me and will carry the small box if I cannot get it sent by any other conveyance. The only patient I have had since I wrote is a child of Mr Glenny's to whom I was called the night before last, and it will I hope be sufficiently recovered of the measles to let me leave town on Monday. The course of visits to Mrs R[ead] is now over and I am free, though I hope none of Mr I. Corry's children may be attacked with this complaint in my absence as it is not unlikely that I may be desired to attend them. I shall call at Mr Davis's tomorrow to know if they have any commands. Miss Davis has been confined for some days past but she is now better. Mr and Mrs Corry leave town for Bath this evening and I have sent my opinion of his case to his consulting physician in that place. A five guinea fee from Mrs Carrothers on account of the care I took of her son who was indeed [of a] frame which could not well resist the force of the disease yet has ha[ppily] escaped.

Pollock told me when here, that from what he heard, Temp[leton's] business was much increased of late. This was to have been expected yet it cannot be said that I have done ill since I came, but when we meet I shall be more particular. I should like very much to see Belfast though I have no mighty inclination to be seen, and I hate the many empty salutations which I shall meet with. WD

71 Sunday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [79]

Dearest Matty, I received your most acceptable little note and if the weather be as bad tomorrow morning as it is this day I shall be obliged to defer my jaunt until Wednesday evening or Thursday morning. I fear Nancy is impatient that I should come and perhaps thinks that it is not proper at this season to delay any time in your proposed excursion. I shall certainly, without some cause of remaining here which I now very earnestly hope will not happen, I shall certainly see you on Wednesday but I will wait for the post and I beg you may write me a line. B[oyle] Moody requested that I might tell him when I went to Belfast as he wishes to go in search of a clerk to his meeting house – if he goes he will probably stay at the Kennedys and we shall return on Saturday morning. I think less of what you mention than you seem to do and when I see you I will tell you why. I am much afraid that my excursion may be prevented, but if so you shall hear from me immediately.

Is there to be a play on Friday? If this weather continues, it is not likely that Lord Donegall will arrive on Thursday but that is of little consequence. Mrs James Pollock and Miss Charlotte will go to Belfast on a visit to the Sinclaires the beginning of next week, but I shall not wait for them. Charlotte is a fine girl and I hope will meet with proper admiration among the Belfast beaux. I have been treated in her father's house with a civility and friendship for which I shall ever be most grateful. I sent the small box by a carman whom George knows and I suppose you will receive it tomorrow. I shall take any of the shirts which want mending and that often mentioned scarf and handband along with me. I thought the new meeting house was not to be opened until Lord Donegall's arrival. I think there might be a proper place found for erecting what is called a cenotaph to my father's memory. Whenever I can with tolerable conveniency, I shall propose doing it as it would take up no room, and rather be ornamental placed against the wall – no more suitable furniture for such places than these pious memorials of deceased pastors. WD

72 [May 1783] franked by Thomas Dawson

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO SAM MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [80]

Dear Sam, I took two places in the stage coach for Monday. It sets off from this at the inconvenient hour of two in the morning, and I fear they will be greatly fatigued by setting off again so soon after their arrival. However it cannot now be avoided but I think on that account they should take as much time to rest here as they can. The coach goes but on Mondays and Fridays. One other place was taken for a lady but the whole will probably be taken up up before Monday. I shall give them their dinner and my best wishes for their speedy return in health and happiness. Dear Sam, yours sincerely, W DRENNAN

73 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, NEWRY, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [406]

My dear Sam, We got into Newry safe and quite well at four o'clock. I have devoured a whole chicken and am now in Will's drawing room. Going into Banbridge a man came up to the chaise seemingly very desirous to speak to us, which the driver hindered by his whip. When we alighted, I asked if there was a returned chaise and though they said no, I suspected the man wanted us to offer one. I was right, but had to look for him as he durst not come to the house, where they told me the horses had rusted¹¹⁵ three times coming from Newry that morning and that they would not take us two mile. I heard so much the reverse from the other party, that finding self was the sole motive on both sides, I determined it should be my principle also on my journey, and determined to take the Newry chaise, which coming from the house the stage put up at, was ordered to be on the look out for us – by this we saved five shillings, and turn-pikes.

I am now going to bed, while you are preparing to spend the evening with your friend and bottle – I hate to say pipe, it sounds so feeble, and like an old man. Good night to you and your bedfellow – Nysa¹¹⁶ I mean. MM

74 [27 May, postmark]

MARTHA MCTIER, DUBLIN, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [82]

My dearest Sam perhaps expected to hear from me last night – but sick, sore, crammed and sorry, I arrived at the Man of War when the feelings of my body and Nancy's mind determined (as has been often the case) against my mother's purse. We quit the stage with a resolution if possible never to go into another, stayed at the Man of War all night, and took a chaise from that into Dublin where we arrived about eleven o'clock and drove to Mrs Bruce's¹¹⁷ where we found too much civility to get leave to go to any lodging and messages from all my old acquaintances to know how I was and had rested all night in a short time after they all arrived and most of them were engaged for the evening. I have left them for you but cannot write as I intended, in a lodging of my own.

I may say without a comp[limen]t that the day after I left you was the longest I ever spent. Before one o'clock we were stuffed into a coach where a drunken gauger, a pretty young but not very prim Quaker, and an old gentlewoman had taken possession of the front seats, and a poetical old maid joined us in the back which immediately began to work [upon]¹¹⁸ me in the usual manner. The gauger would not give up his seat and I would not accept of the lady's, which being next him I thought worse, as he could not support himself and every whiff of his breath

115 i.e. had become restive, shied.

116 Nysa was a family pet, probably a lap dog.

117 Rose Bruce, mother of Drennan's friend William, and widow of Rev. Samuel Bruce of Wood Street, Dublin.

118 Word supplied.

answered the end of hot water. He recovered however after a sleep the little wit nature had lent him, and good humour enough to give me his seat, but I was set a going and but when the good old woman let my head rest in her lap had little respite. We got tolerable sleep last night and this day I am quite well but greatly vexed to find it quite an uncertain matter when the ship sails – nay whether it will be before the Chester fair. This has made me very uneasy but I shall know more of the matter tomorrow. They all here rejoice in the suspicion, for it is no more, that she will not leave Dublin these six weeks. This would be most distressing to me. I hoped not to hear from you here but now beg you may write to me immediately. I had several little things to amuse you but these people brought upon my account takes me from you. MM

75 Wednesday noon [28 May, postmark]

MARTHA MCTIER, DUBLIN, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [81]

After being in bed without sleep until near one o'clock, we began our conflict about the trunks with the coachman. We succeeded in having them put into the boot but while we gained this point we lost the front seats, which were taken up by a young female Quaker, a very drunk puppy, a gauger, and a decent old woman who proposed the man should resign his seat to me – but in vain. I therefore soon begun the old practise of vomiting but after a sleep had a little recovered, the man he grew civil and gave me his seat from which I received no benefit, but continued as ill as on shipboard till we got to the Man of War where we parted with the coach, stayed all night, and came into Dublin after breakfast yesterday – where I am now with a bad head after a total want of sleep. Bruce had not taken a lodging but received us at his mother's with the utmost friendship. Here we are to stay, I fear much too long, at [*sic*] the captain of the ship has deceived him in regard to his sailing, the time of which is I fear quite uncertain.

Bruce does not look well, much thinner than when in the North and pale. He has a cough too and I think I can observe, at least Nancy does, a slight shortness of breath – do not however take any notice of this. I found from his mother you have surprised them all by your long silences. He also mentioned it to me as what he could not account for. You are much to blame in this and sin against yourself particularly if you are in his debt, do not let that make you silent. You will not hear from me again until I get to Bristol so God bless you and make you happy. MM

76 Monday [2 June 1783]

MARTHA MCTIER, DUBLIN, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [83]

Monday morning and we are not yet on board. The ship however has gone down a little way and this afternoon they tell us we are to sail. The family are at present

in a little hurry, having determined this morning to send Sam Bruce¹¹⁹ with us. He is delicate, was ill in spring and obliged to go to the country, which removed all his complaints except a slight cough which seems to make Will (the father of the family) uneasy and as his brother is well fixed in Bristol it makes this jaunt particularly easy and agreeable to him. There are a great many genteel people going and if we can get over our sickness I shall enjoy it well enough – but very little there can be which will afford pleasure unless one has a sharer in it and that I despair of. Oh my dearest Sam, think of some spot again¹²⁰ I return where I may shield myself from the constant prospect of melancholy and discontent, and as winter will be then approaching any poor little cabin would not do for an indifferent state of health – but if Castle Hill, New York,¹²¹ or any such place could be had without a great obligation or any rent – I would wish you to think of it, for I do not allow myself to hope anything from A. Stewart.¹²²

W. Bruce got a letter from you today, which as he did not show it to me, I suppose only conveyed some civil words – these and much more are due to him. When he left the North it lost a prize it will never regain – warm in the cause of religion and virtue, an enthusiast in his attachment to the dissenting interest, his whole study is to make himself useful to it, for which he has formed a regular system worthy of his good sense and uncommon in his time of life. He has introduced the practise of catechizing in his meeting house and in such a manner as evidently proves its good effect. I heard a number of young folks, all gentlemen's children, examined by him after the second sermon yesterday – it was Mears's¹²³ *Catechism* – he asked each one a different question, then desired them to give him their sense either of the question or particular terms in it, which many of them did in a very pleasing manner, but nothing could exceed his, and when on seeing one young lady at a loss he said, my love you are very hoarse and it's a long answer I shall pass you, I could almost have supposed him an angel. Moody¹²⁴ is an excellent preacher and Bruce is very happy in him – the former has yet £180 a year beside the King's Bounty,¹²⁵ £20 more, Bruce and [*sic*] £100 and the King's £20 – so young a man, so wisely, the zealous and disinterested friend of public happiness and private virtue I never saw and do believe is not to be equalled, yet nothing starched nor precise. He has attended me everywhere though he blames the clergy much for giving up so much of their time to amusement. He is not very well, his mother wanted him to go to Bristol with us, but he seems to long to be in the North and proposed to go next week. I wish you could take some little tour with him that would amuse you.

Margaret gave me a wrong direction for Gordon¹²⁶ but Bruce will take her silk and the needle for W.M.¹²⁷ All I hope went off with eclat at the new house yesterday and

119 Sam Bruce, younger brother of William Bruce, founder of firm of Bruce and Symes of Dublin, died unmarried, 1835; another brother, Robert, had settled as a merchant in Bristol.

120 Against, i.e. ready for.

121 Castle Hill was a house in the townland of Ballycloghan, in the parish of Holywood, near Dundonald; New York was presumably a similar property.

122 Alexander Stewart, brother of the future Lord Londonderry, from whom Sam was hoping to get an agency.

123 Rev. John Mears (?1695-1767), Presbyterian minister (*DNB*).

124 Rev. John Moody (1742-1813), Presbyterian minister at Strand Street, Dublin.

125 i.e. the *regium donum*, a payment by government to the Presbyterian clergy.

126 ? David Gordon.

127 Possibly Margaret's uncle, Will Mitchell.

this day is favourable for your review. Going to the Rotunda, Nancy, being as usual far behind us, perceived a lady rapping at a door who she believed to be Mrs Seawright and going up to her found she was right. She told her she was so far on her journey to Belfast, asked her if she was Nancy Drennan still, and turned an exulting look to her spouse. This is Nancy's story, but as Sally has never called on any of her relations here they insist Nancy has been in a dream. Mrs Dun[n]¹²⁸ appears to me to be with child. I bantered her which she courted – and did not deny it. A new parliament will certainly be called in a very few weeks. If Margaret chooses to be in the fashion let her play pools of commerce, for all her lustrings¹²⁹ buy high-priced washing gowns, and wear as much yellow of all shades as she can purchase. If I should stay a week here now I suppose I shall get no letter. I will keep this open till just before we sail.

Five o'clock in the afternoon – just going on board. God forever bless you.

77 Saturday, 14th June [1783]

SAM MCTIER, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, HOT WELLS, BRISTOL [84]

Rejoice my dearest Matty, and let Nancy join in thanks to the ruler of all events that your dear Will is in the land of the living, he is now out of danger recovering from a fever; I suppose you'll not be satisfied unless I give you a particular account. I shall then, as well as I recollect, give you a journal of our proceedings.

Thursday 5th June near one o'clock, your mother received two letters and she had too much politeness to Mrs Hamilton McC,¹³⁰ who stayed about an hour, then your mother went out to enjoy her letters by herself. She very soon returned in great agitation crying that Will was dangerously ill of a fever. This alarming letter came from Mr John Pollock, telling her that he was seriously ill and refused any assistance from the faculty, and pressing her to come immediately and see him properly taken care of, at present he was in the hands of unfeeling strangers. Dr H[aliday] was abroad, Dr M[attear] so engaged with Mrs Holmes¹³¹ and Rainey that he could not possibly go with us. I then sent an express to Dr H enclosing him Mr P's letter and requesting that he would as soon as possible meet us at Newry. About three o'clock, we left Belfast and did not get here until one, too late to go to Mr Pollock's, where we had a pressing invitation, such civility as we have received from them I never saw. I went immediately to W[ill]'s lodgings but what George told me of him made me determine not to hazard the disturbing him that night, therefore returned to your mother at the inn where we got about four hours in bad beds.

Friday 6, I went early to Dr Kennedy who seemed to apprehend little danger. I then visited W[ill] who was very angry at seeing me and said that he would soon be well enough. I found him very restless and full of anxiety, he could not bear the least

128 Jenny (1748-1822), daughter of Thomas Bateson of Orangefield, married John Dunn the previous year.

129 A glossy silk fabric, or a dress made of such.

130 Probably Mrs Hamilton McClure, sister of the future Earl of Caledon.

131 Mrs James Holmes, and Henrietta Maria, wife of William Rainey of Greenville.

covering more than a sheet. I then went for your mother. He was quite angry when I told him of her, and cried with vexation. After sitting by him for some time it did not require Dr H to tell you that he had very bad symptoms. About ten o'clock the Doctor arrived and upon his first visit declared he thought [him]¹³² very dangerously ill. This day he got several doses of James's Powders,¹³³ and continued all day much the same way. This night I sat up alone with him, your mother on the floor in his closet, where she slept very sound. This was the seventh day of his fever and he was so weak that I was obliged to lift him three times to the close stool and again into bed, never was frightened as this night when he very nearly fainted quite away in my arms. All this night he raved a little and from short broken sleep he always awoke with the most dreadful agitation. You may have some idea of it when I tell you that your worst sleep was sound and refreshing compared with his.

Saturday. This day Dr H called away fifty-four miles off, promises to return on Monday. Will during the day continues the same way, the doctors both have a very bad opinion of him, all night raving and worse.

Sunday. What a melancholy object poor Will is this day, shouting with pain and trembling so that in the drawing room I hear his teeth gnashing together. We have a nurse-keeper to assist us, George and I can do no longer without one and your mother is so affected that she is of little use. He purges greatly without being sensible of it. We have terrible work watching [*sic*] and cleaning him, not the smallest trifle can he do for himself, even when we lifted him to the close stool G[eorge] or I were obliged to wipe for him.

Monday. This was the most melancholy day I had, as there did not appear to me the least prospect of his recovery, but a near one of his death. His raving came near an outrage, which I dreaded, he suffered greatly; happy for your mother that she is deaf, the only comfort I now attempt to give her is to cry heartily with her. Oh my Matty, how I suffered when I thought of you and the consequence when this impending misfortune should fall on you. Yesterday I wrote to Bruce to tell you, and two long letters to yourself which I find you did not get.

Tuesday. Will rather worse, Kennedy proposes calling Templeton to which I objected thinking that Dr H would certainly be here this day, but K says the evening may be too late and he wishes much for assistance. I sent as soon as possible an express to Lurgan sixteen miles off for Dr Law.¹³⁴ I never was so glad to see H as this evening, but was overcome so by it that I could not speak. He this day bid us prepare for the worst. Will this night not worse, James's Powders repeated three or four times and purges him greatly, without his seeming sensible of it. Dr Law came here before eight this morning of Wednesday. I immediately raised the other doctors, the consequence of their consultation was more powders and wine, about eleven o'clock, Law told me had had seen people recover that were as bad as he, this itself was comfortable. Dr Haliday now insists upon taking my place and my going to bed, where I had not been for the three last nights past. I slept till seven in the

132 Word supplied.

133 Dr Robert James (1705-76), physician, patented a powder for the treatment of fevers (*DNB*).

134 Dr John Law of Lurgan who later moved to Dublin and died in 1809.

evening and found then his legs blistered and the doctors' opinions all favourable. This night he slept some, his raving not quite so violent and his anxiety greatly abated.

Thursday. The doctors declare him recovering and consent to eat a beefsteak with me at the tavern, when we took a very hearty bottle. Will slept well all this night and Friday the doctors leave us, this day too he slept through and throughout he just opens his eyes and takes a drink then falls over, he continued so all night. Now I am come to the day on which I am writing and a happy one it is. He this day took some tea and bread and butter, the second time he has eat anything since we came here, he still sleeps a great deal which is meat and drink to him. Here ends my journal but I have heard [?some matters] of your mother and him that will make you laugh when we meet. When will that be my dear Matty? Your mother and I had a doleful journey and painful attendance, but tis now nearly over and we are both as well as ever we were. She thanks God that I did not go with you and so do I, for here I have been of more use. We shall stay here until he is fairly afoot and able to go abroad. I don't know what would have come of him before we came if it had not been for George, who is an aff[ectionate], faithful, handy servant as ever I saw. You can hardly have an idea of our situation in a lodging where the landlady would not allow her servant even [to open] the door, and George and I obliged to run from the room where he lay [—] and many there were, she let your mother lie two nights on [the floor] though she had a press bed in the house. She now sleeps [—] in it in the room over Will's drawing room, his closet she was obliged to quit the third night, not being able to stand his piercing cries. For two days her constant salutation to me was (when I came from his room to her), don't deceive me, but tell if it is over.

I shall leave this unfinished till tomorrow before the post goes out, but as postage is costly you must not expect frequent letters from me. J. Bruce¹³⁵ is dead but I hear nothing of A.S.¹³⁶ I have not written to the Doctor since I left home, tomorrow probably I may.

My lovely Matty, I have just finished a comfortable pipe and tis near one. Will continues in a happy sleep. What a blessed change, if you had seen him in the deplorable condition that I was a constant witness to for two long days and nights, lying on his back without being able to move either hand or foot and his under jaw so fallen that he could with difficulty close his lips upon the strop of a tea pot to wet his mouth. I am sure there is not a friend he has that would not have been happy to have him in as good a state of health as you are. Ought not this to be a lesson to us all to show our trust in that best of all beings who has been so kind in this instance? Can we do it better than by a resignation that will show itself at least in the appearance of being content? I wish our dear Nancy would consider this, and also that your health in some measure depends upon her being so, I'm confident it would tend more to your good than all the waters in Bristol or any medicine than can be prescribed for you. I sit up till a little after two to give Will a powder to prevent costiveness and shall

135 James Bruce of Killyleagh, died 3 June 1783.

136 Alexander Stewart.

rise in time to answer a very affectionate letter I received this evening from Bruce – good night.

Will has had a happy night and is now certainly out of danger. Until he is able to go abroad your mother and I will stay with him. This is a disappointment to Mr Haliday but I can't help it, he must do the best he can. Your mother is beginning to be as inquisitive who every one is that passes, as at Donegall Street. Since I came here she has often surprised me. Think of her several times laughing very heartily at what W said when raving. I remember once he wanted to make his water and I was holding the urinal to him, when he insisted his ——— was not near it. I told him it was right enough, in that you be sure said he, and your mother burst into a fit of laughing. He cursed poor George most terribly but he always paid attention to me. When he was very uneasy with his blisters and I was making excuses about the apothecary, he told me often we were all great liars and wondered no one would tell him a word of truth. I have just received a letter from Sally enclosing yours to your mother, which my aunt¹³⁷ got, opened, read, and then locked it up, until by accident Betty heard she had it. Ever yours, S MCTIER

78 17 June 1783

DR ALEXANDER HALIDAY, WHITEABBEY, TO SAM MCTIER, NEWRY [85]

Dear Sam, I should have acknowledged your very acceptable note sooner but I waited in expectation of one still more full and satisfactory from Dr Kennedy – but I have waited in vain – perhaps our letters are fated to be long on the road. One which I had scribbled from Hillsborough, on my way home from my first visit, did not reach him till I was again in Newry, on my second. However your intelligence precluded all uneasiness, or at least alarm, for the want of some from him, and I rely on it that our friend goes on creeping to health – strides are not to be expected. I suppose he is now taking the bark in some shape or other, to brace his weakened frame and guard him from the danger of a relapse. It was worth Will's while to have fever for the sake of those unaffected testimonies of regard his situation drew from the good people both in Newry and Belfast. Give my love to him and Mrs Drennan. I hope she has recovered her spirits without experiencing any injury from her anxiety or her fatigue. It is too soon to look for advices from Bristol. I suppose you will not think of leaving Newry till Mrs Drennan is at liberty to accompany you. Lord Donegall and his suite are I understand to pass through Newry tomorrow – not to return to his faithful and loyal subjects at Belfast.

I am here attending Dick Bateson¹³⁸ in a fever not dissimilar to the Doctor's¹³⁹ – equal weakness and restlessness but less anxiety – frequent droppings of blood from the nose, which is no promising appearance. I had found two notes from him on

¹³⁷ Sam's aunt may have been Mrs McTier, widow of James McTier, who died in 1789; Sally (c.1734-1820) and Betty (c.1731-1811) were his sisters.

¹³⁸ Richard, son of Thomas Bateson of Orangefield, died 1 July 1783, aged 28.

¹³⁹ i.e. Drennan's.

my former return from Newry, one telling me that he was ill, and a subsequent one of the next day countermanding the call as he thought himself well again. He went imperfectly through the business of the review, the fatigue of which, and cold he was exposed to afterwards in looking from an open window at the mock fight, probably have occasioned his illness. I did not see him till yesterday.

You will see by the paper we are to have two theatres so they must build a second at Newry on the principle of not being out done. J. Holmes (who is just returned from Bristol) and J. Ewing¹⁴⁰ build the one for Atkins¹⁴¹ – that is the shell for a certain rent; but the manager is to finish the inside. I hear H. Moore is going to America – that would be wise and therefore I don't believe it. Adieu! A HALIDAY

79 Wednesday to Friday, 20 June [17]83

SAM MCTIER, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, HOT WELLS, BRISTOL [86]

Lest my dear Matty should be uneasy, I sit down some days sooner than I intended to write you a further account of Will, who is recovering as well as you could wish. He is however grown very positive and cross and I fear will be troublesome in his recovery, if however his head had recovered its proper tone so that he would be sensible of his own situation, which he is not at all as yet, he will then see the necessity of caution and be easily managed. At present he rejects all sort of slops and his constant cry is for solids, which he says are the only things that will give him strength. I do believe he would eat any kind of flesh meat every hour of the day. He sat up an hour and half this morning, drank a cup of tea and took a little bread and butter. He dislikes bread and would eat flesh without tasting it. He had hardly swallowed the tea when he insisted upon having some broth, was so very pressing and uneasy for it that we were obliged to indulge him, with difficulty we got him persuaded to go to bed without eating. His tune is quite changed with me, he now says I want to starve him and swears to it, but when he was ill it was constantly, my dear Sam. My time here is now beginning to be a little heavy and we are both wishing for home. Before I leave this however, I will if possible have Will removed to another lodging, for his landlady here is worse than a brute. We dine today at Mr Pollock's, tomorrow at Davis's, every day we have an invitation at the former Miss Pollock's,¹⁴² a friendly affectionate girl as can be, and your mother has found out that Will is not indifferent to her but this is a profound secret – she is of that good kind that feels for everyone and is a friend to all, her attention to us has been uncommon.

Thursday. I have been prevented sending this off today by Bruce who is so far on his road. I think he looks very well. Last night I made nurse steal a march upon him and, when he was dozing, gave him a glyster¹⁴³ which he was in great need of. It had the desired effect and this day his head is quite clear, he has sat up more than three

140 John Ewing (c.1736-1812), Belfast merchant, shipowner and banker.

141 Michael Atkins, actor and theatrical manager, died in 1812, aged 66.

142 Probably Mary Pollock (1752-1831), wife of Isaac Corry the elder.

143 An enema.

hours without being much fatigued, in a few days he will be in the drawing room. Dr H told me before he left this that Will probably might at times rave a little until he was recovered. Yesterday I had a letter from [him],¹⁴⁴ R. Bateson in a fever now engages him at White Abbey, I fancy he would willingly pay the postage of a letter from you, it would be proper to show your gratitude. Tell him also particularly about yourself and how the water and place agrees with you, it will get you an agreeable answer. How does your forehead look? But keep up your flesh plump and round and I am easy about it, I can cover it with your night-cap. When shall I see it on you and have an opportunity to taking my dear Matty in my arms and perhaps teasing her? A. Stewart left London on Wednesday was eight days, I suppose he's home by this. In my next I'll tell you his determination but don't expect to hear soon again from me, it shall be from Belfast. The post does not leave this till tomorrow, I shall therefore bid you adieu till then, that I may tell how Will slept. Your mother is in as good health and spirits as ever I saw her.

Bruce and I had a most comfortable pipe last night *tête à tête*. Will slept very well and this morning is finely [*sic*], I think he'll soon write you a letter. Be cautious in giving your advice. Your secret I found by accident but tis as safe as if you had trusted me with it.

To yourself – Never, my own Matty, had my affection for you a fairer trial than since I came here and I find it as strong as ever. Oh my Matty how I do love you. I love Will too, but sometimes you have hurt me by showing too evident a partiality for him. I would not have anyone rival me in your affection, not even Will. How is Nancy and how does the water do with you? Be careful in following the directions the Doctor gave you and be very particular when you write to me, I think I have a claim on you for it. After this you must expect only half a sheet from me, I wish we were this moment under a whole one. Yours my dear Matty, SAM MCTIER

80 26 June [1783]

SAM MCTIER, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, AT MRS ANDREWS, HOT WELLS, BRISTOL [87]

Once more, my Matty, I write from this place. Will, I expect, will be out tomorrow or next day, and next week your mother and I shift our bob¹⁴⁵ to Belfast. He is every day growing stronger and I don't doubt but this attack will add a vigour to his constitution that before it was a stranger to; I have had great difficulty in keeping him in any bounds and your mother and he for two days kept me as cross as possible and you know I would not hide it. Will however now acknowledges that he eat too much and was one day the worse for it.

This evening I go in pursuit of a new lodging and before I leave this will see him removed to it. Our Newry jaunt is now near a happy end and I say no more of it. A. Stewart¹⁴⁶ has been here canvassing these two days. This one I waited on him and

¹⁴⁴ Word supplied.

¹⁴⁵ i.e. tail.

¹⁴⁶ Stewart was canvassing as a candidate for Newry; he inherited an estate in Kilrea, Co. Londonderry, from his father, and subsequently purchased an estate in Ards, Co. Donegal, and land in Co. Down.



The family of Thomas Bateson of Orangefield:
 the girls are Jenny (Mrs John Dunn) and Frances (Mrs Hans Mark Hamill);
 the boys are Thomas (1752-1811), Richard (c. 1755-83), and
 William, of Belmont, Co. Down.

had a long conversation with him about this agency which is still undetermined. He told me that he was under such obligations to Patterson for managing a purchase and some other affairs for him at Kilrea that he must give him the preference, if he makes it an object much to be wished, but that he had not yet made any application to him and did not know whether he would. If he did not he would be very glad to serve me. He was very candid and friendly with me. I have written to Dr Mattear begging that he and Dr Haliday would immediately join in a pressing letter in my behalf, which I could not urge. Whether he has any chance of succeeding here is hard to say, some people say he has a very good one.

Yesterday Margaret enclosed yours to your mother. I am longing much for your next. She says fevers are very common in Belfast. Poor Richard Bateson is at White Abbey past all hopes of recovery, the doctors have pronounced his death inevitable. It will be a great affliction to his father. He was an innocent harmless lad. I spent one evening at the tavern with Moody. I think him a very great coxcomb and an empty fellow that does not live as a clergyman ought. Upon our leaving Belfast, your mother said, Sam, you need not put any money in your pocket for I have taken plenty. However I put twelve guineas in mine and since I came here I found her stock was three, I don't believe it will all do and Will is crying out every day that it will cost as much as Bristol. He is not at all extravagant and you ought to be as good economists as you decently can. How are you my dearest Matty? Do you ride every day and does the water agree well with you? That is, do you think it does any good, for harm was never apprehended. If it does you no good surely you need [not]¹⁴⁷ stay long. This is the twelfth day to you at the wells and by the time you get this you will be there three weeks. When you may judge of their effects write me fully, and put any soft whisper you have for me at the end by itself that I may read to your mother without any seeming interruptions and I'll do the same. If it were not the expense of postage I would write to you every day and like dearly well to receive one every day from you, tis the greatest pleasure I have. I would give up one pipe in the evening for it for every one I take near two beside your mother. This is Wednesday and the post does not leave this till eleven tomorrow till then bless ye.

Thursday, a letter from Belfast, poor Bateson is dead. I pity his father, this is the first child he ever lost.

Husband's corner

Now my dearest Matty, I have two requests to make and I do in answer to this expect your promise to grant them. The first is, that you never mention to Will my knowing what has passed between you with regard to M[argaret] J[ones], and the second is, that you be as little as possible an adviser in this matter. It does not entirely accord with my feelings, and it would hurt me exceedingly that you should be concerned in any affair that would not bear the strictest scrutiny of the nicest honour, and I acknowledge to you it is a doubt with me whether this would. Any attempt whilst the father¹⁴⁸ lives appears to me great folly but on this I have done. This the

¹⁴⁷ Word supplied.

¹⁴⁸ Her father Valentine Jones died in 1805, aged 94.

third letter I have written to you from this since you left Ireland giving an account of Will's fever, my last I wanted him to direct. Be thankful that he can do this so well, tis more than ever I expected. This day I think he is making strides to health and sometime next week will certainly see us in Belfast. I failed last night in getting him a lodging but this day will try others. Your mother won't write till she gets home nor shall I, another, unless we stay here longer than this day sennight¹⁴⁹ which will make a month in this nasty hole.

Margaret writes me that the meeting house was not much crowded, that Mr Crombie gave a very fine sermon and was never better heard. Mr Haliday is gone home and I saw him only one day, the day before I left home, half a year's rent for him which put me very nearly out of his debt. He can get nothing done with Moore, is forced to bring an ejectment. Ever yours, SAM MCTIER

81 Thursday, 3 June¹⁵⁰ [1783]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BRISTOL], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [88]

Though not a little depressed in spirits when I left Dublin, how ignorant were we of the impending misfortune which hung over us, in that violent disorder with which you were even then attacked – we have had much to be thankful for and may bless God that our state of anxiety was of no longer duration, I mean in regard to the danger arising from that never-feared fever. That worst of terrors is over but still some tender fears remain. Though Sam has been comfortably particular he did not tell me whether it was a fever caught (and perhaps yet to be given) by infection – yet so far it appears to have been our happiness that my mother and he were with you, however you might at first think otherwise.

I think everything seems to have been happily conducted for you, and even the little circumstances of Templeton's not being called was (I think) agreeable. Sam's affection would I am sure lead him to do all in his power for you, and I hope he succeeded in what I know he would wish, to be to you a comfortable and acceptable friend. His promising to stay with you until he saw you perfectly recovered has been pleasing to us. God knows poor Nancy wanted every comfort and much does she wish you could perfect your recovery in this place. Great care and caution will for some time be very necessary for you to take and I believe you will take it, therefore I shall not enforce it. Months of good weather still remaining, and your horse, will I hope brace and confirm you perhaps in better health than you have yet enjoyed. As I hope there is no reason for your spirits being bad, I beseech you not to let them fail you. How we long to have a letter from yourself, expecting then to know all your feelings, whether any unfortunate consequence has happened from your confinement in your professional line, and many other circumstances which tomorrow's post may bring us – as Sam led me to hope you would write soon.

149 i.e. this day week.

150 *recte* July.

I cannot say this place gives me much pleasure and own I long greatly for home – yet am so afraid of disappointing my mother and having all the blame fall on myself for doing so, that I dare not leave it. I am at present very well, I have been free of the headache. The water does me no harm but my rest ever since I left you has been wretched. I hope it now begins to return. Nancy drinks the water and it has given her an appetite which she has long wanted. It is impossible that any friends could have behaved better, with more kind polite attention, and in every respect been more acceptable than Robert and Sam Bruce, and their having twice had letters which particularly mentioned you on days we had not any, gave them a power of making us happy – than which nothing seems more congenial to their nature. You owe that family much, and to be esteemed by such a family is an honour. I am now at a loss to say which of the three young men I admire most – there is an independent spirit, a determined integrity, a manly sense, joined to a softness and courtesy of manner, that I never saw in such strong lines in youth before and even here nor yet in Dublin did I see any equal them in appearance. Yesterday we spent a very agreeable day with them at Bath which far exceeded my expectations and gave even Nancy pleasure, therefore afforded me a very new one. We four took a very handsome coach, set off at seven in the morning, breakfasted and dined in elegance, paid for it, saw everything in that delightful place best worth seeing, was tempted at every corner and one of us, but wise and youthful, Sam resisted. We did not leave it until eight at night nor without a desire to revisit it. The variety of temptation to the purse I hoped would have saved it, for it was so great one might have been at a loss what to take. I saw many cottons new in the patterns and very pretty, and which I thought would have pleased my mother, but went on trying for better until we left all behind us.

By writing this you see I hope my mother is either with you or that you will immediately put this under cover to Belfast, as I leave so much time between my letters as to make one of them acceptable to you all. The ship we came over in sails for Dublin next week. Sam Bruce will go in her because he told Mr Rainey¹⁵¹ he would and if we stay behind it will be much against my inclination. There is another to sail in some time but when is uncertain. Any company from this we need not expect, our expense growing both here and with you, the benefit still appearing chimerical. All these and many more reasons tend to my desire of returning with Sam Bruce – yet still I am undetermined, and as I have done much to please others and they still more to serve me, it would grieve me to do anything now that might even be imagined would defeat their purpose. In less than a week, it's probable I shall write our determination.

We were invited to tea at Bath by Mrs Nairac,¹⁵² a sister of Mr Corry's, who is much better and thinks he has received great benefit from the Bath waters. There is another patient of Dr Haliday's at Bristol, a Miss Harrison from the county of Down. She also thinks herself better but her disorder is so deceiving – and all here

151 Probably Thomas Rainey of Dublin, his uncle (LHL, Joy 10).

152 Rebecca, wife of John Nairac of Abbey Street, Dublin, died 1806.

try to deceive each other so much in regard to their complaints (a pleasant kind of politeness which I shall never experience from my friends) that little attention is to be paid to what a patient who is consumptive says of themselves. A young Irishman has yesterday married one of the first belles at Bath, a widow Wood. His name is Patrick, he is a cousin of Mrs Bristow's,¹⁵³ to her and the Hamiltons this may be a piece of news. We are just now going to drink tea at a little village called Ashton.

We are returned from it and a lovely little spot it is, surrounded by a country beautiful beyond my imagination, numbers of delightful little seats and gardens, my pleasure in viewing which was much hurt by a tasteless company and regret at not having [my] dearest Sam to enjoy it. As these little places were on [the side] of the river from the wells, many of them I dare say could be got at a low rent, its not being a fashionable situation. We met no one but fruit and flower girls returning from their market.

Thursday – Sir William Lothor¹⁵⁴ having twice politely offered to accompany us to a public breakfast and we twice refusing, this day we proposed going, he attended and paid for us. Here we met Mrs Nairac and Mrs E. Corry who came up to us immediately and spent the morning with us. We invited them to tea but they were engaged. They were very agreeable and Mrs Corry expressed great concern for your illness and obligation for the letter you had wrote with Mr Corry which had been of great service to them.

Sam Bruce was with us at breakfast. We sent him to our lodging when we thought the post was come in, Mrs Corry expressing a desire both to hear of you and from Newry. Sam did not disappoint me, and no attention he could bestow was ever so grateful as his remembrance of me since I came here – it is Sam McTier I mean, there is a long stupid letter on the road to him.

Poor D[ick] Bateson, how much rather would I have taken a lease of his life than yours, but his family never knew trouble before – ours I hope is for some time over. I wandered from a stupid party at Ashton that feared for their purses and sauntered into a churchyard. The first inscription I read ended with these words – Go, act thy part, I've finished mine, my lots today, tomorrows thine.

My dear Sam, I shall mind all your directions. Sam Bruce has got a call home and as he leaves us in a few days I fear our stay here must be prolonged – our chief expense being over Nancy seems to wish to continue some time longer. My mother will certainly write soon. MM

82 2 July [1783]

ANN DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, AT MRS ANDREWS, HOT WELL, BRISTOL [89]

My dearest M and N, Tomorrow I leave this place to which I came too in the utmost distress. W[ill] has recovered very slowly and his spirits low of course, which has detained us just a month, but God has given me great reason to rejoice and for ever to remember his compassion and goodness to me. What would have become

153 Presumably Rose (d.1806), wife of the Rev. William Bristow.

154 Sir William Lowther (1707-88), 1st baronet.

of me had not your husband been here, who has shown himself to me in a light I never beheld him before, never went to bed for nights together, and half ones, but in everything was a most affectionate nurse-tender and when we had reason to think all was over, was more given up to grief than myself, in short he has been a most comfortable friend, both to W and I, and many times have I thought God in his mercy ordered it so, for many are the things he has been necessary to me here, all my fear is your much in want of him with you. As Sam I suppose give you the full account of everything relating to W, shall say no more than he is a little like a petted child, but we laugh and scold him out of it, and now when my desire was to have few acquaintance, and no new ones, I am called upon by all the ties of gratitude to the family of the Pollocks for their unremitted kindness and attention to us, every day urged to dine, and butter and every kind of meat, jelly and broth, fit for W, made and sent over. Mrs Corry also most attentive sending jelly, strawberries, and sending her chaise and going with him herself to take the air. If you come home by Newry the least you can do is to wait on them and return your grateful thanks for the many favours conferred on him and me.

Mr Bruce breakfasted with us on his going to Belfast, thinks he is much thinner than he was, does not purpose to stay any longer than six weeks and in that time to ride about, he would not say so, but am sure it is for that he came down. Much work is going on here canvassing, and such mobs as are just under our windows from eight to twelve o'clock at night is surprising, but Sam says we will be just leaving it when the quarrelling and breaking of heads begins, the time (you know) he likes.

W has made me speak to his landlady about his going away and she is very eager for it. I was in hopes to have got him fixed before we left this and today believes if he likes it there is one will do. Mrs Maxwell says it is his servant she cannot put up with, and him he cannot part with, for never was one who did more for a master than he did and always (I think) does. Miss Mattear and Margaret came when the[y] heard of the letter I had received from Mr Pollock and put up my things for me and was most attentive, for indeed I was utterly incapable of doing anything for myself. All my clothes every stitch was on the green bleaching, Peggy with them, the[y] had to give me everything, no chaise to be got for here,¹⁵⁵ was obliged to beg Mr Hyde's to Hillsborough, and got such bad horses the last stage as stopped ten times and would not stir so did not get here until eleven o'clock at night, his lodging locked was obliged to stay at the inn that night with an aching heart. Sam sleeps at Mr Pollock's, the canvassing diverts him a little but he says nothing here is like Belfast. I tell him, nor no place under the sun, in his mind. He has waited on Mr Stewart twice, who has assured him if one Patterson (who is his agent for some other place belonging to him) does not request it, there is no other shall have it but himself. I will not seal this until the post comes in tomorrow as we intend not to set of from this in hopes of a letter and then we will decamp. God grant me good news from you and my happiness is complete. AD

155 Or, for hire.

Thursday, July 3rd

My mother asks me to add a few lines if I be able. I am just newly arisen from the dead after an interment (for such surely is a gloomy bed surrounded with three physicians, a surgeon, an apothecary and two nurses) which has lasted no less than five weeks on Saturday. I am gathering strength daily and my head is growing more clear and serene. We have impatiently waited for a second letter from you and the post is this moment come in without one, and my mother just going to set off with Sam for Belfast. I think without something extraordinary has happened we might have expected a weekly account of your health. Perhaps you are on your return. You cannot imagine the civilities which we all have received from the Pollock family for which I shall ever be most grateful, and as Sam was thinking about scarves and an oak coffin for me (with the approbation of the physicians) you may suppose it was not without reason that my mother and Sam took this journey, which to my great grief has been exceedingly expensive, but my mother seems contented and as it was necessary they should be here. They are just on the wing and desire me to add no more than that I am ever yours and Nancy's etc., WILLIAM DRENNAN

83 Belfast, 9-10 July [17]83

SAM MCTIER, BELFAST, TO MARTHA MCTIER, HOT WELLS, BRISTOL [90]

This day I received my Matty's letter, which I was longing much for, and yet it does not bring much satisfaction. I find you are still kept unhappy and have had a worse time of it than either your mother or I. Could you get a bed for yourself, in this particular don't mind expense. I'm sure both Nancy and you would sleep better asunder, and sleep is a very important step on the road to health; certainly Will can be no cause of uneasiness to any of you, so far from the fever hurting his constitution, there is the greatest probability that it will be stronger than ever. The day we left him he added a few lines to your mother's letter to you, that is now eight days and yet he has not condescended to write a scrap to your friends in Donegall Street, is this kind or proper? J[ames] Pollock came here from Newry yesterday and he says Will is perfectly well and looks already as well as ever he saw him. He, his wife and Miss Pollock, who have been at Mr Sinclair's ever since we went to Newry, are to spend this evening here. Your mother has had a sore time preparing for them, many a time she has wished for a dish of your new coined strawberries that are bigger than hen's eggs; don't be coming out upon us with such travellers' stories, I am afraid your mother will mention them to the company tonight. She had a visit from Brown today, who with his wife leaves this on Sunday. Many a time it was regretted that we could not have them one day whilst they stayed here, they are engaged every day. No part of your letter gave me more pleasure than what you say of the [*sic*] Bristol and yet my lovely Matty I would not have you hurry your departure from Bristol if there is the smallest chance of its adding to your health, or if it will even contribute

to your pleasure. Brown mentioned to your mother a Dr Thompson at Bath who prescribed for Mrs Brown and praised him, which is enough to make her request that you would consult him. I have delivered her message but shall not give any opinion other than that you ought to be very cautious about taking any medicine ordered by a man, a stranger to you and your constitution, and who has not the opinion of any of the faculty on your case. If you think of coming home soon, and that you could stand the travelling by land better than by sea, I'll meet you either at Liverpool or the port and thence tend you on board ship. I must confess, my dearest Matty, I am longing greatly for you but don't let this by any means hasten you, if there is any prospect where you are of either health or happiness.

I spent last night with Bruce. He went this morning to Broughshane from whence he goes to Giant's Causeway and round by Derry. He looks better than when I saw him in Newry and says he is perfectly well. Thank his brother for his kind letter. If ever it be in my power to serve any of the family I shall have great pleasure in doing it. I have been kept driving at the cards till I am tired and now I cannot see. This goes by tomorrow's post, goodnight.

A[lexander] S[tewart] behaved in so friendly a manner to me that I think he would not miss an opportunity of serving me, had I been in his situation I would have acted the same part. He is so engaged at Newry that I have not heard whether Patterson has yet written to him but I make no doubt of his accepting the agency. Mrs Davis¹⁵⁶ and James Holmes's family sent an apology yesterday, their infant tis thought cannot live. There have some letters passed lately between Lord Bristol and D[an] Mussenden. In the Bishop's last he tells Dan that the report current through that country is that he found him and Mrs Mussenden in a retired place in a very improper situation upon which he left Downhill, and proposes that Dan and his family should make him a visit there to put a stop to this calumny; Dan in answer told him that though his fortune was not great, he was and would be independent, that his lordship's temper was so capricious that he would not have any farther connection with him. As for any calumny, Mrs Mussenden's character was above it, but if his lordship wanted a stop put to it on his own account he had no objection to Mrs M and her aunt paying him a visit, but he never would. The Bishop rejected this foolish proposal and here ends all farther intercourse. He has however sent all the presents and written to Stewart Bruce¹⁵⁷ to draw on him every year for the allowance his father gave him. My own Matty, yours forever, SM

84 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [91]

Dear Sam, I blame myself for having delayed writing from day to day, in expectation of telling you that I had gotten a comfortable lodging. I am still on the look out and I am afraid it will be some days before I can get fixed. Maxwell sent me in his

¹⁵⁶ Holmes's mother-in-law.

¹⁵⁷ Stewart Bruce, later Sir Stewart (d.1841) was a brother of Mrs Mussenden.

account a day or two ago amounting to £18 10s 4d, four pound six shillings for hay included. I have borrowed twelve guineas from Mr Pollock and given him a bill on my mother payable on demand. His son James is in Belfast at present and if it be convenient, which I can scarcely suppose, the money may be paid to him. I gave the remainder myself which was all that I could spare from my lack lustre purse. I am daily acquiring strength and my appetite continues nearly as good as ever. I have been employed these some mornings past in paying visits to my acquaintance here, all of whom seemed glad to see me and no doubt there are good dinners preparing for me. I have not yet been asked to the Basin. The Pollock family are unremitting in their civilities.

I cannot imagine why you have not heard from Bristol. Not a letter has come here. I beg if one does come that you will enclose it to me immediately. Is Bruce in Belfast? I should be glad to know when he returns as I might, if he goes to Dublin soon, delay my visit to Arbuckle till his arrival.

Have you heard anything from A. Stewart? You might surely by this time. He remains here until the election. I spoke a few words to him yesterday, he was civil and asked for my mother. I suppose as O'Neill and Leslie¹⁵⁸ concur in their sentiments respecting the test they are to join: this will bear hard on the independent interest. Leslie's address is manly in style – a great deal of haughty servility in it at the same time. Tell my mother that she cannot know anything about the person she wants for some days. Yours sincerely, WD

85 Thursday

MARTHA MCTIER, DUBLIN, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [92]

My dearest Will, We landed here safe and well on Tuesday, just that day a fortnight from the one we sailed from Bristol quay – but for the particulars of our voyage, etc., etc., you must wait till we see you which will be either Monday night or Tuesday. We stay at Mrs Mussenden's¹⁵⁹ and this night and Saturday we spend with Mrs Siddons,¹⁶⁰ on Monday we leave Dublin, thank God with the prospect of meeting a dear brother. Poor young Plunket died yesterday of a fever, much lamented. It is not your friend the doctor but a surgeon, a very promising and amiable young man. I do not find his danger was apprehended until the day before he died. I have got a letter from Sam which had gone to Bristol and was returned here, though of an old date it was comfortable but could say nothing satisfactory of you, for though it was eight days from the time they had left you, you had never wrote to them. This was unpleasant and also the remark on it was strange indeed if you were able to hold a pen.

Adieu for a little – I sincerely wish the sea may never again divide us and only pray for tolerable health and contentment to be my blessings and the lot of those I love. MM

158 James Leslie (d.1796), of Leslie Hill, candidate for Co. Antrim.

159 Daniel Mussenden's mother lived in Dublin with several of his sisters.

160 Sarah Siddons (1755-1831), actress, was at Smock Alley, Dublin, on 21 June and played for twelve nights (DNB).

86 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO SAM MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [98]

Dear Sam, In my hurry last night to get my letter sent to you last night by the post who was just then blowing his horn, I foolishly forgot to enclose the one half of my epistle to the freeholders. I dare say you will now think it too long, but if you please to have it published as I wish in a flying sheet, it would not be agreeable to me to have any of it omitted. I do not think much of the whole, but it is the best the time would afford. I must be in great want of knowledge relative to the county and some personal facts would be useful, for mere general observation does not go down so well. It is long but they have now time to read it. If you do print it, I would wish some sent to Newry, and perhaps with particular directions as to the Corrys, Pollocks, Davis, A. Thompson, Captain Bell, Atkinson senr.¹⁶¹ I am indifferent about its publication in the Belfast paper.

My sisters will be here I suppose tomorrow, and if I can I shall have another short letter ready. But I am not certain for I have many petty avocations, if professional ones can be called so. Isaac Glenny¹⁶² after having been in a rapid recovery for six days past has suffered a relapse by some imprudence or other, and the business is all to be begun over again. Write to me when you think it necessary and believe me truly.

I shall write in a single sheet to save postage. Yours, W DRENNAN

87 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [99]

Dear Matty, I have been pretty much engaged for some days with young Glenny who relapsed twice but is I hope in a fair way of getting well. I have two or three other patients which will prevent my leaving town at this time. Bruce came here on Monday, slept with me that night and set off for Dublin on Tuesday morning. He appears highly satisfied with the Lisburn triumph and hoped it might promote the same cause in the county. He told me to my great surprise that Rainey Maxwell intended to vote for Lord Kilwarlin.¹⁶³ I can scarcely think it possible. Sidney¹⁶⁴ does not deserve much praise but if he had materials he would make a hand of Lord Hillsborough and his agents. B[oyle] Moody was saying a few minutes ago in the course of common conversation that when he waited on Lord H along with Mr I. Corry a few days ago, he found his lordship busily employed in reading some of the letters and great game no doubt he made of them. I have not seen the second or third and would be obliged to you for them. It might perhaps be of service to me to be known as the author by the Stewart party here, but would not at all with the

161 Captain David Bell of the Newry Volunteers; James Atkinson (1730-1815), of Newry and Mill Vale (*LGI*, p.17).

162 Probably Isaac William Glenny (1765-1841), son of William Glenny of Newry.

163 Lord Kilwarlin (1753-1801), eldest son of Lord Hillsborough, MP for Co. Down, 1776-93, later 2nd Marquis of Downshire.

164 Letters to the freeholders of Co. Down, written by Drennan as 'Sidney' (PRONI, D/531/6); Algernon Sidney or Sydney (1622-83) was a hero and martyr of the whigs.

other. They are indeed so unconnected with each other that the one would scarcely know anything that the others did. However I shall write no more. Sam has never written me a line from Downpatrick, and as I hear nothing, it would be agreeable to me to know how it goes on. Stewart will certainly find him useful and will no doubt remember it. But there are active electioneers from Newry there that will outwit him.

You may tell my mother that I got two guineas a few days ago from Mrs Ogle¹⁶⁵ in the Square for recovering a son of hers who had been seized with a fainting or rather a drunken fit while he was bathing. I go on at the usual rate of eight guineas a month and I suppose it will not either increase or decrease much. I ride and bathe every day and find myself the better of it. Tell me any news that may occur and believe me ever yours, WD

88 Saturday morn

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [93]

Dear Will, I wrote you a long letter on Thursday thinking there were franks in the house but not being able to find one I threw my letter in the fire.

Sam is yet at Down[patrick]. How long he will be there is hard to say, he meant only to put them in a method and then return. But I suspect everything there, on Mr Stewart's¹⁶⁶ side, is in such a state of unexpected confusion he will not get leaving them till all is over – no council, no cockades, no forty-shilling freeholders registered. Never was a more unexpected opposition, nor a man less fitted to combat it – resting secure on his integrity, which when it is attended with pride, or reserve, generally makes a man hated. He has from this very virtue, which led to a most capital error, put himself in fear of losing the honour he prized beyond every other, for no longer ago than Lord Shelburne's administration, he refused a peerage as an inferior honour to representing the county of Down. How he could ever have been tempted to come under any promise to such a man as Lord H[illsborough] is truly amazing, the doctors say, it was fourteen years ago, his lordship was not then the character he is now. Stewart, young and grateful for unexpected kindness from his lordship at a time when he was meeting with unfair, underhand treatment from the gentlemen of the county – that Lord H then writing to him he would support him with all his interest, though he foresaw in the end it would hurt the interest of his family – he, in the warmth of gratitude, wrote to his lordship that he never would oppose him, an answer full of madness and folly and which in my opinion he had no right to give, if ever he chose or hoped to be the servant or friend of the people – for to be so and befriend Lord H has during my time been thought incompatible.

His conduct deserves every fear of losing the election, but justice of him and to themselves forbid their allowing it to be the case, and was it not for the interested views of a few disappointed men, once called his friends, but who always hated him,

165 For the Ogle family see Crosslé notes (PRONI, MIC/338/11-12); unfortunately there is not sufficient detail in these letters to make firm identifications.

166 Robert Stewart (1739-1821), later 1st Marquis of Londonderry, MP for Co. Down, 1769-83 (DNB).

and who now represent this error to the common people as his having gone off to the court, his present conduct in adhering to that promise though at the risk of his dearest ambition – and while it serves the man who would see him and all of his religion and principles at the devil, must command admiration. He declared he could not act otherwise without forfeiting his word, though the old fox he passed it to declares he does not remember any such promise. To it however Stewart adheres, and how can any man desire or wish him now upon fear of losing his election to give it up?

The people in Belfast love to give – they readily give their purse and their names are always ready for any paper, none so absurd, that Mr Portis smiling and telling them he will take it as a personal obligation, but they will grace with their names. Never was so preposterous a proof of this as within these few [days,] the night of our members being elected, [a] well-judging and innocent mob chose to divert themselves by testifying their honest indignation to improper conduct by burning Crookshank,¹⁶⁷ Skeffington they spared – it seems the Counsellor is not yet so hardened as not to be much hurt by this affront. He felt it severely and in order to heal the wound, a paper was to be signed reprobating this daring outrage of an injured people upon a character so sacred – and true it is this same paper has been signed by most of our gentlemen. Can anything be more mean, more ridiculous, more inconsistent? I am greatly vexed this honourable reprimand to a few boys of some spirit is not be in the paper – no, it is only meant to be smuggled over to Lord D[onegall] and those who have not disgraced their names by signing are supposed to be principals in this very daring outrage. Had they printed it, I would have hoped to have seen the bonfire once more lighted. Lord D never can be of any good, nor get leave to be so while there are such a set of menials in this place. Did you hear his observation on Rowley¹⁶⁸ ‘that, he thought, they might as well choose poor cousin Hugh’. Sidney’s letters are much admired here. I heard him called a second Junius. My not having franks prevents my sending them. You might get plenty from Corry now. Bruce I hear is thought to be Sidney. I have not seen him nor suppose I shall not and I had many things to say to him but I shall always love and admire him. We will accept of your visit when you please but think this would not be pleasant time – no amusements – the town, the Joneses, all at Ballynahinch.

Bob Wallace¹⁶⁹ has married his w—, Grace just going to Portugal. Mr Bruce will be with you tomorrow.

89 Sunday afternoon, franked W. T. Jones

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [94]

You deserve a packet of enclosures, but unfranked, for neglecting to get them when so easily obtained. Sam came home at ten o’clock last night and is just now set off

¹⁶⁷ Counsellor Alexander Crookshank (1736-1813), later judge, and Henry Skeffington, later 3rd Earl of Massereene, were MPs for Belfast.

¹⁶⁸ Hercules Rowley (1737-96), MP for Co. Antrim 1783-91.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Wallace (1757-1817), later major, brother of Grace, married Margareta Duval.

again for D[ownpatrick] where he is kept in a most disagreeable situation and so much hurried, as to put it out of his power to write to you. He expects however 'twill be over on Tuesday or Wednesday as he thinks Ward¹⁷⁰ cannot hold out longer, nor can have any hope but that one of the parties will yet form a junction with him. Stewart never will – he continues firm, though solicited by both parties, and acts with a scrupulous delicacy and honourable candour which is often turned to his disadvantage by the other parties who both play all the game. One instance of which Sam told me was this. The other morning just as the court was meeting Lord Kil[war]l[i]n called at Mr Stewart's door and begged to speak with him for one instant. Mr Stewart attended him while he warmly solicited his joining him, told him to take care for that Ward's party had made him offer, with which if he complied, he, Mr Stewart, would lose the county – rather than break my promise was the answer. While this conference was going on in court they were waiting and crying out for Lord K and Mr S. But Sir John Blackwood publicly desired them to be patient – for that these two candidates were settling the whole matter by themselves. You may suppose the effect this would produce and will continue to do so on the listening and doubting multitude, for Mr S keeps it secret.

Not a gentleman appeared to propose him on the day of nomination – till Sam had to find out J. Crawford¹⁷¹ and beg of him to do it, who came to Mr Stewart and told him he heard it whispered that he was forming a junction with Lord K and if that was the case 'let him never go if he would propose him'. Mr S laid his hand on his breast and declared he neither had nor would enter into engagements with any party, but preserve a strict neutrality, to which he has adhered in a most honourable manner. His wife's solicitude robbed her of sleep for three nights and give[s] reason to be alarmed for her. His distress on this account took place of the county. If he comes in, it will be most honourably – by the people – in spite of a mean, crouching, envious gentry, many of whom have over shot themselves and fallen into contempt from all sides. Sir J[ohn] B[lackwood] stands foremost in this train.

Sam says Sidney is much talked of. He is supposed to be Haliday, Bruce and Crombie. The letter on a test was read in all the meeting houses. I suppose you saw Sidney *alter*. I think it very poor and part of it I do not understand yet I suspect it to be Dr H's – Mrs Down I know was – strange that that man never can write anything above a humbug.

I do not find you have now any great curiosity about some of your old friends here so perhaps you will not thank me for telling you that among the general solicitude about your fever, the Joneses were conspicuous – all of them that were here – for Margaret was all the time at Lambeg and when she returned was afraid to put her head out of doors as M[argaret] McTier and Maria had made her believe Dr H had brought a packet of stories of your raving about her during your illness and that he had retailed them in every company.

170 Edward Ward (1753-1812), MP for Co. Down, son of 1st Viscount Bangor.

171 John Crawford of Crawfordsburn, Co. Down, JP, landowner, Volunteer, and friend of the McTiers.

Your being known to be Sidney I would fear much at present – be cautious – Newry nor its people are not to be trusted. One thing is certain, you will lose Miss P[ollock]'s¹⁷² warm side, and how that would agree with you I know not. R[ainey] Maxwell does not vote for Lord K[ilwarlin] though his lordship came twice to Goddard and W. Rainey¹⁷³ to get them to prevail on him, and seemed much disappointed at not being able to accomplish it. But by not going to vote at all and allowing Goddard to take off his tenants at the time he is extolling Mr Stewart and his conduct and exclaiming against the treatment he has met with, is on his part as shameful conduct as man can be guilty of – who should be independent if he is not – yet he sneaks from the cause he loves to serve a man he had publicly avowed his contempt of. He was not called upon to do this even on Goddard's account, for Lord H knew his character too well to suppose Mr Goddard could or rather ought to influence it.

Jones of Barbados,¹⁷⁴ his wife and another daughter, are all landed at Bristol on their way here to live with the old man. It will make a full family and a delicate part to act by all. This brings the ladies from Ballynahinch this week, which they found very agreeable and much more to Margaret's taste than Buxton.¹⁷⁵ I wonder you never thought of spending a day there. We have chairing rejoicings, ball illuminations etc., etc., on Wednesday, all which appeared very ridiculous to me, for I saw no reason of triumph on Mr Leslie's resignation, a wiser and I believe as honest a man as either of them and a man who set up on the independent interest – indeed the conquest was over the church party, not one of whom except Robert Bradshaw attended at Carrickfergus. Mrs O'Neill and Mr Rowley¹⁷⁶ opened the ball which was well conducted and genteel and at [the la]tter part of the night two papers were handed about which I enclose – O'Neill's diverted me much with the idea of his being inspired by the bottom. He is quite delighted with this new honour and as the phrase is, wants words to express his gratitude, thirty guineas to the meeting house did as well. Mr T. Greg at the same time gave fifteen. I enclose you a letter f[rom] Sam which is old news but will give you his idea of men and matters. The moment you have read it, burn it. Does your minister wait on the lord at Hillsborough? Don't trust him farther than a game of chess. Don't you get the *Belfast Mercury*? All Sidney's letters are in it. They were sent to me the first day after Sam went away and I sent by post the three first to all the Newry people you mentioned. Did you not know my hand? I am glad to find your fees keep so well, you are already better than any preacher. I am certain you will every day do better.

¹⁷² Probably Elizabeth Anne Pollock.

¹⁷³ William Rainey (c.1745-1803) of Greenville, Co. Down, and his sister, Goddard's wife, were double first cousins of Rainey Maxwell (*LGI*, pp 598-9).

¹⁷⁴ A half brother of Margaret Jones.

¹⁷⁵ A spa in Derbyshire.

¹⁷⁶ John O'Neill and Hercules Rowley were the successful candidates for Co. Antrim.

90 [undated], franked by I. Corry

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [95]

Dear Matty, I thank you for your last long letter, and am sorry I have nothing equally interesting to say in return. Our weather has been exceedingly bad here for some days and I have gone little abroad except to see my patients of which I have the customary number. The *Sieur Palmé*¹⁷⁷ has been here for some time and picks up money. I have within this last month made about twelve guineas but my usual rate will I am sure not exceed eight. When you wish that I should pay you a visit, tell me. I repent exceedingly I did not take a ride to B¹⁷⁸ but like my good mother I am sometimes too late in recollecting what I ought to have done ought! Yet believe me it is more than acts of duty I hint at. Sam talked about sending me a greatcoat. If it be bought send it to me as soon as you can for the weather requires it. If it be not bought tell me and I shall take one off here. I find the free press will take no more Sidneys. It is little matter. I only wish to write a farewell letter to Lord K. I sicken at the Down election. I like none of the candidates – Stewart as little as any. Had it not been for his nauseous neutrality, which is not to be forgiven, he and Ward I firmly believe would have had the county. I don't believe he regards the independent interest a fig, and the whole of his little ambition was to please both parties and be returned by both. He has nearly met with his merited punishment. His promise to Lord H is a most ridiculous excuse and he told J. Crawford he did not think it binding on him. I find some inclination if I could to go to Dungannon,¹⁷⁹ and I wish to be a joint delegate with someone who goes there, but indeed it would not perhaps be in my power to go and in that case such an appointment would appear foolish. Who is that 'Lucas' who appears in your paper? He is very clever and looks like Crombie.¹⁸⁰ Sidney *alter* I take to be Alexander Stewart.¹⁸¹ I saw a ballad which was certainly Haliday's, but I have not seen what you call Mrs Down.

You enclosed me the wrong letters – I want the second and third, and if you can get them, you may send them for I wish to have one copy. I do not trust either Newry or its people much. B[oyle] Moody visits at Lord H[illsborough]'s and as far as I can collect his lordship would wish to get him into the bosom of the church. Your coterie is I find on Tuesday. Are your players gone? I wish Mrs Siddons would pay Mrs O'Neill¹⁸² a visit. Do you hear anything of it? The Corrys are still very civil to me, and as a proof of it, behold this original frank of Isaac's. I spent a day with [him]¹⁸³ and he appeared an agreeable sensible fellow, but I am sure a most inflexible courtier. Our winter amusements are going to begin here and the play-house opens in October. Miss Pollock wishes herself remembered to Sam. Mrs Jebb,¹⁸⁴ the doctor's widow, is there at present, a comely girl who only wears the weeds on the outside.

177 Johannes Henricus Augustus Palmé, a quack doctor; he advertised in the *BNL* in the summer of 1783.

178 To Ballynahinch, to see Margaret Jones.

179 To the Volunteer convention.

180 Crombie did write as Lucas; Charles Lucas (1713-71), was a reforming MP (*DNB*).

181 Probably Counsellor Stewart.

182 Henrietta O'Neill was an enthusiastic amateur actress with a private theatre at Shane's Castle.

183 Word supplied.

184 Elizabeth, widow of Dr Frederick Jebb, master of the Rotunda Hospital, who died in 1782.

As Sidney's sixth letter was not published, I would be glad you would get it from A. Orr and send it to me. WD

91 Saturday morning, franked by W. T. Jones

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [96 AND 151]

Dear Will, I find I must check my pen from writing you long letters, for such you never answer. I have not seen Sam since Sunday, but this night I suppose and hope will end the election, for if it does it must be in Mr Stewart's favour, longer I imagine he cannot stand it. The cry is loud against him. Sam writes nothing now, but to exert interest and send him voters. The doctors vindicate Mr Stewart's conduct, but last night I spent with one of his best friends and as wise a one as either of them, viz. J. Crawford, who says Stewart's behaviour from the first has been a series of blunders, and such towards the county and his own friends, that it was after much reasoning with himself he could bring himself to give him a vote – which was it now to do, he would withhold, as would also several of his best friends. He is utterly deserted by the gentlemen and his affairs chiefly managed by a few boys. I asked Jack what he thought could be the motive of conduct in appearance so hurtful to his own interest. He replied – a belief Mr Stewart had certainly entertained of the independent interest being insufficient to support him and choosing no contest but that Lord K[ilwarlin] should remain in and he continue to be called their only representative. This the gentlemen could not brook, they accepted of Mr Ward, with whom and his warm friends Mr Stewart would come on no terms, though he confessed his ground was changed and that then he could be neutral. What had occasioned this change Jack could not tell, but supposed from that time his promise to Lord H[illsborough] became void – he rejoiced however in this little change as he told he would then give him his second vote, which before he would not have done. The rest of the gentlemen however resented his conduct, some of them acted warmly against him, others thought themselves bound in honour to make the man who rested his cause upon them their first object, and Mr S[tewart]t only a second – so if he falls J.C. says he falls ingloriously, if he conquers it is an humbling victory, while Lord K rises higher than ever and proves himself not only secure but brings the two other candidates to his feet. They present him with all their interest while he remains in appearance neuter.

But there are politics much more interesting going on here – and which if you were now a resident in Belfast I imagine you would repine and curse the day you gave Thomson your vote for a delegate to Dungannon. There is sitting at present a committee of delegates considering of matters relative to the next Dungannon meeting, and in order to get subject for it they wrote letters to the following people, Duke of Richmond, Dr Franklin, Abbé Raynal, Dr Price, Mr Wyvill, Lord Char[lemon]t, Flood, Grattan, Sir S. Bradstreet, and Mr Pitt, with others I do not

recollect.¹⁸⁵ The Irish answers are poor, trifling, polite, short and unsatisfactory. Wyvill's, excellent, elegant and expressive of much warmth and affection to their cause, saying though absent in the body he is with them in spirit, and letting them know there is a meeting founded in the county of York similar – Duke of R[ichmon]d's answer is very long, several sheets of paper – very satisfactory and gives them much new light, very bold and goes farther than they thought of. Dr Price's also very good, and there is a fourth said to be so, which I believe is B[radstreet]'s, for Mr Pitt's is nothing, from France they have not yet heard and they forgot Priestley.¹⁸⁶ This account I got from J. C[rawfor]d who is one of the committee. I do not know but I could get copies of these four letters for you but you give me so little encouragement to trouble of this kind I did not undertake it.¹⁸⁷

The Joneses are all come home. They called at Dr Mattear's the other night, where I was. Margaret was remarkably affable and very agreeable in an account of a shoemaker she had asked to dance with her at a charity ball at Ballynahinch, her conversation with whom she related with great humour. As at the first he declared he was much cowed, she determined to make him throw of[f] that. She asked him if he was married and finding he was not, recommended the married life to him much. He thought her reasons were very good 'for the days and nights were long and lonely'. She asked him, had he never been in love? He replied twice, but he had been both times refused, which she lamented with such appearance of sensibility that he said 'faith he believed she had been refused herself'. She assured him she never had, for that the gentleman always asked, the lady never, therefore she never could experience that evil. 'He would have a hard heart could refuse her, with such a one he could be happy and have no more hard work.' 'Why what is your trade?' 'A shoemaker', Margaret then promised to bespeak some shoes and assured me she never had so much entertainment at a ball.

W. Jones¹⁸⁸ is here attending the committee, what alterations also in the Dungannon meeting now to have in it Lord Bristol, John O'Neill, etc., they have got great men and great opinions, with all which they cannot do better than at first, when plain men spoke plain sense in a manner too plain to be mistaken.

W[ill] Saurin is also here. He came down to the Lisburn election, the only one he was employed at, and it was too short for his interest which I find is so little that he thinks of complying with the advice of several of his friends¹⁸⁹ here, by taking a lodging and following Dan's method as it is thought he has a better right to this situation. I like his manner and appearance, it bespeaks both sense and goodness – but I suspect the former is a little narrowed. I have sounded his friends both here and in Dublin but do not find there is anything between M[argaret] J[ones] and

185 3rd Duke of Richmond (1735-1806) (*DNB*); Abbé Guillaume Raynal (1713-96), French writer who condemned exploitation of Africans and American Indians; Christopher Wyvill (1740-1822), advocate for parliamentary reform (*DNB*); Sir Samuel Bradstreet (?1735-91), MP for the city of Dublin (*DNB*); William Pitt (1759-1806), statesman (*DNB*).

186 Dr Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), theologian and man of science (*DNB*).

187 These letters are at the Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

188 William Todd Jones, the new MP for Lisburn.

189 The text of this letter after this point is numbered separately as D/591/151.

him but friendship, which goes through the whole family. But you have kept off this subject with such a seeming care ever since I came home that I am wrong to mention it. If there is not a letter for me tomorrow I desire you may dedicate part of that evening to me, to tell us what you are about that you have no time to write. I may suppose none to read such letters as mine, therefore you shall have no more of them unless you think them worth an answer.

Our old fellow traveller Lady Morris was here on her return to Scotland. It was when I was away but she enquired for you and brought you the spar.

What did you do with Mr Vise? Have you got any female scholars for chess? McCormick has at length sent Crombie his degree.¹⁹⁰ My bowels have been quite well ever since I came home, my head and Nancy's spirits as bad as ever. My fit is going off for the present, hers never will. She was seized on Thursday night with a very severe colic, we were up with her all night. She suffered very much and has not yet thrown it off. Mattear called to see her and ordered her pills which she will not take. I think you ought to write to her and give her your opinion.

Lord Camden also answered the delegates but it conveyed nothing.

92 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [97]

Dear Matty, I have dropped the thoughts of going to Dungannon and you may therefore send me my greatcoat as soon as convenient. I do not believe Hamilton can make it so well as the tailors here, but it is not much matter.

The song you enclose is indeed horridly mangled in the printing. It is not of Haliday's begetting. I am almost sick of the Down election and I make no doubt that Stewart will be thrown out. He deserves it. God bless me! to see two men binding themselves by a most solemn declaration not to be in the smallest degree instrumental to the success of Lord K[ilwarlin] during the whole election, and making no scruple to give him their second votes at the close of it for the sole purpose of bribing him to return them. Such conduct is nothing more or less than perjury, and when Mr Stewart could do such a thing from the advice of anyone, it is enough to make the most honest men tremble. He must be a weak man or have a weak conscience. I cannot conceive how Sam can attempt to justify such dastardly conduct by saying it was done for fear of losing his election. Men's minds and consciences are unconsciously warped in these matters most surprisingly. I declare that I never was disappointed so much in any man as in Stewart and I firmly believe him to be a weak irresolute man with a pliable conscience. No news here but great satisfaction among the court party in Stewart's humiliation and K[ilwarlin]'s glorification. What a damp must such a business as this strike to the heart of every man of public spirit. I wish you to tell me when you think it would be agreeable for me to pay you a visit. I shall perhaps write a letter to Lord K but I am not certain. I think him as good almost in this affair as any of the group. WD

¹⁹⁰ Doctor of Divinity at St Andrews.

93 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO SAMUEL MCTIER, BELFAST [43]

Dear Sam, I almost forgot to acknowledge the receipt of yours and the enclosed bill until now and the post is just going out – No news – I fear your Dungannon meeting will be too few. WD

94 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [42]

A man going from this with a horse for Harry Bruce – I write just to beg that if you do not take a ride here with him you will write. Say what you think of matters now – we are perfectly stunned and long for news and opinions. Don't you think it odd, a pity, and a great loss, that whoever made the motion was not hanged by the mob? Is there any mob now and do the parliament mean to ask the King for troops? Write me a long letter or never expect one.

B. Arnold is better but still in danger – little Joe Crombie feared to be dying¹⁹¹ – and his father attending at Dungannon. MM

J. Crawford will pass through Newry Friday or Saturday – be on the look out for him – for I suppose he can give you much news, and in a satisfactory manner. Fanny Mussenden¹⁹² writes that he and Mr Stewart constantly divided against each other. I fear there is something very odd if not wrong in that man.

95 [undated], franked by I. Corry

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [108]

Dear Matty, I would be very glad you, or any person to whom you would apply, could get the enclosed printed off and sent under cover to me in Newry, or by any other the most ready conveyance. I and Kennedy have been threatened by the Sieur Palmé in the newspaper here for injurious slanders on his character, and I have reason to believe that Langdon, an organist at Armagh, was a tale-bearer between us. I wish to create a laugh against this foolish fellow, but I do not care to risk sending such a thing to the printer here who is a disciple and patient of Palmé's. You must by all means pay for the printing it, and if it be done accurately I shall not scruple at the cost of a few shillings, which shall be repaid when I see you. I wish for about fifty copies, and I beg you may revise the proof-sheet for these things are horrid, if not accurately printed. I shall send them by another hand to the persons I choose. If you could get them done and sent to me on Wednesday, it would just do. You may enclose them in two or three franks. Sam is no doubt in deep distress about Stewart. Yours ever, WD

191 Joseph (1776-1806), son of Rev. Dr James Crombie; he became a United Irishman and emigrated to America.

192 Fanny (d.1799), sister of Daniel Mussenden of Larchfield, a friend and correspondent of Martha's.

An Original Letter

FROM MR L——N ORGANIST AT A——H TO MR J——S O——E AT NEWRY¹⁹³

Sir,

You have ask'd me to send you, in faithful narration,
what the Sieur and I said, in our late conversation –
I shall write the whole down, and to melt away time
in an easy hand-gallop of reason and rhyme.

*When I read his address, I felt every disorder
in the way he described them, and all in their order –
With the gout I was crippled, with palsy stuck dumb,
My brain teem'd with maggots, and worms gnawed my b–m,
My flesh wasted away – and I sunk with dejection –
I was stretched on the rack of tormenting contraction –
I fell down in the fits, but my good-natur'd wife
Tweak'd me hard by the nose, and restor'd me to life –
Next, a fit of the asthma deprived me of breath,
Then he gravell'd me fairly, and ston'd me to death –
At last, from much thinking on what I had read,
A most deluding dropsy came into my – head:
and then it became my desire and ambition
To receive a few strokes from this shocking physician
For all that my malady seem'd to require
Was to soak up the water, by passing through fire.

I remember the time I first made my approach
Was just when the Doctor stept out of his coach.
I looked at the arms on his rev'rend old hack
The crest, a lame duck, and the motto 'Quack Quack'
Below lay a boar – and appeared to bleed –
Which I've found to my sorrow, a damn'd bore indeed
With a wink at his wife, and a jesuit grin
He caught hold of my hand, and he welcomed me in.
My hand its contraction no longer could hold
but relax'd at his touch – and in dropt the gold

'Sir, said I, your great fame has illumin'd the nation
And spread over the earth like a giant conflagration
With the light of all science your head must be full
For it beams on your brain through the cracks of your skull,
And the soul which inhabits that learn'd attic story
By the help of such sky-lights, is guided to glory.
All your cures I have heard – all your writings I've read;
and I'm come to get water pumped out of my head.'

*Vid. the Doctor's address to the inhabitants of Newry.

193 Mr Langdon, organist at Armagh, to Mr James Ogle at Newry.

'Sir – said he – you have seen with delight and surprise
 The meteor that lately illumin'd the skies
 Through the air with such splendid celerity driven
 That – Sir – was the luminous Palmé of heav'n.
 I cast the the same light, make the same hissing noise –
 I'm the wonder of women, and terror of boys
 I cause and I cure almost every ail –
 A rocket my head, and a cracker my tail –
 At one end, I'm all fire for the poor paralytic
 And discharge at the other, the air call'd mephitic
 Now – Sir – in your head I'll just augre a hole
 then lift from the water the half drowning soul
 and when I've once brought it, securely to land
 I shall set it astride on the pineal gland
 But perhaps for such boring, there is no occasion
 We may soon soak it up – by a warm embrocation.'
 He then pour'd out a liquid, upon my bare skull,
 Till I roared out as loud, as the Phalaris bull –
 Next, towards his electric machine was I led
 and large drops of fire fell, like rain, on my head
 Which made me re-bellow with exquisite pain
 And the water to bubble and boil in my brain –
 Then he forc'd me to swallow a poisonous potion
 Which bred in my bowels, strange noise and commotion
 and 'Now – Sir – says he, I will cure your disease
 For twenty more visits, and twenty more fees.'
 'Sir – says I – my disease is a damnation'd evil
 But to die of the Doctor, is worse than the Devil –
 You're a will of the whisp that is form'd in a fog
 to bewitch silly travellers into a bog;
 From putrescence it rises, and plays in the air,
 and then it is gone – and the Devil knows where
 It then shines in the place where it seemed to sink
 and at last it goes out in a sulphurous stink' –
 I then lifted my hat and my wig in a fury,
 and cursing all quacks – I departed from Newry, I am &c

Armagh Sept 8th '83

96 [undated], franked by I. Corry

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [114]

I send you a letter which by Dr H[aliday]'s expected arrival I have scarcely had leisure to finish. It is too short I think and too declamatory – too general – but to have descended into particulars would at present have been tedious. If you don't like it, don't send it to the press. There would have been nothing in getting the other thing printed. I may surely condescend to ridicule a quack but do as you please. I wish you or Sam could add something to this letter for I don't like it. Your franks pass.

All that Palmé did was to publish my name in the Newry paper in a letter from G. Macartney¹⁹⁴ of Antrim to him, and he is to publish this week a pamphlet concerning the faculty of Newry. This deserves to be ridiculed and the names mentioned is nothing – Langdon is a silly fool and deserves it. Send it however back to me for I have not a copy. I suppose Haliday will not be here tonight as it is four o'clock and I am going out to dine. So that I can't tell you whether I'll return with him or wait until Saturday or W[ednes]day if nothing intervenes you shall see me.

97 27 September [17]83¹⁹⁵

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MRS ANN DRENNAN, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [77]

Dear Mother, I send you the key by a gentleman going to Belfast, and I should have sent it before had I not waited with much anxiety for a sure and a cheap conveyance. I have little news since I left you. The worst is the loss of my mare which was stolen out of the field a few nights ago, and I believe there is little prospect of recovering her. This day I was told she had been carried and sold at Saintfield fair, but I have sent for farther information with little hope of success. If I had come the night before I did I should have been surprised, as I generally go to sleep without a candle, in finding Dr Templeton asleep in my bed and we should have had a curious conversation in the dark – but so it was – that he was called to my landlady's accouchment and occupied my bed for the night. The night I did come a curious accident happened to me. I went upstairs to my room without a candle as usual and put on my two cotton night-caps in the dark. I wanted something or other and hearing the people up, I called for the candle, undressed, looked at my watch which was at the sober hour of eleven, and after putting out the candle went to bed, fell asleep, and must have been so at least half an hour for when the candle came in again it was exactly within a quarter of twelve. I was awakened with a burst of heat on the top of my head and starting up, I tore off my night-caps which were all in a smothered flame. I called and bawled and when my servant came up, I was still as surprised as ever, for there was the size of my hand burned out of both the night-caps and yet the bed curtains, sheets, etc., uninjured, all except the pillow which I

¹⁹⁴ Rev. Dr George Macartney (1740-1824), vicar of Antrim, later a Burgess of Belfast; he was the clergyman who married Sam McTier and Martha in 1773.

¹⁹⁵ The last digit is written as a small 0 and is probably the bottom half of a 3.

lay on. It is strange what ideas filled my head. I was th[inking] of Templeton lying in my bed the night before, and I th[en] thought of the harridans he had in the house after him. I could have sworn that something had been put into my night-caps but the real truth was that in stooping to unbuckle my shoe, I had popped the tassels of the caps into the candle which was placed on the chair, and after going to bed, it had burned into tinder on my head, the cotton not flaming. I write in a hurry and have nothing else to say. Your affectionate son, W DRENNAN

98 Wednesday

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [111]

My dear Will, It is too late in the season to think of the country, either for comfort or pleasure. If I live till summer I shall willingly try the goat's whey but with little hope of its removing this disturbance in my head.

We have been much engaged with the Adairs, being asked with them by the most of our acquaintance, and as all matters are settled among us on a friendly footing this has proved agreeable. They came to town on a Friday and much consultation there was between Sam and I whether he should go to see him. I pleaded for his doing it but determined I would not. Sam called on him on Saturday – he was abroad. On Sunday they met unexpectedly in the street and very awkward on both sides. Adair however immediately drew him away from some men they were with, told him he could not think of calling on him at my mother's or any place where he had not a chance of just meeting him alone to require his forgiveness, to assure him he had never forgot him nor lost hope of serving him, and to secure his intercession with me for pardon of rudeness, of which he appeared to have as strong a sense as one could wish. He therefore called on my mother and me the next day, repeated all and more than he had said to Sam, was affectionate, perfectly unaffected, and quite the old friend of the family. He freely told us his expectation of being made Lord C[hancellor] and it is plain that he and his family wish much for it – they appear all Irish and warmly attached to this country, where if possible he is determined to end his days. His present employments are slavish to a degree, he is not able to [support] having to attend a number of different courts and often to study sixteen hours out of the twenty-four. The Duke of Portland has promised to give him the first thing that is better, and this appears to be what he wishes for. He has also much of His Majesty's attention.

He immediately told Sam he would ask the Duke of P for anything that could be pointed out, but that if he was made Lord C[hancellor] he would have it in his own power to serve him essentially. This was an if and I still wished, while he was on the spot, something might be done. We read over the letter Sam had from Dr Eason, barrack master of Belfast, at the time he had been about purchasing from him and found it in appearance so fair that we could not think of applying for the place he still held – though Jemmy Adair said he would not have the least scruple as he resided in Manchester and that such things were not to be allowed.

A few days after this, J. Ferguson wrote from Dublin that William Mitchell,¹⁹⁶ who has been ill with a spitting of blood and ordered off to Bristol, had got leave to sell, that all barrack masters not residing were to lose their employment, and that first applications would probably be successful. Sam mentioned this as news to Adair who immediately wrote to Lord North[ington]¹⁹⁷ and asked this place for Sam, if it was true, which he supposed, that those who did not reside were to go out – his letter was warm, particular and friendly. No letter can be in answer until Thursday. If he comes over Lord C[hancellor], I do believe Sam's fortune will be made. There is much affection and sincerity in his manner, not the least height, and both wife and daughter kind, easily pleased, and the latter very sensible and agreeable. The wife is enough to make one wonder, ugly, old, and no one thing to bewitch a man. They have been greatly noticed and it seems highly acceptable to them. My mother would not ask them yet they have called to see her twice and this day sent for me to go an airing in their coach. There were only the ladies and Mrs Adair distressed me a good deal asking me about the Serjeant's amours and the date of his loves, etc., etc. I thought the daughter had tears in her eyes several times.

The Sheepshearing rises in reputation. Sam dined at L[angford] Lodge with Colonel Rowley and a large company of gentlemen. It was spoke of particularly by Mr Arbuckle who looked (Sam thought) as if he knew the author.

My mother wrote a few lines to Dr Haliday and enclosed ten guineas. I send you the answer and think you ought to defray Law's expenses. Haliday is at present at Armagh attending Lord Chief Baron Burgh,¹⁹⁸ a man excellent both in private and public. He is in a desperate fever. You see I am not in a writing humour and will be satisfied at my bidding you adieu. MM

The Sheepshearing, an election ballad occasioned by Sir John B——d¹⁹⁹ addressing his tenants for their votes in most religious terms under the appellation of their shepherd.²⁰⁰

1

Little John sat perch'd up, on the point of a rock,
and lifting his eyes, he thus lectur'd his flock,
At the sight of his rod, they all thunderstruck stood,
For they dread like the devil a touch of blackwood.

2

You know silly sheep, that at every election
You are blindly to follow your shepherd's direction,
Observe then my will, if you mean to be free
And beware of all wolves, but my bailiff, and me.

¹⁹⁶ He was Inspector General of Barracks in Ireland.

¹⁹⁷ 2nd Earl of Northington (1747-86), Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (*DNB*).

¹⁹⁸ Walter Hussey Burgh (1742-83); he died on 29 September.

¹⁹⁹ Sir John Blackwood (d.1799), 2nd baronet.

²⁰⁰ D/591/132A but not numbered; in a later hand.

3

I liked Stewart once, and his family well,
 But now for their pride, I cou'd wish them in hell,
 Give your first votes to Ward, if your conscience be clean,
 The next to K—l—n²⁰¹ you know who I mean.

4

The curse of all curses, alight on his crown,
 Who would level the hills of the County of Down
 For tis on these high places, I meet my reward,
 When with humble devotion, I wait on the Lord.

5

His breath wheels me about, like the cock on the steeple,
 With my face to the court, and my a—e to the people,
 and here in the rust of old age will I fix,
 For who cares for honours, who wins by his tricks.

6

I still hear the last words that wise old Robert said,
 As his hands grasp'd the breeches that lay at his head,
 'Let the great and the wealthy, for liberty bellow
 Never mind them son John, your a poor little fellow.'

7

Now let all silly sheep obey my direction,
 Who wish to receive their kind pastor's protection,
 And if any among you, should turn out uncivil,
 Ye rogues pay your rents, and be gone to the Devil

99 Tuesday

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [109]

Your long wished for letter gave some pleasure, and because it was about yourself and your own concerns – entire satisfaction is not to be obtained in this world – our family are resolved not to be disappointed and therefore, one might hope, would be always prepared for the worst. I am the only one of it before whom hope has forever danced, forever deceived, and yet still it attends me and is well received, for the promise of a fancied joy, which always takes place of its last delusion, and so on from day to day and year to year, the final one hope surely must be a reality.

You say I have found out your greatest complaint. Strange if I had not, and I really think you will be to blame if I do not effect your cure, at least for the present. In the first place, as your disorder appears to me constitutional, I cannot but suppose

201 Lord Kilwarlin.

you have now a thorough knowledge of it and will join me in approving the following recipe. Frequently take into your consideration the station and fame of your contemporaries, and here you must view Gemmy Holmes, A. Stewart, J. Kennedy, W. Wilson,²⁰² Dick Bateson – which of these would you change situations with? Among a later class, and those more of your own taste and view in life, where is their fame or their fortunes but in expectation? Where is Quin's, Plunket's and poor Cleghorn's, where is Owen Roe's,²⁰³ though deserved – or would you even change situations with the just, the Cato-like Bruce, or with the rising (though in my mind) suspicious character of Dun[n]. If you have equal talents (which I know you think you have, else why repine) make use of them – gain the honour and enjoy it. Less difficulties occur in your situation than any I have named, for politics now ceases to be local, and so great and open the foundation, every man may build upon it that has materials. But Newry perhaps is too mean a spot to enjoy such a blessing, such a genius. I think indeed it must be a horrid cramped situation, but you have not found it so, else you do not tell the truth, and nine months ago you would have been content in possession of a horse, a servant, an independence, and when you left us could not hope for it in so very short a time. You have now gained it, society, esteem, and more fame by being the reputed author of the s[heep]shearing than any which has yet fallen to the share of your above mentioned friends. You may be probably soon be the first of your profession in Newry and for you I am sure it will be more palatable to be first in Newry than last in Dublin – beside these annual parliaments may afford pretty dreams. I once before suggested another to you which to me grew every day more and more agreeable. I saw, nor see, nothing impossible in realising it and you appeared to indulge it. But how, or why it has ceased to interest you I know not – though I might have expected to do so, but perhaps Miss P[ollock] knows.

There is no public news here but what the papers inform you of – great hopes, or rather wishes for a new election, and some information gained of a conversation with the sheriff, the day before the last ended, where he was ordered only to poll to such a time which, as there is an affidavit of it promised, is thought of great consequence. It was so hard to get the summons for the sheriff given into his own hand by his evasion of it, that D. Gordon had to conceal himself in an ale house near where he was, dress his servant like a gentleman and send him to the house, where he accomplished the matter with great address. You see how fairly R[ainey] Maxwell is entered, he is warm in the cause though not without a jib at Stewart and sorely afraid of having to go to Dublin. A few days ago Sam met F. Turnly²⁰⁴ in the street who told him he had orders to write to him next week and insist from Mr S[tewart] that he would accept of eighty guineas. The sum I mention before, Sam had only guessed at, by the size of the roll – its having diminished and being less than was given to any of his attorneys, did not induce Sam to a change of mind, though it had been suggested to him that it was good pay and proper, both to be offered and

202 William Wilson, a Belfast merchant.

203 Joseph Pollock, *Letters of Owen Roe O'Nial* (1779).

204 Francis Turnly (1735-1801), of Downpatrick, JP.

accepted, particularly in his circumstances, the very thing which made me spurn both it and the manner – Turnly mentioning what the sum was to be, as if ‘you will not refuse it when you know it is so mighty’ determined Sam, the moment he came home, to write him a letter with a positive injunction not to mention this matter again. As he had refused at first from principles, he saw no reason to change and that it would make him happy again to be of use to Mr S in the same cause. This matter has not gone farther than our family except to Dr Haliday who shortly told Sam he thought him wrong, but not seeming to like the subject dismissed it.

Stewart now is one of your upright men and fortune has made him noticed for it – yet who envies him? – for honesty no one ever is, it being in our own power, and out of his own family I do not believe he has the love of one creature.

Adair I suppose is sailed and not one line from him. Well, if he is the more courtier, he is a most completely dangerous one for it’s under the guise of sincerity and plain and unadorned affection.

I hope the former part of my letter has cooled your ambitious fever for a time and shall therefore venture to tell you that W. Bruce and Harry Joy²⁰⁵ are appointed delegates to the convention from the county of the town of Carrickfergus. Whether these counties will get leave to send them is uncertain, but if any do this will, and I rejoice there is a dissenting clergyman among them and that Bruce is he. You will at least have a correspondent there, so write soon and bespeak early and particular accounts. If you choose to declaim upon politics or to boast of your country[’s] feats I wish you would amuse yourself and at the same time be grateful and agreeable by writing a long circumstantial letter to Dr McCormick. They seem to pant for news from this and to pant from fear. He writes to Mr Crombie a number of queries which betray an ignorance one can’t help smiling at – such as ‘are there any people of landed property to attend this meeting?’ and ‘Mary’s heart is bleeding for her poor distracted country, that might now be the happiest in the world if it had but wisdom to stop in time’. Thus they always talked both of America and Ireland, yet as we continued to gain they acknowledge us better, but at the present moment always deem it best to stop. I have not wrote to Scotland a very long time and the political ignorance at St Andrews is, I suspect, partly owing to that. A letter from you to the Doctor therefore would be a great treat to all his friends there, you owe him a little compliment and as a letter would be unexpected it would be grateful to him and the subject might make it agreeable to you.

Sam had a long letter from Dr Scott. He is rejoicing in the flourishing situation of his country and congratulating us on ours and the happy consequences arising from our glorious Volunteers, such he terms them. He sends him a present of several pounds of very nice tobacco, and prays much for a long letter with news. He had heard a few days from Jack Hay who desired him to tell his friends here he was well and settled in Duplin County, but had not got a letter from this since he left it. He enquires for you, I mean Scott. Do not let the length of this frighten you from your promise of answering me very soon.

205 Henry Joy, junior (1754-1835), proprietor of the *Belfast News-Letter*.

Did Mr Maitland's death frighten Palmé off the field or your squibs, for we heard you were at him [—] too low game but perhaps may [—] sport in Newry.

Mr Adair told me he would send for you if he stayed any time in Newry but as they slept the first night in H[illsborough?] they proceeded on to Slade the next day. I suspect he was lessoned before he came here, at Bellwtn²⁰⁶ review he was called a spy and he certainly did seem to wish much for information in general. He talked fair but in that smooth style which the enemies to Volunteers, I observe, always preface their reasoning with – to be sure we had done nobly, every one must admire us and acknowledge but —. A day he had been at his estate I asked him if he had received any honours of a new kind and suitable to the present taste of the Irish, viz. military ones. He laughed and said no, but that he immediately had been offered the command of a very fine company which he had declined by telling them he knew of no use companies now were, and that they had much better mind their farms. I shook my head and so I dare say did his tenants. Flood seemed his aversion and when it was said, what powers he was to exert in parliament, Yes, says Adair, if he is not bought off – rogues all. MM

100 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [115]

Dear Matty, You will excuse me for sending you a few lines in return for your voluminous and agreeable epistle. I have been kept for some days past in some anxiety with regard to the fate of C[olonel] Browne's²⁰⁷ child who has been very ill in the smallpox of the natural kind,²⁰⁸ and has suffered much both from the violence of the disease and even of the remedies necessary in it. This however is the fourteenth day to which it has arrived safely, and as it appears a good deal lighter this morning I am in hopes it will wrestle through this cruel disease. I have paid it all the attention in my power, and both its father and mother seem sensible of it. The whole family are extremely civil to me, and even if the child should die I do not think that I shall lose that degree of confidence which I may have acquired. Mrs Fuller²⁰⁹ passed through on Friday and if you have seen [her]²¹⁰ she will probably have told you of the child's illness which has been my chief reason for delay in writing until I could speak with some degree of confidence on the event.

There is not the least news in this place that could possibly interest you. I received a fee of two guineas from J[ame]s Pollock for inoculating his child. It had the smallpox in a very favourable way, and the other child as much so. I had scarcely any trouble in attendance. I have bought my black suit and am told by the ladies that it is very becoming. But it is impossible for the ladies of Newry, or any lady in it to

206 Bellewstown, Co. Meath.

207 Lieut Colonel William Browne, husband of Frances, daughter of Edward Corry.

208 i.e. not as the result of inoculation.

209 Elizabeth, wife of Bartholomew Fuller, surgeon of Belfast.

210 Word supplied.

make me think so – I have too just an opinion of myself. Mrs Mussenden²¹¹ has I hear, got a son, Mrs I. Corry and Mrs Read²¹² are *statu quo*. We all expect great things from the national convention. I hope they will do something but I am much afraid of alteration and want of perfect unanimity. Did you not say something of going to Larchfield for a few days? – you will acquaint me with it if you do. I do not imagine the Down petition will succeed. I have seen none of the gentlemen in their way up. Jones called twice at my rooms but I was absent. I waited on Mrs Holmes a day or two after she came but have not been asked there, yet I meet James frequently. Though it is impossible that I can be called a party man yet it is evident that both sides think me so. It is a thing that in this place cannot be remedied. Compliments to all friends. My mare is well and George is better. I am as usual. WD

101 Monday morn, franked by J. Blackwood

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [116]

We heard of you and Colonel Browne's child from Mrs Fuller, your attention to whom has been highly grateful to all the family, who said more in your praise to Mrs Fuller than becomes me to repeat – and mentioned instances of your gentility in regard to fees which have not been thrown away. I hope the poor child may recover. Fuller thinks it will not. Mrs Holmes's died after the eighteenth day but it was of a stuffing.²¹³

You seem to be so constantly abroad, that a friend from this, calling on you, never sees you – and as you always I suppose leave word with George where you are to be found, I think a Belfast person would wait till you came to them. If R[ainey] Maxwell calls on his return from Dublin, I would be particularly sorry you missed him – he is a man I have a great affection for and a perfect esteem.

I suppose you have engaged early accounts from W[ill] Bruce of the convention – I shall be obliged to you for them as soon as possible. I think this country never met so awful, so glorious a day as this. It has been consigned to the delegates by a people who has nobly given them the opportunity and the power of commanding justice to be done their country, for it is in that strain only they will be listened to, and in [*sic*] by that they will meet with obedience. If they should in the least degree depart from the firm spirit which has hitherto marked them and gained them the confidence of a people, they will lose a moment glorious for themselves and for their country, perhaps never more to return. Such are not frequent. The matter they have to deliberate on is great, and both good and great are divided in their opinions upon it. I would be sorry however they would find it so vast as to determine upon nothing, or but a few inferior points. Might it not be better in firm and unanimous terms to demand one fundamental right, that the rest might grow out of, or time and experience point out, and don't you think annual parliament would do this?

211 Mrs Daniel Mussenden's son was born on 2 November 1783.

212 Probably Mrs Jane Read, sister of James Pollock.

213 A general term for obstruction of the throat.

I do not hear much politics, there seems to be a timidity about the times creeping over those whose opinions I once thought well of, some of them are grown old and cold, others have ceased to be Volunteers. They are fretted [*sic*] and defeated in their opinions of men they placed too much trust in and have not candour enough to allow they erred. They are not actors in this mighty business and perhaps through envy, a more common vice than is thought, blame and deride those who are. Dr Haliday was in great woe for fear of Grattan's life. He wrote immediately to Lord C[harlemon]t for news but I never heard of any answer. I do not think this is a time that any man's life would be of much consequence to the general cause unless he was a Washington. No orator can either prate the people out of or into their rights. Many words [would] be disgraceful a very few would prevent a [———].

It is thought already that S[tewar]t's committee are partial and little good is expected for my own part – except for sake of fun and the hope of a defeat to Lord H[illsborough] which need hardly be expected, I care nothing about it nor do I believe does S[tewar]t. W[addell] Cunnin[gham] is busy canvassing in Carrickfergus and is sure of success, though without Lord Donegall's interest who I hear means to set up a son of the Lord Chancellor's, Hewitt.²¹⁴ I see you have been telling the public what constitutes a state. All of our fireside are just as usual. What the new year will bring forth I cannot guess. May it and many of them be happy to you.

If I forbear to murmur at my station in life surely you may. The flattery of others and perhaps my own vanity taught me to think I had some right to a better.

Your powdering gown we have made, I think it will please you. It shall be sent the first opportunity.

I shall not go to Larchfield²¹⁵ without telling you. The Christmas dinner and party of old ladies would be no temptation to you to visit us that day especially, as that week will not allow (I suppose) of any diversions. As I see you never answer a long letter I always determine against writing you one, yet fail as much in that as in not writing at all to any other person. We shall be anxious to hear of little Browne. Was it the state of your country or a patient you were writing to Dr H about?

102 [undated], franked I. Corry

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [117]

C[olonel] Browne's little child is now in a fair way of recovery, and unless something very extraordinary should happen, I am pretty certain that she will be more healthy than ever she was, and not a scar remain to deface her beauty, which in her mother's eyes is among the first of considerations. Her father wished only for her life, and I am glad on more accounts than one that she has escaped so well. I was at the oyster party last night and Mrs Browne was exceedingly civil, took her seat as she said of choice beside me, and entertained me, and no doubt herself at the same

²¹⁴ Joseph Hewitt (1754-94), third son of Viscount Lifford, defeated at Carrickfergus by Cunningham, but MP for Belfast, 1784-92, in place of Counsellor Crookshank.

²¹⁵ Seat of the Mussenden family, in Co. Down, near Lisburn.

time, by talking very agreeably on a variety of subjects. She is a woman of vivacity not very far distant from sense, in which quality however she falls short of Mrs Marston²¹⁶ who I think a remarkable fine woman. C[olonel] Browne is I think a plain, genteel, sensible and agreeable man, much of the soldier both in manner and in sentiment. Politics is so seldom the topic among my set of acquaintance here that except one evening we never entered on the subject. I said very little and very coolly, he became somewhat warm, and his lady suspecting I suppose that his temper was such as not to bear disputation, struck in at once with a vast deal of seeming violence on my side of the question, defended her dear Volunteers, abused the military, and at last getting up on a sudden she came up within an inch of her husband's face, and shaking her hand at him in a very laughable manner and with an amiable liveliness of expression exclaimed, 'Sir I tell you in your very beard, you are not an honest man'. Mr Isaac Corry gave me yesterday a fee of five guineas for attendance on his son. You may tell the Kennedys that Miss Betty Moody is a good deal better.

My letter to Dr Haliday was only in answer to one he had written to me some time ago, and had nothing either medical or political in it. I pressed him to publish his patriotic tragedy as I think it very well deserves the light. I had no hand in publishing the ode 'What constitutes a state' nor do I see it in any of the papers we get here. I expect a letter this night from Bruce respecting the national convention. I fear they will split on the rock of religion and indulgence to Catholics. Annual parliaments in the present state of representation would be a nuisance. The reform should be complete or not at all. But there is a strong party against it and every body of men however respectable who is against it must be party and nothing else.

Grattan, since the late debate on the army, has damned himself in my opinion. It is astonishing that the same man who wrote the pamphlet on the Mutiny Bill, could justify the keeping up of 15,000 men in Ireland during the time of peace and under the pressure of accumulating debt. He is as much disgusted at the Volunteers as at Flood. Mrs Read has been very ill and I think it threatens to be a fever, which in her situation is not agreeable – she thinks her child is dead. One must have always something in our profession to make us anxious, but I hope and trust I shall grow somewhat more callous as I advance in practice. WD

103 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, LARCHFIELD, NEAR LISBURN [118]

Dear Matty, I fear it will not be in my power to pay you a visit at Larchfield. I would not wish on any account to be out of town, if I should happen to be called to any patient, as my last visit to Belfast was considered as unlucky in that particular, and it was wished that I should leave town as seldom as possible at least for some time. I wrote to you the day before yesterday and wished for an answer. If I visit

216 Frances Browne and Catherine Marston or Marsden were sisters.

Belfast it must be a stolen visit, and I would wish to do it without acquainting anyone in this place of my intention. Mrs Read has not recovered quite so well of late and even that would lay some obligation on me to remain in town. I should wish to know the day and hour you leave Larchfield for were it a tempting day, I might if disengaged give myself the pleasure of seeing you. This convention has taken my sleep from me this night or two past – greatly do I fear they will be cowed. Returning the matter to county instructions is mere fudge. WD

Nineteen guineas in fees this last month and but nine in my pocket.

104 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [132]

Dear Matty, I just now hear to my great surprise that the convention is dissolved after meeting with a severe reprimand from parliament. We shall know the whole of the matter this evening, and I must own if it be as reported, that the delegates have disappointed me much for although I think they went a good deal into the metaphysics of politics, yet there has been all that unamidity that could have been expected in so numerous an assembly. Bruce will perhaps have time to write to me this evening.

I received five guineas from Mr James Read²¹⁷ a day or two ago, which makes up nineteen guineas that I have received during the month of November. I took this last fee with some unwillingness, but it was pressed with much ardour, and it is almost impossible in these cases to divide the fee offered and receive the half while you return the other. Never man I believe received these rewards with greater indifference, and yet I am fully sensible of their necessity. I am engaged to attend Mrs I. Corry in the latter end of this month or the beginning of January, and I believe Mrs James Pollock will be taken ill in February, so that I shall have it scarcely in my power to snatch an opportunity to seeing you in Belfast. When the year has elapsed I shall transmit to my mother a short schedule of my revenue and expenses which I fancy will pretty nearly tally, without taking into account what she has laid out for me before and during my illness. Mrs C[hristopher] Read is also in a fair way of becoming my patient for the second time. I have received the wrapper which the carman took to Dublin by mistake. If you knew the barrenness of this place, at least with respect to news, you would readily excuse me from writing a short letter. It is needless to tell you how many dishes I dined upon at the Cornet's²¹⁸ or how often I have been asked abroad during the week. How often I lost my money at whist, and how often I kissed Miss P[ollock] in a corner. With regard to the first mentioned game I think myself daily improving but as to the last I am – say what you will – but a sorry pupil. You are so cursedly silent on all love affairs in Belfast that it would surely be folly in me to give you an account of my amours in Newry. We have got

217 James Reid or Read, married to Jane Pollock.

218 Cornet William Scott of Basin House.

a respectable addition to our society here in a Mr Campbell,²¹⁹ rector of this place, brother to the celebrated doctor in Dublin. He is a mirthful, social, sensible, companionable man, who has been twenty years in the church, with a wife and large family and is at length promoted to a living worth £100 a year – his brother I suppose supports him.

Write to me soon, and I shall be long in reply. WD

105 Tuesday morning, franked I. Corry

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST, REDIRECTED TO LARCHFIELD, NEAR LISBURN [149]

Dearest Matty, How have you been since I saw you? Have the medicines been of any use? They were very gentle and required a repetition. Write me a line or two when you get this.

I had no call except from the Widow Pollock²²⁰ and returned in proper time for visiting her.

This morning at Mrs Read's I saw a young man, a Mr Hugh Moore, who was setting off for London with ample recommendations to Mr Adair and makes no doubt of being through his interest with Portland and Fitzwilliam,²²¹ of a profitable employment either under the Directors²²² in London or in India. The Bishop of Derry is we hear to suffer a government prosecution for his answer to the Derry Volunteers. This will be the accomplishing of the first of his predictions which were that he would be called, in a certain time, before the council, secondly that he would not attend, thirdly that his estate in England would be confiscated, and fourth that the Irish Volunteers would preserve it for him.

I was somehow not in spirits to ask many questions when I saw you. You said M[argaret Jones] was to be in Dublin this spring. Could you learn at what time – or any other particulars? Your ever affectionate brother, W DRENNAN.

106 Wednesday morn

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [119]

Dear Will, I did not leave Larchfield until the Saturday after I parted with you, Mrs and Miss Haliday coming the next day. My bowels during that time were better and worse, but fortunately since I came home, and on the road, have been quite right and my head and rest well.

Poor Jemmy Getty's unfortunate life is at length ended. He died on shore and I fear of the consequence of intemperance.

219 Rev. William Campbell (c.1736-1804); his brother Dr Thomas Campbell (1733-95) was Chancellor of Clogher (*DNB*).

220 Possibly Joseph Pollock's stepmother.

221 William, 4th Earl Fitzwilliam (1748-1833), Lord Lieutenant in 1795 (*DNB*).

222 Of the East India Company.

Sam cannot get an end put to this affair of Stewart's money. I believe I told you that upon Turnly telling Sam he had orders to write to him, Sam prevented him by a letter requesting he never might hear more of this matter. Mr S[tewart] saw this letter and blamed Turnly for his management of the affair. Turnly therefore applied to Dr Mattear, told him Mr Stewart never meant that money as payment for his services at Down, that for these he should always look upon himself as under obligations, and be happy to have it in his power to serve him, but the sum he offered was as payment for the time and expense he had laid out for him at the election. The Doctor replied he knew nothing of the matter and could not possibly interfere in it. The other said he believed he had been wrong in mentioning it to him and would apply to Dr Haliday to settle it. The end will be Sam will have to pocket the affront if it be one, and pay off what remains of the very small debts.

I fear government will not take any notice of Lord B[ristol] which I dare say will disappoint him. I wish they would do something that would raise a spirit which most unaccountably seems dying at the very instant it ought to be universally vigorous. I have not heard one word of convention, Flood, Grattan, or politics of any kind since I came home, nor strange to tell not a hint of a meeting of the town. I have not been with any men, but if such things were, I should hear of them. Indeed it's no wonder that patriotism should cool here when one looks at the present champions for it. W C[unningham] will have a long keeping it up at C[arrickfergus] owing to the mistake in the patent, his dinner bill for people little better than Bishop the fishman is often £50.²²³ He and Mr [—] stay constantly there.

Bristow has had another curious triumph over Bryson. When Lord Donegall was here, the ladies he paid most attention to were Mrs Brown and Mrs Lyons,²²⁴ the latter being with child he desired if it was a son that he might have the name and be godfather – 'twas a daughter, but not choosing to lose the honour Tom wrote to know what his lordship chose it should be named, and after waiting near two months for an answer his lordship pronounced Julia-Ann, which it was christened by Mr Bristow, the sovereign representing Lord D[onegall], Mrs Wheeler and Mrs Benson²²⁵ godmothers, who promised faithfully to bring the said child to be confirmed, etc., etc. Tom returned the ladies thanks in Mrs Lyons' name for the great charge they had taken. I found all here as usual, but Mrs Smith thinner and even paler, owing we suppose to a very curious complaint, a daily violent spitting which she thinks does not come from her stomach as her head is so dried up that the snuff comes out of it dry – it is worse after eating, seems pure water, is constant and really both troublesome and disagreeable. Could you think of anything for her? Write soon, I hope you have pleasure in Pollock. MM

Just got your letter, do not be determined George shall leave you. If he has served you so well he is valuable, and should he repent do not punish yourself for the sake of dignity.

223 Cunningham was subsequently accused of improper practices and a fresh election was held in 1785.

224 Sarah, wife of Thomas Lyons of Old Park.

225 Possibly a daughter of George Portis, who married William Benson.

107 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [136]

Dear Matty, I write merely that you should write to me. This place is barren of everything but children. I wish to know by return of post how you are at present and any other particulars which you may think proper to tell me. I asked you lately at what time M[argaret Jones] was to leave Belfast and you did not inform me. With regard to Mrs Smith's complaint, I should imagine that a trial might be made of an infusion of the bark rendered pretty sour with weak spirit of vitriol with which she ought to wash her mouth twice or thrice a day. This is directed to a slight complaint but it may turn out a very serious one.

The weather has set in here very severely and as the frost promises continuance I would wish for my skates by the first opportunity. C[ornet] Scott has kept a croaking for some time past about our barnacle²²⁶ in Belfast Lough, which he assures me are the finest in the world. I wonder if it could be possible to get one or two fine ones conveyed from Belfast. I would wish to make him a cheap compliment.

Business goes on here as usual. The playhouse is to be opened this evening as a ball room and it is to be much crowded. I sympathise with Sam for the loss of his dog and the removal of the Portland administration.²²⁷ Mrs Corry and Mrs Pollock remain in *statu quo*.

Write to me tomorrow and tell me how you are, and all my friends and favourites.
WD.

226 i.e. barnacle geese, which breed in Arctic waters, and winter on the British coast.

227 Sam's prospects of lucrative employment depended on James Adair's being appointed Lord Chancellor by the Duke of Portland.

108 Saturday [3 January 1784]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [133]

Dear Will, Nothing in this family for a New Year's gift, nor any prospect beyond a hope that matters will not be worse with us – joy is and ever has been a stranger among us. The change of ministry affects me only by the malicious wish of Yelverton's disappointment but he, and such, will ever succeed. Adair I suppose has been as much deceived by the Duke of Portland, as he has repeatedly flattered and deceived me. It is a poor, very poor vanity at least in the latter where nothing could be gained, and possibly hurt been done by it. Adieu to him forever.

Mrs Harrison presented her old man with a fine son on New Year's Day. Hill Wallace¹ I believe was married last night, and gets £5,500 fortune – her brother has given them a chaise and behaves very well. J. Crawford gets Miss K[ennedy]² and £4,000 next week. He is really happy as she is the only woman he ever loved – though despair of ever succeeding and the desire of his relations tempted him to think of Miss Legg. He liked her very well and was well received, but while he visited and before he put the query, he observed a mark on her arm which ended the matter. Miss Kennedy's acceptance of him now and former refusal is said to be owing to an affair of a long standing with a cousin of her own in England. Her mother declared such an abhorrence of this match on her death bed that Miss K drew back, and would never think of marrying while he continued to wish she should not, but his being now on the verge of it herself [*sic*], she will not let him get the start of her. This is the story but not the one believed, as it's thought A. Stewart³ might have altered the whole matter.

Counsellor Hay has wrote over to have a gardener and postillion sent to him and that he means to pay a visit here next summer – for a wife perhaps. M[argaret Jones], I am told, intends going to Dublin in spring. I never see and hardly hear of her, as in the present situation of their family they choose to be retired and she joins them through choice.

There is a saying – I do not know how well or on what it is founded – that Dr Haliday is failing in his health and spirits, and frequently speaks of his life as very uncertain. I do not see this and always find him the same charming man. He has got a cough which in the morning his wife tells me is frightful and attended with spitting, but she thinks his suffocating fits are better and less frequent. The poor Ramseys have met with a severe misfortune in the death of their second son, a most promising youth, and the only one of their sons that was so. He was gone to Edinburgh for the first season and died of a fever in three days illness – he caught

1 Hill Wallace (c.1754-94), Captain 14th Foot, married Ellen Legg of Malone.

2 Maria, daughter of Hugh Kennedy of Cultra.

3 Brother of the future Lord Londonderry.

it from a patient in the Infirmary. The sheriff for Down has refused to call a meeting of the county, though requested by 300 respectable freeholders, A. Stewart, J. Crawford, etc., etc., and promises to assign his reasons in the papers. I am glad of it. The barnacle will be sent if they and an opportunity can be made to answer.

How do George and you stand now? You appeared to have conceived a resentment very ill founded, for why should not every servant try to get better wages? You talk of his costing you fourteen pound a year without considering that you can not feed any servant for ten. Your work is little it's true, but that will not get you a good servant, for such will try for a beneficial not an easy place, and with you there can be little benefit but time which perhaps cannot be turned to any. George may certainly get much better wages, and if you are quite assured of his honesty I think you would be very wrong by parting with him for a trifle, to risk getting a black-guard and one that may soon make you pay highly for him. Very few of them have honesty sufficient for a bachelor's servant. He dresses your hair, and writes well and is every way decent – take my advice and keep him if you can.

Have you heard lately from Bruce? I wish to keep you to your duty there for the advantage in your present situation is on your side, but let a just esteem and affection preserve his correspondence and not so soon in life give way to unmeaning and unsatisfactory laziness, which though at the time it appears of little consequence is often of very bad. You do not I hope expect to end your days in Newry – preserve therefore every valuable friend you have in every other place. I imagine you have given up Pollock at least as a correspondent and I wonder much at it. If you can I beg you recover him, and tell me of all these matters.

W[addell] Cunningham appears quite sure of carrying his election. O'Neill continues to blunder even on the right side, and does not appear to have pleased any side by his Randalstown members – there was certainly little dignity in his choice.

Mrs Smith was better before your recipe came and is now in her usual way. My bowels continue well and I have not had a bad night since I left Larchfield, ever dearly yours, MM

For your own credit I beg you will learn to seal your letters like a gentleman. At present they are tacked together in such a way that I always suppose them open and daubed like a shoemaker's.

109 Wednesday, franked by I. Corry

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [134]

Dear Matty, With respect to George, I have determined on a change of ministry, and he leaves on Sunday next. I am not in the least displeased at his desire of advanced wages but I will not advance mine. I will be my own minister for some time and although I hate a change of servants rather more than either the King or my mother, yet I am sure with the help of the lad in the house, I can do for a little without a *valet de chambre*. I wrote to Bruce that if he could find a boy in any of

the Charter Schools who would suit me, I would clothe him when bound for a few years, and get him initiated into the mysteries of shaving and hair-dressing.

I do not find my selfishness so much interested as not to be sorry when I hear of the decline of such an excellent man as Dr Haliday. Were he to be lost to the town of Belfast, I should be sorry even on my own account, for I could not return to that place without a good deal of reluctance, not from any great attachment to my present place of abode, but from an indifference bordering upon distaste which I feel for Belfast excepting, if I need desire you to except, my particular reasons for being attached to it. If Dr H should die it would undoubtedly be thought advisable for me to return and yet I declare I should rather stay where I am. Selfishness is too predominant with us all. I am treated, or which is the same thing, I think myself treated in this place with more adequate (a vain word) respect and attention. Whatever be the causes of it, whether it be owing to myself or the neglect of others, I have so far lost all affection for Belfast, that I should not choose to live in it, unless I had a fortune which set me a good way above professional servility, and more or less servility there most indubitably is, particularly in the first years of our professional life.

I am sensible that if I have any merit, it is not of that kind which would have the best chance of pleasing the people here with whom I am chiefly connected. It may therefore be the effect merely of party, but still flattery is successful though she be known a hypocrite. Among the Pollock connection, and that is my principal one, perhaps it may be owing to another account which I hinted to you. It has frequently made me uneasy. I can never strengthen my interest here by any serious connection. I endeavour to behave in such a manner as not to seem to think I hear the town talk, yet without the least show of preference, more than what particular respect and perhaps friendship must necessarily occasion. It would be a great air in me to appear in any respect distant – but this may be eventually dangerous. It is not nor will it ever be so.

Counsellor Hay's writing for a postillion from 300 miles distance is curious enough. I suppose he will come over as a missionary and return with a colony of emigrants. Take care you and Sam are not fascinated. I suppose he intends plucking off some rosebud such as Miss MtGomery⁴. Our entertainments here are going on in high style. Betterton has built a very elegant playhouse, or ballroom, and last night w[e] had a very magnificent ball for the enc[—] of this air-balloon who has erected this [—] merely by his own activity. The plays [—] week – it is really a very showy room [—] a well-dressed company. Our price of a[dmission] last night a crown and a guinea for eigh[t sub]scription balls. I hear from Bruce pre[tty re]gularly and am faithful in my return. [Pollock] is at Edmond Hill. I was called to his wife while she was in Newry on account of a violent sprain she got in her ankle by a fall in the street. I did not think myself entitled to a fee. They have three fine children much liker the mother and father [*sic*]. When I get free from my engagements I shall take a ride down to Edmond Hill.

4 i.e. Montgomery.

If I seal my letters ill, you spell yours worse and that is an internal defect, mine a superficial one – witness: ministry, yellverton, dispair, beneficial, benifit, triffle – sail a letter, soemaker.⁵ Every yours, W DRENNAN

I asked Corry for some franks to Bruce but he was so tedious in giving them that I did not think it worth while to ask for some to you. Do these pass?

110 Sunday night, franked by J. Dunn

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [137]

This comes to let my Newry friend know that I am in perfect health at this present writing, and have been so for a longer time than usual – yet I have been very lazy because I am in but bad spirits, and when that is the case I hate writing, for all the little pleasant nothings which make up a female's letter vanish in a serious moment – a time which too often breathes little except complaints and that is to me hateful, either of myself or others. There is not a day I am forgetful of you – for my hope, my remains of vanity, centre in you. Would you were friend to William Pitt – may the guardian angel of that noble youth shield him from the contagion of wily low-founded ambition and screen him from the craft of those dangerous monsters, North and Fox.⁶ How charming does the stubborn silence of this boy appear to me when hissed at by so many old serpents, and what resolution does it not promise? I am told he is wrong – even so he appears more lovely than his host of veterans now standing up for the constitution. To hear a North and his party on this subject and against a Pitt is really sickening. What a mercy it was for me that I had not a rhyming genius. Pitt would certainly now be a victim to it. Many are the topics I think might merit his attention were they dressed by poetical inspiration.

Is it not strange that Flood has not opened his mouth but once, and to appear laughed into silence by Courtney?⁷

I am in no way interested about Carrick[fergus] election – both sides appear sure. I cannot recollect any news since I wrote to you. Any public affairs the paper tells you of as soon as I can. Mrs Mussenden's⁸ death was lamented much by her family and friends. It was but a six days illness and called a bilious fever. She was quite sensible and pleased with the prospect of death. An express came to Larchfield, Dan set off but could not reach Dublin in time to see his mother alive. She has left all to the girls who will be well provided for – at the death of an old aunt they will have fourteen hundred a piece and a good house. £300 died with Mrs M but Dan continues one by keeping the same house for them, so that at present they will suffer little change. Jenny and Caroline are at Larchfield and Fanny comes down with Dan – they all return in a couple of months. When my mother wrote you that so much had been offered for barnacle, she meant to tell you they were not to be got, not

5 All as originally spelt in the previous letter.

6 Charles James Fox (1749-1806), statesman (*DNB*).

7 John Courtney (1741-1816), MP for Tamworth (*DNB*).

8 Daniel Mussenden's mother.

how high they were. The ice has gone too far for men to go in. I agree with her in thinking you should buy a handsome watch as soon as possible, in your profession it is indispensable. You have contrived however to spend a pretty smart sum, the first year – as much as my mother has for us all – yet I have no suspicion of your squandering and would never have parted with my servant for all the saving that would yield. Your scheme of a Dublin poor boy is the wildest that ever entered into your head. The chance is fifty to one that he would cost you at the first £2 or £3 in clothes, kill your mare in a month, then rob and run away from you. I enclose you some genuine franks for W. Bruce and beg you will inquire particularly of Sam's eyes, as I hear (with great concern) he is almost blind.⁹ I owe them a more particular attention but it is grown quite irksome to me to write. The franks you sent pass so we beg you may send them frequently. We will be anxious to hear of Mrs Pollock's recovery. Young Ned Jones¹⁰ I am told is soon to be over in order to go to Dublin College. This I suppose will make that place more agreeable to his sister. Our playhouse opens soon, Mrs O'Neill was to visit it but prefers the Newry one much. Mrs Smith is housed at present – the spitting often returns but is lessened by your recipe.

I enclose you a new game more to your taste than whist is yet in the political one, I hope you will soon get leave to play yourself. Begin (as you have done) with caution and I dare say you will soon get leave to speak like a man even in Newry for this purpose you have gained the best side first. MM

We have put on black ribands for Major Hamilton.¹¹

111 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [138]

Dearest Matty, I am just come home after having spent three days in the country and to my surprise find no letter from Belfast. Surely you might suppose that my not writing, although you owe me a letter, must be owing to some avocation in the country. Write to me a line or two as soon as you can with convenience. Mrs I[saac] Corry three or four days ago got an addition to her family of a daughter, and has recovered well. Mrs James Pollock is in daily expectation of lying in. I have been employed since I wrote last by two families who were formerly Templeton's list, and they have treated me at least, very genteely. There was a town meeting lately on the reform business. I thought it my duty as a citizen to attend, particularly as it was a national not a local business, or a piece of party work; though it turned out that none but the one party, the Stewart party, attended. I was resolved only to attend, which was sufficient to declare my sentiments on the matter, without taking the least active part either in speaking or writing on the business. The meeting was

⁹ i.e. Sam Bruce.

¹⁰ Margaret Jones's brother, later Edward Jones Agnew of Kilwaughter.

¹¹ Major Isaac Hamilton, second cousin of Mrs Drennan.

perfectly unanimous, and scarcely anything said. They appointed me one of their committee to draw up the necessary papers, which as I had attended I could not decline. All that I did in the committee was to propose some slight alterations, more respecting style than matter, in the paper proposed by one of the company. Instructions were sent to the members which contained no personal or insidious reflection. The other party don't appear in any degree displeas'd with me on this account, and I am glad it is all so well over. I have been at Morne on a call to see a Mr Houston – the weather exceedingly severe I spent a night with J[oseph] Pollock, and we are knit as fast as ever. Write to me I pray you and I shall answer you immediately. I do very well without George – if you could send the barnacle with him in his return it would be convenient. He is hired at Mr Pollock's. Yours etc., W DRENNAN

112 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MRS ANN DRENNAN, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [139]

Dear Mother, I received the packet you sent me by N. Wilson and I shall get the stockings dyed in the manner you direct. If George calls before he leaves Belfast, I beg you may remember to deliver him my skates, as the frost promises a continuance and I can get none here to fit me. If the barnacle be so extravagantly dear I should by no means think of buying them. I only wished for an opportunity of conferring a slight favour on a family to whom such a present would be peculiarly acceptable.

I shall not buy a watch for some time, as I think I have greater occasion for other things at present. I ought certainly to pay Law's expenses at least, particularly as I hear that you sent Dr Haliday five guineas. Whenever I am able I shall discharge that debt, but there are really so many unexpected little expenses necessary here that one cannot long preserve a full purse.

I have paid my half year's lodging and keeping for my mare, and cannot say that I am very much in debt. Mrs Corry continues pretty well and I fancy I shall be obliged to pass a night or two at Bessbrook with Mrs James Pollock who is particularly timid on these occasions. Matty I think has forgotten her Newry relation. I hope however you will write when anything occurs which you may think may be agreeable to me. W DRENNAN

113 Wednesday, franked by I. Corry

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [140]

Had I anything interesting either with regard to myself or others to say I should have written oftener and my silence is no excuse for yours, as anything from Belfast cannot fail to be agreeable, but our news in this place is all local and uninteresting.

I scarcely can recollect a single thing that has happened me since I wrote last which could give you any pleasure to hear of. I have my usual number of patients, and have not lost any since I wrote to you. I inoculated some children a few days ago, and among the rest Mrs Pollock's child and I go out this day to see if it has caught the infection. It is a very fat child, but will I hope pass safely through the disorder. Mr and Mrs Nairac,¹² who enquired very particularly for you, are to be there and Mr and Mrs Marsden – formerly Kitty Corry. I spent a day lately with Pollock at Edmond Hill and we are grown as warm friends as ever. His conversation gives a slight zest and piquancy to the mawkishness of my daily life in which there occurs nothing worthy of remembrance, nothing worthy to be noted down even to a sister. W. Bruce wrote me a long letter yesterday. He had the offer of Derry which he immediately refused and I think was right in doing so, as he ought now [*sic*] to banish himself in a remote corner of the kingdom. I am particularly sorry he missed an election into the national convention. It would have been a useful feather that would have lifted him above his fellows. Pollock is half a mortified man. I ride daily and yet I do not gather much flesh, but am somewhat thinner I think [—].

How is it with you? Surely you would have written to me had there been any [—] have given me pleasure. Adair is gone to Dublin and nothing doing about [—] Bristow, he will never be Chancellor, and I wish to know if there was any [answer from the] Lord Lieutenant to the letter you say was sent to him. I shall send Law [—] can but my expenses here keep pretty much the same pace with my revenue. [I have bo]ught a suit of black clothes which will cost a great deal and it is surprising how many small drafts I have on my half-replenished purse. They all say here why don't you marry? – you lose much by not doing it. But I believe for aught that I know, I never will marry and I shall die the last of my family. I can find no more to say. Adieu, and write me I beg of you at least a weekly letter. I shall answer it the moment I receive it, and tell me anything that occurs. WD

114 24 February [1784], franked by I. Corry

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [141]

I feel myself well pleased that I can inform you of Mrs Pollock's having sent into this breathing world a comely boy, and since that time has continued better than could have been expected. I am happy to hear that your health continues pretty stable since I saw you last, and I pray to God it may prove permanent, until I have the pleasure of seeing you all cheerful and happy in Donegall Street. I have but a single engagement at the latter end of this month, and after that I should wish to spend a day with you if it be convenient.

Dan Mussenden and his sister Fanny sent for me in passing through this town. I breakfasted with them, and Dan repeated his invitation to make Larchfield always my half-way house in my route to Belfast.

12 John Nairac of Dublin and his wife Rebecca (d.1806), who was a sister of Edward and Isaac Pollock.

Be so good as to look into the Peerage for C. Fox's age and tell me exactly what it is. I have not forsaken my old habit of betting and wagered that he was not forty. The town of Newry has not a Peerage to satisfy us. Give me any news particular or general, though the inanity of this place is such that I cannot answer you in kind. I expect a letter from Bruce daily as he is in my debt at least with respect to letters. I do very well without George, who cost me little less than twenty pounds in one year, the abridgement of which expense is in my opinion no trifling saving. Another town meeting here to address the King – I shall not attend it. It is surely absurd for towns in Ireland to determine so decidedly on the merits of the India Bill,¹³ and Fox as a friend to the reform, which should be our sole object, was at least as useful as W. Pitt, who I believe will not have so much weight in the new-constructed cabinet. WD

Miss Pollock desires her affectionate compliments to my mother and Sam.

115 Saturday night, franked by J. Dunn

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [142]

None of the Peerages mention Fox's age, which you will not find unless in some old magazine. Frizzle the carman set off this morning and took two fine barnacle with him for you. See that you get and deliver them immediately for they have been killed several days.

A large number of the members of the Constitution Club is just past to Carrickfergus in order to make a figure for W[addell] C[unningham] – his friends say he has been offered a seat for Belfast¹⁴ by Lord D[onegall] if he will give up C[arrickfergus] – but this, during his patriotic hour, would not do. I have been both diverted, and made angry, by a curious proposal made by Mr Hyde to Sam – a request that he would go down to Carrickfergus and act for Waddell in the same way he had done at Down – only think of the impudence of this boor – after taking upon him to resent Sam's conduct in the affair of the county, so far as not to speak or in any way acknowledge him, though a partner in trade for years, because the town might be hurt by offending Lord Donegall – now to ask his assistance. Such has, such ever will be his conduct and I sincerely wish he may be disappointed. His wife told me at the time of the Down election that Mr McTier had been of great use, and gone through much fatigue, but she had not a doubt Mr Stewart would pay him very handsomely. She was mistaken, but upon this supposition supposed Sam could be obtained by anyone. If Sam had a vote he would give it to Cunningham and had he been rich perhaps might have acted for him.

How few know how to treat a poor man – indelicate people do not, unfeeling ones will not, your good sort of folks wound them to the quick, and your overly nice ones mar it. I could instance all these in strong colours. I was but a few days in the country at Vaults¹⁵ when a lady came to drink tea with me, and to make it

13 The Portland administration had fallen on the defeat of Fox's bill to reform the government of India.

14 On Counsellor Crookshank's resignation.

15 Unidentified; the theatre in Ann Street was called the Vaults.

convenient brought a pound in her pocket. Never did I experience a feeling equal to that, that then assailed me. I thought of the intention and forbore to answer at that time, wrote an answer the next day, too delicate to be felt perhaps but enough of it plain to show that such another attempt would not be endured. A few days after, J. Hamilton sent me a present of three pounds worth of sugar. My God, I cannot even now speak of it and command myself. Here ended these well-meant insults. How presuming for anyone to take a liberty of this kind unless it was the friend of your heart. Poor people, unless objects of charity, should never be presented with any gift unless it is a trifle, valuable only as a thing of taste, or something of such importance as to make the refusal of it romantic.

Your sentiments about addressing the King agree with Sam's – he did not attend our meeting, nor would he sign his name.

Did you get your skates sent by George? Whenever it will answer you to pay us a visit you know it will be acceptable. MM

Private opinion about Fox's age is that he is thirty-six. This family all present their best respects to Miss Pollock. She sealed and franked your last letter.

116 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [143]

I hope my dear Matty will tell me in her next that her head has continued well since she last wrote and that when I see her, as I wish to do soon, I may find her better than when I left her at Larchfield. I have a heavy cold at present myself, and a most singular swelling in my chops which I should imagine to be the mumps, but they will I hope soon disappear as the frost seems at last to be going off.

I am surprised you cannot find C. Fox's age. It may be found in a moment by looking at the title Holland in Kimber's *Peerage* and you will then see the exact age of Charles James, the late Lord Holland's second son. I wagered he was not forty.

I had a letter from W. Bruce a day or two ago begging me to send him my ideas on the publication of a periodical paper by some young men of public spirit and good principle, and that he would send me his by return of post. I think the scheme a good one, if there be a good number engaged and if they continue it with proper perseverance and spirit. I sent my thoughts on this subject. He is one of twelve distributed through different parts of the kingdom, who engaged at the convention to correspond on the subject of national reform.

Mrs Pollock recovers very fast, and I am engaged only to one more in the country the latter end of this month. If I could contrive to pay you a stolen visit some time in March it would be very agreeable to me.

I beg when you see Dr Crombie you will tell him that several respectable people of the congregation here, which is greatly in want of a clerk, would be much obliged to him if he could procure one. Mr Moody would have written himself had he

thought that his slight acquaintance with Dr C would justify taking such a liberty. There is a brother of Cochran's who we hear has a good voice. Moody has compiled a new, and for the most part an elegant, version of the psalms. The clerk will have nearly £20 per annum if well qualified.

Our playhouse has opened here – an elegant house but a miserable set of performers. They are, however, to be reinforced and it is pleasant to pass an evening there. I have not fainted yet. How is Margaret McTier? It is time for her now to have some flirtations on hands. Let her make me a confidant and I shall give her the best advice *gratis*. She ought to practise the pen a little more than she does. Yours etc., WD

117 Friday, franked by John Blackwood

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [144]

Dear Matty, As you wish that I should give you the earliest advices of my health, I can have the pleasure of informing you that my cold has disappeared, and I am just returned this morning from Bessbrook without finding the least inconveniency from the badness of the day. My hands are so benumbed with cold that you must excuse my not writing very circumstantially. I wrote again to Bruce yesterday in return for the letter which I enclose. I do not know whether the affair will go on but I know that I am totally unprepared for a business of this kind. I received the barnacle which were praised as they deserved. I sent five guineas to Law yesterday with a genteel note.¹⁶ I have little medical news except that Mrs C[orry's] and Mrs P[ollock's] children are both ill and it is likely one or other of them will depart. The severity of this weather is amazing and I am a good deal surprised it has not affected you. Bruce wants me to go for a day to Dublin, but I think it would be useless at present. When I get money I believe I must buy some of the scarcer and more valuable medical books. One must have something to read here for most certainly it is a stupid place but less so in my mind than Belfast. Ever yours, W DRENNAN

Return Bruce's letter.¹⁷

118 [undated], franked by J. Dunn

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [55]

Confidential

Dear Matty, It is now, I think, nearly three years, since your attention to my happiness in life prompted you to a wish that I should fix my affections on one,¹⁸ who you thought well deserved them, and who might probably with time and assiduity on my part be induced to set a value upon them. I believe you concluded the state of my mind, at the time, to be such as it really was: that I possessed a heart perfectly

¹⁶ In payment for Law's attendance during his fever in the previous year.

¹⁷ This related to a scheme to publish political papers and articles (see PRONI, D/533/20-1).

¹⁸ Margaret Jones.

disengaged, an understanding that always would set superior value upon, as it must derive the most permanent pleasure from internal accomplishments, and a turn of mind in general less susceptible of ardent feelings and first-sight fondnesses than many, but as tenacious of sincere, constant and principled attachment as any. As far as I did go, and as much as I could see, I approved your choice; and if that approbation was more cold, or more silent than you expected even from me, the same knowledge of my disposition must have disposed you to attribute it in a great degree to the want of that familiarity and intimate correspondence which never fails to produce warmth of affection in a mind that wishes to be pleased, and not a little to the seeming absence of anything reciprocal on her part, joined to a suspicion I could not help entertaining that she attributed my behaviour to a meaner motive than my feelings either then or since made me conscious of. I felt however that her suspicion was a natural one, and the only way in which it could be removed was, I concluded, by behaving in such a manner as that time might at least evidence my constancy, and that change of situation in life, and perhaps change of circumstances, might prove that my conduct was less selfish than possibly she supposed it. The only two ways she can interpret my conduct since I left Belfast must be by interpreting it as I have done and as I wish that she should do, or by supposing that I have dropped the matter entirely, which until I know her fixed determination more explicitly than I yet have, I am firmly resolved never to do, and this is the word of one who does not often speak rashly. In whatever disposition of mind she may be, I consider myself as inviolably engaged to her among women until her absolute prohibition has dismissed me. I have given her reason to believe that I preferred her to anyone else, and I shall ever do so, until she gives me full reason to believe that she prefers someone, or anyone else to me. I find myself however in a very disagreeable situation and as I am for once explicit I hope for your full and free advice.

You tell me that she goes to Dublin in a short time – I certainly would wish if possible to see her before much longer time has elapsed, because I think my silent submission to her former manner entitles me to try whether there may be any change in it, from which I may collect even the most distant hope of success at last. Yet I confess I should rather see her anywhere than in Belfast, for reasons which must occur to you, and indeed it is not likely that I could see her, much less see her as I wish, by going to Belfast. Tell me what you think I should do. Don't say, do as your passion moves you. I plainly tell you I am not in a passion – but I am in that temper of mind which I think, on my conscience, as strong as passion, and that would undertake as much to accomplish its purpose. Had I in time past, or should I have in time to come, any return of sympathy, I believe I am as capable of passion as I ought to be, and if love be what I firmly think it solely to be, a flower of sense merely, I think I can wear that flower longer in its original sweetness and fragrance than those who are enraptured with the outside of beauty. If she comes up, I should wish you could inform me of the time, of her company, and any other particulars which are interesting. I designed to visit Dublin for a day or two this summer. Do you think I should call on her when there? It is not probable that she will remain any

time in Newry, although I believe Mrs J. Pollock¹⁹ will be here about the time, from Edmond Hill, in order to get her youngest child inoculated. Mrs I. Corry's and Mrs James Pollock's children are better. My engagement in the country is not yet terminated, and I fear that I shall not be able to see you as soon as I could wish. No news of any kind stirring here. C[olonel] Browne and his lady are coming down here again, and I suppose they will be as civil as before. Mrs Browne is very agreeable, and likes to have someone to talk to, although she dotes on her husband. Newry does not abound with people that she can speak to, and a fourth at a whist table is valuable in the family. As I suppose you are able to counterfeit Dunn's franks, I wish you would enclose me some for yourself, as it is a favour to get any here. I hope you continue your resolution of trying the whey, and the season begins the latter end of April or May at farthest. Write to me soon and fully and believe me ever yours, WD

119 [undated], franked by William Sharman²⁰

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [145]

Dear Matty, My engagement is at length terminated, but I have three or four daily visits to make which will prevent me from seeing you immediately. I am surprised how Warren could know anything of the practice of this place, but certain it is that I have had four or five of Templeton's patients under my care, who did not receive such attendance from him as they wished, and which indeed he is unable to give by being so busy with the Dean of Down²¹ and his family. His wife was to have died this morning at eight o'clock but I don't understand that she has kept the engagement. I have not many deaths in my list – I may say not any of late – but then my practice is not so extensive. Newry however is not a place to make a fortune in, as the expense is nearly equal to a city life and the fees I fancy fall a good deal short.

Law returned three of the five guineas I sent him, with a well-written note saying that he kept the other two as sufficient to serve the purpose I intended. Dr Haliday behaved as he ought to do in Mr Ward's²² case, but I should have hurt myself by similar conduct in my situation, though my treatment should have been what I thought the best. This town abounds with quacks, both male and female, and some of my best friends are much disposed to it. I guide myself with coolness. I have not heard from Bruce lately – he expects I suppose that Pollock and I will digest some plan but that will not be the case. Pollock is turned as much a professional man as he can be, and avoids the temptation of writing. It is not friendly I believe to prompt him to it at present. He has done his share, and made his sacrifices. It is undoubted that he was offered what would have made him and his family easy for life – and I believe he would not yet accept of it.

19 Mrs Joseph Pollock (d.1789) was a daughter of Dr Conway Jones, and so a cousin of Margaret Jones.

20 William Sharman (d.1803), barrister, MP for Lisburn.

21 James Dickson, Dean of Down (d.1787); his wife Martha died at Newry in March 1784.

22 Presumably Ralph Ward, Archdeacon of Down, who died on 6 March 1784.

You say nothing of your plan for the summer. I really am greatly desirous that you should try a season of the whey and I believe Bryansford is a place as convenient for the purpose as can be found. The young girl who went there by Haliday's and my recommendation is now perfectly recovered, and as fair and blooming as ever. Old Edward Corry has had a return of his difficulty in speech and it will probably in some time turn out a fit of palsy. The Brownes have taken a house for the time they remain. Joe Pollock will I believe settle in Newry along with his brother and sister who are obliged to leave their mother and fit up a house of their own. I take a ride to Edmond Hill tomorrow to see if the child be fit for inoculation and I advance four miles towards Belfast today to dine with Arbuckle, who is not in a confirmed state of health. You will no doubt tell me any news that may occur etc. WD

120 Sunday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [58]

Dear Matty, My chief reason for not writing of late is a very simple one – merely having nothing to say, either personal or political. My patients, and they are not numerous, are as well as can be hoped for, and there is one or two in complaints of such a nature as require pretty punctual attendance. One of them is a mother so dotingly fond of her child, that I believe she would willingly expend her whole fortune in fees to the physician who would restore it to health. It has been better for some time past, and is about two miles off in the country where I am obliged to make an almost daily visit. The mother of this lady has been in a precarious state of health, and she also is very productive – but no patients require such scrupulous and seemingly serious attendance as the hysterical. I hoped ere this to have it in my power to surprise you some evening, and give a temporary cordial to your fireside in Donegall Street but I have hoped in vain. Perhaps it will be in my power to see you in a week or two – I can fix no day.

I wrote some time ago a long congratulatory letter to W. Bruce. His recovery must be very slow or I think he would have answered me ere this. Our plan of publication will I suppose drop. I feel myself incapable of it. A Hampden who would refuse paying the hearth-money tax and thus bring the great question to the decision of a jury would be of more use at present than forty writers equal to Junius. The Bishop of Derry advised the Strabane Volunteers to refuse the supplies. They should have replied to his answer and begged of his lordship to set the example. I see nothing now that can be done but either supporting a courageous individual or electing according to the convention plan, and let that real representative body avow their intention and the intention of their constituents to refuse taxes unless the reform takes place.

Tell my mother I am in great want of stocks. If she will purchase the cambric or linen for some I will pay her when I see her for them. I shall write to you on Tuesday, and I hope in somewhat better goût than I am at this present writing. Farewell. WD

121 Sunday, franked by William Sharman

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [59]

Dear Matty, I dare say you have expected every evening to see me alight at the door, but I have been and, for what I can see, will be kept by a sort of business which though it scarcely merits the title is sufficient to chain me by the foot, an unwilling slave. The hysterical old gentlewoman is become really dangerously ill. I sent her case to Plunket, who is her relation, and who showed it to Hutcheson.²³ She is now taking the same medicines with some variety of form, which she before tried without success, and I am really apprehensive, though their opinion was flattering, that she will die either of the disease or of the doctor. Mrs Boyd's²⁴ child is recovering, and the maternal interest is still greater with her than even the affection of a daughter. She smiles with one profile at me while the other sympathises with the complaints of her mother. I have three children to inoculate, Mrs Isaac Corry's youngest, Mrs Bristow's,²⁵ and Mrs James Pollock's, and two of them are at present preparing for the infection. Colonel Browne's little daughter, my former patient, has not been very well within this day or two past, but not so ill as to prevent Mrs Browne, who is really the O'Neill of Newry, from giving a very elegant entertainment and ball last night to a company of forty-three, and it was conducted as much in the Shane's Castle style as a small house could permit. The Colonel and the fair hostess attended as waiters and Isaac Corry²⁶ presided – an excellent supper, good music, and great good-humour, or the endeavour after it. The Halls of Mount Hall were the only ladies from the country. Miss Hall²⁷ asked me civilly about a patient in whose welfare it seems she is somewhat interested.

I heard from Bruce and have written again to him. W. Pollock²⁸ and Mr Read²⁹ were at Belfast this week past, and returned this evening. I did not choose to mention it, as I thought it might be troublesome to invite them, and I did not know whether they themselves would have chosen it.

I hear your patriots are again fermenting, and the wits of Newry report that they are to agitate on Saturday next, the non-payment of taxes – I should be glad to know what plot or conspiracy is in motion. Do you ever meet with Dr Haliday now? I fancy he is wanting another call to Newry. Our coffee-house is closed up here, so that I am obliged to get a peep at a paper as I can. I shall do what you say. I sympathise with you sincerely. I can do no more. I hope my mother has no intention of parting with her house on account of five or six guineas additional rent. I would be much against taking any other in the town while she can keep that one. I speak only for herself – with regard to me, I do not think it at all likely that I shall, even if I be inclined to shift a position, ever settle in Belfast. WD

23 Dr Francis Hutcheson, who died a few months later.

24 Probably Catherine, wife of Hugh Boyd (1743-1823), general merchant (see Crosslé notebooks, PRONI, MIC/338/2).

25 Jane, wife of Roger Bristow, a customs official at Newry; she was a sister of James and Hill Wilson of Purdysburn (Blackwood 14).

26 Isaac Corry the younger, MP for Newry, who was her brother.

27 Daughter or sister of Roger Hall of Mount Hall, JP.

28 William Pollock, brother of James and John.

29 Probably James Read or Reid, who was William Pollock's brother-in-law.

122 Tuesday, franked by John Blackwood

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [60]

Dear Matty, Bruce has disappointed me and some time will elapse before he can come down. He tells me that he proposed to exchange pulpits with Craig³⁰ of Lisburn, but Craig, it seems, is obliged to go to Derry. I think he wishes to come for a short time to the North and he says Moody has pressed him to spend a fortnight in Newry, which proposal he has not yet declined, as he may do this without being an additional burden upon his colleague. I therefore still expect him or at least to hear from him again, during the course of this week; and if Mrs Read at that time has no objection, I shall certainly get leave to take a ride to Belfast along with my friend. The weather I fancy will tempt him to leave the stench of the capital, and his friends will I doubt not persuade him to try the air of the country after his confinement. He does not write as if in spirits.

Are you improving the season? Are you yet gone to Castle Hill?³¹ Has my mother, Nancy, and Nisa any intention of accompanying you. Write to me something new, for I am wound up here like a clock on Sunday night and I run mechanically through the circumvolution of the week. If it be news to tell you that I breakfast on chocolate, or that I have bought a new coat of coarse Irish cloth with a resolution to wear it when I go to Belfast, you have heard it. If it be news that W[illiam] Sinclair³² is to be married to C[harlotte] Pollock next month, you and this town have heard it. The old lady is recovered and she with Mrs Boyd go down to Bryansford. I like these people because they like me, and if I did not fear to hurt their delicacy, I would write a note to Mr Boyd and request to dine at his table, for I can't say I much admire my mess-mates and the entrance to our mess-room is a perfect purgatory. I would readily pay what I do at present, 16 guineas or even more, to have the quiet satisfaction of sitting down with a decent, orderly family – but I doubt it would not be well received. Boyd keeps a hardware shop, but he is really a genteel man who thinks himself so. The children I inoculated seem to be doing well and Anne Corry³³ is quite recovered. Tell my mother that the ruffles of my shirt are almost in as bad repair as my stocks. If she be idle, I will fetch her some of the worst to amuse her, as she has the cambric ready bought.

Ann Buntin is in Dublin, Bruce says, but I only saw her once – indeed, says he, for some time past I have paid few or no visits. He has been out at Mercer's³⁴ for a week. I suspect he thinks himself ill – but I beg you may not mention it, as he I am sure would not wish that such a thing was supposed. I still hope to see him the latter end of this week or beginning of next. Pollock often passes through this town, but seldom calls. I am now better acquainted with his lady, with whom I have held of

30 Rev. Andrew Craig (1754-1833), minister at Lisburn from 1782.

31 Castle Hill, a house outside Belfast on the Newtownards road, near Cabin Hill which the McTiers purchased in 1785.

32 William Sinclair (1758-1807) married Charlotte Pollock in August; she was a younger daughter of John Pollock of Newry.

33 Anne, a daughter of Isaac Corry, senior.

34 Rev. Dr Alexander Mercer (d.1794), of Dublin.

late a medical correspondence. She appears a very sensible woman. I really believe Pollock is unconsciously prejudiced with the petty party spirit of Newry, and cannot bear a man to be intimate with his uncle's family and the Corrys. WD

123 Half after seven o'clock

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY, BANBRIDGE POSTMARK], TO NANCY DRENNAN, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [203]

Dear Nancy, I have just time to tell you that I am safely arrived on horse back after a pleasant day's journey and much less tired than I expected.

I fear I forgot Miss Kennedy's letter. If so, look for it and enclose it by tomorrow's post. No enquiries of any great consequence, I suppose I have lost a guinea or two in Newry as well as in Belfast. I have not yet time to pay any visits nor will not till tomorrow. Let you or Matty write when convenient and I shall be punctual. Ever yours, WD

If Bruce comes to town tomorrow tell him of Crombie's approbation of the scheme. Tell him I wish he could meet him, or at any rate let him leave a sketch of his plan behind him that something may be done in his absence.

124 Saturday morn, franked by J. Dunn

MARTHA MCTIER, CASTLE HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [100]

Dear Will, This letter will be disagreeable to you because it is to advise you to let Sydney die, or if he is thought worth reviving, better by any other hand than yours, for as you are generally known or suspected to be the author, as such you will be supposed to feel the little mortification of not having it bound up in the H—³⁵ collection, whereas it was the greatest compliment that party could pay it, to leave it out. Who would think the best election papers worth a second reading — the address to his lordship may perhaps induce it as that is new and I daresay good — but probably very severe and might not that hurt you with many of your friends — but as I did not see it I am speaking in the dark. It certainly ought to be very well wrote and matter in it without slashing or hacking to command attention now — and when the author is known the work should be to his honour.

Have you sent for Dr Haliday to Newry? I hear he is gone there to a Mr Brown — you may send the waistcoats by him. How is your intermissions? I think you would do well to take the opportunity of being with the Doctor of mentioning it to him. Atkins has sent a proposal to Mrs Siddons of a £100 for three nights and Dr Haliday has wrote to Mrs O'Neill for her interest. If it succeeds I hope you will be able to get down at that time.

I saw Bruce on Tuesday and prevailed on Crombie to meet him the morning after — who told me they were together several hours and the result I believe is favourable

35 ? Hillsborough.

to your scheme. He is to write to you, but last week and this he has been engaged in country sacraments. One thing I hope your paper will be consistent in breathing no sentiments but the most liberal in regard to religion. Write soon, MM

Sam mentioned it to Dr Haliday who approves of it and thinks Campbell³⁶ of Armagh would be a good assistant.

125 Sunday, franked by J Dunn

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [158]

Dear Matty, Are you all asleep in and about Belfast that I have not received a line from you this fortnight – not even from my mother who I fully expected would draw upon me for the making of my shirts, for which I find myself greatly necessitated.

There is certainly something to say about the Belfast review and debates about the Catholics. It went here against them by a considerable majority. Lord Charlemont I think cannot be a selfish man, for he is deliberately wounding his own popularity. He deserves still the compliments due to our general and he got them. Derry I suppose will give him a lecture.

I hope Nancy is gone out to the country and that you both use your diligent endeavours to gain that health which both must have or neither.

Crombie's promise to write to me is not come to pass. Dr Haliday when here approved much of the scheme but I fear it must lie over till Bruce returns. I do not think there is sufficient fund for such a work. Does Mrs Siddons come? The Dublin mob may perhaps scare her. The capital is heating like wet grass – I wonder if it will take fire. The regiment stationed here is ordered to march tomorrow. I am sorry for it, as the officers were agreeable men and moderate. I have been at Carlingford, but Mrs Moore³⁷ bade me wait. Ever yours, WD

126 [undated], franked by J. Dunn

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [152]

Dear Matty, How much am I obliged to you for your long and circumstantial letters. If your body was as strong as your mind seems to be vigorous you would have one of the soundest constitutions in Christendom.

I received your last on my return from Carlingford. Mrs Moore has gotten a daughter: I came in time sufficient and had occasion to make only one previous visit. I shall probably go down there tomorrow and if a slight appearance of fever be abated I shall not probably have further trouble. The ride is rather long but not disagreeable.

You have pleased me and complimented me exceedingly by asking me for money. Perhaps you thought you gave me an opportunity of saying what I would do, had I

³⁶ William Campbell (d.1805), Presbyterian minister of Armagh (*DNB*).

³⁷ Mrs Martha Moore (d.1803), daughter of Edward Corry.

it in my power. I like your cabin scheme much – I think with your taste you could make it an elegant retirement and with your company an enviable retreat from the bustle of the world about you. I have always had a fanciful poetical idea of a cabin in its situation and peculiar ornaments which I never saw realised. It would be your delight and rational amusement. I earnestly wish you would look round for one that would admit of such cheap improvement as might easily be procured and then your proud competence would come into play. Let it not be on the road to Belfast, yet not far from the town. I for my own part hate the place, and if Sam could break those habits of acquaintance with the men that have no friendship in them, habits which often bind the strongest and best minds, if he could break them as easily as I could, he would hate that town too. I am neither disappointed or disgusted, and I can live with some pleasure from it, even now that it contains the most that I love in the world. But the cabin is much to my taste and as for sinking in the appearances of life you may tell them that your brother is not ashamed of it. Your husband I am sure has sense above such false and beggarly pride. Is there any shame in living the whole year in a neat cabin which is preferred by your fine folks in the half of it? I have at present fifty pound at your service, and by the time that the year is out I hope to have fifty more. I entreat you very earnestly, without speaking of it to Sam or to anyone, to look round for a spot which might be purchased for such a sum and perhaps with some small annual rent – and purchase it as soon as you possibly can. I can send you the one half tomorrow if you please. Such a thing will amuse you, wean you if necessary from the cares and anxieties of this world, improve your health, and perhaps induce Nancy to commence the contented *Veterona*³⁸ of the modest little mansion. I most perfectly agree in all your ideas of office-hunting. It will keep you and Sam in a continual agitation of mind though you think it cannot and you ought to wait without expectation or seeking after anything. Enjoy yourself and all about you while you are in this world as well as you can.

The Belfast paper says Mrs Siddons is not to come down, perhaps from a later account than yours. If it be so, tell me as soon as you can. Little news here of any kind. The Miss Pollocks are gone up to Dublin this morning preparatory to the wedding. I suppose it will soon take place and then my mother will have an opportunity of returning the civilities she received in Newry by entertaining the whole family in Belfast.

Lord Charlemont liked the Newry address much, I suppose because I drew it up. I went to the meeting along with Captain Black, the voting delegate of the Roman Catholic company in this place. The division in favour of the Catholics, after a short debate in which I took a small part, was very trifling, about eight or nine. I went away and in my absence was named one of the committee to draw up an address which met at nine o'clock and I then submitted the address, which after some cavilling from Dawson was adopted verbatim. What is not usual, I pleased all parties and was complimented by both for my prudent behaviour, by the one for

38 A character in a book which the Drennans read as children.

doing what I could when I could not do what I wished, and by the other for drawing up an address suitable to their meaning. I feared some positive resolution against the Catholics from Dawson, and he might have got it easily carried through by the majority in the morning, but at night I thought they listened to me with much greater attention and I think I might have carried a separate resolution, not putting it in an address which would have been impolite to Lord C, but stating that a gradual extension of civil rights to RC[s] would be of advantage etc. The utmost that is meant is to give right of voting to persons qualified with £50 a year, which would embrace not more than 500 or 1,000 papists, and if dissenters have some of their body even in parliament, I know not why Catholics should not have a few also. It is a most serious subject and I did not venture to give an opinion on it. Pollock is a moderate man here. Jones is a madman in his assertion. Dear Matty, remember the cabin and set about it immediately. WD

127 Friday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [150]

Dear Matty, I have waited with some impatience for an answer to my last, and I should allow you to curtail the length of your letters, if you would send them oftener. Surely the postage does not prevent you. I wish Mrs Siddons had come down about this time as I have been in great part quite disengaged and perhaps when she does come, I shall be necessitated to remain here. Some wise ones maintain that she will not come down as her state of health is so indifferent.

Mrs Moore recovered very well. I fear Mrs James Read will keep me here about the beginning or the middle of next month. Pollock and his lady are come down and intend I believe to reside at Edmond Hill near Newry. I am glad of it as it is rare in this place to find a companion with whom you can converse. Bruce I find will be in Ireland in a short time, but I don't think it probable that he will come by the North. The Pollocks are come down from Dublin and the marriage will I suppose take place immediately. They will in a few days after set off for Belfast. Is M[argaret Jones] going or gone to Ballynahinch? I hear Mrs Mussenden is ordered to drink that water by Dr Haliday. If so, I should not imagine that she was consumptive.

I have been dining with different people these six days successively, and find it pleasant enough, yet not so much so as not to make me often wish for some change in life, though if it must be so, I shall live and die in this place without murmuring. I am fitted for a higher situation but not for one much higher.

I hope and trust you have obeyed my directions in looking out for some place of residence which may be agreeable to you. I have told you what you may command from me at a moment's warning, and I don't think that £50 is a bad saving in little more than a year and a half practice. I believe it will never be in my power in this place to save much.

I must again beg that you will write to me weekly whatever may occur that comes to your knowledge. I am in very good health – no intermissions which I know are merely nervous. I ride out as often as I can with convenience, and I hope, if the Siddons does come down, to meet you and Sam in better health and spirits than I was when I saw you last. WD

128 Monday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [101]

Dear Matty, I received your letter of Sunday night and as N. Wilson returns this day or tomorrow morning, I take the opportunity of saying that I am very sorry Mrs Siddons cannot come to Belfast for I had fixed my mind on seeing you sometime in September. However that may still be accomplished though she will not serve for an excuse. I fancy you have not received the letter I wrote on Friday or you would have answered the question respecting M[argaret Jones]. Were she to go to Ballinahinch, might I not call on her there as I have done in Belfast?

I do not like carrying my gold longer about with me, it is so heavy and I don't care to trust it to a drawer. I have therefore sent forty guineas with N. Wilson which I desired him to keep for me until called for – send therefore to my banker when necessary.

There is a young Miss Jenny Ogle, one of Mrs Ogle's daughters in the Square, who is this day gone down to Belfast. I think my mother or Nancy ought to go and see her as I owe obligations to her mother and I am sure she would take it well. She goes to Mrs McKedy's³⁹ as she is an acquaintance of her daughters. What you say of Miss Banks's⁴⁰ case is curious – if the fever was from the first nervous and accompanied with a lax,⁴¹ Ja[m'es]'s Powders was bad – I never use them, nor ever will unless insisted on by friends, when tartar emetic is a medicine of the same kind and which can be so much more safely applied. Wine and bark seem to have been the best medicines from the first in such a case as hers, and are always the best medicines in the latter part of fevers as they generally appear in this climate. The old practitioners are too timid in their use of both.

What would you think, Matty if I had an offer of [—] ⁴² WD

129 Tuesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [102]

Dear Matty, I gave the forty guineas to N. Wilson merely to carry for me to Belfast without any intention of depositing it for any time in his hands. I required no note

39 Probably the widow of Henry McKedy, who continued her husband's business importing potash and flaxseed in partnership with James Stevenson (Chambers, *Faces of change*, p.96).

40 Joyce Banks, died 28 July 1784, daughter of Stewart Banks, captain of Volunteers and several times sovereign of Belfast.

41 Looseness of the bowels, but the term is also used to mean a total collapse of the system.

42 Word deleted.

on that account, and I beg that either you or Sam may as soon as possible get it out of his hands – I tremble for the cash, and if either you or your husband for you be too proud to make any use of it, let it lie by you till I call for it. I have no design to put out money to interest, and I shall not be satisfied until I hear from you, that either Sam or you have got the money. If you don't choose to send for it, let Nancy or my mother do so.

You seem to expect that I shall go in what they call a geometrical ratio. I do not think so and I am a better judge than you. £200 or £250 per annum will be the *ne plus ultra* of my practice in this place, which is at least an independence. Fees are not high, and I rode fourteen miles to Kilkeel the other evening to see a young man, whose father, after a hopeful preliminary of the great trouble he had put me to, and the little recompense which was generally to be had in the country, laid me down £1 2s 9d. Ten miles for the future be the bound of my circuit unless I take a carriage, which I have done but once since I came here.

I had no call to Rostrevor, but I have been attending a Mrs Lawson⁴³ within two miles of it since Sunday sennight. She was at that time in the thirteenth day of her fever and Templeton, when it was proposed to call in another physician and heard that it was I whom her brother Campbell, the church minister here, had recommended, immediately dropped his attendance, for which he has been much blamed. The woman still survives on this the twenty-first day, her fever is less to be apprehended than a mortification which has supervened and which will require greater remains of strength than she seems to possess, though assisted by the greatest quantity of very powerful medicines, to get the better of. I have still some hopes that she may recover as such an appearance is not an uncommon termination of tedious fevers, and is not infrequently removed. Templeton has a sort of spy about her whom he affects to recommend, a young man who has never studied medicine at any university, but practices I believe gratuitously among the lower people, who in return puff him off in their best manner. I don't fall out with him which would make me appear to fall into Templeton's manner myself, but assent to little matters without ever formally consulting with him. He stays almost constantly there and I on my daily visit write down and subscribe with my name the directions which I wish to be pursued during the day. In case of her recovery I will have credit, and must submit to give him his tithe, which the good old women of the Templeton party (a very strong one here) will increase in the manner they think proper. It requires temper and if anyone ever judged me a hot man, I believe they are mistaken. This young man, one Cowan,⁴⁴ was at Glasgow when I was there on general study, and sat along with me for his degree of Master of Arts, where I can answer with a safe conscience he did not answer a single question except two and in those two I prompted him. He got his degree – I never mention that, neither ought you.

I wish much that Sam would speak to my mother to have me made a free-holder of Down and to get it done by D. Gordon as soon as she can. I should like to have a right of being present and voting at county meetings. If it is requisite to settle £10

43 Mary, wife of James Lawson of Fairlawn, Co. Armagh; she died in 1832 aged 92.

44 Cowan is not in the Glasgow matriculation lists.

yearly on me, I can see no collusion in presenting her with it again, and as she is a woman who has so much more than a qualification to vote, I think it fair that her son may have a single vote.

The offer is nothing tending to politics and I cannot nor will ever say more about it.

J[oseph] Pollock, his wife, and family are to live at Edmond Hill and he is to have an office at his mother's house here, the last place I am sure he would wish to go to, but I believe there has been some fracas between him and his younger brother, who after quitting his mother's hous[e] along with his sister, and fitting up another which was designed to receive and accommodate Joe and his family, found the place when fitted up too small, wrote to Pollock in Dublin and thus obliged him to look out for some other place, after a formed [*sic*] agreement. Yet Joe does not seem to take it ill – poor Joe – he is like *The Idler*, an excellent book but little heeded,⁴⁵ and I fear he feels the prospect of a family growing faster than his fortune or even his character as a lawyer. The Moores feed so so.

Cut this off for sake of postage, WD

Dear Nat, Be so good as to give the forty guineas you were so kind as to carry to Belfast to the bearer and believe me, yours sincerely, W DRENNAN

130 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [104]

[incomplete] appeared as much so. I then calmly expostulated with Cowan on his conduct and both he and the bystanders acknowledged the impropriety – because the patient was evidently worse I went into him and he lay in the agonies of death. I found Cowan at the hall door. He was speaking with the relation and coming forward he asked my pardon for the interference. This is a curious world, dear Matty. Had the patient by some extraordinary but not impossible event got the better, Cowan would have been hallowed in this place. I believe Templeton uses him (in a most cunning manner) to try experiments that he does not seem to sanction but which might injure the rest of the practitioners. Perhaps I am ill-natured but I smell somewhat of deep villainy in Templeton. Cowan is a good-natured fool with a dash of reading. I received his excuse with good nature and said no more. I write this account in a hurry but it is pretty minute. Bleeding in the nineteenth day of a low nervous fever with violent tremor and startings is unknown to my practice. We gave him plenty of wine in every way – it succeeded in Mrs Lawson and has failed here.

The moral of the story is this that none should be more cautious in words and actions than physicians, and it is often in the power of a person who lies on the watch to blast the fairest fame and even confirmed characters, unless those characters have prudence, which is in other words a forecast of the evil dispositions of many around you. You can scarcely conceive how much slander and low artifice is in this place, but I am not hurt by it for I am not disappointed.

45 A series of papers, chiefly by Dr Johnson, contributed to the *Universal Chronicle or Weekly Gazette*, 1758-60.

Bruce is arrived in Dublin and has written me a letter relative to the publication plan, which must at least for some time be laid aside. I see the spirit of Antrim is roused. It should do something good but never surely was there a greater absurdity than the Belfast petition to beg the King to reform a constitution, according to the plan of an assembly which did not exist and which would not be itself a fair representation of the people. The matter was to elect delegates according to the last convention plan, and to petition the King that by a message to the House, or in whatever mode deemed proper, he might bring the parliamentary reform himself. Then it might legally and formally pass. The Catholics certainly have hurt us, but all now acknowledge the necessity of a reform and a few years will probably bring it about. Young Is[aac] Corry, who is really a clever fellow, rode up to me the other day, and with a face of much political anxiety says, dear Doctor we must lay our heads together about this reform, but let us wait till after the assizes when our party may be strongest, I wish for an hour's conversation with you some morning. I told him he might fix the day and hour. I rode off and he proceeded to Foster's⁴⁶ where he has remained for some time past and the reform is I suppose the last of his thoughts. He is laying out a new town here consisting of two fine streets and a square which will I doubt not be taken in a few years. Yours, WD

131 Sunday night

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [103]

Dear Will, I was going to thank you for your two letters, and the agreeable account of Mrs Lawson's recovery, which I impatiently wished to hear of and think it has been one of several lucky events which you have met with in Newry, but observe I will not thank you for them, for though the inside was the style of a gentleman, the outside of your last (but one) was the only public affront I ever met with.⁴⁷ But I ask your pardon – you meant to make me a compliment of three pence, in a manner never before thought of by anyone, or to anyone, above the station of a servant. When you make a present, either let it be an elegant trifle or not less than forty guineas – for you and everyone else will believe me, when I assure you that the latter would hurt me much less than having my letter paid for. You think I am angry, and you are right – first at your doing a vulgar action, fit only for one of your well-meaning blundering folks, and next at such a cover with my name on it being in the post office for two days. I can scold you – any other would have made me cry.

What sort of a half thing is this Cowan – and how, or in what quality is he admitted – does he keep a shop – or is he even styled doctor by courtesy? Had you missed that proper opportunity of giving him a severe reprimand, you would have been much to blame and I was pleased to think I heard it. We have certainly no such fellows, nor no such doings here. T[empleton]'s behaviour is so gross and now, by consulting

⁴⁶ John Foster, Baron Oriel (1740-1828), last Speaker of the Irish House of Commons (*DNB*); Drennan wrote to Bruce on the same subject on 26 September 1784 (PRONI, D/553/32).

⁴⁷ It was marked 'post paid 3d'.

with you when he is called in as an assistant, so evidently selfish and ungentlemanly, that I am curious to know how his friends can justify him. If they do, I doubt they are little better than himself and if that was not the case he certainly would not act so for fear of their censure. Have you no friend there that ever asked him the reason of conduct so extraordinary? It might be a loss to you – suppose upon your going to fix some place else, every enquiry being made, it would not sound well for a person to say you were well spoke of, etc., etc., but it was a fact that the chief physician, and an old-established one in Newry, refused to consult with you – this one that was not an enemy might say, and one that was a friend could not contradict nor assign a reason for, many would therefore be supposed. If possible this boor should be made to give one.

Hutcheson⁴⁸ caught his fever from the Nabob Calmac⁴⁹ who died in an hotel of a four days illness. This will be a fine lift to many in Dublin – did it cause any doubts in your breast I wish it would tempt your senior to the capital. I go to town on Monday to wait on Mrs Sinclair⁵⁰ and her sister. My mother had a party for Miss Ogle last week.

And is Mr I. Corry really a reform man and yet an attendant on Lord H[illsborough]? I would be on my guard with him, though his good opinion and intimacy might be both agreeable and useful to you. I am sorry I never have anything to tell you about M[argaret Jones]. It was as I guessed too late in the season for an afternoon visit here, but I find she wished much to accomplish it. A young relation of hers, granddaughter of old Pierce's, was on the point of marriage with Hutcheson of Lisburn⁵¹ when the account of his father's illness stopped it – but I suppose only for a time as the lady has a fine fortune and he now will have a good estate.

Dr Haliday has ordered Mrs Mussenden to a warmer climate but at present she cannot be got farther than England. Her being much better of a hot day is an inducement to try France, but there she will not go, the servants all dismissed, land set off[f], etc., for one year. Fanny and Caroline go with them. All the four I imagine are in different stages of a decline and poor Dan the most anxious, for a woman who appears insensible to him and all around her – she is grown a perfect statue.⁵²

Sam is in treaty about the farm, to which he is strongly tempted both from inclination and the advice of all judges here, but the man holds it higher than he thinks is right for him to give. You shall hear farther of this and the making you a freeholder in my next. Perhaps Corry wants your pen – I wish you could serve him in a cause you approved. He might be of service in introducing you to a genteel set but would this and your friendship with little Joe be compatible? Tell me what Bruce writes. Poor Sam,⁵³ I fear, is in a melancholy way as to sight, appearance and health. MM

48 Dr Francis Hutcheson of Dublin, died August 1784.

49 Lieut Colonel Jacob Camac, late collector at Bengal, died 1 September 1784 aged 39 (memorial in Dromore Cathedral graveyard); according to *BNL* he had a fortune of £200,000.

50 i.e. the former Charlotte Pollock.

51 The Rev. Francis Hutcheson (d.1814), married Mary Angelica Delacherois in 1785.

52 Fridiswide Mussenden died at Clifden, Bristol, in the following spring; the Mussenden Temple, Co. Antrim, built by her cousin and admirer, the Earl Bishop of Derry, was dedicated as a mausoleum after her death.

53 i.e. Sam Bruce.

Griffith's⁵⁴ letter met with great praise here. I think they were superficial who gave it. It offended me much, first by the most servile expression in regard to England and next by either the ignorance or rather impudence of speaking of Protestant and dissenters.

132 Monday

MARTHA MCTIER, CASTLE HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [107]

I have just received your billet which is hard to understand, except the repeated vulgar affront⁵⁵ on the back of it. Your last letter conveyed the same and justified the censure bestowed on it in a very long letter which I wrote on Sunday three weeks, from which time I have never heard from you and, but for Miss Pollock, would have supposed your pulse had intermitted altogether.

As I suppose you have got some more agreeable correspondent here I shall not trouble you with any news. We are all well. Yours, MM

133 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [CASTLE HILL] [105]

Dear Matty, I had only a desire to init[i]ate your high spirit into an immediate answer by the superscription of my letter, for it really surprised me that you who promised to be so punctual should keep silence for three weeks, and not rather suppose that the dearth of anything new here was, as it really was, the only cause of my neglect in answering your last. I have no correspondent in Belfast but yourself, nor am likely to have any. What your suppositions are I know not, but I am sure it is but supposition. I wish to hear news, but will leave you to judge of what kind will be the most agreeable.

Is[aac] Corry has just now left me after a long conference about the reform, for which he professed himself lately in a conversation, which he procured with Moody and me, a sincere friend but was an enemy to the convention. He wished for a town meeting to resolve in favour of reform, notwithstanding it was not deemed proper to appoint delegates. I could not close with this idea and we broke off. I drew up some resolutions justifying the call of convention and as an inducement appoint him sole delegate from this town. He said nothing of the resolutions, but liked the idea of his appointment as I saw instantly, and today he came with resolutions of his own, pretty much in the spirit of mine but not so well expressed, and leaves a blank for his own name as delegate. I concurred with them without much hesitation and he is gone to get the requisition subscribed. He expects opposition but I believe there will be little if any. He wants a resolution of thanks for his conduct in

54 Richard Griffith (1752-1820), MP for Askeaton (*DNB*), his letter to the citizens of Lisburn declined nomination as delegate, as he opposed even a limited Catholic franchise.

55 i.e. that postage had been paid.

parliament, which though it has been good I shall not move. Moody I suppose will move this and the resolutions. I shall I believe be silent having got what I wished, a return from a town like this and the delegate I believe a friend to reform.

I spent a night lately at Edmond Hill. Pollock will go to congress. His sentiments are perfectly Charlemontean – he thinks something ought to be done by the meeting, and it will probably be to address the King, the People of Britain, and those of Ireland. This will do well enough but what I should wish to be done is to give new life to the late convention, by planning another meeting according to the rule set down by that body. This would be trying the reform plan by practice and the meeting would then be a real representative which the present convention is not.

M⁵⁶ I hear is gone to Stewarts of Killymoon – when did she go? – how long to stay? I don't know what to say or what to do, but the year shall end i[t] one way or other.

I bought a bust of Lord Chatham for you before I recollected the difficulty of getting it transmitted as being made of alabaster. It hangs in my room but I catch no inspiration from it. I am writing a preface for our publication⁵⁷ but it goes on slowly, I am anxious, but why?

Is that an imitation of Miss Pollock's handwriting on your letter? It is ill done for she writes a better hand. Write soon and believe me ever yours, W DRENNAN.

134 Saturday

MARTHA MCTIER, CASTLE HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [106]

I don't well understand your writing scheme – however it is not now worth unravelling. All the little occurrences of the last month have vanished from my memory nor would you thank me for an account of our linen market, nor any other matters the papers have long since told you of.

I cannot even give you any information on the subject most interesting to you. Let me therefore take what I hope will be next best and assure you that I have been much better this summer than any since the first complaint in my head. It seldom aches. I sleep plentifully, though yet a degree of disturbance attends it in the morning, but free of its usual effects on my head, and I really think I have reason to hope the disorder is almost worn away though my looks do not testify it. I have walked less than usual and drank no tea during the summer.

M[argaret Jones] is where you said, for this month past, but it's probable will return soon as her brother is with her and he is to attend Crombie in town. I suppose you will soon think of spending some days in Belfast.

I hear Atkins is come to prepare for the winter and I suppose that is the time you would wish to come, and by being here on a Monday you might secure two plays and either a coterie or assembly, but I hope you will not be in the same humour for keeping yourself up you were the last time. It offended some, was laughed at by others,

⁵⁶ Margaret Jones was a cousin, through her mother, of James Stewart of Killymoon.

⁵⁷ See Drennan to Bruce, 17 October 1784 (PRONI, D/553/33).

and marked the visits you paid too strongly. This perhaps you intended but if so you were wrong.

I assisted at my mother's in entertaining your Newry friends and saw them twice or thrice. Miss Pollock has in my opinion much the advantage of her sister – neither of them are in the least striking. They both speak of you with a friendly interestedness and the former quotes you often. It was natural for them to mention every circumstance relating to you to me. They therefore spoke of the inconvenience and loss it was to you not keeping a servant – that your messages were neglected, your horse at too great a distance, etc., etc., and justly observed that it was not the way to grow rich. I was ever of the same opinion and have not a doubt but this circumstance must hurt you in people's opinion, for it has a most mean appearance and quite uncommon in this age.

I suspect Corry and cannot think he will go the convention with any good design. Nothing but vanity could tempt him, or worse, for you say he owned his disapprobation of it and yet upon the terms of being an only delegate he would comply. He has made you a stepladder and he and Moody have overreached you. I know not nor do I hear a supposition of what they mean to do in Belfast. From the names in the paper you may guess how the next meeting will be attended. Whether it is best so, or not, I can't say but certainly those usually called the better sort have nothing to do nor know nothing of what is doing in the politics of this place.

Sam is once more trying for the barrack master's place. Mr Rowley has promised to ask it. Eason has accepted 120 guineas for it but refers the conducting the matter to a Mr Fraiser, his agent in Dublin. This man told Mr Mitchell several months ago that the place was disposed of for £300 to a half-pay sergeant in Belfast – upon which the matter was given up. This proved not to be fact, at least Mr Eason never heard of it, and it is supposed the matter was not approved of with Sam by Mr Fraiser, because he considered him only as a friend to Mr Eason, but a letter goes off this day which is supposed to be in a style more to the purpose as it supposes him a rascal and offers him twenty guineas. Dun[n] has been obliging in this affair, which probably will turn out as all the rest have done. None caught such hold of my affection as the cabin scheme and that too I see will melt away. Have you no news from Bruce? Is your publication plan quite settled? You see how little Crombie's words are to be depended upon, but if his assistance would be material you ought to make another attempt and make him write his words.

The Bishop of Down⁵⁸ has offered Mr Garner⁵⁹ £1,500 for his house – think of the bargain Mr Maxwell has thrown at his foot. He continues to call here and be civil. I wish they would choose him a delegate, though [he] says nothing shall tempt him into public matters again. His first step was indeed a mortifying one and he now once more levels all his wit against patriots. George Portis⁶⁰ has got the living of Hollywood and it is supposed Lord H[illsborough] has promised Hill Wilson⁶¹ a

58 Rev. William Dickson (1744-1804), Bishop of Down and Connor.

59 Probably Joseph Garner, later of Castle Hill.

60 Rev. George Macartney Portis, son of the Donegall agent.

61 Presumably Hill Wilson of Purdysburn (d.1814), although he did not go into the church.

good one, for it's said he is going into the church immediately and has already cut off[f] his hair. It's to be hoped he will not have much action in the pulpit for his hand might be a satire on his situation.

I had no thoughts of imitating Miss Pollock's hand, which I do not admire. Your letter was wrote on paper where I had been writing an ode which I intend publishing, but chose to send it to the press in a feigned hand. Did you see any of the Mussendens on their way to Dublin? This week they proceed to Clifton. Miss Bruce⁶² has taken Fanny's place as it is thought that will contribute more to Mrs M[ussenden]'s comfort. Her peace of mind is some how quite gone. It is thought by many she is husband-sick. This I do not believe, but must own if her temper and mind does not alter much for the better, her death cannot be regretted. Fanny Mussenden, Jenny and Peggy Greg⁶³ go to Bath.

Nancy has been here since Monday. I shall be sorry to leave Castle Hill but as it's not yet set possibly I may get it next summer, but oh it's a vile, mean thing, to be so tossed about through other people's habitations at our time of life. I believe I told you Sam had offered 50 guineas for the farm. He wishes for it yet fears to take it, which makes me not dare to urge it. I am grown a coward.

We have been here near six months and our expenses will not be above £30 and yet we have had society enough, my mother and Nancy with us a month at one time, and Margaret⁶⁴ staying often. Does not that promise pretty well? – but alas the scowling eye of indifferent friends and their ill-omened, cold, tasteless proverbs satisfied that one gets their daily bread anywhere.

135 Thursday, 14 October, franked by J. Dunn

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [112]

Would you give 3d to know the delegates for Belfast? It is only halfpence a piece and one over, for we have appointed five, Lord Bristol, Bishop of Derry, the Rev Mr Kelburn,⁶⁵ Presbyterian minister, Counsellor Stewart, Robert Thompson, merchant, and Henry Joy, printer – if these are not an aggregate of knowledge the deuce is in it. If the choosing Lord Bristol to be a party in what relates to representation of the people be not wrong, I think these incendiaries (as they are now called) have done very well. They have appointed smart men who espoused their cause and stick to it, now that it's out of fashion – for it is really so among all the higher class, and the next, and next, gib and ape the sneer of their betters, or smile in silence at the list of names which now appear to consider of a parliamentary reform and the affairs of the nation.

I never was hurt by public matters before but there is a laugh gone forth and easily kept up by those who, in my opinion, have betrayed a good cause that once had the

62 Probably her aunt.

63 Daughters of Thomas Greg.

64 Margaret McTier, her step-daughter.

65 Rev. Sinclair Kelburn (d.1802), minister of the Third Presbyterian Church at Belfast.

voice of a nation in its favour, and it is not to be borne coming from such. What is become of that torrent of patriotism which, in a rush over the whole land, promised to bear down all before it had it reached its height, and must it decline so very rapidly, not surely without some deep concealed mine which though powerful is yet unsuspected. W[addell] Cunningham refused to sign the call for the meeting – he goes to England so has not time to serve the county in convention. Dr Haliday refused to sign it because he would not go to the meeting. No one said why, but the day is over and well it is when the Doctor is the only man who can draw up resolutions and patriotic toasts – therefore these kind of meetings have lost their charm. Who else were applied to, I know not, but you read the list and Counsellor Dunn said of the Dublin one, he did not know five names – perhaps so much the better. The laugh is also much against your Newry resolves and your making some silly affair of a merchant in Cork a subject for one. It is wondered Mr Corry would have signed his name to such, but I think you told me they were drawn up by himself.

I was coming out of my mother's yesterday when I met Mrs Portis, a genteel-looking woman and a gentleman who, while I spoke to Mrs Portis, stared so at me with a smile on his face that I supposed he must have been some acquaintance I had forgot, but giving him another look and not recollecting him I construed his smile into a gamemaking one, and found out afterwards it was Mr Pollock and his lady.

Mrs Sinclair is so sick she is often forced to send apologies where engaged.

Hill Wilson has set Purdysburn to the Bishop of Down. Jack Hamilton was near killed yesterday by a piece of timber falling from the top of his house on his head. He has escaped however with a cut of three inches length on his temple. Margaret McTier has had several returns of a severe colic and is now in a confirmed jaundice. This is the second long letter unanswered. MM

136 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [113]

Dearest Matty, Many thanks for your letters. I am in much want of them and I wish it were in my power to return any thing for them but gratitude and affection. A requisition was sent to A. Thomson, seneschal of this town and agent for Nedham,⁶⁶ to call a town meeting and he refused on the pretext of not being satisfied with regard to its legality. The spirit of the subscribers has been so poor that the refusal, instead of stimulating them, has silenced them completely; and Corry who did not sign it went off in a day or two after to enact plays at Shane's Castle. There will therefore be no meeting here, and I believe it is better so.

You surprise me with regard to Margaret McTier. A confirmed jaundice is a disease very uncommon at her time of life, and I make no doubt it will soon be removed. I should wish to hear some account of the manner she is affected.

⁶⁶ William Nedham (d.1806), owner of an estate in Mourne and Co. Armagh, including the town of Newry; Acheson Thompson (c.1738-1818) was his agent, and seneschal of Newry.

I am about to follow your advice in taking a servant. It is not absolutely necessary but I allow that it looks well. I will not be able to get one under four guineas per annum and I shall diet him at the house where we have our mess. I shall endeavour to keep him neat and to have my horse kept so. There was a very neat small house set here a day or two ago to Mr Ricketts, a gentleman from New York, for £16 a year with stable, etc., etc. With a little furniture and that easily procured, it would have done well for me but I really find it disagreeable quitting a place where the people are civil though my rent here is £20. If you choose to draw on N. Wilson do it quickly for I will not allow the money to remain idle. My next visit to you I shall be attended with my servant in style. I should like to hear when I can come most pleasurably. Mrs Read's accouchement will happen about the beginning of next month. I am a little afraid of her but she has good spirits. D[an] Mussenden called on me for a minute but as they were just setting off, I did not see his wife and indeed did not wish to do it, as he appeared very much affected and would probably have been reading my countenance and asking me questions.

I wonder that the minister's correspondent was not honoured with a delegation. I hope something of consequence will still be done. The Roman Catholic question was our ruin but if the reformers had not pretended a wish for alliance with them on the grand question, government would have anticipated the Volunteers and made the Catholic Volunteers act against the Protestant. Why the devil does Flood and such men as he act the silent men before these meetings and not give that previous advice might make these meetings serviceable? We are lost – but the time will shortly come. Dear Matty, I am incapable of speaking as much as I think on this question. Tell me somewhat of M[argaret Jones] and I with Dr Price withdraw from politics. WD

137 Thursday

MARTHA MCTIER, [CASTLE HILL], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [110]

Dear Will, That my letters are acceptable to you I can easily believe but that they should be necessary I do not desire for many reasons, one of which is that even stupidity would not then be a sufficient excuse for silence. Indeed it is seldom one to those we love, for to such we can be pleasing (on paper at least) without much aid either from the head or fancy.

I am yet at Castle Hill, nor can we bear to leave it and I suppose it will not be till our usual friendly anniversary that we again encounter the town scene, which every day grows more and more disagreeable to me – not to mention the feeling reasons – I begin to loathe the society of it and could I but obtain the intimacy of one or two sensible friends, not cast in the insipid mould of sameness by which every creature tries now to fashion itself, and which can so easily be arrived at without either sense, taste or true politeness, I would willingly resign for them all that is in Belfast called company or amusement.

An eternal round of cards, the same game, the same company, the same prattle without either fancy or inclination for anything new – I once thought our women were better than common but I recant, any of them that were so are either gone or carried away by the little fashion of the little place, where you may be for months in what is called our best company without hearing a book named, an opinion stated, or a sentiment introduced, which could give rise to a conversation interesting to anyone above a chambermaid. So that when the news of the day fails (and politics must not now be among it) there is nothing left but the card table, where happily all are equal. Here I can bear my part so that disgust does not in me arise from envy – in this place then and among this society where the paltry competence of a hundred a year cannot be obtained, we drag on life surrounded by those whose wealth makes them our betters, in a dependent state too, without a single pleasure and a high relish for many, without daring to leave it in pursuit of better, and rendered cowardly by an affection to friends, to whom I yield little, and from whom I gain little pleasure – strange fatality.

The affair of the barrack master will or has ended like the rest. The Dublin agent insists upon his having disposed of it to a friend of his own and though this is a lie, it must be submitted to. W[addell] Cunningham has, through Dr Haliday, made Sam an offer said to be advantageous, of settling him in the West Indies as factor for the estate of the two worthies there, which with consignments of ships from this, etc., etc., has enabled a young man who t[hey] sent out about three years ago, to request being recalled on having made his fortune. How tempting this sounds, and for what should it be refused? I cannot keep my friends from dying by being here, and if I go before them, let it be any place but with them. Three years ago I would have had the same objections, yet now they would appear vain and we might have been near returning, found all our friends as well, been out of debt and independent. Cunningham is gone to England and Sam is not required to give an answer till he returns.

We do not hear much news as we seldom go to town and since winter set in see little company. The last I got was that there was a petition handing through town and signing to Lord Donegall requesting he would not oppose Mr C[unningham] at Carrickfergus – the meanness of the measure is suitable to the object who I suppose does not attempt to carry on the farce further. He forbade his name to appear in the papers as an opposer to the grand jury resolutions, he refused to sign the requisition for a town meeting on the reform, he accepted the delegation for convention but would not attend, and this is the object of a petition to a lord from the Belfast patriots.

This same little lord has sent ejectments for Stewart Banks, H. Heyland⁶⁷ and A. Buntin.⁶⁸ Heyland's affairs are put into trustees' hands some time ago, Lillyput and all to be sold, which is said will pay his debts and leave him £40 a year, which in my opinion is plenty for him. Dr Mattear is in for £1,600, but suppose he will get it.

⁶⁷ Hercules Heyland, brother-in-law of Dr Mattear; Lillyput was a house on the outskirts of Belfast.

⁶⁸ Arthur Buntin (d.1803), later Barrack Master of Belfast.

M[argaret] is returned and that is all I know of her. You need not be told that you will be welcome to us whatever time you choose to visit Belfast. I am glad you have got a servant. I hope he is honest and sober, everything else you want is so little you may make him it. Is it possible you ever wore that shirt that you sent to be ruffled – I supposed it to belong to George, but do you not think he has one of yours in place of it? What is the reason you never mention Bruce? I suppose your correspondence is interrupted by your laziness. There was a letter lately from Dr Scott – he says Brown from Ballymenagh arrived there the very day after the death of an eminent physician, came immediately into all his practice, and has more than he can possibly attend to.

You appear to me always to repine at not making a figure or gaining fame – but why not if you are deserving of it? Sure you cannot think it is to be obtained by wishing, and what sort of fame have any of your profession ever gained, that you may not if you deserve it, or whose name among them is ever heard of, but by their friends or patients? At your time of practise to have a professional name is not to be supposed unless it was in a country town, but I suspect much this is not the one you are most ambitious of. If it is literary fame why don't you try for it?

Fevers are very common here, you have seen some deaths in the paper. Harden⁶⁹ died of an inflammation in his bowels, for which he at first took brandy by his own prescription, and then port by Campbell's,⁷⁰ Haliday came in time to sign the warrant; Bristow to give the sacrament, and Val Jones to write a long will, by which there was above £4,000 bequeathed to a poor mother and sisters – but among them the wretched man was so exhausted he died before he could sign his will and all now goes to an elder brother. Poor Mrs Smith can just crawl and though without repining her spirits are fled. You will perhaps see her once more.

I know too little of Miss Pollock but I can't help it. I expected she would return my visit, but as it was not seconded by an invitation and she did not bring a riding dress here, I excuse her. I never heard the report you mention and would be sorry through ignorance she might be led into such a choice. My paper allows of no more than to entreat you to write to me immediately. MM

M[argaret] McTier is recovered.

138 Saturday

MARTHA MCTIER, CASTLE HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [122]

I put off writing until I could with certainty name a time for your coming here which would be agreeable by having a public place where you might most probably meet those friends you are most anxious to see. I began to despair of being able to do this, the coterie and assembly being poor and uncertain, and part of our playhouse having fallen, there cannot be any acting for some time. By the by, if Mrs Siddons had come it would have been tragedy in perfection. By chance, an opportunity now offers which, if you are at liberty to catch, will allow you to spend an evening just

⁶⁹ Probably Thomas Hardin, a founder member of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce in 1783.

⁷⁰ Probably John Campbell (d.1804), merchant and banker.

as you wish. There is to be a consort on Thursday fortnight, unequalled by anything of the kind that was ever in the North – how and by who etc., the paper will inform you. There is to be a ball afterwards, the tickets are a crown so that it will consist of the genteelest company and no doubt all the musical ones.

I think this entertainment will be far the most pleasing and convenient you can get and wish much it may be in your power to come to it – but do not wait till that day, come at least the one before it, for you will be tired and look like a devil. On Friday evening you may have a male party at the card club consisting of all the gentlemen of your acquaintance, old and young. I have given you the best plan I could. Your future one may turn on trifles and therefore it may be proper to mention one to you here. Some months ago Nancy mentioned to me having met Mrs H[arrison]⁷¹ and that she thought her remarkably dry. This made me pay more attention to her behaviour to myself. The other night at the friendly I had not been in her company these six months before, and as she always was rather particular to me, I kept off and waited for her usual attention, but it did not come and I did not seek it. From this no judgment can nor ought to be formed. It is by the manner to yourself but not by hers you must form your opinion.

We are yet at Castle Hill, nor do I think time in the least tedious, though we are now seldom out and seldom see anyone. Pity for a melancholy pair in Donegall Street⁷² took me in for a few days last week, but it would not do, I looked ill, all was silence and I got home again determined not to leave it till your arrival. Write to me therefore immediately and tell me your determination and write to my mother so that she may get it the day before you set out, and I may be in town when you arrive.

Mrs Goddard⁷³ is the only one I now visit and often seeing her in the domestic scene raises her character, and makes her husband and seven children pitiable objects in the prospect of her loss – never was there a woman more perfect in these characters unless it is by having made herself too necessary to them. Her case seems to me a very odd one – I wish for your opinion of it but fear I cannot be particular enough. She was attacked with a feverish cold the beginning of summer, Haliday was employed but found fault that it was not soon enough. She got off without what could be called a fever, but was left poorly, fell away, had difficulty in breathing when she lay down and frequent profuse sweatings. She rode, drank goat's whey and variety of medicines, but particularly twenty drops of laudanum, at length quit all but the latter and got the better of every complaint. To me she appeared to have a false spirit, and in the mornings her eyes sparkled and she talked with a vivacity which I thought quite unnatural. She often tries to quit the laudanum, as it binds her and obliges her to take physic, and in order to get sleep, for strange it is she sleeps better the night she does not take it, though then she has no other complaint but a great drowsiness all day. Dr H has ordered her to abide strictly by the laudanum which he and Rainey M[axwell] says is bracing her nerves and keeping off her other complaints till her constitution regains its strength, and this they ventured

71 Margaret Jones's half-sister.

72 i.e. her mother and Nancy.

73 Eliza, wife of John Goddard, cousin of Rainey Maxwell; she died in February 1786.

some time ago to assert was the case. Mr Maxwell was so great a friend to laudanum that I suspect Haliday acquiesced by way of experiment and it was thought to have done such wonders that I was teased to death to begin a course of it, especially as I had the sanction of Cullen. I kept off it, and ever will, as an habitual medicine, whether by it or not I cannot say, but my opinion is that Mrs G is dying, and also of a disorder not suspected, though a family one, and that it is water some place where it should not be. She cannot rest on one side and often if she omits laudanum is like to be, or fancies she will [—] her sweatings immediately return and several other complaints. She only takes twenty drops nor has increased it since the first. Tell me what you think of this.

Having at least leisure enough here to execute a joke, I accomplished one lately against J. Holmes which was tolerably successful. He had sent out a she dog here to Sam, not knowing it was in pup, and it unexpectedly gave a large addition to my family. I therefore addressed a letter to him beginning in a most serious manner to comment on the fairness of the character he had long seemingly possessed, and my own mortification at finding it so deceitful, etc., etc., related the circumstance of an unhappy female of his coming to me by his own recommendation, all the good qualities she appeared to possess, etc., but that to my astonishment that day she had brought twins into the world even under my own roof. Nature was her only assistant – from me she had pity free of reproach – from you Sir, what has she to expect? – at least a competence for herself and a helpless family which will prevent their being parish charges. I carried on this hum through a sheet. At the close of it and after much surprise he discovered the fact, but imposed it on his wife and several friends from whom he wanted to borrow a country house, as I had assured him his brats and their mother should not stay here longer than humanity dictated. His friend did not relish the request and all refused it with some apology. Take this for want of better.

Dr H[aliday] signed the petition to Lord D[onegall] in favour of Mr C[unningham]. He seemed to wish to account for doing so to Sam. He tried it by one or two reasons to which there was no reply. This is one scandalous business we women never have to repent of, and not a man that has not occasion to blush for signing his name and making it public – at least the contrary is rare. Does your servant dress your hair or will you want a hairdresser bespoke, for on the consort night not one will be procured. Yours, M MCTIER

Do you know who is the Irish Helot?⁷⁴

139 Monday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [123]

Dear Matty, My coming at the time you mention entirely depends upon Mrs Read, and all my impatience will not hasten that matter sooner than the allotted time. She

74 'Letters of an Irish helot' (or slave), written by Drennan and published in the *Belfast News-Letter* in November-December 1784.

is at present confined to home and I expected her indisposition about the middle of this month, but am now afraid it will be protracted to the end of it. If I can I will come on Wednesday sennight. As for the hairdresser it is of little importance. My servant does not dress hair but anyone will do – for I will look like a devil at any rate. I shall expect my mother to engage one at the earnest of one shilling out of her own purse. I suppose she is grown as money-making as possible. I will write to her in the beginning of next week, if I can come.

Mrs Goddard's case is somewhat singular and would require a medical hand to narrate it. I can collect little from yours. It is very hard to speak positively in such complaints. Her inability to rest but on one side, her difficulty of breathing, and particularly her sense of suffocation at night, seem to prove the cause of her complaint lies in her chest, and I might perhaps say water in one side of the chest (which is not uncommon) if any other symptoms of disposition to dropsy appeared. Indeed it sometimes happens that there is a collection of water on one side of the chest occasioning all those symptoms you mention, without any general appearance of the same complaint such as thirst, swelling of the limbs, etc. But to know anything of the matter, a number of questions must be resolved which you could scarcely seem so knowing as to ask her – such as whether during her feverish complaint she had any symptoms of even slight inflammation of the lungs (which very frequently ushers in a disposition to dropsy in the chest), such as pain in her breast or side, short dry cough, or much difficulty of breathing? Has she a cough at present and of what kind, dry or loose? Is her difficulty of breathing greatest in lying and does the sense of suffocation come on soon after falling asleep, awakening with a start and in much anxiety? Is there any swelling of her limbs? Has she any numbness in one arm?

Is she still feverish with an unusual sensibility to cold? Is she troubled with palpitations or have you heard of anything extraordinary in her pulse? I doubt not but there may be something of asthma in the case which generally depends upon the nerves and spasms in the lungs which laudanum will indubitably relieve; but this spasm is more probably induced by some permanent irritating cause which the laudanum will not remove, though it may prevent some of those symptoms which such a cause would otherwise produce, and by lulling the action of this cause will prevent the sweatings etc., for as to the bracing effects of laudanum I am totally a stranger. Laudanum was recommended in your case from its periodical appearance, for it was thought if the return of the fit could be broken, the habit which the body acquired would be broken also, and an opportunity might be taken, in the interval, of using those really bracing medicines which might obviate any new attack. I don't think there is the least danger in using laudanum in that quantity for a month; for though it certainly weakens the stomach and bowels, yet its effects might soon be removed by bracing medicines. It is undoubtedly a poison as most of our remedies are when used improperly and yet I believe I should upon further knowledge of the case be tempted to try two other more virulent poisons, that is a combination of that kind of mercury called calomel with hemlock in very small proportions. Was she ever recommended an issue in the side chiefly affected? Did she ever use mineral

waters of any kind? Did not her mother and aunt die of water in the chest? It if be so, laudanum and indeed scarcely any other medicine will remove it when long continued. I write in a hurry and without much ground to go on.

What can be the reason of the stiffness you mention in Mrs H[arrison], I am much puzzled to comprehend. Could Miss P[ollock] have anything to do in it? That family is still exceedingly civil to me, yet not more so than I should choose for if there ever was a solitary place it is this one – and yet I am seldom an evening but in company and enjoy it tolerably. Pollock and Arbuckle are in Dublin.

I have been reading a most singular and entertaining book called the *Confessions* of Rousseau,⁷⁵ which indeed none but men or very learned ladies ought to read. It is an unique and I believe the first confessions of the heart that were ever written but the style of the original must be delightful. He was quite mad when he wrote it but his heart was as sound as ever and a wonderful display of the heart it is. The work is certainly immodest but not terribly so. You had not better however enquire for it at first hand. WD

140 Saturday

MARTHA MCTIER, CASTLE HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [120]

My dear Helot, You ended well though (if you could have helped it) too soon – at first you were not attended to and one reason was the supposition of many people that the paper was the one proposed by Wilson⁷⁶ and he had very lately tried and disgusted them. They therefore passed over the Helot.

This was not the case with the two last, and Joy did not puff in what he said of them. They were read with eagerness and pleasure, and more than your partial sister were disappointed by the last newspaper. I did suppose by the great care you have taken not to be known even by me, that something was yet to appear to make this great caution necessary – an address perhaps to some well known character, a call upon Lord C[harlemont], Flood, or the benumbed Robert Stewart, to speak to the people and direct them out of the House and if, when the character of the paper had as it has been established, you had Junius-like damned and pointed out some of the base betrayers of the people, your fame might have lived, the papers would have been collected and perhaps preserved for sake of the style. The little four will be forgot before you are known to be their author. You are here generally supposed to be he. Joy's men have been tried, but no one there knows the writer except young Harry, and as he says the paper came from Downpatrick, it has been called Nieven's, also Owen Roe's,⁷⁷ and the last was named Flood's.

I beg you will tell me whether you really wish to be unknown. If not, now is the time to reap any benefit from the discovery which may be made by a single whisper. I have been greatly disappointed in not seeing you at the time fixed, and fear when

⁷⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), philosopher; his *Confessions* first appeared in 1781.

⁷⁶ See Drennan to Bruce, December 1784 (PRONI, D/553/35).

⁷⁷ i.e. Joe Pollock's.

you are at liberty will be the season when all our public places will be shut, but write whenever Mrs Read is delivered, and the time after it you think you can leave her, and I will then name the day that may be most agreeable to you.

Mrs Brown was in Newry lately, did you see her? She could tell you much of Belfast as she is greatly admired and noticed, but could not say she ever saw one of your friends, they are indeed now quite out of the Belfast little world. Nancy's face is never seen but in the meeting house, to and from which she steals like her Aunt Young.⁷⁸ I am very seldom in town and when I am, the only visitor I see is Mrs Smith. The dullest of all houses is in Donegall Street and I fly from it to feed the birds in the country, at present the chief of my amusements. Sam is generally out with his gun all the morning, but never leaves me in the evening. We make them short by dining late and going to bed early, and if the day has not much variety the night makes that up, for in sleep sure never was a mind so active as mine and between crying, laughing, shouting, dancing, etc., etc., I have still a laborious time of it while others are at rest.

One evening during the last moonlight I was surprised by a chaise driving to the door, out of which came three ladies. They entered so cold and rolled up in great-coats I could not at first discover them to be Mrs Harrison, Mrs Smith and M[argaret] Jones. They had dined near Newtown with Mrs Brenier⁷⁹ who now lives there in a little cabin, and called at Castle Hill on their return to town, where they seemed very well pleased to get admittance.

The hearth was clean, the fire clear, the kettle on for tea – we were so affable and pleasant I did not propose cards. The evening was quite agreeable. I pressed them to stay to sup but Mrs Smith took a positive fit having left a child not well. They stayed till nine o'clock and then Margaret declared her regret at going away and mentioned afterwards how pleasant a visit she had made. At parting I went with them to the door, and while Sam was handing in the two married sisters, M[argaret] turned to me, took my hand and requested I would go out of the cold, in the kindest and most sisterly manner, more so indeed than I suppose she would if thus allied, for this is a connection where I never observe any harmony subsist.

I know nothing of the consort, playhouse, etc., etc. For once then I will leave you a bit of blank paper, only desiring you may write by return of the post and be a little more particular pray than usual. Think what a treat a letter is in my situation. I lived on the Helot for a fortnight. MM

141 [undated] Wednesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [121]

I wonder how you can place your judgment in competition with my Lord Bishop of Dromore,⁸⁰ who at the foot of his table resounded the praises of the paper you

78 Mrs Drennan's sister Elizabeth, widow of Alexander Young.

79 Mrs Brenier or Bernier was their cousin Ann, sister of William Todd Jones.

80 Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore (1729-1811), published works of poetical and antiquarian interest (*DNB*).

presume to decry, and even condescended to point out the less obvious beauties of the rest. He said that the idea of the Genius of the Constitution seated in the habit of a slave like the Danite of old between the two pillars was an excellent subject for an historical piece, etc., etc. The Constitutional Society of Dublin have I see resolved that they should be reprinted and dispersed through the seven renegade counties. It may be rant, but there is reason in ranting, and when the only argumentative paper of the set, the second, is thought so little of, it is right to suit oneself to the temper of our readers. I shall write but one more for I am woundy weary and Harry has kept me tightly to it. I do not think the Zealot⁸¹ the production of Maxwell. I rather suspect from the beginning compliment, which I know he used before in conversation, to be W. Jones. Whichever it is I really cannot reply for I have neither ability or inclination, and this is not the season to be drawn into unfriendly altercation. I should like to return the compliment but believe I cannot at present. Mrs Read is still on foot though complaining. The town of Newry is in motion – a requisition for a meeting is I understand signed by above sixty and the delegates mentioned are Brownlow,⁸² Isaac Corry, and Robert Stewart. They meet on Friday. I may attend but I think Corry's odd sort of conduct the last time will justify my silence on the subject. Scarcely anyone knows me here for the Helot and I am well pleased. I told H. Joy however that he might disclose it as soon as he pleased for I was at the length of my tether, and the fame of these petty productions is very fugitive. Bruce it seems knew the constable but no-one else. H. Joy is to receive copies from Dublin and tack to them the additional letters. This will have but a paltry look, however it is better than nothing. I fear I must eat my Christmas dinner here and it is probable will not see you till the new year. Whenever I can come, you may be certain I will come. I am much upon the ice which is excellent this year, and it sharpens my appetite, but my rest is sometimes I believe not much better than your own. We shall compare looks. Yours, WD

Answer me when you hear anything that will please me. I am not in the high spirits you may imagine with all these compliments and H. Joy is infinitely more communicative than you.

142 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [124]

Dear Will, We were all glad to hear it's over with Mrs Read and that you will probably be soon at liberty for eight or ten days. I suppose you will not venture to leave her, nor is there anything here at present particularly inducing – the coterie was last night, the playhouse is quite deserted and M[argaret] J[ones] is at Greenville where I suppose she will make some stay. There is another matter in agitation which Sam desired I might hint to you, viz. a jaunt to Dublin, but as it's quite uncertain how the matter may turn out, he wishes you not to set out for Belfast until you hear

81 Letter of an 'Irish Zealot', published in the *Belfast News-Letter*, 17-21 December.

82 William Brownlow (1726-94), MP for Co. Armagh, 1753-94.

more of it, and that I suppose you will do in a few days. I believe you are now very generally known here to be the Helot, which was only the suspicion of a very few till Sunday at the Washington, when D. Gordon said he had been in a large company in Dublin when the merit of the paper was discussed and great curiosity shown about its author, which was gratified by Will Bruce informing them it was Dr D of Newry. I came to town on C[hristmas] day and have not seen anyone but old women since. From what Sam hears, the paper has met with all you could wish, but for particulars I have none, nor now that you are known I suppose will not learn any. I have not heard of a woman who read them, the length deterred them and men also like them from engaging.

I liked your two last very well and think there is just warmth sufficient in them, though Sam says my putting rant into your head has hurt your style and Crombie fears you will spin too far and beyond your matter – you know best but you must not sink and your last touch should be excellent. Crombie speaks highly of them to us but his sentiments are not always conveyed in his words. Are you to address Down? It may not now be an easy matter as you are known. J. Crawford has been, and still is, one of its best men. If you name any such, give his due. You seem to take the compliment of the Zealot as serious – for my part I looked on the whole paper to be a piece of irony and not a bad one, but your note was the wisest answer. I would have you end in time to let the papers be collected all and distributed before the convention.

I shall write soon again with any information that I think may be agreeable. In the meantime you may consider what answer you will return if invited to represent your native town in convention. I do not suppose you will or should refuse it and as the Helot you will I dare say be received with respect. Sam and I have talked it all over. Unless some patient is dangerously ill at the time you might we think be away four or five days – at no expense as you would stay with Bruce. His introduction would be now a respectable one and every way the matter might be both agreeable and of service to you. Sam is as much interested for your fame and interest on all occasions as if you were his eldest son. McCabe⁸³ offers any bet that if you go to convention you will be tampered with by government. I wish to hear how matters went in Newry and how far you were concerned. Do they know you to be the Helot? If so I think they over-looked you. Write to me of these things when you get time. The decent inoffensive Dr Ferguson⁸⁴ died this day of a fever. Miss Caldwell is married and is now Mrs Overdon. MM

83 Thomas McCabe (1739-1820), watchmaker, businessman, radical, and a founder of the Belfast United Irishmen.

84 Dr James Ferguson, died on 29 December 1784.

1785

143 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [127]

I suppose, dear Matty, the reason of your silence is to say with a safe conscience that you have not influenced me either one way or other with respect to my being a delegate and that you leave it entirely to myself. Some prudent friends I doubt not have expostulated with you on the subject. It is needless – for accept it I assuredly will if offered. Every man must make some sacrifice, and I may as well go for a day or two to Dublin as delegate, as Dr Moody¹ who refused the delegation can come down and spend two or four days in Newry – as he has done – he came on Tuesday and goes off tomorrow. I am sure my friends here will not think much about the matter and it is a poor hold I have of their esteem if this can forfeit it. If I happen to be in company with a number of them I will take an opportunity of telling them so, and true candour in professing myself what I really am will not nor cannot hurt me – and may serve me. I will forfeit nothing but if it was to forfeit my right arm I would go, though I can be of little service for I cannot speak.

I see they are re-publishing the Helot. Do you know that I thought of inscribing it in two lines to you? This would be odd, but singularity and oddity is often right. The thing is however not worth a particular inscription. Tell me some news I beg of you, for your silence really alarms me. I am grown as nervous as yourself. The little news of this place could scarcely amuse a gnat. Yours, WD

144 Saturday night

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [128]

I knew last post you would receive a letter more worthy of your attention than mine and deferred writing till the matter was settled, not from the reason you supposed, for it was known only to one or two that you were to be proposed till the day before the meeting. It was attended by all those who now attend such places, and was flattering to you. Some suppose you will go to convention, many that you will not. Those who have asked me (among whom were Dr Haliday) I have answered, that I am sure you will be consistent – which could not be the case while you avowed the Helot and refused to attend convention. 'He will go' repeated he, as if surprised or some way hurt, but afterwards seemed to give in to what I said – if you were not engaged.

He is confined with the rheumatism. We spent the evening with him, during which he said many civil things of you, wished much that the convention might be full and respectable. If it was, he said, it was entirely owing to the Irish Helot. That was one of his toasts – he is a good patriot and in his heart reprobates R[obert]

1 Dr James Moody (d.1789), of Dublin, brother of Rev. Boyle Moody.

Stewart's behaviour but it's hard to give up those we have long approved. You will be condemned for leaving business by many here and many in Newry – you must expect it. It may be a small disadvantage or perhaps a great gain. Your character it will never hurt – leave the rest to fortune. Manage matters so, if it's possible, that you may go to Dublin with a mind much at ease and unembarrassed, with everything you can think of arranged before you leave Newry, for you will be in a perpetual hurry and fatigue. This you are not fit to bear and I do request and make it a point with you that you will spare your body more than your purse. I mean by taking chaises all the way to Dublin and in it, rather than either lose time or ease which you cannot spare, and if you were to be laid up in Dublin or even put out of spirits by fatigue, it would be much better not to go – guard therefore against it.

You say you cannot speak. I do not advise you but shall mention what occurs to me on the subject. You will be well received – noticed as a man who thinks justly and writes elegantly on the subject of the meeting. It will therefore be hoped and expected that you will speak both to the head and heart on what interests it. If you do speak then you must not disappoint them. Of your talent that way, I know little. I would suppose you may not be apt at reply – nor perhaps venture to trust yourself to it – but surely on this subject, and with the time I have given you, you may have turned something over in your thoughts – which might be proper to propose, do you credit, and prevent its being said 'he cannot speak'. The meeting, I fear, will not be so awful as you expect – no Charl[emon]ts nor Brownlows – you may not be damped, and at all events should be prepared – not to be perpetually prattling – rather never speak – but for once, at least, to deserve and gain attention.

Do not knit your brow, and construe this dictating from a woman – term it the fond wish of a sister ever anxious for your fame. There is one thing more I have to request of you which maybe you may think unreasonable considering the hurry I allow you will be in – that is to write some lines every post while you are in Dublin. I cannot dispense with this, or if I could, you owe it to your constituents. The post does not go out till twelve. You will likely go to the House after leaving convention, but have some letters ready folded in your pocket and wherever you may be, ten minutes will do much in writing and pleasing the people here. I shall end my instructions with my mother's mem[orandum] that you will not forget your great-coat, night cap, and good pocket handkerchiefs. These matters I suppose your servant attends to. He no doubt you leave behind – can he write?

I cannot suppose you gave Mr Pollock any copies of the Helot in your own hand. Do not trust him – if he goes on in the style of living he is in at present it's supposed it will end in no one doing it. It was pure spite made you threaten to put my name to a political pamphlet because I foretold that you would be Mr Rieley's follower in a magazine figure. Heaven defend me from the laugh against myself. No, when you publish your love sonnet you may devote one to the quiet affection of your Matilda. Here, the people are very sickly. I hope it's not so at Newry. You have not mentioned a patient but Mrs Read these two months – it will be hard if they

come on you now, for this would give a right to complain. But I suppose they will be very bad before they consign themselves to Templeton, and is not Kennedy gone? They will therefore keep for you I hope.

Write to me once before you go up – your plans, how the matter is taken, etc. Might it not be convenient for you to travel with two of our delegates? Thomson does not go, the death of one clerk and illness of a second prevents him. He does not like to resign and as he is some use in public matters they do not wish to force him, though it was proposed at last meeting.

I think it was poor in Joy advertising for subscriptions to the Helot,² and by that means deferring publication past the time of its doing good, and till that when it will not be attended to. He however has behaved very well to you through all this matter and paid you a high compliment at the meeting.

You see Isaac's³ name at the Down requis[ition]. He is to attend this day and has declared he will go to convention if chose. He steps forward at the time he perceives Stewart give way and plans no doubt a little rise at the last in his decline – such is human nature. Mr Hewitt, who is here, informed Mr C[unningham] he understood his presence was of some importance to this town at the time of the linen market – he would not therefore do anything in the petition till after that was over. Waddell therefore sticks to what nature intended him for and in his heart, no doubt, curses both your houses.

We had a fish for dinner today on which my mother bestowed more epithets of praise than she ever afforded the Helot, or anything that appeared in print. Your prime constituent would I suppose take it well if your letter from Dublin were directed to him. I mean Sam – you never even name him. I will not call it ungrateful but surely it's unkind. Your writing to him on this occasion will be flattering and more convenient than to me, as there will be many men eager to hear the contents – make them then such as you can. Adieu, may you have a pleasant trip and return well and happy. Remember me most affectionately to our friends the Bruces. If you go to a lodging I hope it will be near them. I hoped before I sent this off to hear what your answer was to an old friend of your father's, J. Park, but I cannot learn whether any has been received. If you go to see anyone do not neglect Mrs Orr⁴ of the Hospital and Ann Mussenden.⁵ Yours ever, MM

145 Tuesday, four o'clock

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [131]

Dear Matty, I just write you a line to tell you that I am this instant going off like a balloon to the great city with W. Jones and his agreeable sister⁶ in the diligence, which has delayed a day upon our joint request. I have just got a good nap and I

2 For re-publishing it in pamphlet form.

3 Counsellor Simon Isaac.

4 Anne, widow of Rev. Alexander Orr, matron of the Dublin Lying-in Hospital, a friend of Martha's.

5 Another sister of Daniel Mussenden of Larchfield, and a friend of Martha's.

6 Probably Mrs Joseph Pollock.

believe it would be well if I could rise thus early every morning. I shall not I believe speak but will advise with the cabinet council at Bruce's. Great preparation often disappoints the preparer, agitates the mind (at least my mind too much) and is often disappointed – particularly here where several young men think they can play a high part who are but underlings. Flood will no doubt carry it and is really presumption to oppose unless on the most apparent grounds which will not be supplied. I shall write to Sam any particulars that may occur worth his notice or that of my constituents. I wrote a note to Mr Pollock senior accounting for my excursion, as due to him. Adieu. Yours, WD

[Inside: Dear Dr, This minute received yours, the carriage shall be ready tomorrow morning according to your request. I am, dear Sir, your much obliged obedient servant, Oliver Mayne]

146 Thursday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [148]

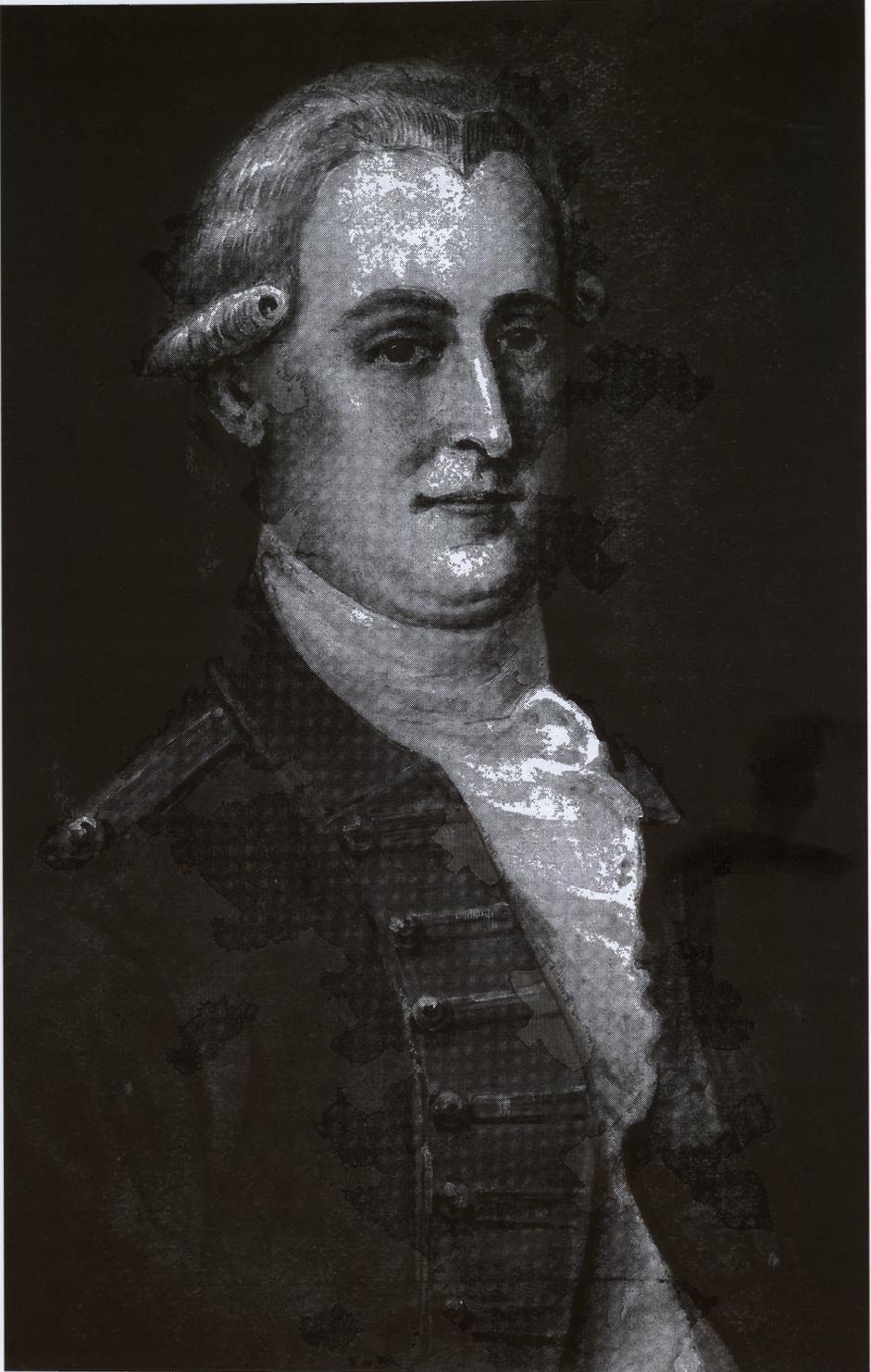
Dearest Matty, do not be alarmed at the appearance of swelling in your feet. You ought to rub them well every morning with flannel or a fleshbrush for a quarter of an hour. With regard to the rhubarb I never use it as it I think always causes griping, and it certainly is not fit for the present state of your bowels. I would mention to Dr M[attear] that something bracing and quieting to your bowels might suit them better. I particularly recommend the very simple and innocent prescription of taking two grains of the powder of ipecacuanha⁷ every night at bed time, mixed with a little sugar or jelly. If it should prove laxative I would reduce it to one grain, but I would continue in the use of it for a week or fortnight and regularly take two grains at night, or one grain in the night and another in the morning. This with the use of an infusion of colombo⁸ I am persuaded would do you service. I know nothing better than the ipecacuanha in powder or a teaspoonful of the wine given in the same gradual manner. If you will not mention this to Dr Mattear I certainly will myself and perhaps it would be proper at any rate. Let me hear from you without fail on Sunday.

Moody⁹ has been confined for these three months. His disorder ostensibly is the gout wandering through him: but I don't think so – I think it a convulsive complaint but don't mention it to anyone. His sister was under my care about a year ago in most terrible fits and all the family are inclined to that disorder. I have paid them regular attention. He offered me five guineas lately which I refused. The brother, the doctor, seems to take all my attention quietly, as my duty, writing to me when he thinks proper, and subscribing himself my grateful humble servant. He does not like to express himself about the complaint plainly and I do not choose to speak too

7 An emetic.

8 Colombo or calumba root, a mild tonic.

9 Rev. Boyle Moody, his brother was Dr James Moody of Dublin.



The Rev. Dr William Bruce (1757-1841)
in Volunteer uniform

plainly myself. Templeton was called on his being taken worse when I was in Dublin. We met there frequently on my return and behave as well together as any of our tribe. I met him with a Mrs Atkinson, wife of a Dr Atkinson¹⁰ of Armagh, who run away with the Doctor to be married in Newry, and was taken mad on her wedding night. She is now quite well. I met him again at the two last days illness of a Mr Byrne here, who died of a fever. The friends forced me in – I went, talked over the matter with him, but could give little or no relief. He attended along with me another patient of his, a Miss Mercer – died lately of a fever. She sent for me the day before I went to Dublin, but I told the apothecary (who is not fond of me) that I could not take the charge of a fever upon me at that time being obliged to leave town for three days. Had it been any of my former patients I would have stayed. My behaviour in this was thought prudent and is not blamed. The fellow wanted to impose it on me as a slight fever and I believe Templeton wanted to divide the burthen. I have a good many patients but they fee cursedly ill. I will tell you when any die.

The rumour here is that I am going to London, that I am to be bought off, etc., etc. I am going to dine with a lady who insisted on having my picture taken before I went to Dublin, and for fear of it I have absented myself ever since. I hope it is now forgotten – the Widow Nevin¹¹ from Downpatrick – but you laugh at this dear Matty. I have not heard anything from Bruce lately. I suppose he is affronted at my not sending him bright passages for the Address to the People. I thought it better to decline it – for they might be cut out after all and the truth is I did not feel myself able to do it in so short a time to my taste. Edgeworth¹² wrote to me also and I answered him at large. He is my chief flatterer, he told me of the fortune of £1,500 per annum that O'Beirne,¹³ Portland's private secretary, made etc. He mentioned his daughter of fifteen¹⁴ as my warmest admirer etc. He is a respectable gentleman of estate in the county of Longford. Pollock also in his speech and to my face mentioned the letters that had fixed the admiration of the nation. I stayed at Bruce's and the family were as kind as ever and as full of friendship for you. I had many invitations which I could not accept from [—], Dunn, Forbes,¹⁵ etc., and had I remained in town, I suppose I might have had the honour of seeing and talking with great men.¹⁶ By the bye, if the little man goes to Belfast, see him – he is really a pleasing prodigy. If an opportunity happens, enclose a copy of the Helot to Dugald Stewart of Edinburgh and another to Dr McCormick – just put on the first, from your friend W. Drennan. The balloon coach will soon run to Belfast. I must certainly see you soon for a day and I need not tell anyone here of my absence or say only I went to the country. Congress have done very well, but the speech here proves Pitt to be unworthy of polite confidence: yet it is proper to make their plan known to him first.

10 Probably Dr Edward Atkinson who married, in 1785, Mary, daughter of J. Macartney of Rosebrook; see Joseph Atkinson, *Genealogy of the Atkinson family* (privately printed, 1910).

11 Possibly the widow of the Rev. William Nevin of Downpatrick (d.1780).

12 Richard Lovell Edgeworth (1744-1817), author (*DNB*).

13 Thomas O'Beirne (1748?-1823), later chaplain and secretary to Lord Fitzwilliam, Bishop of Ossory 1795, and Meath 1798 (*DNB*).

14 His daughter Maria, the novelist, would have been eighteen in 1785 so Drennan's admirer must have been one of her younger sisters.

15 John Forbes (1750-97), barrister and MP for Drogheda.

16 The assembly adjourned on 4 February until 20 April.

And now for the sweets of your letter – surely you might have known the day of her¹⁷ coming up. I am glad it is with the Gayers. I think a good deal must now be collected from her manner – perhaps indeed she will drive through. Well whether or no, I will call on her in Dublin if I do go up, but that is disagreeable uncertainty. I shall have perhaps a line from you tomorrow but must have one on Sunday. Poor little Wilkes.

I think as you do with regard to Mrs Smith but doubt much if she would like it herself. My mother would do it instantly if she thought of it – would I mention it to her – I wish she could be made to think that it came from herself, for she does not like, nor does anyone like, to act in these cases as if prompted.

This letter is not quite so correct as some I have written. Yours ever, WD

147 Wednesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [153]

Dear Matty, I was almost sure last night about seven o'clock that our Belfast friends had passed through without stopping, for I had no doubt that I should have had immediate intelligence of their arrival, but just as I was going down to the inn I heard Mr Smith's¹⁸ voice below inquiring for me, and it was well that the zig-zig stairs and dark passage took him some time in groping out his way, for I grew perfectly sick when I heard him at the hall door, but by the time he came up I was pretty well prepared to receive him. He came he said to ask me how I did, and hoped I would go and sup with him and the ladies, who were then gone to pay a visit to Mrs Pollock's. The answer of course was, with all my heart, and after chatting for some minutes we set off for the inn where the ladies were before us. They both received me well, Mrs H[arrison] very affably and M[argaret] very politely. I did not find myself nearly so embarrassed as for three days before I had imagined I should have been. Mrs H and I supported the conversation on a variety of subjects. M sometimes spoke and sometimes asked me questions, in scrupulous return for my enquires about her brother, Maria, etc., but all was exact rigid justice, and her character of the night seemed as far as I could judge to be that of cold civility, founded on that indifference which is not much pleased or displeased with a person's company, provided they have the help of one or two to relieve them from the awkwardness or difficulty of a *tête à tête* conversation. I suppose Mr Smith had expressed his desire to call upon me and that the ladies had assented, though I remember when I first came in Mrs H said she was afraid that I would not be found at home. M appeared to me not only grave by choosing to say little, but by having something she wished to conceal. When the conversation happened to turn on W. Saurin I imagined I perceived some emotion and if I had even been an indifferent spectator, I should have set it down that she was thinking of something that was not

17 Margaret Jones; the Gayers were her cousins.

18 John Galt Smith, Margaret Jones's brother-in-law; Mrs Harrison was her half-sister.

the subject of conversation, and of somebody that was not in the company at the time. I met her eyes but seldom, and when I did I thought I looked more steadily than she. I stayed nearly two hours. A short time after supper M seemed to be tired, and not unwilling to show that she was tired, though she denied it in words. The conversation went on for another half hour, and then Mrs H seemed also to flag a good deal. I therefore got up and about ten o'clock wished them a goodnight etc., pleasant journey. On the whole, I am at a loss what to say. I think I have sufficient footing at least to call upon them when I happen to be in Dublin. I would rather have waited on them here of myself. Their invitation with M's accompanying manner, when translated seems to be, that we like you well enough as a calling acquaintance, and as your silence for some time past seems to show that you have dropped all thoughts of greater intimacy, we may venture safely now to give you all that we can give you – the friendship of a common acquaintance; nor would we now wish to seem afraid of you, as long as you lay proper restrictions on yourself. Is M to have any correspondent in Belfast that you hear of except Maria? They set off early this morning and expect to be in Dublin today. Ever yours, WD

What shall we do for franks shortly?

148 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [154]

Dear Will, Your last translation may be all just, it may be all or in part wrong, you may not have seen right, a[nd] what perhaps you really did see might proceed from other motives, even the direct contrary of what you supposed — so hard it is in some situations to judge of some characters. Perhaps the most refined in matters of this sort will be the hardest seen through, a[nd] i[nd]eed the peculiar situation you are in, and the delicacy which must attend it and that of your friend, leaves little hope of soon coming to an eclaircissement.

I think it was better you were sent for, because Mrs H[arrison] must suspect you, and therefore her sending for you and receiving you well and before M[argaret] was surely agreeable, and what nothing but a doubtful lover would have construed against him. M's being cold and very, very proper might be from real indifference or from affected, might have been from hearing you were going to be married to Miss P[ollock], which I suspect she would hear, or from Mrs H's presence who she knew suspected you and therefore would naturally eye her conduct. Indeed the circumstance I always thought most against you was M's showing the verses to Mrs H, though it might have been occasioned by accident.

I suppose you have heard from W. Bruce as Harry Joy had a letter from him long ago. Your old hostess Mrs Conron¹⁹ has been figuring very gaily at Bath for some time past, where she has had the two Miss Donaldsons on a visit. She has been in great spirits and declared that having cried for three years and quite spoiled her eyes,

¹⁹ Ann Conron, with whom Drennan had stayed at Castlecor, Co. Cork, in 1777.

she was determined never to shed another tear if possible during her life – to help to keep up the joy of which, she is now gone to London to take the name of Kingston, a very rich good-natured merchant only two years older than herself, with one son of eleven years old, with whom and Miss Hannah, a match is planned by the parents during their courtship.

As Sam and I think it will be impossible to spend the summer here, I have some thoughts of drinking the whey, especially as you have recommended it and it seems to be wished for by my mother. What Nancy desires I know not for these three days she has not spoke – a very common term of silence which is only broke by a monosyllable — to Sam, she never speaks. Her state of mind is distressing, mortifying, and severely felt by me, and the effect it has on her health you will soon perceive when you see her – to it may tend God only knows. The worst is to be feared and I have ever done it, though a dislike to fret you has kept me off a subject that is seldom out of my thoughts. If you see the change in her looks I imagine you will do, ask her about her health. She will not, can not, take it amiss: Her legs swell very much and she has a perpetual drought and complains of a pain in her arms and legs when she wakens in the night like that of sleeping. This I hear from our mutual friend Mrs Smith. What to do I know not or where to go. To take her with me is to destroy us both, nor would she go, and to neglect, to leave her a prey to melancholy and want of health. Oh my God what a return. I long much for your coming though what I have said will damp it but I cannot help it. I cannot go to Murlough it is too far off I can have no com[pany].

It has just come into my head on looking over this that if you bring it in your pocket and give it to Nancy to read – all but the first and second page – it might not be amiss. Some conversation you must have with her – her looks will justify it.

149 Friday, ½ after two o'clock [25 February 1785]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [146]

Dear Matty, My good friend and patron Mr Pollock²⁰ expired about a quarter of an hour ago. I was called to him yesterday morning, and about two in the present morning he was attacked with a violent apoplectic fit which returned four times between that time and the present, and has at length carried him off. All the means which my knowledge supplied were practised but totally in vain. The friends and relations without a single exception seem to think that everything was done that could be done and declined sending for any other physician. He breathed his last in quietness and peace, died at seventy years of age and has left a family of eleven, all now men and women. He was a good man with failings and those rather of the amiable kind. I was up most of last night with him having slept in the house, and he had time and sense enough after the first attack to add a codicil to his will, which Mr Corry drew up, and he had strength sufficient to subscribe it in a sort of manner

20 John Pollock the elder, died 25 February 1785; he was a distant relative of the Drennans.

and to acknowledge it as his will. I wrote to N. Wilson to know when he was to return from Dublin and have not yet heard from him, but expect to do so this night. I am a good deal affected for this good man and therefore must bid you farewell for the present and write soon. WILLIAM DRENNAN

150 Saturday morn

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [147]

My dear Will, The last attendance on your first and best Newry friend would be to you one of the most melancholy occurrences which has yet met your practice, and as a just tribute of gratitude we all pay our regret, and recall to mind the comfort and attention we received from him and his in our hour of trial – they will receive it from the recollection of his having lived to be an old man without the infirmities of one, and at the close, escaping tedious or painful suffering.

You must rejoice in not having come here or being absent from Newry, either by necessity or pleasure, at the time you would have most lamented it, and when the soothing of a friend may have its use, though the skill of the physician was of none. May this balm to the mind be ever in your power and inclination to bestow – and then your profession is the most god-like man can pursue through this life, and must give rise to the most delightful reflections when about to resign it forever.

Sam is just gone to Mr Sinclair's²¹ with your letter, thinking it possible that the confusion of the family might prevent their writing. I am glad you wrote to N. W[ilson] as I hope from that you have bespoke him for a partner in a chaise here. This indeed you can hardly miss any day now if you would leave a line at your inns, for our Belfast witnesses²² are coming down daily and a devil of a figure some of them have made, particularly our delegate to convention and chairman to the resolution for a renovation of parliament, H. Joy and Paddy Gaw,²³ when brought before these puny mortals, they shrunk into nothing and looked as if going to be transported – therefore answered like fools. There is a clever fellow, very young as a lawyer, who acts for Hewitt but does not seem to wish to be thought an enemy to the Constitution Club whom he compliments from himself, but condemns from what he calls information. This young man joked H. Joy a good deal – told him he printed a great deal, a great deal too much, was he not the editor of *Orellana*?²⁴

I am glad there is going to be a Dublin election. Have you no news from Bruce? Don't let him be affronted at you, and perhaps he had some reason if you refused from mere laziness to assist him, because he might suppose you were not to reap the credit, rather I think it was more likely you had nothing left to say on the subject.

21 William Sinclair's wife, Charlotte, was a daughter of John Pollock.

22 From the enquiry into the conduct of the Carrickfergus election.

23 Paddy Gaw (d.1792), merchant and dealer in tobacco.

24 *Letters of Orellana, an Irish helot* (1785), reprinted in E. Courtney (ed.), *William Drennan: selected writings, volume one, the Irish Volunteers, 1775-1790* (Belfast, 1998).

What is to be the consequence if both England and Ireland are dissatisfied with the new regulations? I am no judge of these matters [—] I read all Mr Orde's²⁵ speech, at a time the [—] of people here, were saying we had got [—]ything – of the matter I was ignorant but the manner I could not help calling it impertinent. Have you never repented being known as the Helot? I think it probable there will be subject and occasion for him more than ever – in that case what would you do? Twas, as I guessed, said by some at convention you could not speak – if I was you, I would be well prepared to undeceive them in April. I do not like Todd Jones – I never did as a patriot – the Address to the People I suppose was watered, yet I liked it, though it did not attempt the passions. For that reason it had something in it like the writer, of a calm dignity which I admire, but if wished to have effect it should not have died away in one newspaper like any common information. Why did not the Dublin C[onstitutional] S[ociety] give it consequence by reprinting and publishing it?

Miss Bateson²⁶ was to have been married on Thursday but attacked by a feverish cold it is put off – the gentleman Mr Hamill, a widower, though eleven years younger than Miss B, a pretty fortune in the county of Down and one daughter. They have taken Castle Hill. The Wallaces have buried the old aunt in Lisbon and are coming home with the fortune, near £5,000 all left to Mrs Innis. Mr Pollock owned you as a relation, he was certainly your friend – might it not then be proper for you to acknowledge it also by putting on a slight mourning, perhaps a pair of black buckles – even that might be taken well. Yours ever, MM

You don't go [—]land. I suppose you stand [?or] fall with your country – poor Griffith²⁷ who is just come fro[m] examination is said to be broke.

151 Wednesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [77A]

Dear Sam, I must trouble you to look out for a horse for me as soon as you can find one among your acquaintances that would answer me, as I am resolved to part with my mare. She fell both with my servant and me and some days ago, as I was coming down the mountain, fell forward and I came over her head without being hurt but I do not choose to run the chance of having a monthly fall any longer. I shall send her to grass as soon as I return from Edmond Hill and after she is fattened will send her to a fair, or if I ride her to Belfast I should be glad of getting one there and disposing of her.

25 Thomas Orde (1746-1807), later 1st Baron Bolton, chief secretary for Ireland, introduced propositions for commercial union with England.

26 Frances (d.1824), daughter of Thomas Bateson of Orangefield; she married Hans Mark Hamill of Ballyatwood, Co. Down, in April, and was widowed in 1796.

27 Amyas Griffith, Past Master of the Belfast Orange Lodge, dismissed from his position as surveyor of excise at Belfast for having assisted Cunningham at the Carrickfergus election (Millin, *Sidelights*, p.168).

I think you should take care not to be outwitted in regard to the sand she says you have found in your farm²⁸ – any experiments you can make must be very imperfect both with regard to the proper alkali and the proper proportions of each ingredient. You ought to send up a specimen to some trading chemist in Dublin who will give you a true report in relation to it. I shall pay you all a visit about the end of the month if I am able, but little things intervene always that prevent me. I am very truly yours, WILLIAM DRENNAN

152 Wednesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [157]

Dear Matty, I have been a good deal interested for some days past about the fate of Mrs Read's child which I inoculated and which had the smallpox in a very severe manner. It is now well recovered and my mind pretty much at rest on that account. Nothing has happened here since my leaving you that is worth staining paper with. I pass my time as heretofore without much pain or more pleasure than proceeds from the company which one meets with in Newry.

Bruce writes to me often and his last but one was a keen criticism on our friend Pollock's conduct. Did you see him when in Belfast? He never now calls at my lodging. Report here says that his friend Grattan has made him sure of something valuable – time will show. Bruce talks much of politics but they are so little akin with the complexion of the Belfast set that it would not be proper, nor indeed did he wish that there should be any mention made of them. I wrote an address to Lord C[harlemont] which H. Joy says he read to Dr H[aliday] who thought it inexpedient at this time. I know he thought quite otherwise when it was mentioned to him in his own parlour, and I think that it is exceedingly expedient that at this time the ghost of volunteering should arise and speak in its old tone, for our citizens have lost all their tone. The string is quite relaxed. I suppose Haliday wrote to Lord C to know if such addresses would be agreeable and he answered to be silent. But we are to have opinions as well as Lord C and he has tutored us too much. It will pass at Newry whether Lord Charlemont chooses it or not.

Do you ever see Miss Pollock? I hope you and Nancy – for I fear not my mother in that particular – will be as attentive to her as lies in your power. My obligations to her have been very great. My mother desired me to refuse a fee from the relations. I thought this improper, but it has not yet been offered – I shall go to Dublin if nothing extraordinary occurs by the 20th. Pitt's plan will be known in a few days and Flood's will follow. I think the latter might have waited for the convention plan as he waited for Pitt's, but as the convention dismantled his favourite scheme he I suppose is off from them. Tell me if Mrs Siddons be positively to come over. She will it is likely draw some from Newry and some from Dublin.

28 Sam had purchased a farm near Castle Hill in the townland of Ballycloghan, Holywood parish, Co. Down (PRONI, D/270/12).

How does your cabinising go on? I wish with all my heart it were finished for the town air most certainly does not agree so well with you as the country. I shall remember the pictures and if there be anything else to be done, tell me. Yours ever, WD

153 Saturday, [2 April 1785]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [135]

Dear Will, My pleasures are but few and it is not kind to rob me of one of them by forbearing to write. I have daily an object before me that fills me with horror and makes me look forward to yet greater misery – but complaint can serve no end except making others uneasy and as I have always avoided it as far as possible, I shall not let it make you fear to open my letters.

Ever since you were here Mrs Smith has mostly kept her bed, and appeared for a week to lie in a dying state with several complaints. These, except the spitting, are almost quite gone and though so weak as not to be able to sit up any time she is tolerable easy in body, perfectly so in mind. Nancy and I set out with attending her day about – but as it serves for an excuse not to be seen she chose now to go whenever she is asked abroad, or when anyone is here, so that in this house she is never seen. We have ceased making apologies or denials that could no longer pass. She is seldom inquired for but as an object of melancholy, that unfortunately is attended with this peculiarity of fate to be rather the object of resentment than pity. I avoided any particular conversation with you when last in town, both that I might show I would not complain and because my heart was too full to run the risk. I do not know what she said to you, but to others she has ceased to make my health a reason for her behaviour, which is now attended with circumstances you did not see but which if I was to repeat would with reason alarm you. If possible I will never blot paper with them and yet try to hope them away.

This, and many other matters, made me indifferent about writing to you. One was your repeated declaration of total indifference to every one here except your own relations – they are all quite barren. If you have formed acquaintances more worthy or even more agreeable, this is not to be regretted.

In W. Bruce I think you have a treasure which you should preserve in preference to every other – he will not flatter – I believe I have. I have ever studied to please not to pain and therefore I did not mention to you a report which I heard whispered several months ago among the young, and now repeated, of an affair between M[argaret] J[ones] and George Bamber.²⁹ M[argaret] McTier was the first who told me of it, as a thing she has observed from their behaviour in public and also that she knew she admired him very much as an agreeable, sensible, sentimental young man, that they both have been bantered about it and look so foolish that M[argaret] McTier supposes there is something in it, and that one night at an assembly they

29 George Bamber (c.1760-1835), youngest son of Richard Brown Bamber of Belmont, Co. Down (Blackwood 26).

sat down and were so engaged by conversation as to forget going down the dance. All this I heard a good while ago, and thought there might be a design in telling me. A few nights ago I heard it from quite a different quarter – Mrs Crombie, who did not tell her authority. I then determined to mention it to you before you went to Dublin and indeed I wish and think you ought, both for your own peace and even as a man of honour, to bring this matter to some issue.

Of your address to Lord C[harlemon]t I never heard but from yourself. Of Dr Haliday's politics, or any other person's, I know little not having been twice in company since you were here. What Sam hears comes to me and that is all. By this channel I know that Lord C[harlemont] wrote to Dr H begging he might use his influence to prevent any volunteer resolutions about political matters, as it was certain their enemies were upon the watch for some unguarded expression which would be eagerly caught on as an excuse for a riot act or some other mode of destruction. His lordship, you may believe, did not choose to be mentioned in this. I believe his motives were good – as his actions have been ever consistent and all his words the natural expressions of an honest affectionate and anxious friend to the Volunteers and his country.

Nothing ever equalled the scene playing at Carrickfergus – for allowed bribery, abuse and vulgarity. The chief performers are our watchmakers and Lord Kilwarlin – between whom the lie direct frequently passes and every other term of Billingsgate. His lordship canvassed in Belfast and in every way acts as determined not to be overcome. Though so near the action, and this thought the last day, no person here can guess how it will end – but the matter has been carried on in so avowed a scandalous a manner that even W[addell] C[unningham]'s enemies wish him success – now – though it is publicly avowed he never will get leave to sit in the House and also generally believed.

Sam and I went to see Mrs S[inclair] and Miss P[ollock] who have called here twice but never saw Nancy. Cards were sent but the invitation declined as has been the case from every other person – not choosing to go abroad so soon after the father's death.³⁰ There is something of study and make up about Miss P I don't much like particularly in this.

John O'Neill sent his band to attend Mr Willson,³¹ also one of his servants to vote for him. Mr C[unningham] has Sharman's, Colonel Rowley gives him his countenance and has brought down from Summer Hill an old servant near ninety years of age to vote for him. He was brought here in one of Mr R's chaise[s]. A letter from W.C. to his wife just now says the poll is not yet closed, but that he supposes the majority against him will be 25 by sheer bribery.

30 They were daughters of John Pollock of Newry who died in February.

31 Ezekiel Davys Willson defeated Cunningham by 35 votes in the fresh election at Carrickfergus of March/April 1785; the poll closed on 2 April (Millin, *Sidelights*, pp 39-40).

154 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [125]

I shall probably go to Dublin on Wednesday next, if Bruce does not prevent me: for as Pitt has postponed his motion until the very day before the convention meets, the convention will perhaps, in their style of complaisance, adjourn for a few days until they hear the event of the plan in England, and it would be disagreeable to wait so long in Dublin. I have written to Bruce this morning³² to know what is his opinion. I proposed an address to Lord C[harlemont] at the meeting of eighteen delegates here and it was carried unanimously, though with some expression of fear, and the cautious chairman, a gentleman living in the country, has I believe written to Lord C to know his opinion, but whatever that may be the address belongs to the meeting and as such must be published. Lord C is attempting that very doctrine of the incompetency of Volunteers to meddle with politics which was so reprobated some years ago, and which was answered in the first resolution of Dungannon; but the thunders and lightnings of that Mount have ceased. Whatever commands you have in Dublin tell me by return of post. I shall certainly bring the affair you mention to an issue of one kind or other, it is full time.

I have dismissed my servant for drunkenness and abusing my landlord. If you can find a genteel lad, with tolerable good clothes and well recommended, I think fifteen pounds a year will be sufficient to procure such. I have seen none here as yet who pleases me. My mare threw me a day or two ago and though I was not much hurt, yet I find her so skittish and strong that I shall dispose of her. I was offered ten guineas and I believe I shall take it. If I could get a handsome, delicate well-trained beast I would give twelve or even fifteen guineas for him, and if Sam hears of any such I wish he would tell me – as I am much on horseback I should like to be handsomely equipped. This place is exceedingly stupid at present, and I shall soon be obliged to make some new domestic acquaintance when my good friend at the Basin³³ goes to Dublin or Bath. Since the Pollocks have gone, the Corrys (Isaac I mean) have dropped me in a great measure. They say I have dropped them which is not the case. I seldom see Carleton,³⁴ he is so engaged at the custom house. I am growing stupid and I shall still when in Dublin be an humble listener. I sometimes think I should like to travel for a year or two with a young gentleman of fortune and then sit down at some place – but I don't like shifting positions especially when the one I have supplies me with a competency, and when our profession is so much the sport of accident and fortune. I sometimes think my mother and Nancy would live happier in the country, if the latter had any thing there in improvement or otherwise which might divert her attention to the brute or vegetable creation, as she seems to have renounced the connections of human nature. If she has any taste of any kind, the country might supply something to solicit it, and it is surely needless

32 Drennan to Bruce, Tuesday, April, 1785 [postmarked 13 April] (PRONI, D/553/40).

33 Cornet William Scott.

34 Francis Carleton (d.1829), brother of Viscount Carleton of Clare.

to keep up a house in town which so few see. I am sure I shall never take it, whatever may happen – and Belfast I am pretty well persuaded within myself will not be my latter end. My supreme ambition in this life would be a proud competence of £250 a year, a pleasurable wife or even companion (start not), and a seat in parliament. Bruce tells me he has a system of love, a system of economy, a system of virtue, etc. I am not so systematic as he, nor perhaps so virtuous – but he tells me he admires Rousseau much more than I do, and thinks it the most curious and interesting book he has met with. Write to me pleurably for I am determined to keep myself as easy in mind as I can, while I do live. W DRENNAN

155 Saturday

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [126]

‘Write you a pleasurable letter’, this you will find is not to be done on compulsion, and indeed, according to the sense of this word which runs through your letter, and as it’s a new seems a favourite one – I never penned one in my life.

‘A pleasurable wife, or a pleasurable friend’ (a female one no doubt), a ‘system of love, less virtuous than Bruces’s’ – these are really curious expressions but, as children sing in the dark, you sound your wild notes at the very time (I hope) they are most foreign from your heart. You cannot, nor will not, err from system, at least in virtue, nor could I have supposed you would there yield a preference even to Bruce. Accidental failings few can guard against, but systematic wrong could never be pardoned you, even by yourself, for with a pleasurable female companion you, of all men I ever knew, would be most liable to ruin and remorse. A common character could not long please – though for a lifetime it might vex – and a superior one might occasion yet greater ills. To abandon such is cruelty – to be attached, disgrace, with many lesser ills which all who so entangle themselves feel unless quite callous, and the least of which must be a weight on a mind like yours. At this moment I feel the consequence – contributing out of our scanty pittance to the support of three beings³⁵ brought into life by one of these pleasurable connections, they must not be deserted. While perhaps I am blamed for not managing better the humbling paltry gift which fate has made necessary, but can never render palatable to a soul that rises against (if not above) its giver. How I am led on to write of matters I never meant to speak of, and when only intending to joke becoming unaccountably grave – but I told you it would not do on compulsion.

You appear to be in want of two very pleasurable beings which I am willing to allow you, a man and a horse. Now is the time to get the former and I shall be on the look out – have you no chance of George? Sam says you ought to give your mare less oats and not to take less than twelve guineas for her, as horses are very high priced at present, he will do what he can to get one that will please you.

35 Unidentified; although Martha’s cousin Lennox Young left illegitimate children, the Drennans were not contributing to their maintenance.

Your shirts and a letter from my mother went to you with a servant of A. Stewart's. You ought to be sure you have your number and immediately let her know. At any rate you will let us know when you set out for Dublin and give us a letter either while you are there, or immediately after. Anything that passes in convention will be a treat, if it comes early. You must not hope to bring all your matters to an issue – but if possible, you ought to know the lady's³⁶ own inclinations. They may be such as ought to end the matter at once – but if otherwise, you may yet have to live long on hope, but of what I wish you may know. I don't now like to say much on this matter. She has been twice at the Castle,³⁷ much noticed by the Killymoons and the young woman, a sister of Lord Molesworth's,³⁸ has paid her great attention and invited her to spend next winter with her in Dublin: it's said they have their eye on her for a young Stewart.

One thing I cannot forbear to mention because setting you right in it may afford you pleasure, as it did me – during my attendance on Mrs Smith I discovered she had been the person who had mentioned the matter to my mother, that M[argaret] Mc[Tier] had been her authority and had told her of the verses, etc., etc., but the observation of 'his sister's putting the affair into his head' she had never heard made, nor the matter spoke of but by M. McTier, and that observation turns out to be my mother's own to Nancy. This makes the matter very different – for as it at first appeared, it stuck with me and vexed me very much, so much that I hated to come on the subject to you. Your being in Dublin, perhaps seeing her in coming down, and here when Mrs Siddons comes, are lucky circumstances – out of which you must draw some conclusions.

You owe, and ought to bring Nancy something from Dublin: her taste was good but [—] know what would please or even be convenient for [her is] out of my power – and if few wants was to constitute happiness, none would enjoy more than she. She said herself you ought to have brought her something. Would you have time to sit for your picture? It would be the most acceptable gift I suppose, and a match for her bracelet of my father – a watch would be too heavy an article, something perhaps of the etwee³⁹ or picktooth case sort – but elegant and not common. Perhaps M[argaret] J[ones] would take a walk with you to a toy shop and help you.

So Bruce likes Rousseau – if it's Eloisa⁴⁰ you mean I wonder at it, for I never would have supposed he would have admired it. It has its beauties no doubt but as for touching the heart or interesting it, there is but one letter in the whole collection that reached mine, though the author drives at nothing else from the beginning – but no French one in my opinion understands it, nor the course of still, quiet, little attentions which without design effect that purpose. I shall except one who I believe is Crébillon,⁴¹ and if at any time you wish to amuse yourself with an elegant little

36 Margaret Jones; the Stewarts of Killymoon were her cousins.

37 Dublin Castle.

38 Elizabeth, sister of 4th Viscount Molesworth (1748-93), was wife of James Stewart of Killymoon.

39 Etui, a case for small articles such as needles or toothpicks.

40 *Julie, ou la nouvelle Eloise* (1761).

41 Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon (1674-1762), tragic poet.

history of these sentimental attacks on the heart, read a scarce novel called the *Princess of Cleves*.⁴² Remember me most affectionately to the house of Bruce. Will ought now to be thinking of matrimony. He is at the height of his prefer[men]t and should lose no time in obtaining his height of happiness. Never let him say his system is more virtuous than yours. Let both be perfect in theory and may temptation be kept out of the way of each is the wish of yours, M MCTIER.

156 Wednesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [129]

Dear Matty, I had a letter from Bruce last night which makes me think it probable that the assembly will meet this day merely to adjourn until Monday, as they cannot hear sooner of Mr Pitt's motion. I shall hear from Dublin again tomorrow night and that will determine me: it is not improbable that if the meeting should be very thin today, there may be a circular summons sent to the absent members and this will give me a stronger reason for going. I drank a bottle of wine last night with Mr Mitchell of Dublin who has resigned his place under government⁴³ to great advantage, if his account is to be relied on. He mentioned his supposition that Mr O'Neill would certainly command one of the militia regiments which would probably consist merely of officers, and that Sam ought to apply for an adjutancy. Let him at the same time get me the offer of a physician to the same regiment, as I long much to have it in my power to refuse something of this kind. Pollock it has said has had the offer of a silk gown, that is to be one of the king's council, which though not lucrative puts him in the line of preferment in the law department but it seems he has refused it. I have not a doubt that Grattan is taking an interest in his welfare.

I was concerned in an affair of honour on Friday last which as you may probably hear from other people, I think it better to give you a short account of myself, as it has ended much to my satisfaction.⁴⁴ The conversation happened to turn, at our mess after dinner, on Mr Brownlow having refused to be a delegate, and all of us, I among the rest, were mentioning our opinions of him as a political character. I said very coolly I thought it a selfish one. When at the instant Mr James Ogle, evidently lashing himself into a heat, which the tenor of the conversation and the perfect good humour of the company rendered most unjustifiable, said that it was an untruth and repeated the term in the close of his short sentence. I immediately rose and went out of the room. In about a quarter of an hour after, I sent him a message by the president of the company, as my friend, and we met at eight o'clock with him and his friend in a field above Corry's park, properly prepared. I had in my message required a proper acknowledgement and he refusing it had assented to the time and place. The seconds interfered again on the ground, but I insisted, and obstinately

42 Marie-Madeleine, Comtesse de La Fayette, *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), translated into English in 1679.

43 He was Inspector General of Barracks in Ireland.

44 Drennan wrote a letter of farewell dated 15 April 1785 (PRONI, D2109/1/1).

adhered to it, that he must first ask my pardon for having said I was guilty of an untruth. He again refused it and said he would ask pardon of no one. The seconds in a little time brought him to dwell in a more general way that he would not on the ground and I gave my determination in these very words, that if Mr Ogle begged my pardon for what he said I, would submit to what the seconds thought I should do, if I could. I put in and dwelt on these words because I wanted to show them that I would never ask his pardon in return, and as I was the guardian of my own honour I would not place it more than this in the hands of any other persons.

He made great objections to the restriction but I obstinately adhered to it, and at last he asked me, if I was in his situation would I act as I wanted him to do. I answered that as a man of honour ought never to be ashamed to acknowledge his fault, I believed that if I was in his situation I would rather do that than persist in it. He then said that he would ask my pardon when off the ground, which he accordingly did do before the company, and my answer to him was that I thought he did as a man of honour in doing so. The seconds and the rest were then of opinion that I should say I was sorry for having spoken severely of Mr Brownlow to his friend, and that I had no intention of offending Mr Ogle in doing so, which was the fact. The affair has been kept as secret as such affairs can. I cannot reproach myself for one thing before it, in it, or after it, and I believe it is supposed that I was in the right.

Ogle is a man but little esteemed here, an exceeding snarler [*sic*], and what I did not know till after, a man of suspected courage and who wishes for an opportunity to wipe off some blots in his escutcheon. We had not drunk more than one glass of punch and the affair was all over the same night which I wished it to be. I would not have you mention the matter to anyone. If anyone says anything contrary to these facts you may contradict them, but do not put yourself to the trouble of detailing the affair for it is too trifling, so much so, that it is already forgotten even by the parties. I shall however get out of the mess (but not suddenly) as I consider the man to be a dangerous companion. I have met with several of his relations who are or seem as civil as usual. Tell my mother I received the eleven shirts but am surprised she did not send some more cravats as she has cambric. Let her buy and I will pay – if I can. I see *Orellana* is published in Dublin at a shilling price. I will send you one of them as a present. I am not much addicted to make presents, and in Dublin you know I will not have time. I cannot imagine what will be done in convention. My head is a perfect vacuum.

As the meeting is adjourned, I shall probably go up on Sunday night. Bruce says they met forty strong, and will probably on Tuesday muster sixty, a number that evinces their depreciation in the currency of public opinion: they must issue something more solid than mere notes of adjournment if they wish to regain their credit. The Scotts set off this morning and I am very sorry for it: it was a house where at all hours I had a hearty welcome and where I felt myself under less constraint than any house I ever was in. W[illiam] Pollock met me a day or two ago, and in the

street talked to me about a fee which I refused, and with no great difficulty he seemed to assent; so my mother's uneasiness with regard to that circumstance may be at an end. I wish you would send my compliments to Mr Kelburn and tell him that I wish to know when he goes up, and if he wishes to take a seat in the balloon⁴⁵ for Sunday night, that I shall do it for him. WD

157 Saturday

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [130]

Yours dated Wednesday I received only this day and though the affair you mention ended happily, I was sorry to hear of it. May such never occur to you again for even a proper behaviour in them may be a poor comfort, though the reverse would be disgrace. I fear the meeting of convention will be rather a mortification to you. I do not hear of anyone going from this, nor the adjoining counties.

I am just returned from paying a visit at Orangefield at Mrs Hamill⁴⁶ as a bride – there I met A. Stewart of Newtown. He gave me a very respectful bow but I heard nothing of his going to Dublin and about a fortnight ago, I had some conversation with his namesake the counsellor who seemed not to have an idea that there would be any meeting. He did not appear cool to it, but disgusted at the last meeting, and said that had been the case with Pollock, who he represented as having been too warm in the cause and therefore disgusted, and that he was certain he had no sort of connection whatever with Grattan, nor had spoke to him for many months. If there is a meeting, what is to be done in it should more than ever be well-weighed. Something is necessary – if the members are few, I hope they will be wise, and in that case perhaps it will be better some stay away, but if they err, a few will not be able to stand the censure of their real enemies and pretended friends. To say this however was not the purport of my letter, which as I suppose can just reach you before you leave Newry. I meant to inform you that J[ohn Galt] Smith sets off for Dublin tomorrow, that he stays there only till Friday next and brings down M[argaret] J[ones] at that time. Of this make what use you think fit. It is now needless to send any message to Kelburn, besides I do not believe he intends going. I wished to have heard of J. Crawford attending, but I know nothing of it.

My mother has had a smart fit of the colic, and was so very yellow after it we feared a jaundice. Dr Mattear ordered her some pills which she took of once – but the salmon coming in stopped their progress. Her worst enemy would not now propose her living in the country – for in a *tête a tête* with Nancy, no being could support it. Our little cabin I hope will afford her as much of it as she can wish for, while matters are at present.

Did I tell you that Nat Wilson⁴⁷ is gone to England some time ago – by desire of Mr Foster,⁴⁸ who wrote him a very complimentary letter, just after he returned from

45 The Newry Flying Coach.

46 Formerly Miss Bateson, see above p.198.

47 Wilson was now in partnership with Nicholas Grimshaw in a cotton manufactory at Whitehouse, near Belfast.

48 John Foster was Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer.

an examination in Dublin, telling him he was looked on as the very fittest person to go to England to give an account of our manufacture, as he had given great satisfaction here. [To] Mr Pitt therefore he will be int[roduced?], you envy him no doubt and wish he would p[resent?] him with a Helot. I hope to hear from you very soon, though since you were last here that does not seem much your taste.

Remember all I said to you about the Bruces – it is not there, [*sic*] words of course, so I do not choose an omission.

Till Mr Mitchell came down we supposed you were in Dublin. Have you anything to offer a friend who calls to see you? I think you should always have some good port and rum, not to keep them chatting to you like a female or, as my father used to do, ask them out to take a walk. But all these little inattentions I suppose you have conquered, and can now think of material matters without neglecting the lesser attentions which are much more sought for, and never dispensed with for less than a laugh at least against those who do not practise them. You taunted somewhat to me when here about Lord Chesterfield – but do not be afraid of an invitation there. I have been just reading his memoirs and private letters by Dr Maty.⁴⁹ I admire him more than ever, can excuse all that has been so much ridiculed in those to his son, and think that at last his lordship got an ungrateful return from the world and those who condemned his morals without the half of his virtues. MM

The Sinclaires were engaged here for eight days, Gregs, etc., etc., provided for them – they sent a frivolous apology and Miss P[ollock] only came.

158 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [156]

Dear Will, I write at present merely to relieve your anxiety for which there was no reason. I am tolerably well, my bowels a great deal better though some times a little pained, and the complaint I hope is gone off without doing me any hurt. My headache is gone to nothing and my sleep good constantly – I believe entirely owing to my having quit tea.

I was pleased with the account of your evening's entertainment with our Belfast friend and think you have reason to be so too. I know nothing of her since.⁵⁰

Can you doubt of our all being glad to see you, whenever you find it convenient to yourself – and as there is nothing here at present particularly inducing I think you should set off just when it best suits yourself, and that you think you will be least missed. I would not have you ride. It is fatiguing and not pleasant this time of year. Your bed is always ready but I wish you to write what day you will come. Did you receive a letter from Sam? Nat Wilson is in Dublin and I put off writing till he came down.

49 Matthew Maty's 'Memoirs of the Earl of Chesterfield' were prefixed to the Earl's *Miscellaneous works* and published in 1777.

50 Presumably Margaret Jones; the position of this letter in the sequence is uncertain; Eliza Goddard died in February 1786.

I thought you would have had a better taste than to advise tiles for my cabin to make it look as if it had once been on fire – no – good warm straw shall roof it, as white as you please, but no green but from nature. I have often observed green paint in the country with disgust, always spoiled by the ugliest docken⁵¹ around it. When you go next to Dublin I will employ you to buy me some rural prints, cottage-like or some good ballads, fit to line my porch. I do not know the Stewart you ask about, but as there are some of that name in Lisburn, I suppose he was from that rather than Killymoon. I had a long letter from Dr Scott, he desires to be remembered to you. I shall write to him this week and send him a Helot – as I saw they were sold in Newry I did not send you the parcel you desired.

You will yet see Mrs Smith I hope, and it will be but once. On second thoughts, I found my scheme of having her here was a rash one. It would not do – every room in it smokes which now she cannot bear, nor could she do without a servant entirely to herself.

I do request that you will not bring along with [you]⁵² this time that ungracious affected desire of keeping yourself up, and not seeing your friends, which you offended many by the last time you were here. There is one that on my account I beg you will see and be civil to, that is R[ainey] Maxwell. He has shown me attention and in so friendly a manner this summer that I shall ever be grateful for it, besides I suspect he wishes to talk to you about Mrs Goddard. If this is a vile letter thank yourself, for to gratify you I have wrote it without either time or inclination. I cannot venture any frank when all the members are in D[ublin]. MM

159 Friday, 20 May [17]85

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [161]

I find that Jones himself acted a principal part in shifting the scenes at Dublin, and from some circumstances I now recollect, both in his own behaviour and that of some of his relations, he will prove himself an invincible antagonist. I find that MacGuire⁵³ absorbs all the attention of the Dublin people and indeed I think deservedly, though the enterprise did not seem at first of any considerable danger. He certainly contended well with two of the most fretful elements and it would have been a pity that he who rose in the air should sink in the water. His sensations lying on his back for twenty minutes on the water must have been curious, and on the whole it was perhaps as eventful a day as most men have experienced. I was last Sunday on the summit of one of the highest mountains in Mourne, and had as complete a balloon prospect as could be, by a very easy abstraction of the attention from the jutting out point I stood on, but I find that even on the clearest day there is a haziness and thickness of the air next the earth, occasioned by the greater heat on the surface, that renders objects when at a certain height indistinct and obscure,

51 Weeds.

52 Word supplied.

53 Arthur Maguire, aeronaut, made a successful ascent in May 1785 and landed in the sea (*BNL*, 17-20 May 1785).

which counteracts the advantage of having a greater field of view. Within a quarter mile of the top of this mountain on a little platform, a sort of hanging terrace, Boyd and I found two or three cabins with a small potato garden, in the most romantic situation that can be conceived, with the barren black mountain looking down upon them, the great wood of Rostrevor shelving down like a meadow below them, and the prospect of the whole channel from Dublin to the Isle of Man, the whole map of the counties of Down, Armagh and Louth to be seen from a little hole which had been stuffed with straw in the chimney corner. The inhabitants of this colony were a mere rookery of quarrelling and scandal, and every one of the three houses we went into were filled with evil reports and calumnies of their neighbours.

Bruce writes to me that a Reform Club⁵⁴ is established in Dublin on a wise plan and which is likely to prove a formidable association. Lord Charlemont and Stewart of Tyrone⁵⁵ are to become members and Sharman has purchased his uniform – so that what the volunteers could not do, what the genius which thundered and lightened exceedingly from the Mount of Dungannon, what Pitt and Flood could not accomplish, is to be effected by a club, a switch, a rattan, a jovial crew that wear a blue coat with velvet cuffs, and capes of the same colour, and a gilt button with the motto Persevere. I think the motto ought to be a Constitution, Revolution, or Dissolution, but at any rate it is a sorry sight to see all our efforts dwindled down into a Reform Club, a plan that might have looked well enough seven years ago, but which now is I think rather malignant to the volunteer establishment – by showing that there is an uniform become more the fashion among the Volunteers themselves than the volunteer uniform, by collecting all the gentlemen, the aristocracy, the chaff of volunteering, and leaving the yeomanry and mechanics who are the weighty grain to themselves. Bruce says that he meant to abjure politics on the breaking up of the assembly, but is notwithstanding tempted to become a member and sends to me for my name. I have told him that my name was William Drennan, but that I had no intention of paying eight or ten pound for a suit, and enter into an annual subscription besides, in order to become a member of a society which I could not but think would be too numerous for any good end, and that would hasten that oblivion into which that best reform club, the Volunteers, were already sinking apace. Do you ever see Dr Haliday now, and what is become of his ode, Innovation: I fancy it has burst, like MacGuire's balloon, and soused into the water of Lethe. Dr Forsythe⁵⁶ has I think contrived a balloon that will carry him across the Atlantic. America is a new world and by a dip into the Atlantic we rise from baptism into a state of regeneration. This is I think a fortunate circumstance; it gives a power of living a new life, and prevents that desperate criminality which the consciousness of character irretrievably lost must in general produce. It is curious to observe the family disease in the Blows.⁵⁷ This creates a doubt about the effects of education.

54 See *BNL* 6-10 May 1785.

55 James Stewart of Killymoon, MP for Co. Tyrone, prominent in the volunteering movement, and a spokesman for the Presbyterians of the North.

56 Dr James Forsythe (1756-1849), Belfast physician.

57 The Blows were a family of Belfast printers.

Education is the regimen of the mind, but we physicians find that no regimen or remedy will get the better of an hereditary complaint such as the gout or consumption. Education will perhaps have as little effect in this case on the mind as medicines on the body. I pity the poor mad fellow whose character is thus blown upon, for the nine tenth part of the fault was hers.

Mrs Corry goes to Belfast [—] day and stays for some time there. I am somewhat [—] shall be disappointed in my desire of seeing M[argaret Jones] [—] as Mrs Read's illness will probably happen about the [—] in June. Have you taken the seats,⁵⁸ but I suppose they will be sold like bank stock and there is little fear of losing on them. My finances are not very high at present. I paid £15 yesterday to my woollen draper for a year's clothing. You will not be able I fancy to get me a servant at this time, and I will not sell my horse until I get another. I hear poor Buntin's affairs are clouding more and more. It is odd that neither of his fine girls have had offers. What is to become of them? I expected to have heard from you this day, but hope for a letter on Sunday. Mrs J. Pollock and Mrs Read are both to be indisposed about the beginning of next month. I send you a copy of the Dublin edition of the Helot, of whom when a lady's opinion was asked, she said that the two qualities which appeared most remarkable in him at first acquaintance was gravity and gentleness. W DRENNAN

160 Wednesday morn

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [163]

My dear Will, I am impatient to hear of your and the ladies' safe deliverance, for Mrs Siddons is now here working wonders and I would really be greatly disappointed if you do not see her. Her two first nights being the plays Nancy and I saw her in,⁵⁹ we did not now go, but the effects of her Belvidera⁶⁰ have done credit to the feelings of the audience – no one disappointed, even the old bigots to Mrs Cibber⁶¹ and Garrick. Haliday swelled, Mattear snivelled, Major Leslie⁶² cried and damned the play, W. Cunningham rubbed his legs and changed his posture, a Miss Aderton was really taken out in convulsions, and Miss Lewis that was now Mrs Britt left the house and is at present in danger of a miscarriage. Dr Mattear attends both these ladies. Yet many ladies beside these were much affected though sooner recovered. Among these was Margaret Jones, who restrained her tears for a long time but at length they burst forth with an unwilling sob. Many gave way to this, particularly one of the Miss Fords,⁶³ who appeared to enjoy the soft sorrow forgetful of all around her. Either the fear of being crowded to death or some other mistake prevented the house being full on Monday. We gave up our seats and intend going to

58 At the playhouse.

59 In Dublin in July 1783 on their return from Bristol.

60 The heroine of 'Venice preserv'd' (1682) by Thomas Otway (1652-85).

61 Mrs Susannah Cibber (1714-66), actress (*DNB*).

62 Probably Major Samuel Leslie, 14th Regt, brother of the Archdeacon of Down.

63 Possibly daughters of Matthew Forde of Seaforde, all of whom were unmarried in 1785 (*LGI*, p.238).

the gallery but unless you come and help me I cannot go more than twice. Sam takes my mother in tow tonight – Zara⁶⁴ is the character and the one I most wished you to see, but as she will be here three weeks I expect you will yet catch her. Set out the instant you get leave and let it be on a play day that you may have the better chance of two. I just saw Margaret Jones – she will not miss one. Is Will⁶⁵ an invincible obstacle, he must then be a favoured lover. It's not unnatural but the proof must be good that would make me believe it. By her family he is much disliked and if he is favoured it's in secret – though this is an affair I did not mean to touch on. I cannot but wish to hear what or by whom you heard of it. That the gentleman should be in earnest is very likely, and that he, or by his means should make you believe there were two so is also probable – but let matters go as they will I would take care not to be duped. I have heard of nothing but Mrs Siddons and have nothing to say but of her, and that I hope you will soon get the delight of seeing and hearing her along with one who will have double pleasure in having you beside her. Put money in your purse then and come as soon as you can. MM

Sam does not approve of your getting claret from this – first, there is none very good at present in town, the trouble and expense of carrying it, the danger of your having a stock by you not being well kept – and again if you entertain in a tavern (which would surely be your best and easiest way) you could not but take the wine from the house. However if you continue to wish for it, it shall be sent of the best quality here.

161 [June 1785]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [164]

Dear Matty, I believe it will not be in my power to see you at this time for the goddess Lucina,⁶⁶ though often invoked, will not bring assistance. If the Siddons does not leave you until the latter end of next week, I may possibly see her one night, and yet I cannot promise even that: if so, it is well: if not I shall see you all one day at the review. I am under engagement to a Mrs Falls at the beginning of August.

I saw Arthur Buntin on Sunday evening posting up to Dublin to wait on Mr Orde who lately offered Lord Donegall the disposal of the office of barrack master for Belfast. N. Wilson happened to be with his lordship when he received the letter and being asked if he knew any person in the town it would suit mentioned Arthur, and Lord Donegall wrote to Orde his nomination which Arthur is going up to claim and enforce. There seems to be no doubt of his success. I am glad of it, and so I believe will Bruce who I somewhat suspect, though without any authority, to have an attachment in that family. He wrote me lately a very melancholy letter, in which he gave a distressing account of an accident which happened some time before to

64 In William Congreve (1670-1729), 'The mourning bride' (1697).

65 Will Saurin, or her cousin William Todd Jones.

66 The goddess Juno Lucina presided over childbirth.

his sister Betty,⁶⁷ who in walking through the room fell down and fractured her thigh bone. The speediest and best assistance was procured and when he wrote she was in a fair way of doing well. Bruce hints at some design he has of coming a short time down to the North, as he says *malgré lui*,⁶⁸ and it is not unlikely he may return with Buntin. It will be hard if I cannot get down with them, but I make it a rule never to think much of pleasures beforehand, unless I have a probability next to certainty of attaining them.

I have been just following the body of McCabe's⁶⁹ brother to the grave. Templeton and I attended him. I have nothing new to tell you unless it be so that I now wear spectacles in the streets and in company, and find them both pleasant and useful. There was a meeting of the town yesterday to petition the House about the commercial treaty, by the instigation I suppose of I. Corry. I was not there, but finding when they met that there was not one in the meeting who could handle a pen, they sent a deputation to me to attend which I declined without mentioning any reasons, which were that I had not heard anything of the matter from Corry or from the proposers of the meeting who I suppose made sure of me in the humble office of their secretary. I showed them that I was not quite so ready to draw up things for them, and placed it to any account that they might choose to interpret it in.

It was Bruce who mentioned about Jones to me, as he suspects my attachment as well as I do his. Jones was in this town lately at Pollock's, and sent to me to come and see him by a message from Pollock. I answered Pollock, I was sorry I was engaged. He stayed another day in town but never called. Sam Smith called on me some weeks ago, and seems to be a good kind of conversible lad.

I hope my mother takes care not to weep before the third act. I should imagine she will be there every night. It is better than cribbage even in this warm weather. Have you been in company with Mrs Siddons? W. Cunningham ought to address her in the name of the town. She will wound the soul of Shakespeare, but I hear there are three players in Dublin who will support his plays somewhat longer. Tell Nancy to buy silk for my purse which I will pay her when I arrive, but if not⁷⁰ purses are not fashionable never to mind it, for I am grown wonderfully neat in my dress of late. Yours ever, WD

Write to me very soon.

162 Saturday morning

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [165]

Dear Will, I sit down instantly after receiving the account of your spectacles, to express my regret at your adopting a custom so singular as to appear ridiculous and without excuse except from the very worst sight or old age, and even in these cases

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Bruce (1758-1816).

⁶⁸ In spite of himself.

⁶⁹ William McCabe, watchmaker, died in Newry on 12 June 1785 (*Belfast Mercury*, 21 June 1785), brother of Thomas McCabe of Belfast.

⁷⁰ ? or net.

they have been found so pernicious and inconvenient as generally to be laid aside, both R. Maxwell and Wilson have done so. By your persisting to use a glass when there was at least no great call for it, you have made one often necessary – use it always and you will soon be blind altogether, beside making a fright of yourself. It's impossible you can require it in a street or in a room. This is a shocking unbecoming affectation, for which you will be laughed at at present and may live to repent of. I beseech you therefore lay it aside in time, or I shall be among the first to raise and encourage a laugh deservedly against you.

Beck Beatty⁷¹ has been with us this fortnight and joined the wish of most of your acquaintance in desiring your attendance on Mrs Siddons. We hear no other subject. Last night in the 'Unhappy Marriage'⁷² she is supposed to have reached the height of human powers. She was indeed great, beyond any other I ever beheld. Five ladies were taken out fainting in the last act and hardly a man could stand it. Sam cried for half an hour after he went to bed, and many others who withstood it in the house gave up to tears after they went home. The Edinburgh strictures are beautiful and just – as for myself I can wonder, admire, be chilled, thrilled, etc., etc., but cannot cry – not that I feel too much for tears, but she does not melt me. I believe she is too great. At first I supposed it was my having out-lived these fine enthusiastic feelings of youth, but all ages, all characters yield to her. I drop a tear but it's almost a single one, I am therefore at ease enough to criticise. I see all her perfections, perhaps several little unassuming, modest beauties, not attended to by others. Many I dare say have spoke a speech as well, and in great places been as great, but in the delicate minutia[e] of character expressed by a bend, a look, in all those little decencies and graces which are so charming in life that they are to be prized above virtue, or are they not rather the essence of it – in all these she is perfect and affords a pleasure to an attentive observer that perhaps was never equalled on the stage, unless by Garrick, but in a fine woman they have a finer affect. Her behaviour in private company [is] reserved, elegant and sensible. She sings charmingly, her sister joins with more judgment but not so sweet a voice. I have not been in company with her. You perhaps may if you can get here next week in which there will be the three benefits, whether she stays longer is not yet known. A report prevails that Kemble⁷³ comes down for the sisters' benefits. What the plays are is not yet known. Do you read our *Mercury*? In the last you will see your name in the company with Mrs Siddons and Mrs O'Neill, a strange sort of an ill-written rant, by whom I know not.

Kilwarlin is trying to circumvent poor Buntin, who is not yet appointed, and it's said Orde has promised his lordship not to do it until he receives an answer to a letter he wrote to Lord D[onegall]. Pollock told Buntin they would out him and I think it's not impossible yet. My mother has entertained Mrs Corry, etc. Mrs Sinclair is in a good way – would your ladies were so. Write immediately and come when it's over but d—n your spectacles. My mother has been at the play but once.

71 Rebecca 'Beck' Beatty (c.1744-1831), daughter of the Rev. John Beatty of Holywood.

72 Possibly the 'Fatal marriage' by Thomas Southerne (1659-1746):

73 John Philip Kemble (1757-1823), actor, brother of Mrs Siddons.

Nancy does not cry – come and save the last of the family. Her wounding the soul of Shakespeare is a good thought. Some people think she and the public have been losers by your not being here.

163 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY, BUT POSTMARKED BANBRIDGE], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [166]

Dear Matty, Both the ladies had a happy accouchement on Sunday evening, and within half an hour of each other. If they continue as well tomorrow before eleven as I find them today, I shall probably see you all tomorrow evening. I have some thought of riding but as the weather is warm I shall probably balloon it. Whatever is necessary to be done with regard to tickets let it be done. Purchase one for Nancy and another for yourself. I am glad to hear Miss Beatty is with you and I hope she will honour me with the acceptance of a ticket. My mother is to treat herself. I save her so much by not bringing a servant. The balloon leaves this at eleven so that I suppose it will be near six before it will arrive in Belfast.

164 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [167]

Dear Matty, Safely arrived at nine this morning. I have had one or two calls which I can yet accomplish. Both the ladies and their children have been perfectly well since I saw them, a very agreeable circumstance. I found a letter here from Edgeworth, very warm and affectionate. He says he is to pass through Newry to Belfast to attend Lord Charlemont in the character of aide de camp at the review, and that he knows nobody in Belfast, but begs me if I can to secure a lodging for him from the tenth of next month until after the review. I wish that Sam would take this trouble upon him, and I hope that he will take particular notice of Edgeworth who I am sure he will like, and who may be to me a very useful friend. Had I a house he should not want lodging and the best entertainment I could give. Robert Bruce is come to Dublin and it is not improbable that as he has business to do in the North, that Will may come down with him. The family of the Scotts are all returning to Newry, Walker who took the house from him having offered him £475 to take it back, and he has accepted the offer. I am glad of it. I have a letter from M. Garnet⁷⁴ telling me that Lord Hillsborough in a private conference had promised him something of consequence. It would look very ill if it was reported that any one had a hand in his sermon, bad as it was. I hope therefore Sam nor you will not mention it to anyone, for Haliday talked one night as if he suspected me in some of the expressions. I find on passing through Hillsborough that the races are to be very

74 Rev. Matthew Garnet, Drennan's old schoolmaster for whom he wrote a sermon (PRONI, D/531/8/47).

splendid there and balls in number, two very elegant rooms in the tavern having been fitted up for the reception of the company. I should like to take a ride there if – and if Mrs Falls does not at that time require my attendance. I gave Mrs Corry the pattern of a cap, and she seemed pleased with the attention. She is all affability and graciousness. I hope you will contrive to see Edgeworth when he is [in] town, and if my mother gives him a dinner so much the better. She shall receive her reward in heaven. I beg you may write to me when you find anything new, and let my mother, Nancy, and you subscribe a penny each for this letter. WD

165 Monday

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [173]

This morning, at six o'clock, our oldest and most valuable friend,⁷⁵ was laid in the ground, an event, which though long expected, has been distressing to us all, for she was an uncommon character, which never appeared more bright than during a long decline and on a death bed. Even then her mind required no aid from others, but was willing and strove to give it to those around her. She did not suffer much, except from restlessness, and the effects of her weakness, which seemed to give her much disgust. Perfectly sensible to the last, she spoke of her end without parade, wished it might soon be over, and for the last twenty-four hours refused all nourishment, though she could have taken it, and in silence and composure waited the event. There were many friends with her, which seemed to please her, for she had always declared a disgust to being left to servants at the last. Nancy was with her the two last nights and days, and did everything for her, with a strength of mind and body which never gave up, till three o'clock yesterday morning, when one struggle very severe overcame her, and she was got out of the room fainting. My mother and she then came home, and the Mattears stayed till it was over.

It is now usual to put all deaths into the paper. I would have liked a very few words well marked as to her character, and thought of requiring them from you in time, but changed my mind, thinking the person too obscure – the very reason I now wish I had done it, for such seldom get justice and to such I would have pride in giving it. A pleasurable stock of vanity, which I believe will never forsake me, is gratified through those I love, when it can gain no more for myself. The old, infirm, solitary woman of seventy, that can be missed as the valued friend and entertaining companion of those who might be her children, is a very rare character. Yet so it is, and I already find that I have neither friend nor companion to fill her place as such – one excepted.

My spirits are much sunk, and I would not have wrote this post but to beg you would tell me if you approve of my mother getting an issue⁷⁶ cut in her thigh. She has spoke of it herself and thinks she has not been so well since the one in her arm dried up. It was certainly of use to her head, and that complaint she had in the back

75 Mrs Brice Smith.

76 An artificial ulcer.

of her neck and shoulders, but her desire of having one in her thigh arises from the hope of its doing her leg good, which is greatly swelled, even high up, and at night they are both very uneasy. I fear this swelling will increase, and want to know if you think the issue might either lessen or retard it. If you do not hope this from it, might it not be better for her head, to have it again in her arm? She is much too full of something, and allowing a drain to dry up, at such a time, I fear may have bad consequences. Write to me therefore immediately what you think best for her, and I will try at least to have it done.

I suppose you have wrote to Mr Edgeworth – it's probable he may not choose to rest upon Dr Haliday's house, without some more particular notice. If not, let Sam know, either by a letter with himself, or before he comes, and everything shall be done for him we can. He would not be well off at my mother's, but all that can be done by Sam in attention shall be done. We may perhaps make out a dinner, breakfast, or some such matter for him, but if he stays at Haliday's with Lord C[harlemon]t such matters would rather I suppose be disagreeable interruption. I shall not therefore see him, for I am not now asked any place but what is styled in the friendly way, nor have been invited to Dr Haliday these twelve months. I was not at Hydes nor Mattears since I was there with you and am seldom with any company except Mrs Getty. The day you left town, M[argaret] J[ones] went to drink tea and walk with M[argare]t McTier – of the visit I know nothing, for I am very cautious there. The next night, I met her with Mrs Haliday coming from a country walk down Donegall Street. It was past nine o'clock, but they turned with me, and went back almost to Bradshaws. She was as usual very affable, and Mrs Siddons was the only theme. I dare say you would find a ball at Hillsborough agreeable, but few people go from this, and the person you hint at seldom goes far for amusement. Would not Edgeworth and the Bruces tempt you for a day at the review? I am very glad on your account that Mr Scott and family returns. Have you answered the lady's letter, and sealed it like a gentleman? I beg of you get some sort of a seal and learn to make an impression with something. I declare the very next letter I get so battered, I will first read it and then enclose it to you under cover – a shoemaker with his wax and awl would be better. I hate these little vulgarisms. Adieu, MM

166 Tuesday morning

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [172]

Dear Will, I hoped to have heard from you that your last trip had not been of any bad consequence.

There has been little passed here, worth relating, as you will see by the insipidity of the resolutions which were certainly formed so, in compliance to Lord C[harlemon]t's desire, at least it was owing to that being made known, that there was not an address either here or at Killyleagh, and I believe his lordship was very anxious that there should not be any from Belfast, as other places he hoped (and

said so) would follow its example. His reason for this was he said the great trouble he had in answering all these addresses, so much as to make it the only disagreeable matter attending the review. At the meeting of delegates, it was the opinion of all, the address, if there was one, should be merely complimentary and the chief argument against it was that such was not acceptable to Lord C[harlemon]t, who wished to do his duty as a thing of course. Thus, this annual proper method of Volunteers making public their political sentiments has been, in my opinion, ungenerously quashed by his lordship's finding it sometimes inconvenient to declare his own, and this indulgence I would never have granted him but spoke out to him at the usual times and never have let even the form die but at such a time as this to be gagged. Haliday has often said writing his answers was a matter of so much ease to his lordship, that he never either wrote or took a copy. There was a long debate but about nothing. Bryson was at first for addressing but ruined both himself and his cause by a rant of nonsense. He was answered by A. Stewart and then came about to his opinion. W[addell] C[unningham] was for addressing but not for mentioning politics, yet raged at the propositions⁷⁷ and talked of nothing else – was silenced by Black who was against addressing. Jones I believe never spoke. Bryson drew up a resolution of thanks to Lord C[harlemon]t and read and proposed it aloud. It was thought cool and a murmur arose against it – to get quit of it 'twas proposed a committee of five should name each other, to draw up a complimentary resolution, Sharman, A. Stewart, Isaac, Crawford and Bryson brought forth the little reptile you see.

Sunday night, Nancy, Margaret McTier, and I took a country walk and met the Miss Joneses and N[ancy] Thomson. We first passed, again met, and then joined. On coming home Nancy asked them in. They sat with us till near ten o'clock, and after I was in bed there came a card from Mr Jones, for Sam and I, to spend Monday evening with the Mount Collier family. We went and all were civil as usual.

I beg of you answer Mr Edgeworth for I really am in pain for fear he thinks you have not an idea but what you collected for the Helot, or rather, from what he saw in convention and since, he will be led to imagine you were not the real author of the performance on which he bestowed so much praise. Mr Portis has purchased the half of Yelverton's estate, turned out Charles Britt⁷⁸ and appointed Val Jones junr agent for it at £50 a year. All we poor devils will be provided for at last – somewhere – yours ever, MM

167 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [171]

Dear Matty, I did not miss, by my absence, anything of consequence. The lady who sent for me I visited, and although very ill with a peripneumony, she is grown better. I met a physician of Armagh there, a son of the late Dr King,⁷⁹ an ingenious,

⁷⁷ The commercial propositions were intended to free Irish trade from many duties and restrictions, but were drastically amended to protect English interests.

⁷⁸ Probably Charles Brett (1752-1829), Belfast merchant and businessman.

⁷⁹ Dr G. King of Armagh, died in 1784 aged 89; his son may have been Dr Alexander King who died there in 1794.

literary, melancholy man who is still talking of his wife – his wife – though she has been dead these two years. Every object associates her to it in his imagination, and his mind is tinged in so deep a dye that time will have much ado to get it out, except by dipping it in the matrimonial colour a second time. He has I hear but little practice in Armagh, owing I understand to his too great timidity in practice, and I doubt not would wish to take up his residence here, if the accoucheur part of the profession were tolerable to him. I came up with J. Alexander⁸⁰ and Mr Jones who I suspected very soon to be on some secret expedition, the cause of which you have explained. He is an agreeable man. I had asked them to my room, but was obliged to get on horse immediately on our arrival, and they set off immediately for Dublin.

I was missed and the rumour ran that I had gone to be married. Miss Scott told me she had heard the whole affair in Dublin, that the lady's friends were against it, and that the lady herself was known never to have had given the smallest encouragement except what was dictated by common civility. I scarcely expected that I would see her at the races, and know not when it will be in my power. Hamilton Rowan⁸¹ called to see me this minute and told me that Lord C[harlemon]t had quashed an address he had prepared at Killileagh, but says Rowan, his lordship is nervous, and a fellow, one Hamill, who was drawn out into the shape of a nerve, with Stewart, etc., coincided with his tremulous lordship and smothered my address. Rowan is a clever fellow and just looks the thing for a constitutional conspirator. I have written to Edgeworth. One could make a very good ironical defence for his lordship's silence on the subject at present, but it would require a delicate hand and I am not at present in the political humour. I go to no playhouse here, for they are execrable.

I send you to the best of my remembrance the dinner we had at the Cornet's, as a standing proof that my memory is as good as ever in these particulars. I join with you most perfectly in opinion with respect to the address. Lord C is discarding the political volunteers. That is now an instrument worn to the handle. These propositions if they pass, may arouse the people of both kingdoms and perhaps be instrumental to reform without which all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Adieu, WD

	Fish	
	Loin of Veal	
Potatoes	Cucumber	Lobster Sauce
Lamb Pie	Lobsters	Chickens
Harico	Gooseberry Pie	Beans
Ham	Salad	Cauliflowers
	Salad	
Cauliflowers		Butter
Beans	Gooseberry Pie	Harico
Chickens	Lobsters	Lamb Pie
Butter	Cucumbers	Potatoes
	Loin of Beef	
	Fish	

Fish removed two dishes of ducks and two dishes of peas

NB Round of beef and hearts on the side table

⁸⁰ John Alexander (1736-1821), married Ann Portis, sister of the Donegall agent (*LGI*, p.5).

168 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [178]

Dear Will, You will not now thank me for my information that M[argaret] was at Hillsborough last night. I only heard it by chance this morning and have reason to believe her going was quite [by]⁸² accident – as she told me she did not intend it, and I believe her. She went with Mrs and Miss Bristow⁸³ and I suppose an invitation from them tempted her. At any rate it might be as well you did not know of it, as your leaving home so soon again might be termed wrong. Miss Scott's information has been so good, one can't help wishing to know from whom it came. I hope that melancholy King will not fix in Newry, both on your account and his, two no doubt there will always be, but while you are there, I wish not for a third. It is a place that for so far has done well for you, and will yet do better. I think there is some what in you that might fit a better place – if so, aspire to it. Make yourself known if possible to men of character, rank, or taste. Leave no opportunity even the smallest uncaught. The Helot introduced you – but there you stand. This will not do, the world must be courted to gain its favour even by your betters. The times were made for you and you for the times – it must then be your fault if they do not turn to your advantage. Your situation in Newry is not obscure nor no way against you except in a lodging – this I much wish was genteeler. A trifle you may say – but one that has its effect though not in Newry yet to others. This is a wonderful time and surely your country would hear you if you could again call on her, there is I believe a spirit in the people that never died. Their betters smothered it for a very little time – but I am much mistaken if a word from some of them will not make it burst forth with more violence than ever.

Robert Stewart got over in time for the H[illsborough] races, and I hear attended on his lordship⁸⁴ in his coach. Did Edgeworth mention anything he wished you to do – if he did consider of it. At a large company of men Counsellor Stewart run down that gentleman violently and Lord C[harlemon]t for choosing him. Jack Kennedy⁸⁵ has started out most violently against the present men and measures, particularly Lord Camden, and goes so far as to say — arms.

I spent Thursday evening at Mr Hyde's and a curious one it was owing to a scuffle that had happened at dinner between Mrs Gawn Hamilton⁸⁶ and Harry Savage⁸⁷ relative to her son Rowan having refused being made a member of the corporation after being proposed by Lord Kilwarlin. Harry was rude and the lady is an original. She left the house – but on Mrs Savage waiting on her with an apology she returned to supper. She is immensely rich, parted from her husband, separated her daughter from a man she run off with married and had a child to, and has her now confined

81 Archibald Hamilton Rowan (1751-1834), United Irishman (*DNB*).

82 Word supplied.

83 Presumably Rose, wife of the Rev. William Bristow; Miss Bristow may have been her sister-in-law.

84 Lord Hillsborough.

85 Probably John Kennedy of Cultra, Co. Down (d.1802), landowner and JP (*LGI*, p.366).

86 Mrs Jane Hamilton of Killyleagh, mother of Archibald Hamilton Rowan.

87 Henry Savage of Rocksavage (d.1797 aged 62), husband of Jane Hamilton, sister of Mrs Peggy Hyde; they were cousins of Hamilton Rowan.

in a monastery in France till she is of age. Her son Rowan having got into various scrapes especially with married women, she asked him if a young lady who lived with her and was unprovided for had a fortune, if he would marry her – he answered of all woman she should be his choice. Mrs Hamilton then paid the lady⁸⁸ down £10,000 and gave her to her son who is a reformed man and a good husband.

A letter from Mr Haliday to Talbot has occasioned some alterations in the new street not agreeable to the town. A. O[rr?] has quite quit building after having gone a good way. If Haliday does not turn out a thorn in Portis's side I mistake them, 'twill be an age of revolutions. When Portis purchased the half of Yelverton's estate, the former told him he had given his promise to Charles Britt for a lease of some houses that were on the land. To this Portis objected, and Yelverton abided – Portis declared he would not allow of it and told Yelverton to leave the matter to him and he would settle it to mutual satisfaction. He wrote to Charles informing him that the baron was in great want of money, that he had met with a purchaser for half his estate, but that promise made to him stood in the way of the bargain as the gentleman wished to build on the ground promised him, and that as a friend he advised him to write to Yelverton freeing him from this engagement. This Britt did by return of the post assuring Yelverton he considered his interest far beyond his own, etc., etc. The papers were then signed – and instantly on a stamped one Portis appointed Jones agent. This affair has only been laughed at, as Britt is not loved and Jones is pitied, but the case would have been the same had the characters been reversed. Alexander's business has not yet transpired but I suppose it's to have an eye on Portis.

Write soon. A man called Sunderland⁸⁹ has failed here by whom Robert Bruce will lose £200, and by another in Dublin £4[00] since he came over – when did you hear from Will, is he calm now? MM

169 Tuesday night

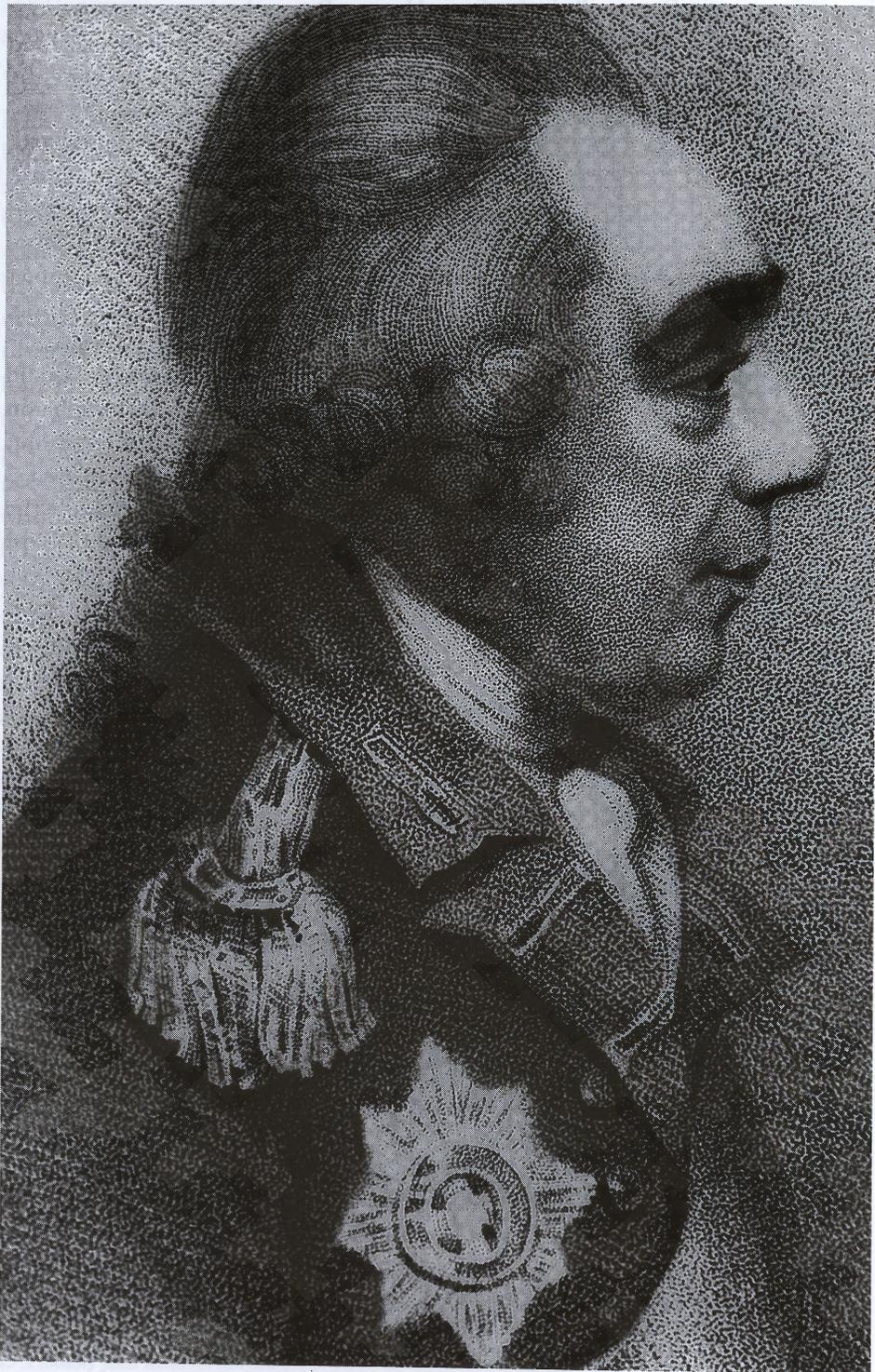
MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [179]

For fear of a surprise that might be more than disagreeable to you, I think it best to let you know now that M[argaret] J[ones] has kept her bed in a fever since Friday last. It is of that kind which I believe does not alarm at first, her only complaint being languor and a pain in her head. Mattear was called at the first, and Haliday today, by which I fear the disorder is not at its height. They have just given her a vomit, by which she appears roused, and a little lightened, so as to sit up and eat a few gooseberries. This and saline draught is all that I can learn she has yet taken, by which perhaps you can judge of the stage of her fever – no brandy, nor wine.

Numbers are at present in a very bad fever, and a very poor and unfortunate family being all lately ill of it, and being pensioners of Mrs Smith's, Mrs Harrison

⁸⁸ Hamilton Rowan's wife, whom he married in 1781, was Sarah Anne, daughter of Walter Dawson of Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan.

⁸⁹ Probably Alexander Sutherland, merchant and partner in the Belfast glassworks; he went bankrupt in 1785 and again in 1789 (Chambers, *Faces of change*, p.98).



The first Earl of Charlemont (1728–99),
commander-in-chief of the Volunteers

out of compassion took one of the daughters into the house on purpose to nurse-keep her. This she did effectually, the girl recovered, whither the infection may have now been caught by M[argaret] I know not, I suppose it may have been three weeks since the girl recovered. If there is any material change either for better, or worse, I shall write tomorrow. Mary Holmes⁹⁰ is in a very bad way at Ballynahinch where she went with her mother and then only complained of her stomach, but this day I hear Dr Haliday says she is in a galloping consumption. Mrs Goddard declines fast. How will we be all repaid for this – when – and where?

I have been disappointed in not hearing from you last week. I have you now in my power, too materially to use it. Yours, MM

170 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [180]

Dear Matty, Mrs Falls was last week safely accouchée and God, as the phrase is, has given her a son. The review went off here with tolerable éclat. The buried majesty of the people rose to cross the stage for the last time, and vainly shook a visionary sword. They were about 1,400 in numbers, and I thought performed a good deal better than those at Belfast. Lord Charlemont came in late on Thursday night and went off on Saturday after the review – Mr Brownlow was at the head of his battalion.

Disagreeably interrupted indeed – you describe it as a low nervous fever – it seems strange that she got a vomit but this day. You say it has roused her, she surely cannot be in an insensible state at this early period for such fevers are very long, and anxious is the physician's attendance even when not interested. Mattear certainly apprehended danger in calling in Haliday so soon, but perhaps it was at the desire of her friends. I fear indeed it was from infection. It lies often long, we don't know how long in the habit. We know too little about it, but she has good physicians. I shall pray to a better for their success. Wine or brandy could not be used at this time even by their greatest favourers. You hear nothing I suppose of her pulse. Is her reason anyway affected? While that is clear, I should not be fearful. It is odd, very odd, that they ordered no antimonial, not even his favourite, James's Powders – I ever preferred tartar emetic. The numbers in the fever prove contagion and in most fevers of this kind, the sooner the wine and bark can be given the better. Have you seen any of them? Mattear will tell Margaret⁹¹ little of any consequence. Have they given a name to the fever yet? I know you will write to me by every opportunity. The balloon comes on Friday. I foreboded something on opening your letter – yet I hope much, females in general do best in fevers. She is young, and healthy. She certainly has complained of the headache a long time. She mentioned to me her being subject to it. W DRENNAN

90 If this is Mary Isabella Holmes she recovered and married Henry Joy.

91 His niece Margaret McTier.

171 Thursday night

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [181]

As M[argaret] got sleep last night and is this day better, I suppose her danger is over. She never was so ill as you seem to think and I am sure I wrote to you that her only complaints were a pain in her head and eyes, and lowness and oppression with want of rest. Fear, I believe, only arose from what might be the consequence of a fever many were dying of – though on Haliday being called as if by accident, he looked grave and shook his head. She got James's Powders at the first.

I saw Mrs Harrison once and Maria once, the former at the beginning of the complaint, which she seemed to believe was only a feverish cold, brought on by imprudence, though her face betrayed much anxiety – but at this time Mattear said it would turn out a fever and I dare say was well pleased when Haliday, who is the family physician, came to town. Her reason has not been affected, nor has she been in the least alarmed for herself. I suppose therefore a few days may restore her.

You would have but little relish for Sam's epistle. He came in on Tuesday night from a large party of men consisting of Haliday, Mattear, W. Cunningham, etc., etc. The former broached the idea of a Dungannon meeting, for which he appeared very eager, and Sam came home full of your snatching the opportunity of doing yourself further credit in the very way best suited to your genius by warming the passions in a good cause, and with reason on your side, and by the name of Orellana catching the attention of the people immediately in letters not less than three, which he wished sent to the *Mercury* as well as *Joy*. This if well done I wish was done, but if your fire is spent do not force a glimmering spark in such a cause and call it yours. Not a line ought to be inferior to the Helot. Perhaps it must be better, now the author is known, to gain it credit.

I was last night at Bristow's. Counsellor Stewart came in there and diverted me while the good folks of the family beheld him with great indignation relating an interview he had with the Prince⁹² who is now in the Lough. Alex has sent his wife on a visit to Scotland and has retired himself to Makees, for the benefit of reading.

When he discovered the frigate with the Prince, he immediately went off in a boat with only some sailors, was received on board, said he came to wait on the Prince, and thinking fruit might be agreeable brought some with him. He was told his royal highness was incog[nito] and appeared only as midshipman. At this moment he came on deck. The officer told Alex that was he – [—] he advanced, made a low bow, and by his own account instantly entered into a familiar conversation. The Prince asked him for news if there was any relating to the propositions and whether they were acceptable to the Irish. A[lex] answered they were much the reverse. He then asked him if he thought they would pass in the House of Commons – Lord Hillsborough was at home – spoke of a riot he heard had been at Cork, wanted to know the particulars but supposed the military were all in the wrong, the people as usual right, looked through the glass at Carrickfergus, and observing a crowd of

92 Prince William Henry (1765-1837), later Duke of Clarence and William IV.

soldiers, said he supposed they were flogging a man. A[lex] took a peep also and observed it was probable they were men called out to do him honour. He said he hoped not, for he disliked these things. He is tall and like his father. A[lex] seemed quite charmed with the visit while the Bristows appeared stupefied with envy and amazement at his impudence which they only ventured to lay to his profession.

My mother paid 3d for your letter this day and hearing the first lines of it and a few queries about M[argaret], she observed it was a pretty 3d worth. Remember the post does not go out tomorrow, MM

By no means neglect to answer Sam, for he says it's what you never do, and that in this case you have got his last.⁹³

172 Saturday, ten o'clock

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [183]

You know that the tediousness, and uncertainty, of M[argaret]'s disorder, cannot be surprised to hear she has been much worse since my last. The night I wrote it, I saw Mrs H[arrison]. The doctors had said her pulse was better, and the family thought her much lighter, and that her fever had got a turn. Haliday, however, told them it would be a tedious affair. He had ordered a clyster that afternoon, for which there seemed great occasion, but said at the time, he was afraid of its having too violent an effect. This, by what Mrs H told me, I suspected was the case, and that evening she had wandered a good deal. The next night was a very bad one, dreadful restlessness, raving and soreness in her legs, of which she has complained much from the first. All day yesterday very ill – the answer to the message his morning, that she is rather easier – but as I never depend on these, I shall give you a more particular account before the evening. The old man⁹⁴ is in great distress, and yesterday gave her up. Mattear gave her antimony at the first, afterwards James's Powders, neither had the least effect, what she gets now I know not. There is a general anxiety on her account, and even for the same reason (I believe) for others who have been more violently ill and yet are struggling.

One o'clock. I have been down street, and learned that Dr Haliday told one she was not worse, another she was rather better – but as if he would take the head of them, no wonder, for there is a third physician called in, a Dr Stevenson⁹⁵ lately arrived. He has been attending a good many of Mrs Smith's poor in this fever, and was latterly called to a woman who was attended by Mattear who has had an amazing struggle. She therefore supposed he was a good judge of it, and if poor M[argaret] recovers, he will no doubt get all the credit. The big man never, I believe, met with a greater mortification, but in my opinion Mrs Smith did right. Stevenson has told them they need not expect any change till the fifteenth day, and that is Wednesday. She has got wine but in what quantities I do not know.

93 Letter D/591/182 addressed to Sam is badly torn and has been omitted.

94 Her father, Valentine Jones, then aged 74.

95 Rev. Samuel Martin Stephenson (1742-1833), formerly Presbyterian minister of Greyabbey (*DNB*).

Six o'clock. I am just going to spend the evening at Mr Sinclaire's so must close my letter – nothing more indeed is to be learned this night and you shall hear from me tomorrow. Sam got your letter and seems much pleased with it. MM

173 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [186A]

Dear Matty, I received your two letters and a long and very particular one from Dr Haliday to whom I found myself constrained to write as capable of giving me the best information, and I shall ever thank him for his kindness. I wrote to him on Thursday with a hope of having his answer by Friday's balloon, but he mistook the day. He gives me an account at first very ominous, but at the close and in continuation he mentions some things that make me, with your account, think that there may have been some sort of crisis on Saturday. I have written all I could think to him, for I studied his letter much. If there be a return and aggravation of fever I much fear I fear the fourteenth day, Tuesday, and not the fifteenth if they reckon right. I have recommended the total warm bath at this time and some other things.

I intended yesterday and the day before to have taken a ride as far as Hillsborough, but have put it off until tomorrow's post, with a wish of spending Tuesday there. Without your letter removes every fear tomorrow, and it appear plain that the crisis has been on Saturday, from the absence of delirium, the continuance of natural sleep, and the improvement of the pulse, as the Doctor will inform me, I shall go after the post comes in. My servant shall follow me some time after, and as I will send him on to Belfast, you may send me a note, and if it be agreeable to you and the day be good, you may come so far, Nancy or Sam or both, and breakfast or dine with me in Hillsborough. I shall give you the chaise and then I may return on Wednesday without being missed. I must confess at this time the bark and wine, at least a trial of them in both ways, with the total warm bath is the mode I am most inclined to but it is a matter of anxious doubt. WD

174 Monday morning

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [186B]

I hope there is now reason for your being pretty much at ease, as the account from the family this morning is that she had a very good night, and is much better. Before the post goes out, I may perhaps learn some physical opinions.

You have wrote to Dr Haliday, therefore it is now needless to say anything about it. You must have him a confidant, and in that case I make no doubt of his being a safe one – it may be, if in his power, a useful one. But there is one thing which strikes me, to which possibly you did not advert – that he will no doubt suppose

there is a mutual attachment. This is not fair, and what you ought in honour to set him right in – and as soon as possible do the same for yourself, supposing, what I hope there is now no reason to fear, her recovery.

I would by no means have you think of going to H[illsborough] tomorrow, for which I can see no reason. Before your man could get here, it would be too late for us to set out, nor would I like the appearance of it, for which I could give no reason. You have no right to appear interested.

I shall write by the balloon tomorrow, by that means you will have another day's account tomorrow night and this in the morning – more you could not have by our meeting. I shall also send your pretty purse from Nancy.

I wonder how the Doctor will relish your prescribing. It had need to have been done very delicately to render it palatable, otherwise your situation will not excuse you. Tell me how he takes it, and what further passes between you. MM

175 two o'clock

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [HILLSBOROUGH], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [184]

Dear Matty, Matters must certainly have taken an ill turn or I must have heard either from you or Haliday this morning – if so surely it would have been better to tell me. Haliday at any rate would have written something. I have ridden as far as Hillsborough, and wait only for my man's coming up to send this note. Tell me everything truly and explicitly, and don't treat me like a woman.

If matters be as I cannot but suspect, don't come here tomorrow. If they be otherwise do as is agreeable to yourself. Yours etc., WD

Give the man his dinner.

176 Sunday night

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [185]

Dear Will, The account today from the family is that M[argaret] is much better, from Dr H[aliday] that she is not worse.

Last Sunday Mr Portis surprised his friends by a visit from Dublin, he returned again in the evening and yesterday appeared again and set off this morning. He declares he has purchased an advowson⁹⁶ for George worth £1,000 a year from the Duke of Leinster⁹⁷ and that the Bishop of Dromore has given him a living about twenty miles from this, of £600. What all this will turn to, is hard to say – but the suspicions I mentioned to you gain ground daily. Yours, MM

⁹⁶ i.e. a benefice.

⁹⁷ William Robert (1749-1804), 2nd Duke of Leinster (*DNB*).

177 Tuesday, eleven o'clock

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [187]

Dear Will, As I intended giving you every satisfaction that letters could, I am mortified at being defeated by the neglect of postmasters. As I hope this may reach you by the balloon, I send it off with my only information this day from J. Smith's which is that she rested well and continues better. Yesterday she slept a good deal, and I suppose no one fears her recovery. If yesterday was such a day with you as with us I suppose you were wet to the skin and sitting in wet clothes afterwards, it's probable you may give too striking a proof of sympathy. I have not time for more than to beg you'll write immediately. Tell me how you are and what Haliday said to you. MM

178 Wednesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, AT MRS DRENNAN'S, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [188]

Dear Matty, I did not get any rain either in going or coming, or catch any cold. A gentleman called at my rooms last night who neither left his name or would allow me to be sent for, but from the description I imagine it to be W. Jones. I fancy he goes down much on my errand, and it would have been curious enough had we jumbled together at Hillsborough.

I wrote a few lines yesterday to Haliday, and though I had marked what you hinted at in my first letter and pretty strongly, yet I repeated it, and dwelt on it and stamped it besides with the seal of secrecy.

The Post Office here is wretchedly kept, though a very important one, and at present is changing to another house, so that I know not but there may be every day letters mislaid. I have not heard this morning from either you or Haliday. I got your note by the balloon and send this with the same conveyance. If any alteration had been, you no doubt would have written. As for Haliday's silence I can scarcely comprehend the reason, for on my best recollection it could not be from anything I said, and it gives me some apprehension as his opinion was ominous. Matty, I have a great notion, they send favourable messages and make too favourable reports to you. I shall certainly have something from Haliday tomorrow. I have paid the balloon boy. WD

179 Tuesday noon

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [187A]

Dear Matty, Here then I am shrunk into my shell again. I called at the Post Office and found your letter dated Sunday night, so that your letter must have been put into the office later than proper, and your Mercury no longer deserves the title, as I enquired repeatedly on Monday morning without getting any news. This you must

allow was extraordinary, as you had promised some account or other every day. Dr Haliday's account made me still more surprised. He says 'I thought the appearance about her exceedingly ominous – a total prostration of strength, insufferable sense of weariness, confusion of head, restlessness, oppression, anxiety, feeble and frequent pulse, etc.' and after going on at length he concludes – 'This is the true nervous fever, a species of the typhus, and I am sorry to add that this very interesting patient is from native delicacy and weakness too likely to sink under so serious an attack of it'. How would you have behaved had you received an account from no quarter by the next post as I did? If Dr H has taken what I said ill he was in fault himself by entering into such detail, and had he been the father of physic I could have done nothing else. I neither differed from him nor ventured to prescribe, but told him my opinion, which was much the same as his own. I mentioned at first that I wrote under the seal of secrecy, and that my interest in the matter was merely on my own account. I shall write him a line tonight to the same purpose, and to appease this Esculapian⁹⁸ god.

I thank Nancy for her very elegant purse. Sam need not buy a horse as my mare does well enough. With regard to a sentence of yours on Monday morning, I had been ascertained long ago, if I had not been rendered backward by something you said to me, and it confirms me in the observation that one should go as their god or their devil drives them, for advice and consequent irresolution produces a strange kind of motley, mongrel character that one does not know what to make of. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

180 10 August 1785

DR A. HALIDAY, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, REDIRECTED TO MARTHA MCTIER [186]

Dear William, The reason you have not heard from me is simply this, that on Sunday evening I was so much hurried, I shall not say as not to have time to write, but as absolutely to forget it till it was too late, and from your letter received on Monday, I thought there was an utter uncertainty respecting your place – indeed I was the less anxious about the matter, perceiving that you received intelligence from another quarter. The fever has sensibly declined, and the lady is much indebted to the *vis medicatrix naturae*.⁹⁹ She got an opiate on Friday night, which did not prevent her throwing off great quantities of yellow porraceous¹⁰⁰ bile from six to ten next morning. On Sunday she got decoction of the cortex,¹⁰¹ though the stomach and belly were rather tense, and if it had any operation, it was that of forcing off half a dozen large offensive (not thin) dark coloured stools. That night the hypochondrium and abdomen felt soft and empty and next morning the pulse was wonderfully calm, skin temperate, and tongue clean and moist – still more so this morning – nor

⁹⁸ Esculapius, god of medicine.

⁹⁹ i.e. the healing power of nature.

¹⁰⁰ Leek-green.

¹⁰¹ Probably a laxative.

was the access last night considerable – great complaints still of weakness, and of unsatisfying slumbers – those about her think she gets much sound sleep. Sure my dear Will, you could not seriously apprehend that I took your epicrisis on the case amiss? It would have been doing me great injustice. The lady's situation you will perceive is hopeful. I should be glad to add, and the gentleman's also – but I have some reasons to think it is more friendly to be silent on that head. With great and affectionate regard, in haste, truly yours, A HALIDAY

NOTE BY WILLIAM DRENNAN TO MARTHA MCTIER: Don't you think that after this it would be best to drop all thoughts of the matter? What his 'some reason' is I know not, but I have so little doubt that it is some good reason, that I shall not I believe even ask him to tell, though it would be some satisfaction. I warrant he knows everything about it already. Mrs Haliday I know is her confidant.

181 Saturday

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [189]

My dear Will, The Doctor's hint is indeed an ill-omened one, and forebodes an issue to this affair, most unfavourable to you and to my best hopes. But it should not be rested on, nor could he suppose it would. The ice is now broke with him, and my advice to you is, to lose no time in entreating him to explain himself fully. He might suppose the improbability of your success might account for what he said, but his having reason for what he seemed to hint, in friendship, implies somewhat more, and in friendship will I suppose be explained. If it assures you of her affections, or her promise being engaged – there is an end to all. But nothing less than this should prevent you, when she is better, to address herself in the method most likely to get a satisfactory answer and this I suppose would be by letter. She is incapable of treating you ill and I cannot think it will or need hurt you a bit more to have an end put to your hopes by her, than by a third person.

It is now needless to trouble you with many suppositions which have occurred to me, as you are in a fair way of arriving at certainty, but I cannot yet believe that either W[ill] S[aurin] or George Bamber stand in your way. That the Doctor would favour the latter is certain, because he has been heard to wish it was a match – and by being interested for it, has perhaps found out the bar to you both. If it is W.S., it is a very early, and I imagine secret attachment. I rather suspect it will turn out a Killymoon¹⁰² affair. This it might be, and yet not hers, but nothing less than a certainty of her affections being engaged should now stop your application to herself. There is but two ways for it to end, and I perceive it's now for your happiness it should come to one of them. If you determine to write I wish it could be so contrived that she could get the letter at least without the knowledge of the rest of the family. She would have then power and time to act for herself. If the letter goes by post this will not be the case, and I know not who you could entrust it with. Many would take the request

102 i.e. a match might be made with one of her Stewart cousins.

as an affront. It might appear in that light to N[ancy] Thomson. What would you think of J. Kennedy, though it might be very long before he got an opportunity? But Dr Haliday's answer may [—] this matter. I suppose you have [written] to him before this.

I saw a letter from Dublin this day that mentions the bringing on of the propositions being put off till today, but that on Friday there was a warm debate in which Flood appeared greater than ever and Grattan and Connolly decidedly against the court, but that the general belief was that they would pass gilded in the shape of a bill that the squeamish would certainly swallow. MM

182 Wednesday, 25 August

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [190]

Dear Matty, I shall just copy a letter or rather note I have just received from Haliday, which I should hope proves that he spoke merely from supposition, or more probably from a confidential friendship with G[eorge] B[amber] who he concludes will be fortunate, but of this may not be so certain as to choose to be more explicit. 'My dear sir, the hint I gave you was surely well intended – I hope it was founded on a mistake. I only said (I believe) that I had some reason. I am willing to think that reason none at all. It was however the office of a friend to put you on your guard against indulging a passion which he thought at the time likely to be disappointed. There could be no other objection to the one you cherish and I am happy to perceive that you think with the fairest prospects (a word or a meaning which by the bye I had never expressed). This is all I can say on the subject. For the rest convalescence goes on slowly, fever gone, appetite returned, but still in bed. In great haste, adieu, A. Haliday.' I long for your opinion of this letter – I think it is an odd one, particularly in obtruding a sentiment or expression upon me which I so far from used that my letter betrayed the most opposite cast of my mind; and which could not surely be foisted on me for any sinister purpose.

I must now copy a part of another letter I lately received from Bruce, 'Said Betty, we had a visit from Moody this morning, and among other pieces of news he told us that an express had arrived with an account that M.J. of Belfast is given over by H and M. I testified some surprise at the intelligence which was immediately taken notice of, and with some remarks on my silence they described you as an admirer of hers and even quoted the title of a poem that you have written on her – all this they had got from Dr M[oody] and perhaps had eked out his intelligence with the hints that they had received from their northern correspondents. They talked of W. T. J[ones] also, but though it was evident that I agreed with them in opinion I could safely declare that you had never mentioned the lady's name in the course of our correspondence. I am glad to find by a later account that Miss J has had a favourable turn.' Miss Scott also mentioned to me that the lines were shown to many which supposes some degree of desire to make it more public than was

intended, and from what that desire could proceed is very doubtful, for what in her would be indiscreet, not to say ungenteel, to submit to common inspection any poem of such particular and personal address, would still appear odd even if a relation or friend had divulged it, as must no doubt have been the case. I have sometimes thought that the relations wished me to declare myself and to be denied, for her advantage to be sure, as soon as possible, and for that purpose these lines were, as it were, published as a means of making me do so, by sealing me down as her admirer.

Even Dr Haliday seems to have drawn back as it were from mentioning what he may know and perhaps does know, to let me proceed to my fate, which he would rather she should have it placed in her power to pronounce, than for him to do it; and indeed there is such a striking difference in his late and last letter that I am almost tempted to believe that he has himself talked with some of her relations, or that his wife, who no doubt from her friendship to G.B. will now take an interest in my concerns, has saved her husband from bursting and let off the secret which no doubt lay as cold as ginger wine on his stomach. Unwilling therefore to tell what he may know, he chooses rather to assume the character of a prophet, and is content to warn me of the event, without even wishing me success in the trial. I did not receive his answer in course of post, a day intervened – Monday. I wonder if he was in town on that day and did not receive my letter until yesterday. Let me hear on Friday what is your opinion of all this.

The propositions are scouted. This shows that all could be done in the business of reform if the property of the House were equally interested on that subject. But why are they interested on this point and not on the other? Because this treaty threatened their properties, and because the reform would, by increasing general liberty, lessen their own power. The most patriotic members of the House are as much self-interested against reform as its enemies are, for even these men would lose that consequence which the people would gain. This event also shows the utter impracticability of forming any commercial treaty with Britain and therefore tends either to union or separation. It shows the folly and ignorance of the minister to pledge the King by an address which must expose him and his opinion to fresh disgrace and derision. There ought to be no rejoicings on this account. It is but repelling an insult and should be done in silent scorn. The parliament seemed afraid that the people would get the start of them. WD

183 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [174]

Dear Matty, I think Sam would not accept such a small agency but as a stepping stone of a more lucrative one, and as it would not appear well to decline it. There may be promotion in that line as well as in others, and I should think that A. Stewart in particular will take the first opportunity of serving him, consistent with the duty he owes to others. Things I prophesy will improve, and when by my

abilities I shall treat with government, you shall have a share of the pension. At present, we must live, as most other people do in every station, on hope rather than enjoyment. I can't say I much like this subject, for either to reason or to moralise on a matter of feeling, is a thing, says Werter,¹⁰³ which I abominate. I lead a life here of most discomfiting ennui, and yet I am pretty much in company, but I still leave it, though an agreeable one, with an indescribable wearisomeness of spirit.

I spent yesterday pleasantly enough at Mr Corry's¹⁰⁴ with the Brownes, Marstons, and young Isaac who is really an agreeable man, and all the family copy his manner with success. He has built a wondrous neat little cottage¹⁰⁵ about a mile from this town, which is exactly suitable to my idea of a country dwelling, a place that you stumble upon unexpectedly, and makes you cry Ha! Ha! He calls it Lack-land, and has a little maid as he calls her for his house-keeper. And here he means to live until his father dies, an event which has been long expected in vain. Bruce tells me in his last, that if he had an independent £100 per annum he would certainly have disowned all profession and lived for himself as his genius led him; for much enjoyment of every kind do we sacrifice in this life, much of our pride, much of our peace, much of our freedom, and much of our conscience even in spite of ourselves, while we aim at getting a superior fortune than a competency. Many things appear romantic on second thoughts, which on a third inspection are the real and substantial grounds of happiness. My acquaintance with the Collector¹⁰⁶ is renewed, and with his sister-in-law, an exceedingly sensible well-informed widow, whose husband died lately at Lisbon and who herself has been for some time an invalid.

I am exceedingly desirous of putting an end to my own affair one way or other, and as soon as may be I have therefore resolved to write as respectfully as I can to N[ancy] Thomson, and to enclose her the next day, before I could receive an answer, the letter which I have written. I do not, as you say, like the idea of confidant-ship, but there is no better way to be taken that I can think of, without a delay which is become disagreeable to me. Is Miss Thomson staying at Mrs Donaldson's or Mrs Smith's?¹⁰⁷ I should rather write to her a letter before I send an enclosure, as she might receive it unprepared. I don't like sending it to J. Kennedy. Have you anything else to say, or has anything else occurred? I am rather hopeless, but if I have any interest with her I shall not lose it by this step, and I shall have a mind that can be settled in some way. If she had ever given me such encouragement as would have kept my mind even in agreeable uncertainty, I should not be so eager as I am about this. I am afraid I shall not be able to see you so soon as I might wish and if I did I don't know that I should come better to my end by being near than by being at a distance. All I want is that she should not¹⁰⁸ answer me, which might give me some ground to proceed, but it is time enough to think how I will proceed, when I find in what manner she receives a first letter.

103 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), *The sorrows of young Werther* (1774).

104 Edward Corry (d.1792), father of Mrs Marston, Mrs Browne and Isaac Corry, junior.

105 Derrymore House, an elegant thatched cottage, now the property of the National Trust.

106 Francis Carleton; his sister-in-law was the widow of his brother John (1742-81).

107 Her aunts, the half-sister and wife of John Galt Smith.

108 ? recte now.

Betty Bruce I hear is better, and I daily expect an answer to a very long letter I lately wrote to her brother. Joe Pollock is gone up again to Dublin to bring down his whole [*sic*] wife to the country. His eldest sister is come from England – a very sensible girl not much encumbered with body. If I could think of politics, it should be to persuade the people to a separation for [*sic*] England, a fruitful subject for political paradox, which in many cases turns out to be truth, and which would require a address to passion.

I wonder you don't at your leisure write one letter to Orde for a place – I would, if I wanted one. WD

184 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [175]

Dear Matty, I expected to have heard from you this week. I have been at Carlingford on a visit to Mrs Browne who entertained me with much civility and from that I was called to Edmond Hill from which I returned last night. I expected something from you, though I really know not well what, and though I have written to M[argaret] – yet the letter lies still in my drawers, and I am resolved to send it (for why should I be uncertain any longer without a likelihood of getting information by any other means) and yet I am irresolute about the best means of doing so, though I think your former plan as good as any, if the common way by post be not the best. I should wish to know your third thoughts on the subject, for I think I am grown incapable of thinking well for myself. I suppose I shall hear from you tomorrow, but if not, you will answer me on Tuesday. Has anything new occurred? Have you seen Haliday since? I am ashamed to write to you so often without anything interesting relative to others or to myself, [bu]t either there is nothing new at present, or what you say must be true, that I can think of but one thing at a time, which by the bye is far from being singular.

Mr Corry made a triumphal entry here on Friday preceded by the manufacturers' daughters in seemly array, who for aught I know, as I was not in town at the time, sung before him the fate of the propositions – Orde's Bill¹⁰⁹ is indeed protested, but still it cost the people £140,000. You mention nothing now about the cabin or the agency. Does Miss Pollock visit you as frequently as ever? I am as often at the Corrys as usual, and one sometimes must in this place seek shelter in any company, from the dismal solitude of self, particularly where one has not many books to amuse or much fertility of mind to divert oneself in writing. I have neither. I therefore read the newspapers when I can get them and I dine, as I do today, at the Basin.¹¹⁰ WD

109 Orde's propositions were published on 15 August 1785.

110 With the Scotts.

185 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY, BUT POSTMARKED BANBRIDGE], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [191]

Dear Matty, I received by this post a peremptory denial, so peremptory indeed, that by awakening my pride a little, it has not a little contributed to quiet my other feelings. I think it bears the marks of study with the wish to appear negligent and Mrs H[arrison] has certainly been consulted. I feel myself lightened in its being over, and though I had the capability of being a faithful and an affectionate lover, yet a refusal has damped my feelings so completely that I am and bear myself as unhurt as I should be.

I write this at Mr Courtney's to whom Haliday came, and who has not been so well last night. He is a bad subject. Dr Haliday was the means of introducing me to the Price family who live now near Rostrevor. I dined there a day or two ago, and they promise to be an agreeable and lucrative acquaintance. I have a design of changing my lodging for a better and then I shall like to see my friends. Let me hear from you as soon as convenient and allow me to put you to expense for so little intelligence. I shall in future write to you by each balloon. Ever your affectionate brother, WD

186 Tuesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [192]

The Gentleman's Epistle¹¹¹

Madam, I find myself so little able to bear any longer a most disagreeable and anxious suspense of mind which I have for some time past experienced, that I am resolved, be the event what it will, to deliver myself from it, and as the most likely means of gaining an explanation of your feelings is to explain my own, I trust, that in this most interesting moment of my life, you will excuse a declaration in terms, of an attachment which in many other ways must have been already so well known to you, an attachment that I feel myself emboldened to say must derive some little merit in your breast, from its truth and its constancy. Yet I know not whether I shall keep my purpose to the end of this letter, for, in truth, I have resolved and resolved so often, I have seen so little on your side to encourage hope, I have seen so much on all sides to excite fear, that what I resolve on this evening will probably be abandoned tomorrow. When I recollect your conduct towards me at times when I might suppose you would act in the manner you wished to act, as when you were last in Dublin, I think within myself that this must proceed not merely from reserve or circumspection of manner, but rather from a dislike bordering on aversion, and if I see a greater appearance of affability when I happen to meet you in Belfast in the midst of your friends, I ascribe it only to the necessary ceremonial of life which so often constrains our inclinations and, when there is no feeling, forces at least a fashionable civility.

111 Transcript of a letter from William Drennan to Margaret Jones, and of her reply.

Then I return into my own breast, and begin again to think that in some things I am worthy of you, and I feel a heart within me capable of very strong and very stable attachment, capable of dedicating the service of my life to her I love. I think I have a gentle temper, and a moderate but well-cultivated understanding, yet whatever cultivation it has received or can receive, I now find plainly that there can be no real enjoyment in this world unless there be an all-invaluable one to whom every sentiment of the soul may be imparted and by whom every sensation of the heart may be felt. With a consciousness of such qualities as might pretend to your esteem, I was led to hope that persevering assiduity and unabating constancy might in time give me a greater value in your opinion, and when I felt every sentiment you uttered so congenial, so married, if I may presume to say so, with my own, I acknowledge it, I went on in a pursuit which to every other person might seem vain and impracticable, with a heart-cheering hope that sympathy in some particulars might produce it in others, and at last in that particular which of all others was most important, for as to the obstacles of disparity in fortune or in family which to others would seem insurmountable, I felt them only as very great, but on that very account I had an ambition which I think well becomes a man, to overcome them.

I think too well of every relation you have to suppose that they would exert any other influence over you than their warm affection and regard for your interests must naturally create, and I think too highly of your sense to suppose that they could exert any other sort of influence in matters where you ought to judge and act solely for yourself. When I changed my situation from Belfast to this place, with other losses, I lost those opportunities of creating or cultivating a favourable opinion of me in your mind which I might have improved by living in the same town, and when I left that town, I felt it would be the height of presumption in me to do aught else than look out for every occasion of meeting you when I could escape from the prison of my profession. I did meet you sometimes – and at those times I wished – from my inmost heart I wished to render myself agreeable to you, and yet I somehow felt that I could only wish to be so. Then I went away disgusted with myself, yet in a little I found some reason to account for my failure, and then I felt myself eager to follow the new hope of seeing you in Dublin. In Dublin you would not suffer yourself even to be seen, and then indeed I said within myself that all was over, her affections are perhaps engaged to another, and whoever that other may be, I must not doubt that he is worthy of her. If this be really the case, and since I was last in Belfast I much fear it is the case, whoever he be I respect him. But if it be not so, and perhaps, perhaps, it is not so, will you place me on the same footing with another, and whoever or whatever he may be, I will neither yield to him in any proof of the value I set upon you, or if ever affection should be mutual, in the value I should set upon myself. Will you even preserve that indifference you seem at present to possess, and suffer in silence that I should again write to you? This will at least show that if you have no preference you have no fixed and settled aversion.

In this dispiriting and cheerless uncertainty of mind, a fearful uncertainty which represses my feelings and checks a thousand thoughts that at other hours I resolve

to express, in this suspense of mind have I written to you, and will you excuse me when I aver that I wish to know the word rather than fear it. I have chosen this time to write to you – I remember that when I recovered from an illness similar in kind, but severer than that which you have lately experienced, I remember and never shall I forget, those meltings of the heart which used to sink and sicken with delight when I felt myself returning into life and all its hopes and endearments, when every sense had a certain novelty and freshness and when the weakness of the body seemed to give a more exquisite sensibility to the mind. I felt gratitude, friendship, with a keener relish, and in my waking dreams, I used to think that the most unresisting softness of the human heart was to be found at such times as these. And now that I have opened my breast before you and told you every emotion of my heart I feel myself lightened. Whatever be the result, however you may determine (but you have determined already), I am sure you cannot use me ill for offering you a heart and the service of a life along with it, offering it as a man who can think, who can feel, and who is not conscious of making rash promises. 'Tis all indeed I have to offer. I am, madam, and with your permission ever will be, with devoted attachment of head and heart, your obedient and humble servant, WD

The Lady's Reply

Sir, I was exceedingly surprised by your letter a few days ago and very sorry to find myself the ignorant cause of any uneasiness to you. You accuse me unjustly of having intentionally varied my behaviour the different times I have met you, for I am not conscious of acting otherwise than natural civility and politeness dictate to every acquaintance and it astonishes me that you should suppose I thought it necessary to be guided by any other motives. I am obliged to you for your favourable opinion and concerned at your throwing it away on one that cannot deserve it by feeling a return. I wish you happiness, but it is not nor ever will be in my power to do more. I am, with esteem, your obedient humble servant, MJ

I did not say her answer was either insulting, or that its expressions were very improper, and yet there is something in it that is almost as disagreeable to me as its peremptory tone. I do not mean to take any resolution, nor do I in the least fear what can be said or invented on the subject which I have such command over myself as seldom to think of. WD

187 Tuesday

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [176]

Dear Will, I have in vain waited for something interesting or amusing to make my paper worth postage, and at last can only tell you we are all well, and longing to hear from you.

The subject that has most engrossed this place, is a very melancholy one, poor Mr Portis's madness – for such indeed it now is, and the effects of it already (it's to be

feared) has brought on the ruin of his fortune. The expenses he has been known to be at, in purchases of lands, houses, presentations, horses, furniture and building, is very great and others are dreaded. He imagines himself possessed of immense fortune and great interest, and provides in some way for every friend or acquaintance. Some time ago he sent cards of invitation for a grand ball, supper, etc., the following night. He had at this time given striking proofs of more than partial madness, and in order to get the ball put off, Mrs Portis feigned an additional illness. Either the hope, or fear, of her death actuated him so powerfully, he thought it impossible she could recover, sent apologies, got Mr Crombie raised at six in the morning to pray beside him, but in the midst of it, got hold of him, desired him to stop, for he could bear it no longer, desired him to go to his wife and pray for her – Crombie however chose to take the road home – sent for the tailor, took off mourning for himself and servants, gave directions for the funeral and declaring he would never again enter that house, put to sea in a storm, from which he was in the greatest danger. From one of the ladies at Lord Selkirk's,¹¹² there was a letter to Mrs Price, of her brother having arrived there, and her concern at hearing of Mrs Portis's death. I suppose he will put it into the papers, and probably may marry, before he is overtaken, for he flies – some way, or other, he will certainly kill the little woman, for as she is thought dropsical it is half done to his hand. Sam had a most friendly, well-wrote letter from him from Dumfries planning out a lucrative employment for him in Dublin; it was by transacting bill business, for which he sent him a power¹¹³ on stamped paper. No one expects he can keep either agency or collection any time, and unless he has a favourable turn, confinement must be the end of it.

Our market has been good but I know no other particulars of it. Subscriptions are talked of for building an academy¹¹⁴ and Crombie will get every encouragement. Jack Getty has been here for some time. He appears to be a sensible good lad – well looking, agreeable, dashy and polite. He has been considering of taking up an apothecary shop here, but does not, nor will not, promise to be a drudge. He thinks himself a gentleman and is determined to remain such – it is therefore feared he will not succeed. He says Dr Mattear has promised to assist him materially in his line – he has not however determined, and returns to London before he will do it.

I imagine Miss J[one]s fancies some danger from me for she has deviated from politeness, and indeed good sense I think, by her behaviour being so different to me from what it very lately was. Though often abroad, and past our door, she has never returned one of the many visits she solicited from me. I longed to see her – to show by the sameness of my manner, I was either ignorant or unhurt. At our new dancing school, I had an opportunity being fixed just at the door when Mrs H[arrison] and she entered I addressed them in the usual manner. They answered – but merely so, and slid past, in so quick an overlooking manner, that I imagine they thought I would run off with the prize. We sat at this same distance all night and I diverted

112 Dunbar Douglas, 4th Earl of Selkirk.

113 Of attorney.

114 Crombie's initial prospectus appeared in the *Belfast News-Letter* on 9 September 1785, for the history of Belfast Academy see A. T. Q. Stewart, *Belfast Royal Academy, the first century 1785-1885* (Antrim, 1985).

myself with M[argaret] stealing looks at me as if I was her lover. I left them in the room, and in spite of this uncivil not to say ungrateful behaviour, mine shall be yet the same, civilly indifferent. I beg you will write immediately to your MM

188 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [170]

I do not wonder that you are at a loss to know what to do with Mr Edgeworth in Newry. Little better will it be here but what we can, we will, if you give us, at least, a day's warning and if you find his stay is to be as short as your own and that he is likely to be at a loss for a bed – you may suppose you can get him one at your mother's but don't tell I bade you say so.

A little matter of some importance has turned up since I wrote to you, Sam having been appointed Ballast Master¹¹⁵ for this town, a new employment for which the merchants here have got an Act of Parliament and they are formed into a corporation. They have a power of appointing their officers, etc., but government reserves a negative, which to have effect must come in thirty days. Their choice was unanimous in favour of Sam, before he ever heard of it. They tell him, for the first year, the salaries will be small – so much so they think it better not to name any, being ignorant what their funds may be, what the business, etc., will be. What we know is this – that there will be an office built, that the hours of attending will be only those of the custom house and therefore we can live in our cabin; that it will not be worse and that it probably will be more than Mr Bateson's¹¹⁶ agency, for which they will allow him to go to the estate twice or three times a year, if he can obtain it on these terms. Nothing less than residence I fear will satisfy Mr Bateson – however, he appears to have wished much to get Sam, and since that cannot now be the case, he says he will not make any change for one year – nor has he yet determined against trying Sam, on his own terms. So far, matters are a little mended. We will have at least £140 a year, and for three years of our housekeeping we spent no more.

The Doctor¹¹⁷ does not approve of this change but he uses no arguments, and it would have required good ones to convince Sam that his cabin and Belfast was not better than Kilrea, which he never looked on in any other light than a banishment where, forgotten by his friends, he would be supposed provided for and never get a step beyond it. He appears now lightened of a weight, that has hung heavy on him ever since his acceptance of Kilrea. Of one or the other, Nancy has never expressed a fear, or a hope, an approbation, or dislike, and I am sure I could be safe in saying, that except calling for coals, she has not spoke twenty words in the family since you were here – a laugh – no – combing Nysa¹¹⁸ is an exertion she has not used this twelvemonths, and as my poor mother says, leaving them together would be like tying the living to the dead, but of this you will hear enough.

115 He was appointed on 25 October 1785 (Millin, *Sidelights*, p.32).

116 Probably Thomas Bateson of Orangefield (1704-91).

117 Probably Dr Matrear, Sam's brother.

118 A family pet, probably a lap dog.

Several people here knew you to be Brutus, and among the first, was Dr Haliday. He was lavish in your praise, toas[—] and upon Sam saying he would answer [—] heart, replied, he might also do it, for [—]ad that he knew he might, and also be assured that your politics did not make you neglect your business. This passed in company, and showed a kind intention. Very melancholy accounts of poor Mr Portis — his brother had got hold of him and was taking steps that appeared prudent both for his mind and fortune, neither of which he can be trusted with. For several days he appeared quite well and deceived them so artfully that he escaped, and for several days no news nor trace of him could be obtained in London, since, he has been found in Oxfordshire. He bestows, purchases and draws bills, to so great an amount wherever he goes, that nothing less than absolute confinement can prevent his entire ruin — if yet that can do it, and it will make him quite outrageous.

Why do you never mention Will Bruce or anything he says? I suppose you are deep in his debt. Crombie wrote to him about an English master. Captain Stewart's house was proposed to be purchased as a temporary academy, but it is too deeply mortgaged. J. Brown's Peter's Hill is now in agitation. Wonderful strides this place is making without any help but the spirits and wealth of its inhabitants.

189 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [196]

Dear Matty, I am just come from a long conference with I. Corry concerning our personal politics, and the line which he recommends me to take at present. He talked a great deal and very well, with friendly compliment, and if you think I can read men, with sufficient sincerity. He did not originate this conversation, but it arose from an expression which I dropped in breakfasting with him, that an independent £100 was better than a professional £300. He told me there were lines where a person of tolerable abilities might have a moral certainty of becoming independent, and keep both honour and conscience, that the great loss of this country was the want of a formed party, that such had been in agitation in Northington's time, that it had been broken by his behaviour, that Fox and Portland and all the Whig interest saw the necessity of it more and more, that for this purpose there was a kind of party forming without great cement as yet by Hardy,¹¹⁹ Forbes, etc., etc., who though chiefly of members would be glad of every accession, and to whom he should hope to introduce me. That there were two ways of gaining distinction at present, either in the House as a speaker, or out of the House as a writer, in the one case much more information was necessary than in the other: that this distinction in the latter case was to be obtained solely by entering a party, if the principles of that party were agreeable to one's own conviction; that Flood or Grattan could alone act by themselves; that his own party was that of Mr Fox (here he spoke in secrecy);

119 Francis Hardy (1751-1812), MP, barrister and biographer of Lord Charlemont (*DNB*).

that the surest way of profiting by a party, and no other way is there to profit or distinction in this country, is by doing it (the party) service, and that the remembrance of this service when revived in the minds of those who would eventually and perhaps quickly have the power of obliging, and by those who were faithful friends, would be an honourable and a fair groundwork of that rise in station, in circumstances, and as he called it, in description, which every man ought to aim at. That he thought I ought, in all honour to be useful to others, and to myself, that if I was proud I should have a desire of getting into a political relationship with men of conspicuous station, that if I was proud of literary talents, I ought to take the most conspicuous mode of using them to my own illustration and advantage, that if I had too much leisure I should employ it to some purpose, to give me an activity of mind, and a habit of keeping it employed as every mind ought to be which would keep itself from decay. That he should be glad to give me every information, commercial and political, that lay in his power and more lay in it than the generality of people would give him the credit to imagine; that he really had a great esteem for me, not considering himself or me as Newry man, or Newry politicians, and that he thought I might rather in some time be led to quit it – etc., etc., etc.

You will, immediately, call all this fudge. I think there is a good deal in it, and a good deal in him. I think him one who will do much for his own interest and yet can be a friend. I know and told him so that he thinks himself well acquainted with mankind, their tempers, and dispositions. I owned my ambition, and my wish for honourable and conscientious competence. I heard nothing that he said that could encroach the least upon my notions of strict honour – I think I have within me an impregnable heart in politics – I am of belief that it is necessary to be a party-man, and that a man can be so consistent with the strictest honour, I believe that there may, but perhaps never will be long, a ministry which an honest patriot ought to support. I think it is becoming any man to wish to rise in station and description as he calls it. If he be well educated and well principled, his heart will be a quick and sensible monitor when he passes the line of duty, and it becomes him to enter into no engagements that may run the risk of infringing upon that line. Nor will I. I dine with him tomorrow with Carleton, etc., in the country. I own on the whole I like opportunities of trying myself, and I hope honour and virtue in this line will not fail me. I thought barely to mention it, for it does not make much impression as I don't know him yet, but I had little else to say.

I am often at Arbuckle's to see an agreeable well-informed girl, a Miss Hardinge, half-sister to Mrs Arbuckle, who is engaged to a Mr Ryves of Tipperary, so that there is no danger. I don't wish what I have mentioned should be made known even in our family – I mean the political matter. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

I may perhaps spend a day with you soon, if you are all are at leisure. When would it be agreeable? I am pretty much engaged at present. I want to buy some things in Belfast, particularly a pair of leather breeches which they make well there. They are absolutely necessary, we ride so much and walk almost always in boots.

190 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [197]

Dear Will, No it is not all fudge – I doubt not he thinks you can serve his party and that he will try to attach you to it, and if, and while its cause is good, why not? But what is this cause? If, the political rights of Ireland, to it you are already bound, and for being and continuing its champion, let fame or fortune reward you. For the former you must trust to yourself, for I have often told you, and you found it here, deserve it and you will obtain it. For the latter, rather be proud of your present independence, and that it sets you above temptation, than by flattering your imagination that you will ever better your fortune by politics, or being a party man, and therefore laying store for future disappointments. ‘Remembrance of service past’ is a frail tie, never any I believe on administration except when it gives rise to hope for more in future.

But you will say what does this all mean? – not to withdraw from notice and live without a hope of rising above £200 a year in the town of Newry. No, I have ever wished you to push for acquaintance, and notice that might in time induce you to a more conspicuous situation. But I never believed this could be obtained but by and in professional practice. You have more than once hurt and surprised me by meanly (pardon the expression) wishing for one or two hundred a year independent of business, and even, as if it would content you, for a poor self pittance. I cannot conceive your meaning for this, unless it is disgust at your profession and its tying you to a particular spot – unless it’s Dublin, I know not any place you would like better and for a future settlement there much depends on yourself. That man’s genius and abilities would require to be very great who in this age could expect to be much or long noticed living on £200 a year. But then you would be bribed, and you would scorn it, and show your cold blade of mutton.¹²⁰ This would be very fine but then it must be told, and short would be the praise, and therefore short the pleasure. After thirty years knowledge of the world this is all Chimera. If well-earned praise in the political line brings fortune, it is well indeed, but expect it not, nor by any other means than by your own industry, nor suppose a trifle independent of this would be eligible. I really believe it is generally quite the contrary and particularly so with you.

I have been gratified in an opportunity of over looking and slightly acknowledging the scornful lady who last Sunday addressed me in the street. How would you like to meet her at the coterie on Tuesday? They are now very good – the last was adorned by Lady Antrim and her three daughters. I was not there nor at her ball – I am a mere nobody. On Tuesday it’s probable there will be a full meeting. At that or any other time that answers your inclination and time we will be all here glad to receive you – and to be glad is here a novelty.

Crombie was to write to you this week. The Bishop of Down¹²¹ has been staying at Bristow’s and appears to be the modestest and most amiable of bishops. Crombie

120 From an anecdote about the Spartan lifestyle of Andrew Marvell (1621-78), poet (*DNB*).

121 William Dickson (1744-1804), Bishop of Down and Connor.

waited on him and it happened at a time when Trail,¹²² Leslie,¹²³ and many more of the cloth were at court, among these his lordship looked like a curate. He received Crombie well, approved of his scheme etc., but one of them had the impudence to stagger him by asking if he looked on himself as the principal in the affair – to which the pawky carl answered that at present all the trouble and management of the matter devolved on him, but that in future he hoped it would rest on abler persons. Trail supposed confining the matter to the lower branches of education would be sufficient for a trading town like this. He was answered, these also would be taught in course, and to their great mortification they found this intelligence was merely complimentary, for that the affair was determined on and was to meet able support. I long to hear whether Corry has anything to propose to you, or if it was all random shot.

191 Tuesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [168]

I cannot come on Thursday and perhaps not on Tuesday, but if I can come on that day I shall let you know by Sunday's post. Perhaps Boyd and I will ride together. I shall send you the standish,¹²⁴ but I will not take George along with me. This weather is indeed bad for the Mahometan paradise of Shane's Castle and they may tax the elements for unkindness. The play was badly chosen, except for dress and scenery, and there will not be one in ten in the house will understand the language. Mrs O'Neill means to moralise her husband I suppose out of jealousy; and yet I believe the whole business is built on intrigue, and that the play begins when the curtain is dropped or drawn, not when it rises. There is a double plot, a mystery which is only for the initiated in the science of pleasure, and the four senses are only attendant damsels who are directed to lead the favoured few to the fifth, enthroned in the inmost recesses of the temple. Except a few, most will feel themselves awkward, nor will they be able to remember that they are only to act as chairs, screens, or other moveables; they will be obliged to admire, and be merry, and that will take away pleasure, for it requires repetition before we can become sufficiently at home to enjoy these novelties of sense. I wrote to Edgeworth very warmly but I suppose it was one of his flights of fancy and that he has never thought more about it. I did not meet the Brownlows at Carleton's, they disappointed him. I was last night at Davis's – Mrs Holmes is full of herself and her fortune, and likes to be here on that account as her family pay her such respect. She got her child inoculated here by one of our amphibious physicians.

Is Mrs Crombie to keep boarders? The academy may in time be of great national importance, if the ability of the teachers and the excellence of the regulations will

122 Anthony Trail (1755-1831), Archdeacon of Connor.

123 Edmund Leslie (1735-90), Archdeacon of Down.

124 Inkstand.

prevent it from degenerating into a school. It will I fear not look enough to polite learning, the learning of life. Both Crombie and Dinwiddie¹²⁵ would shock a gentleman coming to Belfast with a design of settling his boys there. WD

192 Wednesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [194]

I have not yet heard from Bruce. Pollock is gone to London, I suspect a fortune-hunting, but the cause is kept a mystery even among many of his friends here. I yesterday received a letter from Lord Clanbrassill¹²⁶ requesting me to come and see his mother at Dundalk who had been affected with a complaint in her bowels for some days before. I went off as soon after the note as I could with George as well dressed as his master. I came to the inn at Dundalk, from whence I came to the great house about six o'clock – a great room, great company, and great formality. I felt myself very little discomposed, because I knew none but his lordship who particularly addressed me. The ladies were Lady Clanbrassill, the three Lady Jocelyns,¹²⁷ and a Miss Pittman, the gentlemen, his lordship, Lord Roden,¹²⁸ one of his sons, a Mr Jocelyn and a Mr Pittman. Dinner was over so I said I had taken some cold meat before I left Newry. We chatted a little and I belorded the only lord I knew in proper place and time. In a short time the ladies withdrew and after a short [time]¹²⁹ I was called into another great room, where Lady Clanbrassill with a candle in her hand, wafted me along through many passages till at last we came to the Lady Dowager's¹³⁰ apartment, a fine spirited old woman of eighty-two – the disorder was a lax – I made all proper questions, seemingly much approved by her ladyship with the candle. I felt her pulse with all due decorum and displayed Nancy's case to so much advantage that it excited their ladyships' curiosities. I prescribed after a previous consultation with her ladyship's female friend or waiting woman, a gentlewoman from whom in the course of conversation I collected the degrees and titles of the nobility above and therefore was pretty right in my addresses.

I supped there, slept there by their desire in a great room and a great bed, filled with a great number of pictures, rose, and after going to the inn early to shake a little powder in my hair, returned and breakfasted with them all, found the Lady Dowager a good deal better, she feed me with three guineas, and after leaving some written directions I retired with his lordship who most courteously showed me his hot-houses, his books, curiosities of all kinds in which he had lost a great part of his enjoyment and wished to regain it by seeing others pleased. My chief conversation was with him, though all were politely attentive, Lady C in particular. I spent the

125 William Dinwiddie, master of the mathematical school, changed his name to Dinnen.

126 4th Earl of Clanbrassill (1730-98), Governor of Co. Louth; his wife was Grace, daughter of Lord Foley.

127 Daughters of the Earl of Roden.

128 Robert, 1st Earl of Roden (1731-97), brother-in-law of Clanbrassill and father of the Jocelyns.

129 Word supplied.

130 Henrietta, Dowager Countess of Clanbrassill, died 1792.

evening with his lordship turning over botanical works which seem to be his favourite domestic amusement, and the rest were talking or playing at backgammon. They were all very minute in their enquiries. I went into one of the ladies' bed-chambers, being asked first as you may be sure, we chatted a good deal round the fire, and the ladies seemed to have no objection to continue the conversation. I guided my opinion as cautiously, not ambiguously, as I could, and they appeared to like candour and openness of medical opinion as no doubt they are all quacks. If I hear nothing from them, supposing she is well, I will wait for a day or two and then pay a visit of duty and respect.

Thursday. I fear you will scarcely decipher the foregoing scrawl. I have heard nothing from Dundalk today and am therefore in hopes the Lady D[owager] continues better. I have a letter from Bruce which for your entertainment I enclose as it is better worth three pence than mine. Write to me when anything interesting occurs. Poor Pollock I believe goes to England about money borrowed and now recalled – a wife and four children with little for them.

193 Friday [17]86

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [195]

Dear Matty, I paid my second visit at Dundalk, was well received, no fee offered, and I returned before dinner, the Lady Dowager not worse but not recovered. This was on Saturday and a piercing day it was. I went to Carlingford on Wednesday to see a play performed by the Corry family assisted by Mrs O'Neill and Mrs St Leger,¹ along with Colonel Browne. The play was well, exceedingly well brought up, 'The Beggars' Opera'² – Macheath, Colonel Browne – Lucy, Mrs Browne – Polly, Mrs Marston – Locket and Peachum, the two Corrys. An entertainment after, 'The Way to Keep Him' – Mrs St Leger, the widow Bellmour, and Mr Lovemore, I. Corry, capitally and characteristically done on both sides – an epilogue well written, read by Mrs Browne and sufficiently apropos – a supper after. Not a soul from Newry or relations or friends but your humble servant – a particular compliment no doubt, some of their next neighbours, the Moore family their relations and the set were all the company. Colonel Campbell, if I mistake not, a principal partisan among the females, was prompter. We supped, and parted at four, I had a bed at Moores and the day after (yesterday) was so terrible a day of rain, that I stayed there and dined, the party at Colonel Browne's to be there in the evening, when exactly at seven o'clock, an express for me came from Dundalk, and missing me in Newry came on to Carlingford. I set off immediately in a night something tragical indeed and rode twelve miles to Dundalk before ten, found the old lady not so bad as I expected but very anxious. I comforted her ailment, spoke very cautiously, as she is very old, hinted my wish that it would be eligible that whenever able she should return home, etc., etc., got my three guineas and arrived here this day at four, where after dining I sit down to give you this hasty scroll. The moment I came to Colonel Browne's, I. Corry met me in the hall, did not suffer me even to take off my coat, but telling him [*sic*] he would show me a room, ushered me into one where were Mrs O'Neill and Mrs St Leger at a cold collation. He introduced me, I stayed a quarter of an hour with them, went and dressed, came back and to the play. When an act was over, I was petrified to see George, my man, open the door and stand next Mrs O'Neill and Mrs St Leger who had come out before the scenes and stood at the side of the room, the pit part of which was three forms, the two former occupied with the upper gentry, and the third with the lower. I cursed him to the pit of hell. He made his way to the seat, and when after the whole was over, I asked him what the Devil's name brought him there. He said Mrs O'Neill had sent for him to the inn, so I was obliged to knock under. I chatted a little with Mrs O'Neill, a little more with Mrs St Leger, who is a most clever sensible captivating woman, and might have been more intimate had not the express intervened.

1 Possibly Anne (d.1809), wife of Colonel Richard St Leger.

2 By John Gay (1685-1732), poet and playwright (*DNB*).

Mrs O'Neill on my first introduction talked to Mrs St Leger, as if she had known me and made my introduction – all affability for self, but to be taken in good part. I had the offer of a chaise from the two Corrys and Mrs Marston to Dundalk which I politely refused. I have not caught the smallest cold and am well enough pleased with my jaunts though I believe I shall carriage it more in future.

You say in your last that Bruce must think it odd I should enquire about Miss Hardinge. I see nothing odd in enquiring about an exceeding fine girl when he knows by my own information that I am for ever off with an attachment to that other lady.³ I don't know if she could court me. Miss Hardinge is certainly engaged, so there is no harm in visiting and talking with her, and I am none of those susceptible minds that will hang or starve for love. The book you mention is the Probationary Odes⁴ with some election poetry at Westminster election. I wrote you the former and have no concern in either. Yours ever and write soon, WD

194 20 January [17]86

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [199]

Dear Matty, You must certainly be much more busy than I am, when you could not find an hour for this fortnight past to write a line to me. It is one consequence of living in such a place as this, that having so little occasion to exercise, so little solicitation to excite any of the more refined feelings of head or heart, they begin to dry up even to their source, and I really find that I am degenerating fast into a mere creature of the soil I live in, without ambition or passion beyond what Newry can supply. If you continue silence I shall grow out of the habit and out of the wish of hearing from you. You may say what and how much you will, but if ever I have independent £100 a year I shall live as I like, even though the unsocial sullenness of bachelorship be the consequence. I have no news. I hear from Dundalk occasionally and the old lady continues better. I enquired for such night caps as you describe and they are not to be had here. If my mother will buy them I shall certainly remit her the money, and make them up for me as you think proper. Dr Haliday I hear passed through this yesterday to see Mr Hall,⁵ a patient of Templeton's, and if he comes in time today I shall give him this note. Yours ever, WD

195 28 January [17]86

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [200]

My dear Matty, I do not find that you have sent the night caps which you bought for me, but I expect them daily. I have taken this day another lodging which I shall occupy some day next week, and I pay the same price I do for the one I am in,

³ Margaret Jones.

⁴ Part of the *Criticisms on the Rolliad*, a collection of whig political satires.

⁵ Probably Savage Hall of Narrow Water.

though it is much better, genteeler, and the entrance by a good hall door into a roomy hall. It is as central as I could wish it to be, and the shop totally unconnected with the place I stay in. My year's account when settled amounts only to £160 and I fancy it will be fortunate if it increases much, there is such an inveteracy of party in this place and the adherents of Templeton are so active in propagating everything that can in the least operate to my professional disadvantage, that it is well if I stick to the same receipts. I heard from Bruce lately and he promises himself a jaunt here in the course of the summer; I wonder if D[ugald] Stewart ever received the pamphlets I sent him, as I think he would have written to me, and he always used to express a resolution of visiting Ireland in the summer vacation. I believe I shall write a line to him on this subject. The account you gave of A. Stewart⁶ and his wife did not surprise me as I expected it. Dr Haliday passed through without giving me the pleasure of a call. I. Corry never has mentioned a word of politics to me, since our entretien at his cottage, and I should suspect he is [de]lib[e]rating between the offers made him and his wish to figure, or to make himself more valuable. Dr Haliday was right in saying I was no botanist, and I believe his lordship⁷ soon tired of me on that account, yet I obliged him as much as he did me, and I think he parted on the whole rather in my debt. I generally visit Arbuckle's once in the three weeks, principally to chat with a very agreeable family and a most agreeable girl. Arbuckle himself is at present in Dublin ratifying her marriage settlement as guardian, and I suppose Ryves and he will come down together. She is a very fine girl, but as I am past thirty there is little if any fear that I shall venture too far for my peace. We are on another footing.

Miss Bristow⁸ showed me last night a few additional lines to Corry's prologue by Mrs O'Neill on Campbell –

Campbell who triumphs over troops and hearts
 Descends this night to play the lower parts
 William he takes – not Pompey – that would spoil it
 The widow knows who best can tend her toilet
 And sure our play you will bestow some praise on
 When heroes stoop to conquer in Moll Brazen.

I wish if Sam should see a neat little handsome horse, purchasable at a moderate rate, he would tell me of him before he buys him. My mare is disagreeable to me once more. I go on as usual, reading only medical matter, and writing nothing for I want both machine and materials. Yours ever, WD

196 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [201]

Dear Matty, I enclose you your two well-written letters. There is much less of the dash in Miss Mussenden's and I think a stretch of remark that reaches farther than

6 Counsellor Alexander Stewart's wife had run off with George Bristow, and he later divorced her.

7 Lord Clanbrassill.

8 Probably a daughter of Roger Bristow of Newry, see below, p.250.

your other tall correspondent. I should wish to see the lines you mention as Mrs Sinclair tells me you are much be-praised in them. I have been a week in my new lodgings which are much to my taste, and I had no less than thirteen at whist, punch and oysters on Monday last, eight ladies and five or six gentlemen – Mrs I. Corry, Mrs Sinc[laire], Mrs Read, Miss Courtney, Miss Collins, Mrs Pollock, Mr Edward Corry, W. Pollock, old Isaac etc., etc. We were very gay and festive on our entertainment of few articles and the best in their kind.

I have good stabling here and my landlord gives me his own horse when I want one at the hiring price, which will save me the trouble of keeping two. George my man took the liberty last night of running off with the coat and greatcoat etc. he wore, and about £2 in my debt, but took nothing else. I thought to have advertised him but as he is probably gone to Dublin, I think it needless. I must only be more cautious of paying any in advance in future. I received your neat night caps and stockings. I want much any sort of a bookcase for my books. I wonder if half of the one in my old room could be conveyed safely here, as I don't like laying out three or four guineas for one at present. I parted from my former lodgings on exceeding good terms. Politics are all dead and even I am uninterested. WD

I will give you one of my cards on Monday to Miss Courtney.

Dr Drennan presents to Miss Courtney his duty
 And pays his devoirs at the altar of beauty
 Requests she'll make one of a party to meet
 On Monday, at seven, in fair Water Street
 Where the nightly cascades shall resound in her ear
 And the mill race runs by so sweet and so clear
 No sweets of fair Arno will venture to bloom
 Mid the dust and books in a bachelor's room
 But then no fierce cannibal enters the place
 To sully the fair with his death-doing face
 Mrs C, Misses C, Mrs S, Mrs P,
 Are the ladies that make up the petit parti
 Bread and cheese, eggs and oysters are all they require
 A glass of warm punch and a warm-hearted fire
 But as for the kisses they vow and declare
 They may give them who choose and take them who dare
 This is a real extempore.

197 26 February [17]86

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [204]

Dear Matty, I excuse your silence for some time past, and I regret what I suppose to be the cause of it. You have not come to that time of life, when the heart providentially

becomes callous and insensible to the loss of friends, and she⁹ whom you have lost was one of your earliest and most valuable friends, but she may, and you may depend upon the power who delights in virtue, for making her happy.

I live here sullenly on, as Johnson said of Gray,¹⁰ without meeting an occurrence worthy of retrospection, without looking forward to anything worthy of anticipation. I enjoy living here sufficiently, perhaps disgracefully well, for it is an enjoyment of such a kind as when one sits down to a dinner in a tavern on a leg of pork and peas pudding. I have not a great appetite for Newry, but then it is necessary to have one's dinner. I look upon my coming here as only a piece of pot luck, for I drink much claret and never dine on a knuckle of veal as I used to do at home. I suppose by this time you have got your cottage in very heartsome condition, and that you are meditating an escape from your cell in Donegall Street. I should be glad to know what my mother intends doing, for I had rather she should live in the country than take a worse house in town. Mrs Sinclair has been indisposed for some days, but is now recovered. I shall not be able to see you until April or May as I am engaged in the middle of March and at the end of it. How does your Academy go on? I thought the plan which was printed very ostentatious and yet very poor, poorly designed, written, and printed, and even spelled. Moody's stipend was lately raised here to £145 which I believe exceeds any in the North, and is equal to most in Dublin.

Campbell the church clergyman has but £60 with a wife and large family, all most decent in appearance, but he must be aided by his brother. I am sometimes tempted to write to Nedham¹¹ about him, without mentioning my name. Roger Bristow¹² was obliged to get a letter from me to the board about his health since he came to Newry, from a fear that he would lose his office here by remiss attendance, and his relation I. Corry has not interest to avert any stroke of that kind. I have not heard anything of late from the Clanbrassill family, and Arbuckle is not yet returned from Dublin, where he went as Miss Hardinge's guardian to settle her matrimonial affair with Ryves. My lodging continues agreeable to me and is certainly the best in Newry. I have another servant who dresses my hair, and seems to promise well. I shall send any spare clothes I have to Hanna¹³ by the carman I can get to take them. Write as soon as long as you can and believe me, yours ever, WD

198 Sunday, 11 March [17]86

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [205]

Dear Matty, Young McKnight¹⁴ called here on Thursday and left Newry on Friday morning. He spent the evening with me and two or three other lads, and he seemed to like his company and entertainment. I received the thread and wait for some

⁹ Eliza Goddard, who died in February 1786, in her 43rd year; she is buried in Knockbreda graveyard, Co. Down.

¹⁰ Thomas Gray (1716-71), in Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the poets* (1779, 1781).

¹¹ William Nedham, patron of the living.

¹² Roger Bristow, a cousin of the Belfast Bristows, was a custom house official; Isaac Corry's mother was a Bristow.

¹³ A poor relation, probably the husband of a niece of the Rev. Thomas Drennan (PRONI, D/531/167).

¹⁴ Possibly a son of Dr James McKnight of Edinburgh (*DNB*) with whom the Drennans and McTiers were on friendly terms.

opportunity to send you the price of it. I am striving to put into execution a plan which was chiefly formed by Bruce for a book society in this place. There are to be twenty members at an annual subscription, and I believe I shall be able to muster that number. One of the ladies I am engaged for in the middle of this month is a new patient, a Mrs Mageough,¹⁵ the other is Mrs Moore at Carlingford after which I hope to be able to pay you a visit at the Cabin which I think is your best name for your retreat. The Corrys and Sinclaires are all gone up to Dublin and return in three weeks with Miss Pollock. I have had some very cold rides in our late severe weather and have earned some fees, without any sweat of the brow. But I find that the free exposure to air preserves me from catching cold, and I suppose my professional avocations are rather salutary to me, if I am not exposed to the infection of a fever. My lodgings continue very agreeable to me but my landlord is very ill at present and if he should change his tenement I fear I shall be obliged to change mine. I am glad to hear of Sam's recovery from his severe cold, and I hope that you and he will enjoy health and strength and many years in the country.

Were you in the lottery this year? It is strange that I never had a ticket, and the reason is because I seldom find any money to spare. I live from hand to mouth and a month's illness might make me run once more in debt. I sometimes feel the horrors of it, but was never in my life less vapourish. I see good Dr Jebb¹⁶ is dead and his brother the surveyor general, whom I sometimes meet here, an artful, fawning, but pleasant man, lives to ridicule his foolish brother who was the means of getting him his post. I hope Crombie and his academy are doing well. I ought to have written a line to Dr Haliday about a harper he sent here for whom I tried in vain to procure a ball, and was obliged to send him forward with his harp behind him and some silver to carry him out of town. How is the Doctor doing now? It is a pity he had not an heir.¹⁷ The Newry fertility is surprising – old I. Corry I believe has reason to expect an eleventh child from his dainty dame. I am glad to hear of R. Bruce's good fortune. He is really a very deserving young man. I received the shirts with the three items, and I shall send you the oil cap. Yours etc., W DRENNAN

199 Thursday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY, BANBRIDGE POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [206]

Dear Matty, The printed copy of our resolutions as a book society,¹⁸ was what I gave to N. Wilson and desired him to deliver them to Sam, which I suppose he forgot. How could you suppose I would write to Nedham in my own name? I only told him that if he had leisure he might direct a line to A.B. at the Post Office here, which I suppose his indolence will prevent him from doing. The letter was, as you

15 Probably Anne, wife of Joshua McGeough of Greenwood Park, Newry.

16 Rev. Dr John Jebb (1736-86), author of *Letters ... to the Volunteers of Ireland* (1783) (DNB).

17 Haliday married twice but had no children.

18 For a printed prospectus see Drennan to Bruce, 3 April 1786 (PRONI, D/553/51).

may suppose, a very good one, and on this very account will, perhaps, not meet with an answer.¹⁹ I heard that Mrs O'Neill was gone to Bath. Her manners are those of a finished courtesan, and I suppose the manners to be a pretty close transcript of the morals. If she be honest she's a devilish cheat, but I believe there is something within which passes even the external show, and I doubt not, she would wish to make or to find others like herself. Several of her acquaintance are ready made to her hands. Mrs Moore has lain in, and I am at present pretty disengaged, although I am not certain whether I shall not attend Mrs Browne, the lady of Browne, agent for Lord Clanbrassill – she will perhaps go as usual to Dublin.

Our book society is rather for common benefit, than for my use, as most of the books I have read before which are in present circulation. We have a very pretty woman here, a Mrs Wolfe, formerly Miss Smith, who was often at Belfast although I never saw her there, and who even in the honeymoon, seems to have been exposed to the sours of wedlock. The husband is an officer here, and I believe was obliged to marry her by his father. He seems a stupid and ill-tempered man. I had a note very well written from L[ennox] Bigger,²⁰ acknowledging his obligation. Corry is sometimes here. We are as great as ever, but he never talks politics – all in the bagatelle. Write to me by return of post, and tell me something for I feel myself as vacant as possible, and I rest most cursedly as ill as you can do. WD

200 24 March [17]86

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [207]

Dear Matty, I accuse you much for not writing this some time past, as I want some thing to vary the listless uniformity of my professional life in this place. I have had a very disagreeable attendance of late upon an unhappy young man, one Conway,²¹ a sort of half-acquaintance of mine, who in a fit of despair, cut his throat about eight days ago, and still survives. I found him nearly dead on the floor, with great loss of blood, and a most frightful wound which we got stitched up, and instead of finding himself out of this life in a moment, he has been lingering a sort of living death ever since, and if he can be prevailed on to take nourishment properly, will probably live for repentance.

Arbuckle is come down and Miss Hardinge gone up to be married. I find by a note of his this day, that the Clanbrassill family are well pleased with me, and the haughty earl himself not excepted. Old Mrs Pollock, Joe's mother, has been nearly in the jaws of death, and is not yet out of danger. Joe himself is made a commissioner of bankruptcy which I suppose is worth above £100 per annum and in the line of his profession. If you have any news tell me by return of post, for my budget is a bladder. Nothing goes on or is suited to the genius of this contemptible

19 Draft of letter from Drennan to Nedham, 1 April 1786 (PRONI, D/531/8/44).

20 Lennox Bigger (c.1770-1857), a cousin, the grandson of James Bigger and Margaret Lennox, half-sister of Mrs Drennan and Mrs Young.

21 Conway was still alive in 1805 (PRONI, D/591/1152).

place, but the most low back-biting and scandal and it is one's best praise in such a place, to remain in such polluted atmosphere without suffering by the contagion. When Mrs Moore recovers, I shall probably pay you all a visit and pass my birthday at Belfast, the 23rd May. Ever yours, W DRENNAN

201 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [208]

Dear Matty, I send this by Dr Haliday who is come here to see and sign the death-warrant for Mr Warren, a Templetonian to whom I was introduced on my first coming here, but was taken no further notice of. There is a young man of the name of Maitland, an apprentice at Mr Campbell's²² in Belfast, whose mother asked me a night or two ago to her house. I wish that Sam would take the trouble of giving him a call, and asking him to dine once at my mother's. I liked his father's homespun denial to me when I came to Newry and he died, because he could not live, a most rigid disciple of Templeton's. His widow seems inclinable to change the physician.

Major Browne and his lady came here for the purpose of seeing me. I went with him to the inn and saw the dame, like some great fat wife of some great fat shop-keeper, and her delicacy was so alarmed that she soon left the room, and left her husband to make her excuse and give me a retaining fee. Yet he says she possibly may go to Dublin yet. I must however wait, and this with the inoculation of one of J. Pollock's children will I suppose keep me until the end of May.

I like your name for the cabin well, but it is hard to get any one in our language. I can't think of any at present but may hit on one before I see the christening – Medly-Cot – Mount Modicum – Badinage – Competence – are none of them as good as your own. I have just quitted at one o'clock the Doctor and Joe Pollock. We had an agreeable evening, but alas how the noble enthusiasm of politics has failed. Alas! there is no spirit in Ireland or Irishmen, not even a capability of forming it, some men too old, some men married, I must een marry too, and shrink into a plain, good humoured cuckold like many I see. Yours

I hope you do not read my letters for the edification of the family – let them not.

202 Wednesday, 3 May [17]86

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [209]

I went to Dundalk early on Sunday morning. Mrs Browne has gotten a daughter and I returned yesterday with a pocket a good deal heavier, and an invitation to return. Browne told me a curious manoeuvre which Templeton took on this occasion. The day they came to Newry Mrs Browne went a shopping, and being asked

22 Probably John Campbell (d.1804), merchant and banker of Belfast.

the cause of her looking so ill and coming to this town, she told the reason. The lady of the shop advised her much to retain Templeton and spoke so greatly in his favour and in my disfavour, that she was staggered a good deal in her resolution, not having seen me at that time. I called with Browne at the inn soon after, and she retired to the landlady, who harangued a long time on our respective merits, concluding in favour of Templeton and adding at the same time, that if Mrs B wished to speak to him he was now in the next room. As her husband told the story, this information instantly disgusted her and she desired the mistress of the house to inform him that she had no occasion for him. How foolishly must he have sneaked off. But the whole hurt me and disquieted me. It shows such mean artifice, such and so many retainers, as if it cannot be fought with the same weapons will be successful, just as bribery and corruption in such a borough as this will most assuredly gain every election if not opposed by bribery and corruption on the opposite side. Merit of any kind is not understood here and a man who does not behave as others do, will probably fall in the ditch. I do not say that I feel it sensibly as yet for I have at the rate of £200 this year at the least. Dundalk is perfectly the counterpart of Newry in every particular and every one is eager to speak the worst of every one connected in the least degree with an opposite party, though utterly a stranger to his person.

I cannot well say when I shall see you all as Mrs Pollock has written to Dublin for infection²³ and if it returns soon I shall be obliged to attend her child. I must write to Bruce for a convenient travelling portmanteau of which I have a great want. What has my mother done about her house since May has come? You will have a new company from this town at the Belfast review, formed from the saved remnants of the rest, and Corry it is said is to be their captain. This is just a frolic of young lads to show themselves at the review and will die the day after. A brotherhood associated by ties of honour next to oath for certain meetings would be another thing and might keep up to future times the memory of a great institution. Write to me soon etc., W DRENNAN

203 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [211]

I do not wish that Sam should buy me a horse until he finds one to his taste and I would not give above fifteen guineas for one. I shall sell the mare for about ten or twelve, for I think she is well worth it, and stumbled with me rather from sauntering gait than from any weakness of her joints. I have ridden her long journeys without making one false step, when she and I are upon our metal and with a light rein. I much doubt if Sam will find one that suits me so well, but I will dispose of her for fear of being called improvident. I had a pleasant day lately at Dundalk, and find the fat landlady,²⁴ a most spirited sensible woman with a great deal of conviviality

²³ i.e. the vaccine.

²⁴ Mrs Browne, wife of the Clanbrassill agent.

and a longing for society which she is not allowed by the Clanbrassill law²⁵ to have in Dundalk. They pressed me much to be at the christening and I believe I shall attend it. He gave me ten guineas, and he is a very genteel well informed man. She is a relation of the late Dean Swift's and has somewhat of his humour properly femalised.

King of Armagh is in my room at present, a man I like much in conversation and character. He has taken a ride from Armagh this wretched day, from the ostensible motive of some business, but the real one I believe to spend a day with his friends. He is to spend this one with me and we shall have a party in the evening at whist, of which I am growing very fond. Davis invites me now very often to his family rubber²⁶ and I always go, though I am not extravagantly fond of either himself or his family, but they are very kind. Miss Hardinge's marriage I thought was prorogued, but I find that the bill has passed and she will be Mrs Ryves immediately. I could have grown very fond of her affected and *folâtre*²⁷ as she was, but I am altogether safe, and would like to see her, when wedded. I have not heard from Bruce in answer to my two last letters, perhaps he may take it into his head to come down for a day or two. A good many reports of officers here and married ladies, all of which I suppose are true as gospel – but few upon my side of the question – tis a devil of an intriguing world, at present.

Miss Ally Bristow's poem was the one I praised, and if it was her own and a first performance, had certainly much merit. I shall bring Hanna some things in my portmanteau when I come. Little Pollock is inoculated – an operation I never like and she is very delicate. I slept a night or two a day ago, at Little Rainey's²⁸ father's in Mourne near Edmond Hill and never saw such a neat little place in the interior – and he was so happy with his poultry, his cats and dogs, his agriculture etc., that I almost envied his diminutive life. Rainey Maxwell passed through while I was at Dundalk. I have read the book you mention and like it very well but there is too little incident in it. It is in circulation in our society. Conway is quite well and Moody has paid him all proper spiritual attention. I think 'Entre-nous' would not be a bad name for your cabin, but your own – Try-it is better. I may recommend to you the dangerous connections²⁹ as Mrs B, Mrs C, etc., etc., all read it in public. It is a most masterly piece of dangerous seduction in style and sentiment. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

204 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA McTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [212]

Dear Matty, I did not mention to Montgomery that I should be at the Belfast review which I think will be scarcely worth visiting, and I shall probably see you

25 i.e. limitations were placed on her social activities by the Clanbrassill family.

26 i.e. to play cards.

27 Playful or frisky.

28 Possibly William Rainey of Bellevue, died 1789.

29 Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, *Les liaisons dangereuses* (1782).

some day sooner, when the weather grows somewhat cooler and I get my portman-teau from Dublin. With respect to the horse I am somewhat unsettled, as I fear I shall not get my mare well disposed of, and I do not like to keep two horses, yet if he could get one to my taste I believe I should buy him. I lent King ten guineas lately and must write to him for them, though I believe he is in greater want of them than I, and I was mercantile enough to take his note for them. Counsellor Pollock's child has got safely through the smallpox. Miss Pollock comes down tomorrow, and I had designed to go on that day to Belfast, but as it would have an odd appearance to some of the family, I shall wait for some days, and then this town will say that I am gone to get leave to marry.

I am glad to hear that you will be soon settled in the country. I think my mother could not do better than take some place near you if she could get it without land, but as for any scheme of taking a poorer house in town than she possesses, I should think she herself would revolt against it. I should be sorry that my new wife that is to be and I should visit her in a poor paltry house, like what belonged to my Aunt Bigger. Younger Bigger always calls on me when in town. WD

205 Thursday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [198]

If tomorrow does not wear a better aspect than this day I shall dine with Carleton; if it be fair, I shall see you all at Newry dinner time, past four o'clock. Saturday will do as well, and I shall go with you to the Doctor's. Mrs O'Neill could not I suppose speak the epilogue, as it was I. Corry's. He was talking of it, the subject and some lines, nearly two months ago at Carlingford, and Mrs O'Neill has but a poor memory. Mrs Gardiner³⁰ and Mrs St Leger have really been fortunate in getting such a female to set them off and it is really singular that she should like playing when she is so totally devoid of all theatrical power. I have not seen such a day of rain as this is, and I hope, it will rain enough to be fair tomorrow. I intend to call at Crawford,³¹ and at the Miss Hucheson's³² in Lisburn as I pass, but I shall not wait any length of time. I meant that the horses should go to Tinsdal's. WD

206 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [159]

I am glad to hear that your chair had arrived, as it did not call here, and I supposed from the delay that it had been burned along with the horses at the carman's inn in

30 Possibly the wife of Lieut Colonel William Gardiner, brother of Luke Gardiner, later 1st Earl of Mountjoy.

31 Dr Alexander Crawford of Lisburn (d.1820).

32 Probably the daughters of Dr Francis Hutcheson.

Drogheda. That was the reason I suppose of its being in such a situation on its arrival. Sam has not hit upon a horse for me as yet, and I still keep my mare but I shall dispose of her, and probably will get some friend to look out for one at Carinteele³³ fair which is approaching, but if Sam has his eye on one he must let me know. I offered twenty guineas for one of J. Read's, but he was pre-engaged to I. Corry. You talk of Sam's severe riding in winter. Had he some of my jaunts over the Newry and Carlingford mountains even in this weather he would know what a severe ride is. I have not lost any of the Corry interest which I have had. Mrs I. Corry has had another boy lately which was near dying soon after birth but has recovered. Miss P's³⁴ match is I believe broken off on the representation of her brothers and old I. Corry. We have formed a whist club of all that is respectable in the place which meets on Monday night and is sufficiently agreeable. I hope if no professional impediment intervenes to be with you a day at Christmas but if I have two horses I think my mother may clear the stable for them and save me so much money. I think that she will assent to this with all the good humour that flows from her November rents, which I hope are well paid.

The character in the review was sufficiently well, considering how they treated Guatimozin³⁵ and the rest of the fraternity, but the criticism on their judgment in the Tuesday's paper seems from the similarity of expressions used to have been written either by you or Sam. Home³⁶ the painter is here at present staying at Arbuckle's – his lowest price five guineas, and he seems a good one, but I think the price too great for getting a likeness on canvas. I hear N. Wilson is going to be married to a Miss Mercer³⁷ of Dublin with a fortune of £2,000. I fear he is in want of money though the girl I recollect is rather handsome.

I have read *Caroline of Lichfield*³⁸ and it is nicely written, with exact delineation of a pure female mind, but it is scarcely supported to the last.

Davis cannot be liked wherever he goes. He is an insufferably petulant fellow. I have scored him once or twice, so that if he does not remember my mother, I am sure he remembers her son. Yours ever, WD

207 Friday

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [160]

My mother directs me to write to you requesting you will give one Peter Maclane half a guinea, for which he will call upon you and she will repay you.

The sport begins between Lord Donegall and Yelverton. It is put into the Attorney General's hand, and Jack Alexander I suppose will not be displeased in the

33 Carnteel, Co. Tyrone, where a fair for horses and cattle was held on the first Wednesday in every month.

34 She married William Hartigan in 1787.

35 Dr Frederick Jebb (d.1782), wrote anti-government letters to the press in 1779, under the name of 'Guatimozin', but stopped on receiving a promise of a pension of £300 p.a., which was never paid; see Brian Inglis, *The freedom of the press in Ireland* (London, 1954), p.38.

36 Robert Home (d.1836?), portrait painter (*DNB*); painted Drennan in December.

37 Wilson appears to have died unmarried.

38 Published in 1786 in London and Paris, by Isabelle de Montolieu (1751-1832), Swiss novelist.

present posture of affairs to be a martyr to this lordship, and as it is said he has by two late acts of parliament been guilty of felony, it's possible this may be the case. Had it been a poor man, or a McCabe, that had headed such a mob, there would have been no doubt of it.³⁹

Had I ventured into the paper with a criticism on the reviewers, I think I may say without vanity it should have had more pith than the one you mention, which said little for you or against them, and that little not true on either side. It is a fashion to say the reviewers did not do justice to Stern⁴⁰ – but it is unjust, they gave him great and delicate though not indiscriminate praise.

Poor Hugh⁴¹ has kept his bed these some days owing to a fall he got coming home with my mother from Davy Conyngham's – the kitchen wits had made him desperately drunk. Nancy carried the lantern and Mr Lenox,⁴² Hugh, who could be got no farther than the kitchen that night. Jack Getty⁴³ was sent for and dressed his face. No other part appears hurt but he complains of being all sore and Nancy says his spit is tinged with blood, so that I think it's probable this accident will hurry the faithful creature to his end.

You nor no one else that I speak to of *Caroline*, is half warm enough in her praise. It is almost the only novel I ever met with perfectly fit to be put into the hands of a young girl. None of Fielding's⁴⁴ are so – no, nor Richardson's,⁴⁵ they are all intrigue. *Caroline* is highly interesting without a rake, a confidant, a love letter, or almost anything from her on the subject of love, yet it is only for her and her husband you feel, for which reason the book should have ended when they were put to bed and delicately it was done, everything after it is insipid.

I was glad to hear of your club. If the members are tolerable I think it will be [?an] agreeable evening for you and convenient sometimes if you have the liberty of taking a friend.

Home is generally allowed to be a good portrait painter. I saw several of his pictures at his rooms in Dublin and knew most of them. The price you mention is high, but I never would have a picture drawn the usual size, though I own the larger, the likeness is the stronger – but it is for the garret – they are indeed not an ornament in a room when they are larger than an oval of (I suppose) about three quarters of [*sic*] half a yard in length. Have you heard lately from Bruce? You ought to have wrote to him of the chair being come safe and well liked. I have been reading the life of Cicero and highly entertained with it. He has been a good, a wise, elegant, charming man, but I suspect not so great a one as Melmoth⁴⁶ would have one think. He fled very often and never appears bold, but when his enemy is at a distance. He talks well and advises nobly but appears to me not to practise beyond common mortals. MM

39 By order of Lord Donegall, about 150 workmen demolished an embankment at the east end of the Long Bridge, made by Yelverton with a view to developing the area which was part of his estate (George Benn, *A history of the town of Belfast* (2 vols, London, 1877, 1880), i, p.634).

40 Laurence Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*.

41 Hugh Patten, the Drennan's servant.

42 Conyngham's sister married Clotworthy Lenox, a cousin of the Drennans.

43 Jack Getty, a surgeon and apothecary who died in August 1787.

44 Henry Fielding (1707-54), writer (*DNB*).

45 Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), writer (*DNB*).

46 William Melmoth (1710-99), translator of Cicero (*DNB*).

208 Tuesday

MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [216]

The complaint in your last, of not hearing from me, surprised me as I wrote a letter, and not a short one to you, the Saturday before. However, the nothingness of it, I suppose made you forget it. This is more likely, than that it miscarried. It mentioned the observations on the oyster shell,¹ a rise of £23 a year to Sam's salary and little else.

Home arrived on Monday and Tuesday, I hear Waddell, and his dame Peg, are to transmit to posterity in the only way they can,² likenesses of their perfectly characteristic countenances. He sent his boy two days before him who dined at my mother's, and was directed to those matters he wanted. I left town on Sunday – next one Sam intends asking Home to dine here. Harry Joy's application for your meaning pleased me vastly. I construe it into one of those charming little attentions that says little and means much. He had no doubt heard it much talked of, wondered at by some, and ridiculed by others – and believing you would not act without meaning, or from an indelicate or vain one, wished to have an opportunity of vindicating you, and though the trouble of writing a few lines for that purpose might not be thought great, there is not one in a hundred that would have taken it. I therefore set him down as your friend and admirer.

Would I could call Miss C³ so since you would wish it, but of her I know very little. I have always thought it hard that your profession leaves you so little chance of knowing, or being known, in any particular way to any but Newry females – for to obtain this in another place, you must immediately be remarked by her, her friends, and the world. In the present case for instance you have not the least prospect of a further acquaintance and it may be best so. I am neither hurt nor mortified at your dislike of making me your confidant, nor has your conduct at any time, ever done so. It is rather I think an unnatural connection with either a sister, or a woman who is married. But on this subject or any that appears to interest you I shall always try to collect any matter that may amuse you. I have always heard Miss C spoke of as an amiable young girl, of most obliging and general polite manners, but not as a belle though styled genteel and elegant. I suppose she may be nineteen. She was at a boarding school I believe in Dublin, and since was there with the Mussendens in order to perfect her dancing with a new master. Those critics seem to admire and love her, but the youngest of them, Charlotte,⁴ complained to me (as she would to anyone else) that her education had been so shamefully neglected that she knew nothing of French and had a little very bad English, of which her parents seemed not to care, though her spelling was so bad that Charlotte herself took her

1 In Home's portrait Drennan is holding an oyster shell; see frontispiece, volume two.

2 The Cunninghams were childless; Home's portrait of Cunningham is on page 80.

3 For Drennan's lines to Miss C, see D/531/8/33 (PRONI).

4 Charlotte Mussenden, later Bevan, the only one of the Mussenden sisters to marry.

in hand, improved her in it and begun with her in French, of which, and the culture of her mind, she appeared to grow fond. By this I suppose she has had little advantage from education. Her father I believe is an ignorant good humoured laughing man, her mother a polite spacious [*sic*] ill tempered nice woman. From this root springs a pleasing engaging manner, but what more I know not. The mother's side of the house have always been marked by insensibility. There are two brothers, one in the army, the other in the church, both of them good for nothings. The mother had above £2,000 which no doubt is settled on her child – and lately Miss C was left £200 by her Aunt Betty.

I have but one thing more to mention – a short conversation that passed about two months ago between Ann Mussenden and Nancy. The former was spending an evening at my mother's and while the two were in a *tête à tête* conversation, and Ann bestowing much praise on Miss C, with whom she had been just staying, Nancy observed, that Cunningham Greg⁵ had been observed to pay particular attention to her but added – 'sure Mrs C would never consent to that connection as she was certainly a very high woman, and would expect a higher match for her daughter'. Ann's reply was, 'you were never more mistaken in your life, Mrs C longs to have her daughter married and when she thinks of us and the Crawfords, fears old maidenism is entailed on the family.⁶ There is nothing she dreads so much and is forever ridiculing the folly of nice girls.' This nicety I suppose alludes to the man, but as to the fortune I suppose she would be pretty strict. You will forgive me for putting you to double postage as it was owing to my running on to a greater length in this subject than I intended.

The country and my little retreat in it seem doubly pleasant for having been in town – for alas, there I have no pleasure, no comfort, and look forward to things growing much worse with and between those I love. God knows, I want a confidant, for much I fear, what I dare not name. May this be never understood, and all before you at least be pleasant, for there is a canker consumes the rest of us. MM

209 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [216A]

I read your last with a degree of pleasure, till I came to the melancholy close, and the bitterness of it has not left my mind since I read it, but my conjectures are as bad, I hope in God, worse than my knowledge would be. Is it about Nancy's mind or is it, for that is no new subject of lamentation, is it some internal complaint of your own, for which you require a confidant? Am I to interpret what you say literally? I request, dearest sister, you would explain to me something about yourself.

⁵ Cunningham Greg (1762-1830), Belfast merchant, son of Thomas Greg.

⁶ The Mussendens and Crawfords were first cousins, their mothers being sisters of Arthur Johnston, MP for Killyleagh; this suggests that Miss C was also a cousin; in a letter of 1793, Martha refers to a Miss Chetwood of Cork, who may be Miss C, but it has not been possible to identify her.

We are all of us indeed cast in the same mould of constitution and I firmly believe shall all of us die by the same disease, or at least by similar ones. I cannot speak any more on this dreary subject. Perhaps I may not have understood you – I hope so – but if you can explain it, do so for the sake of my mind.

I was at Dundalk last week and dined and supped with Lord Clanbrassill. Arbuckle was there and we were sufficiently pleasant. The peer very gracious and I had the honour of being his antagonist at whist for four rubbers. He is so unpopular a man, that I do not believe he could recommend me as a physician to one country gentleman with effect. I know several, but rather as acquaintances than patients. Templeton is failing fast, and I suppose another will soon be here, though we are pretty well stocked already. H. Joy asked me the reason of the shell in a postscript of a letter which he wrote to me, on another account. Have you got the picture, or has Home sent for it? I intend writing to him shortly. I thank you for your information, and knew the most of it before. I wish to heaven there was some civil commotion, that one might make their life and their death of some service, but now the day is spent in nauseous insipidity, the night in starting, and groaning like Richard,⁷ even with a pure conscience. Such is the effects of bad constitution: it poisons all your felicity and entails misery on posterity if there be any. It incapacitates a man from doing anything worthy of his nature. He rusts and rots – whether for ever, he who made this wondrous world knows best.

I go to Maxwell's⁸ the beginning of next month and pay 20 guineas per annum. I have just now paid my landlord £21 for clothes, horse, lodging, and retain 15 guineas in my purse. Mrs Pollock directed her husband to give me a fee here and has behaved to me always with much regard. She is an excellent woman in many particulars. I hope my mother has had her. Mrs Sinclair is pretty proud and I suppose a little piqued. The Davises are a so so set. I go on Friday to an oyster party at Mr Taylor's⁹ in Ravensdale where six families in the neighbourhood meet at each others' houses, and some of them I have not seen. Write to me, dear sister, when you receive this and if you can, write pleasantly, but write truly. WD

210 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [230]

As your last letter¹⁰ was, to use a favourite expression of my mother's, remarkably facetious, I sent it to her, and shall give you part of the answer, in her own words.

'My opinion of Will is, if he does not soon marry, he will be an old hunk, for am sure he will be a most uncommon disagreeable old bachelor, wish you would urge him to look out for some lively, sensible, agreeable girl, that will be able to put some life into him and do not let him doze over a fire like the rest. What indolence, to

7 i.e. Richard III.

8 Drennan moved back to his original lodgings.

9 Matthew Taylor of Ravensdale, near Dundalk, a linen merchant who employed Drennan's cousin Lennox Bigger, who subsequently married Taylor's wife's sister.

10 This letter is missing.

keep a letter by him, and we wondering what was the matter, am glad to find he squeezes out a word in passing to his landlady, with doing this little, he need never have left her, and am very glad, she makes him pay more, for his unbending temper – how little a thing does, to make us agreeable.’

Consider what has been said, and may Cupid direct and Hymen establish you for the best.

We are all in great concern for poor Mrs J. Smith,¹¹ who is in a very hopeless way from a hectic fever, and a decline, which she kept secret till it's too late to hope from Bristol, where Dr Mattear immediately ordered her, and for which she is to set out, in less than a fortnight if she is able. She goes by Dublin, Mrs Archbold and Mrs Harrison attend her. It's probable they may wish to see you in Newry. We gave her a pressing invitation to try the air of Cabin Hill until she set off to England, and asked Mrs Harrison to accompany her. It was taken kindly but she could not come, and from the very rapid progress of her disorder, I fear she will never leave Belfast. She is really a good and useful woman to numbers and will be severely missed by many.

You will soon have a valuable addition to your society in Newry, by Mr Goddard's¹² getting R. Bristow's place. I am sorry for our sakes, and that of his two lovely little girls, we are to lose him, but on yours it gives me pleasure. I recommend him earnestly to every attention you have in your power to show him, the least of which he will be grateful for, and as he does not know a creature in Newry, you can, and I am sure will, on my account, find out many little ways of obliging him and will be amply repaid not by a shining man, nor a flaming patriot, he entered into the character of a soldier with too much ardour for that, and has been amply served by those of different principles, to whom he will ever be grateful. But I do believe you will find Mr Goddard really an honourable man, a faithful, secret friend, highly generous, full of sensibility, and feeling the least attention or the slightest affront in an uncommon degree. He is formal himself and very modest, but does not exact any form extraordinary from others. You stand high in his opinion, both as a man and physician, and if he does not find you more than a mere acquaintance, will be disappointed. Dr Haliday has always found him more generous than any one, I imagine, in his station and he will injure himself at any time, rather than do what he terms ungentle, or refuse a friend. His eldest daughter¹³ will make your beaux sigh, and men of taste admire and approve.

I have not yet read the B[ishop] of Cloyne, O'Leary, nor Cooper.¹⁴ Campbell of Armagh I hear has answered the Bishop and worsted him. I wish Bruce had done it. Mr O'Neill wrote to Dr Haliday, for his opinion of the scheme for a northern college. He was decidedly against it, or any other, founded by priests of whatever denomination, but spoke in favour of the Belfast seminary founded on no partial

11 Mrs John Galt Smith, Mrs Harrison was her sister.

12 John Goddard, widower of Martha's friend, Eliza Rainey, moved to Newry as surveyor, he died in 1807; his daughters were Bess, who married Captain Kingston, and Mary, who married Thomas Waring of Newry.

13 Bess, with whom Thomas Russell fell in love.

14 Richard Woodward, Bishop of Cloyne, published *The present state of the Church of Ireland* (1786), on the necessity of the alliance between church and state; this was answered by Father Arthur O'Leary, the Rev. Samuel Barber and the Rev. Dr William Campbell; Martha writes Cooper, but probably means Barber.

system, and where all sorts of religions were admitted, both as pupils and masters. This little bit of information costs you two pence.

Home has had great reason, I imagine, to be pleased with his reception here, both in character of painter and gentleman. By the bye, I do not think him much of the latter, his wife is coming to James Holmes's on a visit he told Sam [incomplete].

211 3 April [17]87

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [231]

Dear Matty, I received a polite letter from Mr Goddard yesterday, but he seems uncertain about the time of his coming, not having received any official account of his change. All people here are eager about revenue employments and many are disappointed. Arbuckle's ambition would I believe be satisfied in getting one worth £200 per annum. Stewart¹⁵ of Belfast spent a day here lately and is in pursuit of one of the places of counsel to the quarter sessions which will be worth £300 a year, and as Lord Antrim his patron will be the man who will have the place for that county in his disposal, it is probable he will attain his object. I did not see Mrs Smith in passing through I suppose she was not inclined to see visitors, from her complaint, which I should imagine must be on her liver, and for this Bristol will be of little avail. Lord Clanbrassill and his lady sent for me in their passage through Newry and received me with great politeness. Miss Pollock¹⁶ is returned to Newry and some say she is married, as Mr I. Corry does not wish it to take place at this house and the brothers all affect to be against the match.

Bruce wrote to me lately, seemingly much interested about the clerical controversy, and particularly about my opinion of his thanks to that high-church Presbyterian Campbell. I believe it was merely a declaration of clerical opinion, for most of the laity among dissenters, particularly in towns, are really and truly as the Bishop says, independents, and Campbell is of principles that can be relished but by few of the laity, particularly in his desire that his persuasion should have the maintenance of the state which must prove poisonous to civil and of consequence to religious liberty. He is to be answered by the Fellows in great form and Bruce I suppose will be led in, though I don't think he wishes to risk his name, which must be done by every gentleman that answers the Bishop. I live here just as usual with a competence which would be not at all compatible with a wife and furniture. I in that case must hang on like other people for some post or sinecure for years and be at length disappointed. Report says and honours me in saying that I am courting Miss D. Ogle,¹⁷ for in this town, a man can't dance or talk twice with the same lady without some conversations on the subject. I shall perhaps marry some day in a frolic. I wish to know what kind of cravats are worn now, or if those full ones are out of use at present. Mine are growing shabby and I would replace them, if I knew the proper

15 Counsellor Alexander Stewart.

16 She married Dr William Hartigan in August 1787; Isaac Corry the elder was married to one of her sisters.

17 Deborah Ogle; it has not been possible to identify the branch of the family to which she belonged.

sort. I. Corry is gone to England on a visit to the Prince of Wales and Fox, and I suppose this will be preparatory to some final settlement of his affairs. I am going to dine with W. Sinclair and his wife who are here at present.

Adieu and enjoy the country. I shall pay you a visit some time in summer. Yours ever, WD

212 Sunday

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [232]

Dear Will, After a long silence there always comes a stupid letter, and this must be so for it will contain nothing but three commissions.

The first is from Mr Goddard who yesterday got an official account of his employment, and expecting to be ordered to Newry in a few days, begged I would request you to let me know if there is at present a decent lodging to be procured for him and a servant, what are the terms, etc. My next orders are from Nancy who fears greatly you have not got four cravats she sent you by Ann Buntin, and as they are very elegant and a very elegant price, she would be vexed at your losing them. There was two spotted ones, so fine and delicate that they ought to be only worn in dress – the two checked ones will bear more. My next application is for Miss Bigger, who begs to know if you can give her any account of Lennox – if he is come to Mr Taylor's or is to come, what his health is, etc.

I came to town for a few days till our cabin was painted. It is now almost complete in the inside and if you do not come soon it will be white and clean without. It receives more praise every day and Sam's heart is as much in it as mine – he seldom spends one out of it. All here are in the old style, rather better I hope than worse. If they were all as contented as I am I should be too happy. There is neither public nor private intelligence here you would thank me for. When Miss Davis goes home, she can give you an account of belles, beaux etc. Home and his wife have made a long visit at J. Holmes's and have been entertained by all their acquaintance. He will not send us your picture as he says he [—] more credit by it than any [—]. He told me he was doing a miniature from it for me. He goes soon to London where he wishes you were, as a properer field for your abilities than Newry. This he did not say to me but in a large company of Gregs, Halidays, etc. He also said he was under greater obligations to you than any one in the north of Ireland. He appears a gentle [*sic*] fond husband and good man. Yours, as much when silent as writing.

213 30 April [17]87

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER [233]

Dear Matty, I have just now been looking at one of the best, if not the very best lodging in town, and though not the most central, it has this convenience for Mr

Goddard, that it is in the part of the town nearest to the custom house. Mr Wright,¹⁸ brother of Wright in Belfast, tells me that he can accommodate the gentleman with a handsome drawing-room, bedroom, and a bed for his servant, and that his rate for any temporary residence is a guinea per week, but that if taken by the year, he shall set it lower. I should think Mr G had better take it for some weeks until he can make another choice of his own, or get some house which may suit his taste. His horses will I suppose be sent to grass.

The cravats were sent to me from the inn, and I wish to know their price, for I like them better than the others I had before. I saw Mrs and Miss Price¹⁹ at the inn on their way to Dublin and the latter seems a fine girl.

I have nothing particular to say concerning Bigger. I have not heard from him for a long time, and I suspect that Mr Taylor thinks him rather delicate for the riding part of the linen business. He has two apprentices at present and I believe wants no more. I wanted to speak to him about Bigger, but he seems inclined to evade the subject, says he expects him down when recovered, that he is better, but very thin and unable yet to be of service to him, etc., etc. Taylor is a man of expense and no economist.

I have applied for the use of Lord Clanbrassill's library during his absence, and through the mediation of her ladyship and Miss Pitman, I suppose the great favour will be obtained. If not, I don't care for he is as much obliged to me, as I to him.

No news here of any kind. We ever long for your players. I hear you were to have had a genteel set in Belfast, and that jealousy, etc., broke it off. I think you had better decline Homes's miniature for he does them execrably, and I should rather wish that you would get a likeness of yourself, the head size.²⁰

I laughed much at Peter Pindar's *Ode upon Odes*²¹ and recommend it to your perusal. I congratulate you much on your cottage and when I make any money, I shall rival it. Yours etc., W DRENNAN

214 Saturday

MARTHA MCTIER, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [234]

My dear Will, Mr Goddard requests you will take Wright's rooms for three months. I suppose he will be with you Tuesday next, but if it should be later I suppose they will only charge him from the time he goes. I hope he will be an addition to you, but I am not sure of it. He is stiff and reserved at first, perhaps always so, but it proceeds more I believe from diffidence than pride, what he has of the latter is for and of his children. One thing however, it may be right to inform you of, he is said to be very testy, and easy hurt, when he gets a little drink. Those who know this therefore make allowance for him.

18 Probably Joseph Wright (1745-1848), of Newry.

19 Probably Mrs Isabella Price and her daughter Maria who married Edward Southwell Ruthven in 1794.

20 The portrait of Martha in this volume is probably by Home.

21 Peter Pindar, pseudonym of John Walcot (1738-1819), satirical poet; *Ode upon odes, or a peep at St James* was published in 1787 (*DNB*).

I did suppose you would like your cravats better than your last, for I dare say they were more than double price, but I repeat what I have often told you, that your linen ought always to be elegant, as the chief though not glaring mark of the dress of a gentleman, and indispensably proper and ornamental to a black coat.

Of what use can books at Dundalk be to you, and why, pray, must you wait to make money before you visit our cot?²² Unless you prefer the time of the review, I would wish, if business allow, you would come down the beginning of June. The latter part of the year, we may perhaps form a party to meet you at Hillsborough.

The only news I know could interest you, is a disagreeable affair that has happened [*sic*] the Newtown Volunteers. A man of that town, of desperate character, had been in gaol and ordered to be whipped. A rescue being apprehended, the sheriff applied to Mr Stewart to attend, with a party of his Volunteers. He deputed A.,²³ but his utmost efforts could not obtain more than young Turnly,²⁴ Stewart Bruce, and one or two more. The man was ordered out, and Mr Stewart, seeing it was intended he should escape, was ordering matters proper to punish him, when the fellow struck him twice. He still persisted however, when the man who was to lash him, brandishing his arms and whip, crying room, room, etc., contrived to strike Mr Stewart each time with his elbow, who [————] he saw into it, and [————] it. This is the sto[————] speaks ruin to [————] much against [————] the few gentlem[en————] Newton, might [————] have had the m[————] to himself: [————] stop to Robert S[tewart?].

Lord Bris[tol————] B[————]s living [————] Tom Ste[————] in our New Street [————] building one sup[————] hall, light from [————] yet not for Miss [————].

I did no[————] – his other ones diverted me more. I am sorry the controversy between the priests is at an end, it entertained me much, though reading them has the effect (a bad one I believe) of enlarging the mind too much and making one suspect, it would be better, not to adopt, or be a member of any religious sect [————] uest that, and my [————] been used to go to [————] reasons for every [————] the opinion that [————] of worship you [————] are grown liberal. I think, if I had children, I would breed them up to the Church of England. I would not say this to Bruce and therefore I suppose it is not right. When did you hear from him? Let Nancy set down the price of your cravats – checked muslin £0 16s 11d, spotted muslin £0 13s 7d. MM

215 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER [224]

I was in the country yesterday, and did not receive your letter in time to answer it by last night's post. I arrived here very well, and took up a guinea by the way at

22 Martha appears to have misread the last line of Drennan's previous letter.

23 Alexander Stewart, brother of Robert Stewart, later Marquis of Londonderry.

24 Probably John Turnly, eldest son of Francis Turnly of Downpatrick.

Arbuckle's, the only one I have received since I saw you. I have frequently mentioned to you the inanity of my life in this place, and I find myself in general too lazy to sit down and invent pleasing circumstances and occurrences as if I were writing to a mistress. It is entirely out of my power to mention anything that happens to me here: everything is stupid in itself, and there is no occasion to revive it either by recollection or writing. I have gotten a new acquaintance in Mr Vincent, a gentleman of fortune who with his lady are come to reside in this neighbourhood and promises to be a very agreeable companion. Rostrevor is very full of polite company at present, and I intend to pay a visit some day this week to Mr Price²⁵ who invited me when I last saw him to come frequently to his house.

I have written to N: Wilson respecting the bond for my mother's money. I bespoke a pair of boots and a pair of leather breeches when in Belfast, and if they be sent to Donegall Street, I wish that I should get them by the balloon, or any other conveyance which may be speediest.

I shall be happy to hear from you as often as anything agreeable occurs, and I wish to hear of nothing else. Ever yours, WD

W. Thompson has not yet sent to me the articles of the lease as he promised.

216 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [CABIN HILL], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [235]

My dear Will, The spirit of our correspondence flags or rather is quite fled, and to revive it, I hope we will soon meet a month hence, you promise to be at Cabin Hill about that time, I expect to get my mother and Nancy here to have a neat house, good weather, tolerable spirits and a hearty welcome for your reception. But let me not promise too much – a new fear has arisen the occasion of which I shall relate to you.

On Wednesday we went in to town to Walker's²⁶ lecture and dined with my mother. We pressed her much to go with us, which she refused, and gave as one reason a pain across her breast which she had often felt in a slight degree upon walking any way, and a difficulty of breathing which had increased to such a degree, that upon going to Mrs Getty's the night before, for some minutes after she got in she thought she would have died. I thought something of what she said proceeded from her usual strong manner of speaking, particularly on any feeling of her own, and that heavy limbs, perhaps failed, occasioned a natural fatigue, and prevailed on her to accompany us. Upon returning and getting into her parlour, I was astonished to see her throw herself back in a chair, panting, and almost quite breathless. She recovered in less than ten minutes and just as usual, looks and eats well, and determines to avoid this inconvenience by never going out.

I was instantly struck with the likeness to Mrs Hamilton's complaint, water in either breast, or heart. The next morning upon inquiring I found she had no difficulty in

25 Possibly Kenneth Alexander Price, husband of Isabella Price, see above p.265.

26 Adam Walker (1731?-1821), lecturer on natural philosophy (*DNB*).

going up or down stairs, nor while in bed, but only after having walked any way abroad. I dismissed my fears, and hoped it might be wind, or something hysterical, but yesterday being at Dr Mattear's, and transiently mentioning the way my mother had been affected the night before, I observed him struck and he wished he could feel her pulse at the time. He told me there was a disorder people of about sixty, particularly men, were subject to in the breast, that he feared it for my mother, and that I ought immediately to write to you. This greatly alarmed me, and among other questions, I observed he asked the same one you did of Mrs Goddard – if she felt any pain down her arm. I then mentioned the issue she had had in her arm, and very imprudently, without our knowledge, had allowed to dry up, for near two years. He said there should be no time lost, in getting her to open it and in ²⁷

[Mrs] Apsley²⁸ languishes in the most [————] pain and weakness, but with a [————] and resigned there are ugly [————] and having occasioned her disorder [————] will never be known [————] lecture in Newry if it was [————] the most [————] and really what [————]d have composed [————] from Mrs Smith [————] the side of her [————] them to try Bath. MM

Tell me if you know or have heard anything further of Bigger. My mother's constitution continues even more than usual laxative. The Doctor gave no orders but about the issue.

217 Monday, June [17]87

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [236]

Dear Matty, I have this minute read your letter which I should have answered sooner, but having been abroad yesterday, I did not return in time for the evening post, and the post does not go to the north this day. I am very happy that you prevailed on my mother to have the issue inserted, which may be of use as a preventative to any serious complaint, though I am not very apprehensive that her present symptoms will increase, I should wish to know whether the usual swelling of her limbs has diminished of late for if so, means should be taken to make it recur by occasionally bathing her limbs in warm water sharpened a little with as much flour of mustard and scraped horseradish as will make her legs redden and smart for a short time. The difficulty of breathing it seems is not constant. She has no cough and can lie I suppose with equal ease on either side. Does she ever start on a sudden from her sleep? Has she any thirst, scantiness of urine or dryness of the skin? I fancy I can myself answer in the negative. Is the pain confined to the middle of her chest, or is she sensible of any constant weight and oppression in that part? I should like to know what Dr Mattear mentioned with respect to the state of her pulse at those times when the difficulty of breathing occurs, and whether her own feelings refer her complaint to the heart, by its suffering a strong palpitation, or to the lungs, by

²⁷ Page torn and text missing.

²⁸ The wife of Dr Robert Apsley, who died shortly afterwards.

being more sensible of a difficulty in breathing. Is her face at the time pale or flushed? Is she affected much after a full meal, for instance of salmon and buttermilk? Has she ever this pain and breathlessness before dinner, or have they ever occurred when she did not make unusual exercise, after an usual large meal? Was there a crowd at the Eidouranion,²⁹ and did she walk quickly home after the exhibition? As she has so great an objection to medicines, the only one I recommend is a burgundy patch plaster³⁰ of sufficient size to be applied between her shoulders, to be removed once or twice a week and to be re-applied after rubbing the skin beneath for some time in a gentle manner with flannel. This I know has proved very serviceable in many complaints of the chest. I think it would not be amiss to try a garlic pill or two every other night, for I suppose she will take no internal medicine whose name and nature she is unacquainted with, or I should recommend the use of these pills, along with a decoction of the woods which she might prepare at home, and may be taken to the quantity of a pint during the course of the day.

I think that her diet should be sparing in quantity and light in kind, at least for some time, but not so as to make any sudden change in her mode of living, and flatulent vegetables as greens, or flatulent drinks as fresh ale, bottled beer, English cider, etc., will most undoubtedly increase her complaint; I should rather wish her to try how seltzer water mixed with a little brandy or port wine will agree with her, but all made wines as they are called are prejudicial when she is affected with the breathlessness, I should recommend the instant trial of a pretty strong cup of coffee, but I should wish particularly to know if these fits return upon her at times without any known cause producing them.

Bigger breakfasted with me on Thursday, and I asked him to pay a visit to his aunt in July which he means to do, if he can be spared. I doubt much whether what you say of Apsley can have been the case. I think it cannot. Yours ever, W Drennan

I do not apprehend, at least at present, anything alarming. The disease Dr M mentions is either a very rare one in this country or it is rather an old one christened by a new name, and as far as I remember the cases which have occurred chiefly in England, both the cure, which in the case occurring under Macbride³¹ was issues, and the sex of the patients, led me to suspect that the disease had something of gout in it. My mother is not increasing in her fatness, and she is not disposed to gout. This is what appears at present, but I cannot enumerate the various causes in the chest which may gradually prove fatal, causes occurring in the heart or in its neighbourhood, and it is surely prudent to do everything in the way of prevention. The issue I conceive was most proper, and the best place for it was a hollow in the flesh on the inside somewhat above the joint of the knee. I shall write to Dr Mattear, if it seems to prove necessary, and he shall judge best what is to be done or omitted. If you choose you may show him this letter.

29 A transparent orrery used to illustrate Walker's lectures on astronomy.

30 A plaster made from burgundy pitch, the resin of the *pinus picea*, a pine which grew near Neufchâtel, once part of the Burgundian kingdom; it was used to treat rheumatism, lumbago, etc., and was an irritant, reddening agent.

31 Possibly David McBride (1726-78), medical writer, and grandson of the Rev. John McBride of Belfast (*DNB*).

218 Wednesday

MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [237]

Your promised time is arrived, when I hope you will not be prevented paying us a visit, and as our motions must in some degree be regulated by yours, I beg you will write to me immediately, and tell me your plan and if Bigger comes with you. The review you know is on Wednesday, if you choose it or a ball we must go to town. I would therefore have you, and Bigger, to come to Cabin Hill on Monday or Tuesday, to stay all night, and the remainder of your time in Belfast, as he must be with his aunt who has not a bed for him which he must get at my mother's.

She has been pretty well, but so seldom out that that has prevented any return of her complaint. Your letter in regard to her was so very particular, I did not show it to her for fear of alarming her, but gave it to Dr Mattear. Many of the symptoms you mention I know she has not, but the Miss Mattears having been here these six weeks past, I have been seldom in town and very little with my mother. I hope to get her and Nancy here before the summer is over.

Do you find Goddard any addition to you? He called upon me when last here, but I was unfortunate in missing him. His charming girls were with me yesterday, and you may let him know they were in high health and beauty.

I hoped to have had all about our cot neat before you arrived and we therefore got it whitened, which has left us in more disorder than ever, as we cannot get all finished. We have pleased you and the generality by whitening, but in my opinion have spoiled our cabin, which has lost that grave russet appearance I admired, and is now a great, glaring, bare, white place, like those about bleach greens. When they are white, they should always have a green back of planting. The elegant cottage of Mrs O'Neill's is mud studded with pebbles from Lough Neagh and in front supported with four rustic pillars of ivy. I went to see Mount Stewart and met with no one thing worth notice, unless great wall pounds are so – much expense, no taste, ever[y] thing unfinished and dirty, grand plans for the future, nothing pleasant nor even comfortable at present. We dined at Newtown, and the same day Nabob Alexander³² was entertaining, under the nose of the Stewarts, his burgesses for the borough for which he paid £10,000. The two Alexanders of Belfast, one of Derry, Hammy McClure, his brother in law, Arthur Johnston, etc., were appointed, and J. Crawford was made mayor. He laughed away most of the day with us at the unanimity of his election and had all our wishes for being soon returned [member] of parliament. A. Stewart spent this day with his mama.³³ Think of the infatuation of Robert Stewart – he was applied to for ground in Newtown for the Paisley weavers, but refused them. They then asked it of Lord Hills[boroug]h who gave them every encouragement.

32 The Stewarts had declined to pay in addition for the borough of Newtown when they purchased the manors of Newtown and Mount Alexander in 1744, and it was consequently sold to the Ponsonby family who sold it to Nabob James Alexander, later Earl of Caledon (Trevor McCaverty, *Newtown, a history of Newtownards* (Belfast, 1994), p. 84); Hamilton McClure was an attorney married to Nabob Alexander's sister; Arthur Johnston (1721-1814) was MP for Killyleagh.

33 Mary, sister and heiress of Sir Robert Cowan, who married Alexander Stewart of Mount Stewart, Co. Down.

Poor Mrs Smith now lies in Bath past all hope.³⁴ Write by the return of post to, your MM

219 Thursday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO NANCY DRENNAN, [BELFAST] [177]

Dear Nancy, I am somewhat uneasy about the money which my mother has in N. Wilson's hands, and she ought certainly to do something about it immediately as he never answered my letter respecting it, which seems to argue something wrong, as it could not proceed in him from want of punctuality. If my mother wishes that I should write again to him, let me know, or let her tell me what means she should wish to be taken. As Matty has got into her cabin, I should wish to make some agreeable present but as you know probably what would be most suitable, I beg you will tell me. I do not like articles of dress, but something more permanent, yet not very costly, for my finances are by no means high, but I am clear of debt, with little more than ten guineas in my purse. There are a thousand little expenses here that make my revenue meet with my income.

I do not think I shall be able to pay a visit to Belfast for some time. I should be very sorry to give two or three guineas to entertain the Lieutenant,³⁵ though I allow that those who get knighted for it may think the bargain cheap. Sir Waddell will not sound very harmoniously and Haliday I am sure would not accept of it. Bristow would only be called in future a Sir-reverence, so that I suppose Sir Thomas³⁶ will be the man if the Duke comes which is not probable. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

220 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [CABIN HILL], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [240]

Dear Will, You had not any loss in not being at our review, which was a dreary exhibition. The balls I hear were small and agreeable and Miss C— was at both.

I went to town and remained for the two days under the cloud at Donegall Street – which God knows, was heavy enough. One of the evenings, we supped at Miss Mattears, the first trial of my mother's complaint since I wrote to you. She was much fluttered in going and a great deal worse in returning home, having to stop more than once for breath, and ease to the pain across her breast. I hoped to get her here but Nancy would not come with her and my mother would not leave her. To be at home free of us all seemed Nancy's wish. As soon as ever your business allows, I beg you may come down, write so and that you expect and wish to meet my mother and Nancy here. It is probable some other remedies may be fit to try,

³⁴ She died in Bath on 8 August.

³⁵ The 4th Duke of Rutland (1754-87) visited Ulster as Lord Lieutenant on 30 July 1787; he died of a fever on 24 October.

³⁶ Possibly Thomas Greg, who is said to have declined a baronetcy in 1783 (Benn, *Belfast*, ii, p.181).

beside the issue. I still suspect Dr Mattear fears her disorder is of consequence, but after your being wrote to, I suppose he will prescribe nothing more. If you do not get down immediately I beg you will write to him for his opinion and assistance.

I am in very bad spirits, and cannot take up any trivial subject – serious ones you don't like. I suppose by this time you have a cheerful sensible companion in Rainey M[axwell]. I get little good of him for he will not make one, either at the round board nor hearth side, though well qualified to grace both. Let Mr Goddard know his John made a very good appearance at examination. This I dare say he heard before, but there is music in it will not tire him in repetition especially from different voices. You may tell him I had my account from Dr Crombie and Mr Maxwell, both of whom spoke of John with high approbation. Yours ever, MM

Why were you not more particular in your last about your female patient so far as to say whether the child was dead or killed – a material difference to your feelings?

221 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [CABIN HILL], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [238]

My dear Will, You have been our mornings wish and evenings expectation this fortnight past, and I hope it has been business, not want of inclination, which has prevented your meeting your friends at Cabin Hill. My mother and Nancy have been here these three weeks, and I think it must tend both to their health of mind, and body. I shall therefore keep them as long as I can. The weather has been delightful and our cot appears then to so much advantage, that each fine day, I repine at your absence. I had a long letter from Fanny Mussenden consulting us about building a mud cabin near Wexford and requesting our exact plan, expense, etc., etc. I have given her every encouragement as I find it all I wish and expected.

In Belfast we, nor indeed anyone, can't now live on a small fortune but in an obscure, and what is worse, a vulgar manner, for a small genteel house in a tolerable situation is not to be got at any moderate rent, and it is crowded with rich upstarts who, skipping from the counter to their carriage, run one down with force of wealth which sanctions ignorance and vulgarity, and now gives them a lead and fashion who a few years since would have shrunk with awe from the notice of what is called good company. All this will be – I know it, see and feel it, here, with indifference for myself. You are also above it, but my poor Nancy – what a cramped, obscure unemployed life is hers, with an excellent understanding, and a heart formed for the most exquisite enjoyment of domestic life. She is frozen into a being, little above a vegetable.

Don't you wish to see Miss Brunton?³⁷ She is very pleasing, I went in to her Juliet, and think she was really Shakespeare – but I am sick of tragedy, for I have seen it so long that I know each Ha and Oh by heart. A nabob of the name of Rankin,³⁸ son

³⁷ Anne Brunton (1769-1808), actress.

³⁸ Charles Rankin/Ranken (1751-1802) of Richmond Lodge, businessman and banker, son of the Rev. John Rankin (d.1790).

to the dissenting minister, has bought Montgomery's³⁹ estate near us and builds a great house immediately, Jemmy Crawford is on his return with £60,000, Hull⁴⁰ is making a great figure at Drombo, the Bishop of Down lives elegantly at P[urdys]burn, Lord Dungannon⁴¹ is expected to settle at Belvoir, and from all parts, people are flocking to Belfast and the country around it. The entertainment to the Lord Lieut[enant] was most elegant and conducted with decorum and taste – so as to be much noticed, and spoke of by all the noblemen there. Mr Bristow⁴² was determined to please all. He drew up an address for that purpose merely civil, fixed his toasts, etc. By accident, he had omitted to drink Lord Rawdon,⁴³ and a note being sent to him from the foot of the table reminding him of it, either a wish to atone for the neglect, or the truth [?com]ing without caution to his tongue, he drank [—] Rawdon's health, and the glorious ba[ttle of] Camden. This really did receive three cheers [?before] conscience or recollection struck the company – not but his lordship perceived the danger he was in, from the imprudence of the task, and having got the better of a panic, which he acknowledged afterwards he felt, he thanked the company, and told them the success of that day was owing to the harp on his standard, and the Irishmen who followed it.

He supped at Mr Greg's, mentioned the toast and his distress upon it, from his knowledge of the sentiments of the Belfast people, for which he said he honoured them, mentioned his military enthusiasm being over, and the war with America was sufficient to effect it, his desire of being active, and hope that for the future it would be in the cabinet not in the field, but despaired of it while Mr Pitt was minister, as with a man of his duplicity he could never act. At Hillsborough corporation dinner, the governor gave the Volunteers. Lord H[illsborough] cried, fy, fy, fy, and each time, knocked his hand on the table. 'Do you know, sir, that there is not a toast could be more disagreeable to government?' Ward replied, he would apply to government for information, and announcing the toast to the Lord Lieut[enant], he drank it in a bumper.

Write immediately, and let it contain everything of yourself you can think of, and when you will come.

Poor Jack Getty lies dangerously ill of a putrid fever. You wrote to Dr M[attear], he has been out of town this month.

222 Sunday, August 1787

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER [241]

Dear Matty, I think you might have done me the honour of a letter, as you must have known that I should write to you as soon as my engagement was over. Mrs

39 Possibly William Montgomery (d.1799), of Grey Abbey, Co. Down.

40 James Watson Hull of Belvedere, Co. Down.

41 2nd Viscount Dungannon (1763-1837).

42 Rev. William Bristow was sovereign of Belfast from 1786-88.

43 Francis, Baron Rawdon, later 2nd Earl of Moira, and 1st Marquis of Hastings (1754-1826), general and whig politician, commander at the battle of Camden, against the American forces, 1780 (*DNB*).

Browne, one of the smallest women you ever saw, and a little distorted, was delivered last night about eight of two exceedingly large children, a boy and a girl, and I was sure she would have died from the consequences, but I left her tolerably well this morning, and I trust her complaint will not return. How fragile is our professional character. Had she died at the time, I should not perhaps have one patient more in this line, so sensible is the female mind to unfavourable impressions when any fatal accident happens, though not attributed to any error or want of judgment in the physician. Want of good-luck is sufficient, but the ladies seem rather to favour me in this respect. I dined for the first time on Friday with a parcel of nabobs and naboblings at Mr Turner's,⁴⁴ and one of the nabobesses was so good as to ask my advice in the course of the evening, and paid for it – a Mrs Grant of London. I expect a letter from you at least to give me an account of my mother's situation, and I wrote to Dr Mattear, without having hitherto had the honour of an answer.

I shall, in spite of prudential motives that gainsay it, endeavour to see you in the course of this week, but much will depend on Mrs Browne's state, and I therefore cannot fix on the day, besides I imagine there will be a party with me, and at the head perhaps Mr Scott, that Uncle Toby,⁴⁵ on a larger scale, but it will be no inconvenience to me as they will stay at the inn and Miss Brunton will I suppose engross them sufficiently. It will make the journey more agreeable, and they travel in a chaise, but I shall ride. I have gotten for this week past into my new rooms and am much pleased with both them and the people of the house. They are all I wish for.

The man I hired, got drunk and I seized him just in the nick as he was going off with a coat and waistcoat which I had bought him, and some other things of mine. Upon his refusal to strip, as he was nearly drunk I thought I was able to make him, though much stronger than me, and in doing so I pushed his head through the window, without much injury to the former, and having got my clothes, turned him out of the house. I am in great want of an honest attentive man, if such a one there be, and am obliged to get my horse taken care of by a helper of a stable for the present. I request that Sam will take the trouble of calling at the breeches maker's and bespeak a pair of leather beeches, with this express proviso, that if they be not made of superior leather to what the last were, I shall return them on his hands, nor would I indeed bespeak them from him but from a want of a second pair by me, and I cannot send my measure to Dublin or London with any security of their fitting. A great many buttons are now worn at the knees and the pocket as usual to be behind. I should wish to have them ready on my coming down and to have them as neat as he can make them. Little or no news here at present. Miss Pollock was married last week in Drogheda to Dr Hartigan of Dublin.⁴⁶ Ever yours, W DRENNAN

44 Possibly Jacob Turner (1739-1803), of Turner Hill.

45 A character in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*.

46 She was married on 8 August.

223 Thursday, 7 a.m.

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [210]

Dear Matty, We have formed a little *partie quarrée* that will probably go to Belfast on Monday: Mr Scott, and J[ames] Pollock, a brother of the counsellor's and as worthy a fellow, will take a chaise, and W. Ogle and I shall ride. Mr Scott just wishes to see the town as it is now improved, and Pollock has a disposition to engage in all such parties of pleasure. The one will certainly stay at the inn, but if my mother has a bed to spare in Donegall Street, I shall offer it to the two lads, and I shall either sleep there myself or in the country as is convenient. I shall impose my friends upon you at breakfast, on Tuesday or Wednesday, and I shall return on Thursday morning. Mrs Browne sent an express for me on Monday morning, and I found her with very ominous prospects of a childbed fever, but happily they have cleared up, and I have not heard from Carriff yesterday, so that I trust she continues to do well, which was more than from the first I expected. I met the Rankin you mention at Turner's lately, and after dinner when the ladies withdrew, he followed, and introduced a saddler of this town with whom he had engaged in a long dispute about the price of a guinea bridle, and after great appeals to the judgment of every man in company, the bill was paid upon the spot. His wife is a pretty genteel woman.⁴⁷

I have not yet gotten a servant, and shall not fix until I get a good one. I believe it will be hard to find one even in Belfast. B[etty] Kennedy has been some days here, and I suppose thinks me negligent in my attentions, but I really have been a good deal hurried of late by my jaunts at all hours in the country and with all this I shall go to Belfast, without being one farthing in debt in Newry, and just fifty guineas in my pocket, with which you may do as you choose. My mare will not look as well as I should desire for want of a servant and she has lost a good deal already. I hope Sam remembered the breeches, which with me is now an absolute necessary. If the weather continues as it is this morning, in such a torrent of rain, our jaunt will probably be deferred, but I hope our party will not be broken up for two of them are characters that entertain me much. Ogle is a son of my mother's acquaintance in the Square. I have read with pleasure Hawkins' life of Johnson,⁴⁸ a good book, though like all the Doctor's biographers, liable to much ridicule. Our book society has turned out for my individual benefit. They do not read or send for books, and I have seven or eight guineas with which I buy new publications, which if they don't read it is their fault but not mine. I shall when the money is expended send them notice and auction the books, for I shall not derive individual advantage from it any longer than the fund lasts. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

47 Mary Ranken (d.1849), was a daughter of Moses Grant.

48 Sir John Hawkins published Johnson's 'Life and works' in 1787-89.

224 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [CABIN HILL], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [239]

Dear Will, I am glad to hear you intend coming on Monday as that night is Miss Brunton's benefit, and she has been so ill attended that probably it will be the last of her acting. She is to be in both play and farce, and in Perdita will give you an idea of her Juliet. My mother and Nancy are here but there will be beds for you and two of your friends at Donegall Street and if you go to the play, I suppose you would choose to sleep there – on Tuesday Sam requests you will engage your company to dine with you at Cabin Hill, where for the remainder of the time you can spare, I hope you will stay.

We have been all greatly shocked by the death of poor Getty. His fever was a dreadful one, and no creature yet ventures to the house.

Write a line on Sunday to tell us if your party holds – if you come before dinner, you must go to the inn which is now worth seeing. If I can, I will go to the play, and shall meet you before it, in Donegall Street. I do not suppose there could now be seats got in the boxes, nor would I know how many you would want. You will therefore I suppose have to pit it. Yours, MM

Bring fifty pound and lodge it in the Discount Office.⁴⁹ You will get five per cent and your money at a moment's notice. I have not a doubt of your neglecting Betty Kennedy, and it is really ungrateful.

225 Friday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [169]

Dear Matty, We arrived here at nine o'clock, having spent the greater part of the day at Hillsborough where there is really a great deal worth seeing, and much of the improvements is overlooked by travellers. We walked for more than three miles through planting to the hermitage as it is called, and when we came there, instead of finding the old cock sitting as Thicknesse⁵⁰ did at Montserrat, we surprised two handsome girls feasting on fine mackerel, with a bottle of wine beside them, and in a stable of the place stood a handsome horse with a saddle well stuffed and warmly covered for the safe-guard, I suppose, of his lordship's backside. The hermitage is nothing, but its situation just what I admire, in a lawn wholly encircled with planting of a very rich kind, and where you can see no one thing around you farther off than three-hundred yards, but all is contracted and condensed into the enjoyment of yourself and those that are closest and dearest, though if you want to be extravagant, you may penetrate into the world which lies on the other side of the copse. I never was in a church which I admired so much as that of Hillsborough. It is rather elegant than magnificent, and without that mahogany that encumbers the

49 The Discount Office was set up in 1785 by a consortium headed by Waddell Cunningham; much of the business was transacted by Robert Thomson.

50 Probably Philip Thicknesse (1719-92), traveller, writer, etc. (*DNB*).

church at Belfast. There is a monument attached to the wall which I admired much for its elegant simplicity and such a one would become the meeting house much, as it takes up no room and is very ornamental. This one cost £100 but the sculpture is of Nollekens,⁵¹ the first or among the first in London. When I abound in money I shall do justice to my father and gratify my own vanity by sending for something similar. This one was put up by Leslie. I found on my return this verse tacked to mine on the wall, and it is better than them all –

‘Thus far he wrote and then he stop’d
When Hillsborough himself in pop’d
Then all he wrote became a farce,
and for a place, he kiss’d his arse’

I did not see the servant whom Sam mentioned, but if he and you etc. think him a very good one, it might be better for me to take him unseeing and unseen. I think £18 a year should be sufficient for his diet and clothing and wages, but even £20 I could venture on were I certain that he would be always well-dressed both outside and in. I would pay Merrion boys a quarter 15s as I promised to do. I should have a good servant for it would be very saving to go on as at present which I could do in matters of convenience though not so well in appearance and that I know is very valuable. Let Sam judge and talk with him. He must always have boots and leather breeches and though I may give him clothes I don’t condition it. He has too little to do with me and hence all the servants I had did nothing. I should like to have one well-looking D——. [*sic*]

No very indispensable call since I left this but most of my acquaintance were apprised of it. I believe I should have left my little translation with Haliday, and if you meet him, mention that I intended to have called, but was confined too long that night in the country. I did not go to the play having waited too long for Hanna and it was not worth seeing I find. I was a good deal tired yesterday, but am well today. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

226 Wednesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [213]

My dear Matty, I request that you or Sam will inform me respecting the servant whom S mentioned as several have applied to me since I came, and I cannot give any an answer. I should wish if he be hired, to have him here, and I hope he will not be hired unless both genteel and well recommended. I have attached two ladies since I saw you, one a night excursion into the country, the other this morning, Mrs A. Thompson, who put off to the last on Templeton’s account. She became very ill

51 Joseph Nollekens (1737-1823), sculptor (*DNB*); the memorial is to Archdeacon Henry Leslie and the Rev. Peter Leslie of Ahoghill, and was erected by Henry Leslie.

in the night and sent for me in a prodigious hurry – the husband the messenger. I found a preternatural birth, but in about half an hour all had a happy exit, and in a quarter of an hour after Templeton arrived in his hack carriage. He behaved as well as could be expected and she continues pretty well. Thompson gave me my five guineas and T[empleton] I suppose got the same though distanced. He looked extremely ill and feeble and I think will not be a very long liver. I may however pop first – therefore be confident but not too confident. I distrust all things that seem prosperous in this life. Sam must pay the breeches maker three half guineas abating three sixpences. I hope Thomson has sent the note for my money and if so enclose it and write by return of post. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

227 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [215]

Dear Will, As you desire a letter by return of post, it only allows me time to tell you that the servant never returned to Sam, that I was told he was seen riding behind Dick Bamber⁵² to Lord Templeto[w]n's,⁵³ and as that I imagine was but the show of a day, I have wrote a note to Dick to get some account of him, but he as us [*sic*] usual being from home I can give you no farther intelligence until Saturday.

Your note from Thomson is in Donegall Street but when I get it I will enclose it to you.

You are what Johnston⁵⁴ said of someone's style, a perpetual renovation, etc., etc. This is owing to your always coming here tired to death, therefore not well, uninterested, stupid and joyless. I beg you will always come in a chaise for the future. Thirty miles a day is too much for you and would fatigue many a stronger man unused to it. Adieu for a little, MM

228 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [274]

Dear Will, Your man Hugh takes two shirts that are mended but not worth new ruffles, and here they are quite out of fashion except in full dress – they are even thought vulgar.

My mother is still here and I know so much happier than in town that I will keep her as long as possible. I had soon an opportunity of delivering your message to Dr H[aliday]. He laughed at you in the same way he would have done with you, asked if you had read your translation, and wished he had seen it. How lucky you were in catching Mrs Thompson. It is in this way you will establish yourself with Templeton's patients before he makes room for a new physician. Ann Buntin is not better. Yours ever

52 Elder son of Richard Brown Bamber of Belmont, Co. Down (Blackwood 26).

53 John Henry Upton (1771-1846), Baron, later Viscount, Templetown.

54 Presumably Samuel Johnson.

Tell Goddard his daughters were the two most admired belles at the last coterie which was crowded.

Young Agnew is come home with a dreadful scurvy in his face. Mrs Harrison, N. Thomson and his sister⁵⁵ go with him to Ballynahinch. Nancy desires me to tell you you do not wear your fine cravats in the right way to show them to advantage. They ought not to be folded in plasters⁵⁶ but put round the neck as you would tie a pocket handker[chief] in a wisp.

229 Thursday night

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, MR MAXWELL'S, NEWRY [220]

Your servant sets off from this tomorrow morning, by him I wrote you a long letter but as I suspect you are uneasy upon my account, I chose [to] put you to 2d expense for this, as you will receive it a day before your servant reaches you, and learn by it that I am very tolerably well and hope I have a prospect of being better than for some time past, having got quit of a great deal of stuff of some sort, that I must be better without. Make great allowances for any report of me that comes from my mother or Nancy. From myself you shall always hear the truth and hope I shall never have any to tell that will give you much pain, some you must expect. You are very good in writing so often, continue it when in your power, and to be particular about yourself, you may be assured no wrong use will be made of it. I shall not omit giving you any news that can interest you. Nancy is just employed fixing you up beside Dr Haliday, and your father, over the parlour fireside. The Doctor wants to know if you have plenty of butter in Newry, and whether it is good. I shall get franks for my next. Yours, M MCTIER

230 Friday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [221]

Dear Matty, Hugh Bell⁵⁷ stayed with me three days and yesterday went away on the pretence of some of his kindred being dead at Ballynahinch, so that I am as unservanted as before, and Arbuckle has taken a man who had applied to me before Bell came and whom I liked much. I like my lodging much and the people are as civil as I desire. Arbuckle breakfasted with me a day or two ago, and we shall probably soon pay a visit to Lord Clanbrassill at Tullamore where he now is, and where he says he should be glad to see me. I have gotten into a pleasant neighbourhood, and am in good health and spirits, so good that I find it irksome to sit down, and write

55 Margaret Jones.

56 i.e. like bandages.

57 A servant.

on any literary subject. I think as I have paid you several visits, you should return the compliment, and when Sam has leisure, he and you and Nancy might take a drive in the capriole, when the weather is fine, and spend a day or two here, see Rostrevor, Carlingford, etc., which are really worth seeing. Mr Scott always enquires respectfully about Sam and says he was the only gentleman he met with in his visit to Belfast. Do make Sam think of a jaunt here before October cold, and you will all be the better for it; the Castle Bellingham ale will be better for drinking in autumn, and in deferring sending it, I follow Watson's advice as well as my own. I have room in my stable and yard for Sam's horses and carriage. I should like you and Nancy to see some of our Newry lasses at one of their coteries, if it could be made convenient.

I mess with Goddard and Moore⁵⁸ at present, but it is probable as the people I live with are very decent – the Latin master of the town – that I shall in some time take my dinner with them. I am glad Dr Haliday continues smiling, perhaps it was sneerful smile, but whatever it was, is much indifferent. I know his strength and he knows mine – neither very great. I had a guinea yesterday from Mrs Browne of the Corry family. A physician had advised her to Bristol, of which she has as little need as Mrs Patrick, but I believe she wishes to go, and I framed my answer in writing as she desired, but so as not to call my judgment in question. Her brother Isaac⁵⁹ has been here for a day or so, but stays chiefly at the Speaker's. He danced at Brighton with Mrs Fitzherbert,⁶⁰ but is above telling this – she is certainly Princess of Wales for the present incog[nito] but when he can make law and the parliament who are makers of law, he will declare it. Horne Tooke's⁶¹ pamphlet on the subject is worth reading.

I have laid in my hay and oats and begin to have the carefulness of age, and pleasure in doing little things which may keep me busy. I am capable of something, more than I am conscious of, but time, place, circumstance, company, indolence, want of powerful connections, will fix me in Newry I suppose for my life. I have been purchasing some boot stockings, coarse thread, of half a crown a pair. Can my mother knit any such for I wear nothing else in the morning? When I came here I did not condition for sheets and I believe they find it difficult to accommodate me in this particular and I should wish to do all that lies in my power as they have laid out £70 in furniture, more than they can well afford. Has my mother any to spare? If you resolve on a jaunt, tell me and let Sam bring me a sword-cane from Armstrong which I forgot to buy. It is black – about 8s price. Goddard here has one I like. I am rather out of town and often out late at night. Yours ever, WD

58 Moore was land-waiter (i.e. a customs official) at Newry, see Drennan to Bruce, November 1787 (PRONI, D/553/61).

59 Isaac Corry, MP, brother of Mrs Frances Browne.

60 Mrs Maria Fitzherbert (1756-1837), secretly married to the Prince of Wales in 1785 (DNB).

61 John Horne Tooke (1726-1812), radical writer and politician (DNB).

231 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [222]

My dear Will, I am both surprised and vexed at the man I sent you having gone off, for he appeared decent and very anxious to get to you. Your invitation is flattering, but our accepting it is not at present practi[ca]ble, nor would it answer your purpose. Nancy is not to be pleased, nor amused, that is long over. Our appearance could do you no credit, I am rusty in face, dress and manner, not fit for a public place, and I question much if Nancy would now go to one to see a sister in law. Sam has only Sunday to spare, but I look forward to his having a clerk, and therefore more liberty, and would then (perhaps next summer) like to meet, and spend a day with you at Hills[borough].

Near fifty years' housekeeping has worn out everything belonging to my mother unless it's iron, and she has not replaced any necessary this long time, so that sheets, etc., etc., are in a stinted poor state. Indeed everything in the house looks ancient. Unless you forbid it, I will purchase a couple of pair of sheets and pillowcases for you at our next market, for if you like your lodgings and the people you ought for your own sake to be easy to them. Are not the stockings you want white, thick and coarse?

I join you in thinking your strength equal to H[aliday]'s in everything done by nature – in everything you think material, but where his forte lies, you are weak – in a recollected address. Not that here, nature forsook you. I do not think she made any of us vulgar, either in form or manner, but you slighted this foundation and never appear to see, hear, or feel, but on some great occasion – how seldom then can your manner be interesting. Will you allow the two first lines of this sentence to gild what I am now going to tell you – that, well as I know you, and that affection I have always experienced from you, my heart filled at a mere attitude of yours the last time I saw you. The instant you came into the room you threw yourself into a chair beside me, your arm over it, and your back side so close to me that I was obliged to speak to Mr Buntin through it, and I am sure I speak truth when I assert it was a quarter of an hour before I saw any part of you but the above mentioned. I could indeed have moved my situation, but not caring for a sight of Mr Buntin I determined to try how long you would intercept us, and you did it while he stayed. Laugh at this rather than be angry at me – yet believe it – next to language there is nothing discovers contempt nor ungentlemanly breeding more than attitudes, and for once I will risk adding that yours are the most destitute of politeness of any gentleman's I know. Were they natural to you, I would not mention them, but they are all of your own seeking and indulging.

I have got your picture up over the fireside in our parlour. It is an ornament to our room – another would spoil it, so would a frame. Independent of its being as like as possible, it is an excellent picture, and one that will excite attention, it bespeaks great thought, and a degree of anxiety, that interests the beholder. It is grimmer than you but I like it the better. Haliday did not sneer, he never does, and while you keep your distance will I am sure both admire and esteem you. William⁶² is just come from

62 William Haliday (1763-1838), physician, nephew of Dr Haliday.

Paris, where to settle is not yet determined but I have good authority for assuring you, that there is a falling off of business among the seniors. I have heard it suspected H's judgment in physic was not what it has been but this might be interested tattle. He will not yield the name, but must the profits where there are such a number. I rejoice in your good health and spirits, if these prevent the course of your pen may it never do you credit more. A union perhaps will make you dip it, in the mean time don't spare it to her who loves and admires it. MM

If Mr Scott was disappointed in his jaunt to B[elfast] you may assure him he also disappointed, for the girls hearing of a Cornet Scott had determined to conquer a young man of twenty-five.

232 Friday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [134]

I write a line to ask if you can procure me any servant, for at this place I shall not probably get any one but a blackguard. I would have sent some clothes to Hanna if I had any but I really have none at present by me. I still repeat my invitation to you and Sam to come up for a day or two, live at the inn, and jaunt about to Carlingford and Rostrevor, when the weather becomes settled, as it seldom fails to do after the equinox. My lodgings are still agreeable, and I am fed with fees sufficient for me.

How does my mother go on? I am really surprised she would not get a cabin built or at least neatly fitted up near you, for a house in town is I think perfectly unnecessary, and especially at a rent which might do so well in the country. Were it a pretty place, I should perhaps one day or other, if I live, reside there too – for I am certain that a cottage to my taste, which yours by no means is in its situation, will be my *summum bonum*⁶³ in this world, if ever I have independence from the servility of profession. Miss Milling who was jilted by Dunn, is married to a young man of this town, a distant relation of Dr Haliday's, many years younger than herself, a good lad, and she has made his fortune, near £300 a year. This match makes long and serious tea drinkings among the old maids in Newry. WD

233 Sunday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [218]

Dear Sam, I shall thank you if you hire the man. I shall give the same wages as to the other, £20, but I expect that he shall be always as smartly dressed as any servant in Newry, as his wages will be as good, and from my present want of one, if he can come sooner than term time it will be more convenient. I suppose J. Holmes will give him a discharge.

I shall mention what you say of the mare to Goddard. I believe, if I could, I would have a second horse, but I suppose the price is too high for me as well as you. I

63 Greatest good or happiness.

should wish to know your judgment of her, if neither you or Goddard take her. I have paid two visits to Lady Clanbrassill at Tullamore Park since I wrote last, and her ladyship has I believe recovered from a sore throat which alarmed her. Great rumours of war, if so, the troops will be drained off, and then the Volunteers will array to serve government as usual without fee or reward. I think they should be rather persuaded to abandon their arms. Yours truly, W DRENNAN

What of the note for my money given to Thomson?

234 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [CABIN HILL], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [219]

Dear Will, The worst sore eye I ever had prevented my writing to you for several posts.

J. Holmes's man is engaged to you from November, at £20 a year. He has a good character, remarkably neat and clean in his person, and though not a fine looking servant appears like a sensible respectable one. I hope with all my heart he may answer you so as to become an humble friend, a very comfortable character for one in your situation.

My mother and Nancy left this about three weeks ago and I have not been in Belfast since. I hear there was a meeting of the town called by Bristow last week to propose subscriptions for raising men for his majesty's fleet but McCabe and Co. would not consent. Such men are very useful and have ten times the merit of their superiors, who dare only to bluster in the private circle of their friends – it is not to such, but to men they look down on, and a very few others, that Ireland owes her freedom. I think these sort of expenses ought to be taken in turn and for this war, those who kept free of Volunteer trouble and expense during the last should now step forth, and either guard their coasts or open their purses. I would be invaded, were I an Irish Volunteer, before I would volunteer it either with money or person for George III.

The last resolve carried in Belfast is to demolish Bryson's meeting house⁶⁴ and build in its stead a new one, on the model of the church. J. Kennedy's name is down for 20 guineas – I believe he is a very generous worthy soul. N. Wilson has been very ill. I believe he is now in Dublin and I wish very much you could see him on his return and insist either upon the best security or the money. £400 is not to be sported with – now you may apply – soon perhaps you could not do it so well. He is thought consumptive and I was told, by Jack Holmes, that he had above £10,000 in property, that would turn to little account, if anything ailed him. A tedious [—] it would be, at the best. I wish [your mone]y was in other hands.

I hear Dr Haliday went to Newry last week, but said he did not believe he would see you as he would not be there an hour. Pray did Hugh Bell deliver you a bundle with two shirts and four handkerchiefs? You never mentioned them. He is hired

⁶⁴ Of the Second Belfast congregation.

with W. Cunningham. The horse Sam mentioned to you, he tried and liked but would not give the price asked, 12 guineas, not thinking his looks at least deserved it, but he seems anxious for your having a second, thinking it very wrong and unsafe for you to ride without a servant at night.

You often speak of my mother living in the country. I have turned it in my thoughts a hundred times in different ways but could never approve of any except her living with us, and this I knew would be a plan for our mutual advantage in several particulars and much to her comfort and I believe her wish, yet it was a serious matter, perhaps a doubtful one, and to unsettle her at this time of life, to take upon myself a task I am but freed from one year, and which here might be a more delicate one than ever, to risk Sam being tempted to spend his time more from home which might be made unpleasant both to him or his guest, these and twenty other fears alarmed me. Yet my mother's peace, a saving of about £70 a year to the family, and perhaps a little comfort to Nancy, induced me to consent to Sam's making a proposal to my mother of letting her build a room to our house and remaining with us – though I know it was the height of her wish, she hesitated and no wonder – my death, Sam's death, even ill health, or perhaps good fortune, increase of business, etc. etc., might send him from this, etc. etc. etc., the change lies over.

Thomson's [note] for your money is in Nancy's ke[eping]. If you choose it may be [brought] by your servant.

235 Tuesday

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [202]

My dear Will, Supposing Mr Goddard would have returned to Newry long before this, I wrote to you, and sent him my letter a week ago. Since that, I saw him and desired him to put it into the Post Office, but not knowing whether it has yet reached you, and fearing you might think so long a silence unkind, I now take up my pen, but not with much pleasure being a good deal vexed to hear of hostilities renewed between Templeton and you. Sam spent a good part of last night with Dr Haliday, and as it was *tête à tête*, he told him of what had passed previous to his going to Newry, and the steps he had taken, though ineffectual, to soothe matters, his beseeching you to continue your attendance, and your refusal. His motive, he said, was compassion for a man whose life was of consequence, and whose state required hourly attendance instead of Templeton's two visits in the day. He did not however pass any censure on your conduct, either here, or in any other part of the affair, and I dare say you knew that a continuance of your visits could be of no use, or you would not have let any resentment on points of etiquette have prevented their renewal. The Doctor said, you told him your friends thought it would be mean thus to continue them and would be a loss to you in their opinion. This may be so, but where there is much party spirit, it is probable that is more the foundation of zeal, than regard either to your interest or honour and such is the prejudice of Newry

partisans, what I would trust far more to your own cool judgment than their advice. The Doctor said the people were lamenting their situation in regard to your differences. This and everything relating to Templeton will require cool, deliberate conduct, for one little error in regard to strict propriety, or delicacy, would give a handle to tales that would be eagerly told, and no behaviour of his would be an excuse, even to your own mind, for having drawn you into the least matter your judgment could condemn. As a gentleman, and a man of delicacy, you have a character to support, he has none. Out of a well founded resentment to him you must take the greatest care not to risk this character and by gratifying that, serve him and hurt yourself. Beware then of Newry advisers, and be assured you can never be hurt, either in fame or fortune, by overlooking, when doing so may serve or seem to serve a patient. Dr H lamented Templeton as a bad tempered man, hurt by misfortune, declining health, fortune, business and friends. Such a one should make you fear yourself, more than him. I do not fear you, I only wish you to be guarded. That such conduct, between two gentlemen, is very uncomfortable and disreputable is certain but this was their footing before you went there, and it's most probable will ever be so in Newry.

We have been in Belfast this week past, where I find little news. Crombie continues poorly. Bryson's house will be taken down immediately which I am glad of, as it will relieve Crombie from much preaching.

My mother has a party this evening to which Dr Haliday has invited himself. He loves the company of his friends and is in my opinion so agreeable an addition to them that I was both sorry, and surprised, he had to spend his evening at an inn in Newry, solitary and alone, except with his pipe, but it was Newry. I find you continue visiting at Dundalk. I hope it will be profitable, for in this weather it must be uncomfortable. Whenever you have time, I beg you will write a particular letter to your MM

236 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MRS ANN DRENNAN, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [78A]

Dear Mother, I understand from Mr Moody that he and his sister Mrs Glenny mean to pay a visit for a few days to Belfast. I have many obligations to that family and I find that Miss Moody has been for some time at J. Kennedy's. I don't know whether you or Nancy will think it proper to visit them as their stay will be so short, but I request that you will inform Sam he will oblige me much by calling upon B[oyle] Moody. I hear you have written to N[at] W[ilson] and I think you ought to be as peremptory as possible if you think it may be the means of saving £400, but you had better take some legal advice about it. Creditors are in general much more to be pitied than debtors.

Tell Sam I have sent to Dublin for a handsome saddle and bridle in expectation of a horse he will buy me, the price of which, if he finds one to his taste, I would

not him [*sic*] stand on. Another Dr Black⁶⁵ is coming here in a day or two for, Templeton cannot yet go out. I shall however, if I can, pay you a visit in Donegall Street about Christmas; I shall ride to Hillsborough and sleep there and see you in the morning, but this depends on my getting a horse for I will not take a chaise singly. W DRENNAN

65 Possibly Dr Samuel Black who settled in Newry in the 1790s (see Crosslé notebooks, PRONI, MIC/338/2).

237 Friday, January [17]88

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [248]

Dear Matty, I am still obliged to defer my visit to Belfast. I saw S[amuel] Smith¹ here last week, but he seemed to set such a price upon his mare as prevented me from even offering money for her. He either has passed through this on his return, or will do so in a few days, but if he does not, I must request that Sam may apply to G. Warnock to serve me at Banbridge fair on the tenth. And I should rather have a handsome beast even at 30 guineas than what is called a good hack from 15 to 20. I should rather not purchase any than not have one a good deal better than my present, for which I paid 15 guineas and a half. I met G. Warnock at the play a night or two ago, but was called out suddenly and had not an opportunity of speaking to him particularly and I thought my acquaintance with him did not justify me in taking that freedom which Sam might do in a matter of this nature. I shall expect to hear from Sam before the fair and I shall send my servant to Banbridge on that day. A note on me for the money, if he buys one, will do I suppose. I never was pestered so with colds in my life, and I begin to find all the rheumatism of an old bachelor in spite of this town's talk and D. Ogle, whom neither town or talk will prevent me from calling a very pretty girl, one whom Sheridan² might have written his lines on which you read in the paper, and which are so beautiful I can't help remembering them,

Marked you the eye of heavenly blue,
 Marked you the cheek of roseate hue,
 That eye in liquid circles moving
 That cheek abashed at man's approving
 The one Love's arrows darting round
 The other, blushing at the wound.

I have closed my accounts for the year and will let you guess the amount. I don't know any expense I am so ashamed of as what I lose at whist, and if ever I marry I shall never touch a card. My profits here will never be great, but I think one or two junior physicians would rather increase them, by preventing the apothecaries, etc., from filling up so great a part of the practice and leaving us the bad cases. Whenever these grow serious, then the physician is called – much too much for form sake. I see too much of this bad world – such hypocrisy etc.

We are very gay at present with assemblies, plays, etc. W. Pollock will certainly be married to Miss Clarke.³ What has my mother done with her £400? What now about W. Thompson and the house, etc., etc.?

1 Samuel (1766-1829), son of John Galt Smith.

2 Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816), dramatist and MP (*DNB*).

3 He did not marry her until 1791.

238 Wednesday morn

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [249]

Dear Will, Sam has put off writing to you in hopes of Smith's return and being able to obtain his mare for you, on which he has been much set, but he is not arrived, and as he will probably be at Banbridge fair, Sam thinks you ought to send your servant there with a letter to George Warnock, and your directions, either as to her or any other. This you may do, in consequence of his being spoken to before – but which he will not act from now as he has been abroad for some time, so that Sam had no opportunity of renewing his directions or giving him money. This, therefore, you must do yourself. I suppose you can trust your man, if not, probably, some one going from Newry to the fair.

We have been in town this fortnight and perhaps will remain for some weeks longer, as Sam's accounts at this time of year takes up a great deal of time owing to the great (and I believe proper) strictness of the Commissioners of Appeal. This is an administration which I hope will do justice to the honest by not winking at defaulters.

There is in this town at present a violence of business, if I may say so, which I would think portends something great, either in the rise or fall of individuals. Strange it would be in any other man but W[addell] C[unningham], after all the opposition given to the bank as a matter hurtful to the public, to declare that next New Year's Day he would open a second in Belfast.⁴ This however he has announced, speaks with contempt of the fund, the management etc., of the present – and looks destruction. He has avowed J. Campbell⁵ as a partner but none of the rest. A. Stewart of N[ewtown], Carr,⁶ Hull, Rankin, are spoke of. I fear there is a foundation formed for party and animosity in this place, which will not be easily laid and I would shudder if W.C.'s interest, ambition, and therefore inclination and abilities, were combined against me.

Sam's opinion is that Belfast does not know its strength and power and that there is business for two banks – founded I suppose upon the certainty of the Discount Office having discounted £25,000 a month even since the bank opened. This office will give up on the opening of the second bank. All this has contributed in an unexpected way to Sam's profits in the notary business – and if he can retain that of both banks, I am sure it will be a handsome matter, but this I suppose will be hard to do. Waddell is paying us court at present and I think I see his purpose. We are to spend this evening at his house, strange revolutions – but it is the third solicitation and rather gratifying than humbling my spirit. Are you preparing any strains to be sung in due time in praise of a Temple's⁷ administration or is [it] satire [al]one that can tempt you? The former in a good cause might perhaps draw you into as much notice,

4 Cunningham's bank operated until 1793; his partners were William Brown, John Campbell and Charles Ranken (Millin, *Sidelights*, pp 23-5); the partners in the first Belfast bank were John Ewing, John Brown, John Hamilton and John Holmes.

5 John Campbell (d.1804), merchant and banker of Belfast.

6 Probably David Ker (c.1750-1811) of Portavo, Co. Down, MP for Blessington, 1796-97.

7 Probably refers to George Nugent Temple Grenville, 1st Marquis of Buckingham, Lord Lieutenant 1782-83 (as Earl Temple) and 1787-89 (*DNB*).

as more serviceably, while even in doing so, you might catch matter sufficient from others for the pointed warning. I noted Sheridan's lines – and envied his wife.

Will Haliday is come here, and home which is to be his uncle's, I think a bad plan. MacDonnell⁸ is said to be getting good practise. I think you would have done better to have allowed your brother doctor to have come to Newry at his own time and quite from his own opinion. I always thought it would be very fortunate for you if a third kept away for some time. This I fear you have prevented and have carried your candour needlessly far. You need not hope to have it rewarded. Black⁹ was at Coleraine for a fortnight. All in this house, lease etc., is just as it was thank God not worse, in the most interesting matter, not better, nor never will. Sam and I begin to fear increase of business, for then the country I doubt would have to be given up. This we will keep to as long as possible. Websters, Bammers, and Hamills, are all going to Belfast to live but houses are not to be got for the half that want them. In the New Street a hundred and ten pound is asked for rent. MM

This is fine travelling weather. Why do you miss it, and when will you come?

239 Thursday

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [247]

This is to countermand sending your servant to Banbridge, as Warnock will not be there. He and Sam Smith are both returned, and the former is yet to try to make a bargain for the mare, as he is sure there is not one in Ireland would answer you better. He bought her for Sam, and is in the secret of what he ought to sell her for.

I wrote you a long letter yesterday, which I suppose you got, and expect to hear from you, and that you are coming soon. Last night Waddell kept Sam after the rest went. He let him know that he had informed the different companies he was in, of his intention to separate, the first of January next.¹⁰ Sam asked him what he would sell his share in the ships for. He answered, he had put in £400, divided five and twenty per cent, and that he would not sell under £700. My mother's four I fear will now obtain but five per cent and I think if Crombie would join her and purchase in his name, it might do well for both. I mean to go up and try him, but he is so shallow and yet so deep that he is never clear.

The second Miss Park¹¹ died yesterday. Mr Portis returns Collector, in the last administration he was negotiating for £600 a year, and two after his death for his wife, but the present is not friendly to pensions and yet will not hurt him – there is no arrears and business said to be well attended to in this port. It is said and by

8 Dr James MacDonnell (1763-1845), physician, philanthropist, mineralogist, antiquary; see David Kennedy, 'James MacDonnell, 1762-1845' in *Capuchin Annual* (1945-6), pp 353-60; Peter Froggatt, 'Dr James MacDonnell, M.D. (1763-1845)' in *The Glynn's*, ix (1981), pp 17-31.

9 Either Dr Black or Rev. Robert Black of Derry.

10 Cunningham was selling his mercantile interests because it was illegal for a banker to operate as a merchant (Millin, *Sidelights*, p.13).

11 A daughter of James Park of Belfast died in January 1788.

many believed, that Lord Donegall is to be married to a widow Moor,¹² sister to your first flame, Jenny Spencer. It is certain however that he visits Belfast in May next.

Brown, the banker, had a second paralytic stroke and set off for Bath but taking Bristol in his way, was strongly recommended to consult a physician there who had wrought wonders in that disorder, and having cured one old gentleman, he had in addition to his fee presented him with a chariot and four, in which our poet old Marriot¹³ now rolls, and under his care, Mr Brown still continues, but I find grows daily worse. Perhaps his death might unite the bankers, and all that is said may be with that design. Yours ever, MM

240 Thursday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [252]

My dear Matty, I have this instant received a letter from W[ill] Bruce he is to be married tomorrow to a Miss Hutton, a lovely girl with £600.¹⁴ He writes a very long, a very enthusiastic letter indeed, a letter as opposite to what the incombustibility of Bruce would be supposed to pen as possible. He writes truly like a lover. He is now Dr Bruce, having with his colleague received a diploma from Glasgow. I wished to give you the earliest intelligence. I wished to have heard from you. Write tomorrow and perhaps I may get free on Sunday, but I cannot answer. I wished to have had the mare bought that I might ride her up. Tell me any news. I write in haste, that worthy fellow King at my elbow, who has come stained with the variation of each soil to pass a day with me. The barrel of beer will be here and I shall probably send it by a vessel in the Basin at present. Yours ever, WD

241 Sunday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [250]

My dear Matty, As I have not heard from you this day, I conclude that the mare cannot be procured at any reasonable rate, and indeed from S. Smith's language when I made him the offer of 30 guineas on his calling upon me here, I should imagine that he will not sell her at a price which would be becoming in me to give. I hear there were several handsome horses at the fair, but there were no gentlemen went to it from Newry whom I should wish to act for me in such a business. My visit to Belfast must depend on the death or recovery of some patients who are at present in a most precarious situation. Mrs Maxwell is dead. I called in Law of Lurgan, who visited her twice, and several days before her death, which from the first I feared and as repeatedly mentioned them. We are never called in here until

12 Lord Donegall married Charlotte, widow of Thomas Moore, and daughter of Conway Spencer of Trummery, Co. Down, on 24 October 1788; she died the following year.

13 Probably Dr Thomas Mortimer Marriot or Maryatt, Belfast poet, died 1792 (see Benn, *Belfast*, i, pp 616-7).

14 William Bruce married Susanna Hutton on 25 January 1788.

the necessity of the case and the full practice of the apothecary, in part occasioning that necessity, has obliged them to recur to physicians to save the credit of all parties concerned. I am not a little vexed at finding so much of this. Yours etc., W DRENNAN

242 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [CABIN HILL], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [273]

My dear Will, Since the day you left me, I have not been from home, and never did I enjoy any one half so much. Nancy has been with me, and seems to take a little more interest in this place than any other. She is at least unruffled while no visitor appears, but at that time her behaviour vexes and mortifies me, which at any other, use has reconciled me to. My mother I am sure is better without her, and for both their sakes I wish to keep her here as long as I can, but I see she will never stay above a fortnight at a time. Her prudence in regard to appearance, and other relations, rather than inclination dictates this, though she does not say so.

What I have long seen meditating has at last taken place. Dr Martear has withdrawn the leases we thought granted for life – £65 a year – and so there is an end to our ever possessing anything but the daily earning, to our ever being just, ever being generous, on the first of blessings all must depend, and without health we must either starve, or once more be dependants on the renewed bounty. But there are many chances against this – I have ever hoped for heaven, rather than dreaded hell. All passed amicably – it was asked on the supposition of our now being able to do without it, and you may believe, was restored with ready compliance. You may perhaps think I ought to feel proud and pleased to give it up – yet this is not the case. I never felt hurt at the idea of these leases been given up to Sam, however I may be so at their being taken from him. I should however tell you that for doing so there were some reasons given which appear plausible but which I shall not now repeat.

Thomson's note for your hundred is in my mother's hand. There are four light guineas which you gave him returned, and what was like to be of worse consequence, two you gave my mother were so. You do not know her now, or you would not play these tricks. There is a very cheap kind of Irish muslin for common cravats sold here. Nancy has bought you three which come only to four shillings. If you wish to get any more, say so directly for they are going fast off.

There were great rejoicings on Wednesday, Dr H[aliday] in the chair, but did not make any figure, even in his old line of good toast master. The Bishop of Down was on one side and H. Joy on the others, as strangers. Harry's name is up at present for a member, and he electioneered in the last newspaper.

I looked over your written book in hopes of seeing and admiring some new productions but believe me, I was startled at seeing an old one preserved with so much nicety. I shall not dispute its merit nor whether it can answer any good purpose to preserve it, but its making part of a collection which you may have both pleasure

and honour in coming under inspection would be very good, this might happen even by accident.

In my eyes Cabin Hill is improving very fast. Come to it soon, either with, or without another £50. Adieu. MM

243 4 March [1788]

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, IN THE CARE OF JOHN GODDARD, ESQ. [251]

Dear Will, I hope to get Mr Goddard to carry this, and three cravats, which were all Nancy would buy, as she wished to get some others of a different pattern. He tells here, of your great business, and good luck in Mr Black settling in Newry, as one who will never hurt you – and if no third one goes there, you have really been as fortunate as a Newry physician could hope to be. Here we have many and if I might form a guess of what they are doing it would be this: Haliday at a stand, possibly going back, but will never be higher than he now is either in fame or fortune – Mattear declining in both – Apsley seldom heard of, and supported mostly by his private fortune. Stevenson, Moor,¹⁵ and White may pick up a little money, and no fame among the poorer sort, but even here seem many degrees lower than Ferguson. MacDonnell I suppose may stand on as good footing as Ross did, and there is little doubt of his getting fast forward. Young Haliday has just taken the field, and there is also a Dr Bell¹⁶ at present in a fever, occasioned by fatigue in attending his brother in law Burt who is dying. And is it not very strange such a man as MacDonnell making any figure in [*sic*] he is said to be sensible and modest but these are not qualifications which generally gain the middling or lower sort of people – smart impudent fellow[s] who rail at their seniors and their systems, as Forsyth did, oftenest succeed. This, McDonnell avoided – he was a stranger, quite unconnected in the town, of a low and a bad family, well known here two of his brothers having at different times broke into Mr Macolmn's¹⁷ house, and robbed him. Yet it's very probable, in a few years it may be MacDonnell and Haliday, I mean William, in this place.

Your last letter hurt me very much and I burned it; that I should have been the means of advising you to anything which could be stain on your character, would cut me to the soul. Such an idea never wounded me, nor can I fear it. Your conduct through the whole of that transaction, I think, might be known, without any other accusation than of being unsuccessful, not did it ever give me the least uneasiness upon any other score and how are you to make it up in a second choice – by being more fortunate I hope, but not by quite overlooking fortune. I beg you will write soon and particularly, for I could not let them know of your last letter and they are

15 Probably Dr Samuel Moore who died in 1795.

16 William Byrnt, town clerk of Belfast, died 23 March 1788; John Bell became physician general of Sierra Leone, and died there in 1792; they and Surgeon Richard McClelland (d.1807), were married to daughters of James Lewis of the Grove (Blackwood 7).

17 ?McCollum.

angry at your long silence. Crombie I believe is declining very fast, he has not preached these two Sundays and fainted the other day with the fatigue of putting on his clothes.¹⁸

One of our greatest fortunes, Miss Irwin, took a trip to Scotland the night before last with Mr Charles Dicky, much to the discomfiture of Mr Robert Bradshaw. Poor Jemmy Ferguson had to take a jaunt of different kind in order to lay Mrs Wheelan¹⁹ beside her husband, who though not very fond of lying near her while alive, ordered by his will that die where she would she would be buried beside him. She is therefore set off on a journey of 130 miles – for this however he allowed her to burthen his estate with £500.

[W] C[unningham] sold his shares in the ships to Paddy Gaw and I never heard that he said a word more of the matter to Crombie. What will become of the poor woman²⁰ who now barely live on the interest of their few hundreds, when that interest is lowered and every article in life almost doubled.

We all spent a day last week at Davy Conyngham's²¹ previous to their leaving Belfast. He will have near £2,000 a year, a charming house, domaine, library etc., etc. They have given Nancy the kindest and most pressing invitation to go with them but all in vain, and as I wished her much to change the scene I have done all in my power, but to no purpose. I mistook when I said Thomson's note was for £100 it is for £50, and you can neither get them changed nor the interest without sending the note you have, it's therefore not worthwhile until you come here.

Was there ever a scene you wished to be present at, so much, as Burke's²² accusation of Hastings? It is at such times, one feels being in a paltry town. There was but one pocket handkerchief sent up, the cambric would only make a large one. I neither hear of S. Smith's mare nor any other than will answer you. Sam sent a man to a sale of several the other day, but could not succeed for you. For himself, he thinks he has, in a light pony.

The notary business goes on well. I hear little Henderson²³ is dying, in that case, it may do better. Ever yours, MM

244 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER [253]

Dear Matty, I received the cravats by Mr Goddard which I like very much, and I wish to have some more of them as soon as Nancy can procure them. I met J. G. Smith here in his way to London, and he told me I might send for his son's mare at

18 He died in 1790.

19 Mrs Whelan, formerly of Dublin, whose death is noted in the *BNL*; she was probably a relation of Ferguson or his wife.

20 Probably women.

21 He inherited Springhill in 1784, moved there on the death of his brother's widow in 1788, and died in the same year.

22 At the trial of Warren Hastings (1732-1818), Governor General of India, impeached for corruption (*DNB*).

23 Probably David Henderson of Belfast, died March 1788.

forty guineas, but I shall never give any such money, nor is the mare by any means worth it. Nothing worth mentioning occurs here. Templeton is practising as much as usual and to speak in the style of the place, is purchasing mutton at eight pence a pound. Black I believe is doing little if any – nor am I much, 20 guineas per month since I saw you, which would be well enough in the year. Corry is here and I paid him a visit which he has not returned, though I saw him most jovial with the fat landlady of the chief inn yesterday as I passed by. We never meet. Joe Pollock called on me yesterday and gives me a good account of Bruce and his wife. As I have so little to say, you must say more and I will add for want of something better a few lines I wrote to a pretty little girl here with a present, the first I ever made, of some guitar music.

Not in the trifling, tinkling lyre
Is music sought or found
The voice must with the note conspire
And mingle sense with sound.

For far beyond the fingers' art
One thrilling weeping tone
That makes the strings of every heart
Responsive to thy own.

Yet vain the voice and tinkling strings
With all their arts combined
But to their aid Eliza brings
The music of the mind.

Still may that living lyre impart
More bliss than meets the ear
And gladden still a mother's heart
Yet be to one more dear.

245 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [254]

Dear Will, I can very easily account for, and excuse your not liking to narrate a parcel of little dirty circumstances, which if they have in no manner tended to vex you, cannot interest me. My mother however said, on reading your last, that you seemed in dudgeon with yourself and everyone else – never allow Templeton to accomplish the former, and as for the latter, you must expect it will be sometimes, if not often, the case in your profession. Much of its arts do I see put in play, from the great doctor to the little, but as there are nine in Belfast, their attacks on each other are more divided, and less strong and open than in Newry, every way split only in two. Here therefore there is a better face put on matters. There are no two

that will not consult together and appear to act like gentlemen, and I must yet lament your having been obliged to act so, that this cannot be said of the Newry physicians.

I hope you have not rode much lately, as the severity of the weather would continue your cold. I have kept close at home, well, and thankful for it. Belmont is sold, and Will Bateson²⁴ the purchaser. If my father's old cat was alive, I would rather have it for a neighbour. These little little Batesons will ride round our house, and round our house, without ever touching the house, every morning and at evening, each will return within his walls, to a blinking fire, and guarded by a bawling Cerberus.²⁵ We will miss the foolish Bambers very much – they were good neighbours, neither rich enough, nor wise enough, to make them independent of others. I should pity them very much on being driven from this sweet place, and with dreary prospects for the future, but that they have no feeling even for themselves, much less for the place of their birth.

J. Kennedy informed Sam (and I am sure with a design of serving him) that there was half a share of the brewery company to be disposed of, and that he thought if he would purchase it, it might turn out much to his advantage, for though for some time, years perhaps, they could not have any dividend, he thought in future it would be 20 per cent. Sam having applied to him to know of a safe hand to place [my] mother's money and yours with, made [him] imagine I suppose that he had [—] the price of half a share – Sam [thought] as my mother was willing to go [—] ship co[mpany] she would like this, but know[ing —] could not lie out of £30 a year, proposed going half with her, which would be only the loss of £15 a year, the building supposed to be security for the money, but she did not seem to like nor understand it. And we were fearful of urging it, lest she should imagine it was from selfish views, and my chief one was that if she could spare £15 at present, for what might be £25 in a little time, and her money made perfectly secure, it would be a wise step. The glasshouse company will take her money, and as it is certainly very good security, I think you had better place yours there also, you will have six per cent and you know the D[iscount] Office gives up January next, I suppose you may add another £50.

S. Smith's mare is still on hand, H. Wilson did offer 35 guineas, but said he wanted one just at the time, and therefore would have given more than she is worth. I request you will give my compliments to Mr Goddard, and let him know that John stayed a week with us, which in spite of very bad weather, we contrived to make agreeable and refined, by the Grecian history, and chess. Yours ever, M McTIER

George Joy is gone to England to be married to G[race] Wallace.²⁶ He gets £300 and a fine girl, she a fine house and a little man.

24 William, son of Thomas Bateson of Orangefield.

25 The dog which guards the underworld.

26 See marriage settlement, 1788 (PRONI, D/971/42/E/1).

246 Wednesday

MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [256]

Dear Will, There is a decent but not a fine looking servant who offers to go to you, upon your terms – but I did not care to hire him until I heard again from you, still hoping Joe might stay with you. I do not think you ought to raise your wages, but some little attention, either by word or gift, is what must be grateful to a good servant, and to one desirous of pleasing, more acceptable than wages which is their right, the other is their reward. Whenever you change, you run a chance of getting a rogue. The man I am in treaty with looks honest and plain, though bred in a bad place, the late Mr Lambert's, since that he has lived with a Captain Hardy and Colonel McIlwrath, who with our rector Mr Hazlett²⁷ all give him a good character. In those places he lived in the worst situation, that of a groom and postilion, as they are generally blackguards. He does not however look like one, nor yet like a skip. He understands horses you may suppose, but not hair. I am to give him a determined answer on Saturday, so do not neglect writing by return of post directing me what to do.

Castle Hill is once more going to verify the country people's observation of being unlucky and often changing its inhabitant. Its present one is embarrassed and is about selling it to Bunbury,²⁸ Mr Isaac's heir, who cannot be long the possessor. Will Bateson keeps Belmont close to himself on his £1,600. I never was in it since it was his, and Sam only got one dry scurvy meal. Bunbury I believe is not bright but if he brings pleasant people together that is enough. His uncle intended him for the law, but observing he never would be Lord C[hancellor] he put him into the army, under Harry Savage's tuition. What this [has made] of him I may be able to tell y[ou some] time hence – the Hamills, don[']t move] till May.

The servant is m[—] young, he can write. Yours ever, M MCTIER

247 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [260]

I gave Dr Haliday a translation of mine from Cicero, and I should wish to have it returned, if he has not paid so ill a compliment to it as to have carelessly mislaid it, and as it is a perchance whether I see him when I visit Belfast, I request that Sam may get it for me, as I did not keep a copy. I have been reading Campbell's²⁹ last performance, which I think very tedious and desultory, a sort of historical index, with a good deal of parade of quotation, and without luminous arrangement, or any ornament in manner. He is however more an independent and less a Presbyterian in this last essay, and the truth is that the Church of England is absolute monarchy,

27 Rev. Jacob Hazlett, rector of Dundonald (d.1810).

28 Thomas Bunbury (d.1802), later Thomas Bunbury Isaac; he would not long be the possessor because he would inherit an estate from his uncle, Simon Isaac of Holywood.

29 Dr William Campbell, *An examination of the bishop of Cloyn's defence* (1788).

the Church of Scotland a Presbyterian aristocracy, and the independents alone form the true Christian republicanism which is perfect freedom. An independent alone can reason against the Bishop with consistency, and in this pamphlet Campbell is evidently become one in order to reason with effect.

I wish to know if Newry notes will be taken in Belfast, as I have £50 by me, which I could enclose in that manner to Sam, or if not, let him tell me how I shall send it, as I don't like keeping money in my lodgings, and I am not certain when it will be in my power to see you as I am engaged to attend two ladies about this time. My cold is rather better, but not altogether removed. I cannot say, as Dr Johnson so politely tells Mrs Thrale, that my nights are very flatulent, but they are sometimes amazingly uneasy. The Doctor's letters to that baggage are curious, and there is one written by her to a new married man which is very instructive, and worth the perusal.

Arbuckle is about leaving this country, and poor Vincent, a gentleman near this town, has just left this world, and left his beautiful little country villa for the first proprietor, J. Ogle,³⁰ who I suppose will reside there with his beautiful little wife, a Miss Sands formerly, whom he married without any fortune, though the poet might say 'The golden sands o'er which Pactolus rolled – are not so rich as Sands without a grain of gold'. They have been very civil to me and she plays and sings very attractively, a quality I think eminently desirable in a female companion. I took the liberty of paying a visit a few days ago to Lane,³¹ a nabob who married one of the Camacs, and has taken Eden, an elegant little spot near this town. He is one of the bankers here with Thomson, Turner and Camac. He has not yet returned the visit. I left my card. Carleton is off with me, I know not for what reason, if he has any. I had a letter lately from Bruce whose happiness continues, and I doubt not will be permanent. He invites me to see him, and advises me to follow his example. I will not sit then, as Johnson says, in solitary individuality. True – but doubts and fears and suspicions make the anticipation sometimes most painfully pleasing. The true way to prevent such nettles from stinging is to crush them hard. Arbuckle tells me he has passed your cabin frequently and admires it much, and Arbuckle is a man of taste, and a very pleasing gentleman. I go to Dundalk tomorrow to visit the Mercers, and for the benefit of the ride. I am a little afraid of bathing, having tried it for a week too early in the season and being much worse after it.

I have not seen the admired lady³² this fortnight. She has been confined with rheumatism in her head and never ventures out – an odd complaint this for a girl. She is to go down the shore in the course of the summer for the benefit of sea-bathing.

Goddard tells me he has not seen you look better, and my mother fat and hearty, as the vulgar say. Belfast is turned into such a city that such as you and I are in the third or fourth form – nothing without money and that is not to be acquired either by easy or very conscientious means. I expected to have heard from you by

³⁰ John Ogle (1741-1821), later of Fathom Park, married Mary Sandys in 1786 (Dublin marriage licence).

³¹ Major William Lane married Miss Camac in 1787 (Walker's *Hibernian Magazine*).

³² Deborah Ogle.

Goddard. I am in a strange fluctuating agitated state of mind at times, at others in dead repose. I have had but little enjoyment in life. Is it now to begin, or is it never?
Yours sincerely, WD

248 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [243]

Dear Will, Seriousness, and joke, are so very equally dispensed in your two last letters that I am really at a loss in what style to answer them. I suspect them to be very artful, and for that reason, and several others, which since your first have passed in my mind, I shall forbear to enter minutely into what you call their principal subject, which you treat in so very pretty a sportive taste, that a disinterested reader might smile and be amused. I cannot frown – you never made me do so nor I am sure never will. If your letters are honest, I must tell you that in my opinion you are sliding insensibly and pleasantly into a bewitching passion, and that immediately you ought, for the sake of your own peace your character and perhaps that of a deserving girl, consider well what you are about. If any great objection occurs, try yourself, in time, by letting it have its weight; if not, forbear to appear, or if you can, to feel the lover; which will give you a better chance of developing the character – for though not twenty yet, surely there must be a character even in beauty for you to admire. It grieves me to think I shall never know well the mind of her who will be your wife, but perhaps it is best so for I should be hard to please, and yet I wish you married, though one woman only came up to it. Many however may be better formed to make you happy – even among the young and conceited, for these have charms suited to the short time they generally last, and such being partial to you would I suppose indicate taste and soul. Insensibly I have grown serious when I meant only to tell you that I was determined to think the grave part of your letter a joke, and to suspect the seeming sportive one to be the really serious – for you are in no bad health, thus to croak.

Why don't you bathe, this tempting weather? It would be a luxury, and a few weeks of it used to brace your breast against its present trifling complaint. Lord D[onegall] is expected immediately and some fields about the Poorhouse a few weeks ago having sold for £10 an acre, the tenantry are quaking. It was an unfortunate time for such a precedent.

About three months ago Mary and Peggy Greg³³ went to England after such a mysterious intercourse with Mr Moore,³⁴ who was then in Belfast recovering out of a fit of illness, that many people believed they were married the night before she left this, while others asserted the affair was over and that she was gone for her health, which was very bad. The truth was Mr Moore was to follow her to England, and

³³ Mary Greg (c.1748-1814), eldest daughter of Thomas Greg, died unmarried; Peggy married Narcissus Batt in 1793; Mrs Hyde and Waddell Cunningham were connected to the Gregs by marriage.

³⁴ Probably James Moore of Ballydivity, Co. Antrim, who died 26 May 1788 aged 35.

there be married, when he was sufficiently recovered. Another attack however, so severe that it is thought he has not now many days to live, prevented this, and gave him hope only of seeing her before he died, which he has so ardently solicited by letters, that last week she came home, and is suppose to be there, so unwell as not to be seen. The fact is, she is gone off to his house near Coleraine, and Mrs Hyde and W Cunningham accompanied her. She may perhaps see him alive and possibly I think, may take the name of Moore, which I hear he presses her much to do, having it in his power to leave a jointure of £200 a year on his estate, but not the estate itself which goes to a remote branch of his family, to whom he has a great dislike.

Belfast has been very gay. Colonel Lindsay³⁵ and his corps gave the most elegant ball and supper at Sheridan's ever seen in this kingdom. Mrs Bell Brown³⁶ gave another last week to a 150 people who all supped in her house. Of this there has been much talk as it was rather in the tag rag style – her husband's judgment and avarice are both I believe softened, and she makes the best of it, at least for herself. Why do professional fears haunt you? For my part, I think you carry all before you. No third physician will now try Newry, and Templeton will live to establish you in all his business before any other second can take place. MM

249 Thursday, 12 June [17]88

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL [257]

My dear Matty, I find that Mr Watson has sent the barrel of beer and he says by a safe conveyance, but he desires me to inform Sam that it is forwarded. The carman lives at Drumbridge, but he forgets his name. I hope it will not be alegar,³⁷ before he gets it.

I went to Mercers and got my guinea, and after going to bed on returning (as I was much fatigued), was soon after summoned to Mrs Russell, one of the three who engaged me, and there I stayed by the bedside during a most painful and tedious accouchement of twenty-four hours continuance, unmoved by female tears and lamentations that issued from all quarters, and our patience and perseverance were recompensed at last by a living child, which would have been murdered by several of the practitioners in this place. The mother has continued tolerably well on this the fifth day. I was in the very centre of the enemy and sustained the brunt of bed-chamber supplications and ante-chamber imprecations. My cold, or what you will, abated until this day when I have a return of it and it is really curious how susceptible I am grown in nose and throat and lungs to every the least irregularity or exposure to cold. I do not fear the want of practice such as such a place can afford, if I have strength to perform my duty, and to correspond to my attention.

Rainey Maxwell and Mr Rainey have been here for some days, and I have been as much with them as I could. Perhaps I may be at freedom when they return from

35 Colin Lindsay (1755-95), became a brigadier general and died in the West Indies.

36 Isabella Brown, formerly Callwell, wife of John Brown the banker.

37 Sour ale or malt vinegar.

Dublin to accompany them and Goddard to Belfast, but I am still waiting upon a lady about three miles off, and though Mr Lane has not yet returned my visit, Mr A. Thomson mentioned to me last night, something about Mrs Lane having a wish to see me. She is it seems great with child, but I did not think this intimation sufficient to visit again until Lane himself did me the honour of a call. You will think me grown a little more communicative in giving you all this petty personal intelligence, and I believe that I have, as Pollock said in his advertisement of Edmond Hill, a good deal of capability about me, if heaven would grant me such things as health, and something of permanent interest and affection. I am as insulated, here, as the eddy-stone,³⁸ and want much a female confidant. I think mostly about myself, but whenever that thought is out of my head, I think of another, but that thought is rather painful than pleasing. I think of that other more when I am absent, than when present, when I find much to criticize, but in absence I see the creature of my fancy. She³⁹ is as Goddard says handsome, by which he meant to say that was all, but he and his friend Moore have no reason to like her. I really don't know her temper, her disposition, etc., more than they do. I have not seen her these three weeks but thrice of late on the Basin when I was with other parties which I did not, perhaps durst not, abandon. The *Spectator*⁴⁰ says, all marriages are either insipid, vexatious or happy. If ever I should happen to enter that state which I think improbable, I should prefer the second and third, blended to the first. I dine this day with the Belfast party at Mr Warren's,⁴¹ a house I never was in, though recommended there on my coming first to Newry. Young Fortescue⁴² of Ravensdale passing though here yesterday sent to me for advice about an ague he had.

What about linen and cambric for my new shirts? I should like them both very fine, as they last long with me. I am not however in great necessity for them. Write to me about something, or if you please, rather about what you know nothing about. Lane has just now paid me a two minute visit, but mentioned nothing relative to the lady. Yours ever, WD

I should wish you would burn these letters.

250 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, C[ABIN] HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [223]

You desire I may write to you 'of what I know nothing about', that is to say, give play to my fancy, and allow it to flash out, a long, agreeable womanish epistle, but if these are the sort you relish you must bespeak a more youthful correspondent. I have often told you, I am a mere matter of fact old woman, and if at any time imagination now sports either on my tongue or pen, I blush at the recollection, and

38 The Eddystone lighthouse, in the English Channel, fourteen miles off Plymouth.

39 Deborah Ogle.

40 A periodical published in 1711-12 and revived for a short time in 1714.

41 Probably Thomas Waring of Newry, father of Thomas Waring the younger (1761-1841), who married, in 1792, John Goddard's younger daughter Mary.

42 A younger son of Chichester Fortescue of Dromiskin Castle and Ravensdale Park, Co. Louth.

reserving it for thought only, own to you, I indulge in the hidden pleasure. For all of us, I hope, have one – as few, I believe, are without their secret sorrow – both perhaps, too mean to acknowledge.

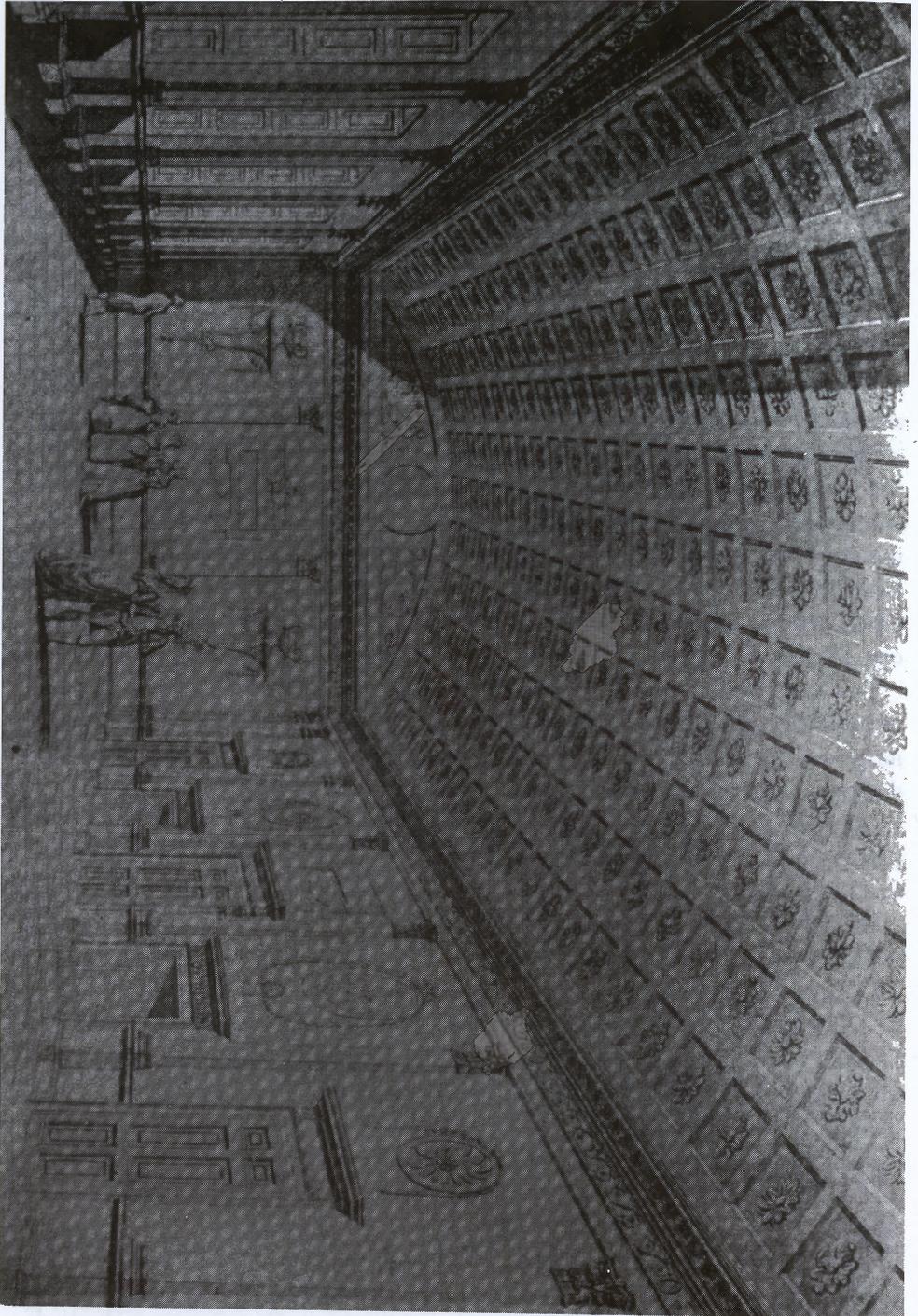
When you are in the croaking strain I contemplate the fate of your contemporaries and have marked many of them to you. Of your Dublin ones, none but Dünn is heard of. He indeed rides in his own coach, but it is balanced by an insipid, stupid little wife. Your old friend Natt Wilson, dashed from his ambitious views of being shortly the most eminent and rich of his line, now lies, happily for him, a senseless clod, while an execution rests on all he once possessed. Another day's life and he must have ceased to be a merchant, nor did he get away without the additional pang of being obliged to confess it. W. Cunningham and Thomson went to his lodging in the country on Thursday at two o'clock for the purpose of his being declared bankrupt, in order to having [*sic*] the statute taken out, and he died that afternoon in a fainting fit. The bankers and discount men have been sureties for him to the amount of what varies so much in report, that I shall not name it.

This was Lord D[onegall]'s ball night, Sam and Margaret were there, I did not go, and in asking the news from it the above was related. Though his death was expected and his fortune feared, the account, and the words 'died of a broken heart', went to mine, and in a moment after to my head, which has been very ill ever since, an effect I always find instantly from such recitals. I will dwell on them no longer, for though I have lost the charms of a youthful mind, I have not gained the graces of an aged one. I cannot moralise myself, and hate it from others.

This same ball was very grand, crowded, and ill conducted, though Mr Bristow presided like a Minos, and by the tickets drawn for each apartment, which were numbered, conducted plebeians to the table of the lord's supper, and justly condemned some more aspiring mortals to the lowermost seat at the feast. This, you may suppose, ruined flirtation, damped Castle politics, and demolished the Bacchanalian parties, formed to honour the champaign.⁴³ Some ladies therefore, it is said, took this last part singly on themselves.

Of many little Castle occurrences, that most talked of at present is the following: Mr Talbot having signified his pleasure to Mr Greg, that he should be conducted to the glasshouse, never having seen window glass flashed, Mr Greg good naturedly undertook the office and sending to let him know he waited for that purpose, Lord D got up and said he would go also. Upon which, our Pomposo Bristow, starting up between the door and his lordship, with extended arms, beseeched him not to demean himself [by] appearing in the streets, with a man [?who had set] his face against his lordship and the go[overnment?] by refusing, for so long a time, a p[———] garden. The peer rested not [———] a clergyman then present, jealous, I [———] his brother's influence, took care, th[———] Greg asserting it to be true, but [request]ed he would not notice it, till after the visitation as till then, he was hanging on Lord D – the affair however got wind, and Lord D, Mr T and Bristow, have declared in the most solemn manner to Greg that no such words

43 Champagne.



The Belfast Assembly Room

passed. Ledwich rests under the lie, how easily I know not. Carson waited on Talbot in favour of the linen hall but in vain. He told all that had been done for it, what more was wanted, and that they were in debt. So, I assure you sir, is Lord D, replied Talbot, who has three country seats, a family and horses at each, and yet, pray guess what I have paid for horse hire for his lordship in London, within these last three years not less than £21,000 [*sic*] and that for Shellteys⁴⁴ which lord had never seen, he had paid the sum of £2,000. I do not insist on your belief of this.

To gratify you in writing of what I know nothing about, I believe that a young, pretty and admired girl, not absolutely a fool, could make one of a wise man whose affections are disengaged, and who sees, or fancies he sees, the little quiet attentions of a tune, or a colour, paid to his taste, while the gay, the bold, or the younger, pass unnoticed. This, I take to be very bewitching. When will you come down? If you have a scarf too coarse for shirts send it to me by Mr Maxwell. Mrs Joy⁴⁵ was the bride of last ball, Miss Patrick, now Mrs Jones, is to the next[*sic*].

251 Tuesday morn

MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [258]

I received your note, upon which, not what gave rise to it, I shall not at present enlarge. Cabin Hill once more looks cheerful and its interests are renewed. I have just wrote to beg my mother and Nancy will meet you here on Saturday, the day Mr Goddard is expected, though I wish you could come on Friday, as you might then perhaps be prepared to relish a whimsical party, formed for the Deer Park on Saturday. It is to consist of a great number, I suppose all the genteel people in town, who have drawn a lottery dinner. My ticket came up, four bottles of cider, plates, knives, forks, spoons, etc., for my own party. Loins of beef have fallen on some, dozens of wine on others, and as Lord D⁴⁶ sent to request he might be allowed to draw, they contrived he might have the genteelest part of the entertainment and gave him the honour of the dessert. Tea, sugar, etc., has been also drawn in abundance and I suppose all fairly, as Sam Hyde got a blank. They have also provided against the prayers of the farmer for rain, by determining in that case to send all to the Exchange, and there to spend day and night. I think it's probable both Mr G[oddard] and you would relish it. If so, or whether or not, tell me beforehand the day you mean to come. I dare say it would be a high gratification to Miss Goddards to be at the Park, and consequently to their father to take them. If he would choose this, deliver Sam's compliments and mine to him, and beg he and they will be of our party. I know Mrs Rainey⁴⁷ was asked to go, but I believe declined it, being very ill breeding. You see it will be necessary to answer this as soon as you determine.

⁴⁴ ? shelties (Shetland ponies).

⁴⁵ Grace Joy, formerly Wallace.

⁴⁶ Lord Donegall or Lord Dungannon.

⁴⁷ Probably Henrietta, wife of William Rainey of Greenville.

Our worthy high sheriff's worthy sub has played a trick of some consequence the other day, and on Bob Thomson too. You know, I suppose, that this representative of majesty is one of little Stewart's little sons. The law allows a shilling a pound for selling a bankrupt's goods, but it is generally fixed for a certain sum by bargain. Robert Thomson made his with Stewart⁴⁸ for £150 in a drawn up paper, signed, sealed, etc. Stewart went home, and it's supposed, consulting the more knowing ones of his honourable house, returned to Thomson, begged a sight of the paper, which having got he pocketed, and refusing to return, chooses to claim the law fee for his trouble, which will amount, it's supposed, to £1,500. He has a right also, it seems, to retain the money that rises from the sale for a certain time in his own hand, and this he chooses to do likewise, so that the security for all poor N. Wilson's property now is, Shaw⁴⁹ of B[ally]tweedy and Master Stewart. I fear there are many of our acquaintance here hurt but it is not proper to own to it. A. Orr is in for £3,000 with N. Wilson, Jemmy Ferguson and John⁵⁰ a good deal also – and the latter having suffered severely by the London failures, his house there, with Jameson, is greatly feared. Though this is common report, I would not wish you to mention it. Sam's notary business thrives but too well and I am sure its increase will both surprise and please you. I tell you therefore in secrecy, that in the first year he made £30, the second £60, and in this half year 70 six pound,⁵¹ and as this does not arise so much from misfortune, as the increase and punctuality in trade, joined, I believe, to a very general desire of serving Sam rather than H. Joy, it's a manner of making money, very easy and pleasing.

I dined yesterday with H. Joy, in the country and there met his cousin, the young counsellor,⁵² who after being in London six years, at the Temple, Paris etc., is not in the least conceited. This is all I can say for him, though I am told his friends have formed high expectations from him – he does not seem to me to be a subject for them. He is very ugly, a most disagreeable, vulgar tone of voice, and in a private company – nobody.

W. Bruce I suppose is happy, and yet I suspect he has not much pleased any other person than himself. It is a match that must in several respects be thought poor by those who most wished him well – and to the common eye at least, I have not heard of any charm, nor any grace, to account for it. She is, I find, just not ugly. Tell me if you bring your servant. I suppose he would like it, and you ought sometimes to gratify a good one. He can be accommodated either here, or at my mother's.

Your last £50 is lodged at the Discount [Office]. MM

48 Probably Thomas Ludford Stewart (c.1759-1845), brother of Counsellor Alexander Stewart, attorney and later seneschal of Belfast.

49 Henry W. Shaw of Ballytweedy, high sheriff of Co. Antrim.

50 Probably John Stevenson Ferguson (1761-1833), they were sons of Dr James Ferguson.

51 i.e. £76.

52 Counsellor Henry Joy (1766-1838), later Attorney General.

252 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [214]

My dear Matty, The lady at Heath Hall⁵³ has at length got a son, and I shall pay my visit to you as soon as I can. I imagine I shall have either Goddard or J. Pollock for my companions, but as yet I know not which. I suppose we shall see you on Sunday or Monday at farthest, and have your cold chicken and peas in preparation. You mentioned nothing of £50 I sent down with R. Maxwell which I wish to be given to R. Thomson. I still continue to sneeze and run at the nose on exposure to cold, with some transient pains in my breast, but have no cough, and eat well and drink well and sleep much better. I beg for God's sake, that you will not make me ill, or put Nancy etc. upon me, or I shall grow very obstinate and mulish. Were I to live a life for health I cannot live better than I do, without care or trouble but perhaps twice or thrice in a year. Yours ever, WD

253 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [CABIN HILL], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [225]

My dear Will, You have no doubt been a little displeas'd at my silence from which you may infer that I am very lazy, stupid, and not anxious, but need never suppose me less affectionate. I will try not to be any more anxious, for between Nancy's mind and your body, I have been almost grinded to death, and am quite satisfied that nothing real but an inclination to doze your lives away, is the matter with either. I determine therefore, from this time foward, to let neither her moping nor your croaking in the least infect or affect me.

I have not been in town since you left me, but I heard you were at the coterie where I fancy you glided in and out like a ghost. Some say, they saw you standing with Mr Buntin, but I did not hear anyone say you spoke, eat, or danced. The Collector⁵⁴ and Mr Moor made a very short stay at Greenville. Had it been long as expected I hear we were to have been honoured with an introduction but it's better not – they now perhaps believe you have an agreeable sister.

Dr Haliday dined here on Sunday and showed me a letter from Lord C[harlemon]t which I think you would like, as it seemed warm from the heart of a good old man, zealous in his country's cause. He tells the Doctor, he wishes early to give him an account of his embassy which has fully answered every purpose he wished from it, and then I think uses some words of yours: that before, the independence of Ireland was only in theory – now it's fixed by practice. He raves like a lover of the prince,⁵⁵ and says he knows not how to quit the theme – that till he saw him he had not an idea of an accomplished prince, that their reception was far more than cordial, and that Ireland may rest assured, she has bound by the strongest ties of gratitude the

53 Probably a lady of the Seaver family.

54 Francis Carleton.

55 Of Wales.

accomplished prince, who will one day be their king. He asks what the Belfast politics are, laments the fall of reviews, but says, his friends here acted well in determining to do all they could, enquires the opinion of the marquis's behaviour, and declares that for his own part he is determined never to hold intercourse, nor treaty of any kind, with the man who could insult the mistress of his heart.

The complaint in my mother's head is returned, and I fear she will find bad consequences from want of a drain. Her spirits are infected, but I hope to restore them by getting her here. I have been diverted by the people speaking of your good looks, and Mrs Rainey admiring your manner. I believe they think Pollock⁵⁶ made an unjust attack and they wish to make up for it. If so, they show more good nature to you, than you would to one of them, for except your own relations, I verily believe you don't care they were every one at the d—— and perhaps some of the former to bear them company.

Young Agnew⁵⁷ is getting much just praise here. He has made Sam Smith a present of a £1,000 and wanted to make it £2[,000] but Sam positively refused it. He has made his brother Val agent to his estate with a salary of £300 a year, he proposed £4[00] and putting it out of his own power by settlement but this the old man would not hear of.

I spent last night at Greenville for the first time for above a twelve month. I had determined not to go there again but R[ainey] Maxwell (the only one of the family who now cares a pin for me) urged me, in so polite and delicate a manner that I could not refuse. Few I admire so much, none I esteem higher than that man. There is heart in every thing he says and does. The house is now so wholly altered, that not a spot in it recalls past times or gives me any melancholy ideas. The mistress⁵⁸ is very clever, much more so than the world allows, but she does not think me worth pleasing and therefore I suppose I do not think her agreeable, nor would I have thought she could ever have been the woman to gain so much power over Mr M — though I think she acts so as to merit his approbation, which has been of great use to her in the opinion of others. She heard from Miss Bristow that you have given great satisfaction in the [——] attendance at Moors do not be impatient for a further reward. I received your letter of the 17th and suppose Nancy will send such of your things as she has got with Mr G[oddard?]. I was pleased you wrote to her and wish you would sometimes direct your letters there — I shall answer all I see.

Arbuckle has employed W. Getty and makes his place better than the last. Remember we expect you to eat our first strawberries. Do my dearest Will come down in health and spirits and free of imaginary ills except it's of love — they only are to be indulged.

56 Joseph Pollock.

57 Edward Jones Agnew came of age in 1788; the old man was his father, Valentine Jones the elder, and Sam Smith was his nephew.

58 Henrietta Rainey, wife of Maxwell's cousin, William Rainey.

254 Friday

MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [227]

Dear Will, Nancy sends you by Mrs H[olmes?], three pairs of black stockings, two cravats, and two silk handkerchiefs for your pocket, which, when you have a cold, you will find much more comfortable than any other, and the only sort fit for spitting in. The two cost half a guinea, and are therefore worth taking care of. Your shirts are not finished, but they will be sent by J. Hay. He walked here to breakfast the other morning and I really think him a sensible well-behaved modest man, with matter sufficient for a day's entertainment to you at Newry. After much cookery the ale is as sour as vinegar and was so when it came here. I tell you this that you may get at least some abatement in the price, and as it was not sent when you bespoke it but in the very worst weather I think this is but reasonable.

All here as just as you left us, rather in better spirits than the day after. I hoped to hear from you after your return from Dundalk. The event there would give you pleasure, and the trial I suppose entertainment. I hear that Mrs Price is much worse. Your introduction to that family in that place, and during what I suppose will be a tedious illness, may be of use to you, as they have large and genteel connections.

Poor young Thompson is still ill as is his sister and a [————] little Frank's all in fevers so [————] mother and Nancy are best here.

I hear no news, either public or private, except the failure of Will B. Dunn.⁵⁹ There has been much resentment in talk of the demand for the military and Lord Charlemont occasioned the contradiction in the paper of any riot. It is said not a sixpence remains for the poor Wilsons, the old woman sets up for herself the third time.⁶⁰

I beg you will write soon and be particular as to your cold, breast, etc. Goddard I suppose will soon bring down his sons. If I returned with him to spend a day and a night with you in N[ewry], would you receive me well? You might convey me back as far as H[illsborough] where Sam and Nancy would meet us. The man you bespoke the pencil from sent it a few days after you left this by a car man.

255 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [226]

I have been as much on horse back this last fortnight as ever. I went to Dundalk to hear the trial between Lord Clanbrassill and Reads Freeman which went totally in favour of his lordship, and my ears still tingle with the wild hubbub and dissonance of the lawyers, particularly with the yell of Curran,⁶¹ the fiercest imp of the pandemonium, and whose currency, or rather currancy of eloquence is singularly keen and malignant. I went with I. Corry to spend a day at Scarva with Mr Reilly⁶²

⁵⁹ Brother of John Dunn, MP.

⁶⁰ Probably Nat Wilson's mother, Elizabeth Wilson (d.1796).

⁶¹ John Philpot Curran (1750-1817), barrister, later judge (*DNB*).

⁶² John Reilly (1745-1804) of Scarva, Co. Down, MP for Blessington, Co. Wicklow, and leader of Downshire's nine MPs, Chief Commissioner of Public Accounts (*LGI*, p.586).

whom I found a plain, respectable piece of Irish bullion, depreciated indeed by an alloy of Hillsborough politics, but at present, if I mistake not, a malcontent. The arch-fiend aims at transforming all the competent country gentleman into his body guards. For this purpose he wheedles them with a seat in parliament and when in Dublin they and their wives must live like commoners, in all the city extravagance. The plough rusts in the furrow, the estate is neglected, but the coach and the phaeton perambulate the streets in triumph, and it is immaterial whether the sullen captive is in, or goes after. He becomes necessitous, sighs for a collection, which Lord H[illsborough] to be sure exerts all his influence to obtain; it is obtained, and the sublime front of the gentleman farmer is changed into the abased look of the prone parasite, or the servile mute, one of the silent squad in the House whom their master will not allow to speak, lest they become responsible for any opinion or assertion. Mrs Reilly is a fine woman with a masculine mind and manner. She is daughter to a Colonel Lushington,⁶³ who came over along with Mr Stone under the patronage of the Duke of Dorset.⁶⁴ The Duke told them he could not provide for them both in the army as was their wish, and they therefore tossed up a halfpenny which should have the election of the army. It proved a rap to Lushington who got the choice and died lately a half-pay Lieutenant Colonel. Stone went into orders perforce, and became Primate of Ireland.⁶⁵

I am rather much with these high people but it will serve me. Lord Clanbrassill invited me to Tullamore. I heard just now that Dr Maxwell of Armagh was dead. I hope it will be of service to poor King who is a most amiable man. He spent a day or two with me lately, coming on a kind of sleeveless errand and I was glad to see him. I gave him my 30s cane, for I got a handsome one as a present from Moody. My circuit round Newry is ten mile in every direction which is not bad, though not as yet very lucrative. I saw the Speaker⁶⁶ a third time at Rostrevor assembly. He chatted with me very familiarly just as he does with everybody. I danced a set with Miss Price, an ugly little girl as could be found, and it was a dry formal meeting as could be conceived.

If you complain of my writing short letters, I am sure my patients can't, for I give them long instructions etc. to their hearts content. Write to me what news you have gathered since your last. Yours etc., W DRENNAN.

256 Saturday

MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [228]

Dear Will, There is nothing gives me equal pleasure to a letter from you, saying you are in health, and spirits, and the more particular it is in self, or professional occurrences, the more agreeable.

63 Colonel William Lushington of Sittingbourne, Kent.

64 Lionel Cranfield Sackville, 1st Duke of Dorset (1688-1765), Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1730-37, 1750-55 (*DNB*).

65 George Stone (?1708-64), Archbishop of Armagh (*DNB*).

66 Speaker John Foster.

By this time I hope your cold is gone and your breast braced, and the weather is so very fine, that unless you experienced some very bad effects from bathing the last time you tried, it I think you ought to apply to it again, for certainly it used to agree remarkably well with you. Do not take this influenza, for it will set you back again.

Nancy has not yet spoke two sentences since you left this, and I expect every day her determination not to speak more. She sits in the fields all day except a few moments at meals, and if any company is expected, goes off to town. If they surprise her she only says, yes or no, and really is to me so distressing and mortifying a figure, that nothing but compassion for my mother could induce me to keep them here. For as for Nancy, to afford her pleasure is impossible. Every day her behaviour becomes more extraordinary and her disregard to appearances greater. So much so that I have the mortification of seeing her the subject of wonder and laughter even to the servants and country people around, who I am convinced think her wrong in her head. Hope of her being better has quite forsaken me – fear of her becoming worse is but too likely.

Jack Hay means to spend Monday evening with you in Newry, that being a condition of his travelling with Harry Joy. He seems to promise himself much pleasure in this evening, I hope therefore you will not disappoint them – they seem well qualified to make it agreeable to you. Hay takes up your shirts mended, thirteen of them. There is one not your own, having the neck buttons fastened to tapes – by which you will know it, as it's likely you have borrowed it take care to return it. If it is changed by your wash woman it is not much matter.

Your old master, Mr Garnet,⁶⁷ expressed much concern at not seeing you the last time you were here. He has been complaining and declining for some months and now lies on his death bed. His family will be very destitute, but it is a family fortune – a thing as generally marked in large ones as family faces. There were four Smith brothers. They all had a great number of children, one of them eighteen men and woman. These branched out into numerous families, Thompsons, Boursiquots and many more – sober industrious people but all unfortunate, and Mrs Donaldson⁶⁸ who served her time to two brutes is the only independent one of them I know, upon 60p[ound] a year.

Have you read *Agathon*?⁶⁹ It is in my opinion a very extraordinary clever, dangerous book. I believe it was noticed in the review, but I do not recollect how, nor have I heard any opinion of it. I would like to know yours and if you do not think it a very artful performance. It cannot hurt either you or me. The two last volumes, for there are four, might I think be of use to you in abating your patriotic enthusiasm, if at your age it ever glows like *Agathon*'s.

Is Miss Debina's health restored, or is she at the salt water? I think you were fortunate in missing Mrs Rainey. Yours ever, MM

67 He died in August 1788; his wife who died in 1766 was Anne Smith.

68 Mrs Hugh Donaldson (1714-1808), elder half-sister of John Galt Smith.

69 Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813), *Agathon* (1766-67), a psychological novel.

257 Saturday evening

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, NEAR BELFAST [271]

Dear Matty, I have little news. Hay and Joy passed through on Tuesday, and would have spent the evening with me, but that they had not time. Hay indeed seemed desirous to remain, but the other monosyllable travels like a mail coach, and stops for no call. I think Hay has fattened himself up to his manner of consequence, and his style of address seems now to be rather portly than pragmatical. He says his only motive in visiting Dublin is to see his brother's widow. I accompanied him to several people whom he wished to please by an account of their friends across the Atlantic, and he was here on the right side of the counter, and something burly and big in his manner is only an adequate representation of the upright stability of the United States. Mrs Wilson a [?sage] lady whom Joy keeps, diverted me with the demure looks of wonderment she cast at him under her eye, though they both thought each other a piece of starched formality, and were not much mistaken.

Mrs Lane has recovered well – this fee £20, enough for a nabob. The very name is an incitement to imposition, and if he does not render himself an instrument to be plundered, he will be called, as Lane is, a niggard. S. Hall⁷⁰ has returned from Dublin, and the physicians there approved much in writing of what had been done for him and added little themselves. He is far from cured and I fear it will be a very tedious and irksome business. I breakfasted with Goddard today, he takes his boys down some day next week and will probably return on Monday sennight, so that I trust you will have time enough to fix upon your visit which I very earnestly desire.

Debina as you rhapsodize her name (though I think there is more pettability in the diminutive Debby) has been this week past about fifteen miles from Newry, and rumour is uncertain with regard to the time of her return. The last time I saw her in company and the only time since I saw you, she put me into a pet, and it cost me some trouble to appear not so. I think it easier to be at a distance – and even pleasanter. Her friends are now on the reserve, and there are such indescribable turnings and windings in female behaviour which captivate though seen through, and yet I really think her coquetting merely for a little talk and a little fun. Love, or even like she cannot – such an opposite.

My breast has been pretty well, and my spirits are always better than they used to be, sufficient for the general. If the weather proves warm again I shall bathe, but today I was pelted with hailstones. I go down to Carlingford on Tuesday, and I believe I shall pay a visit to Armagh on Thursday, a place I have not seen, where there is a friend I wish to see and a great assembly in the evening. My chief companion here is a fair widow, not a perverse one, a Mrs McClure who lives near me, where I talk as I choose, and read (one of my few excellencies) what I please.

I wonder if Haliday has mislaid that translation. I mentioned it to him in two letters, but he never took any notice of it. Now I should not wish to lose it, as I may

70 Probably Savage Hall of Narrow Water, Co. Down.

translate some select beauties of the ancients when I have leisure, and I took considerable pains with this.

I hoped to have other [*sic*] £50 at the end of this month but rent, hay, oats, etc., have exhausted me, but I have enough to do what is singular for me – treat you with a dinner, and then we shall take a walk and see the new houses that Colonel Browne is finishing, one of which I should like sometime or other to possess, even at £50 a rent and the furnishings I suppose £300, and then you shall see the walls at least that conceal a fair piece of vanity, and if she be at home, perchance you may see her simple self. Hay will perhaps return by that time, but if not I shall accompany you to Hillsborough where I think a few hours may be spent very pleasantly with Sam, and Nancy. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

258 Wednesday, 27 August [17]88

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO SAM MCTIER, CABIN HILL, NEAR BELFAST [259]

Dear Sam, I had a notice some days ago from the Discount Office that they would pay the £150 I lent them on the 21st of September, and that I am to attend at Mr Campbell's office on that day to receive it and the interest. I suppose my personal attendance will not be necessary, and that you can transact the matter, or if there be any form of empowering you to receive it, be so good as to let me know. At the same time, I wish you would advise me where to place it or what to do with it. As the interest of such a sum is no object, I should wish to have it where I could get it when I want it, on a short notice. I should rather have four per cent on this convenience, than lend it to any private hand on five or six. I suppose by the 20th of September I can make it up [to]⁷¹ £200.

When you see Dr Haliday, tell him I thank him for his circumstantial letter which will certainly be of the service intended. He mentions his intention to compare a translation I read to you with the original. I don't desire that, I meant transfusion not translation, I must be tried by the spirit and by no means by the letter. I think it shows that Cicero is far inferior to many modern orators.

Dear Sam, I wish you health and happiness, to enjoy your good company and relish your competence. W DRENNAN

259 Sunday

MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [272]

Will you for the present accept of this instead of the company of your humble servant, who I find no longer possesses that elasticity of mind, or body, which can start in to a journey of thirty miles in a day. After wavering ever since your last, I have determined to put off my visit till a more favourable opportunity, and that you

71 Word supplied.

may not impute this to mere female inconstancy I will give you several little reasons. In the first place I have not seen Mr G[oddard]. He sent me word indeed that he would take me, but I suspect he would rather let it alone, for I suppose he intends riding up, and I think threw all the difficulties he could in my way by appointing six in the morning for setting off, as he was obliged to attend the fair at Banbridge, he would call on me if he could but believe it would not be in his power. The weather appears unfavourable – I have not yet had the influenza, and it appears as if no one would escape it. It would be horrid to take it in Newry. The ball on Thursday would rob [me]⁷² of your company and what could I do, longer than a day, in a bachelor's lodging? My greatest inducement was to judge myself if your cold was quite gone, or what sort of a one it appeared by its effects to be – my smallest, to get a peep perchance of your present Dulcinea and place of abode, and there perhaps I shall surprise you before long. I will not miss a tempting opportunity though in winter. If you summons Dr Haliday, let me know at the same time. I asked him for your translation which he said he had read with great pleasure, but would not send it to me, as he wished to compare it with the original and then he would write to you.

The Discount Office has ceased, on account of Robert Thomson's bad health, and not being able to wind up its affairs, they are put into the hands of the new bank. You must therefore think what you will do with your money. Must I ever repeat, why this perpetual croaking at your fortune? [Nothin]g bad has ever happened you. Newry has treated you well, Belfast wished you so, though you ungratefully slight or affect to slight her, for what reason I know not, unless that she did not make you a practising physician immediately on your leaving college. In what have you been disappointed or where has been your unsuccessful effort? Produce your abilities, prove them, and if then they are not rewarded, complain that your fate has been the same of many great men. Garnet died beloved, and I believe with no regret, but that of leaving four unprovided girls to whom I heard Lord D[onegall] presented 30 guineas to buy mourning, and that I suppose is their all. I need not mention any news to you from this – family matters may perhaps interest you for a year longer if they were of the pleasing kind, but that they never will be now.

My mother, Nancy and Margaret went to town on Thursday. I am just going to dine with the only lady except one, I ever saw, that I would have liked as a sister, but little J. Ferguson⁷³ got her with £1,500. Yours ever, MM

Mr G[oddard] has just been here, and pressed me with much civility to go with him, so a[—] did R[ainey] M[axwell] supposes you[—] me to your wedding but I think some other time may be better.

72 Word supplied.

73 Presumably Althea Maria Brownrigg (d.1843), whom James Ferguson married in 1782; his brother John did not marry until the following year.

260 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [255]

I sit down to write just as you did your last, without a subject, against my inclination, and merely because I ought.

There is a black cloud that glides between Belfast and this, at present it hovers over C[abin?] Hill and drives every cheerful thought and look before it. I have a cold just now but very slight, too much so to be the influenza, which I expect we will all escape. You I hear had it, and I suppose it has prolonged your cold. J. Hay gave a good account of you, though I don't find Pollock's conversation and yours struck him, for by what I could learn it was taken up comparing each other's merit in your different profession, a subject which soon composed Jack to sleep.

We shall once more look out for a servant for you and benefit Newry by stocking it with decent ones. You will soon be as useful in that way as your mother, though the means I believe vary a good deal. Words send them from her – want of them from you. She rouses, you and Nancy would stupefy any attendant.

Your money is in the bank at four per cent from which you can get it on demand. I only saw Bigger one morning at breakfast and do not know what brought him here. He said it was business and his stay depended on the post. I am glad to find you are established with S[avage] Hall, they are a powerful connection but take care what you say of L.H.⁷⁴ to whom they are much attached and boast relation.

Lord Dungannon is at Belvoir living in a princely style, and Lord and Lady Antrim with their three daughters. The young man I believe is very decent, appears unaffected, pleased with Belvoir, his mother and sisters – walks into town and attends the public places. He presides at the coterie next night, his choice Mrs Rankin who is much the fashion. All this I hear of.

If you have any scarfs I shall be obliged to you for them. I have use for what will not answer you. I have been reading the R[evue?] account of Lavater's,⁷⁵ in whom I have great faith, and whose book I am sure would afford me great entertainment as a help to read the human countenance, a science I am persuaded might be brought to great perfection by close study. I hardly know any one whose face does not bespeak their understanding – and in an artful character, there is that in the eye which I think never deceives me.

Hugh⁷⁶ has been confined to his bed near a week with a sore leg, Mrs Hyde near a mortification with one. The Dunns have been at Orangefield. I find all Bruce's friends regret much the connection with a large fam[ily] of coachmakers, wheel-rights and trades formed to assist each other – it was a pity.

⁷⁴ ?Lord Hillsborough.

⁷⁵ Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801), German poet and author of works on physiognomy.

⁷⁶ The Drennans' servant.

261 Sunday

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [270]

I join with you in thinking the characters are very well done, and do credit both to the painter and the originals.⁷⁷ The first must be a striking likeness for, without preface, I gave it to Jenny Greg to read, who beginning at the wrong side of the paper at these lines 'Too tenacious in tenet to sport an opinion', and only reading three more, she exclaimed immediately she knew a friend of her own to whom they would exactly apply, and told me the initial of his name. On reading it through, she was violent in her admiration, particularly at your cleverness in so very nicely hitting off a most difficult character and one she seems perfectly to know. She entreated a copy but I refused, at least for some time, as by that means Pollock might perhaps hear of it, and not knowing it to be flattering, might resent such a thing being handed about among women. Ann Mussenden stayed with me a few days. I showed it to her also who allowed your excellence, more than his, for though it was a picture highly finished yet she thought it so very flattering she hoped he never would see it. She does not like him, and though in some things she allows him to be what is called great and just, she thinks him in others very very little and a character unfortunate for himself and all he is most connected with. I saw Dr H[aliday] once since but it was in a large company, so I did not show it to him, beside he was out of temper and would not have approved anything. You might be flattered by his doing so, yet in the present case the two I have mentioned were much better judges. They will speak of it and raise curiosity in those who know P.

I hope by this time your patients are better, either in heaven or on earth, and wish, if so, you could take a seat in the coach and spend a couple of days with us. I am very uneasy about Nancy. Sleep has entirely forsaken her, her nerves and mind is in a wretched state, so much so that she owned to Mrs Crombie she could not any longer sleep, or rather spend the night, in a room alone, at least without a candle, for that her imagination was in such a state she really feared for her head. This was to be [—] kept secret from me, but she shocked Mrs C so much that she did not think this proper. What can I do? Her looks and manner sometimes terrify me, and I suspect an irregularity in her constitution which may help, with her [— im]agination, to produce the worst [—].

I know she might [come] here but at present she will not leave Hugh whose leg is a third time ill. There is not any ulcer in it – it was an accident he met with from a dog having a horn tied to his tail, and running with it against the back of his ankle cut him so as to fill his shoe with blood. Fuller⁷⁸ [did] something which twice healed it, but now he complains of pain in it and a tettering discharges from it. Fuller is a party subject and as it is thought the Mattear family are his enemies, I am very cautious in regard to him. Sam went to him when Getty died out of regard to his wife and the Holmeses,⁷⁹ but to you I may venture to say I believe him a blundering babbling blockhead.

77 For the lines on Pollock, the Rev. William Campbell and Carleton, see D/531/8/41 (PRONI); the lines were later known as the 'Trio' and published in William Drennan, *Fugitive pieces in verse and prose* (Belfast, 1815).

78 Benjamin Fuller, surgeon of Belfast, formerly surgeon in the 49th Regt, died 1800.

79 Fuller's wife and John Holmes's were Pattersons.

Mrs Hyde's leg still confines her – he attends and I can't help fearing for her. Garner who married a sister of Mrs Rainey's⁸⁰ has purchased Castle Hill. I never saw your man since but would not offer him a bribe to get a horse, for then you would be sure of some one. MM

Is Goddard going to be married, or has anything happened between you and he that you will not long mess together?

262 Sunday

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [275]

Dear Will, I thank you for your long agreeable letter, the more so for being mostly taken up about yourself. There was odd matter in it, and that, and the scrawl it was wrote in, tempted me to suspect that your heart had been opened, at the expense of your head and hand. You imagine, you are thought short-sighted. Take care, in avoiding this, that you do not weaken your sight by stretching it to distant objects, where imagination (our family foe) may lead you far astray.

I do not think you vain, though desirous of fame, nor do I suppose that the least share of vanity dictated any part of your last letter. I believe such things are, and if they have really happened in your case, the party's chief temptation must have been, not in making a dupe, but in a reliance on a man of worth and honour, and in such matters much delicacy will be necessary to satisfy oneself, to avoid hurting others, and in your situation, to avoid converting warm friends into secret enemies. I never wish to hear more than you choose to tell, but of this I can assure you – no wife will ever hold any secret that regards your fame, and honour, more sacred than either of your sisters. May I then ask, what was the subject of Lady S——s conference, and from this unpromising theme, let me turn my thoughts to the gentle, tender votary of hope, the love-breathing Edwin – as such I find you are now generally to be known – for in that character, you are now at Greenville, where your Lottery of Love was shown the other day to Miss Jones, as lines addressed to Miss D. Ogle. This must be impossible but how can it be contradicted? You were strangely imprudent, nay worse, indelicate, ever to show these lines, to address them to another lady – I can't believe it.

She⁸¹ to whom they were first sent, behaved, as I always thought she did, with strict propriety. Curious to be certain who they came from, she showed them to a friend who knew the hand, and ever after kept them close. Her cousin Maria had read them, but could not obtain a copy, and it was to her these verses were shown at Greenville, as Dr D's to Miss D.O. She was sure they were word for word the same, but I suppose to make her cousin so also, begged a copy. This she told Margaret McTier, with much wonder, and so it was brought to me. I affected to laugh at it, saying if they were the lines I had once seen they could not possibly

⁸⁰ Joseph Garner of Castle Hill, died in 1821 aged 67; Garnerville in Belfast is called after this family; Garner and William Rainey married daughters of the Rev. James Hutchinson.

⁸¹ Margaret Jones.

apply to Miss O, that a copy of them I supposed had somehow got into Mr Goddard's hand, and as you were bantered at present about that lady she would be the one supposed to be addressed. How this all happened you know best.

I am glad the rusticity of your servant does not displease you, but supposing some of it to be put on, you may rectify it in part, I think, by taking off a quarter of the skirt of his coat. The reason he went without a letter, was my uncertainty about the time he was to set off, as Sam was almost sure of getting a horse for him to take up to you. It belongs to Jack Burden who having bought him from Mr Rankin a short time ago, and Sam being acquainted with the latter, he thought he could obtain a just account of his perfections. I believe he did, but I suppose he sunk his faults, which Sam pried out from the smith who always shoes him – these are what is called the swift cut, and being old. The former he says is prevented by his particular manner of shoeing, but if you were to get him at 25 guineas, the price put on him, and such a thing to appear against him you would not get 10 for him. In short it appears so very hard a matter for Sam to be pleased for you, that I wish you would not depend upon him, and as Banbridge fair is said to be a good place for horses, get some Newry friend to look out there. In the mean time send your other £50 to the Belfast B[ank].

You wish for a house in order to give you a little eclat, but this a mere house will not do. It must be a genteel one, an agreeable, an hospitable well-furnished one for this purpose – and for this, how much is wanted, even more than money or what money can procure. It would require an agreeable clever mistress, for you are not one of these kind of men who could ever keep house as a bachelor, either to your own good account or any other persons. Indeed so very few can that this must ever be a sufficient excuse for an unconnected man living in lodgings, and a lucky one it is for you – when saving a little money is so very necessary – and believe me it is not a little that at present can keep house even merely decent. No, if a little figure would be of any use to you, it would be cutting a greater, and at much less expense, if you keep two horses, to add a chaise to it, which would only be the first cost, and contribute to your own ease and comfort.

I shall not say why I enclose you the copy of a letter I sent some time ago to F. Hamilton,⁸² nor why at this time it just comes in to my head to do so, and yet it has a meaning. It met the reception I feared – he went to Sam, cursed and scolded, talked of freedom, intermeddling etc. – but believing my intention good forgave me, said he had thrown the letter into a drawer, but would never comply with its request. In some happier cooler moment however, it again met his eye and he then determined to alter his will. I hope he has done so and I have fulfilled my part of what I thought right.

I have not seen Dr Haliday since, but will once more apply for your paper. Dr Mattear dined here the other day, and wanting paper to write on, I went to the

82 Martha wrote to Frank Hamilton asking him to leave a larger bequest to his granddaughter, Mary Heyland, daughter of her friend Mrs Hercules Heyland; see draft of this letter, 18 July 1788 (PRONI, D/531/228); Hamilton died the following year but had not altered his will (PRONI, T/715/1).

drawer where your characters happened just to strike my eye. I told him as dinner would not soon be ready I would give him that paper to amuse him a little, upon condition he gave it no praise, as its being shown by me might be thought to extort it. I believe from this he supposed it some nonsense of my own and was agreeably disappointed. He knows Pollock and seemed to think it excellent – but supposing the second to be Campbell of Armagh he was involved in approbation and error. He put the paper in his pocket without offering it to me, and he has been the only one got a copy from me, but no doubt they are now public in Newry. I would be glad to know how the gentlemen like their pictures. The Walk on the Basin⁸³ is also at Greenville.

I read the lines to Poverty because it looked like Burns,⁸⁴ but deigned not to peruse the answer. Yes, I recollect now hearing it very ill read, and thinking there were beauties in it if the reader had done them justice.

Your lottery ticket is bought and stands thus: No. 38.956 price £8 7s 6d.

Dr Drennan	£2 1s 10d
Ann Drennan	£2 1s 10d
Sam McTier	£2 1s 10d
Martha McTier	£2 1s 10d
	<hr/>
	£8 7s 6d
	<hr/>

What dream has inspired you with a lottery desire? I shall inquire about your watch but McCabe has been in England a long time. I shall also send the powder the first opportunity, and beg you will let me have the scarfs by any safe hand for I am in great want of them. Mrs Dobbs of C[astle] Dobbs had her breast cut off a few days ago and Fuller who performed the operation having had a scratch on his finger, his arm and hand swelled up to a monstrous size. He became ill and soon had a levée of doctors and surgeons that I believe frightened him and his wife out of their wits, and considering poor Getty's fate no wonder. I hear he is better.⁸⁵

Why is D hated⁸⁶ by the men? You may like this, I do not. MM

263 Sunday

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [276]

Everyone hates advice – you were never pestered with it, except to wear worsted stockings, which indeed appeared to fret both your mind and body, and since that, what has been the step in life you have taken but by your own free choice? This has

⁸³ Poem by Drennan, 1 July 1788 (PRONI, D/531/8/46); published in Drennan, *Fugitive pieces*.

⁸⁴ ?Robert Burns (1759-96).

⁸⁵ However, Charity, second wife of Conway Richard Dobbs of Castle Dobbs, died 8 November 1788.

⁸⁶ Word unclear.

done as it ought, in guiding you in everything of consequence, in trifles may it not be useful, nay wished, to say such things are so, appear, or are thought so; thus, I said of Love's Lottery appearing at Greenville, as addressed to Miss O. I believe I also opinioned upon your taking up house. But as to advice, I declare, except in regard to the skirt of John's coat, I do not recollect a word in my last long letter at which you seemed so much hurt, and to avoid this, I often forbear mentioning little matters I hear, though when about you they interest me. Thus, though I was told before I heard it from yourself, that Campbell took the verses so ill, and flew in to such a passion that a quarrel must have ensued, but for the good sense and friendly mediation of the Collector,⁸⁷ and wishing much to know the truth, I forbore to enquire for fear of touching an unpleasant subject. There is not one physician, from the great to the little, whose manner in some things, it is thought might not be improved, both to their own advantage and the pleasure of the patient – so also, I have heard, of Dr Drennan's, to whom it was thought I might give a hint of advice, but I declined it.

May I hope the miff with Mr C is blown over, and that the genius, and poet, will be admired and remembered, while the offence is forgot. Dr Haliday had to entreat me to let him read them. He did so to the Miss Jones[es] who happened to be here. They met with the highest commendation. I cannot get the other paper from him, you must wait till you see him and I wish you could come down soon. The theatre I hear is well filled, and very agreeable. I believe you never saw a good Hamlet – Holman⁸⁸ I am told is just the elegant young prince, and to see this character well done is surely the highest treat of the stage. We spend this Christmas at home, and hope to make it more cheerful than in Donegall Street. For the week we will pack the two families⁸⁹ here, and if you could join us I have a spot for you, but while the playhouse is open would be pleasanter for you.

Have you a confidential friend in Newry you never mentioned to me – a great admirer of you and your poetry etc.? I was told his name, but forget it, he is some sort of a sec[retary] under government.

Nancy grows worse and worse – and seems steadily fixed upon not doing anything, though she has owned to Sam that she can no longer struggle with her feelings, and that she has that in her head which alarms her. This must be caught on in order to enforce what you advise – but it must be done, or at least tried, by yourself. No evil has ever yet come upon me by surprise – I foresee them all and can in some measure prepare myself therefore for every misfortune, but those I dread for her – I cannot bear the subject.

Have you read Royal Reflections? At any other time than when their supposed author lay on his death bed, they would make one smile but this is not the hour of ridicule. The wit of these times makes courts and their inhabitants as familiar to us as any other scenes with Georges and Bettys, but contrary to the effect I suppose they

87 Francis Carleton.

88 Joseph George Holman (1764-1817), actor and dramatist (*DNB*).

89 i.e. the Drennans and Matthearts.

generally have, my esteem for the King is greatly heightened, as the great object of ridicule appears to me [to have]⁹⁰ amiable virtues, which though they have not made him a great king I do believe have formed him a good husband, parent, and man, and the praise daubed on the Prince makes one slight the satire on his poor father. MM

There is not any of the best powder just now in Belfast but it shall be sent soon. I beg the scarfs.

264 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [244]

My dear Will, Dr Haliday called here yesterday and read me a letter he had from you, and could you think of, much less fret at, any old wife's scandal, though ever so bitter and sometimes hurtful, while you had a friend who signed himself Werter?⁹¹ God help the man that does it, for that name to me conveys the most heart affecting, soft silent sorrow, while the latter end of his story throws over the mind a horror or rather a gloom of an indescribable kind, which I never experienced in reading or hearing any other story, either real or feigned. It is a precious mischief, how could you leave to himself the mortal who adopted it and who at that instant so much needed the soothing voice of friendship, not in tones of rational advice, but by the softer ones of pity, perhaps assisting pity, or the playful touches of wit or ridicule, and these all in your power – hurt too no doubt, by shafts pointed by envy or malice, of which you at that instant felt the smart, but feel no more of it from old gossips, it is too condescending, rather provoke the critics, and like your brother poets, if you must be pelted received it from them. No men I believe experience, or indeed are more in the way of it than those of your profession, the effects of female opinion, clatter or folly. I see plenty of it here and in Newry it must, as a dirty, party place, abound in that evil. But surely you have never met with it in anything that either was of consequence or made any noise – at least, nothing of the kind was ever heard here, and in such a place I have always supposed you to be wonderfully lucky, and therefore prudent.

Perhaps these little tales are made to reach you by pretended friends, only desirous to mortify you and therefore the one half not true, but to avoid pain, disappoint malice and act with dignity (I do not mean to advise but to comfort), show disapprobation of every faculty story being related to you.

Your watch and powder were sent by John Goddard, I hope safe.

The Miss Mattears, my mother and Nancy are all here at present, though I love my relations I relish other society by way of pleasure. Could I afford [-] to them however it would still be my greatest, but that I find impossible, for here or in town, alone or in company, in every scene, and every season, melancholy and never ending discontent weighs me down. Guard against this as your greatest foe and that of your M MCTIER

⁹⁰ Words supplied.

⁹¹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The sorrows of young Werther* (1774).

Little Tom Stewart⁹² is to be married immediately to a pretty young girl, a daughter of Ez[ekie]l Boyd's, Langford Heyland⁹³ to a bastard of Nabob Alexander's, young and ugly with £10,000. You have bad dreams. Our ticket is a ——. Dickson had not any books for you.

Did the scarves return to you? I do not choose the fellow who carried them should be the possessor.

265 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL [245]

Dear Matty, I did not receive the scarves in return, but the watch and powder came safe. I fear I have lost the books, or that Glass has mislaid them. Dr Haliday favoured me with a very long and entertaining letter for which I should wish to thank him in kind if I could, but my brain I often think is withering, and the genial current of fancy frozen. I was reading Dr Jebb's works⁹⁴ lately published in London, and I observed with pleasure this sentence, But why does Junius – why does Orellana slumber? because he has no object, or none but pitiful ones and because his genius is not voluntary or spontaneous. I spent my Christmas at Mr I. Corry's which is still a favourite house of mine. His daughters play on the forte piano very agreeably and I delight in music which I can feel and understand. You are no doubt all pleased with the papers. I know not what the Prince of Wales will do, but I know that the Prince of Orange would not have accepted the regency had he been confined by similar conditions – but the Prince has thrown himself at the feet of the Commons. It is a very curious business. I see that the rule of regency and the rule of royalty are different things. I should imagine that the government reverts to the people and if so they may appoint a convention. We are growing gay in this place and Christmas hospitality is everywhere to be met with excepting in my room. We have a ball tomorrow, an assembly next day, and a dance next week. No Miss D⁹⁵ – I saw her but once these six months at Dundalk and probably will see her as seldom when she arrives. A poet, the name of which like Congreve,⁹⁶ that great man I don't like, would have said on seeing her,

Tis she! the fascinating she! My heart still feels her sway
 Gives up its half-gained liberty – Trembles but must obey
 The hapless slave escapes in vain – who meets his master's eye
 He stops – and conscious of the chain – Trembles but cannot fly.

I am lampooned here but have not seen it; if worth showing I shall send it. They will rip me up and all my history. J. Pollock wrote me an excellent copy of verses ridiculing both me and himself like a gentleman. Yours, WD

92 Thomas Ludford Stewart and Amelia Boyd of Ballycastle were married in January 1789.

93 James Alexander (1730-1802), later Earl of Caledon; the Heylands were a gentry family with property in Counties Antrim and Londonderry.

94 Published posthumously in 1787.

95 Miss D. Ogle.

96 William Congreve (1670-1729), dramatist (*DNB*).

266 Friday

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [246]

My dear Will, I am vexed at losing a guinea's worth of cloth, by my mother's temper, and a carman's dishonesty, and beg you will try to find him or his employer out, and if possible make them account for it.

And now for the state of the nation, which at least makes the papers amusing. Much indeed, and seemingly good of the kind, is said on both sides – too much for me to determine, but as to the heads of the parties, my admiration, respect, and good opinion has been from the first bestowed on Mr Pitt. His opponent, I believe a man of abilities only, whose ambition and fortune tempt to hereditary crimes. Lord Chatham's son, I believe, will be proudly virtuous, neither tempted by vicious pleasure nor broken fortune to sully his, or a father's name, and whose character I dare say it's his ambition to imitate – the praise of which forever charms his ear.

As I have spent my Christmas chiefly among the old ladies I named to you, I cannot retail to you much on the subject of the day worth hearing, except it may be an observation that Sam made to myself. I had not heard anything like it broached and thought if it could be supported, it might be, what I am always on the watch for, good subject for your pen, and one which Orellana might once again come forward as the champion of his country's rights. That this was the most fortunate time of Ireland proving indisputably her independence, by voting the Prince regent from right hereditary, or if England took the other side, then to oppose him and at any rate establish Ireland in her fullest rights. If there is anything in this, why are Irish men at present so becalmed as scarce to give an opinion, as if they durst not till the matter was fixed for them in England? Were the matter happily weighed, elegantly expressed, and insinuatingly conveyed, if truth was its foundation, I would wish you to be the author. Much will no doubt be said after the meeting of parliament and by Mr Grattan in particular, who I suppose will on this occasion be a Foxite. Doctors Haliday and White are the only ones here – the former gets so warm, appears so prejudiced against Mr Pitt, both as man and minister, and through thick and thin vindicates Mr Fox and admires the Prince so like a weak girl, that one, in my opinion, can only laugh at him and I am told that S. Hyde lately worsted him and by dint of reason.

I don't wonder you were pleased at being placed in the same line with Junius and by Dr Jebb, yet his sentence is a very odd one and must certainly refer to something that went before. Not having any acquaintance with you either as a man or till then as a writer, how could he judge of your genius as spontaneous or not? He names Junius and you in the beginning of the sentence but ends it as if of you only. I would be glad to see Pollock's verses with any restrictions you please, and also the lampoon.

You are under a mistake. Your genius is not frost-bitten – for though sometimes you may be a little nipped yet it was in a much harder season that this, though exactly the same time of year, you produced the Helot, which coming warm from the heart with a spark of right nature kindled in others a kindred fire.

My company is all gone and we go to town on Monday. Lord Dungannon gives a grand ball at Belvoir on Thursday. Every one asked, even to my next neighbour though no acquaintance, but me – I do feel it. Yours, MM

267 Tuesday, January

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL [246A]

Dear Matty, The carman has run off from this town and the scarfs are not to be recovered. I sent a short paper without signature to H. Joy on the hint of Sam. It is not worth a signature but may serve for the purpose which I don't find a very fertile subject and soon tired of it as I do of most things. If Joy does not insert it send it back to me – or send it to the *D[ublin] Ev[ening] Post*. I can't get the lampoon, and Pollock's verses are too voluminous to send, but I shall read them when we meet. All here as usual. Mrs Thompson still keeps me in waiting. Mrs S. Hall has engaged her accoucheur from a distance, and I am out there I suppose by my too great deference for Emmet's¹ opinion who I believe did not understand the complaint of Savage so well as Potts. I cast up my accounts for last year – £296 by the help of 20 guineas from Turner for killing his wife, which closed the year. If I can I will pay a visit as soon as I am disengaged. Farewell.

I prophesy this year will be worse for me. W DRENNAN

I have £50 if Sam can tell me any way of remitting it.

268 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [246B]

Dear Matty, I send Sam £50 by Mr Goddard. I paid 25 guineas for my horse, and I believe am bitten, for he has an incorrigible habit of throwing up and down his head in riding which makes it so uneasy to me that my servant shall ride him in future. I went to Mount Hall a day or two ago, where I was received with coolness next to contempt; in going there I was as near being drowned as the balloon knight was, by my companion and I missing the line of road overflowed by the high tides, and when I came home I found the house all in confusion and my room broken open, on the supposition that a fire in the house had risen [*sic*] there which was not the case. Such is life, but it is not great accidents that ever disturb me; but if they could, I know not a book which could prevent their effect so much as one I have been just now reading, Necker,² the present prime minister of France, on the importance

1 Dr Robert Emmet (1729-1802), physician of Dublin, father of Thomas Addis and Robert Emmet.

2 Jacques Necker (1732-1804), *De l'importance des opinions religieuses*.

of religious opinions. I request you may read it with care as it is a comfortable book, though I think the sense is often conveyed ill through the translation. We view the object through a smoked glass. The expression of his thoughts is too refined and general and sometimes obscure, but this makes you take more care in the perusal. You mistook my own words for Jebb's which are only the first in the sentence. I write at present chiefly to tell Sam that H. Joy will do best not to print the thing which I sent him, as it is but a trifle and its intention I see already anticipated in all the papers. Mrs Thompson has not yet been confined but daily expects to be so, and I shall then be at freedom to go abroad, if agreeable. You would think it odd were I to tell you that among the pleasures of my life the chief are music and dancing. I seldom am out of spirits, though my health is by no means confirmed – I live in hope and I see many around me worse and still growing more so, a selfish comfort. I don't read much except a little in my profession and I beg you will again have enquiry made about the books. I read *Amelia*³ lately with pleasure, I often look at *Bruyere*,⁴ and I have an inclination to translate a paragraph that would please King, and Werter.

We see Eustrates placed in his small boat, blessed with a pure air and a serene sky. He sets sail with a fair wind which in all probability is like to continue, but on a sudden it changes; the heavens are clouded; the tempest appears; a wave oversets the boat: it is sunk to the bottom. Eustrates rises to the surface of the waters, endeavours to swim and we hope that he will reach the shore and save his life: but another wave sinks him and we then give him over for lost. He appears above water a second time and our hopes revive, when a foaming billow drives him to the bottom from whence he never rises. He is drowned.

No man can hear this read well without being deeply affected. It is dyed in the deepest melancholy and Necker should be at hand to encourage and console us.

Goddard will see you I suppose, and as Greenville will be much crowded, will I fancy thank you for a bed. I am often with him and esteem him much. If he gives me advice through you, decline the office, I beg it of you. Yours, W DRENNAN

269 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [246C]

Dear Will, I have been too long in your debt. This month past we have been in town, and the consequence is, many engagements of seeming gaiety, which home unhappiness renders unreal, and always dispirits me so much, that it is with reluctance I write to you. Wishing to avoid giving pain, and yet with a heart wholly occupied by a distressing subject, I feel myself unable to take up, or dwell on trifles.

Your welfare however, will never appear one to me, and it is with great satisfaction I must observe the gradual increase of your income, which, tending to a foundation

³ Henry Fielding (1707-54), *Amelia* (1751).

⁴ Jean de la Bruyere (1645-96), French essayist and moralist; Drennan means that the melancholy tone of the piece would please Dr King of Armagh, and Goethe's Werther.

for independence in future and comfort at present, ought in my opinion to be more gratefully received, and the hope of its honourable and lucrative increase, more cherished for some years to come, than croaking prophecies of its decline. You can look forward to some addition to your fortune with certainty, to others with hope, and unless it was your choice of a profession I know of nothing you have to regret. You are yet to experience domestic comfort, may it be yours, but believe me there is nothing will contribute so much to it either in yourself or family as a cheerful temper, and the only thing in your father I wish you not to imitate is his groaning away life. Many causes however he had that I hope will not fall to your lot – but some there will be.

H. Joy supposing Sam had known of your last paper spoke of it to him with much praise – before he could publish it. It was generally supposed yours, indeed it was impossible for it to be thought any other pen, I could as soon have mistaken your face. I think there are very little politics talked at present owing I imagine to such a jumble of Whig and Tory – high church taking up the dissenters' old party – they joined to Lord North's cause etc., so much to be said on all sides, that secondary judgments give up the cause, while all but bigots, among whom is Dr Haliday, lament the cause of the present disputes, but you doctors are apt I believe to be hardened men, two of them seem now to be deep in the cause of precedence, as much so, in this grand case, as if they were two Newry ones.

Mr Goddard gave your money, but no advice. I am glad you are intimate with him for I still think him a friendly, safe, honourable man.⁵ You once told me this was not saying much but a short intercourse with the world will make you s[et a] juster value upon it.

When are you to visit us? Whenever at any time you find it most convenient or agreeable to yourself you ought to take a trip, and when the mail coach runs I hope to see you oftener than we have done. At present there is not great entertainment at the playhouse but there is a forced assembly and two opposition coteries. Can there be nothing done about the cloth? It vexes me to lose it. I wish to know how you and Campbell stand – has the Collector appeared more, or less friendly.

I thank you for Necker, which reserving for the country, I at present take up Davis⁶ on Shakespeare – a sure sign you'll say that I need the former. I own it, I feel it, but how shall I help it, for I acknowledge and lament the want of that calm steady piety, uninfluenced by passion. I can be grateful for good, ready to acknowledge it has prevailed in my life, humbled, softened and flying for relief to devotion in the hour of sorrow, but uninfluenced by pleasure or pain, I am not what my father's child should be. Were I to own all my thoughts on the subject of the love of God, they might prove my sincerity greater than it ought to be.

I hear that the reptile Hall's complaint was the consequence of his vices and that Pott said it had been so improperly treated by the Irish surgeon that a fortnight more of their skill and he would have lost his [nose?].

⁵ However, Goddard later took to drink and low company.

⁶ Thomas Davies (1712?-85), *Dramatic miscellanies* (1785) (DNB).

270 Thursday

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [266]

Harry Joy showed Sam the proof sheet of the two answers you will read in his paper tomorrow. He says there is little in them – at least of an Irish man – yet some matter that might be foundation for you to answer. If you think proper to do so, you may be certain of being well attended to here as there is suspicion enough to make a second eagerly sought for, though no certainty that need discourage.

The first, as is often the case, passed unobserved by many you respect, the second would not do so. Bryson was asked if it was his, when getting into one of his rash flights, he declared, he would rather hold his right hand in the fire till it was consumed, rather than he would have wrote so inhuman a paper. This only created laughter in those who heard it – perhaps therefore, he may be Philanthropus.⁷ If the parliament is prorogued – you might find time and sure there is matter to command the attention of the public if you have thought – surely your pen can do you ample justice. All the weighty interest in the kingdom except the Hillsboroughs are united for appointing the Prince regent with unlimited power. This may be good Irish politics – but cruel English ones.

Sam dined with a company of gentlemen the other day where Mr Rankin run [*sic*] out in the greatest raptures of the beauty of your Debina – particularly of her fine turned arm, which is certainly a charm of much femality and which, I have observed, is always highly rated by the French writers.

Mrs John Hamilton⁸ has been confined these two month[s] by what was termed a feverish cold but which I fear is now a hectic. Poor Jack is very anxious and has proposed a jaunt of pleasure to London, not daring to name Bristol. There however I suppose it will end – literally. He will think himself very deplorable but it will turn out very differently. She is a haughty termagant and he from his boyish days, a jinny. He has a sweet dove-like daughter, that will make him happier than any other object he has yet been connected with. How often we cling to those who make us wretched. Ever yours, MM

271 Sunday

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [267]

Dear Will, We are yet on our town visitation but on Tuesday return to our cot, in high hope of a pleasant summer. It is new painted, papered, etc., and looks the habitation of joy, a guest I never expect to wait on me. I shall however court content, and for some years hope she will give me her company. Could she assume a sister's form I would adore her.

We have been daily disappointed at not getting a letter from you these stirring times, and additional fears of your health now add to the unusual gloom. There is

⁷ Letter by 'Philanthropus' (*BNL*, 3-6 February 1789).

⁸ Formerly Abigail Armstrong, wife of John Hamilton, the banker.

a favourite bird here also pronounced dying of a consumption and leaving a companion to whom it is attached. Nancy sits for hours contemplating them and has tried her skill in vain to stop a lax.

Mrs John Hamilton wishes to try the air of Cabin Hill previous to going to England. I expect her when I get it aired but I fear it will not do. Mr Hamilton⁹ of Ballymena is dead – the place is to be sold – he left Beck Beatty £50. You will see I am not in writing humour. I can only beg of you to give us a long letter with a great deal of I in it, anything you choose of D, or even tell me how you like your servant.

J[oseph] Pollock's verses on you are at Homera.¹⁰ Jenny Greg has promised me a sight of them. Your books are here. I do not care to send them by cars for fear of wet, but Mr Buntin will be going up soon and I suppose will take them. Hugh fails [—] fast [—] demolished the oak [—] and fir leaf – all else as usual.

Do, my dear Will, write immediately an egotizing long letter, free of croaks, to yours ever while here, M MCTIER

272 Saturday¹¹

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [229]

My dear Will, I fear you have been much worse than you said you have had a spitting of blood, why did you not tell this? For God's sake write by return of the post, for I am very wretched. Say if you intend coming down and when it will be in your power, for immediately you must determine upon somewhat that may conduce to your health. Everything must give way to that. You must travel, leave off[f] the accoucheur line – leave Newry go to Dublin come to Belfast or anywhere or anything that has a chance of being of benefit either to your body or mind. Your way of life must be uncomfortable even in health but in sickness, solitary and improper. You must either be with your friends here or they must go to you though unfit for the task. MM

273 Tuesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [242]

Dear Matty, I think you have treated my last letter unkindly, in not having honoured the principal subject of it with an answer, relinquishing me as it were to my fault, my folly or my fate, or trusting I suppose to the frostiness of my character, and the prudence of my flirtations, even in this most slippery month of the year. Let those say so, who have fallen – I for my part think that if there be a tendency

9 John Hamilton of Ballymenoch, near Holywood, died March 1789, father of Mrs Peggy Hyde and Mrs Jane Savage.

10 Homera or Ballyhomra was the home of the family of Frances Jones, Joseph Pollock's wife.

11 This letter is impossible to date because the reply is missing; the tone of panic suggests 1789, when Martha was heading towards a breakdown; it is tempting to insert it at the end of the year but it would add a false note of drama, as no other letter suggests that Drennan went to Dublin for the sake of his health.

to melancholy madness in our family, as you have said there was, it is most ready to show itself in this season, like all prevailing humours, and I have had my share of it, whether with reason or quite without reason I shall not say, but the course of the summer may determine. I have been rather better since the warm weather came in, but still I cannot get quit of this cold which I caught or rather which caught me two or three months ago, and I expectorate so much that one would scarcely suppose love could take up his abode in such a breast as mine, such a raw, damp uncomfortable lodging. His godship would find bad repose with scarce a spark to warm his nose – a pretty place for him to dwell who likes a heaven a hot as hell. You might however have asked me to supply what was deficient in my last account, such as the amount of her fortune, the colour of her hair, or any other particular which appeared to you most interesting in one in whom I seemed to take an interest. Well, all I can say is if I grow well and then fall or slide into love I shall become a good correspondent. I have nothing new to say of this sweet briar. Lovelace¹² had his rose-bud, and I who may be Love-less will have my sweet briar. I have seen her at times since I wrote last, and what did she say, or how did she look? Why she looked infinitely conceited, and talked an infinity of nothingnesses, such a multiplication of cyphers, that derived their sole value from the pretty number one that gave them credit and currency. She talked of the moon, and of the men, and of the assemblies, and of poetry, and of music – but I'll tell you in my next.

No news. Dr Black has I believe left this place, having met with but little encouragement. Templeton is carried about in his chair, a hard fate for an old man but harder it would be for a young one. I wish him and his a comfortable livelihood sincerely, provided he and they act with candour. Mrs C[ol] Browne and Mrs Moore have just been paying me a visit. Old Mr Corry¹³ is dying daily. Answer this letter. If I have health, I shall see you next month. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

274 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [193]

Dear Matty, I am quietly pursuing my profession, doing what good in that line I can and as little mischief as I am able. I have not much money in my purse and yet I have received near £140 this year already. I live much such a sort of life as those lead whom I see around me and that is the misfortune of living in a place of this kind that if you cannot elevate them, they will bring you down to their level. The former is impossible, and the latter I find to be fact. My health is as usual, and my spirits are as good as I generally find them. I look around for news that would interest you for a moment, and cannot find it; and there is as little novelty either in thought or design within, as from without. I am neither writing or reading, or courting, or like to do any of the three. I know nothing more remarkable about me

¹² Richard Lovelace (1618-58), cavalier and poet (*DNB*).

¹³ Probably Edward Corry who died in 1792; the position of this letter is uncertain.

than that I wear a black coat and ride a gray mare. I must lay in store for another course of seditious letters. WD

275 Friday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, NEAR BELFAST [261]

Dear Matty, I am enjoying this fine weather as much as one can do in a town, and I am every day on horseback in excursions to the country, sometimes for the sake of business, but oftener for pleasure. We have got a regiment quartered here for some time, and the L[ieut] Colonel Lindsay,¹⁴ an old fellow student, has renewed his acquaintance with me and seems to be a very agreeable man. I have some idea of giving some of my friends at least one dinner at Byrnes's and I could make out a very pleasant dozen to town and country acquaintance such as C[olonel] Lindsay, C[olonel] Browne, Major Molesworth,¹⁵ a new neighbour whom I dined with yesterday at Eden, Major Lane, I. Corry, Ogle, Carleton, Goddard, Moore – my mess-mate, W. Pollock, Read, Moody, Gordon, and Thomson. I suppose it would cost me about five guineas and Moore would help me at the entertaining part. I hear that my old flirting acquaintance, Emily English, is among the regiment a Mrs Jephson, but whether she goes with the baggage, or how I can't say as I have not yet seen her. I am too much abroad in mind as well as body, neither ever at home – wonderful that I am still as lean as Cassius. I shall study to improve in size.

I am much with Goddard. His son William has been better for some days past. He expects R[ainey] Maxwell and I should be glad to see him. I wish much for the glass which he gave me and which I entrusted to Nancy to get mended. It only wants a little glue and I beg it may be sent up done or undone by the first opportunity, as I cannot see the show without it which is exhibited daily before my window. I bespoke also a pair of slippers from Stewart which he has never sent me. I have no other news – of love nothing – of flirtation a little – but still I am to be married immediately as the people are pleased to say. Trade goes on too slowly for that – if it does decline I shall certainly migrate. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

276 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [262]

Your letter yesterday saved you a long scolding one today, for Nancy's complexion assumes so very wan a hue on any unusual silence, that in pity to it you ought to be a little more punctual.

I approve much of your entertainment, though it should cost double the sum you mention for so courtly a party, as I have not a doubt that your never giving one has been thought mean, and I feared would have a place in Pollock's verses – and now

14 Colonel Colin Lindsay (1755-95), was a student with Drennan at Glasgow before entering the army in 1771.

15 Probably Major Arthur Molesworth (d.1803), of Fairlawn, Co. Armagh.

I shall tell you that Goddard, when he was here, hinted a wish to me that you sometimes would have a friend or two with you, but fearing you might term it advice I did not mention it to you. It was only done as a good humoured hint, and when I observed the awkwardness of your situation for anything of that sort and that you would feel it, he replied, with a pooh, you, that could acquit yourself so well at other times, would do so then. There is one thing however I suppose you are aware of, that it is very hard, indeed almost impossible, to have anything of the kind without giving offence. You have received general civility, from many something more – if you make a return it also must be general, and though you might not choose to entertain all at once, yet all or none should be noticed and equally well treated, even selection of company, the first, and the last, creates censure. I do not remark this to you in order to put you off your party. I wish greatly you could have it but as giving offence to any one of your friends might be of great consequence to you, I only mean that you should be on your guard and form your plan well. As you have had one or two evening parties, perhaps the dinner may take in all they left out, and as on such occasions the wine is very material, you might let the weight of that rest on Goddard – I mean choosing the very best in your town, before your day.¹⁶

Colonel Lindsay and his corps were much liked here and generally entertained. He spoke of you and Tom Bateson,¹⁷ the latter I believe as an intimate that had long slept in the next room to him, and when he was quartered here spoke with pleasure of being so near his old friend with a handsome wife – but to his surprise, and Tom's disgrace, he never saw him but once at Greenville, where they were brought to a very silly meeting on Tom's part. Poor Miss English is in the regiment and to the last gained admiration, particularly from men younger than herself, every family fearing for a son or a brother. The unfortunate man she has married give[s] proof of the most disinterested affection, as she is old, blind and without one sixpence or the means of supporting life, for until a short time ago the little bounty of acquaintance was become necessary. Since that, she received a small matter from the concordatum on which she did wonders, appeared decent, and gained respect. In this situation let no one blame her for marry[ing] a poor and unfortunate man – worse she cannot be and better it is possible. She has at least gained a friend, companion, and protector in her forlorn situation. This was not to be rejected. I am told she is as handsome and agreeable as ever.

I spent the evening at Greenville on Friday with a Colonel Horsefalls who is staying there and I suppose will prevent Mr M[axwell]'s visit, though I heard nothing of it. Let Goddard know they are all well there. His two girls are now decided toasts and particularly Betty was the admiration of a large circle formed to see them dance at the last coterie – but this I dare say he heard long ago, but you may amuse him with mentioning that after many likenesses found out for Bess, it was determined the justest was Serena in the Triumphs of Temper.¹⁸ A young gentleman asked her

¹⁶ Goddard was a customs official.

¹⁷ Tom Bateson (1752-1811), son of Thomas Bateson of Orangefield, was at Glasgow University with Lindsay and Drennan.

¹⁸ William Hayley (1745-1820), *The triumphs of temper* (1781).

if she had ever read that poem, and on her saying she had not, he told her in it she would see all her perfections and none of her faults. Bess very properly replied she would much rather know her faults.

Jemmy Kennedy has taken our old Rosemary habitation which has been so much improved by its late inhabitant that it is really a genteel and most convenient habitation, but it will not be long so for there is a dirty vulgarity that runs through face, dress, house and manner of our worthy friends. I have read Necker with great attention and think it an excellent, useful and agreeable book but matter of great astonishment to me, as seeming addressed to a nation of atheists. We here have doubts that ever was one. He writes as I would suppose a Frenchman might do against deism – it is impossible he could confound the two. Impossible also that I could mistake him as his arguments are openly pointed to not only a body of learned men but the fashionable tenets of the time. He says, 'Atheists are not common in the lower classes'. Is not this odd language?

Jenny Greg, M[—] Crawford and Miss Clewlow,¹⁹ went to Dublin about [—] ago on a teeth cleaning party and are to retur[—]. Did you see them or Mr Bun[tin]?

Mr M told me he had a letter from you and that his friend William he feared was but poorly. This is the second cold fit he has given me for I did not immediately perceive my mistake. He said he had showed your letter to Fuller. I suppose you did not care. Do not again be so long of writing.

277 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [263]

Dear Matty, When self is concerned you see how I improve in the frequency of my letters. I wish to provide for this perilous party of mine and I must request that if there be anything such as a good turbot, or any other matter not easily procurable in this place, you will be so good as to have it purchased for me, and if possible make interest with the mail coach man to have it sent by him. He comes in on Monday – the day before mine. All I sent cards to come, except Scott who never dines from home, Lindsay, Carleton, Ach[eson] Thompson,²⁰ I. Corry senr, J. Ogle, Gordon, Blackall, Moody, two Pollocks, two Reads, Goddard, Moore, Turner, Boyd, Ross Thompson,²¹ and I think to ask Campbell. You see it will require meat as well as drink. Write to me by return of post and mention everything that you may think of. Such a crowd saves awkwardness. Molesworth and Lane are abroad, the latter on a visit to Rankin. Yours ever, WD

The ladies will devour me for not having given a dance but that would be more dangerous and difficult.

19 Probably a daughter of the Rev. James Hamilton Clewlow of Bangor.

20 Seneschal of Newry and agent of William Nedham.

21 Ross Thompson, later of Greenwood Park, Newry.

278 Wednesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, NEAR BELFAST [264]

Dear Matty, I am exceedingly obliged to Sam for the turbot etc. It was a vastly fine dish, and the asparagus was what could be wished both in quantity and quality. We had a very good dinner, rather indeed a manly one, but eighteen men sat down to it, and yet a sirloin of roast beef went away untouched. Our wine was good if not choice, and the most of the company remained till half after eleven. We had port and madeira at dinner, and four bottles of each on the table which sufficed for hob nob. I had scarcely taken my place at the head when I was called in all haste to Mrs Moore who is now in Newry and was then suddenly attacked with one of her convulsive paroxysms. I lost a quarter of an hour at the dinner and W. Pollock officiated for me at that time. I returned and she became better. The company seemed pleasant enough and generally so. Lindsay very much so while he stayed, but he left us at parade hour and did not return. Carleton very chatty, but he does not much like Lindsay. Colonel Browne, old I. Corry, and Scott sent excuses; the former would have come if he could. None of us were absolutely drunk. I believe I was, contrary to what I should be, rather the most so. I was, during the whole, at my ease without being too easy. My toasts, the King, Prince of Wales, Army and Navy, Prosperity to Ireland and then Married Ladies, etc. I have not yet got my bill, but I suppose we drank about a bottle a man, exclusive of our dinner wine. We had no politics – all small chat. Lindsay tells good and short stories. He will be very generally acquainted here, but is a man that does not attach himself much to any man or thing. I have just ridden off my headache, in a delightful day down the shore. Our company was Lindsay, Carleton, Goddard, Moore, Waring,²² Turner, J. Ogle, Violet Hill, I. W. Glenny,²³ Moody, Blackhall a genteel lad on a visit here, two Pollocks, two Reads, Acheson Thompson, Davis, Boyd, Gordon, and myself last and least.

I received the glass with the two cravats which are very neat. I am surprised Stewart cannot make me a pair of slippers. My breast has been much better since the warm weather commenced, and the expectoration diminished. If good living could make fat, I have enough of it, being out in all the parties made for the officers who have bewitched all the girls. They all dance, Lindsay also sings – fourteen of them at our assembly. I danced one of the sets with Miss D. Ogle. I liked her and I disliked her – she did not care which. There is a pretty girl, of the Square Ogles, in Belfast at present. I wish she could fascinate some Belfast nabob. Her sisters are manifold, one called Sally, a fine little girl in the pensive style. I received a great folio volume in a present from Chambers,²⁴ the bookseller in Dublin, who has published a grand edition of Guthrie's *Geography*,²⁵ in return for a short sketch of mine inserted in it about the Volunteers. Had I known what I do, I should have taken some pains

²² Probably Thomas Waring of Newry (1761-1841), who married Goddard's younger daughter.

²³ Probably Isaac William Glenny (1765-1841) (Blackwood 90).

²⁴ John Chambers, later a United Irishman and a friend of Drennan.

²⁵ William Guthrie (1708-70), author (*DNB*).

about it, but it may serve for a section. I forgot to tell you that I asked Campbell early and he would not come. Carleton thinks I am quite on the vantage ground above his crony for they are fast friends. My fees should be large for they are rare. I must again thank Sam for the trouble I have given him. Farewell. W DRENNAN.

My poor Cicero is to sleep with Haliday.

279 Friday

MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [265]

It gave us pleasure to hear that the things sent from this pleased you, and that your party went off well. If you thought so, I dare say all the rest did, though by the time they sat, Sam says, a bottle each was not enough. I hoped to have heard of it from A. Buntin who I thought you would have picked from the road, as a first fiddle. He was in the same house with you, but hearing you had a party forbore to join you.

You have got a very formidable corps of officers, many of whom direct their attacks to the married ladies. Dalles I believe is one of them, very handsome and agreeable, but as I suppose he has been lately obliged to abscond on account of a manifest intrigue with Mrs Stewart, daughter in law to Sir Annesley,²⁶ you will not be in danger from him – nor your young ladies either, for in every town he goes to, he falls in love, courts, asks, and forsakes. Miss Black²⁷ was the Belfast fair he served so, after having asked her father's consent. Maningham I think is also in this corps, and very handsome. Mrs Webster²⁸ was his particular. Do not however, either from fear for yourself or by way of caution to the ladies, mention this for you may be assured that would only enhance the danger.

All conversation here is engrossed by the melancholy effects of Hill Wilson's famous amour. A woman evidently mad, though quiet, with many marks of remaining beauty and gentility, wandering through the streets with her arms straight down to her sides, attracted notice, and by many was recollected to be the once beautiful Mrs Fitzgerald, though marked by fetters on both legs and arms, and looking like fifty in rags without even a shift. The report was at first laughed at, but several ladies and gentlemen who had once visited her, now conversing with her find the report to be truth. She was taken off the street, up to the poorhouse, and going past the house in D[onegall] Street where she once lodged, mentioned it as the scene of her ruin, recollected, though not at first, most of the ladies, asked Mrs Bristow if she remembers their dancing together at a coterie when there was a scarcity of gentlemen, told Mrs Joy she heard her father was dead, calling him the poor man that talked so much of her legs.²⁹ She was at Downpatrick after having escaped from Boat's,³⁰ and was here put into gaol for pulling off the judge's wig. Ten guineas were

26 Sir Annesley Stewart of Fort Stewart (d.1801); his daughter-in-law was probably Mary Susanna, daughter of Richard Chapell Whaley, who married James (later Sir James) Stewart in 1778.

27 Possibly a daughter of George Black of Stranmillis.

28 Mary Anne, widow of General James Gisborne and wife of Gilbert Webster; she subsequently married William Rainey of Greenville and Major Robert Wallace.

29 Joseph Wallace (d.1786), JP for Counties Antrim and Down.

30 Boat's was a private lunatic asylum in Dublin.

immediately raised to clothe and take a decent lodging for her, where she now is, until her friends answer a letter sent to them, when the poor wretch I suppose will again return to that place of horror from whence she escaped. I think tis much to be feared she was placed there by way of confinement rather than cure, as her husband told she was gone to a convent. Hill Wilson I hear was on his road to Belfast, but Tom Banks³¹ went off to Newry to prevent him. I think the account may chill him even more than the fear of a locked jaw. The strawberries and dairy both promise well for the summer and claim your promise.

I have been just reading a book that pleased me much in my youth, and I had curiosity to see if my taste for it remained – when I find Lucan's *Pharsalia*,³² a poem so very sublime, noble, and interesting, that I would fain know the reason that it is not more generally read and admired. I hear from the young Goddards, their father is expected down next week. Perhaps that time might answer you, let me know soon. Yours while you are your own, MM

280 Sunday

MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [268]

One is always more reluctant to answer a long, agreeable letter than any other – you dislike not to repay in some coin, and have no question to ask. I waited therefore, but in vain, for a striped one. Friday's paper gave me the first sight of your Volunteer sketch, which I was very sorry to see there, for though inserting it may do credit, both to the editor and Joy's paper, I do not like his bepraising you, which looks too like a traffic, had he taken it into his head, to extract what was said of Orellana at the same time, it would have published you in a most ridiculous manner – or rather, republished you, in a few words, which I think he gilded you with himself once before. His very introductions lead to an expectation of your pen and if I was you, I would strictly guard him against praise, which from him will always produce laughter at you – but this I only say from my own fear, not from knowledge. I have not heard any opinion of the paper, which I think a good one, though not so striking as I would have expected from you in such a book – but perhaps that might be owing to a desire of disguising your style, and being limited in room, yet the style is yours but appears so more by a flash or two, than its general elegance. Did you get Cicero from the Doctor³³ and can you make no use of that author towards your being introduced to the world by other means that little H. Joy? I hope he sent you Lavater and I think it will afford you great pleasure. It is really a key, a golden one to the human heart. He means his last aphorism to be so in particular, but fear of spoiling the book prevented my marking as I read, which I regretted at the end.

I am now engaged in reading (what is a rare thing with me) a set of sermons which I find very elegant or rather sublime, convincing, and entertaining. They are

31 Thomas Banks (d.1824), son of Stewart Banks, sovereign of Belfast.

32 Lucan (39-65), Roman poet; Martha may have been reading any of several translations.

33 Haliday.

White's³⁴ on Mahometanism. You no doubt saw an account of them which more than mine would induce you to read them. They are not in the least dry nor bigoted, though the author is a Trinitarian.

I find you write sometimes to Mr Max[well]. He told me lately, you had a warm friend and admirer in a Mr Lane who spoke much in your praise to Mr Rankin. Is not this Lane some relation of Miss Debina's? Her reported 'wouldn't if she could' should go for nothing – most probable, she never said it. It would be indelicate, and even prevent what at least vanity might not dislike, or if she did say it, looked as like resentment at the question not being put, as a determination to a negative – such is the glorious uncertainty of female appearances.

I am very sorry to hear bad accounts of poor Mr Goddard³⁵ – even that there are fears he must lose his leg. Of his sister and C[unningham] Greg I never heard anything, though much admired – her manners yet are too childish to inspire love, or if she does, it will more probably be in a handsome youth of nineteen and six feet high, very like herself, a Mr Horsfall, a young officer, who has stayed for some time at Greenville.

Not one word do I ever hear now of honest Bruce and have you filled his place, probably you never will. Shame upon you, for to you I am sure it is due.

Poor Mrs Hamilton is daily expected. Bristol could do nothing for her, she grew daily worse, a sea voyage was ordered, and I suppose her only hope now is to get home to die among her friends, natural in her case but it would not be my choice.³⁶ Nancy is here at present. I never look at her when my spirits are good – that I do not long to exclaim 'mother of musings, contemplation sage'.³⁷ You appear not quite satisfied with your fees of late. I hope they have mended, and that you will soon bring down another £50. Your turbot, soles and lobsters came to 16s 9d. You remember young Williamson who I admired so much one day he spent with you here, and his speaking of poetry that had lately appeared in the Belfast paper and making game of it as Bell's – the answer to yours upon poverty was his, and very good.

I have not one tittle of news that could give you pleasure, unless it's Campbell Getty's³⁸ having got a lieutenancy. Yours ever, M MCTIER

281 Friday to Tuesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER [269]

Dear Matty, I have little news. I am now frequently at Mount Hall. W. Goddard was invited there, but his foot has grown worse, and he is obliged to come to town for surgical attendance. Fuller came up lately and laid it open, not much with my mind. It has been worse since, and the bones are certainly affected which will come

34 Dr Joseph White (1745-1814), orientalist and theologian (*DNB*); this work was a published series of lectures.

35 William, son of John Goddard.

36 Mrs John Hamilton died on board ship, at Garmoyle, in Belfast Lough, on her return from Bristol.

37 From 'The pleasures of melancholy' by Thomas Warton (1728-90), poet (*DNB*).

38 Campbell Getty, lieutenant in 72nd Regt, died in 1795.

out and perhaps be ended with the necessity of amputation, if his complaints of a consumptive nature do not take him off before the matter becomes thus terrible. Miss Hall is his nurse-tender at the country, and so wonderfully attentive that I cannot guess the reason of it. It is the beguine rubbing Corporal Trim's limb,³⁹ but she is about an older soldier in Goddard. The match will not catch. I met Brownlow and his two sons there lately. He was more than usually reserved on account of the approaching death of his daughter. His nose and chin meet too nearly for me. He asked if I was not the person that wanted to string the Irish harp, but took little or no notice of me or anyone at dinner or after it. I did not think Goddard would have let William remain at such a place, in such a situation, but indeed he scarcely knows what to do with him and he now brings him up expecting R[aine] Maxwell this day or tomorrow with whom we shall consult. It is a case, like all such hereditary ailments, which creates an inert and feeble practice.

As to the paper in Joy's, I see no praise given and I think it was rightly done in him to publish it. Dr Haliday said he would give that translation to you, and I beg you may ask him for it. I don't intend doing anything more of the kind and did that only because it struck me at the time. I never had so much vanity of authorship as you think I have and every day I feel it less. I like as well the character of one that could write and it saves me so much more trouble if trouble would do, which I doubt. There is a good dentist come here and recommended to me – I write with him to Dr Haliday. His name is Cullen,⁴⁰ and if you can sound his praise do it as he is very clever in his art. I like Lavater but not so well since I saw him in front, his profile is best. The expression is new always. I read Gibbon⁴¹ for style and I think if I had the same industry and learning, I could write as good, but I have no stimulus, no none. I must retract for that historian is inimitable – I never could have imagined such a style could be so supported through twelve volumes.

I hope my mother has called on Mrs Read as she neglected it when in Newry. Dr Campbell of Armagh has just left me, and is setting out for Clonmel in the south, a pitiable translation at his time of life and with his family, but he seems in good health and good spirits. Tell H. Joy that I shall send him Lavater as soon as possible, but I beg he may desire his news boy to call for it. The mail coach runs now every day, and I should expect a visit from you in return for so many of mine. Miss D— has been indisposed for some time. Lane is no relation of hers, nor does he or his wife admire her in the least. Yours ever, WD

282 Monday night

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY] [279]

My dear Will, The day I wrote last to you I had a sickness in my stomach which afterwards affected my bowels. Want of rest for four or five nights and the old nervous

39 Characters in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*.

40 Cullen advertised extensively in the *BNL* (July-September 1789).

41 Edward Gibbon (1737-94), historian (*DNB*).

complaints next came on me, and remains with great severity attended also by burning heat and thirst. All day I am tolerably well. I took rhubarb and pills, which settled my bowels, by Dr Mattear's direction, Haliday called on me yesterday, and I find they have agreed to give me James's Powders. I hoped to have thrown off this attack without your knowing of it but I am fated to pain those I love and have no recompense. Perhaps you may wish to come down or write to one of the doctors. If so I wish it would be to Mattear. He I see is fearful of alarming us and has [—] seen me twice. He told me my pulse was just what it used to be when I was ill – 90 to a minute I believe – but that I imagine is little to what it beats in the nights. My spirits are bad for the least I expect is a long fit, and poor Nancy is a bad companion. She kept up tolerably till the doctors appeared but since that she attempts no disguise of her feelings and they are dreadful indeed. If you have any comfort for her, write to her unless you choose to come. I hoped to have had a pleasant strawberry meeting, not a professional one here, and if it is not for your own satisfaction I would rather see you when I am better, but feared you might hear from some other quarter of my having been ill, about which there is always too much made. Yours ever, MM

283 Wednesday night

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, NEAR BELFAST [280]

My dearest Matty, I should have seen you before this if Mrs Russell had permitted me to leave town, but I am under an absolute promise not to leave her. I trust you are by this time better. I wrote to Dr Mattear and expect his answer this day, but I request you may let me know particularly of your state. The James's Powders may have given you a needless alarm, but they are ordered in the slightest feverish cases and even to children. The moment this affair is over, I shall set out, and it distresses me much that I cannot break off sooner but I hope you will be better, and write me so, if you do not see me. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

284 Thursday

MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [281]

My dear Will, As I did not hear from you I thought it probable you would take a trip in the mail coach, which prevented my writing. I find by a letter from you to Dr Mattear you cannot come at present, which I by no means regret, as I would rather have you when I am quite well – nor would I have told you I was otherwise but for fear of offending you by application to others of your line. I think the powders have done me good. The quantity is small and agrees perfectly well with me. Last night I got a great deal of quiet sleep, the heat and tumult in my nerves greatly abated, and this day I am perfectly well – but as it is generally every other night I am worst, I dare not build upon this. I imagine this complaint has been a

slight fever, which has now gotten a turn. Your letter to the Doctor, he did not receive in time to answer by the mail. I expect my mother out this week and hope you will meet her here when you are at liberty. I shall write you a line tomorrow and hope it will tell you of a second good night, upon which I may have some dependence. You must make great allowance for my being sometimes a little alarmed about myself when you know how much so those I love are. Nancy however has exerted herself at present and her spirits are this day better, by which you may suppose I am. Yours, MM

285 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY [48]

I promised in my last to write to you the next day – but this new manner of sending the letters has confused me and I know not yet when they go out, or when not.

I have had two good nights and one bad since that – I continue to take the powders which have not any effect as to my bowels, sweating etc. – I hope therefore they will answer some better purpose. Your ever, MM

286 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, BELFAST [277]

Dear sister, I have gotten one of my female patients off my hands – a Mrs Gallway who kept me up for one night, and was rewarded with a living child, her first having died under the hands, as is said, of Dr Gray⁴² of Dublin. The Dublin doctors in this line are not I think very fortunate, Moody in particular who has lost five patients in childbed since he went to Dublin, two within these two months past. Mrs Russell whom I saw just now, remains in expectancy. I send this by Mr Goddard. His son is not better, and it is a great chance if he ever will. This warm weather will I hope give you some relief, at least it must further any perspiration if that be the thing your physicians want, or have you quit medicines? I intended to propose to Dr Mattear pills composed of two grains of James's Powder, half a grain of opium, half a grain of extract of hemlock, and two grains of camphor, a pill of this composition to be taken every night, and in the course of a few nights I doubt not, it would have some good effects, if accompanied with the bark during the day in large quantity. I would ask them about sea-bathing for this weather is fine for it and the complaint is so obscure that something might hit which would not seem at first sight well calculated.

I see an Ode in this day's Belfast paper which I think like Haliday's best manner. I read it with much pleasure but Gray's Bard⁴³ is truly inimitable. The French affairs must please you, if you be capable of reading. Farewell, dear Matty, and the moment I can get disengaged expect to see me. Your ever affectionate brother, W DRENNAN

⁴² Dr William Gray, 12 Jervis Street, Dublin (*The treble almanack* (1791)).

⁴³ Poem by Thomas Gray (1716-71).

287 Friday night

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [67]

Dear Matty, I received yours on my return from Mrs Price who has been much indisposed since Dr Haliday left her. I think it was very right applying the blister, and perhaps it would be proper to keep it open for some time, or if that cannot be done, to shave the whole head and rub it every night for some time with flower of mustard until it grows red and warm. I still think the hemlock stupe⁴⁴ ought to be continued whether it seems to have effect or not, and the hemlock pills ought to be gradually increased in number by adding one to the morning or evening pill, every fourth day. I think you ought to try some of the cephalic snuff sold at Magee's as a discharge from the nose might be of use, and even a bleeding from it might relieve the undue quantity of blood that I believe is in the internal vessels of the head.

Nothing can be of use suddenly but I beg of you to persevere, and in particular I would have you make use of that cooling nitrous julep which you took one night, and which will produce some good effects. Your throwing up the opiate pills was in some degree owing to the other ingredients combined with the opium in order to create perspiration. If you object still to the hemlock stupe, I would use the mustard and horse radish bath to your limbs twice a week, by immersing your limbs into warm water in which as much flower of mustard and scraped horse radish have been added as will make your limbs smart, which might have good effects in lightening the head if repeated for some time. You ought even now to wear warm stockings or at least socks. I still wish to see you here and perhaps the change of air and journey might have effects which you do not expect. I should be happy in treating you and Nancy to your seats, and it is only on that condition I would have you. Hope for the best, dear sister, and believe me ever yours while WD

Write

288 30 August [17]89

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, NEAR BELFAST [278]

Dear Matty, I expected to have heard either from you or of you yesterday, and I beg you may give me a line or two tomorrow, as I wish to know the effect to the pills and particularly that of the hemlock pills last ordered. I request you may be circumstantial and I shall be as much so in reply. Dr Haliday and Fuller were up here, in order to inspect the state of W. Goddard's foot, and amputation has been determined as the only chance of saving his life, for his foot is past cure. His father will go down with him in a day or two. W. Bruce and his lady arrived here last night in an excursion to the North for some days and they proceed to Belfast in a day or two. I supped with them last night. She seems a pleasing woman, tolerably genteel and I should imagine good natured. He appears happy and wears the married man well. I missed

⁴⁴ Flannel, or other cloth, wrung out in hot water and medication, and applied to the skin.

but one call since I went, and that not a material one. I hope much for a visit from you and Nancy. The stage coach is so very convenient and I am sure you would not experience any sickness. Ever yours, W DRENNAN

289 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, NEWRY, TO MARTHA MCTIER, CABIN HILL, NEAR BELFAST [282]

My dear Matty, You may well be surprised at my silence, but really I expected every day to be able to see you, but am sorry to find that I am still to be confined. Mrs Russell remains in *statu quo* and one or two ladies more expect to lie in the beginning of this month. I know not when I shall get down. I hope you continue better. Write to me. My spirits are vastly unequal of late. I have tried the cold bath frequently with little effect in increasing or diminishing my defluxion, but I shall persevere in it. I live the life of a parasite, always at other men's tables. It will not do much longer. Templeton is still confined. D. Ogle has been so these six weeks with what is called rheumatism in the head, but really an inflammation and discharge from the ear, which whenever it dries up is succeeded by most excruciating headache. This I heard as in confidence from relations who should have been friends, and seem to her to be much so – woman, woman – strange, but it made me like her better than I did. I met her last night, and she looked piteously pale. I shall see you as soon as ever I am able. Write by return of post. Yours ever, WD

My dearest Matty, I have just received yours and opened my letter to say how much it grieves me that I cannot relieve you. I wrote a long letter to Dr Mattear in which my opinion was stated pretty fully and I suppose he showed it to Haliday. I have not received any answer and therefore the state of the case seems to be pretty much the same. They will certainly order something quieting as James's Powders will not give rest.

290 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [155]

Dear sister, Your account distresses me. I know not what to say in answer to it, nor what to propose in alleviation of your complaint. I read lately of good effects from the extractum hyoscyarni or extract of henbane, given in small doses gradually increased, but these cases are so dressed up in favour of the practitioner that one does not rely on them. Mention it however to Dr Mattear as an article which might be conveniently introduced into pills if it is prepared at any of the apothecaries, and if not it could be made very easily. I don't think you have tried musk which I found found a more powerful medicine in nervous cases than has been supposed, but it was given in considerable quantity. I am sorry to hear of your intention of quitting the country but Sam's business is of such a nature as will probably ere long force

him into town. Your complaint, like my own when bad, renders me stupid, and insensible, and sullen – unless I get into company when I forget it and everything, yet am not merry or feel myself ever so except when I hear music. If I love anyone or anything, I think it is a little child in this house, the sound of whose crying is even pleasing to me. We are all a family unfit for life, even you the best of us, and life is closing gradually like the twilight on us all. This is a dismal day – I have asked Joe Pollock to dine with me when we shall flatter each other into some good humour. I see my Trio as they call it has got into print, with a curious introduction and some notes, as if written by a stranger to all concerned, but I suppose this was disguise the better. It is printed incorrectly which I hate. Send to the breeches-maker opposite the market house and desire him to send me the breeches by the first opportunity, or I will not take them, and the first money Nancy gets let her pay Stewart the shoemaker £1 16s 3d, which I owe him. I am glad to hear Bruce is such an orator but I don't think he is one by nature. I shall see him on his return. Dear sister, write to me whenever you are better – soon I hope in God, our best our only physician. W DRENNAN.

291 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [283B]

My dear Matty, I have daily expected a line respecting your health. Write to me a line or two at least, and tell me how you go on, whether you are taking any medicine now or not, and if any what are their effects. I earnestly wish that in this fine weather you and Nancy would come up for a day in the mail and see me. I am waiting now upon Mrs Lane who expects to be ill daily. We have no news here. Dr Moody⁴⁵ of Dublin is gone to Buxton on account of his health, and people here report that he is declining fast. His bad success of late has I suppose hurt both his body and mind. You could scarcely guess who took the trouble of publishing my lines. It was Campbell's brother, the doctor who lives in Dublin, and thinks that the character of orthodoxy etc. may do the curate service. He calls me a young physician and the son of a dissenting parson etc. I should wish you to go and see Bradberry's⁴⁶ exhibition but not his lecture. He is some mechanic that sells glasses. I priced one of his cameras⁴⁷ which I wanted merely for the purpose of taking profiles. It was two guineas which I thought too high but I believe I would now give it. If any are bought at that price, buy me one and send it up to me and one of the microscopes at three crowns.

Bruce and his lady spent a day here on their return. They seem very happy. Pollock is cheery and I believe glad he is once more a single man.⁴⁸ Yours ever, WD

45 Dr James Moody, physician of Dublin, died 18 December 1789, brother of Rev. Boyle Moody of Newry and Rev. John Moody of Dublin.

46 Bradberry's optical exhibition at Mr Lindon's, in Orr's Entry, High Street, Belfast (*BNL*, 9-13 October 1789).

47 ? a camera lucida.

48 His wife had died on 7 August 1789.

292 Tuesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [283A]

My dear Matty, I request you will write a line to let me know how you are, and how you all are. We are or seem to be at a forgetful distance from each other, and I fear it will become more and more so, you having little pleasant to say, and I having little new to communicate. Business is very far from occupying me, and my sluggishness of mind prevents me from making business for myself. I wrote to Bruce about advancing myself to Dublin if Moody should be removed from practice, as it is understood here that he is very ill and gone to Buxton, but as this is an eventual matter not a syllable of it to be mentioned. I have many reasons for desiring to quit this place which are scarcely worth recounting. I shall not however relax in my professional duties if occasion be given to exert them. I see Cabin Hill⁴⁹ is to be sold and I suppose will sell well. Tell Nancy if Dr Mattear has given the £100 to place it in the bank until called for. I am now often at Mount Hall as usual and they have behaved genteely to me. Write me a line dear Matty and believe me, ever your affectionate brother, W DRENNAN

293 26 October [17]89

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [284]

Dear Sam, As I cannot prevail on Matty to answer my letters I enclose one of Bruce's for your and her perusal, and if there be anything which his friendliness has not suggested, I should be glad to hear from either of you your thoughts on the subject.

I do think my practice here will decline with the town, and I proposed to Bruce my removal to Dublin on the event of Moody's removal from business – you see his ideas. He tells me in a letter I received this night that Moody still continues in a most perilous state of health – much more so than his friends here seem to imagine. I rejoice to hear that Bruce has received such a call⁵⁰ and I trust he will accept it. I indeed imagine he himself would not, but that his mind is altered since he altered his condition. Be so good as to enquire about a pair of leather breeches that were to be ready for me, by a man opposite to Banks. Young Stewart⁵¹ is canvassing here. He called on me, but I was not at home. Yours sincerely, W DRENNAN

294 Wednesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [286]

Dear Sam, I wish for a line occasionally from you, as I find correspondence dropped from other parts of the family and for what reason I cannot say. I received

49 Sam sold his lease of Cabin Hill to Sam Hyde in November 1789 (PRONI, D/270/13).

50 To be the Rev. James Crombie's assistant at Belfast.

51 Robert Stewart (1769-1822), later Viscount Castlereagh, elected MP for Co. Down in 1790 (DNB).

a letter from Bruce part of which I shall copy, as it relates to what you said. I cannot, says he, avoid taking notice of the extract from Mr McTier's letter, because it had some influence on my decision. Had I moved to B[elfast] it would have been with a resolution of spending a studious and active life. I saw a great field open to a literary man and a minister and I should have attempted to occupy part of it myself and to have excited others to parcel out the remainder among them. But it is plain that no improvement in the congregation or the academy could be suggested without exciting the jealousy of Dr Crombie. I know enough of his character and conduct in the academy to expect either an insidious or open opposition to every plan of reform or extension as would best answer his purpose, and though I have the reputation of prudence and reserve, I should not like to cope with such a veteran. I foresaw that though none of my pleas tended to my own emolument, or to Dr C's loss, but rather to the honour and advantage of the institution over which he presides, it would be necessary to possess a high degree of influence in order to execute them. These expectations were damped by Mr McTier's two letters. They indicated such an undue attention to Dr C's interest and case in my best friends, as effectually quelled my spirit of enterprise.

On the extract quoted in yours I shall now make two or three observations, 'It vexed me and some others that they could not do this without hurting Crombie by making his salary less than Bruce's' – that is, that a minister who was to undertake all the occasional duties and as much preaching as his colleague himself might choose to throw upon him should have more stipend than the minister who enjoyed the royal bounty, the advantage of the Widows' Fund, and £300 or £400 per annum from the academy, and was to pay no more attention to the congregation than he thought proper. The next sentence contains an expedient for relieving Dr C from this unreasonable chagrin, namely, that a poor man should divide his income with a rich one and that laborious minister should pay a salary to one who was engrossed by very lucrative cares which were inconsistent with his ministerial duty – So far Bruce. I think there is a vein of unjustifiable timidity that runs through his conduct in this affair, and perhaps he knows by experience the disagreeable situation which a colleague has to undergo from jealousy of rising merit. I think his objection to Crombie seems to weigh most and if so it may be a sort of suspensive negative he has given which a change of circumstances might alter and he can lose nothing by waiting.⁵²

Mr Stewart is here frequently and this seems to be his headquarters. I dined with him and think him very genteel, very well informed, and very much what I admire, but why put out Ward, who has behaved well, for the chance of putting in Stewart, who may behave well? I suppose he seeks popularity now to lay at the feet of the Marquis if put to a push. I received a circular letter from the committee for the relief of Garnet's children. I should wish to be grateful to his memory, but in all these things there is a relative duty and the uncertainty of a most contingent profession

52 Bruce moved to Belfast in the following year, after Crombie's death.

hangs over me in particular. I beg therefore you may give three guineas to J. Kennedy, but I suppose you will judge it too little – I think not. I see you are now become a money broker. I wish you success in all you undertake. I request you may speak to the breeches maker about the breeches I bespoke when last in Belfast. It is not the man I employed first, but the other who lives nearly opposite to Stewart's the shoemaker. What does Nancy say about her jaunt or could she not prevail on Matty to accompany her? The weather I hope is improving. Bruce adds, 'and every observation which I have made since my last confirms me in opinion that you also have acted wisely. I am satisfied that Dr Moody's receipts were overstated greatly by me, and Dr Evory,⁵³ a man of peculiar suavity of face and manner, is another candidate for his practice – but don't repeat anything I mention about Moody.' Now I think him wrong in all this about myself and that my line would better but it's all one fifty years hence. W DRENNAN

295 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [284A]

Dear Sam, I shall most readily meet you and my dear sister at Banbridge on Saturday if nothing extraordinary should intervene, and I be not retained by a patient expecting to lie in. If you go you will probably sleep at Hillsborough, but tell me the time you expect to be at Banbridge which I should wish to be early that I might return at night. I have just had a letter from Bruce. Moody I believe is dying and if that happens shortly, I shall probably determine on Dublin, though Bruce talks in a hesitating manner. His lady is lying in and he has called Dr Clarke.⁵⁴ He says that Armstrong who married Mary Blow is settled in Dublin and with great eclat. This seems odd. Purcell and Plunket attend Moody. Answer me by return of post which is just now going out. Yours ever, WD

296 [December 1789]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [NEWRY POSTMARK], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [285]

My dear Sam, This night I shall probably be in Dublin. I have had a long letter from Pollock who consulted with Mr and Mrs Bruce, and rather on the whole writes discouragingly – many difficulties and much risk are mentioned, and much courage is required to undertake them. I have however a propensity which is strong and I believe will be obeyed. I do not think I ever wanted courage, and I am less easily disheartened by difficulties that must occur in all such adventures than my friends imagine. If I were not to catch at every probability to raise myself from my present situation, I should not think that I acted like a man who flatters himself that

⁵³ Dr Thomas Evory (b.1758), Assistant Master and Master of the Rotunda Hospital, 1786-1800.

⁵⁴ Dr Joseph Clarke (1758-1843), Assistant Master and Master of the Rotunda Hospital 1783-93, married Isabella, niece of Dr George Cleghorn.

he is above his situation. Every place will appear full like Macbeth's table when we are haunted with fear. Pollock says 'If you come lose no time – Don't finally resolve however or speak of it, till you are here.' I shall therefore try the ground for a day or two. Moody is probably by this time dead but Pollock says my other rivals are many of them men of abilities, knowledge and address, with an education at Dublin College and city connections. Notwithstanding, I think it is worth venturing some time and money to live there and not here, and I believe I will venture both. I know I shall have mortifications at first, but I am not unused to them. Few came over to William on his first landing, but he conquered at last. Pollock and Bruce declare themselves engaged, and I am led to think that it is a fear of not appearing so friendly to me as they wish that leads them in a certain measure, rather to be on the discouraging side. My prospects here are limited I know, and I am apt to believe will contract rather than enlarge. If I settle in Dublin, I should lay much stress upon letters and particularly from ladies which will always be useful in time, but I know not if you are able as you are willing, and our dear Matty is I fear more unable.

My dear Matty, your advice is not with your brother on this occasion, but I will not yield to despair either on her account or my own. I received a letter this minute from Bruce. Moody is dead – and I will go up this evening or down. Write to me immediately – let dear Matty write a line. W DRENNAN

297 22 December [17]89

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 12 ECCLES STREET, DUBLIN, TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [287]

My dear Sam, My die is cast – here I am and here will be. I write to acquaint you of this and all my friends through you. I write at present with an earnest solicitation that you will be active, as I know and feel that you are willing, in getting me as many recommendatory letters as possible and in particular, if possible, from ladies to ladies, as it is in the accoucheur line my first aims are chiefly directed. I hope to do well in time and I have confidence and patience. I cannot be particular at present as I should wish, in mentioning all that I have done, all that I have met and expect to meet with, and only can now mention what is my wish that you should do. Is David Gordon in Belfast at present? He resides in Dublin and his lady⁵⁵ is not probably engaged. Everything in this line, cast your thoughts about for me and if you can get letters enclose them to me, if not, as soon as convenient. Such recommendations will recommend me as substitute,⁵⁶ if not at present as principal. I need not say be active, when your brother and, more, your friend is so deeply concerned.

Dear Matty, support me with your advice and your efforts. Let them occupy your mind and lose yourself in your dearest brother. Live happily – live long – and I despair not that you will see me greater than ever you expected. Dear Mother, believe it – dear Nancy, remember me, and dear Sam write soon. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

55 Mary, sister of John Crawford of Crawfordsburn, Co. Down; she married David Gordon on 11 September 1789.

56 i.e. for Dr Moody.

1790

298 25 January [17]90

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 13 MARY STREET, DUBLIN, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [288]

Dear Sam, I have written to Dr H[aliday] for a letter to Lord Londonderry,¹ who is I believe arrived in town. I have heard nothing from the quarter he recommended me to, or from any of the Rowleys, or from Mr Hardy, but there cannot be time for this. I cannot write anything of the kind you mention, as I do not feel a tendency to it, and cannot either befriend my country, or myself, in the prospect of recommendation to Mr O'Neill. I should like to be introduced to him and the Rowley family, but not in this way, and I am literally a professional man and likely to continue so until a paroxysm seizes me which is not now the case. I do not agree with you in respect to writing too many letters. I cannot point out where applications are to be made unless I write; if there are any particular applications I mention those I desire, and if not I desire general recommendation – it is no loss of dignity here, and little there. If one in five are of service, it is well, and I have found often those most distantly acquainted with me, do me most immediate service.

Tell my mother I do not mean my shirts to be ruffled at the wrist, and I have set down the measure of the neck and of the wrist on the top of the next leaf.² My cravats should be full and as worn in the present fashion, and the breast cambric should be pretty full. I was not in pressing necessity for shirts as much as neck cravats – let her remember the towels and some handkerchiefs. I have or probably will take my lodgings at 40 guineas per annum. Alas – poor Matty. Yours, W DRENNAN

299 1 February [17]90

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 13 MARY STREET, DUBLIN, TO MARTHA MCTIER, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [289]

I wish to God, my dear Matty, I could do or say or think of anything that could bring comfort to you, but how can I, when I know neither the cause of your bodily ailments or your mental distresses? I wish much you would try the total warm bath twice in the week along with the pills which I mentioned some time ago to Sam, as I have known many cases where this warm bath with rubbing after it, and without any hot regimen, has brought on a wonderful cessation of all irritations both in mind and body: and this, accompanied with medicines which gently determine the course of the blood more to the surface of the body, might have the happiest effect in lightening both your head and your heart.

Mr H[ercules] Rowley called upon me with Sam's last letter, but I do not yet consider myself as introduced to that family, as I think he will forget me in five

1 Robert Stewart was created Baron Londonderry in 1789.

2 Not found.

minutes after leaving the room – his intellects appear to me much injured. I did not open Sam's letter while he was with me, and therefore did not ask him respecting the direction of the letters to him, but Sam's familiarity with him might probably entitle him to this favour, if the act which expressly prohibits such covers to anyone out of the family does not render the request improper.³ David Gordon called upon me to return my visit and asked me to dine with him on two days in which I happened to be pre-engaged, one of them to Mr Saurin and Lady Cox⁴ whom I have not yet seen. Mrs Gordon is certainly right in not engaging me early – her intention is sufficient. I waited on Mr Hartley⁵ who received me with much civility, mentioned the obligations he lay under to my father, and requested my excuse for not taking that immediate notice of me which he wished, on account of the city business which then occupied him so much. I danced at a city hop with one of his daughters, a very pleasing little girl. I dined along with Tandy⁶ yesterday and many other city politicians. He is a prime man in the city and I doubt not, will be my friend. I shall deliver J. Hamilton's letter this day, if possible. I met Mr and Mrs Patrick at Nairac's⁷ and I made myself known to them, as I once was at their house near Dublin. She appears a sensible woman, and he is a warm and self-sufficient politician. I have been in company with many men of literature, have been pleased and have given pleasure.

I must abandon my lodgings tomorrow. I offered 40 guineas. The lady asked 50. In the meantime, two counsellors, one of them Joy of Belfast, have offered £80 for twenty-two weeks accommodation taking the whole floor, and we must part, as she says with much unwillingness on her side. We part on the best terms, which is convenient on account of messages she may be obliged to receive for me. You see the prices of lodgings – I looked through forty and find the most of them dear and shabby, but in the best part of the town they are dear, but better worth the money. I believe I shall take one this day in the new buildings, Dame Street, but tell not the price in the streets of Belfast – 50 guineas. The fact is, no genteel one and central one can be got cheaper and this one is most genteel. A good lodging is a hobby-horse of mine and I must crib in other things. A member of parliament, Pennefeather,⁸ has the floor above me. Mrs Bruce had advised me to close with Mrs Higgins⁹ my present landlady at 50 guineas, but these rooms are in no degree equal to those I mean to have – and accordingly I have taken them and shall remove there on Wednesday, No 27 New Buildings, Dame Street.

I expected those letters from Doctors Haliday and Mattear which were to be my introduction to Lord Londonderry but I have not yet received an answer from Dr H, and the Rowley family have I hear patronised a Dr Maxwell, lately arrived from the North. However, I shall return Rowley's visit soon and then perhaps he may introduce me.

3 Hercules Rowley (1737-96), MP for Co. Antrim, later 2nd Viscount Langford.

4 Mary, widow of Sir Richard Cox, married Saurin in 1786.

5 Travers Hartley (1723-96), the retiring MP for Dublin city.

6 James Napper Tandy (1740-1803), merchant, radical, and United Irishman (*DNB*).

7 John Nairac whose wife was a member of the Corry family.

8 William Pennefeather, MP for Cashel.

9 Possibly Hannah, wife of Thomas Higgins, and sister of Mrs William Bruce.

I am just come from paying a visit to Dr Law¹⁰ who arrived on Saturday, and who certainly will injure me in my practice among those whom I might otherwise have had, but he is a good and a fair man and we shall always be on a friendly footing. I have no patients but one, but I have and will have patience. Surgeon General Stewart¹¹ to whom I had enclosed a letter of Dr Haliday's relative to Mrs Richardson,¹² answers that Lady Fitzgibbon¹³ had employed Dr Guinan¹⁴ immediately on Sir T. Bell's¹⁵ decease, but that he did not doubt of Mrs Richardson's friendship to me whenever it lay in her power. I wish to be informed if a bill of Stewart's the shoemaker for a pair of boots and yellow slippers was paid for. I beg my mother may have my shirts, towels, and a pair of coarse sheets for my servant ready with all expedition, that I may send down mine which are most out of repair. I often remember Newry and what I left there. Law was surprised I could desert it. I got a very handsome watch ribbon enclosed to me from that place, I fancy from Mr Acheson Thompson's eldest daughter.

Might I not call on Mr Hardy, for he will not I suppose be at the trouble of calling on me? I got two letters from Kelburn of Belfast which promise to be of as much use as any or as all I have received from my native town. I am transplanted. Like a plant I look for some time as if nothing had been suffered by the removal – then I wither a little – at last I take root and grow stronger and more flourishing than ever.

For ever yours, W DRENNAN

300 20 February [17]90

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [290]

Dear Sam, I write in a hurry. I received yours and I hope the affair will not hurt me in the long run. I suspect a lady whom I never saw and who never saw me for telling the story. I had a letter from Dr Haliday which I showed to the Corrys, and Mrs Browne¹⁶ said she would do all that her friendship for me could suggest: but I must wait. Were I to tell you the lady I suspect it would surprise you, and I know she is not of the Corry family, but very intimate with Mrs R[ichardson] and Lady F[itzgibbon]. I thought it my duty to write a very civil letter to Mrs Moore a day or two ago. Mrs Dun[n]¹⁷ is now doing well. I was feed by her yesterday with ten guineas and on the whole have made near twenty since I came up. I this instant received a letter from Mr M. Taylor¹⁸ near Dundalk who tells me his lady is just ready to lie in and that from his anxiety about her, he will give me twenty guineas if I go down this night

10 Dr John Law (d.1809), formerly of Lurgan; Drennan subsequently revised his favourable opinion.

11 George Stewart, Surgeon General of the Army in Ireland.

12 Anne, daughter of Rev. Bernard Ward, Precentor of Down, wife of John Richardson, MP for Coleraine; by her first husband, Richard Chapel Whaley, of Whaley Abbey, Co. Wicklow, she was the mother of Lady Fitzgibbon.

13 Anne, Viscountess Fitzgibbon (d.1844), later Countess of Clare, wife of the Lord Chancellor.

14 Probably Dr Michael Quinan, 24 South Anne Street, see *The treble almanack* (1791).

15 Sir Thomas Bell, physician, knighted in 1778.

16 Sister of Isaac Corry.

17 Wife of John Dunn, MP.

18 A linen merchant who had employed Lennox Bigger, Drennan's cousin.

and two guineas for every day after a week's attendance, and he assures me that her nurse has fixed on Monday as the day. I owe her much and having got leave from Mrs Dunn will go. He has good connections in this city and his letter tells much in my favour, Lennox Bigger is with him and his lady is now much at a loss. I attended her but once and Templeton was her former physician. I meant to have written at length to Dr Haliday this day, but must defer it. Law and I, I hope will both do well. He is already puffed off in the *Phenix*.¹⁹ I am only published by the plate on my door.

I wish you would pay Stewart the shoemaker's account of boots and slippers which I received from him. I believe the young doctors of Newry have had little or no business since I left them. I called on Rowley who never expressed any desire of seeing me again, or of introducing me to his father as he had said on my first visit. Jones²⁰ wanted me to dine at Lord Moira's the day I could not go, and has promised to introduce me. I met Miss M. Jones²¹ once at Counsellor Saurin's. I dined at D. Gordon's with a large party and he never mentioned anything as yet of engagement for his lady. Counsellor Waddell²² was there who is Law's warm friend, and Mrs Pottinger,²³ etc., who are mine. I know not if you can do anything more than you have done, but every letter which I deliver myself is or will have good consequence. I sat half an hour with G. Macartney²⁴ and Lord Massereene,²⁵ and George and his brother William profess much kindness to me. Yours sincerely, WD

Mrs Bruce just now calls to request that I would get a letter to Mr Gallway,²⁶ merchant in Ann Street whose lady is at large, who is as he says a distant relation of my mother's. He is a son of Mr Gallway of Portaferry. The sooner this is done, the better, as Law is using influence there, but in this case it will be in vain. The lady has been designedly kept ignorant of Sir T. Bell's decease, for fear of alarming her. Dr Law's manners I hear don't agree well with the Dublin fashion. Yours

301 3 May [17]90

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [291]

Dear Sam, If I had anything very interesting either of a public or a personal nature, I should have written it. Nothing of either kind has occurred, and you are sufficiently occupied. I have just seen Grattan and Fitzgerald²⁷ proceeding to the hustings at the head of more than 1,400 men, eighteen of the corporation's bands of music playing, etc., Grattan advancing on his light fantastic toe, hope elevating and joy brightening his crest, his eyes rolling with that fine enthusiasm without which it is

19 A Dublin newspaper which appeared in 1790-91.

20 William Todd Jones.

21 Margaret Jones or Todd Jones' sister Maria.

22 Probably Counsellor James Waddell.

23 Anne, wife of Eldred Pottinger of Mount Pottinger, and sister of David Gordon.

24 Rev. Dr George Macartney of Antrim.

25 Clotworthy Skeffington (1742-1805), 2nd Earl of Massereene, who had recently been released by the mob from La Force prison in Paris; for his career, see A. P. W. Malcomson, *The extraordinary career of the 2nd Earl of Massereene, 1743-1805* (Belfast, 1972).

26 Gallway or Galloway, later a friend of Drennan.

27 Lord Henry Fitzgerald (1761-1829), MP for Dublin city, and brother of the 2nd Duke of Leinster.

impossible to be a great man. Fitzgerald, a fine tall young fellow, bending to hear what Grattan is saying – both bareheaded and at times bowing popularly low – each of them holding an arm of the aged and much respected Hartley; while at some distance behind walks Napper Tandy in all the surliness of republicanism, grinning most ghastly smiles and as he lifts his hat from his head, the many-headed monster raises a shout that reverberates through every corner of the Castle. I see suitable devices and mottos on the standards – The Men of the People – The Men that dare be Honest in the Worst of Times – a Place Bill – a Responsibility Bill – and in particular I distinguish a negro boy well dressed and holding on high the cap of liberty – but I look in vain for a bill for amended representation. Let me take another glimpse at Grattan – when all that mighty multitude shall be dead and forgotten as if they had never been, that little man there with the triangular phiz, so genteely ugly, so full of soul, his name shall live as a redeemer of Ireland. Dr Emmet told me he asked him whether he was a friend of a proper representation – his answer was – I and my friend here are by no means adverse to a reform in parliament. The people then says the Doctor are enlisted under you as a party, that people who were once the principals, and the nation is become a Ponsonby²⁸ party. I had the honour of being mentioned in the course of the conversation, and a fine boy²⁹ of Emmet's was brought in to repeat a certain letter at which you will smile, but as I have little profit at present, you ought to allow me a portion of praise.

I saw Dick Bamber who called upon me in his Whig Club³⁰ uniform which seems to be very expressive. He was in the procession. Your resolutions and toasts are much admired here. I was a little chagrined at Dr Haliday's declining his recommendation of me to the Castle Stewart family, especially as I had mentioned to a very intimate acquaintance of the family that I had a probability of obtaining it. And his excuse that any farther assistance of that sort might be deemed insidious to Dr Law, however reasonable it might be were we competitors in a small town where one must lose when another gains, or if Law had any footing in the family, was certainly not a valid excuse, where we were in quite another situation. I have been introduced to Lady Castle Stewart³¹ and have some hopes of her patronage. I hope you are going on well at Down, and that the ass will at length throw the old man and his son into the dirt.³² Government will be stronger in the next parliament and perhaps that is to be wished. I see them driving to ruin and to reform. I am not in a balladizing humour, and I see little good to be gained from it in my present situation.

Perceval³³ told me a fortnight or three weeks ago that Graydon³⁴ and he had proposed me as a member to the Royal Academy but I have heard nothing of it since,

28 The party around William Brabazon Ponsonby (1744-1806), and his brother George Ponsonby (1755-1817), politicians and reformers (*DNB*).

29 Robert Emmer (1778-1803), United Irishman (*DNB*).

30 The Whig Club was established in 1789 to work for moderate, mainly administrative, reform.

31 Sarah (d.1843), wife of the 1st Earl of Castle Stewart.

32 Presumably Lords Downshire and Hillsborough.

33 Robert Perceval (1756-1839), contemporary of Drennan at Edinburgh, and a founder of the Royal Irish Academy (*DNB*).

34 Presumably George Graydon (1753?-1803), secretary to the Royal Irish Academy, founded in 1785 for the encouragement of science and learning.

nor indeed am I very anxious about the honour. I wrote to Dr Bruce my sincere congratulation on his arrival, and I join with you in thinking that Mrs Bruce will accomplish her part in this laborious office with great propriety and ability.³⁵ Bruce's mother is my zealous friend. Is Matty in the town or country at present? Is she taking any medicines at present? Would she and Nancy be ever inclined to pay me a visit here? Perhaps you will be brought up on the merits of a petition. My mother will I hope find the Bruces agreeable neighbours. Farewell – the town is you may suppose remarkably healthy. Give my respectful and affectionate compliments to your sisters and to Margaret when you see them, and believe me, yours sincerely,
W DRENNAN

302 8 o'clock, 9 May [1790]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DUBLIN, TO MRS ANN DRENNAN, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [291A]

Dear Mother, I am come this instant from my second examination which I performed a good deal better though not perfectly to my taste. I addressed Dr Saunders³⁶ in a Latin speech which put him to a non plus by not having wherewithal to answer it. I paid my £15 and am now a licentiate which is not of the greatest importance but will give me what is deemed requisite for men in my situation. I was examined by four of them for an hour and a quarter, which was tolerable stewing, and it would not I think be odd that I should miss some or even many questions in such a situation.

I attended a Mrs Maziere³⁷ lately who was one of Dr Law's connections, but being taken suddenly ill she sent for me. Mrs W. Hincks³⁸ lies in shortly, and Mrs Grierson³⁹ is I believe pregnant. I write almost in the dark. Write soon and I shall answer soon. Farewell dear mother, W DRENNAN

303 17 May [17]90

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, DUBLIN, TO MRS ANN DRENNAN, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [292]

My dear Mother, I had my pen in my hand to write to you when I received your letter and one from Dr Bruce. If I could get franks with any convenience, I should not put you to the expense. I am going on if not prosperously yet sufficiently well and contentedly, picking up a few guineas, and laying the seeds for getting more. Do not let you or Nancy think me wanting in affection, particularly in natural

35 Bruce had been appointed principal of the Belfast Academy.

36 Dr Arthur Saunders; Drennan became a licentiate of the College of Physicians.

37 Probably a relation of Bartholomew Maziere; like Law, the Mazieres were from Lurgan, Co. Armagh.

38 Susan Hincks (1769-1849), wife of William Hincks (1770-1848), Dublin merchant and United Irishman; she was a sister of Drennan's future wife, Sarah Swanwick.

39 Charlotte, wife of George Grierson (1763-1821), king's printer (*Irish Genealogist*, II (1952), pp 303-7).

affection. You are both surrounded with so few objects that withdraw your attention, or at least you suffer your minds too little to be diverted from one or two subjects, which must make you surprised that I do not think of them as much as you do. In this place I am in a very different situation of mind. I am grown better with respect to my cold and breast. There is an elegant cold bath about a mile from my lodging which I mean to use in the summer months, at least thrice in the week.

I am this day in attendance on Mrs Joseph Hutton,⁴⁰ married to a brother of Mrs Bruce. He is one of the ministers in Eustace Street to which I have subscribed myself for two guineas and as much to Strand Street. I dined yesterday with Mr Thomas,⁴¹ the other Eustace Street minister, who is very pleasant and has a very sensible woman for his wife. I met there Mr and Mrs Isaac Weld⁴² who invited me by a card this morning to spend the evening on Friday. Old Mrs Weld,⁴³ a fine old lady of eighty, remembered my father when he was a resident in Dublin. I have attended Miss Dick⁴⁴ in an illness and am still very well received in that family. I please many and I cannot help it, if I do not please all. I am disposed to do it, but the best and brightest have their faults – why should not I who am far from being either, and in a profession which is most liable to observation and a part of it which is most observed? I have heard nothing from Mrs Richardson or any of the Rowleys, but in the course of years do not despair of hearing from them both.

I was to have dined this day with Mr Mathewes,⁴⁵ brother to Miss Mathewes, but have been obliged to come nearer the place to which I have engaged my attendance and dine at the aforesaid Mr Wilson's. Bruce is I find well and likely to be better. Tell him I saw his mother this morning and found her very well and ever disposed to do me service. I shall write to you soon and send this in haste for Hugh.⁴⁶ Yours ever, W DRENNAN

304 Tuesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [293]

Dear Sam, I hope you are still going on well. Hillsborough is moving earth and hell for votes. I saw a letter from the Speaker⁴⁷ to Mr S. Dick⁴⁸ in which he petitions most imperiously for his vote and presence immediately at Down in his lordship's case. I thank you for the squibs – the elegy, and the proclamation. I would hollow 'Mortimer' frequently in his lordship's ear. If I were near you and had leisure, I would

40 Mary Hutton (1767-1864), wife of Rev. Joseph Hutton (1765-1856), Presbyterian minister, and sister of Mrs Susan Hincks, and of Drennan's future wife, Sarah Swanwick.

41 This is presumably a slip of the pen; the Rev. Samuel Thomas died in 1786; Drennan must mean the Rev. Philip Taylor (1747-1830) of Eustace Street, who was married to a sister of Isaac Weld.

42 Isaac Weld (d.1824), customs official, and his first wife Elizabeth Kerr.

43 The widow of Rev. Dr Isaac Weld of Eustace Street (1710-78).

44 Probably daughter of Samuel Dick, see below.

45 Members of the Mathews family of Newcastle, Co. Down.

46 ? Hugh Patten, Mrs Drennan's servant.

47 John Foster.

48 Samuel Dick (d.1802), Dublin merchant.

fasten my cracker to his tail. I send you lines truly extempore for they are written in half an hour. Take them to the bog-house or send them to the print-house. Things go on here as usual – Perseverance is my motto. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

Add a verse or two as you know the men.

305 Wednesday, July [1790]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, DUBLIN, TO MRS ANN DRENNAN, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [294]

Dear Mother, I expected to have heard from Belfast, but I suppose Sam is so fatigued after the election that he is averse from writing. I have little new to tell you. I got Lennox Bigger to buy me four neat breakfast-cloths which will serve also at dinner for which I paid a guinea and a half, and coarse sheets for John⁴⁹ which came to a guinea. I was called since I wrote to you to young Mrs Hincks who suffered a miscarriage. Between ourselves, and the family, I may tell you what I have received since I came to Dublin – just 60 guineas, and if I keep myself barely afloat for some time it will be as much as I can or perhaps ought to expect. I mentioned by mistake to you that Dr Clarke had attended Lady Fitzgibbon, but I find it was Guinan who is now growing infirm and therefore more apt to give room for younger men. I find also that Dr Law was making every exertion by his friends, Mrs Brownlow,⁵⁰ etc., to get employed there, which he never has mentioned to me in his frequent morning calls which were made partly to sound me about the probability of my reception in the same place. He is very sly, but this does not alter my general opinion of the man.

Mrs Mitchell has been much better of late, and to be sure owes it, in great part, to my medicines, for which she owes me her interest whatever it be. Mrs Isaac Corry has brought up one of her children about whom I consulted with Dr Perceval a day or two ago. Dr Perceval may thank me for several fees I have thrown in his way, and may some time or other return the compliment. I met Carleton lately who was very civil, in the street, and I[saac] Corry is as much so. I suppose there will be no petition from Down, and of consequence Sam will not have occasion to come up. When does Bruce come? Write and tell me if you know, but I suppose he wishes to come unexpectedly upon us. With respect to what you say of Mrs W I see her but seldom, and generally when she has occasion for me as a physician. Mrs Nicholson⁵¹ has been in England this month past and I never saw her but twice while she was in Dublin. Don't give me too much direction, or it will indispose me from writing at all. Let us do as well as we can. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

Our members are all gone again, and you must therefore pay postage.

49 Drennan's servant.

50 Probably Catherine, second wife of William Brownlow, MP.

51 Anne (1741-1800), sister of Rev. Dr George Macartney, widow of John Nicholson of Bangor.

306 31 December [17]90

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER BELFAST [295]

Dear Sam, I return the bill on B. Maziere enclosed, and if you can, send me the other by return of post.

I have consulted with every person whose advice is valued on the subject you mention, and it is their joint opinion that the complaint is produced by an extraordinary determination of blood to the head occasionally, that every mode therefore of diverting this tendency by directing the blood to the surface as by the exhibition of tartar emetic, by a seton⁵² cord in the nape of the neck, by lying with the head high at night, by shaving the head and rubbing it with stimulating applications, are all means of bringing relief. It is also recommended that great care must be taken of having the mind or attention turned to the mention of herself in any way, that she should keep in company, and have her mind always in constant employment and occupation. Yours ever, WD

52 A thread to maintain an issue or opening for discharges.

307 2 January [17]91

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, TO MRS ANN DRENNAN, DONEGALL STREET,
BELFAST [296]

Dear Mother, I shall write to you frequently if you consent to pay the postage. I wish you many new years, if they be happy ones. My health has been a good deal better since I came to Dublin than when I was in the country. This I cannot attribute either to the air or mode of living, which are neither of them favourable to weak lungs as mine certainly are, but simply to the correction of a bad habit I had contracted from prejudice, of keeping myself very slightly covered in the night time. I thought I had always caught cold by staying out late at night for every morning I had a constant pain in my chest, and a constant expectoration of mucus from my lungs. Since I lay warmer, this has very much abated, and is not nearly so frequent in its returns, unless I walk much at night or in the evening. My expenses here have been very considerable, and I must now enter on my mighty capital. I shall draw for £100. I have made since I came up not two pounds more than I did the first year in Newry which is £105, and that with what I brought up and the price for my horses has been what I have expended. Now, when you read these things, or anything else I may write for your and Nancy's entertainment, I make it a condition that you read them to Sam or Matty only upon their promise that they will not on any account mention them to any other person, and if this be not agreeable, let them not be read at all. There are many things may be mentioned in such family letters that I should be made ridiculous indeed by mentioning with the least hazard of being made public.

My job chaise or my balloon has at least covered my mantelpiece with cards of invitation, and I think facilitates my getting new acquaintance for drums and balls. I generally drive in the morning to any patient I may have and sit an hour with any of my acquaintance, and dine for the most part abroad. Who would you have me marry? I can when I choose, but not whom I choose. Would you have me take Miss C or Miss S or Miss G or Miss E or Miss O, for not to shock Nancy's prudery, I could get any of them even with this insignificant person and face – ay and as many more. This year must decide my choice as it will be pretty decisive of my purse.

Is it not odd, I should never hear a syllable pro or con from Mrs Richardson. I always take it into my head there is some slanderous story circulated at my expense which has prejudiced her and others. This I cannot know from want of female confidants. Mr Carleton is in town, and we called at each other as before, without seeing or being seen. I[saac] Corry has been in the south these five months at least for which he receives five guineas a day, beside his £1,000 per annum as commissioner. His service to me has amounted to taking me in much hurry to Surgeon

Stewart, Surgeon General, the first day I arrived, and this same gentleman after much profession of kindness only gives me a hat in the street, while he entertains frequently Law and others. This same Stewart is a comely soft man, much with the Chancellor¹ and his lady, and I suspect more with [the] mother of that lady, but that is my sc[—] you must not be shocked at hearing [—] ladies keep gentlemen, as gentlemen in old-fashioned times use to keep ladies. Young Emmet,² son of the doctor, my pleasant old friend, is not two months arrived from the Temple and is to be married in a week to Miss Patten, a pretty girl with a reputed fortune of £2,000 but I doubt if she has the quarter – her mother a widow of a dissenting minister at Clonmel whom you might remember. I have been at the house of Mrs Colvill,³ formerly a Miss Lennox, a relation of yours, and I met another Miss Lennox, an antiquated virgin, at Andrew Caldwell's⁴ lately. I suppose Bruce's child is better by his giving a ball. Fare you all well. W DRENNAN

I expect to hear from Sam tomorrow – Tuesday

308 5 February [17]91

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [299]

Dear Sam, I think you might give me a line now and then, about your affairs domestic or general. Dublin, to those who do not mix in particular circles, is more barren of anything very interesting than you could imagine. The first of my patients that has died since I came was buried yesterday, you may therefore collect that the number which I have had has not been very great. His name was Fayle,⁵ one whom I accidentally met in company about a year ago, and who employed me as his physician, but being rather inconstant in his attachments of this nature would probably have dismissed me for some other, had not death intervened. Perceval, a man I must respect for candour and liberality of professional character, was occasionally consulted.

I should be glad to give you a set down in my carriage which if not as handsome as some is at least as dear, and yet I am as well off as others. Dr Harvey⁶ wittily says that Dr D has mistaken the effect for the cause, and as this observation has more wit than malice, I take care to retail it as his speech – others call it a shitten carriage because it happens to have a patent yellow ground, but the most never mind it in the crowd which are incessantly traversing these streets. My Newry friends sometimes give me a call, my Belfast ones, seldom. McCabe is very civil in this respect. His petition respecting the double loom has been received by the House, and a

1 John Fitzgibbon (1749-1802), later Viscount Fitzgibbon and Earl of Clare (*DNB*); Mrs Richardson was Lady Fitzgibbon's mother.

2 Thomas Addis Emmet (1764-1827), originally qualified as a physician but took up the law on the death of his elder brother, an outstanding barrister; he became a close friend of Drennan (*DNB*).

3 Sarah, widow of Robert Colvill of Newtownards; she was born Sarah Lennox and died in 1835, aged 104 (*JFR*, p.263).

4 Andrew Caldwell (1733-1808), barrister (*DNB*).

5 In a letter to Bruce, 24 December 1790, Drennan describes Fayle as a friend whom he was said to resemble (PRONI, D/553/74).

6 Dr William Harvey (d.1819), physician to Dr Steevens' Hospital in 1779 and to the Rotunda in 1784, many times president of the College of Physicians:

committee appointed to examine its merits. I was in the House but once this session. My chief entertainment was observing Grattan, for excepting him, Ponsonby and I think I[saac] Corry, I could have made as good a speech as any I heard from either side. Grattan is without exception the most singular speaker that ever, with such a figure, voice and manner, made an oration. His voice was totally lost at every third or fourth sentence and his action was violent to a degree of fury, which is felt because it is genuine enthusiasm, and he makes the other speakers who are young men throw about their arms, and struggle in their throat, in order to seem energetic and give some sincerity to their declamation. Grattan's face is I think one of the finest and most expressive I ever saw, though this would seem joking to some – and there is a genteel awkwardness about him and all that he says and does, which I think doubles the impression he makes. I[saac] Corry answered him as well as I believe any in the House could, but was not honoured with a reply. I should imagine the House to be very low at present in parliamentary speaking. Flood is in town, but whether he will be a member is uncertain.

All the world talks of that horrid affair near Dundalk and Lord Charlemont, Brownlow with all the gentlemen of that country had a meeting. They may now ask why should we tolerate, why should we commit arms and rights to such savages as these Catholics, and the only answer is, why did you make them and keep them savages, for that they are such is without question. All this will put off the day of general freedom – the barbarians and Mr Burke, and this island will be the last redeemed in Europe. How does your Whig Club? The one here literally does nothing more than eat and drink. They have no fellow feeling with the people, nor the people with them, and my own opinion is that every Volunteer should blush to quit his uniform and buy one for either Whig Club, northern or southern. It is not good reasoning to go from generals to particulars, nor I am sure is it good patriotism. I am very much in company and do not often dine at home. I saw R[obert] Stewart once in the House and once out of it. He is certainly a most promising young man, and one of the most handsomest in the House, perhaps to become one day, the most able. Lord Hillsborough has petitioned against his minority⁷ and we hear that he has the best legal opinions over the water in his favour. I dine today at J. Pollock's,⁸ and I hear Mrs Sinclair is in town on a visit to them.

Is Matty trying any medicine at present or undergoing any regimen? I hope and trust that she will recover her peace of body and mind, and that I shall have a visit from you and her perhaps in the course of the summer.

How does Bruce and his family, public and private? Give him and J. Kennedy my best compliments. Tell A. Buntin that I got a job on the hope that he would make use of it, supposing him to have no objection to a job in any colour. I just now hear a sound in the streets which you would not expect in Dublin, a number of boys and girls singing psalms, as they proceed to the charity sermon. There are many traps in this place noon and night – this is a charity trap. Farewell. Yours sincerely, W DRENNAN

⁷ Stewart canvassed while under age in 1790.

⁸ Either Joseph Pollock, or his cousin, John Pollock the younger (d.1825), attorney and government agent, brother of Mrs Sinclair.

309 21 May [17]91

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [300]

Dear Sam, I had some hopes that you and Matty might have effected a jaunt to Dublin in the course of all the fine weather we have had. Dublin differs both from Belfast and Newry most remarkably in the weather. I don't think there has been three days of rain successively since I came here, and in Newry I have seen as many weeks. In summer we are choked with dust. I think for all the visits paid by me while in Newry, which taking two in the year were fourteen, you might afford one in return if your business should permit it. Mr Ne[il]son' of Belfast, a very smart young man whom I met with yesterday at dinner at Counsellor Dunn's, told us that Lord Donegall was wanting to put the Ballast Office into the hands of the corporation. J. Dunn is well, and his lady in a thriving way. Mrs Gordon is so too, but she will probably lie in the country.

I saw lately a letter from Dr Haliday to Mr Chambers,¹⁰ secretary to the Whigs of the Capital, a body made of good honest men but not so honourable as of the Whig Club, and not so genteel as to gain admission there, so were obliged to tack the shreds of whiggism together to make an association for themselves. The Whig Club is literally an eating and drinking aristocratical society without any fellow-feeling with the commonalty. When the people come forward, these men draw back, and when they come forward, the people are lifeless and there is no strength in them. Lord Charlemont was escorted by the Whig Club to the water side. Jos[eph] Pollock, whose mind is I think neutralised for some years past, went with them in my job.¹¹ He wrote the address from Armagh to his lordship, which was very well written and spirited, if a man does not find himself sick in hearing that word so often repeated to such little purpose.

I should much desire that a society were instituted in this city having much of the secrecy and somewhat of the ceremonial of freemasonry, so much secrecy as might communicate curiosity, uncertainty, expectation to the minds of surrounding men, so much impressive and affecting ceremony in its internal economy as without impeding real business might strike the soul through the senses – a benevolent conspiracy – a plot for the people – no Whig Club – no party title – the Brotherhood its name – the rights of man and the greatest happiness of the greatest number its end – its general end, real independence to Ireland and republicanism its particular purpose – its business, every means to accomplish these ends as speedily as the prejudices and bigotry of the land we live in would permit, as speedily as to give us some enjoyment and not to protract anything too long in this short span of life. The means are manifold – publication, always coming from one of the Brotherhood, and no other designation. Declaration, a solemn and religious compact with each other to be

⁹ Samuel Neilson (1761-1803), woollen draper, United Irishman and editor of the *Northern Star* (DNB).

¹⁰ John Chambers, Dublin printer and bookseller, United Irishman; the Whigs of the Capital, led by James Napper Tandy, included many founder members of the Dublin United Irish Society.

¹¹ i.e. in his job carriage.

signed by every member, and its chief and leading principles to be conveyed into a symbol worn by every [one]¹² of them round their body next the heart. Communication with leading men in France, in England and America so as to cement the scattered and shifting sand of republicanism into a body (as well as those malignant conspiracies which courts and classes of men have formed) and when thus cemented to sink it like a caisson in the dark and troubled waters, a stable, unseen power. Why should secrecy be necessary? For many reasons. It gives greater energy within – greater influence abroad. It conceals members whose professions etc. make concealment expedient until the trial comes, etc., etc. I therefore think and insist on your not even¹³ mentioning it, nor do not imagine I shall neglect my profession or injure my character by keeping bad company. You are not, I believe, a republican, but not many years will elapse till this persuasion will prevail, for nothing else but the public happiness as an end, and the public will as the power and means of obtaining it is good in politics, and all else is job. Such schemes are not to be laughed at as romantic, for without enthusiasm nothing great was done, or will be done.

I think it would have been well worth your while to come to Dublin to have heard Kirwan¹⁴ yesterday, for such a patriotic display of this wretched land, never did I hear. The town is thin, and he got but £418. One lady took her purse, and not thinking it enough, threw a watch with trinkets into the plate which was handed round by Lord Clonmell,¹⁵ etc. You may conceive what a sermon it was when I felt the strongest impulse to give a guinea, but somehow or other it was, in falling, transformed into a shilling. I doubt much if St Paul could have preached better.

My mother tells me that Mrs Conyngham¹⁶ desired you to make use of her house. It was a most civil offer and I should very earnestly wish that it were accepted by you and Matty for a few days at least. I am, yours very sincerely, W DRENNAN

310 · 13 June [17]91

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, TO MRS ANN DRENNAN, BELFAST [301]

Dear Mother, I received yours this morning. My life floats on not disagreeable, though I do not do as much good in my profession as I could desire, I have made 80 guineas since this year began, and do not despair of making £200 in the whole of it, which for the second year, without any great friends to support me, I do not think bad. Harvey said that he was three years here before he made kail to his broth. I saw a house or rather palace that Hudson the dentist has built in the country, and which the wits here say, is not reducible to any order but the tuskan.¹⁷ I suppose this

12 Word supplied.

13 ? ever.

14 Rev. Walter Blake Kirwan (1754-1805), popular preacher, famous for his charity sermons, later Dean of Killala (*DNB*).

15 John Scott, Earl of Clonmell (1739-98), one of the judges at Drennan's trial in 1794 (*DNB*).

16 Anne, widow of David Conyngham.

17 i.e. Tuscan.

man makes at least £1,000 or £1,500 per annum and the third part of it would satisfy me, vain as you think me. I want nothing more than £500 pretty certain.

I wrote a polite letter of advice to Mrs Dunn, but received no answer. I am determined to call on her mother-in-law to sound her respecting her daughter's intentions, and if I find that she has any to call Law in, I shall wait on her myself, and in a respectful but determined manner, insist on her giving some reason for it. The matter is of consequence to me though it may appear trifling to her, and it is best to know positively before the evil is done. All this may perhaps be unfounded suspicion on my part arising from her close and reserved manner.

A. Buntin is here catching a dinner like myself where he can, rose pomatum in his hair, and an empty purse in his pocket, content and almost happy.

I have been talking to old Mrs Dunn,¹⁸ and I cannot collect that Mrs C[ounsellor] Dunn has found anything amiss in my conduct respecting her. I have been attending a young lad in a consumption lately, a Mr Nevin, and his mother enclosed me lately ten guineas beside three I had received before. He is in the country and in a desperate way. I believe I will give up the job¹⁹ at least for the four summer months, which will make the two ends meet. I dined lately with Dr Emmet as I do often and he is always civil to me, as is his amiable wife, his daughter not so much so.²⁰ She is at present in Youghall. The young counsellor²¹ and his lady live with the doctor for the present. She is very pretty, and he is very studious, or affects being so, very clever in speech as all the family, through which a vein of elegance, taste and all that runs.

Mrs Johnson²² and her family are still great favourites with me. I dine there today for the sake of an introduction to a Mrs Hoskinson,²³ one of the Fellow's wives. A Mrs Minchin²⁴ a widow lady lives there, with whom and her three children, I was told, that I was going to be married. I have not seen the Miss Patersons²⁵ and don't know any of their acquaintance here. I am asked tomorrow to Mr Patrick's who asked me once and twice when I came up first, but never since as I was engaged both times. He is a flash of a man. His sister is always civil to me and I suppose it is through her that I am asked. They have taken a fine house in Palace Row. Lennox Bigger's wife²⁶ and he have gone to the country. She was ill here and they called me to see her. I have no more news at present, and believe me ever yours, WD

18 Margaret, wife of the Rev. William Dunn of Strand Street, Dublin; she was a sister of James Bruce of Killyleagh, Co. Down.

19 i.e. his job carriage.

20 Mary Emma Emmet, who later married Robert Holmes, and died in 1805; she does not appear to have liked Drennan, although she later employed him as her accoucheur.

21 Thomas Addis Emmet.

22 Maria, wife of John Johnston of Belvedere Place, Dublin; she was a sister of the Rev. Thomas Higginson of Lambeg (*IFR*, p. 593).

23 Possibly the wife of Dr Francis Hodgkinson.

24 Possibly Elizabeth, widow of Francis Minchin of Dublin, woollen draper, who died c.1789 leaving three children (*IFR*, p. 842).

25 Hannah and Mary Patterson were neighbours in Belfast.

26 Bigger married Charlotte Eastwood on 25 March 1791 at St Nicholas, Dundalk.

311 2 July 1791

SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [302]

Dear Will, I received yours and the enclosure which I have read several times and am highly pleased with it. I have showed it in confidence to several gentlemen here who all approve very much of it except Bruce, whom I found had seen it before by H. Joy. Bruce is against all appearance of secrecy, which point he says he has frequently argued with you, indeed I think Bruce is guided too much by H. Joy, who would not in my opinion risk the circulation of his newspaper for any political scheme whatever. He is one of your very prudent patriots. I have not yet showed to Dr H[aliday]. If I should, he would be apt to ask to leave it with [him]²⁷ until the next day which I could not well refuse him and then I know I would never get it from and he would in all probability send it to Lord Charlemont, at any rate he would not like it. His prejudice against the Catholics is very great and he likes much to stand well with Lord C, etc., of rank.

We rejoice here at the King of France being taken and are making great preparations for celebrating the 14th at a meeting of the different Volunteer corps. They named me as one of a committee to prepare some declaration or resolutions to be published from the meeting on the 14th, which I believe will be the most numerous ever was in Belfast; I know they appointed me in hopes that I would get something from you and I will be much obliged to you if you'll do something for us, and let me know soon if I may expect it. Dr H[aliday] is not looked to as formerly on these occasions, between ourselves he is much failed in every respect.

My poor Matty was very ill yesterday, more so than she has been for a long time. The night before she eat a very hearty supper and had a very bad night's rest after it, and we think she is always worse of eating much supper, but in company there is no restraining her. At any time however she seldom tastes flesh. In the midst of her illness she had a most violent hysterical fit of laughter. Last night she took four pills, slept well all night, and is well and perfectly composed today. We spend the evening at the Halidays. If I could get some discreet woman, as a better kind of servant, just to attend Matty, take care of her things and occasionally sit with her, I believe I would try a house of our own. I have Kingsmill's ready.²⁸ If I could get such a woman that could be depended on, I would not want her for wages. The Doctor says he hopes the turn of the year will produce a happy change. Yours ever, SAM MCTIER

If your club brotherhood takes place we will immediately follow your example.

312 3 July [17]91

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [303]

Dear Sam, I received yours and thank you for it. I enclosed on Saturday to H. Joy, who had wrote to me on the subject, a declaration adapted to the occasion of the

²⁷ Word supplied.

²⁸ He had bought the lease of this house, but the McTiers continued to live in Cunningham Row until 1793.

14th, and desired him to show it to you and Bruce – as I think it a very proper opportunity to speak out, I wrote it with perhaps too much spirit for your assent. I hope not however, for I cannot assent to have it at all altered, and I am only sorry I had not room to express the necessity of conciliating the interests of Catholics and Protestants at present. The first are at present in treaty with government who are holding out to them as a lure that if they be quiet they shall get a similar indulgence to the bar, as they have done in England. This they promise, without any intention I believe of performing, but merely to divide the two great bodies, and particularly at this time when Burke has foolishly licked up such a spirit, and when the French disease seems so catching. The Catholics will rather rely on this chance of getting a little surely, than run the risk of coalescing with men who they think treated them ill, and who they suppose are led by men their bitter enemies. I mean by the Catholics, the aristocracy among them such as Lord Kenmare,²⁹ Fingall,³⁰ etc., who are in habits of connection with government, and whom government can influence, as a few, with greater ease than the large body. These are the men who are now using every art to check all free expression, or action among their own members, and I believe will do so until the next session, when they expect the promised indulgence. If government grant this, they will do wisely, in giving a sop to Cerberus he will fall asleep. If they do not, then the democratic part of the Catholics will have double energy, and it is probably [*sic*] they will carry the whole body with them. There is a representation of them which at present sits to manage the repeal of the penal laws, composed of members nominated by the towns, and the land holders sit in their own right, and these, not being responsible to any constituents, act aristocratically, and are under the eye and influence of government.

If therefore the Presbyterians come forward by drawing up some articles as a base as it were of amity and alliance between the two bodies in a common cause, this common agreement, this point of union, would shock government more than anything, for it conquers now only by fomenting division and by saying to the Catholics, do not depend on those Presbyterians who have always hated you with peculiar rancour and who now only want to make you their instruments for a reform, in which they will abandon you and leave you out on getting their purposes served; but confide in us who have certainly the power, and who in a short time, you shall know, have the will to serve you. Now the 14 July is a good occasion for the Northerners to speak in a friendly manner, if they want assistance – at least to pave the way for communication by showing themselves liberal enough not to deny the common rights of men to Catholics, such as the right of entering into the bar, of being justices of peace and magistrates which would render them knit with the interests of the country – the right of carrying arms, and sure there never could be such a thing born by us, as they did when Volunteers, that every man of them was under the mercy of any rogue or rascal who had a pique and could make the law be enforced that subjects them to a fine of £50 or £100 and imprisonment for six

29 Thomas Browne, 4th Viscount Kenmare (1726-95).

30 Arthur James Plunkett, 7th Earl of Fingall (1731-93).

months, if a firelock be found in their houses – the right also of franchise, in which they differ themselves, but most are for extending it only to those who have £50 per annum in counties.

There was it seems a society³¹ much upon the principles I propose in the College – J. Pollock one – I was there a night or two ago. As being a society, they are naturally against or rather indifferent about another. However I still think another would do – broader and deeper.

The Catholics hate the Whig Club here. They say Hobart³² and Ponsonby have met on the point and are both against them. I believe Pollock will move something about their intentions with respect to Catholics at their meeting on the 12th, a strange day when two days after is the proof that a great Catholic country know liberty and practise it better than any here. Lord Charlemont must like the 12th better than the 14th.

Sure Matty must be interested in the accounts from France. That baggage the Queen has been the impediment to his effecting his escape. It is really a wonderful affair – the sovereign in the common sewer, and Burke would say the fishwoman in the sovereignty. If Joy or Bruce should not like the paper I request you will propose it. If you do not like it tell H. Joy to send it back. Yours ever, WD

[LIST OF TOASTS IN SAM MCTIER'S HAND]

King

Prince of Wales

14th July 90 and the F[rench] Revolution

National Assembly of France and may they establish that constitution that will contribute most to the happiness of people

A speedy separation to Church and State everywhere

The United States of America.

President Washington

Congress

Memory of Dr Franklin

Memory of M. Mirabeau³³

Mr Paine³⁴ and the Rights of Man

President of the N[atational] A[sssembly]

M. Lafayette³⁵

Ireland

Lord C[harlemont] and the V[olunteers]

Mr Grattan and the virtuous M[inority] of last S[ession] of P[arliament]

May the Catholics and P[rotestants] of Ireland be of one mind in ascertaining their rights as men and fully establishing the independence of their country

31 This society had been founded by Tone, and included Pollock, T. A. Emmet, Peter Burrowes, Whitley Stokes, etc. (Marianne Elliott, *Wolfe Tone, prophet of Irish independence* (New Haven and London, 1989), p.103).

32 Robert Hobart (1760-1816), later 4th Earl of Buckinghamshire, at this date Chief Secretary (*DNB*).

33 Honoré-Gabriel Riqueti, Comte de Mirabeau (1749-91), French revolutionary and statesman.

34 Thomas Paine (1737-1809), radical thinker and author of the *Rights of man* (1791) (*DNB*).

35 Marie-Joseph, Marquis de La Fayette (1757-1834), French general and statesman.

[? IN MARTHA MCTIER'S HAND]

A Convention of our People to obtain their Equal Representation

For the Good of our Nation may each honest Catholic and Protestant be ever united.

May the Sons of Ireland be alike occupied in promoting the Public Welfare and alike invited to partake in the public happiness.

313 9 July [17]91

SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [304]

Dear Will, Last night we had a meeting of the committee for preparing matters for the 14th when I laid your paper before them, which was received with unanimous approbation, but you know there is a class of men who think they add to themselves by finding fault with the works of others. One of this tribe who came in late, objected to the word legitimate, as being of doubtful meaning when you say 'that obedience itself ceases to be a duty when power is no longer legitimate'. The amendment proposed I thought very bad and would not consent to, but told them I would let them know the next day by twelve, for I wanted to speak to H. Joy before I admitted of any alteration (Bruce is gone to the Causeway). This day I have shown it to a great many people who all highly approve of it and think the objection a foolish one. H. Joy and I waited on Mr Sharman who is now an inhabitant of our parish and is to be our chairman the 14th and we showed him the declaration, which he also liked very much and said he would sign it with all his heart, but he said the words, a weak man or a wicked woman, were so personal against the king and queen of France that he wished they had been left out, and we agreed to strike them out. H. Joy and I next went to the big Doctor³⁶ and showed it to him, in whose face I could plainly see envy and disappointment whilst he was reading it. He proposed nobility in the place of peerage, and royalty in that of the weak man, etc. He said it was a good paper but never asked who wrote it and when I proposed to him that the Whig Club should join with the people in the procession and their declaration, the first he said we might, but as a club we must dine together, and from H. Joy I learn he has a paper prepared for the occasion. He says it is a very timid and weak one. Mr Sharman this morning said he had got a blank cover with two or three printed papers, that he did not rightly understand, and that he had given one of them [to]³⁷ George Black.³⁸ Afterwards I met G.B. and asked him for a sight of the paper Mr S[harman] had given him. He asked his son for it, who said that Captain McNevin³⁹ had not returned it. McN he said had behaved very ungentlely for he only desired him to get a reading of it. By this time, I doubt not but it is in the Secretary of

36 Haliday.

37 Word supplied.

38 George Black of Belfast (b.1725), merchant, wine importer, several times sovereign of Belfast.

39 Presumably Captain Andrew Macnevin, government informer.

State's hand at the C[astle] of Dublin; upon my enquiry at G.B. what kind of paper it was, he said it was something like freemasonry, but contained a Catiline conspiracy, that it was devilish well written and in strong nervous language. I advised him to get and be cautious of showing, for fear of its getting abroad as it might do mischief in the hands of hot headed people. He agreed. I send this by Neilson and this night your declaration is to be adopted by the committee. What would you think of some printed copies dispersed on Thursday morning, that country people who join and the townsmen might know before hand what they were going to declare? Yours ever, SAM MCTIER

314 11 July [17]91

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [305]

Dear Sam, When you wrote I suppose you had not received my last, as you would in that case have mentioned the paragraph, the insertion of which I was particularly anxious about, the more so, as many here think it would be of much importance to hold out a paragraph of this kind conciliatory to the Catholics. I thought and still think that it should be proposed to the body at large as a touchstone of their dispositions on this grand point. The personality of the words, a weak man and a wicked woman, only renders the sentence more pungent and if it be conveyed by a general term – royalty – it will have no impression – that's all. A 'peerage' is improper as there is properly no such thing as peerage in France. There was not one I read it to that had not either a verbal or some other objection and if allowed they would pluck all the feathers from the goose or the peacock. The paper on the Brotherhood was read publicly by Sheridan⁴⁰ in the Four Courts the day after I had sent it to three in confidence, and he was not one of the number – so that seeing it public I sent it to all I liked. It will neither damp or destroy the business. Another name may be taken and all will be the same. If copies of the declaration be previously printed, they will say it was improper anticipation unless the title testifies the intention. If it be printed send me a copy. We dine here on the 14th but in what force I cannot say. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

The paragraph is after the world's national happiness, thus

Seriously reflecting both as men and Irishmen on the principles and practice of France and its truly national assembly where Protestants sit, the representatives of many hundred thousand Catholics, and are instructed by them to place the civil and political rights of Protestants on a foundation as broad, deep, and secure as their own – then casting our eyes over this distressed and divided land, where the great body of the people are still constrained by force rather than obliged by duty, we do think and declare that men who differ in their creed may form a sound part of the same civil constitution, and we do wish from the bottom of our hearts that the time may be accelerated when the rights of men and the rights of citizens may meet

40 Charles Francis Sheridan (1750-1806), barrister, MP and author (*DNB*).

together in the name of Irishmen – for – until that time we shall seem to act merely from self-interest, ourselves, a dictating and domineering party – ourselves a monopolising aristocracy – Go on then great and gallant people of France

315 [undated]⁴¹

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [339]

Sam has neither time nor temper to write at present, immediately after the grand procession and the reading the declaration where Harry Joy has foiled him as he did in the committee last night. Your last paragraph in regard to the Catholics was lost by the previous question. The declaration is adopted and the chairman Mr Sharman is requested to transmit a copy to the National Assembly's president in French and English.

Oh Will – I [text breaks off]

316 31 August [17]91

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [306]

Dear Sam, I hope you have not dropped all thoughts of a jaunt to Dublin this summer; I could accommodate you and Matty with great ease by resigning my own bed, and taking my servant's for the short time you might stay. My lodgings here are very good in respect to rooms, and central in situation, though that is not a matter of the consequence I supposed it, and they are not very distinguishable as the houses in this range are almost perfectly similar to each other. I pay 60 guineas a year which is an increase of ten guineas per annum by my landlord who evidently took me at an advantage, and it has made me desirous of looking out for a house in any genteel street which I could afford to take. I saw one in Gloucester Street, on the side of the water I have most acquaintance, which I suppose might be had at £45 or £40 a year with £100 fine, and is in one of the genteelest streets of Dublin, but I could only do it by borrowing the money and paying interest for it which would make the rent amount to £50. I suppose I shall stay where I am or shift only next door, though some of my friends seem to wish that I should be in a street of less thoroughfare and business. I have only taken my present lodgings until November.

W. Sinclaire has, I believe, received two addresses to the Belfast Volunteers from two meetings of Roman Catholics at Elphin and at Leitrim. It is here imagined the most prudent way not to publish them at present, least it drew down the aristocratical part of the Roman Catholics to damp all such proceedings by their united influence and power, but rather to wait until the system of conciliation and consequent unity of council and action should be farther completed. For this purpose,

⁴¹ This unfinished letter is bound in the sequence for 1792, but must date from 1791 as Drennan moved to 11 Dame Street in November 1791; it is the only letter from Martha in the period from summer 1789 to February 1792; the wrapper has been used by Drennan to draft part of an address or resolution.

it is thought that it would be a proper mode for the Belfast companies to depute some of their members to those Volunteers who are most bigoted against the Catholics, to lay before them the real state of the business, these answers, the necessity of amity and alliance and to endeavour to get resolutions of a similar nature to their own agreed to, without aiming at publication until the number was obtained sufficient to form a tolerably good representation of the popular interest in Ulster. If this were obtained and then a specific agreement upon the extension of elective franchise to be prepared and handed by a committee to the Roman Catholics who meet almost in a body at Ballinasloe fair, where every wealthy man who receives rent, or poor man who pays it, are assembled. This would then come with a force and a seriousness that would necessarily draw forth an answer, and that answer would be given.

At present the Catholics are cautious, they think you are squibbing only in the paper, without any serious intention of doing them service: they think you a divided body like themselves, and that it is only the minority that talk it well, while the great majority are still inveterate against them: they therefore naturally turn to government who promises fair, rather than to old enemies who put on a face of friendship. They meet as they are met – a few companies hold out terms of amity, and a few meetings of their own return them thanks for doing so – all this is on a par. If you go on to a provincial declaration, they will probably answer it in terms becoming men who have no particular fondness for chains or slavery. They are, they acknowledge, a large and inert mass, but if once put into motion, their momentum will be great and the voices of Presbyterian Ulster and Catholic Connaught agreeing would show the will of the nation pretty plainly. But a system ought to be laid down. The dissensions in Armagh should be approached by deputation and conference: and it should end in a committee deputed from a provincial meeting, to confer with the Catholics at Ballinasloe in July 92, for such a time it would take to prepare the different steps for this formidable coalition. I have written in a hurried manner what is suggested, and shall perhaps do it at more leisure again.

Was the Belfast declaration really sent to the National Assembly? For it looks foolish to see it resolved and to find that they took such an air upon themselves, without anything following. I hear that a man child was born in Donegall Street. I hope that my mother will make it a handsome present. Yours sincerely, W DRENNAN

317 Tuesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [309]

Dear Sam, I can see nothing in Dr Caldwell's⁴² regimen which need require force, and the regimen itself will necessarily occasion confinement. There is nothing in it even severe, if it be not a blister on the head which seldom produces great pain, and the confinement in a dark room which I should deem unnecessary and perhaps

42 The McTiers may have consulted Dr James Caldwell of Magherafelt, Co. Londonderry, United Irishman; but since this has been impossible to prove, the Dr Caldwell who treated Martha has been indexed separately as Dr Caldwell, Belfast.

would tend to irritate the brain more than compose it. When she had sore eyes I suppose she was accustomed to have them covered for days; I would rather close her eyes in this way for a trial. I should imagine it would be proper, if Dr Mattear concurs, to give a fair trial to the present course: its objects seem to be, first, what was our object all along to prevent the head from being the sufferer, by undue and irregular determinations of blood, and secondly, which is I think a new idea, ingenious and I hope founded, to weaken the stomach and bowels by laxatives, vegetable diet, and the use of acids, so as to make them the seat of the complaint, and I believe it is certain that her stomach and bowels have been much stronger and better since this complaint in her head supervened, which give another reason for the pursuit of the practice at present pointed out. Most of the articles have been done I believe, but in a complaint of such duration, there must certainly be a persisting regimen of a powerful nature used, and I see none better than this, because all others have failed, and failed perhaps not by being wrong, but by being tried in a partial, accidental manner. If it be done at all, in justice to Caldwell it should be done completely unless some other disease should be the consequence, which should I suppose be attended to – a swelling in her limbs may come on and perhaps in moderation might be useful. I have said what I think, under proper deference to superior opinion. I know not if Dr Haliday would not take it well to be acquainted with C[aldwell]'s plan, or will not have reason to take it ill if you do not in a friendly manner impart it to him. Of this however, you are the best judge. If you think the regimen could be better executed here, why would not you bring or send her up?

Tell me what the Doctor thinks best to be done, who must on so many accounts know the state of her case more accurately than I, by having given every attention to the different changes in her situation. When anything is fixed by your brother, let me know. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

318 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [309A]

Dear Sam, I should suppose that Mrs Orr⁴³ would be most happy to do everything that could oblige either you or Matty. She is under some slight obligation to me for my attendance on one of her sons. Two of them I believe occupy one of her rooms in the hospital; but I still think it would be most eligible for Matty either by herself, or with a servant, to stay along with me for some time. I shall be able to make it as convenient for her as possible. You might accompany her and leave her for a time. I see nothing easier to be done. I can't say I like much the idea of an hospital, even though it is in this case a friend's house, and I rather think it must be disagreeable to any one not accustomed to it. I am you may be sure desirous of seeing her, probably I never shall unless she now comes up to Dublin. Our lives are all most uncertain. If you think of any scheme for coming up tell me, and much I wish you would.

43 Martha's friend, Mrs Anne Orr, matron of the Dublin Lying-in Hospital.

We are to have a new paper here on the 1st January, a National Journal,⁴⁴ published thrice a week, £1,000 to be previously subscribed, £50 shares to be proprietors and regulate the fund, if they do not rather choose to commit it to the management of the literary men. The proprietors are not to interfere in the management of the paper, which is to be in the hands of the editor and a committee. Russell⁴⁵ will probably be the editor but that is secret. £550 is subscribed already, which is supposed will serve for the first, a losing year. A prospectus is written by Tone,⁴⁶ but I have not seen it. I should not wish to write anything that might seem to injure H. Joy who always used me very civilly, like a gentleman and like a friend. There is room enough to write elsewhere if I could, would or should. I think two new papers, one in the North and one here will do good service, and I sometimes feel myself not averse to serve my country. The time may perhaps come when even I may do it some [good].⁴⁷ Adair is an English foreigner and would reasonably detest any doctrine that trenches on alliance.

Is it true that A[lexander] Stewart⁴⁸ is to be married to Lady S. Moore? Tell Bruce I am ashamed at myself for not writing to him. Tell Nancy I have got the rheumatism in my head, which I hope may make her come up to see me. Tell my mother, I shall write to her soon and wish I could pay my duty to her in D[onegall] Street. I write, to speak like a merchant not a friend, in a hurry and therefore excuse haste – etc. Yours very sincerely, W DRENNAN

319 5 November [17]91

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [310]

Dear Sam, I doubt not that Matty has blood enough in her veins and that they are large enough. It is an operation that I find often fails from want of attention in the operator, and then he blames the veins, etc. If her arm was previously well rubbed, and then dipped up to the shoulder for some minutes in luke-warm water, the veins would be as turgid as necessary. I think the leeches may be apt to be more troublesome as they often continue bleeding for a length of time at the orifices they leave. The laxative is only directed to operate twice in the day and I think this should be carefully regulated as more might be too weakening. Let her persevere in her plan, now that it is begun, and God grant it success.

The coalition of persuasions is going on here with alacrity, and Tandy with the rest of the city patriots seem to strike in with the idea. The Volunteers here noticed the Armagh resolutions with proper indignation and in return have received the thanks of a number of Catholic citizens who have formed a club that is daily increasing and will form a balance against the aristocratic influence in their regular

44 This appeared from February to June 1792.

45 Thomas Russell (1767-1803), *United Irishman* (*DNB*).

46 Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763-98), *United Irishman* (*DNB*).

47 Word supplied.

48 He married Lady Mary Moore, daughter of the 1st Marquis of Drogheda, on 2 October 1791.

committee; and as many of them are members of both, they will be enabled to direct the committee as they choose. They seem very kind and forward in private; in their publications they are perhaps properly as yet, rather timid and reserved, saying nothing that would pledge themselves to any particular line of conduct; their future conduct will, I take it, depend much on circumstances, particularly the behaviour of government towards them. Of the intentions of Mr Pitt, or the ministry here, they profess to be quite in the dark, or rather they suppose from the latest accounts that these intentions are inimical to their prospects of farther relief. Mr Keogh⁴⁹ a leader among them writes so from London. They printed here the answer of the Belfast Volunteers to the Catholics at Elphin, etc., and have sent copies through Connaught where it is said by Mr O'Connor that they are intoxicated with these addresses, and he wishes to know from his correspondents here whether meetings should be encouraged, as in several towns they are eager to manifest their sentiments. His correspondents have I believe written to him, that all such meetings should be encouraged as preparatory to a more general one, a national one, a final one. But before that, our minds on both sides should be well prepared, for not to complete the business then, would be disgraceful to the individual, to private personal courage, every one of us would set down himself a poltroon. They are much at a loss here for an editor to the paper called the *National Journal* and I suppose it will not come out for some months.

The paper you sent me of the United Irishmen was very good, but most miserably printed. You should get your papers printed in another style, and this way of hand-bills is a sort of unpublished publication that saves the expense of insertion in papers, which is now amazing.

I don't know but a civic oath well drawn up would be a good bond of union now, and might ascertain our numbers. The Duke of Leinster and Grattan are supposed rather favourable to the Catholics – the Ponsonbys violently against them. Tone and Russell compliment the abilities of our friend, Bruce, and I am sure deservedly. They spoke of his argument against the Catholics. I should not hazard any rupture of disunion at present, but I should like to see a magnanimous disavowal of the doctrines falsely imputed to them, in such terms as 1,500 of the first Catholics in England with Lord Petre⁵⁰ at their head, did not disdain to subscribe. It is an excellent protest, and he who signs it is certainly a good subject, a good citizen and a good man.

Some one told me that another academy was set up under the auspices of the church. It is hard that such a man as Bruce should be thus between your parties – one hating him and the other not liking him. His brother⁵¹ has I hear married a banker's daughter in Bristol. Our state was out in the city yesterday – two grand coaches – the Chancellor's was hooted at, as not of Irish manufacture. If I had anything new to write, I should write to my mother, but I really have nothing.

W DRENNAN

⁴⁹ John Keogh (1740-1817), silk merchant, Catholic leader and United Irishman (*DNB*).

⁵⁰ Robert Edward Petre, 9th Baron Petre (1842-1801), campaigned for removal of penal laws in England.

⁵¹ Robert Bruce married Mary, daughter of Joseph Edge of Bristol.

320 Thursday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [311]

Dear Sam, I request you will write to me a line frequently, and tell me how the object of our common love and attachment goes on in the plan prescribed. I am sometimes uneasy about it, in a constitution that has suffered so much and so long.

I went to a meeting last night of Catholics and Protestants to the number of eighteen, assembled by Tandy who is really the mayor of this city. He wrote down the names of those whom he wished to be present. His object is a citizen club; hence he dislikes lawyers, and orators and critics, and I believe rationally enough, for they do turn most clubs into cockpits. We first balloted for each other, called ourselves the Society of United Irishmen of Dublin, then adopted your resolutions, with a preface written I believe by Tandy himself, some passages of which I should think open to prosecution (which perhaps in some time would be as good a mode of joining issue with government as any other). No objection was made. The general fear seemed to be to say anything that might break the recent soldering, and we were as cautious of interrupting Tandy as possible. It seems he submitted his paper and resolutions at dinner to the Honourable Mr Butler,⁵² a lawyer, and brother to Lord Mountgarret, whom he placed in the chair, and who declared his zeal in the present cause, very handsomely. He seems the only man of fashion among us. Tandy and he are, I suppose, making mutual instruments of each other – all fair and both serve the public. We then balloted for eighteen that were not present into the society – Jones, Rowan, Tone, Russell, Stokes, Burroughs, W. Sinclair, Simms,⁵³ etc., etc., the two last as chairman and secretary of the fraternal club in Belfast. No one dare propose Pollock. He and Tandy have an irreconcilable animosity and much of Tandy's manoeuvring in forming this club was to keep out Pollock. He thinks him very captious, very self-opinionated, and very unfit for an amicable club, and he has differed with him often in their city meetings. I believe, if Pollock proposes himself he will be black-beaned, but I rather suppose he will not offer himself.

This club is to meet once a week for some time, and is chiefly composed of the Tandean party in the city. Tandy likes rather too much to publish, but this I suppose will be corrected. The resolutions etc. are to be printed for the use of the members only. I see your Whig Club resolutions – at the close you hit the nail on the very head. All that is wanting is two bodies large enough and strong enough to make the same stroke and drive it home. I should not imagine this could take place in less than a year or two but many accidents may happen that will hasten it. Why should we not refuse to pay taxes as well as America? Are we better represented than they were: or are we more lightly burthened? I really imagine Britain and Ireland think themselves in some better situation than America was – how absurd.

52 Simon Butler (1757-97), lawyer and United Irishman (*DNB*); his brother was Edmund Butler, 11th Viscount Mountgarret (1745-93).

53 Whitley Stokes (1763-1845), later regius professor of medicine at Trinity College (*DNB*); Peter Burrowes (1753-1841), barrister (*DNB*); William Sinclair (1758-1807), linen merchant of Belfast; Robert Simms (1763-1845), tanner and partner in a paper mill.

Tandy told me that Grattan called on him lately and had a long conference. He said that Grattan was not unfriendly to the business and seemed to speak as if he could not tell all he knew about the matter. If Tandy instructs him from the capital⁵⁴ on this point, which I believe he is at any time able to get done, Grattan's answer will be a trial upon him, bound as he is on the one hand to the Whig Club and on the other, the necessity of keeping his popularity in the city. I imagine he would wish to avert such a trial which Tandy has it always in his power to put him to, and therefore he cultivates his good graces as much as possible – I have a great veneration for the heart as well as head of Grattan, but I doubt he has tied himself down to a party, which I think breaks the compact that he of all men has with the people of Ireland. I met Neilson twice or thrice. He is a man [of] the right stamp. I don't much like the title of your [—] paper. He wanted a motto for it. I could not supply him. My fancy is on the wane and never was apt. The only thing that occurs to me at the moment is – The Public Will, our Guide – The Public Good, our End – or – To make Irishmen Citizens and Citizens Irishmen, or with Fayette to say, for a nation to love liberty, it has only to know it: for to have liberty, it has only to will it. I believe he has left town. Don't read my letter to your club, but tell the substance of it, if they have not heard it by another hand. If my mother sees this, she will think me immersed in politics – never less so – I shall attend the club, but not affect to be what is neither my power, if it were my wish to be a busy member. I will never however flinch, or blink my principles while I live, whatever be the temporal consequences – I must rub though life as I can. Yours sincerely, dear Sam – W DRENNAN

There is a very good paper published by their new Catholic club in this city of which I suppose you will get copies. It is written by a Dr McKenna;⁵⁵ I was going to say I thought I saw a still superior hand in it.

321 Thursday [November postmark]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 27 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [313]

Dear Sam, I think it best to put you to the expense of fourpence rather than not mention the proceedings of our club last night. At our first meeting a committee of six was appointed to draw up regulations for the society and to report at their next meeting. Tandy and I were of the committee. Tone nor Russell were not as they were not present the first meeting. I proposed that the following solemn declaration or test should be read to every member upon his being admitted, and repeated by him after the president.

I – AB in the presence of God, do pledge myself to my country, that I will use all my abilities and influence in the attainment of an impartial and adequate representation of the Irish nation in parliament: and as a means of absolute and immediate necessity in accomplishing this chief good of Ireland, I shall do whatever lies in my power to forward a brotherhood of affection, an identity of interests, a communion of

⁵⁴ Grattan was MP for the city of Dublin.

⁵⁵ *Declaration of the Catholic Society of Dublin* by Theobald McKenna (d.1808), secretary to the Catholic Committee (DNB).

rights, and an union of power among Irishmen of all religious persuasions, without which every reform must be partial, not national, inadequate to the wants, delusive to the wishes, and insufficient for the freedom and happiness of this country.

This was carried unanimously in the committee, chiefly on account of its being a means of impressing more deeply on the mind the principles of the society on the member who enters, as well as on the society itself. Subscription of name merely is often neglected and forgotten. It will not be so easily forgotten the repetition of such a test before a large society. The civic oath of France was a test found very useful, and it was not thought sufficient for the members of the new assembly to take it generally but every individual member repeated the form of words from the tribune. It was opposed by Russell, Tone, and Stokes, a Fellow, as being too rhetorical though I can't see a figure of rhetoric in it, as being too argumentative though this seems not very consistent with the former objection, as being indeterminate though I think the end and the means pretty plainly expressed. In short, after a good deal of conversation, they I think injudiciously and rashly on their first night of admission, occasioned a division in the society, and on the question being put they were the three negatives. Stokes retired before the test was administered, which was first taken by Mr Butler, all standing, and afterwards by everyone present repeating the words after the secretary. I fancy Tone and Russell wish everything to follow your society by adoption, but it seems very proper that the society in the capital should originate any matter which they may think useful to their own institution or to the common cause. All this perhaps may be altered next night but I think the ceremonial was of use, and that some test will remain. You need not mention this, unless any other account is given.

You ask me about my business. I don't think it varies much. I suppose this year will produce about £200, but my expenditure is, I think; too great even without a carriage. I pay 60 guineas a year for lodgings, my landlord raising them upon me at a time I could not get myself accommodated, not choosing to remove to any distance which has bad effect, unless one takes a house and they all require the payment of some fine. I have been a good deal indisposed of late with a severe cold got by fatiguing attendance in the country, but am better. W[illiam Todd] Jones is in a very poor state of health and is apprehensive of consumption, I believe with some reason. I have no news.

I believe I warned Matty about taking care of the wounds made by leeches; they are always very troublesome and apt to break out at night. After dropping off, the wounds should be pressed with a little pledget of cotton or any such substance, and held pretty close by the finger of an attendant for half an hour at least. Yours sincerely, W DRENNAN

322 3 December [17]91

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, DUBLIN, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [314]

Dear Sam, I send you a letter of Jones's distributed *gratis* – perhaps the reason, you say, for which I send it. It is a good one. Another pamphlet of his is at press, which

I hear is to be addressed to your United Irishmen.⁵⁶ I must tell you (and you only as it was mentioned to me in great confidence) that Grattan is a decided friend of the Catholics, and that he is not averse from being instructed by the city on this business. To what extent he goes, or in what time he means to come forth, I cannot know, but certainly such an accession of strength would be invaluable. I believe Tandy acts as his lieutenant. I fancy he would not wish that any promising business like this, should want his participation. Tandy said he would introduce me to him. He complimented an address of mine to the French societies.

Hobart sent for Byrne,⁵⁷ the principal Catholic merchant and one of a sub-committee appointed by the general one to wait upon and negotiate with the minister on their relief from the remaining penal laws. He said that government were [—] to indulge them with the bar, and education immunity, a [—] and in some time with more, but supposed they could have no scruple in disavowing certain publications, alluding particularly to that of the Catholic Club signed, T. McKenna. You saw it. Byrne called the meeting of the s[ub] committee (No 17). They agreed to return for answer, that the paper was not their act or at their instance. Some Catholics called the large committee together on Saturday last with a design I believe of cashiering the committee of negotiation, but at last came to the determination that this committee should make up their report and give it in, some day next week – I forget the day. The report means what they have done in the commission with which they were entrusted some months ago. If it appears they have not done their duty, they will I suppose be discarded. These are said to be facts – I question some of them. Our society shifts to a greater room – does not meet till Friday – once a fortnight. Stokes will I hope be brought to attest and some others who strain at gnats – the test to be read to each candidate before he is proposed. We have hopes of young Emmet, a fine fellow.

Write soon about Matty. My mother seems in a pettation and will not answer my last. This life is too short even to admit a pet. Yours very sincerely, W DRENNAN

323 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [315]

Dear Sam, It is rumoured this day on pretty good authority that an offer from government has been made to some of the principal Catholics of an admission to the bar, and of forming seminaries of education or of graduating in our colleges, and that in a short time the army will be opened to them, but that for the elective franchise, it is a matter of which they must drop all thoughts, and it is also understood that all meetings of Catholics should be discouraged immediately by those men of weight and influence among their body. I should imagine this bait will not take. Happening to dine with a very large party of Catholics and Protestants, I thought

⁵⁶ *A letter to the Societies of United Irishmen of the town of Belfast* (Dublin, 1792).

⁵⁷ Edward Byrne, a Catholic merchant who had made a fortune from sugar and distilling, chairman of the Catholic Committee.

this rumour a good ground for putting a question to them, that if government should hold out indulgences with a view of breaking the newly cemented alliance, what would be their conduct in consequence? The gentleman who was our host and all the Catholics answered individually that they considered our compact as indissoluble, that its foundation was the extension of elective franchise, without which they should always be a discontented people; and that although they would take anything offered to them from government, they would die rather than come under any stipulation with regard to their future conduct, and they firmly believed the great bulk of their persuasion were of the same sentiments.

Opposition was again made to the test last night by Tone and Russell, chiefly on the ground of it being dangerous to exclude many who would, but for this, desire to become members, and it was defended principally by Tandy on the ground that if this test kept them away we should do better without such men, and that it was better to have a society knit together and braced by a strong obligation than admit these scrupulous, hesitating, half-way men who would soon damp the zeal and spirit of the meeting and perhaps in some time, outvote the original members and defeat the purpose of the institution. With regard to any squeamishness about the solemnity of the test, it was not an oath or any sort of religious obligation, but an agreement and pledge between man and man, a calling of our country to witness the truth of our declaration, when the mere nominal subscription was but an assent to certain doctrines, without any enforcement on our conduct to put these doctrines into practice. It was said that any change in the test would render our society liable abroad to the charge of levity and inconsistency, and would be unfair to those members who have already taken it, by binding them with a stronger obligation than the gentlemen who are about to enter into the society. If you complain of your society as too mixed, in a city like this, without some touchstone of this kind, we would be overrun. It is to be observed that all the Catholics, though at present in a sort of treaty with government, were most zealous for the test which I think indicates their sincerity, and I observe that the solemnity is the thing they like, perhaps from their religion.

I think Tone and Russell imprudent in rendering themselves unpopular, which was evident by their not being appointed on the corresponding committee of twelve. My chief fault to them is, that they are too reserved to some who are entitled to confidence and that they aim rather at making instruments, than partners. They don't conceal this enough and therefore, I think, don't know men as well as they will do. They are both sincere and able, and zealous. They sometimes speak as being officially representative of the Belfast society, and Tone said, if this had not been the case, he would not have taken the test. Have they any commission of this kind? A letter of W. Sinclair's was read last night which received very great and merited applause. I believe that Tandy means to occupy the society for the winter, in bringing to maturity a plan of reform, the sketch of which will be communicated to him from high but concealed authority. I suppose therefore, it will go on the broad-bottomed principle which is now adopted and by being submitted in parts to such

a meeting, may be altered or added to so as to form at last a popular, national plan, preparative to a convention, which is the worst place for maturely digesting any plan and which, if it sits a short time, should have all its business previously settled. Your inner society could not do better than form their plan and submit it to the U[nited] Irishmen, and our committee will probably write to every person who is known to be an able friend to give hints or plans on the subject. One thing strikes me among many, that the Roman Catholics are just in such a situation as to make an intermediate electoral assembly necessary as in France. Farewell. WD

Does Matty still complain of the swelling in her stomach and belly? If her appetite fails her greatly, it perhaps might be expedient to quit the acid. Write soon. I shall get franks to my next – nothing new in print.

324 7 December [17]91

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [316]

Dear Sam, I am often fearful that Matty's strength will not be able to persist in the course proposed so rigidly as was mentioned by Caldwell. There is a medical practice and there is a surgical practice. Dr Mattear knows the difference well. Would you ask him if any intermediate corroborant be advisable as pyrmont instead of seltzer water, or any bark decoction. Certainly some sort of exercise must be natural and proper provided it does not induce fatigue and I cannot see that going out with a friend in a carriage, or as that makes her sick, riding double⁵⁸ for half an hour or an hour every fine day, could contradict the general plan. It is company and that disposition natural to her of exerting her mind in it, which certainly irritates by exciting her too much.

I sometimes think, Sam, there is a backing, I do not say a panic among the Catholics. I dined with Tandy yesterday and six of our zealous united Catholics present. We had some difference about their intended and I believe now settled mode of applying to parliament by petition next sessions: some of us contending that this was only humiliating themselves to make the ministry and the greatest part of the opposition more haughty: that to petition was the long experienced method of not gaining a request, experienced by us at our conventions, experienced by them for a century: and that it was not a little to be doubted whether they did not by this measure infringe the newly-cemented compact in the preamble and declaration to which they had professed and engaged so and so etc. They answered that their grand committee had it in original instructions to pursue the mode of petition unceasingly, that they had no right or power of doing other wise, that they themselves were a small part of this committee, and that although as individuals they would keep to their bounden engagement as United Irishmen, yet as individuals they could not be supposed to actuate or even to influence the great Catholic mass throughout the country. We deprecated the idea of their being merely individuals as inauspicious,

⁵⁸ i.e. pillion.

wishing to consider ourselves as having much present and more probable influence, and advising rather a consultation of their constituents in a national matter so great in itself, and that has so very lately taken a new and interesting turn. I went away at this time as I always do early, and heard nothing since. Tandy was silent, Jones warm for petitioning!! cultivating the Catholics much. Butler, I think always right since I knew him, yet is looked on suspiciously. Tone was not present. I believe it certain that their rich moderate men are trying to damp the fire if possible and the dignitaries of their church are busy writing through the country counteracting letters. This appears to us a reason for now beginning to publish and open the trenches, but still to publish chiefly by hánd-bills addressed to any good men in every town and county. Our corresponding committee will probably be put into action tomorrow night when we meet. The truth was and is, the Catholics wish to have two strings to their bow, a part to treat with government, a part to ally with us, and if one string cracks, why try the other. This is a good and perhaps fair archery. None pledge but those who came among us, and it is easy for the body at any time to disclaim them, if government is gained, and to back them if government holds out, but at any rate to use them as a bug-bear to the minister, who is alarmed not surely at what is, but what may be the consequence of this new style of speaking.

Pollock tells me he has been admitted an honorary member of your society, and intends writing a letter, no doubt a long one, and perhaps cavilling at the declaration. However that be, certain it is he has declared off from our secret society, I should hope on pure and well-grounded reasons. Our paper will go on in spite of many obstructions. Our device – Ireland, with serene majesty pointing to a column on the pedestal of which are the words ‘Love one another’, on the shaft, ‘Let the Will of the People be the Law of the Land’, the harp at her side, the helmet and spear ready at her feet, and the shield with two hands joined – ‘Unite and be Free’.

I write a prologue of mine spoken by a son of Mrs Orr at a private play in a house I like. It may amuse Matty, Nancy and Margaret, to whom give my affectionate compliments. With all this politic and poetry, I mind my business. Yours, W DRENNAN

In our society this night thirty-four persons were proposed notwithstanding the test. It was moved that an account of the popery laws, and those aggrieving or particularly noticing Protestant dissenters should be reported by a committee appointed for that purpose. I request you would call on Bruce and speak to him, if he can specify any of the latter kind, or any lawyer of your acquaintance, and acquaint me with it as soon as you can. Our committee of correspondence to communicate with societies and individuals in this and neighbouring kingdoms immediately – Lord Kenmare’s letter much talked of. Write soon.

You have here enough for your money.

PROLOGUE TO *DOUGLAS*⁵⁹ AT A PRIVATE PLAY, DECEMBER 7TH 1791

Chilled to the heart, expires the wasted year
 I hope – December, has no influence here
 No – not one wintry visage clouds the room
 All breathes sweet spring and summer's choicest bloom
 From blissful eyes, the sparkling spirits flow
 and the cheek reddens, with the social glow
 No winter, surely, in such hearts, can freeze
 The will for pleasure, and the wish to please
 In such a group – at such a happy hour,
 The wish to please is more than half the power
 And – I – who only such a wish can show
 Come to announce a tale of pleasing woe
 (Your tastes refin'd such pleasure better suits
 Than Breslaw's fingers, or than Astley's brutes)⁶⁰
 A tale – from which no heedlessness can roam
 Which finds in every female heart – a home.
 Makes the fond mother tremulous though blest
 Compress her child more closely to her breast.

We boast our ignorance of scenic art,
 To con a feeling; and rehearse – a start –
 To roll from pit to box the clockwork eye
 And lift both arms to storm the canvas sky
 Or, at the prompter's whisper sink, distrest,
 Or, beat upon that sounding board – the breast.
 This is to hold the mirror up to – Art,
 To get by rote is not to get by heart.
 To get by heart – an honest phrase, though plain
 For what you do not feel – O never hope to feign
 O never hope to reach that art divine
 Which shoots a soul unto each lifeless line
 Like the famed dervise, who with magic breath
 Transfused himself at will, within the ribs of death.

To feel what we express is all our scope
 And ev'n our heroine has no higher hope
 No stratagem she lays to catch a tear
 Her action artless as her soul sincere
 Her choice of character declares her aim

59 A romantic tragedy by John Home (1722-1808), secretary to the Earl of Bute and tutor to George III when Prince of Wales.

60 Breslaw was a magician and conjuror who performed in Dublin in 1791-92; Philip Astley (1742-1814), was a horse trainer, who opened equestrian theatres including Astley's Amphitheatre in London (*DNB*).

No public plaudit, but domestic fame
 Her best ambition and her future bless
To be – what her delighted mother – is
 Of a sweet flock, the guardian and the guide
 and to her happy husband – still – a bride – (going, returns)

I had forgot before the year was gone
 To give the blessing of old ninety one
 May all your lives in even current flow
 For floods of pleasure often ebb in woe
 Your days slide on with soft and noiseless wing
Your winter, usher in perpetual spring.

325 Saturday, 17 December [17]91, franked by J. Dunn

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [317]

Dear Sam, I have just entered a new lodging which I like much, ever fond of novel-
 ties as my mother will say. I have two handsome, well-furnished drawing rooms,
 and a good bedroom above, for the same price I paid to a shabby landlord for rooms
 shabbily furnished.

I enclose you our device, and the words 'Let the Will of the Nation be the Law of
 the Land' are to be put on the column by types upon use. I enclose our test. I find
 Lisburn has established a society which I hope will make it spread. A Kenmarish, or
 as the wits say a Kenshee resolution is to be brought into the Catholic Committee
 this night by one of the Bellevs but there is little fear of defeating it. I could not
 attend our club last night, but I believe little was done but electing and proposing
 members. It is said that the Duke of Leinster has declared warmly for the Catholics
 and that Grattan will be instructed on the subject.

I hope Matty keeps close to her room in the morning and does not allow herself
 to be agitated by company. Tell my mother to write to me immediately. I saw a
 private play of *Douglas* last night admirably performed, and worthy of the finest
 tragedy we have. I could accommodate you now with a dinner and a room and wish
 you would think of making a business or pretending it to see me. Yours sincerely,
 W DRENNAN

326 24 December [17]91

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [318]

Dear Sam, What to say in answer to my dearest Matty, I know not. Whatever can
 be done consistent with the course she has herself voluntarily engaged in, certainly
 should be done, and surely none of her friends would or could resist it. I should think
 that towards summer some jaunt or other may be tried and would be serviceable to

her, but surely she cannot do anything so proper in this severe weather, as by giving the fairest trial to the course she is under, of which I think confinement to her room until dinner at least is a necessary part. I can say no more. It is now two years and a half at least since I have seen her. I know little of her situation, not could I even were she near me, in a short time. I am therefore obliged to be silent even to her, my dear sister, on the subject, confiding in the attention and care of all who are connected with her – to the God of goodness and to them, I commit you.

As to politics, the resolutions proposed by Bellew on Saturday were rejected by a majority of 93 to 17. They are now endeavouring to get them subscribed by individuals and I believe have gotten about 40 names. The committee will take into consideration this day the propriety of their members daring to take such a course, and probably may expel some of them. At any rate, a political schism is created among the Catholics which I prophesy will in time introduce a religious one, and that body will be insensibly converted by civil into religious liberty, and unlimited toleration.

As to the test, my idea is that at present great regard should be paid to unity among all our societies, as well as among the members of any single society. If the words are merely supposed superfluous, or commenting, this is not a sufficient reason for altering what by alteration will introduce a difference even in form among us and you. We adopted your declaration verbatim on this account: and for the sake of compliment as well as coalition, you ought not to hesitate to take our test as we take it. It might have been improved even by us some nights after it had been taken by the original members, but it was deemed safer and better not to give precedent to alterations in a matter of this kind, when they did not go to anything but form and verbal criticism. It is certain that I can solemnly declare an opinion contained in the paragraph beginning 'without which' as to any other part of the test, and it is an opinion which seems to me evident as day.

Our society now consists of 96. An odd thing occurred last night: I don't think a black bean had appeared before, but at the last name proposed – Crosbie⁶¹ – five appeared, and on account of some informality a second election was made when eight appeared and he was rejected. Tandy and his son⁶² proposed him, and I sometimes suspect it was a stroke against them by some of our Catholics. It vexed Tandy much.

By the bye, I met Russell a day or two ago at a dinner for the first time since he returned, and he was so very cool on my saluting him, that I determined not to trouble him again. I know not the reason.

Pollock, or rather Pendulum, is come back to our little society. He does not know his own mind half an hour. I send you the address written in the French style you see. It was subscribed by Tandy, Newenham, Bacon, Edwards, and Ashenhurst, the officers of the corps here, and I believe sent by a private hand to Bordeaux.⁶³ It was

61 Possibly Henry Crosbie, woollen draper, of Parliament Street, who was elected the following January.

62 James Tandy, wine merchant, later withdrew from the society because he opposed universal suffrage.

63 An address to the Friends of the Constitution in Clermont, signed by Sir Edward Newenham (1732-1814), MP for Co. Dublin (*DNB*); Thomas Bacon, tailor and major in Goldsmiths' Corps, later a United Irishman and executed in 1798; John Talbot Ashenhurst, notary public, a United Irishman; see R. B. McDowell, *Irish public opinion, 1750-1800* (London, 1944), p.145.

not published. Tandy told me Grattan liked it much. This I question and think, that he did not think it proper to publish it. I have some fears for France at this most trying time. I have some idea of writing a circular letter to propose to our corresponding committee. If Lord Charlemont hates the Catholics, they detest him. A paper appeared in the *Star* signed an Irish Helot of which I know nothing. The Careys⁶⁴ wrote to me to know if I was the author which I denied and notwithstanding they published it. I take no notice of this as the production is really poor. Yours etc., W DRENNAN

I request you may tell me particularly how our friend Bruce goes on.

327 30 December [17]91

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [319]

Dear Sam, I continue to like my new apartments much and I long to give you a dinner in them. Did A. Buntin tell you of the hogshead of claret I had laid in? I may truly say I am looked up to as much as any man in Dublin, though part of the adulation is paid to an Indian Emperor of great splendour who is near my windows.

I should like to see the names of the men who refused the latter clause of the test. It was not that which gave most umbrage here: it was the 'communion of rights', the solemnity of the appeal, etc., at which they boggled. I enclose two squibs from Rowan's private press. He scatters these about at a great rate. You are mistaken in supposing the Catholic Committee divided with such a minority. The division was 93 to 17, and the names added to Kenmare's address were got throughout the kingdom – fathers and sons – and but nine from the city of Dublin. Byrne did not subscribe. The Catholics I really believe, in spite of their priests who seem little consulted and little regarded in these particulars, are more unanimous than the Protestants. You don't mention a long long letter from Pollock which I hear he sent down to Belfast. Did you receive a letter of mine written on a published letter of Jones's? I should wish to know, as some say letters are stopped.

I proposed a circular letter to our committee of correspondence which was carried, and reported last night to the society. It was read with a considerable applause and the committee received thanks for it. We wish to circulate it as soon as possible, and if I can enclose you a proof I will this night, but your society will be addressed publicly. The English ministry confide so little in government here that they are writing busily to many individuals to know the real state of the country. Keogh who had been on a deputation from the Catholics to England returns shortly and is referred back to government here. Hobart returned but the budget not revealed. I wish you could send me one of the new papers at Belfast when it comes out. What is the expense of an annual subscription? The paper here will not be out till parliament meets. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

64 William Paulet Carey (1759-1839), engraver and editor of the *National Evening Star*, expelled from the United Irishmen and was crown witness against Drennan in 1794 (*DNB*); his brother was concerned with him in the *Star*.

I don't know if ever I mentioned it to you, but I firmly believe between ourselves that Grattan had a hand, if he was not the author of the declaration signed T. McKenna. I think I have a good eye, perhaps you will say a suspicious one. McKenna is sensible, but very irregular in his life, and what most of his persuasion has in too great a degree, a slatternness and often slovenliness of mind. Of the lady you mention I never thought much. I burned your letter. The strictures were written by some underling who manufactured some good things he heard or that were delivered to him. This is my guess, though I did not read above a paragraph of it. I suppose it will be answered. Another is come out of two sh[illings] price, cursedly dear and very stupid, by one Grace,⁶⁵ a lawyer. It is called *Catholic Presbyterianism* – a flat imitation of Johnson's *Taxation no Tyranny*.⁶⁶

65 George Grace, *Presbyterio-catholicon, or a refutation of the modern catholic doctrines propagated by several societies of catholic presbyterians and presbyterian catholics* (1792).

66 Samuel Johnson, *Taxation no tyranny* (1775).

328 5 January [17]92, franked by J. Dunn

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [297 AND 312]

Dear Sam, I sent a circular letter to you last night and I wish to know whether you received it, as several others were sent at the same time. I expected to have heard from you this week. Keogh is come over with a son of Ed[mund] Burke¹ to spy out the land and make his report upon it – I have seen neither of them. A second letter signed an Irish Helot appeared in the *Star* addressed to Lord Charlemont – I therefore thought it incumbent on me in a line or two to his lordship to disavow the publication, and he sent me a very civil answer, thanking me for having prevented the sensibility of his supposing for a moment that anything reflecting on him could be written by me, and consequently that he had the misfortune of receiving the censure of one for whom he had the highest esteem. A[—] words. Another address from Kilkenny subscribed by sixty names, and no counter subscriptions – it is odd – I hope all is well. Keogh has the nature and had the wish to excite the people, and if nothing happens soon, you may depend on it the Catholics will fall off at least for the present – indeed Burke and Keogh coming over looks like it. Tandy told me he was against giving the freedom of the city to young Burke some years ago. Don't allow the circular letter to be published, as that would defeat its end of getting information.

Keogh has just called. He says government here personally hate the Catholics on account of the agitation they have lately produced on both sides the water, and politically they will if obliged by positive instructions give what Pitt desires, but even then grudgingly and probably with all the abatement they can. He was asked by a person high in office in England whether on the supposition of their breaking off with the Presbyterians they would get several immunities, they would do so either before or after,² and he answered firmly that they would neither before or after be guilty of any breach of promise, that Mr Hobart had received the same answer, that they would be grateful and thankful to government for every immunity offered, without giving any pledge or condition. Keogh employed young Burke as a counsel in their cause in the room of one McNamara, who was formerly their agent in London, but is supposed Kenmarean in his principles; and Burke, as Keogh thinks, is zealous and sincere for very liberal extensions, but how far he did not say. Burke has not yet been able to see Hobart and therefore it is still uncertain the substance of what is to be granted or refused, and the mode of proposing it to legislature. If government propose it, Grattan and opposition will probably not contradict, but on the ground of not going far enough. Keogh and Burke are referred back to this government who no doubt are instructed, but Mr Pitt was not so explicit

1 Richard Burke (1758-94).

2 The text from here is on a separate sheet numbered D/591/312.

with either as to determine what precisely shall be done. If anything is done, it comes from Pitt, who forces government here to act against their wish, and against the Chancellor's wish. I hear that in Connaught counter resolutions are made in several Catholic meetings, and sent up here, but not signed as they should be individually, Kenmare and the Bishop burned in effigy or at least hung up in some towns. Parochial meetings are calling here but the result I have not heard. Keogh attended one and accused Troy,³ the Archbishop, of creating a schism in the church as bad as that of Luther. Troy wanted to refuse the chapel in his parish for their meeting and it being said that a sledge would remove that difficulty, it was left open for them. Keogh knew nothing of coming over till Monday last, and then thought proper to set out to be on the spot and see how far government on this side tallied with that on the other, and to pin them down. He tells a good deal of his mind to me but not all, and his party has been close of late or rather silent while things are in train – perhaps wisely. In the abyss they are at present, they will certainly thank anyone who stretches forth a hand to them. Keogh seems to agree in the necessity of countervailing declarations, but there was an absurd direction sent from this recommending inflexible silence on the part of the country, until they had seen how their friends here would behave.

You may keep my letters as they will show what has been done or the news of the day, if one should wish to make out any historical sketch of the business – from the Belfast address till now – perhaps my little paper was the first seed of the coalition – I mean that of the brotherhood; and if so, I shall ever deem myself very happy. It appeared in June and the address to the French, 14 July, the amendment to which was I think the first motion to union on our part, answered by the Catholics at Elphin and Jamestown, and promoted by the establishment of the United Irishmen of Belfast and Dublin. I hear one is forming at Ardee. I am somewhat surprised they do not multiply more, and I think your societies should exert themselves individually and by circular letter through all the towns about. I think they should be numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., of Ulster, and I think you should keep up a more regular official correspondence with us, as all communications of that kind inspire our meetings and manifest that the work is going on. To prevent admission of strangers, not difficult in this city where we scarcely know half of the faces around us, we are to have a medal of admission perhaps to be worn at the meeting, the name on one side and a device on the other applicable to the circumstance. My belief on the whole is that some things will be granted to the Catholics this session at their instance, that their petition to parliament will be received, and that some country gentleman hack will make the motion, and what the conduct of opposition may be is hard to say. But however it may end, there is a spirit, a leaven mixed with the Catholic mass that will work more and more every day. To grant them liberties by piecemeal is but to whet their appetite. They have seen everything gained by resolute exposition of their

³ John Thomas Troy (1739-1823), Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin (*DNB*).

wrongs and their rights, and they know the weakness of England by her distant connections. Tippoo Saib⁴ may be the reformer of Irish representation.

Saturday – I am surprised, you have not written to me all this week – Matty surely must be worse – I beg you may write by return of post.

I hear no news today. Little or nothing was done last night – a letter read from one of your societies signed W. Osborne⁵ – the committee reported progress in the penal laws – the circular letters distributed through the members. It has already got as a tail piece to a pamphlet, therefore you may have it printed in your new paper when you please. I got one of them today – good paper and type and appears well. Bruce tells me you were the only papist in a company of fourteen respectable people of all professions but not one United Irishman in the number. He very humorously compares us to a man with his head in a barrel who thinks the world in an uproar around him, while he himself is the only one that speaks. This is a very new and laughable simile. I should wish to see more of these societies – I fear they don't strike the public taste.

Tell my mother I shall write very soon and on an important subject. Yours ever, WD

329 Sunday, January [17]92

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [320]

Dear Sam, I saw a paper last night addressed from the sub-committee of the Catholics to the people of their persuasion signed Edward Byrne, and said to be drawn up by young Burke. I could not get a copy at the time. It contains the articles which they ask for with a prospect of attainment. 1st, they require the profession and practice of law in all its departments, 2nd, the exercise of county magistracies, sheriffs, coroners and justices of peace with their inferior officers, 3rd, the power of serving and right of being summoned to grand and petty juries in all cases whatsoever, 4th, a participation in what they call our free constitution by obtaining the elective franchise for the knights of shire – in which however they will consent to a modification, that in addition to the 40 shilling fee, the elector must rent, occupy or possess in fee or for life, a farm of £20 per annum. In all this they do not notice the right of carrying arms, the rights of education and academical honours, with many other grievances under which they at present labour, not mentioned in this partial enumeration. The paper recommends great moderation, circumspection of conduct, and what I think particularly remarkable, dissuades much from all political controversy – alluding I suppose to parliamentary reform; assigning as a plausible reason that until they are on the rank of citizens, it is not fit to debate about such a matter. The true reason seems to be to dissociate them from the dissenters to whom a reform is notoriously a principal object. The paper recommends the instant appointment of committees through the nation to canvass, as they call it, all the

4 Sultan of Mysore (c.1753-99), military leader against British forces in India.

5 William Osborne, chairman of the Second Society of United Irishmen of Belfast (*BNL*, 10 October 1792).

bodies of men that may be supposed inimical to their interest, to apply for this end to all the members of parliament with whom they are connected, to the established clergy, showing them (what is a damned lie) that they have nothing to fear from these extensions of liberty, and instructing them to profess without reserve and with all truth their great friendship to the Protestant establishment and religion.

Such is the substance of the paper as well as I remember. It seems to have a hatred to the Presbyterians who, I believe, are hated by Mr Pitt from whose graciousness these largesses of liberty come. The paper says they are not as yet authorised to say that government is favourable, but their words imply that it is not averse. Though reform is kept carefully out of sight, I think that widening the elective base is certainly a reform in part, and that therefore if they get all these four articles, the Presbyterians should be glad and express their satisfaction that their brethren are lightened of their load. I suspect however that the fourth is not meant to be granted but is only held out as a means of uniting the whole mass, while the three first articles interest only the aristocracy of the Catholics, and the benefits do not extend to the people much. It is however a beginning. When you see the paper you ought to consider whether it in any degree breaks the compact between the Catholics and dissenters, or whether it is inconsistent with the test. It is the groundwork on which I suppose all the Catholics here will go. How government here will behave and how Mr Grattan and opposition will act is uncertain, but it will be curious if these things be granted without a dissenting voice in a House in which last session not a single man would bring in the petition of the Catholics.

It is said that the account of our junction was the first thing that made Dundas⁶ speak amicably, and that afterwards on Kenmare's address, there was a retraction. Burke is said to be very warm for the Catholic people, but I confess I don't like him. He dines with all parties, the Chancellor as well as the rest, who lately told the Catholics their requests were idle, chimerical and absurd. If you joined merely to get a reform, I believe that is pretty much at the same distance as before; if you joined to relieve your Catholic brethren, I believe that end will be obtained, and all that remains is to use this relief as a means of gaining reform at a future day.

The most of our circular letters were burnt at our friend Chambers's fire. Between two and £3,000 will be raised in the space of a few days for that worthy man, in which are my five guineas. His will be a Job's misfortune. Our society did little last night – progress reported in the digest of penal laws which will I suppose surprise all parties when enumerated. I proposed maturing a popular plan of reform during the winter by dividing the society into four committees, and each separately to draw up a plan which should all be reported to the society at large for their adoption of the best. Tandy opposed this for the present on the ground of the best business being to forward the union and to do nothing more at present. I fancy Grattan will propose some plan in this session. I imagine Pollock, Stokes, Burrowes, etc., are about forming a society of their own, but I should imagine they will scarcely get a Catholic to enter.

⁶ Henry Dundas (1742-1811), later 1st Viscount Melville, home secretary (*DNB*).

I should wish to send you an address to the English people relative to the non-consumption of sugar. It is excellent and I wish it were reprinted in Belfast as here at 1d a piece or fourteen for 1s. The Quakers here are forming associations against sugar, and I should much like to see family resolutions on the subject drawn up and subscribed by some of the matrons of Belfast most famous for conserves and preserves. An abstract of the evidence before the British House is to be published.

Lord Kenmare is expelled the committee. Yours etc., W DRENNAN

330 Saturday, 28 January 1792, franked by J. Dunn

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [321]

Dear Sam, I had written you a very long letter, and by the strangest accident cannot find it high nor low – I must send you this line of excuse. I hope you will be bold, and manly in your resolutions. Grattan has given the common council a set down, and answered the aggregate tolerably well, though I don't like his bringing in reform with an also. The leaders of parties here check the people, and even Tandy speaks not about reform as he used to do. I hope the Catholics will get something but I fear it will be little. Burke never let the petition out of his hands except to O'Hara⁷ whose blundering made the whole business ridiculous. I see the address to the Clermont⁸ people in the *Northern Star*. I should have no objection to their publishing the paper on the Brotherhood which was printed in June last, about fifty copies and soon after the societies took place. I own I should like to see this mentioned. I enclose the only one I have left, and if you don't send it, return it to me.

You ought to make your society enter into some resolutions respecting the non-consumption of sugar and get that excellent pamphlet reprinted. The Guild of Merchants are to censure Tandy and if there was a new election Grattan would lose his seat. The grand jury of the county [?instruct] Newenham to maintain the Protestant ascendancy – he answers joyfully – yes – Finlay⁹ answers ambiguously. I am so vexed at not being able to find my letter that I can add no more – but yours, WD

331 28 January 1792, franked L. Parsons¹⁰

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [WRAPPER ONLY] [321B]

332 3 February [17]92

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, DUBLIN, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [298]

Dear Sam, I believe my mother got the interest of the money I had in bank, and I still am in her debt £5 or £6. I have now only £50 there, having had occasion to

7 Richard Burke asked Charles O'Hara, MP for Sligo, an old friend of his father's, to present the petition in the Commons, but when O'Hara did this he claimed he was presenting it as a favour to an individual, thereby undermining its force as a Catholic Committee petition (Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, p.155).

8 See letter of 24 December 1791, no. 326 above.

9 John Finlay (1737-1823), MP for Dublin county, February-April 1790, 1791-97.

10 Sir Laurence Parsons (1758-1841), MP, later 2nd Earl of Rosse (*DNB*).

draw out £50 on laying down my job¹¹ – the very same in which Sir H. Jebb,¹² a man between forty and fifty, was married to Miss Cope, a girl not fifteen – Well it is not consummated as Mrs Cope, who tells the story with all its graces, assures the ladies at her card-table, and in spite of all her distraction of mind never fails to win the rubber. It is said the marriage will be broken, and that he will go to India – at present he drives about as usual, and hopes no doubt still to get her and £6,000.

I request, Sam, you will be more cautious with respect to anything I may throw out on paper to you as I hear there is an extract of a letter of mine to you handed about here, in which I am said to accuse the Catholics of duplicity of conduct. I do not recollect ever having said so. That they acted a double part as a body is a matter of fact, but that any individuals among them are acting with duplicity I deny, and firmly believe that the part of which I know the most, acts with great zeal and great sincerity. I remember saying over the bottle at Tandy's, that such a mode of proceeding viz: by petition to parliament might perhaps be construed into an appearance of duplicity by addressing in a humble manner that very House which we all reprobate, and I still think that the conduct of us all, Protestant as well as Catholic, towards that House is inconsistent with the dignity of an insulted people now abusing it, now cringing before it, now cursing, then praying, now saying, We are not represented, and then laying before the honourable House, etc. Whoever reported anything in a letter which was in its nature confidential, has neither acted in a friendly or honourable manner to you or to me. All the world here attend to the House – all run to it – all talk of it – better to put that House into Coventry, better to let the galleries be deserted than break down the doors to get into them, and soothe, thereby, the pride and self-sufficiency of the members. I can't say I like Grattan's answer to the aggregate. It is to please all Whig and Catholic, and the old reformers and the new, and time, patience and perseverance for Lord Charlemont. I don't understand the term ascendancy: it is really an astrological term denoting the star which had uncontrolled dominion over our nativity; and is the language of a soothsayer rather than of a politician. My toast should be – the Sovereignty of the People – not of any party: the Ascendancy of Christianity – not of any church.

I congratulate you on your victory – I hear H. Joy proposed a protestation to be offered to the Catholics similar to what was adopted in England. How has that gone on, or how was it received? I should wish it were done – but I think they will not do it. McKenna told me however, that a petition to parliament would probably come forward from Munster, praying among other things, that parliament would propose any farther security, of protestation, or oath, as to their wisdom should seem meet. They rather choose this to be put on them, than that they should voluntarily adopt such a measure: and there appears some reason in this. The oath they do take, before they can enjoy any land, is explicit, and renounces most of the doctrines imputed to them – but it is the style and tenor of these oaths, which has taught them or rather confirmed them in a servility to royalty, loyalty to person and

¹¹ His job carriage.

¹² Sir Henry Jebb (d. c.1811), physician, knighted in 1782, brother of Dr Frederick Jebb.

not to law, which prevails much in the south. The mercantile part have adopted here more of the spirit, and somewhat of the language of liberty, and their ideas will spread rapidly through the mass, which in general has followed the political doctrine of priests, and the old Tory nobility. Lord Charlemont has had a letter from Dr H[aliday] in which the minority is represented as much the most respectable and weighty: even 20 to 1 makes a minority of 60 in 1,200. That is considerable in Belfast – Were the church people there – Your chairman is toasted here with three cheers and the secretary of your reading society.

Mr T. Stewart¹³ of Castle Street wrote a very polite letter for me to A. Kirkpatrick¹⁴ senior and junior when I came up here. The sisters were all engaged in their physician. The old man is dead and his eldest son with a great fortune of his own is going to be married to a great city fortune – Miss Sutton – I shall wait on him after their marriage, and if you happened to fall in with Mr Stewart you may mention this, if you think it proper. I can still say, that all my influence or connection with Belfast has not put a single guinea into my pocket, and therefore perhaps it is needless to expect any advantage from it now. I have not seen I[saac] Corry this year past.

We have drawn up a subscription paper about abstinence from sugar, and shall soon get many thousand signatures. It is in this form – ‘We, the under-named, do engage that we will abstain from the use of sugar and rum until the West India planters, themselves, have prohibited the importation of additional slaves, and commenced as speedy and effectual a subversion of slavery in their islands as the circumstances and situation of the slaves will admit, or till we can obtain the produce of the sugar cane in some other mode, unconnected with slavery and unpolluted with blood’. The subscribers are to be published alphabetically, the ladies in one column, the gentlemen in another. This would be a touchstone to the Belfast traders in rum. Let them cast round the world an equal eye, and feel for all that suffer.

I received yours of the 31st. The letter is lost and very unaccountably. H. Joy’s account is good, and pretty impartial I suppose – too much about prayer to parliament. These are words to be sure, but words such as generate sentiments. The French knew the force of words and altered the language when they altered the spirit of their constitution.

I have no objection to printing the paper you mention as you please – and my only motive in mentioning it, was a desire to show the date when I think the present coalition begun. The account of your meeting in the *Star* is not so well drawn up as by H. Joy, and a card to Dr Haliday appears very ill printed and even spelled. They should take care to get a good editor. Report says, they are now clipping even Langrishe’s¹⁵ bill, and that even so, it will never pass the Lords. I know not how their petition is to be garbled by opposition, but on both sides they are pretty well harassed. I never yet saw Burke even in company and I never had but one visit from Keogh since he came over. Either this reported extract of my letter, or fear of being

13 Thomas Ludford Stewart, attorney.

14 Alexander, son of Alexander Kirkpatrick, married Mary Anne, daughter of the late Alderman George Sutton in June 1792 (*Walker’s Hibernian Magazine*).

15 Sir Hercules Langrishe (1731-1811), politician and supporter of Catholic relief (*DNB*).

seen with a republican has prevented him. I shall not notice it. I see different tests in the *Star*, and none I think either plainer or better than our own. Our circular letter is it seems liked in London. I think it probable that government will put off the discussion of the Catholic question until the opinion of the grand juries is taken and it is supposed that they will all sing to the same tune particularly in the south. Reports today of a riot at Dundalk between the Defenders¹⁶ and the military – Government will probably make it out a rebellion. There is a great stock of bigotry in this country, and perhaps the Catholics will be kept down more carefully, from the very spirited struggle they have made.

I just left the House – Langrishe moved for the committal this day fortnight (Saturday) when the debate is to begin. Hobart in answer said that it was proper to judge of the conduct of the Catholics from their past conduct which was very loyal etc. In Langrishe's bill they are not to be king's counsel. Some wanted the bill to be deferred until the sense of the nation was obtained, that is, the Protestant sense of grand juries and corporations.

Tandy requests that something may be done to conciliate parties in Belfast and hopes you will speak to Bruce and Dr Haliday on this subject, as any division is very detrimental to the influence of the town even in that particular in which they agree. Write to me as soon as anything happens worthy [of]¹⁷ attention. W DRENNAN

333 February [17]92

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [322]

Dear Sam, It is still doubtful among us who know little what will be the fate of the Catholic question. Some say that government want to bring about an union with Britain in this way, by telling the Catholics their enlargement in civil rights will depend on their co-operation for an union and their dissociation from the furious part of the Presbyterians. I think the result of this late coalition has been that the moderate party have gone to lengths which they would not have gone to had not we gone farther, and many of the old Tories and government men in the Belfast minority must be astonished if they look back upon their own conduct and sentiments some years ago. For my part, I cannot see why this disunion has taken place. The Catholics themselves mentioned a modified franchise in election, of £20 in additional qualification to the 40 shilling fee, and surely this is gradual and must therefore fall in with the ideas of those who have included the elective franchise in their amendment to your resolutions. The circular letter to the Catholics in which these four articles were mentioned has not I believe been circulated, and I know not the reason. Do you understand by our test, and the communion of rights which we pledge ourselves to forward, an immediate and perfect equality? For my part I think this modification of elective franchise would be a participation, and really an inter-communion of right as much as they themselves would require and as much as

16 A Roman Catholic secret society, active in rural areas.

17 Word supplied.

ought to be extended at present, and hence I imagine the different parties in Belfast really agree at bottom. I do not say that the Protestant voter is better than the Catholic, but I should think perfect and complete equality at once and immediately, is impracticable, and therefore inexpedient.

Black¹⁸ of Derry is here at present about an increase of the royal bounty¹⁹ which was proposed some sessions ago by G. Ponsonby, but he gave place to Stewart of Killymoon who has been, as it were, the representative of the dissenting interest. Though it is called a pending negotiation on this account, and not taken up at present, it appears an unlucky and suspicious time for this clerical body to make an application of this kind even to the legislature. Black does not profess being here on any authority or with any commission from his clergy, but merely as an individual who, by his office as their agent, is interested in the business, and will make his report of the opinions and state of parties, with the disposition of government in the matter, to the annual committee of Synod, which is to meet at Lurgan on Tuesday next. He does not let out what they mean to do, but thinks that Mr Stewart will be successful in his application to parliament in [*sic*] their behalf. This is the first time parliament was applied to, and they before petitioned the throne.

In Portland's short administration it seems great promises were made from England, even to £5,000 per annum, but on that ministry going out the promise shrunk to £1,000 (a pitiful 1,000 as Black calls it) which was gained from the Northington administration and in the business of that day Campbell acted as commissioner. The northern clergy have in all £2,200 per annum, including this £1,000 on the Irish establishment, and £400 of the £800 which is given to the south as well as the north, on the English establishment, from George I. The few congregations in the south, which are still diminishing, bring their pension at present to £25 and it will probably in some time be £50 per annum. In the north the increase of new congregations lessens their receipt and each have about £13 or £15. This must be a great thing to the country clergymen as the average of the stipend in the Synod is said to be not more than £40 per annum. The stipend thus given is certainly very small, and if they get a great increase to the bounty, their dependence on the crown will increase in the very same ratio – they will be dissociated from the laity, and our religion will be contaminated by the corruption of our pastors. The laity should however remember the poor situation of their clergy and contrive some means of relieving it. Black wants Bruce to go to Lurgan, and if he does, it is likely he will give a second stab to his political character. The Presbytery here agreed to send McDowal²⁰ and have now retracted. A very intemperate, anonymous letter was sent to Black, threatening him with being tarred and feathered if he did not leave town immediately, where he had come up, it was said, to sell the Presbyterian clergy to government for a pension, on condition of their repudiating the Catholics. Black is just of the same opinions with your minority

18 Rev. Robert Black (1752-1817), Presbyterian minister at Derry (*DNB*).

19 i.e. the *regium donum*.

20 Rev. Dr Benjamin McDowell (1739-1824), minister of Mary's Abbey (Rutland Square) congregation (*DNB*).

and maintains his consistency of conduct from the first Dungannon meeting till the present moment. The dissenting clergy in general are quiescent, and thus there is it seems good reason for it. I rather imagine that they are nearly all inimical to the Catholics. There are 180 of them in the north, and they must have weight, if they do not themselves lose it, by courting dependence on a rascally government. Tell my mother however that her annuity²¹ will be raised from £13 to £15 shortly.

Robert Stewart votes now with the majority – he is a half-blooded fellow, and those whom Junius calls the meanest of the human race – the Conways have their share in him. How will the Down countrymen like this, or Dr Haliday? But perhaps it is only on a particular question. It is fair to wait. He will I suppose be violent against the Catholics. I enclose you a good squib against them and Burke. Is it not curious Edmund Burke being toasted at one or two of their meetings? I again beg you will not read anything of mine but to those you confide in.

I received yours (Friday). I am surprised that Bruce is not acting merely on the defensive, but carrying on an offensive war and making the seat of it the pulpit. I imagine he confounds civil or political tests with religious ones which are undoubtedly against our principles. There is another distinction between tests voluntarily taken and tests imposed, the very imposition of which must make them rejected by any freeman, but our test is merely a political bond of union, a sensible symbol, and living record of our opinions, at this time, nor is there anything in it which obliges us to an unalterable adherence to the terms, or to the matter, in future, if circumstances and situation of external affairs happen to change. We act for the best in our present views of things, and if, however improbably, such views should alter, we can change our test very conscientiously and adopt another – at present, we use it as a discriminative characteristic of our society, by which we are to judge of our own conduct, and to make the nation a witness of the coincidence of our words, our writing, and our action. According to Bruce, no man can make a promise, or any compact, because he may change his mind. He cannot understand the test as the world interprets such things, and when we say, 'with all our ability etc.' no man who knows anything of life, could suppose that it was a devotion of all our time, and all our powers to this single object. Popular phrases must be taken in their popular not their philosophic interpretation.

I drew for £50 on the bank which I got at Mr Dick's office in August I think, so that if I had £200 when I left Newry as you told me, out of which you sent me £100, I must as I said have £50 remaining in Belfast. I had desired my mother frequently to receive her interest. I think she can scarcely save any out of £150 p.a.

The Catholics are not, and I well know could not be more likely to advance me in my profession on account of any little share I have taken in their political concern. They have the virtue of a persecuted sect to be closely attached to each other, and to favour their own doctors exclusively.

21 As the widow of a Presbyterian minister.

I have just now read Bruce's paper²² and it certainly must be answered, in Joy's paper properly where it appeared. I shall send you what I can, though I happen to be hurried by attending a sick lady at her house. Leslie has played a fine election manoeuvre which may avail him much. The letter to Belfast meeting is very good – Burke the author – the grand debate expected tonight. Yours W DRENNAN

334 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN] [321C]

My beloved Brother, You are attacked in a public paper, in your character, your religion, your head, and worse than all your heart, and by whom, that man who by being for years cherished as your friend, ought to have known its value. I say you are attacked because he knows, everyone here knows you were the author of that test – and it is with pain I add, that as such, I fear you are generally reprobated by those you most esteemed here, and those whom the Doctor²³ means by the old, staunch and effectual friends of liberty, some of whom have gone so far, when in their cups, as to wish to see the promoters of this work hanged – and at the time knew you to be the chief one. Indeed my dear Will, I fear you have taken up a cause, that as a losing one for the present, you will suffer by, and when I recollect the warmth of your heart in everything that could point to your country's good, and the love of that honest applause which ought to reward it, I tremble for you and your feelings, in case you have lost the favour of that country you have ever loved with enthusiasm – lost the Protestants, disapproved of by part, perhaps a majority of the Catholics, and some of those you seem to be more closely knit to in your society, I suspect to be flinching – while the report of your having spoke of the Catholics as acting with duplicity is no doubt the wicked design to blast you. Your cause I believe is good but I fear you have gone too far in it, the moderate Protestants think so (and what is worse and they quote as a reason), the most of the rational Catholics think so as appears by their addresses. If this is so – the man and men who first and most boldly stepped forward in their behalf will as in most things of the kind fall victims.

You may have hurt yourself in your profession – be termed a fine writer but a dangerous and rebellious man. I think I hear them say (little man) in the state. I do not write this to damp you. They may be false fears and I only tell you them to put you on your guard in a place where you can have but few friends and where now I suppose as a writer you have many enemies. Your pen, as a ready and an elegant one, may have been courted, then envied, and the writer afterwards discarded in an unfashionable cause.

Yet the reverse of all this may happen. The above will show you one thing however – which I know not how it will affect you – that your lost sister never ceases to think of you. But let me return to what was my principal design – noticing Bruce's

22 'Strictures on the test', published anonymously by Bruce in the *BNZ*, 10 February 1792.

23 Probably Haliday.

publication, which in regard to you as the ostensible man is what I mentioned before, and in the seventh paragraph I am sure Sam is the person he alludes to, as he is the only gentleman that was and is still I hope an intimate of those old friends Bruce characterizes.²⁴ I think he has stepped out of his way into the pulpit and into a public paper to fix a stigma on a number of his townsmen and his oldest friend. Sam also was a warm one. I need not say how this has affected me, especially as it must be publicly known as an attack upon you. What will you do? I do not presume to advise, but as a most delicate matter beg of you to think well. He has a good head and I hope an honest heart but I have long feared one quite void of tender feeling.

You have long made the subject of a test your theme, it ought therefore to be a subject you could say something in support of. Have you matter equal to manner? If so and you think proper to answer him you must have a great advantage, though in all he writes for the pulpit and says out of it, attack and satire is his forte, his sermons are little else. What I fear is some of our little irritated united men stepping into the *Star* with low personal matter in cards, etc., which will disgrace them and their cause and only flatter him. May you not be a fitter person, perhaps the very person that is called on to justify himself and those unhappy persons he has drawn in to so unhappy, so dishonourable a predicament as he is here laid before the public. If you can justify them and yourself in a way that will do you and your cause honour, I do think you ought and suppose it will be expected – but weigh it well, and in many respects consider – and you must do it with surprise and regret that it is Drennan against Bruce and in a public paper, upon an important matter, and that you will be both as well known as if your names were published. Again I repeat weigh it well. If you are sure of matter you may be assured of manner but consider this is a peculiar nice affair – be very delicate if you can destroy his argument with force of satire or how else you please, but attack it only – be delicate as the man, even as to a friend. Let the feelings of one burst through it if propriety will any way allow of such a thing – if not it will at least dictate to be less personal than he has chose to appear.

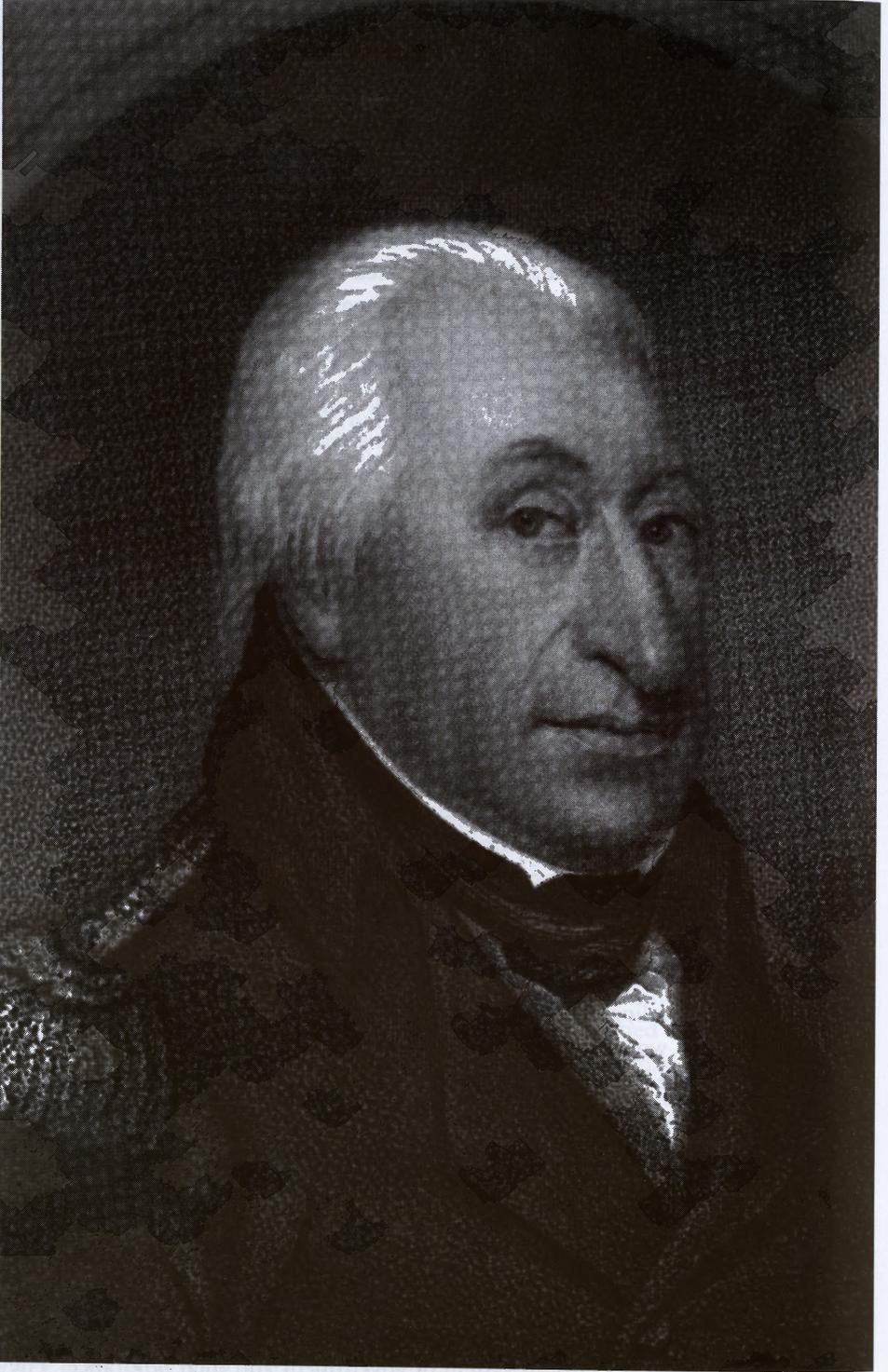
If your feelings are hurt to him reserve it for a private letter. Oh Will, could you think that our stubborn friend Bruce is a hen-pecked ninny and called so to his face by an ignorant unfeeling shrew of a wife who is hurting him in his Academy and the opinion of the world, poor fellow. I fear much he will not be long in it. Next Sunday it is proposed to have service only once a day till his health grows better – violent perspirations and the spitting of blood occasionally.

335 11 February 1792, franked J. Dunn

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DUBLIN, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [323]

Dear Sam, Black, Pollock and I are sitting together. Black tells us that the minister Hobart immediately acceded to Stewart's recommendation of the dissenters. This is wonderful and shows the curious system of government and their ignorance. They

²⁴ characterises.



James Napper Tandy
(1740-1803)

mean to divide our clergy and they think in consequence our laity – but it will not – our laity are not dependent and it will hurt the characters of the clergy. Much is to be said to this subject.

Ponsonby said whatever Hobart would do or say for the Catholics, he would and he hoped his party – this was a clinch of cleverness.

336 14 February [17]92

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [324]

Dear Sam, I put you to the expense of 4d merely to tell you that I have written to H. Joy, just desiring him to intimate in his Friday's paper that 'an answer to the strictures on the test of the United Societies would be published in his next', as I have not been able to send off the answer in time for his next paper. I should wish that I might appear in his paper on Tuesday and in the *Star* on Wednesday where perhaps the strictures ought to appear preceding it, in the same paper. Tell Mr Neilson I thank him for his letter. I should not wish any answer to appear first except on my antagonist's ground. Tell my dearest Matty I received her letter. I shall send you what I have written on Thursday or Friday at farthest which will be time enough for the Tuesday's paper of Joy. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

337 16 February [17]92, franked by [?] John Reilly

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [325]

Dear Sam, I send you enclosed my reply, and you will tell me if it be tolerable, by return of post. I think after reading it to Matty, and to Mr Neilson, you would do well to send or take it to H. Joy, as it is but fair to appear in his paper, and as I promised to send it to him. I cannot however take the trouble of re-copying it, and so it must be sent by Joy to the *Star* when he has done with it, or it cannot be inserted in that paper with the [stricture]s on Wednesday, as I should wish. It is a dry work to answer anything, and you will see it is not my vein; however I think it may do, as some answer must be made. If any word or phrase seems too sharp take it out, though I endeavoured to avoid any, and if anything strikes you as very wrong erase it. You will think it long but I could not make time to make it shorter, and an answer must necessarily be longer.²⁵ Yours ever, WD

338 Saturday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [326]

Dear Sam, The talk of the hour turns upon Tandy, and it is disagreeable to say, that he has mismanaged the business, first, in dwindling down the general cause into a

25 Drennan's answer to the strictures was published in the *BNZ* on 21 February 1792.

personal altercation, and next, when he had made the affair personal and Toler²⁶ had refused all explanation, in not meeting him before the House met, as it is said Toler was ready to do. Tandy delayed, I suppose, with a view of giving him the lie in print and thus forcing the challenge from Toler, but as soon as the House met, the letters were read, the privilege of parliament asserted, the messenger dispatched, the proclamation issued with the contemptuous reward of £50, and Tandy is now obliged to suspend at least all proceedings on his part, until the close of the session.

The society met, but only agreed to consider of the matter in committee this evening, and Tone thinks all the answer to be made is a republication of our declaration. This does not seem sufficient in answer to the epithet of a 'blasted' society. Tandy is said to be in Belfast. I wish he had been in Newgate,²⁷ and that he had not flinched from the messenger. When £50 was proposed in council as a reward for apprehending him, let it be 50 pence said the Lord Lieutenant.²⁸ The point of honour is much bandied about in conversation, but on the whole Tandy is supposed to have lost ground in this affair. Butler has made up the affair on his part for the present with Toler, but the friends of the former say that an apology was made to him, and Toler says that whoever will say in his hearing that he made any apology whatever is a liar. This must bring them together. However it be, Butler declined the chair last night, on account of the personal dispute which had been between him and Toler. This is the first part of his conduct from which I differ, as in his public character as chairman he is not to consider himself under any other light than as the conveyancer of the society's sentiments which may or may not be his own.

(Sunday) We met, and Butler's friends I think were much for the magnanimity of moderation – Butler himself not present – H[amilton] Rowan called to the chair – Tone, secretary. We agreed to resolutions, 1st, that undefined privilege was as dangerous to the liberty of the subject as undefined prerogative and equally unrecognized by the spirit of the law and the constitution. 2nd, that having associated for great national objects, and to promote union among Irishmen of all religious persuasions, this society is entitled to the respect which such objects naturally claim. 3rd, that an insolent menace having been publicly thrown out against this society, we are far from shrinking from, but anxious to meet any constitutional enquiry into our conduct, and reserving for that occasion the justification of our actions, we resign to deserved contempt, the scorn of official station or the scoff of unprincipled venality. These resolutions to be printed and the declaration to be annexed. It was proposed to annex all the names of the society as each part and member had a share in the opprobrious epithet given to the whole, and from an anxiety not to devote any man in the chair but this was not carried, and Toler must now stand on his pledge to bring the society to the bar. No notice taken by the society either of Butler or Tandy, as private matters are best settled among themselves. Rowan certainly would have no objection to take up Toler in this business, and I think Butler must feel awkward

26 John Toler (?1745-1831), MP, Solicitor General, later 1st Earl of Norbury, (*DNB*); he had made fun of Tandy's unfortunate looks in a debate.

27 The main Dublin prison.

28 John, 10th Earl of Westmorland (1759-1841), Lord Lieutenant 1790-95 (*DNB*).

in seeing Rowan's name as chairman to these resolutions but it is said that Toler wished to be off with Butler, and make Tandy grapple with the law. Grattan thought it very imprudent in Tandy to take any notice of Toler's personality, and before the letters were read or the business brought on, he left the House. Some friends advised Tandy to write against Toler, and to say that well knowing the virulent prosecution he must suffer on being the challenger,²⁹ whereas Toler was free from danger, he was lead to do as he had done, but now repeated his desire of meeting him at all events before the session was closed. It was said that Toler would put such a letter in the fire and perhaps turn the bearer out of doors, as he had before offered to fight him and told his second that he was ready and there were his pistols. It is probable that Tandy is still in town, and he will certainly resist being taken. Some of the Volunteers agreed to resolutions to mount guard at his door in order to protect the liberty of the subject, but the printer would not publish them, and there is evidently a sort of cowishness crept among many, and even into our society, but say nothing of this, or of anything I write to you.

How was the answer to the strictures relished? I think the *Star* ought to have published it, as it might help to confirm the doubters. The truth is the test has its advantages – and its disadvantages. It has kept out many able men here, chiefly lawyers, and the society is not so genteel as it might be without it, chiefly composed of Catholics, and these at present are fearful of speaking or doing anything to impede their pending bill. Hence they spoke even against the resolutions passed last night – particularly against the proposal of adding their names. When the fate of the bill is decided, then they say they may speak. This is prudent at least. It was resolved that it was not suitable to the dignity of any society to take notice of Edmund Burke's scurrility against the dissenters in his Letter to Sir H. Langrishe.³⁰ His son and Keogh have kept as clear of the dissenters as possible, but the Catholics assist the charity subscriptions at the meeting houses, and this day near £300 was collected at Dr Moody's, Strand Street, a good deal of which was sent by Catholics. I think the Presbyterian parsons are pretty well gagged now. The southern association will now have £50 a piece royal bounty. This matter should certainly be made an object of public investigation. Sam Bruce entered the society but has not taken the test, and will not. A resolution is passed to expel the names out of the books of those who have not taken the test, after a certain day.

I received my mother's letter and tell her I am much obliged for all her advice. Farewell – I shall write my mother soon. Yours, W DRENNAN

Dear Sam, The Parliament House is at present in flames. I saw the dome falling in. It is said the plumbers at the top caused it – I doubt not for a job – but it is a most unfortunate accident. It will be called a Catholic plot, and terrify the public mind. Rowan and Tone were in readiness to attend at the House,³¹ but this affair

29 For challenging a member of parliament to a duel, while parliament was sitting.

30 *A letter from the right hon. Edmund Burke... to Sir Hercules Langrishe... on the subject of the Roman Catholics of Ireland and the propriety of admitting them to the elective franchise...* (Dublin, 1792).

31 They were to attend at the bar of the House, as signatories to the society's resolutions in Tandy's defence.

has been terrible and all has been deferred. The fire it is said can't be put out and the House of Lords is taking flames.³²

339 [3 March postmark] [1792]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [329]

Dear Sam, I have read Bruce's reply³³ and think it must have an answer which I shall send to you in the course of the week. Thank you, dear Matty, for your addition.

Tandy is I believe come up, and we have agreed to a letter which I fancy will be sent by him to Toler this night. It was sketched out by Emmet, and added to by us. It puts the business of Tandy's appealing to the public prints on the motive of eluding the virulent prosecution which would be on his head if the duel should end fatally, mentions that he had no intention of foregoing the private satisfaction which he at present demands, and anticipates Toler's behaviour on the receipt of this letter by taking it to the House, but reprobates it as unworthy of a man of honour and a gentleman – in short, Tandy's adherents want to provoke Toler to fight, as the only way which can bring up their friend in public opinion. Rowan would not take this letter, though in case it be answered by Toler and that the matter is then likely to take place, he will be Tandy's second, but he fears that Toler will say the author of this letter is a coward for I offered to meet him, and I will not now meet any coward, and am surprised that you could be the bearer of such a letter. Poor Tandy, after eighteen years struggle against his own interest in the public cause, has nearly lost his reputation as a gentleman in a quarter of an hour. He is in town and I hear looks ill and at a loss, ready to adopt advice (a bad thing, or a bad symptom in such affairs when a man should be a judge for himself, and not suffer anyone to direct). He resists the idea of Newgate, and says he will defend himself rather than go there. His situation is bad, and he should endeavour by some risk to make it better.

The Catholic Bill has nearly passed the Lords.³⁴ The Chancellor interrupted Law,³⁵ Bishop of Killala, in his entrance upon a historical comparison of Catholic and Protestant in the affairs of Ireland from which much was expected, and which will notwithstanding be renewed this day. If my letter was opened, it must have been by a lady or ladies.

Joy printed my answer with several errata, and omitting one or two words of some consequence. McKenna has abandoned physic and is going to the bar, for which he can't be ready these some years. He is a man of desultory, slovenly manners and morals. The post just going out.

Tell Joy to insert in his Friday's paper that there will be an answer to the continuation of strictures in his next.³⁶

32 The fire of 27 February destroyed the dome and part of the chamber.

33 Published in the *BNL* on 2 March, under the *nom de plume* of 'Isadas'.

34 By this bill, Catholics were admitted to the bar, to intermarry with Protestants, to teach in schools and to accept apprentices.

35 John Law (1745-1810), Bishop of Killala, 1787-95, and Elphin, 1795-1810 (*DNB*).

36 Drennan's reply was published on 20 March.

340 Tuesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [328]

Dear Sam, I have little news to tell you. I imagine Tandy will surrender himself on the proclamation, according to the wishes expressed by a committee of the society appointed for the purpose of considering a letter written in answer to one of yours, and complimentary to Tandy as well as decisive on the abuse of privilege and prerogative in his person.

An express is sent for him, and if he does not comply with the wishes of the society, they will cast him off. The *National Journal* is come out and the first number contains the proceedings of the Catholics of Dublin on their agreeing to the declaration, and it seems very well drawn up, to give a respectable idea of the abilities of men who are denied on account of their supposed ignorance, the elective franchise. The paper is bad and the printing often inaccurate, but both will improve and it is likely will be of great service. I shall send it to you, but I shall drop the *Star* unless you send it to me in return. I shall enclose it to Dunn as at your house – if this does not do, tell me some other way. Burke, Butler, Rowan, Black, Pollock, Knox³⁷ and Tone dined with me the other day, and we were very pleasant together. I shall write to my mother tomorrow or next day. Write to me soon. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

341 7 March [1792]

WILLIAM BRUCE, BELFAST ACADEMY, TO SAM MCTIER, CUNNINGHAM'S ROW, [BELFAST] [330]

Dear Sir, You will perceive by the conclusion of the enclosed, that I desire Drennan to send it to you: but recollecting that this would be attended with an expense not only of three shillings postage but, what I value much more, of suffering in your esteem for several days longer – I think it better to send it to him through you. Yours sincerely, W BRUCE

342 8 March [17]92

SAM MCTIER TO [WILLIAM BRUCE]³⁸ [331]

Dear Sir, I read your letter to Drennan last night and sent it to the Post Office immediately after. I thank you for the friendly sentiments you express in regard to me. Your strictures which have occasioned them have been the topic of the day and the writer has come in for his full share, and I can't help thinking they were not prudent friends who advised the writing of them, and lament they did not lead you to speak to me on the subject of your publications which have made them and you the topic of the day, and this is seldom an advantage, by your letter it appears to me that you have been greatly misinformed.

37 George Knox (1765-1827), barrister, MP for Dungannon, 1790-97, and friend of Tone.

38 Draft letter.

I am by principle a Protestant dissenter, therefore judge for myself,³⁹ and am perfectly satisfied in my own mind of the propriety of the test. That there is any immorality or sin in taking it, even your favourite Paul himself could not make me believe. A letter from W. Drennan tells me he will send an answer to your continuation this day or tomorrow to appear in Tuesday's paper. It would have been a great deal better these publications had not been. I hope however they will not occasion any bad blood and soon be forgotten. I am dear sir, sincerely yours, SAM MCTIER

343 Friday, 9 March [1792], franked by W. Lecky⁴⁰

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DUBLIN, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [332]

Dear Sam, I enclose you a letter I received this day from Bruce. I think it better to have done with the business and I do believe that he acted from pure motives. Might it not be better, as the letter is chiefly addressed to you, to come together and enter into a candid explanation on both side. I never felt much hurt by his attack, but I think he was in a greater passion than he could justify. His theory of the origin of the test is altogether a supposition. I formed it without previous communication with anyone, and it was received without great debate. There must be a good deal of unfair proceeding in Belfast, if his facts are right.

Another society will go on here, chiefly of lawyers, and I suppose will take the same name. Butler was again sent for by the Chancellor and he expressed his surprise at the intention of publishing to a society of 2 or 300, a friendly and private conversation; that he never meant to censure or to threaten him with prosecution but merely to give him the advice of a friend on his conduct. Thus, his affair is soldered. Ponsonby accused the Chancellor of offering him a *carte-blanche*, if he would join the Buckingham administration. Lord Fitzgibbon denies it and a letter to that purport is to be read this night in the House. Tandy writes a letter to the Lord Lieutenant requesting a legal process in the courts may be instituted, etc., etc. This will be laughed at. Burke called on me today but I was not at home. Jones is I think turned crazy – he is tonight he says to do one of two things, either strike his name from the society, or move that Butler be put out of the chair. I am with Mrs Bruce⁴¹ etc. just as usual – and never made any matter of it. Might not you and Matty, now that thank God she is so much better, make a visit here? Write soon and long. W DRENNAN

Don't lose that paper of the brotherhood – or send it to me or bring it to me – shall I ever see any of my relations again?

39 This is the basic tenet of New Light Presbyterianism.

40 William Lecky (1748-1825), MP for Londonderry city 1790-97.

41 Dr William Bruce's mother.

344 27 March 1792

SAM AND MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN
[333]

Dear Will, Charge the postage of this to the Ballast Office and any other demand that may be made, together with the auditor's fee of £10, and I will remit you for all; the £10 is not to be paid until I write you that the accounts have been audited. By this you see that I trouble you with sending my year's accounts to the Account Office. They will come by the same mail that carried this, directed to your care. I beg you may send them the first day that the Office is open as they are too late.

What do you think of your friend Isadas⁴² now, but I may say your three friends, for I have every reason to believe that Dr H[aliday] and J.H.⁴³ were concerned with him in the strictures from the beginning. I have been much disappointed that there was not a letter from you this night, either to your mother or me; I saw a long one yesterday from Tone to Sinclaire. He mistakes the situation of this town and country around, they are still full of prejudice, which time only can remove. At a meeting of the committees of our three societies this evening we determined to have two thousand of the pamphlet published by the c[orresponding] committee and 5,000 of their declaration, this is all we can do yet.

Mr Webster⁴⁴ lies at the point of death in a fever, say the physicians, but I'll never despair while there is life. Yours, SAM MCTIER

[ADDITION BY MARTHA MCTIER]

Bruce's character appears to me in an unexpected light every day – proud and unfeeling, yet deigning to be led at home by an overbearing woman, and in this little political contest getting aid from both Dr H[aliday] and H. Joy, even his private letter to you larded by the latter. The Doctor never names you but darts at you through Bruce and smiles, or affect[s] it, at fine style, and rounded periods of certain writers. I would have liked to have seen your answer to Bruce's haughty letter which yet showed him sore – for he at least did not like the appearance of not continuing his friendship, and in a seeming accidental manner said in a large company at Mr Greg's he had that day a letter from Dr D[rennan], and on Jenny saying really with emphasis, appeared disconcerted. He has denied being the author of Portia⁴⁵ and says Jones knew he was not, but that he could not lose his joke. Dr H[aliday] will never forgive your getting the place in Dublin he saw too late he had lost for his nephew, and which by his interest there he certainly could have made an important one – his own in all public matters here has lost its respectability and he mistakes or loves to think it is the town not himself which is hurt. Bruce's last is trying – but it will ever be reluctantly, he will bend to conciliate himself with the Catholics, the town, and the United Societies, but with you I think he is more personally severe than ever. Why this continued personality? As soon as I try to forget one lash another

42 Bruce's *nom de plume*.

43 Probably John Holmes, unless this is a mistake for H.J., i.e. Henry Joy.

44 Gilbert Webster, a member of the Northern Whig Club, who died the following day.

45 Letter from 'Portia' (BNL, 17-21 February 1792); W. T. Jones, *Reply to an anonymous writer from Belfast, signed Portia. To which is prefixed Portia's original letter* (1792).

rouses me – reflecting on my former attachment to him and that I yet have to his relations I forebore printing Portia and am now sorry I did not do it. I really do not know how to meet him for I still think he might have treated his subject as well without hurting his friend. He has got a daughter – I hope his heart will be more inclined and softened to her than it appears to be to his sons. A speech of his a good while ago was seconded, and though a trifle bore harder upon him than he could have supposed. In a large company at Jemmy Holmes's, a very sweet polite little boy of his, upon leaving the room to go to bed, bid good night to the company and to their surprise went up to the stately doctor and held up his mouth to give him a kiss, but he without bending from his erect position observed – 'Gentlemen never kiss'. The child sneaked off[f] reproved, and the ladies particularly the mother wondered. Little things of this kind particularly at the Academy occur daily and the new one increases – they have a sweet little woman there, Mrs H, who is no better than an upper servant but far more amiable than the mistress, who would not suffer a little boy of hers to stay there and get his education like a gentleman's son. The chief inducement the mother had for coming here was this son's advantage, but she was obliged to part with him. Mrs B[ruce] is most universally disliked.

I am struggling with my dreadful and extraordinary disorder in hope, a slight one, of being able to conceal it and take up, for the third time in my strangely chequered life, a house. Belfast is the most convenient place yet I fear it must be at least for a time the country. Once I would not have feared it, it was my delight and two of the happiest years of my life were spent in my darling little retreat – but alas that independent mind I then had is gone, and now leans on others. I fear everything in life and the consciousness of my past derangement and the remains of it, which in many respects amounts to what I know is folly unparalleled, makes me dread the return of day. No inhabitant of the Bastille ever panted for liberty more than I do, for death which I would prefer infinitely to restoration. I cannot read, I cannot talk, nor I fear ever be more than a lodger and I often wish it was with some decent parson⁴⁶ in the country. Yet I know that take me off the subject of my hated self, I am just what you once knew. Never while you exist cease to love and remember my husband's care of me. His trial has been more than you can ever know or repay, and to the whole family I and mine must ever be debtors. Oh Will, if you knew what my frenzy has often induced me to do and say to them, what menial offices they have performed for me, it would amaze you, yet some of my family do not seem sensible of it. I have not seen my mother during a confinement of four months though she passes the door to Mrs Getty once or twice a week. What her reason is I know not. It hurts my beloved husband – it appears odd to the world – and to a family who would lay the hairs of their head at my feet (for so the Doctor told me) to restore or make me happy – how must it astonish them. Dr Mattear has been all the brother and friend you could have been to me during a severe trial of both for near three years, never never will I forget his tenderness, his forbearance and his pity

46 *recte* person?

– but for him I would have now [been]⁴⁷ God knows where. Some time I may see you. If when you write you could show a sense of what I owe this family it would be but justice and gratify your MM

Mrs Hyde is in a declining state of health. When you see Mrs Bruce give my love to her and the girls, nor do not forget my best wishes to my travelling friend Sam. If you ever see Mrs Orr remember me to her.

345 Monday, 2 April [17]92

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [403]

Dear Sam, I really wish that you and Matty could pay me a visit, as I could give you lodging at least without the smallest inconveniency. I wonder you have no desire to see Dublin in its present improved state, especially when the conveyance up is so easy. Do think of it.

Our society agreed last Friday to a letter to yours in which a compliment is paid to Tandy. He wrote a letter to the chairman – Butler (or rather Butler wrote it for him), stating the facts of his arrest by warrant of the Speaker etc. as the causes of his absence from his duty as secretary, and upon this letter, the society took the subject into consideration and agreed to the illegality of the commitment, that the proclamation was unwarranted by law, and that means should be taken to bring the business to a judicial decision, for which purpose a secret committee was appointed. Tandy has answered queries which they sent to him, before they would proceed, that he would conform to their advice and opinion. They have agreed to institute a civil action against the messenger in Tandy's name, and are to take Burston's⁴⁸ opinion about the proclamation – whether it expires with the session? If it does, ought Tandy to give himself up before the close of the session in order to try more fully the validity of the proclamation: if it does not, shall he give himself up?

The action for false imprisonment, or caption by the messenger, is to be begun immediately and in the exchequer, where they trust most to Yelverton's opinion, and they ground their hope of his judgment on their date, upon the commitment being made without summoning Tandy before the House to answer, without setting forth the grounds upon which the warrant was issued, and without any proof farther than a complaint being made to the House by one of its own members. It is said the proclamation is suspended, and this is said to be owing to the disapprobation of the ministry in England. This report, or correspondence from England, has stimulated the bar here, for certainly Butler has a good deal changed on this subject, and is now for pushing it on in law immediately. It is likely Tandy will surrender before the prorogation, but he has two horrors about him – a horror of Newgate – a horror of the bar of the House – and I much fear between ourselves – a third horror – of fighting. His nerves are but poorly strung by complaint or tendency to palsy, and I

⁴⁷ Word supplied.

⁴⁸ Counsellor Beresford Burston.

really think he has proved himself not the man to be replied on unless bound down by engagement, for which purpose the queries were sent to him in writing, and he returned his assent in the same way.

You mistake in saying Bruce's letter was interlined by H. Joy. It was I am sure his own hand, when he read it over, adding to it. We have some thoughts of repealing or reforming our test in order to accommodate the scrupulous. The Catholic Committee are to publish 10,000 of the digest, 10,000 of Tone, 10,000 of Jones who is a great favourite as having seemingly devoted himself totally to their cause. Burke and Tone revised their speeches and they appear well. Burke goes off tomorrow to England by Cork. I had a card from the Catholic Committee who are to entertain him at dinner this day.

I meant to have sent this yesterday but was kept too late at their dinner. There was nearly 100 Catholics and but seven Protestants entertained by them – Burke, Butler, Rowan, Black, Tone, Neilson, and I. The toasts given were very good and spirited – among them Black and the Synod of Ulster, for which he thanked them in handsome terms. He speaks well. They gave him their letter to Derry accompanying their declaration – and the letter to Belfast which is excellent to Neilson, and he spoke very well in return for their toast and compliment. Butler as president of the U[nited] I[rishmen], and Rowan with the Volunteers of Ireland, both returned their thanks, and they even went so far as to toast Jones, Tone and myself, for which we thanked them. McKenna was not there, I suppose in dudgeon with Burke and the committee. I left them at ten very much engaged. Neilson will tell you any other circumstances. I send you the *National Journal* – I don't much like the report of being called a proprietor and Pollock still less, hence probably we will shelter our indolence under this excuse for not writing.

Grattan sends confidentially to Rowan, I believe to damp him by disapproving of the resolutions of the U[nited] I[rishmen's] last paper. The poor Catholics have not even Grattan thoroughly – Grattan would not go up to the Castle with the address of the Presbyterian ministers for the increased *r[egium] d[onum]*. Certain it is Black has had good opportunities of knowing all parties for he has been with the first people, and I believe has endeavoured to show government that the Presbyterians were far from going the length of the Belfast people. He supports great dignity and importance and is certainly an able man. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

346 [18 April]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DOMINICK STREET,⁴⁹ TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [329A]

Dear Sam, Tandy is sent to Newgate, and will probably be out tomorrow. Attorney General⁵⁰ descanted on the atrocious libel of the United Society and pledged himself to bring the matter forward against Butler and Tone next session, that if such

49 Hamilton Rowan lived in Dominick Street.

50 Arthur Wolfe (1739-1803), Attorney General, later Lord Kilwarden (*DNB*).

things were permitted they might as well let them jostle us out of our places. Their names were attached to that libel but who were the authors of this he did not say. (They were written by Butler himself as also the letter of Tandy to the society.) Toler, Cuffe, and Grace⁵¹ ordered to give all the information as members of the House to assist him in the prosecution – Grattan, Curran, Egan⁵² not there. Sheridan said a few words as to his, Tandy's, answering improper questions, and Tandy at last said that as he was in custody upon what he judged an illegal and unconstitutional accusation, he would answer no interrogatories – ordered to Newgate – a good many accompanied him – I was not of the number – a regiment round the jail to prevent or provoke a riot – first question to Tandy whether he was not taken into custody by the Speaker's warrant – he answered yes – but should have stuck to the answer he at last gave, which was written for him. I suppose he'll certainly be out tomorrow, but the Speaker's warrant is to hold him till he receives an order from the House, and the gaoler will not let him out tonight even on Alderman Howison⁵³ giving him a written order. WD

347 [21 April postmark]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [335]

Dear Sam, I am really surprised you did not give me some account of the Academy matter.⁵⁴ Surely the Trustees should publish an honourable justification of Bruce's conduct in the whole business. He writes to me, and in most friendly terms – hints at malicious reports going about. What could be reported in a matter so plain and palpable? I am astonished at the account of the business which I hear of in his and Mrs Bruce's letter, and all for no assigned reason. Surely, [to gain]⁵⁵ respect the Trustees should step in and as the matter is public should vindicate the president. Little news – Tandy between ourselves is lost as to courage – the society are to prosecute the Speaker, messenger and the privy counsellors. I request to hear from you soon and long. Yours, WD

348 Saturday, 28 April [17]92

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [334]

Dear Sam, You must wait for the journal for one day as the regulation about putting it in before eight prevents me sending it, the night of publication. Are they examined at the Post Office, for if not, I might enclose a line in them to you at any time.

51 Richard Grace (1761-1801), barrister and MP for Baltimore 1790-97.

52 John Egan (1750?-1810), MP for Tallagh (*DNB*).

53 Alderman Henry Howison.

54 On 12 April 1792 a number of the pupils barricaded themselves into a room in the Academy and demanded a restoration of holidays which had been curtailed; the 'barring-out' as it was called was potentially serious as the boys had pistols, and shots were fired.

55 Text looks like 'I again', but 'to gain' makes better sense.

Last night the society met, and I enquired of Tone if the letter had been sent which he answered in the affirmative, but I suppose he had only done it the day before. I cannot account for his conduct in keeping back this letter which was passed by resolution the 20th or 22nd of last month, as there was little material in it except a compliment to Tandy, for which purpose solely it had been drawn up, and a hope that the Catholics would not rest satisfied with the morsel of liberty they had obtained. This letter I believe indeed was the means of stimulating Butler into the business of putting the affair of privilege in due trial by law, at least he acknowledges so much – for in any compliment to Tandy he would rather not join as he thinks his personal conduct poltroonish (hush!). Tone does not like Tandy and perhaps that was a reason of his keeping back the letter. Rowan has behaved as well to Tandy as a man of honour could do. To a note which Tandy wrote to him about what was to be done with Toler, he wrote him back, that was a matter which he could not advise him upon, and must be left to his own personal feelings. When Tandy met him afterwards, he told him that his affairs were in such a situation as could not be settled in a short time so as to enable him to go out to the field. Toler flourished with a great stick through the street the next day after the prorogation as if he expected Tandy would meet him and affront him, but this did not happen. It is not true that he lodged examinations against Tandy, but only bound him to appear in court. In case the Volunteers meet, I much doubt whether Hamilton Rowan would act under him, though he meets with him as usual in civil capacity. Don't mention anything of this. Tandy was at the society last night and was called to his place as secretary.

Our officers are to be chosen next night by ballot. Rowan I believe is meant for president, and I fear they will return me as secretary. I therefore request that you will give me your opinion, genuine and openly, on this subject. I am of opinion that my practice has neither been one guinea advanced or retarded by what I have done in politics. What has been done must already have done all the injury it can in the eyes of the court acquaintance, and if I shelter myself, or put myself under the shield of another name, as was done in the circular letter, do I not hurt myself in the eyes of sanguine friends, and act in a cowardly manner by not subjecting myself to any danger which I did not hesitate to subject other people to? Affairs in this country will perhaps very shortly take a very different turn, perhaps on the coming of a new Lieutenant – Marquis of Abercorn⁵⁶ is mentioned, a friend of Rowan's and his correspondent. What could I get by any change? Well – but I do not like at all a timid sneaking off, and I should like less to decline a station of this kind, and see another manfully expressing that the same sense of duty to his country which led him to become a member of the society must prevent him declining any station of honourable danger, which it chose to place him in. It is their wish to show that they have respectable men ready to come forward and to show a society really respectable. Ought any member to be damped by what has been thrown out or done against their officers? Will I not be deemed prudently poltroonish and really cowed by the

56 John James Hamilton, 1st Marquis of Abercorn (1756-1818).

little danger which they have encountered, and which during the summer it is probable that I should never meet? Three months is the period of office. The Catholics would wish for such men – don't laugh – and I should not wish to disoblige them. Backwardness may lose, what is called, my new friends and others will not be more disposed to serve me, as my conduct has shown my opinions, but this refusal would be a half way hesitating, indecisive conduct, that would always be referred to as the hinge of my character which was found wanting in any critical situation. How would Lucas⁵⁷ act? Life is very short.

You ought to have made Rowan reviewing general or exercising officer at least. He is a noble fellow – in appearance and in reality.

I really must press you and Matty once more to pay me a visit. If Nancy will not come, could not you bring Margaret or one of the Miss Mattears? I can give you as good a bed as your own and a drawing room to yourselves. My mother complains of her ill-health. Tell her to take a dessert spoonful of unbruised mustard-seed every day at noon in a little water or peppermint water. I hope Bruce is well and all at rest. H. Joy wrote to me about an address to Priestley. Write to me by return of post. I had rather you did not read this letter to Matty, though she has such a manly mind – much less to my mother or Nancy. Yours ever, WD

I should imagine your Belfast meeting in July might be made the groundwork of a provincial convention. The Catholics justly say – address us as a province and we will answer as a body, but with all due respect to Belfast, and gratitude, we would think it rash to say we will join in demanding reform, unless an adequate convention puts the question to us, and then we will not disappoint you. McKenna, Tone, and probably Keogh will go down, and the Volunteers, as a military instrument, or the civil convention may then most certainly be put in motion. This would put the Catholics to the trial, which I hope they would not decline – and if not, they will hang on from session to session, and perhaps at last be at the mercy of government.

349 16 May [17]92

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [336]

Dear Sam, If Dr Mattear and Dr Caldwell declare that they think, as physicians, that a separation of my sister from her husband and relations is a measure necessary to her restoration, I certainly, who have at all times a proper deference to superior judgment and experience, must coincide with their opinion, especially as at this distance, and from the length of time I have been absent, I can form no opinion of my own with respect to the precise nature of her malady. At the same time, temporary separation may introduce perpetual separation, for if the regimen adopted for so many months has not had the desired effect, it may be doubted whether one, two, or many months absence, though under the same regimen, would succeed. I confess I am not as yet prepared in my mind, however necessary it may be, to make this

⁵⁷ Charles Lucas (1713-71), Irish patriot (*DNB*).

exposure of her situation to the world, and to manifest that she is of a alienated mind. This perhaps may proceed as much from a regard to myself and my own settlement in life, as from my affection to her, and therefore should have only that regard paid to it which such a selfish consideration, though a natural one, must claim. My wishes for this scheme must be in exact proportion to the assurances which her physicians give that it is indispensable to her recovery – my disinclination to it depends on the appearance of such a separation to the world, and on the injury not only her mind must suffer on future thoughts of such a matter, but on the positive injury which her blood relations must receive by it. Do you think it possible that she could spend a month with me, if accompanied with that discreet nurse you mention? Has she so thoroughly lost all self-government, as to make this altogether impracticable? Even this would be a change, and perhaps ought to be tried before this last resolution. It would at least satisfy my own mind thoroughly, but in this, as in all things relative to her, I follow implicitly your opinion, and in doing so I prove best my affection for her and her future happiness.

I sent the note and received the receipt etc., which I shall send by the first opportunity.

350 [?21 June postmark]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [337]

Dear Sam, I should have written to you sooner, had I anything material to say either about others or myself. When I have not anything interesting, I feel an unconquerable reluctance in writing, and perhaps you may judge of my indolence in this particular by your own. A. Buntin took his dinner with me yesterday *tête à tête*, and we talked over all your Belfast politics. I am cutting out of these matters, as nothing such a man as I can do seems in any respect a compensation for what I may suffer. Politics here are very confined and local, I may say personal, and one may run about all the days of all one's years in such petty matters without advancing a step to any great national good, a turnspit god to roast meat for others. Tandy's jury did well, and I believe the fact is that Toler might be indicted for provoking the duel with hopes of success in finding him guilty. The society commence their prosecution which will come on next term – Butler and Emmet the lawyers, and they have subpoenaed the Lord Lieutenant with the rest. The judges refused to sign a letter missive which is the ceremonial mode of compelling attendance, and the lawyers then advised to proceed in the common manner.

I suppose your meeting on the 14th July will be much crowded, and I think your committee should meet to consider of some plan for the business of the day in which as much ostentation and formality should be introduced as possible. I think devotion should be mixed with it which is too much wanting even to French enthusiasm, and I should like to see one of your orators drawing up a sort of service for all the people to be read or spoken, and chorused with proper responses in the open air –

at a rustic altar – under the arch of heaven – a liturgy of liberty. You should make all preparations in time, and have something as the French call it more ‘imposant’ than a mere review. Your ladies should get some part to perform, and the lower people should revive [*sic*] their garlands etc. etc. If I can do anything for you, tell me, in what manner or style, address to the National Assembly is now a bore, but something or other should be done to show we can celebrate such a day in Ireland, though they dare not in Britain.

Mrs Bruce is expected here on Monday and the Doctor in some time after. I suspect that Dunn wrote Portia, and the last letter was extremely well done. I think it should be printed, but Jones is idolised by the Catholics. Farewell. WILLIAM DRENNAN

The *National Journal* is stopped – the Catholics did not like the editor and they have not yet fixed on any other.

351 Thursday, [5 July postmark] [1792]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [338]

Dear Sam, I send you a short flighty address. If longer I think it would be presuming, and if more political it would be unsuitable to this season of war. I should wish you would copy it in your own hand, and if you think it will do, I should not wish any alteration, for I never knew a critical committee that did not take away all the zest of a writing and leave it vapid. You ought certainly to have two days – one for the procession and another for the review. You should have four flags for France, America, Poland, and Ireland, borne by handsome boys in suitable dresses. Your dinner ought to have been where it was before, not at an expensive tavern but so as to include all at a crown each. Tone I believe intends to propose a declaration of politics, adhering to our constitution and abhorrent of a republic. This perhaps is prudent and proper – it is just the sentiments of the Catholics. This declaration is by no means incompatible with a short address of good wishes to the Assembly and France. If you don't like this one, burn it – for I can't alter it. Mrs Bruce is arrived. I am attending her in a sore throat – Bruce expected in a week.

Tell my mother I am ashamed not to have written to her. Farewell – and believe me ever yours affectionately, W DRENNAN.

Write me a line, but don't return the address if not liked, and tell me the plan and what you are doing – excuse this scrawl.

352 Tuesday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [307]

Dear Sam, I am glad you like the address but it is likely that if Sharman has written one it will be better, and I am not now so boyish in such things as I used to be, to prefer a worse to a better. I should have no objection to read or speak my own

were I to go to Belfast, but it would not I think be seemly in me to go such a length. Tone will probably be able to throw off some address to the people or to mould his resolutions into that shape. He has a ready and an excellent pen. I cannot do it now, and indeed you ought to have met and laid down some plan a month ago. Keogh and some other of the Catholics will probably be with you. I think one of your orators should first read the Declaration of Rights – another the address – the declaration by a third. I like the Jacobin motto best – The constitution, the whole constitution and nothing but the constitution. For the Volunteers I should wish a flag with this beautiful motto from Rousseau – *Tout homme doit être soldat pour la défense de sa liberté: nul ne doit l'être pour envahir celle d'autrui: et mourir en servant la patrie est un emploi trop beau pour le confier a des mercenaires.*⁵⁸ For Poland – A King the first and best of citizens – the artificial Noble shrinks before the Noble of nature (Paine). For America – Man – man for high and only title (Paine)

I am happy that our dearest Matty is better – Surely she might take a jaunt to me rather than I to her. This is what I cannot or rather ought not to do. Yours ever, WD

353 [undated]

HENRY JOY TO SAM MCTIER⁵⁹ [308]

Dear Sir, I have only time to send you a few toasts – if any [—] of them are good make use of them. H JOY

The Revolution of Poland: and its Patriot King

The Revolution of France

May Governors grant that to the Requests of the People, which cannot be denied to their Arms

The Rights of Man, and Mr Pain[e]

The Sovereignty of the People

The King of Ireland

May Philosophy enlighten all Nations, and form the whole into one immense family

The Constituting and Legislative Assemblies of France

The American Congress and the illustrious Washington

Lord Charlemont and the Volunteers of Ireland

The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade

The Revolution Society of London

The Society for Constitutional Information

The Conquerors of the Bastille

The Memory of all Citizens who from the Creation have fallen Martyrs to their Love of Liberty

Charles Fox, and his Bill for rendering Truth no longer a Libel

⁵⁸ 'Every man should be a soldier for the defence of his liberty: none should be one to invade that of another; and to die serving one's country is an occupation too fine to be entrusted to mercenaries.'

⁵⁹ This letter is much corrected and over-written.

Mr Wilberforce,⁶⁰ and a speedy Repeal of the infamous traffic in the flesh and
bone of Man
Napper Tandy, and a speedy check to the unconstitutional powers of undefined
Privilege
Reformation to those who deem corruption necessary to government
May the People of Ireland be united in the enjoyment of equal Liberty

354 18 August [17]92

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [340]

Dear Sam, Our political world is here at peace or watching in silence the grand scenes that are now acting on the theatre of France. There is no boy's play there I promise you. To me, it appears that the last interposition of the people was as necessary as the first, and I am still of my old opinion that there never was a general insurrection of the people, call them mob, sansculottes etc., or what you please, which was not justified by the necessity of the case, except perhaps religious mobs. It appears to me a second Bastille business rendered necessary by the treachery of the king, the corruption of the officers, and the gold of Coblenz and of all the confederate kings finding its way not only into the palace, but even into the National Assembly itself. There was no time to be lost in debating and adjourning the debate, and society rose once more into the seat of government, and decided the question, under appeal to the national convention which will I hope be granted as supreme authority and if it does confirm the decree, cut off this hand. Extraordinary situations call for extraordinary measures, and I do not fear the revolt of the real armies by this business, though certainly the cashiering of generals and suspected officers in the very face of the enemy will be hazardous to a great degree, and only to be balanced by the greater danger of allowing them to remain after having lost the confidence of the soldiers – which in the day of battle would be ruin indeed. Fayette ought to resign the command instantly and go the moment after into the ranks. – 'The enemy I most fear, in the present hour, is at the frontier, I will do my duty against them at all events, and in whatever station I may place myself or be placed, I shall behave like a Frenchman.' This would be sublime and worthy of his former life.

I think the assembly have been gradually corrupting, as is the nature of all entrusted power, cut off as it is from the living mass, yet the major part is sound, and there has not been a more soul-expanding sight since Rome was sacked than the stretching forth their hands to heaven, while the noise of the cannon was heard, and swearing to die at their post for liberty and equality. Some say, here, that the Jacobins are in the Coblenz interest and driving on the people to madness. This I think a mere Burkeism, an ingenious subtlety without truth. If the Duke of Brunswick⁶¹ gets to Paris, the carnage must be dreadful indeed, and perhaps the slaughter of the

⁶⁰ William Wilberforce (1759-1833), philanthropist who campaigned for the abolition of slavery (*DNB*).

⁶¹ Charles, Duke of Brunswick (1735-1806), German general.

Tuileries will be the very cause which will prevent him, looking to the consequences which will probably follow. Be of good cheer. Do not, as some (formerly their friends) do, go about saying all is lost, and snivelling out, the mob – the mob – No – it is God and liberty – it is the inspiration of him who breathed the breath of life, which without liberty would be but protracted suffocation. It is living in a barrel – it is smothering under a heap of hay. France is like a man in the crisis of a furious fever – a second convulsion comes on – good God – how he struggles – how the mercy of the human countenance is distorted – how the breast heaves for air – how the limbs twine with anxious jactation. The women say – tis all over don't torment him – draw the curtains – stretch the body – art is vain – but not nature – but not God – what a groan – he is dead – No – he lives – he lives – and the agony was the effort of regeneration.

I wonder your address never came to hand. It is curious, for the Assembly wisely notice even what are trivial things, but which may show that the sense of the world is with them. The Catholics here consult daily about their affairs and the organisation of the new committee, a good model for reform, an experiment put into execution without hazard, and which may habituate the public mind to real representation. With some slight objections I like their paper much. Mr. Bousfield⁶² of Cork sent me two dozen copies of his pamphlet (a second edition) in answer to Burke, wishing me to send them to the North. I shall send them, as it seems an excellent work.

Dear Sam, your promised visit will be in the character of a ghost for I can scarcely expect you or my sisters in this life. It flies apace – yet another year and perhaps it is gone, and for ever. If I be not dead before you come, perhaps I will be married, and that is a grave business you may think for me. Write to me soon and tell me all your politics – the poor and starveling imitation of gallic greatness – a combination of weavers – Snug and Bottom and Snout rehearsing their play – little more – Ireland is a besotted nation. Yours, WD

355 15 September [17]92

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [341]

Dear Sam, Melancholy accounts this day from Paris – I know not what to say. Roland⁶³ in his letter, which I wish Ne[i]lson would have translated, says all that is right and proper on the subject. All hope is gone if the people who intrigue merely for the purpose of being in the convention, should set the mob against the Assembly. Brunswick will come to Paris, which is only defended by men without arms etc., the slaughter will be great, and the king will, I suppose, be the sacrifice on their part. It is best to be silent on the subject for some time.

As for the Catholics, I think they have fairly got the argument on their side, and the grand juries have libelled and calumniated the first principles of the constitution.

62 Benjamin Bousfield, *Observations on the right hon. Edmund Burke's pamphlet on the subject of the French revolution* (1791).

63 Jean Marie Roland (1734-93), French statesman.

Butler's and Burston's opinions must certainly set the Chancellor in the most ridiculous light. Our society has drawn up a letter (written by Butler) to the nation, which I think a very good one, and your society's should coincide with it. The Protestants who do not assume any sovereignty over their fellow citizens should come forward even with the signatures of their names, but particularly the minorities of the grand juries should protest openly, not tacitly. I hear J. Crawford and Sir J. Blackwood were against the jury in Down – if so, they certainly ought to have openly protested. I should think an address from the Protestants to the King, going along with that of the Catholics, would be a proper measure, renouncing all intention of maintaining an ascendancy inconsistent with the natural rights of man and contrary to the genuine principles of the constitution.

Your Volunteer corps ought to meet and address all the citizen soldiers of the nation reminding them of the first end of the institution and warning them against such an abominable perversion as to make the instrument of civil discord what was meant to be a rampart against foreign foes, and a foundation for a reform in representation. The Catholic Committee will meet no doubt. I advised some of them to adopt some Protestant members. Much was said for and against, but I was pretty well persuaded they would not do it – though in reality they should take this method of showing their liberality, of showing how they would act were they electors themselves, and particularly of showing that it is not merely a Catholic cause, but a national cause in which they are engaged. Young Burke is here again and I see him at times. Tandy I believe has lost much of his weight in the city. He did not attend at the meeting of the corporation, nor at our society when the letter was agreed to. I don't enter much into what is going on, only sufficient to show that I am not a flincher in these ominous times.

Matty's lines are always a cordial to me and she gives me hopes of a letter. H[amilton] Young⁶⁴ is, she says, arrived. Is he to reside in Ireland? Has he called on my mother? Ever yours, W DRENNAN

Mr Burke has called on me repeatedly, and has just now left me. His ideas are pretty much as follows, and he seems very desirous to impress them on me. It is a certain fact that government on the other side were friendly to the Catholics in the elective franchise, and were contradicted by the ascendancy here, who are using every means in their power to stimulate the public mind, in order to show that they have a proper knowledge of the nation. This Protestant ascendancy is in reality a faction which have intruded themselves into the government of the country, against both King and people, and are resolved to keep it. They have made the grand juries declare war against the Catholics, and Mr Burke thinks that it must be actually declared as such, for to maintain the constitution by the perpetual exclusion of the C[atholics] is war, and to pledge life and fortune that they will never give them the elective franchise is war declared, and the raising Volunteer corps for the express purpose of withholding this franchise is an overt act of war. The ascendancy is now

64 Hamilton Young (d.1799), cousin of the Drennans, formerly a merchant in America.

in forcible possession and they are determined to keep it. The Catholics will appeal to the King, to prevent an appeal to heaven, and will lay their situation before him. He thinks the grand juries should be prosecuted immediately as a means of enlightening the minds of men and the nature of the ascendancy which in reality is only a few men actuated by the most monopolizing spirit should be laid open. If the Protestants of Belfast would agree to a resolution that there has been an actual war against the Catholics, it would be of singular use, and advance their freedom by confirming the English ministry in their original opinion, for Mr B[urke] has a moral certainty it is favourable to the Catholics, if the nation be not maddened against them so as to render relief impracticable. I know not if you should mention all this but to your friends.

356 Tuesday, [?18 September postmark]⁶⁵

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [440]

Dear Sam, I received yours of the 16th. Mr McClean⁶⁶ will certainly find room anywhere if he has abilities to make room. There is an open to be made, though it be not found by an active able man in all professions. Crampton died I suppose rich, Hudson and Whitley are now the chief dentists, and Hudson will or has made a large fortune. Cullen, whose abilities I suppose Mr McClean had an opportunity of knowing, died poor. His widow got a collection of about £200 which is her all. Recommendations will do all, if backed with abilities. Connection with two or three principal families is a good prospect of a fortune. Hudson has gained much by a manner and an affected sympathy with his fair patients who readily mistake it for real – he flatters etc. at a great rate. In short if Mr M be such a man as you represent him, I say with Cowslip, he will make room anywhere. You have promised to see me and you never broke your word – I therefore rely on it.

Burke read me his proposed declaration which is excellent, but I fear too spirited for the Catholic body to adopt. I believe they find difficulty in getting returns to their committee and they have sent out their commissaries to spur on the torpid people. I know nothing of their councils – Tone is possessed of them all. They behave civilly to me but nothing more, whether this is as a Presbyterian or as Dr D I don't know – I shall never act as if I noticed it. Nothing of consequence in the letter, but a wish to get some extracts from Bousfield printed in the *Star*.

I think Prussia will get to Paris. If they make the war a bayonet or pike business, and fight in the ancient style man near to man, I should think the French ardour would prevail even over discipline. The murder of the prisoners is one of those things that must be openly condemned and perhaps tacitly approved.⁶⁷ We would

65 Endorsed 1793, but from its content belongs in 1792.

66 John McClean, dentist, was living in Gardiner's Row in 1807 when his daughter married Drennan's brother-in-law, Edward Swanwick.

67 A large number of prisoners was massacred in Paris on 2 September to prevent their being released by Brunswick; however he retreated after encountering Dumouriez' artillery fire at Valmy.

in the same way condemn the assassination of the king and the emperor. If the boat which escapes from a wreck be sinking with the weight of men, some of them ought to be thrown into the sea. It is no time to weigh nice points of morality, much less of legal forms. Suspicion is a shrewd sign of guilt. Brissot⁶⁸ was suspected but instantly gave up all his papers and manifested his innocence. I doubt much if a single man lost his life that was not guilty of *lèse-nation* – and executed by a sort of summary martial law. When the extreme danger ceases, the amenability to law will resume its former place. Law is precedent which really cannot anticipate the circumstances which occur in revolution periods, and therefore all that is to be referred to is the instinctive decisions of the people, and were not the aristocrats and intriguers in Paris kept down by such vehement procedure, in such a city of 600,000 there would have been plots in every section. The approach of the enemy would increase their strength and if the federates etc. had left Paris in such a situation, there might have been an enemy within worse than the one without. I fear the French armies are by no means a match for the enemy even in numbers and I should imagine a battle would be dangerous to their cause, even to save Paris. The time for hope is in the retreat, but then the taking of Paris may subdue the whole kingdom. I should hope not – particularly the south would rather divide the empire than yield. Will Priestley go to the convention? Certainly he ought – his age etc. is no excuse. Consistence and courage will impel him. He ought to stick to his system. WD

357 [28 September postmark] [1792]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, DUBLIN [342]

You will perhaps laugh or rather it will be a smile of contempt at me, and the subject of these few lines – but I will risk that rather than omit anything that might serve you. A friend of yours, Ann J[ane] Bigger, came to me this day and wished I would hint to you that if you wrote to H[amilton] Young you would mention his sister.⁶⁹ She seemed fearful that you might not have heard of the death of the two others, and says it is in regard to her he seems sore. He was at my mother's today and got Nancy to go to his sister's, which she did with an offer of a bed to one of the Biggers, who are expected here tonight. We have all observed a distance in him in regard to you, and find he has mentioned having received a letter from you when in America but was much hurt by your not mentioning the name of one of his friends here. I imagine he thinks they have been overlooked by us through pride. This is the occasion of the present hint which I suppose you will take as meant by your MM

If you have wrote and mentioned sister, I hope it has been sister and not in the plural. Nancy thinks very well of him and particularly for this very attention to his sister, yet she went to the house with something like shame and fear for the construction the town might put on it.

68 Jacques Pierre Brissot de Warville (1754-93), French politician.

69 Martha Young (d.1807); since Martha had not been writing in 1791, and the Drennans and Youngs had not been on friendly terms, she fears that William may offend Hamilton Young by being unaware that two other sisters had died in 1791; Ann Jane Bigger was a cousin of both the Drennans and the Youngs.

358 Saturday, 29 September 1792

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [343]

Dear Sam, I send you the paper. If you like it, get it if possible passed without clipping and altering more than your 'secret' thinks absolutely necessary. If you adopt it, send one of them to our secretary, Mr Thomas Wright,⁷⁰ surgeon, Ship Street. If you do not like it return it to me. Tell Matty I mean to answer her long and affecting letter soon. I wrote to H. Young and did not overlook what she mentioned.

Butler proposed a non-consumption agreement against the ascendancy. The Catholic mass could do much if they chose, but no one took it up. The convention has met and elected Petion⁷¹ president – not unlikely Paine will be next. If they fight as well as they talk and write and decree, I fear them not. Write to me a line by return of post – this costs you 8d. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

The rumour of an union is renewed here and that government want to force the Catholics or the Protestants to assent to it – perhaps this should be noticed.

M[at]ty will smile at my sealing.

359 1 October [17]92

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [344]

My dearest sister has made me very happy to hear that she is returning as it were to life and its enjoyments. I always think of the justice of an observation I somewhere met with that whoever has the misfortune to think much about himself, becomes disordered either in mind or body. Our sufferings are our own, but our pleasures arise from external objects. Endeavour therefore, my dear Matty, to think of the French, of the Catholics, of Nancy, or even of me, or of any other subject but yourself, and you will give fair play to your constitution which aims at your recovery, and which will probably grow stronger every day. Your account of H. Young and Nancy's paying the family a visit, entertained me. I hope Nancy will form no bad designs against her cousin, and I don't wonder she was afraid of the town talk on the subject of the visit. I wrote to him as you desired and probably had not done so, if you had not desired it. I cannot be supposed to have any affection for a man I never saw and as for motives of interest, were the quarter of the Cottown⁷² mine at present, do you think I should leave it to him, much less should he be inclined to do anything of that nature to me, against whom I should suppose he was rather prejudiced than otherwise. His sister seemed to me a very good woman, and I doubt not he is as good a man, though, as you say, he probably thinks us proud. God help me, I should be proud in a little degree, to keep me buoyant in this tide of human affairs, as I have so many causes of humiliation, in my person, in my profession, the

70 Thomas Wright, surgeon, United Irishman and informer.

71 Jérôme Pétion de Villeneuve (1756-94), French writer and politician, first president of the Convention.

72 Cottown or Corton, a property near Donaghadee, Co. Down, which had been divided unequally between Mrs Ann Drennan and her sister Elizabeth Young; the former now owned one quarter, and Hamilton Young owned three quarters.

meanest of the liberal professions, and in the small progress which I have made after ten years labour – a little of the energy which pride is perhaps requisite to lift one above the composition of cawdle,⁷³ and the convention of midwives and wet and dry nurses. I suppose if have pride, which by the bye I much doubt, it must be from my good mother, who may be fonder of me on that account, and as H. Young is half-blood, I suppose he has his share of it. I warrant when my mother gives him one of her nice suppers, she will look on the great fortune at her side (for she will place him there), and then compare the rich merchant to her poor little accoucheur, who in Newry made in the year 83 – £103, 84 – £144, 85 – £160, 86 – £173, 87 – £213, 88 – £296, 89 – £222, in Dublin 1790 – £105, 1791 – £187, and this year I know not till the end of it. With what poor graduations I come on, while a merchant makes as much at a single venture.

By the bye, I wrote a paper for the United Irishmen, and tell Sam that if it be adopted, I should wish this small sentence added to the end, which I overlooked somehow in writing it, and even such a trifle as a pin is nothing without a point though it be but a minikin one. The concluding sentence is – We will not vilify the religion of any man, far less will we presume to make those varieties of faith which are natural and perhaps necessary the instruments of civil persecution and political usurpation (add) – to make what may be deemed the pleasures of the Creator, the causes of torture to his creatures. You will equally smile at my desire to have such trivial alteration made in a trifle, only if it be printed, I think everything ought to be correct and neat.

I hope you go to my mother frequently – in her last to me she seemed a little out of humour. Ah! Let her not – tis not worth while for the time either of us have to live. I value life less and less but this does not make me less cheerful, rather more so. I should be happy you could go home and have a house of your own again, with a husband who is deservedly dear to you and who wishes, I suppose, to be at Kingsmill's house this winter. You should endeavour to be well in order to see me in spirits. You and perhaps I have been too much the creatures, the victims of hope which some would call self-confidence. Nancy, our dear Nancy has indeed had a joyless life of it for I don't think even hope visits her often. Well remember my rule – don't think much of ourselves or we will all turn crazy. My dearest sister and friend, ever yours, W DRENNAN

360 Sunday, 28 October [1792]

MARTHA McTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [345]

This day, my dear brother, your Matty feels a renewal of her wonted spirits, and as in her better times rejoices with ardour in the downfall of tyranny. Kings will now I hope stay at home, for it is there only the gaudy puppet is of any consequence, there for the peace of mankind and their own salvation they had better keep their

⁷³ A warm spiced drink traditionally served to new mothers and their visitors.

troops also. The French were long averse to trade, but at last served an apprenticeship in America, and now have set up for themselves. The Prussians also, I dare say, will soon fall into the same business. What a contemptible figure on the scene does that King of Prussia⁷⁴ make – any old woman (if she lived in Belfast) would have been a better politician. I can feel a contemptible kind of pity for Lewis⁷⁵ but hatred and abhorrence of the other. Wisdom and therefore happiness certainly dwells mostly in the middle ranks of life, and I believe the two extremes of king and mendicant are the most worthless, for very wise purposes no doubt the former are generally deficient in intellect, when this is the case and they content themselves with good living pageantry and doing no harm they will for a time I suppose be tolerated. I never liked kings and Paine has said of them what I always suspected. Truth seems to dart from him in such plain and poignant terms, that he or even she who runs may read, and I imagine his writings will have a most important effect on the public mind.

The Irish will certainly soon attain some national character and no longer be deemed blunderers. They are the only people who at present dare to speak out, let them keep arms in their hands, think and act with liberality, speak out boldly, and watch each happy moment thrown in their way by others, and they cannot fail of an easy conquest over their oppressors. The difference of religion has been the greatest bar and that is now melting away – and if it can once be believed that this is for mutual advantage, Ireland may make herself all she ought to desire. The Irish heart is good – the Scotch head, and the English b—. If I was on a journey with one of each nation and at a loss for a little money, I would borrow of the Irishman, make a companion of the Scotch and send the English to bespeak dinner. I remember an officer's lady who told me, that among the men who fell sick, on inquiring the seat of their disorder, the Irishman always answered it was about his heart, the Scotch it was aw in his heed, and the English it lay in his belly.

Our Volunteers are to fire on Tuesday – illuminations are recommended but no bonfire, for even here there are enemies to the French revolution: and many that you would not suspect, once honourable men, but from causes not hard to make out have lost their public spirit, some who would be ashamed to condemn the revolution in France yet finding themselves very snug wish for no change here, others used once to take the lead have been too long of coming to a determination and while they adopted the caution of age, the better spirit of youth has got the start and left them so far behind in the race, that not being able to make the figure they once did, they have sunk into insipid neutrality at a time when every mechanic is roused in to public spirit and dares avow it in language such as Osborne's – these men and their occupations those I allude to affect to despise, but it will not do and the laugh now turns against themselves. Our best writers, speakers and actors are now those whom nobody knows. Of this number are two reading societies⁷⁶ who for three

74 Frederick William II (1744-97).

75 i.e. Louis XVI.

76 The first Belfast reading society was founded in 1788 and eventually became the Linen Hall Library.

years past have been collecting a number of the most valuable books not merely to look at, among these are the encyclop[ædia]⁷⁷ the parliamentary statutes etc. Till within these two months there was not among them one of higher rank than McCormick⁷⁸ the gunsmith, or Osborne the baker, but of late some gentlemen who wished to take advantage of a valuable collection of books have deigned to enrol themselves with these worthy plebeians who would do honour to any town. A scheme was proposed to unite the two societies for the good of the place and make it something more than a mere library by giving premiums to merit and purchasing a philosophical apparatus, but the gentry oppose this scheme and wish to confine it. The tradesmen, the original proprietors, will not give up, they wrote an excellent [letter]⁷⁹ to Dr H[aliday] requesting him to be their president. He answered them very politely and promised to attend their next meeting, and this is probably the last public honour he will receive, as he has of late spent much of the little remaining fire against those assuming men. I think they had an eye to his books more than himself when they paid him this compliment.

Patterson⁸⁰ the curate you know is one of the most timid slaves we have. This day soon after the news from France was made public he was sent for to christen the child of a countryman about a mile out of town. He asked the name of the child when the father held up a paper to him with Dermourer⁸¹ wrote on it. I suppose he was afraid he would not sound it plain and had it wrote in very legible characters.

Bruce preached one of the most noble discourses this day that I ever heard come from a pulpit. He has an art which I think a very happy one, of treating every subject, even the most common ones, in a new, ingenious and therefore interesting manner; his text was 'work out your own salvation'. He left out fear and trembling, not being a great friend to it, and opened his discourse with a startling sentence – that God never made any creature wise, good, and happy, but had given him the means of becoming so. This he exemplified in a number of very striking and beautiful instances, even in our frame he observed what culture and care could do to render even the most perfect of our organs useful and delightful to us. The eye for instance, but how different was its view to the mere rustic and the man of taste, the painter and the poet, the hand also he dwelt on and its powers – even of it[self] to describe the passions and exemplified it prettily enough, though I was conceited enough to think [I cou]ld have done it better. He gave a very noble definition of liberty – but cast a blemish on a discourse otherwise elegant, by a harsh unhappy simile, in observing how easily we dwelt upon the faults of others, while we were blinded to our own. He compared such, to the foolish mother, who while she ridiculed the partiality of other parents, dwelt with delight on her own deformed brat – an inelegant comparison and an unfortunate one for him, as he is suspected of not having very warm parental feelings, a belief that has been one reason of hurting his academy.

77 Possibly the Irish edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* published in the spring of 1792.

78 Richard McCormick who later settled in Dublin.

79 Word supplied.

80 Rev. Edward Patterson (d.1818), curate of Belfast 1774-87, vicar of Carrmonee 1788-93, and rector of Desertegney 1793-1818.

81 Charles François Dumouriez (1739-1823), French general, victor of Valmy and Jemappes in 1792.

I have been lately looking over some of poor Crombie's⁸² sermons and though I thought highly of them when they were preached, I was surprised with the elegance and chastity of their style, the purity and loveliness of their sentiment, what pains he took to dress his thoughts in the best expression. This occasioned blotting and erasures endless and makes it shameful writing but never does he write or blot one sentence, though perhaps beautiful, but for one more so. He certainly respected his hearers highly and studied hard to please them. I never yet read such sermons – Blair's⁸³ do not deserve to be named beside them. This is my opinion of them in their present form, how would they shine finished or improved by such a hand as yours. I really think it a pity such discourses should be lost, they would do his memory, his people, and his family, who are very promising, great honour. There were a few of them laid by, as if for publication or for his future inspection. Mrs Crombie took them to Scotland and consulted McCormick⁸⁴ but he gave a decided opinion against their doctrine. Hill allowed them great merit. She consulted Haliday, who also spoke of them in high terms but said it would be work of labour to prepare them for the press. You of all the men I know could accomplish this matter, both as a correct writer and one who was acquainted well with the style of the author. She would not publish them by subscription, nor unless inspected by one she could depend on. Your regard for the family might perhaps induce you to undertake this matter if not incompetent with your own business.

In that case might it not with a well written introduction or account of the author do yourself some credit? Or might you not in that case be excused as a son for taking some notice of the character of his predecessor?⁸⁵ A character more worthy of an elegant pen surely never existed – yet it has sunk it to oblivion, though adorned with all that could make human nature lovely. Had his mind been in a beautiful female form it would certainly have been the most perfect of all the works of God, and yet there is no record of his virtues, and a mind harmonised by every amiable virtue, every attractive grace, and a son too who remembers them and whose pen can do justice to every subject and render any interesting, and is it because this uncommonly attractive character did not print that he can fill no place in biography, because his taste was so exquisitely refined in everything and his opinion of himself so modest? This I know, that if my pen was equal to my conceptions I could render an account of your father, a piece worthy the attention of the man of taste at least.

I meet H. Young often and he improves upon me. He visits my mother in a very friendly way. I was there lately when he came in after tea and told her he had a letter from Willy and that he had answered it – that he found there was no probability of your coming here and that he would have to visit you. I made a covenant with myself that I would not in this letter, I would not say one word on a late subject, you will therefore find me your old MM

82 Rev. Dr James Crombie (1730-90), Presbyterian minister and founder of Belfast Academy (*DNB*).

83 Rev. Hugh Blair (1718-1800), published five volumes of sermons, 1777-1801 (*DNB*).

84 Rev. Dr Joseph McCormick, her brother-in-law; Professor George Hill was related to McCormick.

85 i.e. their father the Rev. Thomas Drennan.

361 Tuesday [30 October postmark] [1792]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [346]

Dear Sam, I received your letter and think it would be your best way to have your resolutions for the Whig Club drawn up in the words of Locke,⁸⁶ Blackstone,⁸⁷ etc., whose authority none of your members could question and who are the foundation of revolution principles. I write chiefly to tell you that Hamilton Rowan intends dining with you that day – a man whose mind and body does honour to Ireland. He wishes to be introduced to your reformers. He is a true patriot, excellent in head and heart, zealous and actively zealous for the cause of his country. I shall write with him to you and W. Sinclaire and Neilson. What has N done with the plan of reform? Something of that kind might be proper to show that the end is not forgot while the means is agitating. Rowan is a personal friend of Lord Abercorn's, who will probably be Lord Lieutenant, but I believe does not join him in his politics. Some say Lord Rawdon is to come over. I believe they mean to elect me as their president in the United Society for the next quarter and Rowan will probably be secretary. I cannot consistently decline it. The society agreed to an address to the Friends of the People in England which I wrote, and I shall enclose you a copy, along with the constitution of the society.

The Catholic Committee has now returns from 25 or 26 counties which is sufficient to make a proper representation.

We had an illumination last night for the success of France. The guards traversed the streets and kept all quiet. The illumination was not general. You should have one. I was disappointed at not hearing from Matty as I expected today. I request your attention to Mr Rowan who has been very civil to me. I have gotten a severe headache which makes me conclude. Your fellow citizen, W DRENNAN

362 Tuesday night, [1 November postmark]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [347]

At Sam's request I sit down at 12 o'clock this night to tell you there was a very numerous and respectable meeting of Volunteers and citizens called by public notice – where a declaration of their sentiments respecting French affairs was unanimously agreed upon. He was called to the chair and on the motion of H. Joy the declaration was ordered to be transmitted to the National Convention by the chairman. He begs of you to write a letter for him and enclose it as soon as you can, such as you would think fit to be sent on this occasion to the president of the Convention. White⁸⁸ wrote the address on very short notice. Sam thinks it is sensible and plain, but not like those sent from Belfast on former occasions. I have been all this day singing over the hills and far away, and Prussia and Brunswick skipping before my

⁸⁶ John Locke (1632-1704), philosopher (*DNB*).

⁸⁷ Sir William Blackstone (1723-80), judge, published *Commentaries on the laws of England* (*DNB*).

⁸⁸ Dr John Campbell White, physician and United Irishman, later emigrated to Baltimore, U.S.A.

eyes – I longed for some humorous words to that good old tune the Pretender danced to. I fancied it replete with irony and happy timed satire, that it was sung in private parties, in the streets and on the theatre, and that Dr D was known to be the author. This is a time and an occasion when a well turned song would have an excellent effect an[d] perhaps do its author more credit than many more important pieces. George Ogle⁸⁹ was more known as the author of a ballad to a good old Irish tune than all his parliamentary speeches. How provoking that Sam, if he was to transmit any address, it was not one of yours. I fear for any other – what you do for him will not be garbled nor any such ill-sounding word as coadjutors be foisted in among your sweetly flowing ones. Haliday was not at the meeting. The illumination was without exception except by Mr Bristow. Ever yours, MM

Sam longs for an answer to his last.

363 Thursday, 1 November [1792]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [347A]

Dear Sam, I received Matty's letters – and her last one this moment. I am glad you agreed to an address. As for any introduction, you can do it better by and of yourself. It should be very short – something perhaps like this – As chairman at a meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast, I transmit to you, Sir, the expression of their sentiments on the revolution of France and of their sensations on the news of its glorious completion. I transmit them to you with all the respect which man can justly pay to man, and I feel myself emboldened, in the sincerity of my heart, to pray to that God whose ear is open alike to the first assembly on the earth and to the humblest individual, that your arms may continue to prosper in the cause of France and of human nature: that the principles of your declaration of rights may live in your practice; and that, in fine, you may soon bring about a civic union of the world when all the sons of men and all religions shall join their worship in a temple of liberty which may have the earth for its area, and the arch of heaven for its dome.

We had great entertainment from a meeting of the Catholics here, the householders, to answer the corporation – much excellent speaking and I was sorry none but their friends were present. Keogh spoke for more than an hour, better, absolutely better than any man could do in parliament – one excepted – a Dr Ryan⁹⁰ made a most elegant harangue indeed. Emmet drew up their answer which you will see. I shall write to you again by Rowan who goes on Saturday and of whom I cannot speak so much as he deserves of all.

With respect to your Whig Club declaration, I really don't know what to say, but I think it would be better to adopt others' words, as 'whenever a question arises between the society at large and any persons vested originally delegated by that society, it must be decided by the voice of the society itself', 'In a free state every man who is

89 George Ogle (1742-1814), MP and composer (*DNB*).

90 Probably Dr Thomas Ryan, United Irishman and member of the Catholic Convention.

supposed to be a free agent ought to be in some measure his own governor and therefore a branch at least of the legislative power should reside in the whole body of people' (Blackstone), 'The legislature acts against the trust reposed in them when they make themselves or any part of the community master or arbitrary disposers of the lives, liberties and fortunes of the people. The reason why men enter into society is to limit the power and moderate the dominion of every part and member of the society' – Locke, 'In every state where the citizens do not participate in the power of the legislature by the delegation of a body freely chosen by the majority of the nation wisely restrained by their instructions particularly on the nature of taxes and the collectors⁹¹ of them and subject to their control, there is not nor can there be public liberty' – Mirabeau.

Now, I would preface these principles and add something to apply them which I am now, hurrying out to dinner, unable to do, and W. Sinclaire or you can do better. If my work could be traced it would damn the paper in the club and therefore I save myself the trouble. Your fellow citizen, W DRENNAN

364 Wednesday morning, [8 November postmark] [1792]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [348]

My dear Brother, Not being in bed till two this morning I have not been able to rise in time to give you as particular an account of what passed at the Whig Club as I wished, nor perhaps what I could learn from Sam at that hour may not be very correct. Such as I got then from him however is at your service.

The number was sixteen, of what is called respectable men, that is gentlemen, and in politics, some very gentle men. Mr Rowan was introduced by the most open aristocrat⁹² there, alas! how fallen is Dr Haliday. He was well received and put into the chair. W. Sinclaire as secretary proposed resolutions which I have not time to procure, but which went fully and decidedly into the Catholic question, they were every one carried with only a solitary and feeble No from Dr Haliday. Sinclaire acquit[ted] himself well, and the company, I suppose being rather good, sensible men, but timid and a little averse to give up prejudices long nursed in secret, and of late warmly avowed, rather than weak or bigoted, listened to reason, did not dispute what they could not controvert, and with the help of a president and secretary, United Irishmen they, their resolutions I hope will do their country good and themselves some honour. If I recollect their names were Haliday, Sinclaire, Isaac, Crawford, Gordon, Boyd, Ferguson, Symon, Montgomery, White, Rowan, McTier – I have forgot four.⁹³

91 Or collection.

92 Aristocrat is used throughout as the opposite to democrat.

93 Dr Haliday, William Sinclaire, Simon Isaac, John Crawford, John Gordon, James Ferguson of Belfast, John Simon of Mountpleasant, Hugh Montgomery of Tullycarnet, James White of Whitehall, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, Sam McTier (see Henry Joy, *Historical collections relative to the town of Belfast* (Belfast, 1817), pp 341-2); Joy does not include Boyd, who may be Hugh Boyd of Ballycastle, MP for Co. Antrim 1794-96.

I congratulate you on the honour of being president. It may make you some enemies and even hurt you in your practice but that in my opinion is of small importance, none when compared with self approbation, and you never will have that, at least you never will have mine, but in that consistency of conduct which has hitherto marked you, and destitute of which man is indeed a poor, very poor creature, yet so often are the best disgraced by it, that the best should fear themselves and not desire long life. You and I believe your fellow I[rish] M[en], united upon honest principles, you can have no other motive for continuing to act in a body. They appear to me to be like truth daily gaining credit, they will not go out like the snuff of a candle, and as you had the honour of being among the first, I hope you will be the last to desert them or their cause. They entertain Mr Rowan I believe on Friday. He dines with us today, I wish it had been in our own house, and with WS on Saturday so you will not have him at your next meeting. Farewell at present, God grant you health and life while you are a constant honest man. Parliament I hope will not injure you but if it should you are at your post. MM

365 Saturday night

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, TO THE CARE OF A. HAMILTON ROWAN ESQ. [349]

My dear Will, As it is possible you may have thought I wrote too often of late by post, I shall take the opportunity now of Mr Rowan's return and his offer to carrying anything to you I chose. Indeed I was greatly tempted to give him myself for that purpose – he goes up in his own chaise and wished so much for a companion that he went to Hyndman and offered him a seat, and to send his servant in the mail. I mentioned my hope of visiting you soon, he politely wished it was now and that I would go up with him. I had not time to think of it but as words of course, and as such refused – but if he was to come in my way again and renew the invitation I would certainly accept of it, though he goes tomorrow, but to see you I would need no preparation. He dined at Dr Haliday's on Thursday, Sam was there, the Doctor had fenced himself with several pudding faced fellows fit to ward off the now hated subject of politics, the feast of reason, etc., had not need to decline there, for the meat and drink are below mediocrity and a standing jest. The two or three first toasts over, he begged leave to give a friend and then announced a name he has not pronounced in Sam's hearing or mine these three years – Dr Drennan. On Tuesday morning, the day after the Whig Club, a remarkable change was avowed in the sentiments of many of your old acquaintance here – John Holmes, H. Joy, J. Ferguson, and several others of the antis, declared the friends of the Catholic question had undoubtedly the best of the argument, that they were now quite convinced and Holmes told J. Crawford that he would be among the first to promote a petition in its favour from this town.

The Doctor, however, will not, can not yield. I am afraid there are two of them that will not on this question do it with a good grace – instead of going to the club

on Wednesday, Haliday called in his chaise on Billy Irwin,⁹⁴ got a white pudding for his own dinner and some beef steaks for Hugh Montgomery, and with this provision and a plentiful disgust at the Monday's meeting, went to Tullycarnet to enjoy it with Hugh who is greatly horrified about the Catholics. It's hard for him who so long led now to follow at humble distance, no more to resolve, to toast, to be looked up to. Sam, in hopes that he would see the loss his present mode would be to him, gave him many opportunities of trying to recover, but he would not see nor take them. He asked him to go to the meeting, the day of celebration where he thought he would have been put in the chair, but a sulky No, was all could be got, and probably there is not another man will again think it worth while to ask him. His new friend H. Joy has got the new light but I think he was born and ever will be short-sighted to everything he imagines against his own interest. Indeed I cannot help believing that this sudden flash of conviction and candour has its foundation in fear with the most of its converts. They stood out while there were any hopes of success. They now begin to find numbers as well as reason against them, and would not relish being marked out as the enemies of the Catholics, which they have always guarded against as far as fair words go, and at the same time differ with the most enlightened and rational of their Protestant friends. This is the real situation of the opposers of Catholic liberty in this place, who now find certain societies are not yet gone out like the snuff of a candle.

Yet my dear brother be as guarded as you honourably can in your present situation. I do not think it is ever pleasant to be responsible for the opinions of others – that probably may now be your case. I hope therefore, they will be well weighed, and that in any political matter you may publish, the best law opinions may be your sanction. I would not like to visit you in Newgate – for glorious indeed ought the cause to be to gild such a residence. Patriotism seldom places any one there, it is oftener the mistake of madmen.

So long is it since we conversed together, that I know not whether you now relish my poor arguments, or desire more from me than that we are well. I wish when I write to amuse you and therefore continue at it, till perhaps I defeat my purpose. To entertain you would now be one of my most pleasing occupations, for what has this life to give me – nothing. I defy it to produce any one thing for which I am now interested, unless it is some addition to the happiness of you or Nancy. I am now nearly a half century woman.⁹⁵ Every day I live may rob me of a blessing, none can add one – unless my mind grows more weaned from a world that has been rather hard on me, and can attain that pious wish of leaving it for a better. This frame of mind is I hope in reserve for me. You make me angry when you write of yourself, your profession, and your appearance with such humility or rather discontent. You know I have always differed and ever I suppose shall differ with you on this subject, your fortune indeed is small, but this I think was not the object of your ambition, and as love does not seem ever to have attacked you with much violence – when have you suffered?

⁹⁴ Billy Irwin was a Belfast butcher.

⁹⁵ i.e. she was nearly fifty.

I wish indeed you were happily fixed with a wife equal to your wishes and that you enjoyed the sweets of a family of your own. It is time, and I should imagine men of as small fortune and worse prospects than you can settle comfortably in life and even obtain both merit and fortune in a companion, nor can I think but you might succeed in this if you once seriously wish for it. Life is short and some of its blessings are I hope before you. Try honourably to obtain them – and if you fail, it's what thousands have done before you. I am not sure that unhappiness in the marriage state is so common, at least in the middle classes, as many think. Complaints you hear and uneasiness you see, where yet there is tender affection and where the thought of separation would be very distressing. Behind the curtain there will ever be defeats and errors, which are least known on those who manage best – and I am far from believing that those couples who are sometimes held up as the patterns of felicity from a never varying sentiment are the happiest.

I spent last night at my mother's. I think she is wonderfully well except being very deaf and tolerably curious. Milly Smith⁹⁶ has been staying with her. She has lost her beauty and is in bad health. Dr Mattear has attended her and ordered some things which she thinks have been of service. Her spirits are better than her circumstances, she is chatty and I think at my mother's they are mutually useful to each other. Nancy goes out oftener and when in company is in better spirits than she has been for many years. My mother never goes out of the door, though I am sure she delights in company, and Mrs Smith stays with her and keeps up the name of our old valued friend⁹⁷ and I believe will gladly do it as long as my mother chooses.

Now Will, I really think I have some claim on you for a long particular letter, and I expect you will give it to me the very first day you have time. Read over some of my late letters, answer my queries, or rather random observations, and let me see whether they are now any way interesting or amusing to you.

I find myself inclined to write to my respected friend Mrs Bruce, but if Mr Rowan goes tomorrow I shall not have time. Remember me affectionately to her and the girls. She will be pleased to hear I am better and writing once more to my beloved brother and without a word (I hope) than can pain him – let me now then stop for fear. Ever ever yours, MARTHA MCTIER

366 Tuesday, 20 November [17]92, franked J. Dunn

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DUBLIN, TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [350]

My dearest Matty, Do not think me ungrateful for not answering your letters sooner. I have been hunting after a frank as one would hunt after a pension, and have just now got one, when the post is going out. I shall write to you at length in a day or two. I enclose the gauze or tiffany handkerchief, and one of our society's addresses to the Friends of the People which was never answered. My station of president is

96 Mrs Milly Smith was probably a relation of the Rev. Thomas Drennan.

97 Mrs Brice Smith who had died in 1785.

not in the least dangerous, and you need not fear that I shall want prudence. Report says here that the Ponsonby party is come over to the Catholics and that the English ministry will grant their demands. Young Burke is here again and if I mistake not is really a spy of Pitt's – at least all parties here disown him. He would willingly visit the North if he could.

Mrs W. Hincks lay in of a dead child or rather miscarried at her seventh month. She is now well, in good spirits and I hope will do better the next time.⁹⁸ The outcry against me as a papist is [—] and it must be borne. Surely you must derive much happiness from the news of France. B[oyle] Moody of Newry is going to be married to Miss Barret, a strapping girl of six foot and breadth in proportion. Mrs Orr and the Bruces send their best compliments. Rowan was vastly pleased with his reception at Belfast and talks much of all his friends there. They are going to raise a regiment of Volunteers with a national uniform, consisting of ten companies of 100 men each. You will be glad when I say that I have not the smallest design of entering among them. Tell Sam to ask Neilson why he did not write to me. I see you are talking about a convention. There is an interior cabinet of the Catholics here, who are I believe Keogh, Ryan, Tone, Warren, McCormick, McDonnell and Byrne and Braughall⁹⁹ – ask Sam if he knows of this, and tell me. Yours, WD

367 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [453]

A little bird told me that H. Young had some design of paying a visit to Dublin and that you might possibly accompany him. I hope you will – and that you will see me before my looks like Custine's¹⁰⁰ shall be turned grey. Ask Sam if the societies in Belfast are doing anything, or about to do anything. My own mind is that a good plan of reform would be the best thing they could shape, and to make it open and liberal, not restrictive as the Catholics ask. This would show Belfast consistent, but I imagine that Tone has written to Neilson to stop all such proceeding for the present – but at least some reason should be given. It is said the Marquis of Lansdowne is come over, but rumours vary so much and they are so numerous that one does not know what or whom to believe.

I thank you much for the map¹⁰¹ of Belfast, a town which I have always liked best at a distance. Surely, Matty, you must derive amazing pleasure from the newspapers at present. The French news has all the fascination of a novel, attended with the conviction that it is reality. You have but a poor epitome of their debates in our papers nor are your Belfast translators good ones. I shall enclose you our letter to the Scotch when it is printed. Tell Sam to write, or to tell you if he be lazy, anything he wishes to say to me by way of advice on information. My dearest sister, believe me ever yours, W DRENNAN

⁹⁸ Susan Hincks, who was to become Drennan's sister-in-law, did not have a child that lived until 1802.

⁹⁹ Thomas Ryan, Thomas Warren, Richard McCormick, Randall McDonnell and Thomas Braughall.

¹⁰⁰ Adam Philippe, Comte de Custine (1740-93), French revolutionary general, guillotined in 1793.

¹⁰¹ Probably Williamson's map of 1791.

368 Sunday, 25 November 1792

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN, TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [351]

My dear Sister, One certainly would not wish to die at such a time as this, and I request that you will take particular [care]¹⁰² to maintain your health and spirits, for Dumouriez is only at Brussels, and the Catholic cause is making only as much progress in the public mind as he is doing the Pays Bas. He is, without his knowledge, fighting hard against the Protestant ascendancy of Ireland, and the fortunate event of the French revolution has the effect of adding daily numerous converts to our national union. The political rats are beginning to make their appearance, and to indicate the tottering situation of the mansion. I really think that the government here are panic struck and you may conclude so, from their attention even to the poorest opposer.

Jack Pollock yesterday came out of his way to speak to me. I believe it was out of his way, for on quitting me at my door and my accidentally going out again after I had shut it, he was turning back and repassed it. I asked him in, but before this our conversation, or rather his, turned upon his belief that we were all selling our wares to the best advantage, but in different manners, some exposing them at the windows, others keeping them in the back shop to heighten their value etc., etc. He concluded with saying, Drennan, I am your friend, and whenever you wish to befriend yourself and get some good of your abilities, apply to me: this was said more seriously than jokingly. I answered, I never will, and then went in. On coming out again and seeing him returning on his step, I wished to coquet a little (for I really want an offer, but in a manner that could be laid hold of as such, and give me the glory of refusing it which I suppose he is too wary to make) and therefore wished he would walk in – he did so – and the chief tenor of his succeeding conversation was the ruin of my practice in case of persisting in any politics, that I would be deemed to have abandoned my profession, which from what I said, he concluded was the farthest thing from my thoughts, but not from what I had done and was doing. My answer was that I was satisfied some would be cruel as to wish to hurt me and even ruin me as a physician, merely because I differed from them in politics, but that I hoped he and his friends would not lend their assistance. I was sure by the bye that they have done so, as much as a matter of such a trivial nature could call for their conversational damnation. We were interrupted by Emmet who seemed not a little surprised at our *tête à tête*, and he immediately said he would leave us to hatch rebellion, and hoped, on his going down stairs, that I would eat a bit of mutton with him, which I answered by saying, I was always ready at his invitation. He had not asked me these two years; I leave cards when Mrs Pollock¹⁰³ comes to town, but have not been at her parties either this long time. How much I have written about this nothing, which I really on the whole believe was only to impress me with the idea of his consequence and power where he chose to be kind – but you have it as the anecdote of my day.

102 Word supplied.

103 Mrs John Pollock, formerly Hannah Maria Clarke.

I should earnestly wish to make by practice at least what would make two ends meet. I firmly believe that my name as a dabbler in politics was spread carefully when I gave little or no reason for it, and has done me as much harm as it could. I shall lose none of the few families I have, and I believe would have gained few more by being a neutral, or like Origen,¹⁰⁴ emasculating myself to please others – and delivering myself up to the horrors of a vacant mind.

As for my presidency, I bear my honours meekly – though the society seem resolved to make me giddy. I proposed a letter to the Scotch delegates which was received with great acclamation and Tandy etc. bedaubed me with praises. Our society, by the bye, is growing really important – not a night but twelve or fourteen are admitted and take the test. We were twenty about a year ago, and we now fill a large hall. Emmet desired me to propose him – he will dispute the palm with Butler who is extremely popular, but on the whole Rowan is most liked. Rowan and Butler dislike each other as men, though they associate as politicians. Butler is to harangue today in the courts and will make the judges look about them, as is said.

Tell Sam not to tell anyone, not even his interior, that we are to form one of our own, Protestant but national. The Catholic cause is selfish compared to ours – and they will make use of every means for success. They will negotiate on this side and on that side – they will make as many instruments as they can – they will send their sanguine men into our society – and the heads of their sect, for it is but a sect though a numerous one, will not enter it but stand off, sullen and reserved. In this they are wise – but certainly our aim as men of Ireland is to keep them up to the compact, the league and covenant – which is ample justice to them, and then, their exertions with the Northerners for reform in parliament. We ought then to watch them, though their sincere friends, greater perhaps than they are to themselves. I told Sam who were their cabinet – and Tone who is an excellent man (whom I sometimes pity, harnessed as he now is with others and other opinions) corresponds with Neilson who I suppose to be one of the initiated. Now want of confidence suspected on one part, produces it in another, and the Protestant reformers have a cause to put in train as well as the Catholics. It would be well that we should get ourselves connected with Grattan who is preparing his new edition of the revolution, revised and corrected by the illustrious author.

W. Rainey¹⁰⁵ is I hear to be married to the widowed widow Webster. Rainey Maxwell was most anxious for some receipt for diverting his thoughts from his late wife and he has himself adopted a simple and perhaps a natural remedy. Perhaps, a habit of marrying is better than a habit of remaining single. Mrs Webster makes the most of life and crowds as much into a small span as possible. She puts one in mind of the epigram, and if tis heaven to lie within her arms, she wishes all mankind in heaven. The old general¹⁰⁶ and Webster will grin horribly when they hear it.

104 Origen (c.185-c.254), Christian theologian, emasculated himself to avoid the lusts of the flesh.

105 William Rainey of Greenville's first wife Henrietta died in 1790; Mrs Webster was Mary Ann Boyd, widow of General James Gisborne, Governor of Charlemont, MP for Lismore (d.1778), and of Gilbert Webster of Belfast, who had died in the previous March; Rainey Maxwell was the cousin of William Rainey.

106 i.e. Gisborne.

Young Burke has left town. He asked me to write to him which I civilly answered as an honour as well as pleasure, but he hates the Presbyterians as he hates the devil, and I firmly believe is now merely a spy of Pitt's and now going to present him with a political view of Ireland. He is a real and bitter enemy to the managers on this side the water and a real friend to the Catholics, or rather a Catholic himself, as his father is in grain – and were the Catholics not under some constraint, they would, in general, adore the father in all his opinions. Sir H. Langrishe has we hear got £1,200 pension a year, and a new cargo of pensions is said to be come over to distribute as *douceurs*,¹⁰⁷ like lottery tickets. Sir Edward Newenham got lately £400 for self and sons. One of the[m] lately asked an old lady of seventy, and was refused. He has now got a Miss Lynam with £10,000. I dine with them tomorrow at Dick's.

They are busy about their Volunteers – the uniform to be green turned up with white, and 100 to start from the ground on the first day – their oriflamme¹⁰⁸ to be magnificent and on it to be inscribed in glowing capitals 'Universal Emancipation and Representative Legislature' – this banner to be kept sacred in the centre – their name, I believe, First National Battalion. They will probably defile, in the French fashion, before our society, which will do service to both. Many of the Catholics will no doubt be paid for. This may induce the aristocrats to raise their Volunteers, but this will in the end be raising them for the nation. They will come into the general cause. I dined yesterday at Rowan's with a Protestant party at least but one Catholic was present. On Wednesday he gives another dinner, I suppose to a Catholic set. The Catholics don't altogether coalesce either with Rowan or Butler though they affect to do so, and pay much compliment. Mrs Rowan is a fine Juno-like woman and quite a match for Rowan. They have many children and their eldest son cast in the same mould of body, but I fear far short in mind: perhaps it is awe of his father.

I think if Mrs Crombie could get some of the sermons conveyed here, I would give my poor opinion on them, but in my mind London is the only profitable mart for books, and if given to a bookseller of credit by a man of credit, I doubt not, they would turn out to good account.

369 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [354]

Dear Will, At twelve o'clock at night while Sam is at his pipe he desires me to take up my pen and write a few lines as he shall dictate – they run thus –

This evening we had a meeting of our select society, where we were unanimously of opinion that the Catholic Committee should ask nothing short of total emancipation and full right of citizenship, this to be intimated by this post to Tone and you. Tomorrow evening there is to be a meeting of all the societies of the U[nited] Irishmen in order to lay their opinion before the c[orresponding] committee and it

107 Rewards or sweeteners.

108 Banner.

is supposed that will be that nothing short of a radical reform will answer the ideas of the people here. Russell will inform you farther of their intentions. Neilson shows Sam all his letters from Tone, in none of which the Catholic interior is mentioned. Enclosed is a letter from R. Maxwell and Sam recommends it to you to correspond with him on the subject of reform. There are three new Volunteer companies to be raised here immediately, they are to be formed into a battalion and it's in contemplation to offer the command to J. Crawford.

Thus far on Thursday night for Sam – it's now Friday morn and he is gone on another of his favourite duties, attending the funeral of an old friend, an old one of our family, and one for whom I had a great regard and high opinion. Were I to write for the paper perhaps I might say, Died on Thursday last, Mrs Jane Hamilton of this place – rational and steady piety to her God, a circle of kind attentions and useful action, regulated by prudence and propriety of conduct seldom equalled, were the ornaments of a life which at the age of sixty one had never lost a friend nor found an enemy. Its close was therefore strongly marked by peace. Would this do? I have ventured it to Joy in an unknown hand. I also wrote to Mrs King who has been steady in affectionate and respectful attention to this worthy aunt.

I received and thank you for your long sensible but not agreeable letter. If you could make the two ends meet – surely you do so, for you have yet a small sum in the bank here – the two ends meet – take care of that – did not that fear rob your poor Matty of her reason, no more of it. Politics have done you all the hurt they can – is the meaning that you think they will do you no more? It may be I am far from wishing you to give them up, to desert them now would neither be to your honour nor interest, but [surely] an honourable, I mean a patriotic line of con[duct] with a good heart, virtuous life and an a[ble] and elegant pen, will not damn a man's fortune. I won't believe it. Your writings get praise and admiration and always have done – while their author is unknown only to a few – who have not power to serve him. Jane Greg who is now at Manchester writes to Mrs Hyde that the addresses from Belfast to the French are in England thought masterpieces of composition, and to tell Ann¹⁰⁹ and me that they do their author the highest honour. She beseeches us to send her all the writings here in regard to the Catholic question which she wishes much to obtain for a friend of hers, a most sensible man and one much interested in Irish politics, Dr Percival.¹¹⁰ Could you send me some free of expense for though we bought the most of them they are now all gone.

Hammy Young improves every day. Nothing can be more civil and affectionate than his behaviour to us all. He has a dash of family pride, which I think attaches him to us at least the Lennox¹¹¹ side of the house. He is to go to Dublin in about six weeks and has offered to frank me up. I have not one inducement but to see you. You would tire of me in a day and probably think your coz:¹¹² and me a very antiquated pair – but we are to stay only one week. Mrs Getty's old Dolly is dead, and

109 i.e. Nancy.

110 Probably Dr Thomas Percival (1740-1804), physician and author (*DNB*).

111 Young's mother and Mrs Drennan were Lennoxes.

112 Cousin.

she herself gone to nothing both in mind and body. She proposes to live at Donaghadee with her son William, so that is another from my old mother. Farewell, burn this for I am ashamed of it. MM

370 30 November [17]92

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN, TO MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST] [352]

My dear Sister, I enclose you our letter to the Scotch that you may laugh at my expression of 'away from us and from our children', and say how unlike me, and that you may smile at the expression of 'smiling with scorn', and say how like me. I have no news to tell you either of myself or others. Government in England are certainly under great alarm, and I imagine this may make them concede to the Catholics here. Their convention are to meet on Monday. They applied for the Rotunda¹¹³ which is hired out at 10 guineas a night, but the governors put off their answer on account of a thin meeting and Lord Charlemont with others declined attending. Kirwan who is a governor told me, that he happened to be there, and said that it was merely to be considered as a good for the charity and not as a political question. They are therefore at a loss where to meet, the delegates of three million.

Pensions are said to be come over for £12,000. Would you choose one? Mrs Stratford has £800 and Mrs Lees £600 per annum. Butler and Emmet behaved most manfully before the bench of judges and were ready to shield their attorney though greatly threatened by the bench. I suppose you will have the whole correctly given. Trade seems to feel the effect for the banks are very averse to discount bills, and Shaw¹¹⁴ could only get £3,000 out of £6,000 discounted. Lord Grenville¹¹⁵ has issued a circular letter to the lords lieutenants of counties in England exciting them to proceed against seditious publications, and I suppose the same will be done here, so that our press is to be put under lock and key. The United Societies of Belfast are very silent of late – is this by instruction? My practice goes on as usual. That many will endeavour to hurt me I doubt not – God forgive them – it is not worth their while. You have stopped sending me the *Star* – if convenient, send it still. WD

371 Saturday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [358]

Dear Sam, Lord Charlemont wishes to damp the volunteering on the new principle of universal emancipation and representative legislature, and is setting all his instruments at work to discourage the new recruits. He is the Fayette¹¹⁶ of Ireland, honest but narrow minded, and he is at present a disciple of Burke's. He always puts

113 Events held in the Rotunda provided income for the Dublin Lying-in Hospital.

114 Robert Shaw (d.1796), a leading Dublin merchant.

115 William Wyndham Grenville (1759-1834), Baron Grenville, statesman (*DNB*).

116 La Fayette.

me in mind of a sentence in Tacitus, the English of which is, that he retains a character merely because it has never been put to the proof. Lord Mountgarret, brother of Simon Butler, is said to have gotten the commissioner's¹¹⁷ place vacated by Langrishe and £1,000 pension per annum beside. He had been promised this some time ago, and as it was long in coming from Hobart, his lordship had got his pistols ready as he is a professed duellist. Hamilton Rowan went off last night to England as second to Mr Dowling¹¹⁸ who has been challenged by a Mr Burrough of the Castle on account.

I was interrupted here – and after an hour's conference, which was laid down as confidential and which you are to consider as such, in which I acted and spoke as I think I ought, I have only to say that I professed a strong esteem for you and your opinions, without saying that they would alter my own; and that it was said in return, there would be great pleasure in having you to chat over the business. I add that if you come to Dublin, you may do this and advise me – and you may take this opportunity of bringing Matty. I am to dine on Sunday sennight with Mr J[ohn] Pollock. Perhaps your coming up will put you to expense, and I am so tied up by a confidential manner that I can say nothing. It may be all an unauthorised quiz as it has been said to be merely from the party but that was after pretty strongly knowing my mind. Answer by return of post.

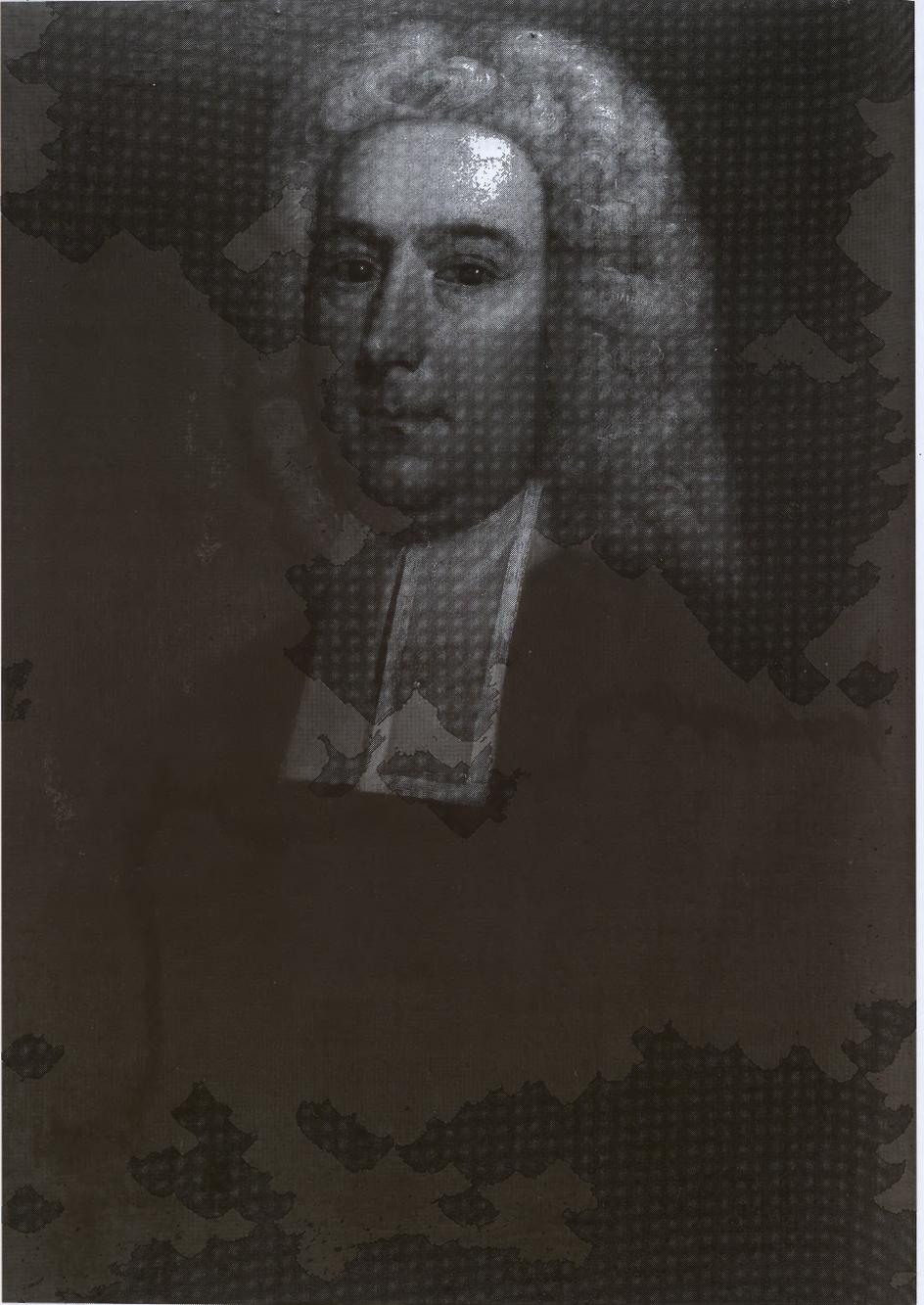
372 1 December 1792

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DUBLIN, TO [SAM AND MARTHA MCTIER] [353]

A few days ago, Mr J. Pollock overtook me in the street, and entered into conversation with me about the politics and the patriots of the day, the general purport of what he said being, that patriots and courtiers were only selling their wares, or their abilities to the best advantage, but in different ways, the first exposing them in the window as declaredly to be purchased, the latter affecting to conceal them in a back shop, the more to enhance their price, and to heighten the idea of their value. He concluded with saying, Drennan, whenever you choose to consult your own interest and put your abilities to the best advantage, apply to me, to which I answered, that I never will. We were then at my door. I went in, but immediately after thinking of some business, I went out and saw the same gentleman returning, which proved to me that he had gone out of his way, with a design of speaking to me which till then I had not suspected. Willing therefore to coquet it a little for my private satisfaction, I pressed him to walk in, to which he assented, and the conversation continued pretty much on his side, by his observing that my adherence to politics would certainly ruin me in my profession, that after spending years in being the instrument of a faction, I should find myself pretty much where I had set out, and that I ought when it was time, to do something for myself, and not wait till it was too late etc.

¹¹⁷ Langrishe was a commissioner of revenue and of excise, but does not appear to have vacated either of these positions at this date.

¹¹⁸ Matthew Dowling (c.1755-1804), barrister and United Irishman.



The Rev. Thomas Drennan
(1696-1768)

Mr Emmet came in and he then took his leave. I mentioned his words in a letter to my sister on the 29th ult.

This day at dinner time, he called upon me, and said he wished to speak to me in private and that I would order myself to be denied to any one that should call. I did so, and then he began to speak pretty much in the same terms he has used before, concluding with declaring that what he had said was to be confidential and by no means to be revealed to anyone. I told him that I thought this hard, that there were some persons such as my sister, and my brother in law Sam McTier, whose opinions I highly valued and might therefore wish to consult on anything interesting to my welfare. He protested against my sister, talked much against disclosing any important matter to any woman, but seemed to have no objection that S. McTier should be a witness of what he said, and believed that if he was, he could convince both him and me of what should be the line of my conduct. I began to think that I was acting rather unfairly in deceiving him with regard to my determination on such a subject, and though he had spoken only in a vague and general manner, that I ought to tell him my mind early to convince him that I had not been hesitating since I saw him and inclined to enter into a treaty.

After recounting my obligations to his father¹¹⁹ on my first settlement in Newry, and saying that I concluded his coming to me was only a continuance and a proof of his friendship to me, I said that I had early formed my principles in politics and that my father to his last hour had desired me never to forsake them, and here, on recollecting that best of men and thinking that I saw his meek and venerable form and face bending over me, with a placid and approving smile, I burst into tears and remained for some time much affected. I continued by saying that I was conscious I had no abilities, that I had only political honesty, which I prided myself in, as I thought it a rare qualification, much rarer than abilities; that were the room full of gold and that offered to me, I would not change my sentiments or my conduct; that on even the consideration of interest I could not, for I would lose all my happiness, and never spend a night of sound sleep after it; that I did not promise myself long life, might never marry, and that therefore I might, upon the profits of my profession, live with a proud competence, though I was conscious my conduct must injure me in that profession, and I feared there were some who had been my friends and had no reason either to disapprove of my professional assiduity or my personal character, had endeavoured in conversation and to take away my livelihood by railing against my politics, and injured me, a young man in my entrance into life, merely because they differed from me in political opinions. I acknowledged myself fond of popularity, that this was the reward I wished for, next to the applause of my own heart, and that as most men and most physicians had a hobby to ride on, independent of their professions, as Dr P— had a garden, Dr— a laboratory, so I had a hobby of politics and that I would keep to it.

119 John Pollock the elder, of Newry.

He seemed to take some things that I had said not in good part, declared that he never could propose anything to me inconsistent with honour or honesty, but I thought I perceived that he had seen through me sufficiently, and that from that moment he would open himself no further. He affected however to go on, and to ask my opinion upon political questions in order to judge by my answers whether there could be any agreement between us, what my opinions were on the granting the elective franchise to Catholics, on the preservation of the constitution in its three branches, or the preference of a republican frame of government, and particularly on the establishment of these new Volunteers called National Guards, whom he inveighed bitterly against, and even represented as being, if they arrayed themselves, guilty of overt treason and might probably be treated accordingly. My answers to these questions were open and sincere, and indeed he might himself have anticipated them. He then declared that it seemed impossible that one maintaining such opinions could benefit himself under the present government. He returned to the insisting on all that had passed, being as if it had never been, that in whatever he had said, he declared on his honour he acted merely from himself, without authority from any person whatever, and that it might injure him much with his political friends and patrons if it was to come to their ears that he would speak to, or make promises to any man, on such a subject.

I told him, that as I wished in everything to be candid and that I wished to act and speak from the bottom of my heart, I must tell him, that I had mentioned to my sister what he had said to me in the street, which I had mentioned as curious. He asked me what he had said. I told him the words as near as I could recollect. He answered that in writing this to my sister I had proved my ignorance of the world which he had already noticed, but that what he said was not of any consequence. I again mentioned my wish of some witness whose opinion I valued, and mentioned S. McTier, as he protested against all my political friends here, and I told him that as S. McTier was in Belfast it might not be worth while to summon him up on the occasion. He seemed to think so, but said he would have been glad to talk with us, at any time. He had asked me to dine with him before, to which I had cheerfully assented, had I not been engaged on the day he asked me. He repeated his invitation for Sunday next, on which I was engaged, and then asked me for Sunday sennight, saying that on weekdays he had very little time to spare. What S. McTier thinks proper that he should do, in this situation of his brother and friend, he will do immediately. I have written this in a hurried manner, and the matter is not very important, except from that significance which every such subject obtains that relates to little self. I think I may be said to have had an offer indefinite indeed, because no one could expect anything written on the subject from any one in or under government, but sufficient to give me the satisfaction of having refused it. Whether advice or influence may change my mind, I cannot say, till I have heard or felt it. I am as I was, but I know not, nor have I the presumption to say, what I shall be. I request you may return this paper in your next enclosure – I wrote it chiefly for myself. WILLIAM DRENNAN

373 Thursday, November [but postmark is 8 December]

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [356]

Your conversation with ———¹²⁰ might not according to his sense of the word, show knowledge of the world, but it proved my beloved brother to be above what such as he might term temptation, and he objected to your sister knowing anything of this transaction – what a compliment. There could be only two reasons for this – it is possible he might have heard I was not a weak sister, or to speak more modestly that I was one might influence you, and this was one of the truths you honoured me, by telling him, and at which he no doubt would laugh. Every circumstance in regard either to you or your family, I dare say, he has lately taken into consideration. The more likely reason perhaps was, that woman¹²¹ blab – true – but with me you must be safe, and he is in no danger, for in this affair I will never breath his name. I know enough of the world however, to take and keep a copy of your last letter, giving a particular account of a conversation which does him no credit and which I dare say, as one who knows the world, he would have not the least scruple to deny, or represent in any way that might make his own cleverness, or what he might term your simplicity appear. I wish therefore much for what he avoids, a witness or friend of your own being present, if there is any further particular conversation to be between you.

But what can he hope from it – from the man whose mind has never been perverted from its native purity, and in the moment of trial, sees or thinks it sees the form of virtue, in the most interesting and commanding form she could appear – a venerable, wise, beloved, and departed father. Away from his children such puny tempters. You have got now in part and will yet more fully, what you have been labouring for in a noble cause, honest fame. You have no other female idol to tempt you, and Cupid has spared you any trial from him. Where then can be your danger? I have not a fear either for your virtue, your fame, or your fortune, but as it seems you are ignorant of the ways of the world – be on your guard against knaves, who for their own sakes, will catch at anything you either say, or do, to betray you, or those who from envy of that pen which has now placed you in that predicament will be glad to humble you. Do not be too humble – come forward, with caution, enter boldly into that cause you may now be a veteran in with honest intention, that neither fears its own inspection nor to apply to the Supreme Being for support and direction, a pen that can write like a Cesero, you want nothing that I can suggest, to ensure you that fame you have so long panted for, and to cope with your enemies, but that guarded prudence which when a man throws off even in politics, he lose dignity both to his cause and himself, and becomes much less formidable to his enemies. These you must now expect to have, comfort yourself by the reflection that it is not your private life, nor character, that has procured you them and to have been without them at this crisis, you must have had that vacant mind, and been that neutral

120 John Pollock.

121 *recte* women.

you dreaded and I despise. Your worldly tempter has probed you to the quick, and I think, has seen enough to make him hopeless of success – but perhaps not so his employers, for he has them. Surely you cannot fancy, the man who for two years past never seemed to know you were in the same place with him, now starts into your service from disinterested regard. He must think you ignorant of the world indeed, to suppose it – but his knowledge of it may lead him to a further trial, how to stop that pen which is now admired and attended to both at home and abroad, on a subject he and his patrons dread. Now also would be their time, either to gain you to their side, or undermine you with your own, and to fix a slur on the chairman of the U[nited] I[rishmen] for this reason, as it is only in the latter way I fear them, I wish you had a friend present at any future conversation, but Sam thinks, if he was to go up, it might bear the appearance of negotiating, but if you wish it let him know by return of the post – the expense can be no consideration. I would not now on any account go with him – but hope to accept of H. Young's offer. The only thing I wonder at in —s' conversation was his seeming to wish for Sam's presence. At first, I supposed it was from his knowing him to be a needy man – (a mistake however) but I rather suspect, it was to make you think better of his design, and to give it the appearance of ho[—] for when you said, 'it would not be worth his while to go up' he joined you, and probably would never have named him had he been in his reach. As I before said, he has probed you, do the same by him – suppose he means the friendship he professes – declare your desire to mend your fortune by any way, neither dishonest, nor unfaithful to yourself – these you know he would not offer. Do not dwell any more on your principles, do not throw needless dampers in his way, encourage him to speak out, and say what he means for your advantage – but if he exacts any promise from you, think well before you make it. If he condescends to mention your sister, let him know she can be trusted.

I sent you the last *Star*, where you will see the address to the Scotch without any introduction. Though many of the proprietors have declared it to be one of the first papers ever was written, I am not in the way of hearing any opinion of it, for as it is well known you are its author, people do not speak of these addresses before me – some fearful of their tendency, others not liking the cause, nor knowing whether your friends here would like to have you thought their author. I believe, however, it is looked on as a master piece and I am glad since your name was to appear as c[hair]man it has been to a paper that will do its author immortal honour. As far as I am a judge it surpasses all the others – to them all I hope now you will receive answers. I think you will flatter the Scotch into one – you have attacked them on their weak side. The Edinburgh society¹²² I hear is founded on the strictest principles, every member admitted must have two creditable witnesses to his character, in case of misbehaviour he is to be expelled, but in any attack made on him he is to be supported by the society. All they fear is the ardour of the people and their every effort is to keep them from any irregularities or riotous meetings. Government in

122 The Scottish Association of the Friends of the People (see John Brims, 'Scottish radicalism and the United Irishmen' in D. Dickson, D. Keogh and K. Whelan (eds.), *The United Irishmen* (Dublin, 1993), pp 151-166).

my opinion will have more to fear if the Scotch desert them than any other people. I beg you will write if it was but a few lines every day that has any news in it, and for some time the proceedings in Dublin will certainly afford a great deal. I have wrote this with the loquacity if not the wisdom of age – indeed I find when I do sit down to write, an invincible propensity to continue at it. I sometimes fear the length of my letter makes you at least dislike to answer them – but I ask not line for line to yours. Have you no sort of intercourse with Grattan either as an individual or in your society? Does he spurn little honest men and stand alone? Sure he can fear no competitor, nor in such a cause should scorn the virtuous citizen.

374 Monday, 3 December [1792]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN][355]

To begin in the style of business – Yours of the 25th was hard to be made out by reason of the poverty of your paper, and the badness of my sight, that of the 30th was a riddle, but my imagination not having lost much, I think, it is not the hardest I have met with. Yet I am more in the dark than I wish, and one part of it does puzzle me – where you say by Sam's being in Dublin, he might advise you. Sure in anything just or honourable you will never need it, that, with you, will I hope be ever instantly decided. What then can it be, that could admit of consideration, or that wrong or right can appear doubtful in? Seldom, very seldom, need that be the case. I have always hoped for the time, and flatter myself it is not now far distant, when your abilities would do you public credit. You have been preparing both yourself and the world for it, from time to time, which I believe to be a better method, at least a surer one, than a violent rush.

Your name is now at a paper of consequence, both matter and style of which will draw much attention, and it is time you should burst out of, what my mother would style, this hugger mother kind of acting. I do not like it, you were born for something better, and though prudence and even dignity of character might deter you from talking, or warmly taking up, every little political occurrence, yet the cause you are embarked in and the sentiments you possess, in my opinion should not be defended in secret, they, and you, will stand the test and let them openly come to it, let the effect of your fortune be what it may. Consistency in a good cause will assuredly give you self approbation and most probably gain you the approbation of the world – nay that honest fame you deserve and wish for.

I own to you last night after having read your letter to Sam when all the rest of the family were in bed, I wished and tried all in my power to prevail on Sam to go up and take me with him for a week, which as we have long been talking of it would have excited no surprise here. At first he said it was ever best to keep out of the way of temptation, but after chatting a little longer, declaring he would never sleep a night in quiet if he was ever tempted to betray his cause or his party – that no sum, no place, could be sufficient, and knowing my sentiments he puffed himself up so

with his pipe, and this theme, that silence ensued, and as he was to be obstinate, he begun by declaring he would not go to Dublin at present. He has now an increasing business, let it or his fortune be what it will, I know him too well to hope he ever will have anything put to the fore – and though this is very desirable I have given up all thoughts about it. I expect for the remainder of my days to have less difficulties than I have had, perhaps none in regard to fortune, while he has life and health, I think we will have enough to live in Kingsmill's house in the station I was born in. More I do not desire. I will not, I hope, outlive all my friends and if it should be my fate to be a widow, I do believe you or H. Young would not see me much stinted. What then have I to wish for? Rural elegance was my utmost ambition, my darling delight. The treasury could not give me back the mind nor relish with which I wandered over the few fields belonging to my darling cottage while I proudly called them my own, and when Adair was talked of as Chancellor I dreaded the promotion that might occasion my parting from this beloved spot.¹²³

Yet in a frenzy of fear and despair I would leave it, I thought our affairs were a second time deranged, to this I affixed the idea of injury, I thought your £200 would be lost, and that nothing could save me from shame and reproach but affecting to be tired of the country, to sell all and live the rest of my days in my mother's back garret. Secrecy was my grand object, from my mother and you to keep my secret. I did do so. The reason, which by a fright on a tender subject had got a shock, became every day more and more impaired by almost a total want of rest. My sufferings for three years are beyond conception, for strange to relate, I knew I was wrong, and that on every subject but one I was the same I ever had been, well. This saved me to the world, in a great degree, till it pleased a merciful God to make me better and sensible that I could do much towards my own recovery, but could you after considering my past life and that I am now a half century woman expect ever to see me what you once knew me? Yes, you shall in manner, conversation and affection – it is alone or at home I feel the difference. I have lost that self enjoyment, that independence of company I once possessed, and having wept myself almost blind and not being able to read, I fly to cards and company to get over the evening, and am thankful I am as well received there as ever. Indeed there is yet no end to the marked attentions I receive from every one here – many that I did not formerly visit. I hope therefore to take up house for the third time, next May. How have I wandered from my subject, take no notice of this part of my letter when you write.

This moment I received a note from H. Joy which I will enclose if I get a frank – that little fellow is not the plan and has helped to hurt a much nobler being than himself. Bruce grows greater every day in the pulpit, but nowhere else. I do not think he is happy – his wife I am sure is not prudent in her expenses, she is very vain in dress, furniture and table, vying with the first in the place, complaining they are laying out, and are out a good deal of money on account of the Academy which I fear never will flourish – but others say the Academy need not be charged with it

123 This was in 1783 before Cabin Hill was built, although Martha may be referring to her stay at Castle Hill, in the same neighbourhood.

for none was ever kept in the same way. The Doctor dines out and sits till supper whenever he is asked except Saturday, and all this time the boys are left to tutors – in the house, nor the Doctor's company, they never appear. This gives great umbrage, but he wraps himself up in such a self-important manner and his wife apes it so foolishly that no one can tell him his error which will hurt him much. I admire and respect him almost as much as ever, but he is no longer the friend I once found him. He never enters my door but when invited, and then appears embarrassed, though by an ease and affability on my part, I do all I can to dispel it. I could do more if he would let me, and guard him against errors he does not know of and mortifications I feel, but he does not hear. How would it surprise him to be told he was black-beaned the other night at the tradesmen's reading society by seven men – that it was tried a second time and there were six, on which McCormick the gunsmith declaring he had put in a black bean by mistake, it was tried a third time and the Doctor was somehow got in.

If you saw him in company now how would you wonder. He comments on the furniture, on dress etc., not one word of news, or politics, sits down to cards, is snub[b]ed by his wife, who is perfectly ignorant of all the etiquette there, and though she is not his partner sits by him directing, till she makes his face redden and the whole company ashamed. After he gets over this he pushes for a seat at the head of the table, either to get from the politics of the men, or by way of dignity, a favourite word of his and his lady's, and here after very minutely eyeing and inquiring about every dish, they both fall to and eat a voracious supper than which nothing I believe can be worse for him. I fear he will be a short-lived man¹²⁴ and his place as a preacher would not easily be filled up, for I do believe he is the very first in Ireland – in my opinion perfect – he is lazy however and makes too few sermons.

H. Young has sent my mother and Sam two dozen each of the finest madeira in the three kingdoms and finding Sam was very saving of it told him to use it more freely, that he should have more when that was done and if at any time he wanted a sum of money to apply to him with freedom. He gives an entertainment at the inn on Saturday to those who have noticed him and they are not a few. I am now in company almost every night yet never meet Dr H[aliday] – nor hear of him. I know not what he does with himself, he frequents no club nor public meeting of any kind. His health I believe is much impaired and his evenings I suppose are spent trying for victory over A. Buntin or D. Bamber at picquet. The latter will soon desert him, he has spent the summer at Gilsland,¹²⁵ and has picked up a Miss Eglinby, an English lady who it's said has a pretty little estate on which she lives and has consented to let him do so too.¹²⁶ He has bought a carriage and horses and sets off to be married immediately. Sir James Bristow¹²⁷ has gained his former prize, Miss Boyd – they are to be married next week. Mrs Webster and W. Rainey I suppose

124 He died in 1841.

125 A spa, near Carlisle.

126 He died in 1807 at his seat, Nunnery in Cumberland.

127 Sir James Bristow, brother of the Rev. William Bristow, married Alicia, daughter of Charles Boyd of Co. Down; she was probably a sister of Mrs Webster.

will soon follow their example. At present the folly of their behaviour is quite sickening and the theme of every company – as he was among the very severest censurer of this lady's conduct while she was a wife – he appears now in a strange point of view. A. Stewart¹²⁸ is to get a divorce from his wife who divides her fortune which is now £1,800 with him in order to marry the Johnston who has kept her. Stewart is carrying on a prosecution against G.B.¹²⁹ for damages, who has not a sixpence and is just married to a daughter of Jemmy Wilson. This appears a wanton piece of cruelty highly condemned. Positively I will not take another sheet nor another subject but to beg of you to write very soon and to continue to love your MM

375 [8 December postmark]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [357]

Dear Sam, This town is agitated with so many rumours that one would think there was an office from whence they issued ready made for the day. I may tell you what I saw, but it would only be deceiving you to tell you what I hear. We heard this morning as certain intelligence that the Volunteers and military had had a scuffle in Belfast, then at Arklow – both lies. I saw this morning the artillery corps stationed at Chapelizod march to the Castle for ammunition etc. and proceed to the barrack. A full council is said to be assembled, and an attachment to be issued against Mr H. Jackson¹³⁰ for summoning the Dublin Merchant Corps to co-operate in the attainment of a parliament reform etc. The advertisement was very imprudent and said to be treasonable by lawyers but the honest citizens did not understand it so.

The first National Battalion, I believe, will meet tomorrow evening at six, at least I imagine Rowan and some Protestants will meet – I have some doubts whether the Catholics will venture. They are now said to be in a good train without trying the military instrument. Lord Donoughmore¹³¹ waited on the convention and told them that the Lord Lieutenant would transmit their petition and back it with all his authority. They asked if this communication was official. He begged they would wait half an hour – they waited two hours and he returned saying, it was merely from himself. Their petition I hear goes to emancipation without modification. Your societies sent them a letter with the knowledge of which we were not honoured. Is this to be united, co-operating Irishmen? Russell never called on me, and Tone had like to have snapped off my nose when I asked him if there was any such paper. Our society last night agreed to a resolution, that having so frequently manifested our opinion on the emancipation of Catholics, it was unnecessary to repeat it, and that in the faithful discharge of the sacred duty reposed in them, as tending to our great object of perfect freedom in Ireland, they might rely on our zealous

128 Stewart divorced his wife in February 1793; she had eloped with George Bristow, son of the Rev. William Bristow in 1785, and lived with him until 1788; see *Journals of the House of Lords*, xxxix, 1790-93, pp 527-9.

129 George Bristow (1765-1837), married his cousin Eleanor, daughter of James Wilson of Purdysburn; Stewart brought an action against him for criminal conversation, and was awarded £1,500 damages.

130 Henry Jackson, ironfounder and United Irishman.

131 Richard Hely Hutchinson (1756-1825), 1st Earl of Donoughmore (*DNB*).

co-operation. Some Catholic members boggled about this or at least about sending it by a deputation which was however agreed to – Rowan the chairman, Butler, Rice, Tandy and Chambers – all Protestants. They are gone to the convention this morning and I suppose Rowan will tack a speech to it. Many in the convention dread us republicans and sinners, and don't like to have much communication with us, but that is no reason why we should not profess our principles as we have done, and communicate them. Tomorrow will produce something. It is said the Riot Act will be read to the Volunteers, if they assemble. They will not I suppose disperse, but will give themselves up to the law – but I should suppose the trial will not be made. Some say the Post Office will be instructed not to pass the mail. Rowan, last night, enclosed the Scotch address and paid 7 shillings at the Post Office for it. Today, it is said they have issued some order respecting letters.

[Isaac] Corry met me this morning – My dear D how are you? – How many kings have you killed this morning? – How are you going on? – I hope well in your profession as well as you are doing in other things. I said – tolerably – a proud competence was all I wanted. I am uncertain whether to dine tomorrow at Pollock's or not. Joseph Pollock is to be there who told me that he had dined at I. Corry's, and that his cousin had asked him verbally to dinner, which on that account he had accepted. The Hartigans¹³² are to be there and I fancy a crowd. I believe therefore I shall send a familiar apology as he intends to disappoint me.

My dearest, dearest Matty, I thank you for your excellent letter which I should strive in vain to imitate, but in my heart – which I hope will never disgrace you. But on the whole, we make the most of small people. Grattan is still in England. I told you that he was pleased to mention me to Tandy who said he would introduce me – but overlooked it or me. He will be over if not distracted by his amiable wife who I hear is dying.¹³³ Adieu.

I should think some address to the Volunteers – on the principle of arming the people for the sake of peace and to prevent the licentiousness of the lowest rising, would be good. Answer me by post. WD

376 [10 December postmark] [1792]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM AND MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [359]

Dear Sister, and dear Sam, The proclamation came out last night after the post went out, and consequently information of it could not be conveyed to the country this day (Sunday) as no post leaves town. It is signed by twenty-three, a grand grand jury – it recites seditious meetings, corps to be raised with devices and intentions against constitution etc., and empowers magistrates to disperse all such meetings of people in arms who act under colour of the Volunteer institution which had done service, striving in this to make a schism between the new and old Volunteers. In short it is

¹³² John Pollock's sister and her husband.

¹³³ She recovered.

levelled at the first National Battalion, nicknamed national guards. It did not prevent H[amilton] Rowan and one or two other Protestants from walking in the streets with the green uniform and side arms. The mob surrounded them and huzza'd much. They spoke to them, requesting peace and quietness, and begging of them particularly to have respect and proper behaviour to the soldiery. They are to meet this evening at seven, on the summons before issued, and then will probably call themselves a meeting of Volunteers, and call upon the Protestant Volunteers of the city and county of Dublin (for the proclamation only takes notice of this city and county) to meet on Sunday next with side arms, and the Catholic Volunteers to meet in uniform without side arms, in order to take into consideration the proclamation issued this day. The Catholics who first originated the idea of this corps are now afraid and would rather have prevented any meeting and Tone was warm on that side. But Rowan deemed it his duty to stand forth as one of the Protestant Volunteers, leaving the Catholics to act as their wisdom and prudence should suggest. Tone then said he would go to the meeting as a Protestant were he not obliged to go to England this night, but he deposited a paper and subscribed it that nothing but business of superior obligation had prevented him – so that both he and Russell acquiesced in the propriety of attending to the summons, since they saw that Rowan was determined, with Butler's advice, to go on with it. But the Merchants Corps, after making a rash advertisement for meeting, condemned by all the lawyers, have this day at their meeting, as I hear, gone as far back in the other extreme, and resolved that the present circumstances of the nation do not require the arraying of Volunteers. This must have been effected by heavy influence either from government or some other quarter – (I request you will not read what I write even to Neilson). This I suppose is only for their own corps, but it may end in dividing the Volunteers – which would be terrible.

I went to J[ohn] Pollock's to dinner – Mr and Mrs Hartigan and Joseph Pollock, as great a rarity in the house as myself, were the party. We were very pleasant, raillery on all sides, nothing serious, and I left them at nine o'clock – I have heard nothing since the morning. Our society at its last meeting passed a resolution expressive of their reliance in the Catholic Committee discharging the sacred trust reposed in them, and expressive of their satisfaction in the prospect of universal emancipation as tending to perfect freedom in Ireland. I believe I told you that five were deputed to lay this before the convention, but after being told that it would be received, the gentlemen were only admitted to an antechamber, and their further progress was evaded by many plausible reasons, such as exciting a party in the convention etc., but the real reason was their fear of showing any public communication with United Irishmen, in the present stage of the business, and I suppose the Belfast advice was hushed up as quietly as our resolution has been. The deputies were indeed somewhat hurt at their not being admitted, or being sent on a sleeveless errand. I know not what report they will make to the society, for though Butler and Rowan are sensible of the distant manner in which they were treated, they fear to

express it much, as the Catholics are to a man very suspicious and apt to take dislikes, and they are now getting self sufficiency as a body that has sat in spite of aristocratical power, and are in a prospect of success.

Keogh I never see; it is only the secondaries that we meet with much, and I believe they all now repent having put the Volunteers in motion, at least the Catholic part of them. I suppose the Catholic deputies to the King will set off instantly, and until they send back an account of their reception, the body would, I suppose, wish to remain perfectly quiescent. Their address to the people is to be published, but that to the King will not, nor perhaps will be seen for some time. The King may not give a public answer, but the favourable answer of the minister will do as well and if they receive this, the body at large will keep a perfect quietness until parliament meets, and until they see whether the minister can grant their requests, in spite of the aristocracy. If so, well – if not, they will then join in the Protestant cry and the nation will go on abreast – but the argument of many of them is, that until they can gain some share of the constitution, it is absurd in them to agitate the business of reform.

The Catholics – the Catholics have damped the new Volunteers which they originally moved, and Rowan, Tandy, etc., is left in the lurch. I see no advertisement calling the Volunteers of the city in this day's paper (Monday) and I see an advertisement of the Merchants Corps that will damn them to all eternity – saying their principle is and ever has been to support the constitution, laws, and peace of the country, and that they will assemble when necessary. Rowan will be as mad as the rugged Russian bear. Butler swears to me that Tone has been bought of[f], as McKenna certainly is – I don't know, but this I think, that the Catholics are so, for the present.

Thirty of the National Battalion did meet – and agreed to a deputation to the other corps to meet on Sunday next. The proclamation will by that time have lost much of its effect. The proclamation aims really at the North, though it hopes to strike the first panic into the capital. God direct you all for the best, but if you do not act with spirit and determination, the Protestant cause is lost. Perhaps Rowan and Tandy will be deputed down to you.

377 15 December [1792]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [360]

Dear Sam, Matters remain here much the same. The panic occasioned by the proclamation appears wearing off, but it depends chiefly on the North to bestir themselves for the influence exerting in this city on all persons is astonishing. Tell Neilson I received his manly and candid letter. He is an excellent man, and I think in times such as these such men are beyond fine gold. We received two letter from principal persons in the Scotch convention, Muir and Skirving¹³⁴ which you will see

¹³⁴ William Skirving, secretary of the convention, and Thomas Muir (1765-98), Scottish reformer and radical (*DNB*); the Irish address was in fact rejected by the Scottish Association of the Friends of the People and Muir faced charges of sedition for reading it aloud; he and Skirving were later sentenced to transportation.

published. Our letter was not at that time read in their convention, but it is to be read and copies distributed throughout the kingdom. Last night we agreed to an address to the Volunteers of Ireland which if possible I shall enclose. It was right to explain liberty and equality and to show our dislike of tumult yet in a spirited manner. Tell me how it is liked. It is printed soon to distribute to the Volunteers who meet here tomorrow, and of whose determination there is more reason to fear than to hope. Charlemont has all his officers busy countermining. I know not how the Catholics will act – sometimes I think they are bustling up again, or at least affecting it for fear of seeming to desert Rowan etc. [Even Tandy is vibrating strangely].¹³⁵ I have not time to add or enclose the address.

£105 first year – £186 second year, about £170 this year – no debt. WD

378 [19 December postmark] [1792]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [361]

Dear Sam, I write to you at this time to request that you will not breathe any suspicions of the Catholics for the present. If they see we suspect them, they will suspect us. Let us not run a risk of losing them now when their business is nearly decided, and ours is but beginning. Our friend Rowan wrote you an account of the National Battalion. Read it yourself and to Neilson, but on the charge of secrecy and to no other. The cry of revolution and republicanism is raised against us – No King, etc. Take great care to obviate this. Our present pursuits ought to terminate in an equal and impartial representation of the people, and let posterity go on to republicanism if they choose. The lunge that all the runners of government is making at us will be hard to parry, and therefore a Dungannon meeting appears absolutely necessary to embody and ascertain public opinion. The Catholics objected perhaps justly to the words ‘representative legislature’ as either republican, or at best ambiguous, and it is not proper in taking a test to have any ambiguity. I don’t know what is the opinion of our *Address to the Volunteers*, only that it has already received the thanks of all the corps in Dublin, except the Merchants. Thus far I wrote before receiving yours of the 17th and agree with you in toto. You ought to have a town meeting immediately to prevent Belfast from being forced asunder from the rest of the North by its enemies. Your resolution should be plain but decided on reform, as our sole business. Let your new regiment be green, I beseech you – it will serve the National Battalion amazingly. We want your help – If not ready now, the counties will be made so before the 15th February for every week will bring changes. War will happen – Custine is certainly defeated – I fear a check is coming on. They should execute the king immediately for the sake of union – if not, it will be terrible work.

The sense of government with regard to the Catholics is not known – Lansdowne, Fox, and Rawdon, speaking so much in their favour, seems rather inauspicious. We will soon know, but if they be refused etc. It did not tend to soften the King their

135 Brackets in original text.

going through Belfast – perhaps however they were right in giving a farewell kiss to their friends. You say you like the address – remember that – as an outcry will be raised against it. By all means get the resolution about Dungannon. This will prevent dissention. When does H. Young come up?

I cannot now write such an address as you want – but I think it should go to the actual summons to Dungannon after saying that our ultimate view was an impartial and adequate representation of the whole nation in parliament. Let it be simple but solemn. Let it deprecate all revolution, all republicanism, yet stick to its principle and never desert it.

It might be expedient to send particular expresses to all the principal towns in Ulster with a copy of your resolutions. This would impress the public mind more, and fix their attention. The parochial meetings must please the country men and would really allay disturbance – (three)¹³⁶ from each parish – the fuller the meeting the better – the more awful – the less room to corrupt. One from each parish would make 365 which would not be a bad number. The convention should be like a people – a parliament may be restricted to 300, but a convention will never answer the end unless very numerous.

[A] draft of proper instructions should be instantly prepared. Much depends on these being perfectly similar, simple and decisive. This will prevent the treachery we once exp[erience]. In these instructions should be inserted a prohibition [from dissol]ving until there was a sufficient ground for the be[lief] that reform would be effected. It should be short, but expressive – as – ‘You are to go to Dungannon on the 15th of February, then and there to consult and advise with your countrymen on the means of obtaining that reform in the representative part of the legislature which is now necessary for the salvation of Ireland, and not on any account to dissolve, until you have an assurance that such reform will be accomplished’ – and during your session, we shall allow you (so much) per day. A sketch of the whole organisation of the meeting should be drawn up instantly. When it is done, send it to me and I shall show it to our select – perhaps I will venture to draw out my own ideas clearly and distinctly and submit them to you – but no matter which – meet immediately and draw up your own ideas in very few words. Recruiting drums are beating here. My love and fellowship to W. Sinclair. Behave like men.

[With crossed out draft:] The constitution of these realms of Great Britain and Ireland is founded on equal liberty, but has greatly degenerated from its original principles and purity. Its abuses are to be remedied by the unanimous efforts of every rank and degree in this nation. The representation of the people ought to be free, equal and entire. The present House of Commons does not represent the people. Trusting that in the constitution itself there is still strength enough to rectify its abuses, for of the constitution, a representation of the people is an essential part, [—]re [—]¹³⁷ etc. deprecating all idea of revolution

136 Brackets in original text.

137 Illegible.

379 Friday, 21 [December 1792]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [457]

I did not receive the *Star* due this day – Friday – but as it is now taken in at a private cabinet which I attend you need not send any more of them. Lennox Bigger sent me a creaking [*sic*] letter, not quite dunning, about £5 which I owed him for sheeting.¹³⁸ I sent it immediately and would have sent it before, had not I waited for some time for the half being paid by a gentleman who took it. I suppose I shall make this year just £170, last year was £187 but I got 30 guineas in one fee that year, in a case of long attendance. I consider therefore my receipt till now as pretty stationary, but of the coming year who can determine, and therefore, although not in debt having 30 guineas ready for my last half-year's rent and discharged my other bills which I wish to do, to make the year begin smooth, I think if Matty comes up with H. Young, she had better bring the £50 which I have in the bank along with her. My old friend Kennedy sent me lately two dozen of excellent wine which I must give to the best men I can find in this town at any little party. Mr Grattan is still in England with his wife, and I suppose engaged in Irish business even there. Curran I hear went off for England a day or two ago. I fancy these parliament men but half like us.

4 o'clock

Rowan has been taken in a very civil manner this morning by Carleton,¹³⁹ on an information of having distributed inflammatory handbills in a meeting of armed men in Cope Street. He immediately gave bail of £200 and £100 each for surety – no Newgate nor anything like it – it will be a lawyers' business. There is nothing at present against me – nor I suppose will, as one man is sufficient to try the matter. Rowan waited on Judge Downes, and his bail was instantly allowed. It is for the distribution merely, though by the bye he did not distribute for he happened only to have one in his pocket. The same warrant is against Tandy. He is gone to the country this day.

A copy – Ireland to Wit – By the Hon William Downes, one of the Justices of His Majesty's Court of King's Bench in Ireland. Whereas I have received information upon oath that on Sunday the 16th of December inst a number of men armed with bayonets and swords to the amount of near 100 persons were assembled at a house in Cope Street in the City of Dublin and that Archibald H. Rowan and James Napper Tandy, both of the said city esquires, were among the said persons so assembled and then and there distributed (a lie) several printed handbills containing a seditious libel to several of the said persons so assembled – These are therefore in His Majesty's name etc. etc.

Thus you see tis all a farce. I request you will not alarm where alarm need not be given. My interest, as well as my duty, is in doing my duty. I have copied this after dinner with our friends Rowan, Butler, Burke etc.

I will try to have something for you on Tuesday night, but you would do as well without me. Yours ever, WD

138 Lennox Bigger, his cousin, was a linen merchant.

139 Oliver Carleton, police constable.

380 24 December 1792

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [364]

Dear Sam, I ask your pardon for putting you to such frequent postage. I enclose you a short address which I think might do, if accompanied with resolutions descriptive of the mode of appointing delegates etc. If you have not some plan of this kind prepared, all will be uncertainty and confusion. You have some title to direct the people, and they want it. I wish you would get the Honourable Simon Butler, H[amilton] Rowan, Thomas Addis Emmet, Counsellor McDermot,¹⁴⁰ Counsellor Leonard MacNally,¹⁴¹ and Tandy returned as delegates from any parts of the North you can. As for myself I should wish to be returned, though I might not go. I think your naming delegates at your meeting on Wednesday would put the matter in train, and make it go on rapidly. I wished to draw a sketch of the preparative plan, but really have not had time – and by the time you receive this you will I suppose have everything determined.

Three printers and Tandy are informed against, like Rowan, for printing and distributing the *Address to the Volunteers*. As yet they have avoided me and I know not the reason. We hear that expresses are gone for the Belfast printers and I should laugh heartily to see our friend H. Joy and Neilson coming up in the same carriage *vis à vis*, but perhaps this is a report only.

Our society came to proper resolutions, though a division occurred for the first time about two weakening words ‘legally and constitutionally’ which were carried by the Catholics who are now prudently timid till their business be determined. You will see our resolutions in the paper. A new association¹⁴² has taken place which threatens us but will do good I hope, though it means to run away with all our honour and credit. I sent some hints to you. I still think the meeting at Dungannon ought to be very numerous – that they should be instructed in a simple and summary manner, and never to return until they merge into a national convention. Why did not I hear from you today? You might adjourn your meeting till some day in the beginning of January for future business after having done all you think necessary at present. I hope you have digested something. I see R. Thomson’s name in the summons – he, I hope will attend.

The great men are fearful of the democracy of Dungannon and therefore hurry it if possible for their craft is in danger. For my part I am in heart a real republican and if we must conform to others for a time, it is prudential and to make them serve us. Adieu – *Vive la republique*. WD

381 25 December [1792]

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN] [365]

This day six years,¹⁴³ I believe it was, that we first parted for separate abodes. Since that I have gone through much, but let me recollect with gratitude that there are

¹⁴⁰ Owen McDermot, barrister and United Irishman.

¹⁴¹ Leonard McNally (1752-1820), barrister, playwright, United Irishman and informer (*DNB*).

¹⁴² The Association of the Friends of the People was founded by the Duke of Leinster.

¹⁴³ It was actually ten years; Drennan left Belfast for Newry on Christmas Day 1782.

many things in my situation changed much for the better – that I have not lost one dear relative, that they are at present in good health, and that I have not one anxious thought, but what at that period possessed me and now wholly engrosses every waking moment, solicitude for your fame and worldly prosperity, so far as brings quiet of mind, and independence of fortune.

This same day then that gave birth to your heavenly friend, and the tenderest, the best of earthly parents,¹⁴⁴ I pray that their spirit may descend upon my brother, that integrity and innocence may continue his companion, support him in any trial that may await him, soothe him into peace and prevail in the end as the guardians of his character, over any enemies, party zeal or involuntary error may create. But my dearest Will, there are some errors you may fall into, and which your particular inclination leads you to, which may be of great consequence to your country, and therefore to yourself. You embarked in an honest favourite cause, it was certainly that of truth, and as such has prevailed, in a shorter time than your warmest hopes could lead you to expect. You have I believe been a principal (by forming the first society and aiding it and the cause of the people with a pen uncommonly graced with the power of leading them) in this triumph, and though your peculiar situation made it prudent sometimes not to avow your writings, they began to be generally read, admired, and well known to be yours, and in my humble opinion the address to Scotland of itself would have gained its author immortal honour and was the most perfect of his works. The threat thrown out in parliament of bringing some of the U[nited] I[rishmen] to its bar, I always believed would if possible be executed, and I could not help fearing it would be the president of the present time – at the same time as I thought you were in honour bound to accept it – I said not a word to deter you and hoped that caution and good lawyers would preserve you from any writing which might bring you into danger, or your society to disrepute.

Of this indeed I have not yet heard, but own to you that from the moment I read the *Address to the Volunteers* I grew uneasy. Its first paragraph was good and it contained just sentiments, but I did not like it nor the sound of some things in it, and therefore would not write to you till I saw what might be its fate – this may be too long. I do not know its author – nor I hope will the world, for some time. Pity it would be, that either he or his cause should suffer by any expression not wrong perhaps in its sense but unguardedly worded – led astray perhaps by a warm heart – may be – by weak, or what is worse, false, bribed advisers. They are glorious but certainly perilous times and in every sphere require caution to steer right, but perhaps none require it more than those who by abilities or character have at present any influence over the people.

They seem to have gained them – to have gained the people – what then have they to fear, themselves? This is their moment of danger – from vanity, presumption and ignorance – they are in the fairest train for getting their two grand objects obtained, objects of which they so lately despaired and which all their powers would not have

144 The Rev. Thomas Drennan was born on 25 December 1696.

accomplished without foreign aid. In all things you know there is a time when wisdom will pause, if not stop. What a glorious thing would you a few years ago have thought it to be in daily expectation of seeing the Catholics emancipated and parliament reformed, and that your little self could really be and be thought a means in such an event. Stop then, reap the sweets, nor risk them in chimerical fancies of a republic – the goods of which are yet unexperienced, doubtful to its friends, disapproved of by the best and wisest men, and at least a question too nice for youngsters in politics to decide on in a moment of advantage, where by such presumption they may lose those advantages which seem at present in their reach, precipitate their country in blood, and plant thorns in their own breasts, and abhorrence in their countrymen.

This town is looked to at present, both by the capital and the country around us. It, as you say, appears best at a distance, but believe me it does not breathe that republican spirit which strangers allege – nor does it deserve the character for patriotism which many in it you know, might be supposed to gain it. Tomorrow it meets and even the place for it has been a matter of dispute. It has been however resolved, that as the Town House is much too small to contain the inhabitants, they are to meet in Mr Vance's house.¹⁴⁵ I intend going and not engaging myself any way in the evening, that I may have time to give you a speedy, and as good an account of what passes as I can.

Not a man that goes to it with any intention to speak or even to vote, that I think should not before he joins it, on the bended knee pray to be kept from passion, prejudice and party zeal – yet I doubt not but there will be plenty of it. Good arguments perhaps on both sides, but emulation about papers, resolutions, etc., etc., and if I see the merchant Thomson against the merchant Cunningham, the physician White against the physician Haliday, the printer Neilson pitted on the little Joy, and the stiff Kelburn at the haughty B[ruce] – I shall be apt to think but meanly of them all.

There is not an hour that we do not hear of revolutions in the minds of men and anecdotes particularly of the countrymen and Volunteers, highly interesting and amusing, but there are so many I know not how to select them. From what I observe here, I imagine your cause is hurt by a few of your adherents, despised more than they ought to be for their station, which not giving them the advantages derived from a knowledge of the world, and though perhaps favoured with good natural understanding, are so puffed up by self consequence, and the advantage they have gained over some of the more respected inhabitants by being on the popular side, while their betters are in sulky obscurity, these things have given them a boasting manner and dictatorial speech of what they will effect, what they will do etc., which is ridiculous and offensive, while many of them not amiable, and avowing in a most impudent manner republican sentiments and talking of kings as if they were to be their butchers, serve to alarm not only women and children but the thinking and wise. I find they have even studied this in order to alarm government. This may have been right though I suspect they would be more formidable if they talked less,

¹⁴⁵ Rev. Patrick Vance (1756-1800), minister of the Second Belfast Church since 1791.

and that it is not good policy to alarm even wives and mothers – but if this manner is only to create an alarm that may do them service, let them stop, it's done. I do not know S. Neilson, but he is spoke of here as a firebrand. This may be going too far – but it may be his interest to make advances to you and yours, to keep him at his distance, I would not like to hear him called your correspondent.

Yesterday I dined at my mother's with Milly Smith and H. Young. His sister was asked but unable to come. Whether it is her state of health for which he seems much interested, or his own that appears poorly which affects his spirits I know not, but they are very flat till company appears to cheer him a little. He says nothing of late about going to Dublin, but when he does I hope to see you. I am going to eat my Christmas dinner at Dr Mattear's and have left myself only time to dress and write. MM

382 26 December [1792]

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [362]

Dear Will, After having been at the town meeting from twelve that the business begun, till near three that it ended, I take up my pen more in conformity to my promise than hope of informing you, as the paper of this night I suppose will give an account of the proceedings more to your satisfaction that I possibly can. To your satisfaction I suppose they will be. There was scarce anything that could be called opposition to the resolution drawn up and proposed by R. Thomson, there was no indecorum, party zeal, or heat appeared, except what I would term an agreeable warmth in a few, for the cause they were engaged in. This led young Getty¹⁴⁶ rather farther than the rest, who prefaced his speech by saying, he knew he was thought to possess more zeal than knowledge – but his sentiments he would give, and I think they went to this, in answer to an amendment (the only one proposed) by John Holmes for leaving out the words (I believe they were 'without any violence') that they would not pledge themselves to go no farther than petitioning, promise to do this only, and you might go on to the end of the chapter. He was not one of these violent admirers of our constitution that thought it not only the very best, but perfect – the present situation of this country, the prejudices of education and some other causes, tended to make him suppose that the government by kings, lords, and commons was at this time the most desirable, but that he did not doubt the time would come when we should all be convinced we could be well governed without either kings or lords, and have Ireland an independent kingdom. He did not look forward with terror or dismay to any convulsions occasioned by a struggle for these objects, and when they happened, and that they would he seemed to have little doubt, he hoped he would then be found in his place.

Thomson answered this, and artfully steered the middle way. You will see that J. Holmes's amendment was the only thing gave rise to conversation, for it could not be

146 Robert Getty (1761-1829), merchant and radical, brother-in-law of Dr John Campbell White.

called debate, and beside Getty, Kelburn answered him with bold, almost republican sentiments, and much dry humour, chiefly turned on a demand of security from Mr Holmes that a parliamentary reform would be granted by their determination to take no other method to procure it than petitioning. He called on Mr Holmes to give them security for this and his security was good – but this was not being complied with it seemed the general sense of the meeting, that they would be fairly represented, without making either terms, or promise – but, as my sense of the matter may be wrong – I once more refer you to the newspaper, and shall proceed to tell you what did not appear. Dr Haliday did not – Bruce was in the background speechless, and eke his little friend.¹⁴⁷ By the bye, that editor has a sore time of it at present – in a dispute with all his own relations, about the profits of a paper which he wants to make them take his word for gives him a profit of only about £100 a year. They are trying for other proof. I have read with more than ordinary attention Erskine's¹⁴⁸ speech in favour of Paine, and could not help noting these words, 'that a man must not address to individuals, upon the spur of some occasion, opinions that shall provoke them to sedition to insurrection and tumult but he may, etc., etc.'

Several people here suspect their letters are opened. Yours frequently appeared to be so, when we supposed it to be your own negligence. Pray might I not direct a letter for you sometimes to your servant [if] you tell me his name? I hope it is yet the [one] I hired for you, as by this time he may have become a friend – and you stand in need of him. This night Sam received a long letter from Mr Rowan, but no enclosure. That gentleman has twice politely remembered me in his letters, beg of him to accept compliments of the festive season from me in return.

When they were appointing the committee of twenty-one at the meeting, a wag of a mean appearance proposed the corporation as one voice, but they not being present, and not having a friend to vouch for their acting, they were rejected.¹⁴⁹ The wine you mention did come from J. Kennedy – that is, my mother sent it to him to pack up and get conveyed to you, as she knew it was madeira of so excellent a quality that there was none like it in Ireland. It was H. Young's present to her, one dozen is inferior to the other. This transaction she kept a profound secret till Monday last that he dined there, and none of the wine being to be got and having read your supposition she was obliged to own to the fact. At any time that you can get a frank I shall be obliged to you if you will enclose me a copy of your letter to him and his answer. The first Christmas for many years, poor Hugh was not chairman in my mother's kitchen, the honour of being prime minister there he literally resigned about half a y[ear] ago, choosing to retire from the bustle of life to the place of his nativity with a quiet conscience, unpensioned and an independence of £30 saving. We hear of him often. He is tolerably well, goes to church every Sunday and sends us word he will come to see us in summer. There is a long list of marriages spoke of for the next year – Mr Rainey and Mrs Webster – Miss Margaret Greg and

147 Henry Joy, who was in the process of selling the *Belfast News-Letter*.

148 Thomas Erskine (1750-1823), lost office as attorney general to the Prince of Wales for his defence of Paine, later 1st Baron Erskine (*DNB*).

149 All the Belfast burgesses were Donegall nominees, and the corporation was ineffectual.

Mr N[arcissus] Batt – John Houston and Miss Eliza Holmes, and Mr Seed and Miss Gallan for certain.¹⁵⁰ Write as frequently for some time as you can. MM

I wrote this letter and left it in my own room where it has somehow got grease as if it was a kitchen maid's. I hate the sight of it.

383 Friday, [28 December postmark]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [366]

Dear Sam, There are none of the Belfast papers received in town this day, nor have I received a letter as I had reason to expect, nor has Rowan. We are therefore to conclude that the papers have not been delivered, and probably your letters opened. Shame on the dishonourable government that can advise such a procedure. If the editor of the *Star* be taken this may somehow prevent perhaps the publication, but it is needless to conjecture – for there is clearly a design formed first to blacken and calumniate the people and then to put down their friends by all the terrors of legal torture. This is the formed design through the three kingdoms and it has already had its effect in Scotland for the present. I received Matty's letter of Christmas Day, and hope I shall behave moderately and firmly and calmly at the bar of the House if ever I be called there, as in my closet. Thank God, I have not a thought or word or action that I can greatly reproach myself for in politics, and whatever be the event, I shall go on. If they have opened Matty's letter, they will never think that a woman wrote it, and she is therefore secure.

The printers here are beginning to be frightened and even refuse common advertisements – those under influence of the Catholics particularly. (Tell it not in Gath, but if the Protestants don't come forward at Dungannon, the nation is undone.) Individuals will be put down, if the assembled nation does not interpose their shield for their protection. What need we care if the petty hirelings of the Post Office stop and read our letters – are we not honest men engaged in an honest cause? W DRENNAN

384 Monday, 31 December [17]92

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [368]

Dear Sam, I fancy we have been mistaken regarding the post, and I really believe they never open any letters, but Matty's last letter was either put in late, or delayed in the delivery. I received this morning Mr Getty's letter enclosing an address to our society from the Battalion – Blue – of Belfast, for which letter I sincerely thank him, and as for the address I shall read it to the society next Friday when an answer will

150 Rainey and Webster, see above, p.429; Margaret, daughter of Thomas Greg married her cousin Narcissus Batt (1767-1840), merchant, businessman, and banker; John Holmes Houston, later of Orangefield, Co. Down, married his cousin Isabella, daughter of John Holmes; William Seed, flour miller of Belfast, married Elizabeth Gallan (*BNZ*).

be given. The rumours of riots in the North are so numerous as evidently to be fabricated by government who have turned this engine of panic against us, and who are sending soldiers, artillery, etc., to Dundalk to make a riot if possible, and every little quarrel in the streets or in any country town is now increased and published in all the papers. For the papers now are evidently in panic or in pay, and it was with great difficulty our last resolutions though explanatory of our principles could be got inserted. If the North does not go on we are lost, for the Catholics all now act as if they were cowed, and we are scarcely able to keep them from altering the very character and spirit of our society. The two who are at their head or affect to be so in the society are exerting all their power in and out of the society to infuse a milk and water spirit or to water down every resolution. We had a energetic letter from Lisburn requesting support for arms and accoutrements, but I am almost convinced the society will not act in it and it must be left to individuals.

I admire very greatly your Belfast resolutions and hope your committee of twenty-one will not be summoned to Dublin for I swear they speak more treason by the half than we dare venture here. No intelligence from the delegates is mentioned. All their business is kept secret. The set are at present incommunicative and have been for some time unconfidential – yet I should not wish this to be known. The Catholics may save themselves, but it is the Protestants must save the nation. I fear, I greatly fear that if they get their franchise they will not use their franchise, but I may be mistaken. There is evidently a misunderstanding taken place between the parties here, and both perhaps are in fault; but it is certainly proper all circumstances considered that the Protestants should not be damped and quieted, and restrained, but acting at first for the union let them now act for that reform which was their object from the first.

I hope your committee will meet often. Ought they not to draw up a model of instructions, which should be very general, and the delegates should certainly have very full powers: they should be paid: and they should be prohibited to dissolve without some certain prospect of attaining their end. It will be advisable to make the organisation as similar to a good plan of reform as possible which would make both a good precedent and good practice. Is a Catholic convention to do this, and ought not we? I see the Derry men recommend two delegates from each parish, but this is only for a preparatory meeting on the 25th January. I mentioned names I wish to see returned – Rowan – Butler – Emmet – Tandy – McDermott – McNally – some towns or parishes surely could be gotten to return them. I add John Chambers, printer. He and Emmet and I will draw out our distinct plans (which are measures) of reform and have them shortly printed on cards. Our society will appoint a committee of twenty-one for drawing up a plan which will be submitted to the society. I hear nothing of any intention to take me. People account for it variously – perhaps Pollock has averted the stroke for a little. I can't see any reason to think they will call me to the bar of the House, and my time is over next month. We never heard a true account whether Neilson was apprehended. It is said that no magistrate would back the warrant, but I believe a judge's warrant does not require this.

I send this letter by Mrs Connor whose daughter I have attended and to whose politeness I am under great obligations. I gave some of the good wine to our good friends on Friday last. My account is closed on this last day of the year and that only with £170. I can't well be worse, and may be better – though I doubt it rather than fear it. I am not anxious for fortune, but will never be charged with inattention. It is said 2,000 weavers had made an offer to escort the Lieutenant to parliament with orange ribbons etc. to draw his coach. I don't doubt but they are striving to get this accomplished and that the first day of the session will be made as regal and as terrible with military and perhaps with militia, half pay Volunteers, etc., as possible. Militia should always be printed now malitia.

The Leinster Association meet tomorrow, and are endeavouring by all methods to gain converts, and to injure our little societies. I hope the North will see through this fawning aristocracy, who comes on the field so late and so languidly. If we notice them, it would in my mind be in the most genteel manner with a little mixture of irony.

I hear that our society will send arms or money – to Lisburn – I know not, but it will be tried. Our society has a positive character to support. The Leinster society is only negative, lukewarm, quiescent. W DRENNAN

385 Monday night the last of 90 3¹⁵¹

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [460]

Sam is engaged in such a multiplicity of business, that it is not in his power to communicate the daily little occurrences which at present interest, and the early knowledge of which may make important. Indeed the daily story is so generally a lie, that after one repetition it dies and is forgot, and so often has it been said that messengers were come down for the *Star* people, that this day, when it really happened, no one would believe it – upon all that follows however I believe you may depend. Two men came from Dublin last night, with powers to take into custody the proprietors of the N[orthern] Star – of this they were informed by report this day. On this, Sam N[eilson] wrote a letter to Mr Bristow, accusing him of improper conduct in not informing them of it, or casting an odium on the town by allowing it to be supposed any of its inhabitants would fly from, or oppose, any legal measure of government.

They therefore had a very peaceable meeting with two very gentlemen, who accepted of their word of honour for remaining there, until they could hear from the judge what bail he would take for their appearance in Dublin. The men expressed their obligations to the Northeringtons for their genteel and manly behaviour, at which they expressed much surprise (and at which I believe many are disappointed), saying

151 Although the date looks clear, if odd, the 31 December fell on Monday in 1792 not 1793, and the content is clearly 1792 as the Leinster Association was set up at the end of 1792 and the printers were indicted in January 1793.

they and their town had been much misrepresented and by some of its own inhabitants, that it was said to be in uproar and rebellion, of which they could not see a symptom, and would certainly say so when they returned, and concluded by requesting their protection to their persons, in case of any insult, which the others readily promising I suppose gave them courage in what, when they set out, they probably thought a bold undertaken [*sic*] to seize twelve bold men in little Boston, with them however they dine tomorrow – and will eat and drink well with them, I dare say, while they stay. As I supposed they were arrested for printing the *Address to the Volunteers*, I was surprised that H. Joy did not make one of the party – but it is for something of their own, in regard to a reform freeing the people from taxes on tobacco, that they are arrested.

This day at one o'clock the new committee met, Jemmy Holmes in the chair, about two months ago one of the most zealous against the Catholics, now all was unanimity. The papers will give you the particulars, and let you see that their representatives are to be balloted for first in the market house, and soon.¹⁵² Not a being here now ventures to breath a word against the present views of the people – but many, out of humour with themselves and a dying cause, hating the light that now discovers the narrowness of mind which so long disgraced them, vent their gall in hints and doubts and croaking forebodings of mobs and carnage etc., which they would rather see verified than be thus perpetually disappointed. I do not believe that individuals who are prudent and just to themselves will now suffer in the cause of truth, and the people it appears to be gaining over (from different motives) all ranks, and descriptions. We must not search too deep for motives – the effect will do. You might as well desire a stone, rolling down a hill, to stop and ascend, as allay the present ferment by any means but granting the people, what our children, our very servants know to be their rights. You are their avowed friend, let me be excused for again desiring you to be guarded by that prudence, which while it leaves no open to malice or the law, may perhaps find it hard to defend you against envy. Less men than you have suffered from it, and as you say, a little bird told me, that Mr Tone was not quite free of it. What are the Irish commissioners about? – does no one hear from them? – surely, those of their own persuasion do. [I]f so, they are very secret. What is the reason?

Sam dines this day with Dr Haliday. There is a society going to be formed of which perhaps he may be the head, but as the formation of it has been set on foot by an apothecary (Fuller) he may not relish it. It is graced by the sentiments if not of a very wise man at least a duke and a set of our gentlemen who may be termed invalids in politics and also Volunteers appear now, when every man and boy is somebody, to long to enroll their names in some society and think no doubt they will be safer, more respectable etc., under the banners of his Grace of Leinster. They have come on indeed with the slowness of age, but with its caution also, and having avoided much expense and danger, either real or supposed, hope to come in

152 These resolutions are printed in [Henry Joy], *Belfast politics, or a collection of the debates, resolutions, and other proceedings of that town in the years 1792 to 1793* (Belfast, 1794), pp 115-6.

and partake of the harvest and yet, to pass with the people now conquerors, as their friends – friends to the rising sun. Sam will write to you tomorrow or next day and send you a bill for £50. He received a few lines from you on Sunday. When you have time you had better write to my mother as she values one directed to herself more than any other, and seems piqued at your having given her up.

I believe Bruce and H. Joy are both hurt at not having been named for the committee, though the former probably would not have acted, and so great is the prejudice among a certain set against him, that it was well he was not proposed. H. Joy is doing all in his power to recover, but yet it will not do – he was mentioned in private as one proper and W[ill] S[inclair] declared he would openly object to him, believing he would be forever cavilling and throwing objections in their way. I hope to hear from you tomorrow. Last night I drank tea with Miss Young who I think dying, and her brother¹⁵³ confined under Dr H[aliday's] care. I do not believe he would put in a word for you.

Sunday fortnight Bruce preached a good sermon on the duty of a good citizen. It was one I had heard before, now it did not do, it occasioned some talk, and yesterday he noticed this to the great surprise of the people in the pulpit. Oh! he is ill advised and keeps at a distance from his best friends.

153 Hamilton Young became insane and died in 1799.

1793

386 Thursday, 5 January 1793

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [371]

You are now three long letters in my debt, that of Christmas day I know you received, but two since you have not acknowledged. To help you to it, I will try for the future to date my letters, a necessary form which I am seldom prepared for beyond the day of the week. A sudden thought is often the occasion of my writing to you, and puts you to more expense of postage than I need to, for half a dozen private hands left this for Dublin today – but while you have an opportunity of speaking to one of them (I mean Mr Neilson) I wish to suggest what has occurred to me as a matter that would be acceptable to the public, serviceable to its cause, agreeable to him, and honourable to you – if I am mistaken, it is no matter. It is the reprinting the Helot's letters, either in his paper, or as I fear there would not be time before the convention, or as a pamphlet. I am in the situation of numbers who have applied to me, I have not, nor can I get a copy. With me indeed, the sense and spirit remains, but at the time they appeared, their novelty chiefly attracted and the time was not come (in my opinion) to give them their highest relish. They indeed did serve the purpose then, and therefore might aid it now. Many of the first letters were little read, being passed over as mere newspaper essays, and they had not attained their character till they came to a close. They were indeed republished in Dublin, but as a local matter that had answered its end. The author not certainly known, no great number certainly was bought or came here – and it is as certain that they have been often much wished for.

Mrs Hyde has had a long letter from England earnestly requesting Irish publications on the present affairs, particularly anything from Dr D's pen, giving unbounded praise (and from many well-known names) to the two addresses – to France and to the Scotch, and begging the Helot's letters, which I cannot procure. The Belfast papers have been burned in the coffee house at Liverpool and therefore the desire for them increases daily. The same authority I have for this, also says that the people there say that the preparations for war with France is all a farce, for they are intended for Ireland – the military are certainly sliding in, very fast. While I am writing I suppose the new mode of ballot is going on at the coffee room. It is an experiment which may be important and remembered to take its rise in Belfast, where I remember the first Volunteers' resolution was formed which startled many, drove two weak minds from the chair, which Sam filled, and yet I believe went no farther than to declare there was no power competent to bind Ireland – but the King, Lords and Commons – what a change – and to make yet a greater, such a number of things seem to conspire at present, that I am every day strengthened in the opinion that some wonderful events are decreed, to which everything tends

without its own knowledge. This is surely the case with all governments, for they appear more bent on their own destruction than the people ever wished. Have you read Mrs Wollstonecraft? I suppose not, or surely you would have mentioned her to me – you ought, even as a politician, and she too conspires to make an important change. I wish they would order her book to be burned.¹ Why does not Burke bring in a bill declaring the influence of the people, increased, increasing, and ought to be diminished – poor Burke. Oh! there is a period, when to us, it would seem good to die. Age is as much to be feared as youth – and the treasury bench is too hard for it. Fewer honours and profits would make man more honourable and profitable both to his country and to himself.

But I have wandered from my subject without finishing it. I wish you to be chose for the convention and might not this same republication tend to forward it? I wish it also to be for Belfast. You are absent and of those who will vote, many will not think of you, some will think it would not be for your interest, and others that it would not be for theirs. The first bar the Helot would remove, perhaps the other two. As I have it not, I cannot say whether there is anything inapplicable to the present time, or whether a preface or introduction might not obviate that and procure somewhat in its stead, more suitable to the purposes I have mentioned. All I mean is a hint, which might lead you to a good and easy use of the present minute.

This poor, wretched Lewis, I wish most ardently for his life, and think I could have pleaded much better for him than his lawyers, whose arguments I think prove them his enemies – uncommonly hard fate to be tried and judged by them. A hundred good pleas might be offered for mercy to him and I would not blush to see them the subject of your pen – would to God he had many such in his cause. Do not term this either womanly softness or inconsistency, it is nature and even reason pleads for his life, and even respect for themselves and their own dignity as a nation would be more conspicuous by pardoning and showing no fear of his importance in any country, than by putting him to death. John Gordon,² who I believe an honest, clever fellow, is just returned from F[rance] and a great enemy to the king – yet he mentions many things which prove he has been treated with an inhuman want of feeling, and that the whole people have undergone so violent a change that the most common observer may trace it in the manner of every man in the street, who no longer trips it, dressed out, on the light toe, but with arms unmuffled and across, and bent brow and plodding step, jostle any man, particularly if he is well dressed.

Would poor Capet³ and his dame were in Botany Bay, what might they not do there. They might yet make themselves immortal in some more agreeable way than they are likely to do in France, a despotic government I suppose would be fittest – at any rate, he might think it better to reign in hell than serve in h[eaven], or at least

1 Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97), radical feminist, author of *A vindication of the rights of woman* (1792); Paine's *Rights of man*, written in answer to Burke's *Reflections on the revolution in France*, had been published in 1791 and 1792; Martha was, of course, aware that ordering a book to be burned by the public hangman immediately increased its readership.

2 John Gordon, United Irishman, clerk to John McCracken, muslin manufacturer; see C. J. Woods (ed.), *Journals and memoirs of Thomas Russell, 1791-5* (Dublin, 1991), pp 40-1.

3 i.e. Louis Capet, King of France.

live in Botany Bay than die on a scaffold in Paris. The 10th of August, his wife brought him two pistols, put one in to his hand and bade him head his troops, die as he had lived a king. He took it, and after a pause said 'No madam, it is not time for that yet'. Much blood was therefore spared – yet, his refusing to fight, turned every Frenchman against him – Gordon

At the last cote[rie whe]re there were many officers just off their march from Col[-]ren⁴ some of them were heard to swear they would have God save the King played, instead of opposition they were joined in a p[—]s and repeatedly encored, at which they were no doubt much disappointed. This is the way at present to baffle, the *Star* account of their transition [*sic*] has been much approved.

Robert Thomson and William Sinclaire are returned for Belfast, about 150 voters. Do not credit any reports of it but what we write, for we are in perfect peace and good neighbourhood.

Positively I will not write again till I hear from you, and I desire you may look over some of my late letters and comply with their requests, particularly in sending me copies of the two letters I mentioned. This you may do by Neilson.

387 Tuesday, [January 1793]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [373]

Dearest Matty, I gave your last letter to Neilson to read who admired it much but did not speak a single syllable about the object of it, whether from delicacy or difference of opinion I cannot say. I shall send some copies of the Helot down with him which you may read. There is one letter asserting the incapability of the Catholics of Ireland for political liberty or power which was infused into my ear by H. Joy as I well remember and as I could testify from his letters. This displeased many of the Catholics at the time and you may recollect that W. Jones, who has indeed been their oldest and most consistent friend, taking me up on this very account in the Belfast paper under the title of the Zealot. I am apt to believe that the Catholics still owe me a grudge for this and think that my late conversion since I came to Dublin has been brought about by views of interest rather than upon principle, and this, along with an instinctive horror of republicanism which inspires them, has occasioned rather a dryness and want of confidence respecting me. Were there any republication therefore of these letters, mine to Isadas should be annexed as giving some explanation of my reasons for being less incredulous with respect to the Catholics now.

With respect to my being returned to Dungannon, might it not be deemed a total abandonment of my profession, and do not I, as well as my native town, appear best at a distance? Beside many there would think it infringing upon their superior right and I believe Thomson, who has the certain lead and on whose model Neilson forms himself, even to his tone in conversation, is not very fond of me, though I have always respected him as without competition the ablest man in the town. My

4 ? Coleraine.

first principle is that the Dungannon meeting should be very numerous and as democratic in its nature and organisation as possible, and I hope that at Ballymena they will not confine their delegation to so many from counties and so many from great towns, but keep to their parochial returns, or at least make the number delegated from county, or rather baronies, very numerous. In that case, I, and several others here more capable of serving the cause, might be elected. I wish there may be time enough to get the province represented before the 15th February for an adjournment would be very bad, and the other provinces will certainly not follow if the meeting is not very splendid and important in everything attending it. If so, this will incite them, who are now as far behind Ulster as Ulster is behind Belfast. Neilson and the rest were treated civilly by Lord Clonmell who pretended that the magistrate in Belfast might have been more accommodating; indeed Neilson thinks Bristow acted a double treacherous part through the whole affair which he knows by having, through the efficacy of good meat and wine, pumped much secret matter out of Logan the messenger. They were bailed by a Catholic and a Protestant, attended by many of both persuasions, and entertained by them yesterday at dinner. I was engaged and the guinea is as well in my pocket.

They are still keeping up the cry of insurrection, and yesterday more artillery is sent to keep you in order, and cars are pressing in the streets this day for the baggage. Tandy's Volunteers are to be out next Sunday (but Tandy is too plainly timid) and Rowan's will probably go out though but fifty strong and not a Catholic among them. He is vexed to the soul at them but keeps his brow as smooth as he can.

As for Louis, it is my opinion in two words, that if he be not executed there will be another massacre, and in mercy to the people, in mercy to the constitution, it ought to be cemented and consolidated with his blood. The great importance that his life is made of shows clearly to me that there is more seeming than substantial republicanism, and that aristocracy is ready to lift its head. If it does, woe to the men, for they will be cut down; but if the king be executed, they will not rise; if he be spared, the republic is not out of danger. I know the cause will be hurt in these countries by the shock of his execution, but their cause will be saved by it, and perhaps ours is only that instinctive pity which attends those who surround the scaffold but which on going home wears off, by considering the reality of the crime and the necessity of the example. The French love spectacles and, say what we will, their story will in after ages be a blank at the close without the death of the king. There are thousands strung up at Tyburn every year, whose lives, in the universe, are a link as important as his, and all our ideas in his favour are artificial and hang about a term – king – I'll say no more about it.

I am sorry I lost Young's letter and kept no copy of mine: but they were both as you would desire them. I mentioned the Biggers whom I knew to him. But in reality I can't imagine how you should suppose he would be inclined to do me any service, a man I never saw, with whom I am very distantly related,⁵ and who has many connections of his own, either in America or here, who have much superior claims upon him.

⁵ They were actually first cousins.

The Leinster society is distributing its papers with much care and several societies are forming on the plan. It is well – but had [—]one before they would not have come so near us. I hear th[e meet]ing at Drue's was broken up by an irruption of the nati[—]. [?Tone I] never see – he is one of this society and I hear wrote a long letter to St Claire on their principles. I acknowledge I feel a repulsion not an envy of Tone, though I agreed in all his principles, before he became agent – now Keogh guides him and both are artful men, very capable, but such as you feel an unaccountable repugnance to. Rowan got Sam's enclosure. I believe you don't like Rowan, but I do, who know him better. He will not bear that the town should not call for any tune in the play-house they please, and after God save the King is resolved to have the Volunteers' March – and let him do so, say I, at a safe distance.

I shall write to my good mother tomorrow or next day. Give her my love and duty, and tell Nancy to remember me as I remember her, her kindness, her tenderness for me in all my life, in all my sickness real or imaginary. Indeed I am ashamed to be so insensible, as I am conscious I am, to all your kindness and unceasing attention to my insignificant self. I got Sam's enclosure. W DRENNAN

388 Tuesday, 16 January 1793⁶

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [374]

Dear Sam, You will see with surprise that a committee on the subject of reform has been unanimously agreed to by the House, that the Ponsonby and Shannon interest have proposed it, that Grattan has been seconded by Isaac Corry, that in short wonders are now the order of the day. It is likely that the Shannon interest, etc., do this out of pique and party work against administration, though some affect to say Lord Shannon⁷ was of this opinion a year ago. Whether all this be a tub to the whale, I suppose will be discovered, but surely if it was the people impelled them to all this, the people ought not to relax, but to go on to Dungannon, there state their grievances, lay down the essential articles without which they cannot be free, and call a national convention. Tandy said today he could say from authority that Grattan would attend if returned to the convention, I hope not to infuse the frigid aristocratic spirit that Flood, Charlemont and Brownlow did, who all betrayed the people.

I was with Frank Dobbs this day in the street, who was talking about the Leinster club of which he was a member, when we met Grattan, who was accosted and congratulated familiarly by Dobbs on the business of last night. Grattan looked at me once or twice, I thought half knowingly, but Dobbs did not introduce me, and Grattan seemed in a hurry to get from him – no wonder – he is obliged to go by-ways to avoid people. I fancy he condemns the new Volunteers much, and Rowan and his adherents along with him, and I doubt whether he will ever give me the honour of his acquaintance.

⁶ Tuesday was not the 16th.

⁷ Richard Boyle, 2nd Earl of Shannon (1728-1807).

The Leinster Association have appointed a committee to draw up a plan of reform. Ours have done the same – our committee twenty-one. We have met – Emmet, Chambers, and I, have laid our plans before them and printed them only for the use of the members of the committee. I hope plans will not divert the people from measures, nor are ours to be published at present. All are now holding out the hand of congratulation, Jack Dunn, F. Dobbs, etc., etc., who were devilish dry but the other day. Pollock has dropped calling on me of late (I mean my friend Joseph) ever since the day I dined with him at his cousin's and left him there after tea. I hear he is persuading Newry, and as many as he writes to in the North, from a Dungannon meeting. He is of the Leinster squad, and the Duke writes to him.

Tone is come over, but not the others yet. They have reprinted their petition here with references to the statutes on which they are aggrieved as a refutation of the Chancellor. This is done by Butler, who has been very useful to them, though they like Emmet better, and Butler is jealous of Emmet, who speaks admirably. Butler asserts that the test act with regard to the dissenters is not repealed, and that they cannot legally exercise civil or military office, and that Campbell, Fox, Priestley, etc., who assert the contrary are under a mistake, and is to propose a digest of the statute still against them in our society next night. This would raise the North with a vengeance. The dispute whether or not Catholic emancipation is to precede reform, will only make the Catholics warmer for reform. We heard today that Rankin your chairman was to be apprehended. I hear R. Thomson did not draw up the hot part of the resolutions, but Neilson, White, etc. Neilson called on me today but I missed him, and therefore must put you to postage. I shall get some franks from Dunn tomorrow. Why don't you write?

389 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [375]

Dear Sam, I hear little politics since the adjournment, but it is generally thought that the Ponsonby party threw out the idea of reform to embarrass government and Lord Shannon shrugs up his shoulders when asked if he be willing to resign his boroughs, and says what must be must be, I can retire to Castle-Martyr and live happily, if my tenantry are happy, and to keep my property shall be content to part with my power. The Duke of Leinster sold his borough of Harristown lately to John Latouche⁸ for £14,000 which Giffard⁹ calls pretty smartly little less than political swindling.

The Leinster society are putting every engine to work to be as popular as possible and seem to have had credit in the north. Their plan of reform will probably not be so palatable. Ours is not made. Emmet made a most brilliant speech for personal representation in our committee which they ordered to be printed for their own use. He is a great orator and will make a distinguished figure. My idea is that a representation

⁸ John Latouche (c.1734-1805), MP for Newcastle.

⁹ John Giffard, apothecary, one of the Dublin sheriffs, proprietor of the Castle newspaper *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* (Inglis, *Freedom of the press*, pp 57-62).

by the head is not practicable in Ireland at present. I shall probably read an address to Ireland which if it passes the committee will probably pass the society, but our Catholics are very easily alarmed and it will not be easy to get anything spirited through them – I still think there is much discouragement against the Dungannon meeting attempted by all the men of property and influence. We want Custine to give the Prussians a hearty dressing – this would help us. Tis said the Chancellor must resign – he has been put down in his law quotations by the publication of the very statutes. If Lord Westmorland and the Beresfords,¹⁰ and the Chancellor give up, I know not who they will get to undertake the government. Cooke¹¹ is gone over, and until Monday the business of the Catholics will not be known, and as for the reform I dare say its importance etc. will be so great that it will be put off to the last.

I wrote to H. Young on your hint but have not received as yet any answer. WD

390 Friday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST], PER FAVOUR MR SIMMS [321A]

Dear Sam, The Catholics are to have the penal code swept away, excepting the bench, and the king's council, excepting the chancellorship of Ireland and the House of Commons for the present parliament – none of which they are to enjoy. What a compromise. The Chancellor was furious in the House of Lords against the Catholic petition, said it was a lie and libel, that if the Catholics got political power there was an end of peace, and that there would be war in Ireland in a short time. The Secretary Dundas asked the delegates why they did not come through the official channel, Keogh answered that it was because the Irish government had lost all their confidence, that the Catholics had no trust in them, and that they could not wait in London till after a certain day, if they would not receive an answer before that time. Your twelve apostles are so busy in engagements that it is hard to see them. We bring in a compliment in our society this night to the sovereign for that part of his speech relative to the Catholics. How the Catholics will behave, I know not, but I fear all the minority even Grattan are against a Dungannon meeting. For God's sake, let there be one, if possible, if possible – or we are undone. Grattan, I hear was great, but not animated. Our society will not probably be noticed, individually – neither Butler, Tandy, Emmet, or Drennan.

Last night, Butler read me his resolution of thanks to the King in which I got inserted the words, principles of the constitution – and an equal representation of the people in parliament. A part of the King's speech¹² was quoted in which an attachment to the established constitution is expressed. This quotation I had not read at the time he showed it to me, as he told me it was needless, being only a part

10 Party around John Beresford (1738-1805), MP, 2nd son of Earl of Tyrone, first commissioner of revenue (*DNB*).

11 Edward Cooke (1755-1820), under secretary (*DNB*).

12 Of 10 January 1793.

of the speech. But it was noticed in the society and appeared to me so contrary to our test, and all our principles, that seeing it was likely to be carried as Butler, Emmet and all the Catholics were for it, I thought a bold stroke necessary and declared I should leave the chair rather than put the question. This produced observation in plenty and defence also, but though I am sensible of a little incorrectness in the official behaviour, I congratulate myself that it was done, as the resolution by Butler's motion was altered so as to leave out the whole quotation, and this I believe was due in great part to my explicit declaration. I had determined in my own mind to put the question as given to me as was my duty, but immediately after to leave the chair. I fear they meant to bring in attachment to the established constitution (which is said to be the bargain with the Catholics for their emancipation) by a side wind. Emmet is much their advocate since Tone's absence, I had almost said their agent, and Butler has taken a veering within these two last nights, that appears odd. Duquerry¹³ is disgusted and it is whispered Butler will step into his place. This is a fact – that Rowan stepped into Butler's while he was writing this resolution of praise and gratitude to our most gracious sovereign, with Godfrey Greene¹⁴ at his side. The resolution, as abridged and as added to, is I think prudent and wipes off the calumny of disloyalty. You will see it in the papers. Neilson spoke for it, but I believe is sensible that the words established constitution ought not to be sanctioned by our society even in a quotation from the King's speech.

The Catholics are still doubtful whether government are not playing a double game, for is it not strange that the Chancellor who reigns here, should speak so decisively against them? I shall write to you soon. WD

391 Wednesday [January postmark]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [376]

My dearest Will, There was not any news from Downpatrick yesterday in time to write, and I have been able to glean only the few following particulars, before the post goes out this morn.

The meeting was astonishingly full. Lord Hillsborough¹⁵ took but three days to come from London to it, supposing no doubt to glory at this momentous crisis in all his wonted influence – but this also is fled even with the men of Down, and his lordship was opposed and worsted in everything. Young Mat Ford¹⁶ was in the chair. They have agreed to the Catholic question without reserve, thank the Volunteers, approve of a Dungannon meeting, and meet at Ballynahinch on some future day for the purpose of choosing delegates. I have not time for more.

H. Young is ill – very ill indeed. Sam and I see him as often as we can as it gives much pleasure to his sister who is much to be pitied. He is frequently locked up in

13 Henry Duquerry (d.1804), MP for Armagh City, January-April 1790, Rathcormack 1790-97.

14 Godfrey Greene (1742-98), MP for Dungarvan.

15 Later 2nd Marquis of Downshire.

16 Matthew Forde (c.1753-1812), of Seaforde, Co. Down.

his own room a whole day without meat. The accounts are settled and I hope he will be better for he has a good and delicate mind. My mother is not very well. I wish you would write to her. Yours ever, MM

[ENDORSED BY DRENNAN]

Dear Rowan, You have extinguished the sun, and some of the stars – I send you a letter of this morning about Down. W DRENNAN

392 Thursday morn 8 o'clock [2– postmark]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [377]

Yesterday I wrote you a few lines which I hoped would be the earliest information you would receive of the D[own] meeting – you have got a fuller account in the *Star*, but as I have picked up some little accounts of it that will not be there, and yet are pretty strong and agreeable features, I take up my pen, thus soon again, to try to amuse you with them. G. Hamilton¹⁷ was called to the chair by several voices, but opposed, John Crawford, in the same way, but the cry was, we cannot want them, we cannot want them, when Ford proposed the committee, Isaac was named, several ayes, not a no, so by Johnston,¹⁸ when G. Hamilton a general shout of approbation, and to J. Crawford the house rung. Neiven¹⁹ said he thought the freeholders should have leave to nominate some, Ford told them they had it in their power to object, that he said was invidious, and you see they thought fit to add seven more to please them and to those seven you are indebted for the resolution in regard to the D[own] meeting. Frank Savage²⁰ was four times put up and as warmly and generally rejected, till J. Crawford, fearing disputes, observed Mr S[avage] to his knowledge had been very active in getting that meeting called, begged they would not waste their time on trifles for he could assure them they had much important matter before them – in an instant Savage was unanimously admitted. How delightful this honest tribute of unbiased attention to political integrity, beyond all the admiration ever paid an orator, cold is the applause to a handsome speech compared to this. I detest the absurd paltry phrase fit only for a school boy, and that boy I would not have my son.

Lord H[illsborough] said there were French emissaries to his knowledge in Ireland trying to sow such and such seeds – a lie, a lie, from fifty different voices – he told them that the design of the French in opening the Scheldt²¹ was to invade Ireland – a loud and long laugh, and I dare say sincere. In answer to what he said on a war, Pottinger²² told him that in case there was one – unless there was a reform granted, this country would do little to oppose it. Dickson,²³ that dressed A. Stewart and H. Joy so well at the commemoration and raised the laugh at Isadas under the name of

17 Gawen Hamilton (1729-1805), of Killyleagh Castle, Co. Down, Hamilton Rowan's father.

18 Probably Arthur Johnston (1721-1814), MP for Killyleagh 1769-76.

19 Thomas Nevin of Downpatrick, a member of the Northern Whig Club.

20 Francis Savage of Ardkeen, MP for Co. Down, 1794.

21 The River Scheldt had been opened to commerce by the French.

22 Eldred Pottinger (d.1814), of Mount Pottinger, Co. Down.

23 Rev. Dr William Steele Dickson (1744-1824), Presbyterian minister at Portaferry (*DNB*).

Jeroboam, was very severe on his lordship, and as the gentlemen were full of resentment at their proceedings on the g[rand] jury and much ashamed of them, they chose to divert it of the proper object themselves – to the man that led them, and have I suppose made him repent his journey. His non-attendance was repeatedly thrown up to him and A.S. ended his speech with a hope that his lordship's patriotism would induce him to take his seat. A wag of a country man told him if there was a war we might suffer from the want of light on the [subject] of which his lordship was the guardian.

In short, the people I believe appeared very well, and the gentlemen showed they were for once properly tutored. When J. Crawford was put in the chair, he declared he could not leave it till he declared that that day was the happiest of his life, that he pronounced the county free, and that he hoped they would join him in giving it three cheers. They gave nine – or rather a continued one all the way home. Had the noble lord of Londonderry supported his family character or his own, such a man and J.C. might have done what they pleased. How far superior is the latter at all times but particular such as these to any lord I ever knew. I had a great deal more to say, but I fear missing the post.

Write to my mother. H[amilton] Y[oung] is very ill – he will not I am sure write to you or anyone else for some time at least. Some of our new Volunteers passing the regiment here on Sunday last were hissed by it. Two gentlemen waited on Captain McDonell,²⁴ the commanding officer to require an explanation which he gave by an apology. MM

393 Friday, 24 January²⁵

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO MRS ANN DRENNAN, DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST [378]

My dear Mother, I hope and believe that you will not accuse your ever respectful and affectionate son for having neglected to write to you for some time past. You will be as angry I fear at me for the cause as for the effect, and curse those politics that have diverted me not only from my interest but from my duty. I must indeed plead guilty in great part and have only to say in return that however I may have injured myself, I have done it with the sincerest desire of doing good to others, and by her own sense and spirit and love for the honour and consistency of my character, as well as by the remembrance of her ever revered husband, I beg my dearest mother not to complain of what cannot be amended. I have never had desire of much fortune, which at best is but a temptation to evil, and if I can make an honest competence it is all I want. The friends I have made, I hope I shall not lose, and those which were not friendly, I believe I never should have made. Be thankful to God for all the blessings he has afforded you in the course of not a short life, nor account it the least

²⁴ Probably Captain Donald MacDonald, 55th Regt.

²⁵ Friday was the 25th.

of all his blessings that you have an honest, though a poor son. Thank God that he has restored Matty's health and spirits, and that your own health, at your time of life, is extraordinary, better I believe than any of your family possesses. I hear from Sam that H. Young and his sister are both in a poor state of health. I wrote to him to see if he would try air and exercise and take a trip to the capital but have not yet received any answer.

Mrs Bruce and her daughters are well and I hope the Doctor is thriving in his Academy. Ask Sam if it was he who drew up the declaration for the Friends of Reform in Belfast which I think very good, and as much superior to that in Dublin as their Whig Club is to the one here. Mrs Bruce is always glad to see me and I call there frequently. My chief houses are Dicks, Griersons, Emmets and Johnsons²⁶ at the Green, whose eldest daughter is going to be married to a Mr Turner at Dungannon, and I am sorry she is to settle out of town. At Emmets I find a family always agreeable, the son will probably be at the head of his profession, and the daughter a genteel but very distant girl. Mrs Orr asks me often. Her eldest son²⁷ is about to study law with the assistance of £100 a year from his uncle in India. He is a very fine lad.

Mrs Conyngham²⁸ gives her balls as usual, and is to have two next week at one of which she has asked me. I don't hear of anyone courting Miss Stafford²⁹ who is much admired. The only one I flirt with is a pretty little girl, Miss Fleming, but you know that I am serious in everything except being seriously in love.

I just now hear the king of France is condemned to death. Pray for his soul. Death he deserves, and all the men that have been slaughtered and are daily slaughtering in France, demand his blood. I say nothing about it in company, but I ever thought that if they did not execute the king, they murdered the nation. His death will give an ague fit to all the world, and will be the greatest lesson that was ever shown on this terrestrial scene. Pray notwithstanding for his soul.

I treated some of my friends to the wine you were so good as to send me, and they complimented it most highly. I met young Robert Stewart yesterday who accosted me very coolly, and if there be another election I should hint to you not to use your interest for him at least, though I would not against him. He is a proud aristocrat under the garb of great mildness and complaisance. The Down business went off well, and indeed my dear mother, you ought to have some pleasure in reflecting that your two sons have behaved like men of honour and virtue in the cause of their country, before others took a part in it, whatever we may lose by the event.

I had some hopes of seeing Matty or Nancy this winter but there seems no prospect of it. I really think if your strength does not allow you ever to come up, you ought to have the wish that either M or N or both should see me after so long a time. Tell Sam that Rowan and Tandy are not yet obliged to attend the court and

26 The families of Samuel Dick, merchant, George Grierson, printer, Dr Robert Emmet, and (probably) John Johnston, of Belvedere Place, Dublin.

27 Robert Orr (1770-1817), barrister, later a close friend of Drennan.

28 Anne, widow of David Conyngham of Springhill, formerly a neighbour in Belfast.

29 Probably a Conyngham connection.

that there seems much uncertainty in government about the whole business. Believe me ever your affectionate son, W DRENNAN

394 [27 January 1793]

SAM AND MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN [DUBLIN] [379]

Dear Will, I am just come from the Washington where we have fixed our annual celebration of the 30th January,³⁰ and I have read your pious letter to your mother. She too is now come round and thinks you are right in persevering in the line you have began. I believe she is saving money though she denies it and says you need not expect anything from her. She is certainly grown very stingy but you will sometime reap the advantage if getting money is one (which I doubt). Don't expect any answer from H. Young, he is very low spirited and I am sure the fear of being pressed by his sister and friends to accept your invitation has made him pocket your letter. He did not even mention it to me and when he does speak he is very free with me.

At the last meeting of our society there was a new committee of correspondence fixed with instructions to prepare an address to the people of Ulster stating what they ought to expect and without which they ought not to be satisfied. If your address does not meet the wishes of your society, I am sure it cannot be too spirited for our adoption, therefore I request a copy of it, if they don't take it as their own, perhaps some alterations to make it apply to us might be necessary. Lord Hillsborough at the Down meeting must have been greatly mortified. There were several severe things said to him. Dr Little,³¹ who was a particular friend of his lordship's at the last election, taxed him with a breach of promise, and his lordship in joke said, Doctor you are growing less. Little replied, my lord it is not to make little people less that we come here but to make great people little.

H. Joy produced the paper to the meeting, W[addell] C[unningham] in the chair. I suppose Dr B[ruce] had some hand in it; I don't think much of it, but it is a great step. Armagh it is said will be called in a few days, which will make the delegation to the provincial convention complete. Government applied to Lord C[harlemont] for his advice. His answer was that they were late, but the only chance was a reform, which might probably satisfy the North and bring parties to their old situation. Yours ever, S MCTIER

[THE REMAINDER OF THIS LETTER IS IN MARTHA'S HAND]

At Down Frank Savage was named for one of the committee – and rejected by a number of noes – five times was he proposed, and five times opposed with added warmth, when J. Crawford got up, declared he knew Mr Savage had been very active in promoting that meeting, begged that gentlemen would not waste their time upon trifles – for he could assure them they would [*sic*] matter of much importance to canvass. They to a man acceded and Savage without a negative was appointed.

30 The anniversary of the execution of Charles I.

31 Rev. Dr Joseph Little (1740-1813), of Killyleagh, Co. Down.

There was a glorious ascendancy of a plain, country gentleman, ungraced by any influence but that of private virtue and public integrity, or any rhetoric but common sense delivered with honest warmth such as every intelligent freeholder can judge and feel – such only is the oratory Ireland at present needs from her sons. That which only tinkles on the ear, or is characterised by handsome speeches, is beneath the time and a satire on the speaker it is damnable praise fit to be applied to a boy's theme only, and that boy I would not have mine.

What an insolent puppy is Lord H[illsborough] but certainly of great use at the meeting he intended to lead. There seems in everything relating to governments and all their adherents at present a kind of fatality which they are not able to resist, and which appears to make them blunder in a very uncommon manner and proceed irresistibly to their own destruction. All tis to be hoped will work for good. That some greater revolutions are to be brought about than what can be at present scanned, I have not a doubt – and that the change will be for the good of mankind I also believe. Everything seems to be changing, the very seasons – I know not but the scarcity of fuel may have some important effect. The freemasons appear splitting and if they die, change, or reform, what but Christianity will remain unshaken?

This same reform I hope will not be too easily got. There might be more reasons to wish this than merely that, if all was got I know not what we would now do for conversation. This subject has given such a zest to it of late that common occurrences are quite insipid.

Again I ask if you have read Mrs Wollstonecraft. There is another book which I read some years ago but cannot now procure – Whitaker's³² vindication of Mary [letter incomplete]

395 Monday, 28 January [17]93

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [380]

Dear Sam, Yesterday we were sitting in committee of twenty-one about a reform (in which by the bye it has been agreed, chiefly by the great eloquence of Emmet but on a division of 11 to 9 in which I was in the minority, that there should be no property qualification in voting for members, a measure which I think premature, impolitic and impracticable in the present situation of this country), as we were sitting, Dowling, a Volunteer captain who fought with Burroughs, a man six foot high and I believe a c—d, came to tell us that the Volunteer corps to which he belonged were in Ship Street Square (this is an old corps), that Aldermen Warren and James were at the gate and said if the Volunteers marched out the military would disperse them. He was instructed by the law members to answer that they were no illegal meeting, that they were an old corps recognised by the thanks of the legislature, that doing no overt act against the laws they would march out, and when he read the riot act they were then and not till then to disperse. Dowling went off and three

³² John Whitaker (1735-1808), historian, author of *Mary Queen of Scots vindicated* (1787) (DNB).

lawyers with him, and Tandy at their tail who is a great great c—d and the curse of Ireland.

Our debate went on, and in two hours McNally of the lawyers and Tandy returned, when McNally declared the dispersion was made of their own accord and by Tandy's advice. Tandy said that he had advised it in order to save confusion, that several of the Volunteers had sworn they would not give up their arms (which by the bye was not demanded) and that a full meeting of Volunteers ought to be called, for what were there were but a mouthful for the Castle, to deliberate on what was to be done. That is, after being spit in the face, you are to say, I shall consider in a week how to resent it and in the mean time put it in my pocket. Dowling nor the other two lawyers did not come back, and the other officer is Bacon a tailor, easily wrought upon. If the Volunteer honour be blasted, and if they be put down in this city, as seems now the determination, let such men answer for it. It was agreed or rather recommended individually to make the matter reparable as possible, and therefore to meet as soon as possible – this day – and have the affair terminated not in blood but by being dispersed on the reading the riot act. Rowan who was in his common dress attending at the committee, was to have a meeting of Volunteers, privates as well as officers, at eight o'clock yesterday evening, and I have not heard today anything which was done. Even Emmet who has more eloquence than energy, more counsel than action, advised a meeting today for the sake of honour. The Catholics were all in motion I believe to stop and give up the pass. McNally is to write down a full statement of the whole occurrence. The guards were drawn out in great array and have laughed exceedingly at the little trouble they had.

What is the intention of government God knows; perhaps they try their hands on the few Volunteers in this city, having previously tampered by threats or promises with their commanders. Will they try the same experiment in the north? – God forbid – but yesterday's affair might have begun a revolution. Parliament meets today and I make no doubt, in this business if brought on, will join with government. Alas for the Volunteers – I'll wager even Grattan will be against them and perhaps Tandy still honest though beshitten is his agent in this business. He slunk off from our meeting and we met him closely conferring with the Catholics and telling his story as soon as he could to everyone.

Tone, Russell, Emmet, etc., who would have flamed out about a year ago, are so entwined with Catholic trammels, they cannot act as their heart leads them. Butler's courageous spirit gives consistency to all his actions and infuses energy into the least thing he says or does. Emmet would fight a duel etc. but then his personal courage or spunk does not colour all his conduct. Hence I believe great personal courage is the best quality almost a man can possess – not merely for serving him on this or that emergence [*sic*], but for the effect it has upon every word, every gesture, every action. The one is to be waked to action – the other is ever vigilant. There is, as Mr Burke says, some difference in blood – the Mountgarret blood is heroic – Tandy, Dowling, etc., are not gentlemen – Rowan is every inch of him, body and soul.

I enclosed you our address to Ireland on Saturday night but I fear it was too late for the post. I think the *Star* ought by all means to print it, though a number of copies are printed here. It was praised by the society and the Catholics, who it is said are still uncertain about their affairs, this day or tomorrow will tell and it is needless to conjecture. Go to Dungannon or, I repeat it ten thousand times, the nation is lost. Write to me immediately by return of post, if you have anything or nothing to say – I add no more till the evening.

They agreed last night to send a deputation to Lord Charlemont laying the affair before him and demanding a review. You may guess what his answer will be. I prophesy that Rowan will take his uniform off and burn it before their faces this evening at eight if they do not meet somehow or other. It is thought government, seeing Catholic freedom and reform must be granted, want to entrap the people into some hazardous measure. The king of France was executed on Sunday at twelve o'clock, not by insurrection but according to the sentence, and Paris and [*sic*] will be at peace. I have not heard anything more and wish you good evening.

396 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [381]

Dear Sam, Lord Charlemont declined calling a review but said he would speak to Mr Hobart on the subject which he did, and Hobart referred him to the Lord Lieutenant, who told him he would not interfere with the city magistrates in the performance of their duty. The delegates from the corps again assembled and it was Rowan's opinion in which he was joined only by two others, that the corps should go out as soon as possible and have the riot act read before dispersion. They agreed to call a larger meeting of delegates and to appeal to the Volunteers of the north and south. Whitestone,³³ a lawyer of the court, was there to give a long law argument and Rowan presented Butler's opinion in contravention but it had no effect. Rowan will resign in print, and is glad to get out of a set of men who have neither the spirit nor the manners of gentlemen. Lord Charlemont and Hobart were much of the same mind, one that the Volunteers ought not to go out; the other that they must not. So they are locked up for the present, and probably will not appear unless a war calls away the garrison of the island. Grattan touched on the business with some indignation in the House but I suppose nothing more will be said about it.

All occasions are now taken to call out the military. They at present line the streets for the Lieutenant to assent to one bill, the Alien Bill. A report here today that a massacre has happened in Paris and fifty members with Egalité³⁴ killed, Arthur Macartney³⁵ traced as the author, but it goes hotly – I hope it is not true.

33 Counsellor James Whitestone.

34 Philippe, duc d'Orléans (1747-93), French revolutionary.

35 Arthur Chichester Macartney (c.1775-1843), eldest son of George Macartney, vicar of Antrim; he was at this date at Trinity College, subsequently took part in the battle of Antrim, 1798, and having served as an artillery officer, became vicar of Belfast.

I sent a dozen of our addresses by the mail coach to you, and should wish to know how you like it. I took the liberty to enclose one in a blank cover to Mrs Grattan, as some time ago she was pleased to mention my name at her table to one who happened to be a friend of mine. They are thinking to call another aggregate meeting in their city to repeat their resolutions, to thank Sheriff Hutton³⁶ (brother to Mrs Doctor Bruce), who manfully said he was ready to avow them at the bar of the House, and, as Tandy wishes, to call a national convention without the delay of intermediate provincial ones in Leinster, Munster and Connaught, and to begin the business by naming ten delegates from this city, which proceedings may be confirmed and followed up by a recommendation to the same effect from Dungannon. Rowan's business about the *Address to the Volunteers* cannot come on before next term.³⁷ My presidency is out on Friday, and I shall be quiet, but would receive a return to the national convention. I should like to have Butler again president and Emmet secretary, but Emmet will decline it for he is greater in counsel than in action – in that case, I think Tandy may be again secretary. Butler once said he would not be again in office but he was then under the influence of pique, and at present I believe wishes for it. Tandy is not well – he lives an irregular life.

You see Black's harangue at Derry – is it not plain that he and the dissenting clergy are gagged? They are really and truly pensioned, and not one here wishes to speak on any public subject – such is money and such are men. I heard from my mother this day. The horror excited here by Louis' fate is amazing, particularly among the women: It is done much with the design of making a war popular, and if it take place, I prophesy the downfall of Britain. Spain and Holland will fall into the vortex of France and the centre of Europe will convert the rest. There will not be a monarchy in Europe in thirty years – and these poor soldiers who have now been waiting for two hours under the rain for the shadow of majesty will have some nobler duty to perform.

I wish Lord Charlemont were outed from the Volunteers and Rowan made their general – it is a place suited to him and he to it. Tell my mother, that I go by the name of the Gentle Jacobin in some families, but the general hate and detest me. Ponsonby reprobated most violently the Belfast *Star* for making use of the terms 'our French brethren'. Burke's spirit now rages through all meetings from parliament down.

397 30 January [1793]

SAM AND MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, DUBLIN [382]

Dear Will, The mail is generally so late coming in and I lie so long in the morning that it is but seldom that I can answer yours by return of the post. We look with great anxiety for news from the capital now every day and I request that you may write to me as often as you can.

³⁶ Henry Hutton (1754-1808), lord mayor of Dublin 1803-04.

³⁷ He was being prosecuted for distributing it.

Your goldsmiths³⁸ disgrace us, such an attempt here might be dreadful, I do think that if there were any scuffle to happen between the military and the Volunteers we would have in this town from the country in less than forty-eight hours not less than ten thousand men armed with such weapons as they could get. A great many of them would be very well armed. Tell Mr Rowan I am much obliged to him for his letter. Our regiment makes its first appearance on Sunday next. They are to go to hear Mr Vance.

You need not fear a Dungannon meeting. Every county in this province have now chosen delegates or appointed meetings for that purpose, except Armagh, and we are told there will be in a few days a call of that county also. Can't you spurn [*sic*] on the other province[s]? I think your committee should do something in this business. Since I wrote the above I have heard at our meeting of the day that the parishes of Armagh are taking up the matter and that there is not to be a county meeting. If any attack be made on our V[olunteer]s with legal authority they will be amenable to the law, but to no other authority on earth will they submit. I received a letter this evening from our friend and one he appears to me that I would wish to grapple to my heart. Tis past twelve and I must take a smoke. Ever yours

[REST OF THE LETTER IN MARTHA'S HAND]

Sam is just returned from the annual meeting of the Washington on the 30th of January – it was very thin – no wonder. Do you think the King of England will still keep the title of King of France? A packet of the addresses to Ireland came safe this night. It is thought good but too long. Neilson is to put it in the *Star*, but few will read it through.

I wish you would adopt the mercantile form of saying I received yours of such a date, for it is very seldom I can be sure you receive my letters and this is very unpleasant. I would be glad also that you followed the same authority in reading a letter before you answer it.

You would choose to hear that my mother received your last dutiful epistle with much pleasure – but declared she has nothing to say by way of answer. I wanted to convince her that a set of very fine handsome shirts would be as expressive an answer in several respects as your letter could receive – but to the devil a one was her reply – and an enumeration of all she had paid Nancy Drennan on your account. I dare not trust myself on any political subject this night. Yesterday I discussed fifty with Dr Bruce and afterwards with R[ainey] Maxwell and as I told the former I never now could meet him but at the pulpit or the card table, I took the opportunity of discussing a variety of subjects – at which he seemed not well to know whether to laugh or look grave. I really think I rallied him pretty successfully. I had many little anecdotes since my last but I know not in what situation you may be in at present – for I see clearly you are at the mercy of some printer and I am sorry it is in the power of any man to hurt you by telling truth.

38 The Goldsmiths Corps.

398 1 February [17]93

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [383-4]

Dear Sam, Hobart offered to take in the Catholic petition and do his best to get as much as he could. They refused it. Their term in the address to the House is an admission into all the rights and privileges of the constitution, which they use because it was the expression in their petition to the King and it supposes the total abolition of the penal code, though in measured and respectful language. If they have no message from Hobart this day (Friday) they are to present their petition to the opposition and leave it to them to choose who shall bring it in. Tomorrow is their day.

Keogh told me that the minister of England has expressed his dislike at their amity with the Northerns, and every means will be used to break them off from their alliance. Certain it is the Volunteer part of the Catholics are completely locked up in speech and action. It is said to have been agreed in council yesterday that the Volunteers are to be put down. A warm debate in the House last night from which the audience was excluded on Lord Edward Fitzgerald,³⁹ husband to Pamela Egalité, saying that the majority of that House and the Lieutenant were the worst subjects the King had. Our society was belaboured. Hobart read part of our address I hear, but as the gallery was driven out, I cannot yet know the circumstances. I received yours of the 30th ult, this morning. I have not yet seen Rowan but shall at dinner time. Let Matty write often and long. No letters I am convinced are ever stopped. Let her say as she will, our last address is good and it must necessarily be long as it enters into a justification of our society. I could not see Miss Stafford this morning but shall tomorrow. I know not whether the aggregate meeting will take place here or not. The House was cleared on Fitzgerald's expression, and it is said he refused to ask pardon. The House was in a flame – and it is not known today whether he is to do it this evening or not. His brother the Duke⁴⁰ and the opposition will it is likely prevail on him. Tandy says he is an honest hearted fine fellow and not easily moved, greatly irritated as he must be by having been deprived of his commission. It is not unlikely that he and his elegant wife will lead the fashion of politics in a short time, if he stays here. Someone said that Hobart read our *Address to the Volunteers* with due emphasis and discretion, and the Chancellor in the Lords expatiated much on the foolish hand-bill of Dowling dated the last year of slavery and first of liberty.

I imagine the heads of the Catholics are not certain whether at present the North does their cause most good or injury, but I believe that they will in no case desert their friends, however they may negotiate. I hope so and indeed believe so. W. T. Jones is here living at an inn, a night house next almost to a bad house, with his room in the strangest anarchy that was ever seen; he curses and confounds the French, because he thinks this the Catholic opinion which it too generally is; he

39 Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1763-98), United Irishman and rebel (*DNB*); his wife Pamela (1776?-1831), was believed to be an illegitimate daughter of the duc d'Orléans (*DNB*).

40 Of Leinster.

talks openly of his embarrassments and his wishes for relief etc. Pollock I never see, and Jack Pollock salutes me in the old whiting [*sic*] manner.

Our committee for reform meets often and will have one out in a week, if they determine to publish it. Emmet carries all before him. His plan in principle and detail will be adopted by the committee, but there are doubts of it being sanctioned by the society. Every man in the king's legiance is according to him to have a vote. I shall perhaps send you if I can a copy of our papers, though but twenty-one were printed. Recruiting parties are every day beating through the town and hand-bills inviting all young fellows to fight against an 'insidious nation'.

I was obliged to write the enclosed in a loose sheet. G. Hamilton wrote to Rowan to tell him he was thought of as a delegate from a barony in Down, which he had declined thinking that the meeting at Dungannon would be merely formal to call a national convention. Is he right? It would be expensive. I read your letter and he assures me there is no love lost between you. The Volunteers are calling committees and thanking Whitestone for his legal advice and doing nothing else – so that Rowan [——] right to resign in respectful terms. The house all beset [- Fitzg]erald but he was firm not to ask pardon – He was a [——] cut. Rowan called at Leinster House, left his ticket for Lord Edward, and added a freeholder of the county of Kildare, telling the servant he had not the honour of being acquainted with Lord Edward but he would understand his card. Lord Edward was very firm in the House. He said he was sorry he did not understand the rules of the House, but no more would he say. The opposition crowded round him, requested him to explain farther, and some in speaking wanted to explain his words. No – says he – those were not my words. The Speaker sent for the Chief Baron but all would not do, after two hours debate, and it is said the Duke said on going out, by God he shall not ask pardon. How it is going at present, I cannot say, but I suppose he will cry *peccavi*.⁴¹ WD

399 1 January [*recte* February] [1793]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [385]

My dear Will desires Sam to write, though he has little to say. This, both from want of time and inclination, is not so easy to him as to me, and as your desire seems to intimate that even trifles, of a certain kind, may now be interesting or the occasion of what is, I shall try to recollect any occurrences of that description which you may not have heard. One of these, was an attack made upon C[unningham] Greg, and a Mr Willcocks from America, which from prudential reasons was not put into the papers. They were walking out to dinner, at Will Sinclair's at Lillyput, on a Sunday. At the top of Donegall Street a man seemingly drunk came up, swearing and rude, saying, it was hard he could not be received as a Volunteer. Greg replied that by his present appearance on such a time and such a day, he supposed he was an unfit person. The gentlemen walked on and after they were past the houses in Mud Row,

41 I have sinned.

this man with three others came behind them, knocked them down, beat them severely, and to save their lives, fixed their dependence on a pair of nimble heels, which helped them off completely dirtied and well beat. Greg had a thumb put out of joint, and the American, who was very handsome and had remarkable fine teeth, was so terrified with the idea of losing any of them that he lay on his face in a soft dung hill and bore a back beating.

Some days before this, a party of very low fellows had been somehow got into the barrack, there they received drink and money, and issued forth, under the appellation of royalists, and denouncing damnation to the Volunteers, a term by the bye, that seems to be creeping too fast into fashion among their betters, for an enlightened age. The construction therefore that was put on this transaction was, that it was some of these honourable supports of government that attacked C. Greg, mistaking him for Will Sinclair, and as the general belief is that there are traps laid to provoke the people to some real or pretended outrage, it was thought prudent not to take any very public notice of this affair.

We happened to be of a party with Lady Har[riet] Skeffington⁴² and the Bristows, the night the account came of the execution of Louis.⁴³ It was a trying night, but as all joined in pity, though not in execration, with the pastor and his lady, who with great ease and relief to their troubled minds placed the monarch in heaven and his subjects in hell, all in regard to the French went off wonderfully well – but Mr Jordan⁴⁴ having made some slight observation on the impropriety of officers taking men into a barrack on political matters, Mr Bristow, sore galled before, and not meeting with any opposition by which he could clear himself of the load that was on his mind, started all at once into the most violent and unprovoked passion I ever was a witness to in company – thinking, I suppose, that Jordan, as a young man rather in a depressed situation, would be easily silenced. With rage sparkling in his eyes, and a voice faltering with emotion, he demanded, and by a clenched fist knocked down on the table, so as to make us all start – If men were not to declare their loyalty – Certainly, but not in a barrack – What were there particular places for men to be loyal and profess it? – Yes – What were they? – He need hardly tell the sovereign of Belfast that corporations know them – there was a town house and to loyal people it would be open – And must a set of men be condemned for declaring loyalty in a barrack? – For being smuggled there in a corner, for that kind of loyalty procured by drink and money, a sort of it new here – no town in his majesty's dominions was more loyal than Belfast, they declared it now and on every proper occasion, but they were not smuggled into a barrack for that purpose.

But it is needless to mince the matter Mr B[ristow], Jordan added, with a coolness and composure that through the whole did him great credit, – these men were hired to assassinate the Volunteers and they declared that to be their intent. I deny that these men were loyal, the[y] are drunken vagabonds, who rather than work

42 Lady Harriet Skeffington (d.1831), daughter of the 1st Earl of Roden, wife of Chichester Skeffington, later Countess of Massereene, noted for her philanthropic works.

43 Louis XVI was executed on 21 January 1793.

44 Francis Jordan, sugar refiner and United Irishman, later settled in Liverpool.

chose to accept of money at the barracks, saying they had lost their work on account of their loyalty – this you know to be a lie, as there is not a person in Belfast would turn off any servant for a difference of opinion, either in religion or politics, and that the introduction of the term Loyalists here was a new and invidious one, which might occasion animosity here for years. Bristow hung on the word loyalty. Jordan maintained that of Belfast – but that it was to the whole constitution not any wooden part of it. B[ristow] told him he thought such sentiments could only come from a bad citizen. Even this did not provoke J[ordan] who owned to be an obscure one – but that he would give his sentiments.

The new raised levies go to Vance's meeting on Sunday and it is expected they will be strong. They have recovered the musical instruments which belonged to the concert and are to have a band – it has a good effect.

Wednesday Mr Kingsmill⁴⁵ called on J. Holmes, told him there was information on oath of arms being concealed in [his] country house and begged as a gentleman h[e would allow] him to search as he requested it in B[——]. Holmes allowed him but swore by the A[lmighty] if he had not asked leave and done it, he would have [blown] out his brains.

400 Saturday morn

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [386]

Dear Sam, You will see that opposition had joined the cry against the new Volunteers or rather as the truth is the conspiracy against both old and new. Mr Grattan was severe on the foppery of using the French manner of writing and against the insolence, disaffection and seditious tendency of the counter proclamation issued by the United Irishmen – Ponsonby too as violent as the Attorney General. This is pretty pre-judgment, to prejudice and pervert the minds of the jury. Duke of Leinster said the proclamation was pointed at Rowan, a man who was much esteemed in the county of Kildare, but whom he thought wrong in many things and rather an enthusiast than a man meaning ill. Dowling's call of the Goldsmiths Corps was certainly very foolish, and this with one or two devices of which I know none that could give umbrage but the harp without the crown, which had been in use in many corps before and of old, and I believe still is in use, this and this only has produced these proclamations and addresses to Lord Lieutenant etc., all evidently in my mind to keep down the people, to frighten them, and to stave off reform – and to make a war popular. The execution of Louis co-operates with their purpose. How the North will be treated Mr Hobart best knows. He said but two meetings happened here of the Volunteers so insignificant in numbers as to be disregarded, but the Volunteers on Sunday sennight amounted to thirty. Well – if the North can produce more than thirty, they will probably receive his mandamus. No, the truth is they are strong and will not yet be noticed, but they will be acted upon by every indirect means.

45 Edward Kingsmill, JP and Burgess of Belfast.

Butler is made again president of our society, Oliver Bond⁴⁶ secretary. Rowan was eager to have another president not to monopolise the chair. They made me a very complimentary resolution which is customary on going out, and Rowan another. I should not object to its being published, but that is not the custom. Matty says, I am in the power of the printer, and is not Rowan etc. etc. in the same way. I signed my name to a desire to him (the printer) to publish the resolutions and so did Rowan. Fitzgerald at last made no further apology than he said he would at first – to express sorrow for not having understood the orders and regulations of the House.

I went to Rowan's this morning. On my coming into the hall, he happened to come out to see who it was, and then told me that Lord E[dward] Fitzgerald had just that moment come into him and asked me pressing, would I come in. I tell him I would rather go into the other parlour and read the papers. He then went in and returned in a minute to tell me that he had wished of all things to introduce me as his friend to his lordship, but that I had gone off on business and he wished to call me back. His lordship was very desirous he should and accordingly he came in to me, I went in and we remained more than an hour together. He was as plain and familiar in his manners as in his dress – entered into many topics indeed – not too talkative – seems honest – zealous – and a republican – all his thoughts bend to France – uncautious – unreserved – wished to know much of the North – was but half satisfied at our mutual declaration of its avowed coincidence with King, Lords and Commons, though another party was making its way and the tacit opinion might be otherwise, yet the majority were for the constitution reformed. He said that Paine had nearly a design to come over here. We thought at present he would do more harm than good. He said there would be a war – Chauvelin⁴⁷ had assured him there would and if there was there would be a landing. We hoped that parliament would intercept that by giving that reform which would satisfy the people. He said they would never please the people and it was impossible they could. In short, my dear Sam, and I request that you may reveal this to no creature but Matty, I believe he is a noble emissary from France – but an incautious one and I fear he will be entrapped by some of our state inquisitors, however as the Leinster family are by nature capricious, he may probably be soon diluted here. He talks with enthusiasm of the convention.

Robert Stewart railed against it in the House till he lashed himself into a passion. Do the North know how he is going on? Fitzgerald on going away wished to see Rowan and, *en ceremonie*, me also, which I bowed to as a compliment of course. Leinster and Charlemont shed tears over him to get an apology, but could not do much. Grattan declared in the House that if there was a national convention it would be the end of all established government and opposition will exert themselves against it – hence I was warn [-] Tandy to get another aggregate to re-assert their former resolution, [to] call a national convention, appoint ten men from this city, rescue [the] honour of the metropolis, impel the other provinces and immortalise

46 Oliver Bond (1760?-98), United Irishman (*DNB*).

47 Bernard François, marquis de Chauvelin (1766-1832), French minister.

themselves. I have some notion the lure of being delegates will take, and that his friends in the city will coincide in requiring the sheriff to call the meeting. I much fear influence from Dublin will water down the Dungannon meeting – the delegates will be one sort of men in their parishes and another at Dungannon. They should do nothing but call a national convention, the dread and horror of government and of opposition. The Catholic question is put off till Monday and the reform gives place to it. The people are a dun and desired today to call tomorrow and then they will be told when to call again. WD

401 Sunday night

SAM MCTIER AND MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [386A]

Our Volunteers have been out this day in uniform and side arms, the Regiment Green marched to church to hear Bryson, their numbers above two hundred though a very bad day, the Blue Battalion went to hear Vance, they were not quite an hundred, but is very lately they determined on their uniform. There has not been any attempt yet to seize our cannon, but it is expected every day and also a search for gun powder etc. When they make it I don't believe they will be much gratified for I fancy they will not find any cannon and but little military stores. We are perfectly quiet here and on very good terms with the military, from General White⁴⁸ down to the privates. I spent an evening with the general and his aide de camp at Bristow's, they seem very quiet, I am told he says he has eight regiments that he can bring together here on very short notice with a suitable train of artillery. What would this paltry force signify, were the people of this country inclined to an insurrection, triple the number would not avail, no nor twice that number, and yet there is not a town near this where troops are quartered that they are not in some measure under military government.

In Lisburn the privates make their quarters good, two were sent to David Wilson at the mill, he offered them half a guinea per week and to provide themselves, which they refused and went away; soon after an officer returned with them and two others and showed the four into Mr Wilson's best bedchamber and bade them make that their quarters, the four refused a guinea per week; every day we have fresh accounts of such things happening in the neighbouring towns, many of them no doubt false and others greatly exaggerated. I believe the one I have related. Notwithstanding all these things and every measure of government to provoke an insurrection among the people, they are determined to keep quiet and wait for a more favourable opportunity to asserting their right to be represented in the C H.⁴⁹ Their strong measures will bring it about for they are uniting the people and when they are united from north to south, the secret comm[ittee], gunpowder acts, and military force will not be able to resist the voice of the people. They must, they will be heard.

⁴⁸ Major General Richard Whyte (d.1807), deputy commander in chief in Ireland.

⁴⁹ ? Commons House.

I have proposed to several of the Volunteer corps to get wooden guns and to turn out and exercise with them, and learn their discipline and go on increasing their numbers. What will these things come to or where will they end? Write soon and write often, we look to the capital, you look to us, but that is looking down. I leave this open till the post comes in.

The post is come in and no letter and I am just come from the Washington, where the from time to time men are more violent than any others. We must wait, we must persevere and we will be represented. I am sorry to hear so many principal people here talk seriously of emigrating. Were I younger I would certainly join them, old as I am if many go I'll be with them, but I would rather see the country emancipated from placemen, pensioners, hired slaves and English thralldom, from all which Good Lord delivers us. Yours ever

I say again write and why did not you send me one of the last papers from the s[ociety]?

[IN MARTHA MCTIER'S HAND]

Why don't you write to Rainey Maxwell? I am sure your not answering him will be a mortification he does not deserve. You perhaps do not approve of his sentiments but that is no reason. He is an honest, sensible, curious, news-loving man – and to such, the times surely [—] much letter matter – besides, he is my friend.

Last night, after reading your Friday's letter, I fell a little into the horrors – it was a great storm – and at the solemn hour of twelve, I painted you sitting in a solitary lodging, without relation or friend, perhaps at that moment the victim of malice or party. I still fear there is a paper in that printer's hand, which he refused to give, and why, I know not. Oh! be guarded, do not be your own enemy and I would not fear much from others – for I do not think it likely that those who know you will be so, may not William Tell be one. A countryman who came into a shop yesterday was asked if he was a Volunteer, he said he was. He was told his gun would be now taken from him and what would he do. Well replied the fellow, she has been my companion these sixteen years and it shall not be the first man that will take her from me. I repeat Sam's request that you will write very often. Strange times, to be anxious every night for news and yet expect no good. Take care that even the cause of persecuted friends does not put you off your guard nor make your pen your enemy.

402 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [387]

Dear Sam, I imagine Rowan has mentioned to you and Matty has taken alarm about the printers having me in his power. The affair as far as I can gather is this – McDonnell⁵⁰ the printer refused to print the resolutions relative to our intention to prosecute the members of administration who could be convicted of a sale of peerage if Ponsonby and Curran would produce the evidence in a court of law, which

50 Thomas McDonnell, United Irishman, printer and proprietor of the *Hibernian Journal*.

they said they were ready to produce before parliament. Dowling called on me, first, as president, to desire my signature to empower McDonnel to print them which I gave in the presence of my friend Chambers, and Dowling I believe added Rowan's name of his own accord. I don't know what made Rowan etc. wish to have this from McDonnel, but I heard that Rowan and McNally went to him with a design expressed to each other of getting them from him, and McNally desired to speak to McDonnel in private, but it would not do. Now to the great surprise of Butler, Rowan and Emmet, it appears by the declaration of McDonnel, that in this private conference McNally had positively advised him not to give up the authority as it was the only security he possessed. This you may be sure has forfeited McNally's confidence in our society and Emmet was inclined to denounce him to the society, but all this is over-blown and the affair is quite over – nor do I believe there was any danger in it, any way.

Lord Edward Fitzgerald called on me this morning but I happened not to be at home. This I suppose has been done by Rowan's friendship. I shall return the visit soon as respect requires, but I must be on my guard without seeming to be so. Were I not sure they did not open letters, I think it would be best not to say anything about this great and I am much inclined to say good man. He entertained us when I met him at Rowan's, with an account of Dumouriez's behaviour at Jemappes. He ordered the music of all the battalions to be collected at the head of each, to begin the Ça ira and that the army should follow his voice and sing it, which was done for eight to ten minutes before the attack on the entrenchments. He then stripped off his coat and waistcoat and led his battalions on to the entrenchments, and when he was got to them, his valet Baptiste took the lead of his master and was the first man who grappled with the enemy. The reception of that servant by the convention was by no means ludicrous, and the embrace of the president, amidst the joy occasioned by the victory and the acclamations of the members and audience, was the sublimest spectacle he had ever experienced since he came upon this earth.

Rowan is much at present for raising a corps of gentlemen Volunteers to give a compliment to Fitzgerald. I doubt whether he will get it, but he will try. He wants Charlemont out, but not that he should seem to put him out. The horror against the French is not however worn off sufficiently to relish this, to relish even the term convention. I doubt the Volunteers are here so degraded that no gentlemen will be got to join in a corps, but Rowan will try as he has evidently fallen in love with Fitzgerald. I called the next day on him but he was not at home. I am to dine with him and his lady tomorrow – Wednesday – at Rowan's.

I received Matty's last letter, and read it to Rowan, who has been often liable to entrapment from soldiers coming to him and pretending disaffection, to none of which he would listen. It is shrewdly suspected some higher men were at the bottom, even our friend Jack Pollock.

The Catholic petition was brought in by Hobart, and met their wishes in almost all things. The restrictions are said to be seats in parliament, on the bench and at

the revenue board. It was only leave to bring in the bill and few spoke except Dr Duigenan⁵¹ three hours against indulgence, and Ogle and Burton Conyngham⁵² – the grand artillery not come out. You will see a curious letter of Lord Shannon to the madman Lord G[eorge] Gordon.⁵³ Our party tomorrow is to be those I mentioned, Wogan Browne⁵⁴ and his lady, and Walter Blake Kirwan – as I cannot speak French I shall be excused for my silence.

The French will get the Turks on their side to a certainty. All Europe will ch[——] but here and in Scotland the liberty of the press is gagged more than ever. In Scotland, there are sixty indictments out for publications as innocent as the Lord's Prayer – and they are under courts that would force a jury (who are packed by the sheriff) to bring in Abel guilty of the murder of Cain, and Jesus Christ of that of Pontius Pilate. Fox's Letter to Westminster is much talked of, but not yet arrived. Rowan said he would send papers to you about the Volunteers. I expected a letter this day but did not receive any, since Matty's of the first.

Take care that the convention at Dungannon may represent the spirit of the people and not be wrought on to forget their duty by influence from this. I see no reason that should make the county members, as ex-officio, a part of it. If the Catholics should be called off by Hobart, we are gone. Let us suppose the worst, to remedy it if it does happen – Write.

I request you will get Neilson to publish in his paper extracts from Arthur Young's⁵⁵ Tour through France, and in the first place his last chapter on the revolution – it is full of genuine information.

403 8 January 1793 [but postmark February]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [388]

At twelve o'clock on Tuesday night, Sam has brought home some news from Ballynahinch meeting and as I wish to give you an early account of anything interesting I will take a little off sleep at present for that purpose, and put off some other matter of which I was full charged in answer to your last, which will demand more time and a sheet for that purpose.

Well then – the meeting was very numerous, Mr Ford junior in the chair, and as usual, the gentry kept the people waiting till two o'clock before he took it. The delegates from the parishes were desired to retire and choose three delegates for their barony, which as well as I can recollect were the following: Pat Savage,⁵⁶ Dr Dickson, Mat Ford, J. Crawford, Gawen Hamilton, John Gordon,⁵⁷ A. Stewart, Eldred Pottinger – I believe, Joe Pollock and Boyle Moody – Rankin, etc. etc. There was

51 Patrick Duigenan (1735-1816), barrister, MP, strongly opposed to Catholic emancipation (*DNB*).

52 William Burton Conyngham (d.1796), MP, teller of the exchequer and privy councillor.

53 Lord George Gordon (1751-93), political agitator, died in Newgate later in 1793 (*DNB*).

54 Wogan Browne, member of a landed family in Co. Kildare.

55 Arthur Young (1741-1820), agriculturalist, author of *Travels in France* (1792) (*DNB*).

56 Probably Patrick Savage of Portaferry (d.1797).

57 John Crawford Gordon (d.1797), of Florida Manor, Co. Down.

little debate for all passed unanimously but Savage spoke the most and said they ought not to leave the convention till they turned these rascals out of the House. Someone moved that Robert Stewart should be added to attend the meeting at Dungannon, if it did not interfere with his duty in parliament, and Dickson moved that Lord Hillsborough should also be nominated to attend the convention, provided it did not prevent his attendance in parliament. The first motion was carried, the last was not seconded.

Jack Crawford called here yesterday morning before he went to Ballynahinch, eager for news of the Dublin Volunteers. Sam was not at home and I supplied his place as well as I could. He flew off in great indignation saying that between the hot headed and the luke warm the nation would be lost, and reprobating the Dublin Volunteers. He wished much to know Mr Rowan's reasons for resigning, which I gave as I remembered, but Sam thinking it might be right that he and the rest of the meeting should be fully informed, sent Mr Rowan's written account of the transaction to Mr Crawford with an injunction of having it returned to him. I told J.C. that Dr Haliday had received a letter from Lord Charlemont in which he says that for some time past he and the Goldsmiths Corps had not been on good terms, owing to their having refused to march round the statue of King William the 4th of November, but that now he had settled all matters between them and administration. I advised him therefore to go to the Doctor and procure a sight of this letter from the fountain head. His reply was, that he had seen that letter and that he was as much in the dark as ever.

Sam had it once in his head to go to Ballynahinch to judge of the temper there and to get Mr Crawford to propose you as a delegate, but changed his mind. He wishes much for the paper you promised him. Don't you think there was some odd matter in the last *Star*? Kersaint's⁵⁸ speech was certainly not wrote nor spoke in France – it was a most artful paper and if there are French incendiaries here, one of them wrote it. The most obnoxious man now here is Kelburn, many gave this paper to him – he certainly is a hypocritical little spitfire. There was also one of the papers on the British constitution in Joy's last, that struck me as being very well wrote, particularly to convince and please the lower ranks. Sam thought of getting the U[nited] Irishmen to reprint it for the use of the country people, but Joy was the printer and Bruce supposed to be the author and it would not do – Bruce denied this – yet I firmly believe he is the author. Poor fellow, he has some how got into strange trammels but in this on the Volunteers he spoke his true sentiments. He is not well, a bad cough, vomits blood and has got a complaint in his knee. His father had the same. Don't take any notice of this.

Miss Apsley⁵⁹ lies at the point of death. She this day sent for her uncle to tell him she knew she was dying but her father did not, and to request he might inform him of the truth, with tenderness. She takes leave of the world in the prime of life, admired and with as much fortitude as Louis, yet will not be noticed as any way great.

58 Comte de Kersaint (1742-93), French sailor and politician.

59 Daughter of Dr Robert Apsley, died February 1793.

404 8 January 1793 [postmark 8 February]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DUBLIN, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [388A]

I received Matty's account of the Ballynahinch meeting this morning. She says she wrote it on Tuesday night. I am half disappointed at not being returned to Dungannon though I believe I should not have gone. The times might give me courage to speak, and sincere intention would supply deficiency in oratory. I dined with Lord and Lady Edward F[itgerald] at Rowan's – a very select party – three ladies – Wogan Browne, Kirwan and I were the only men. We were all easy and familiar. She is a pleasing, interesting little girl, with enthusiasm of eye, manner and mind, and at times accompanied with energy of gesture which is pleasing in her feminine size and form. She exclaims much but her Ah and Os seem all sincerity, and as she said of Mirabeau when some one doubted of his patriotism, O! he was a patriot, from the very bottom of his soul. Her husband evidently dotes on her. We had all our share of the conversation which was chiefly in English, with her in French, but I imagine she understands English sufficiently. At tea-time I was rallying Mr Browne for speaking so well etc., and for acting so little, and I spoke a good deal with energy. She was much pleased and spoke to Lord Edward once or twice as if translating for him. They stayed till ten and went off. Rowan dined with them yesterday being asked just at dinner-time. Her dress was just as here; they say she was received well by the Duke, but the ladies here will do everything to discredit her.

A bill is brought in to prevent the exportation or the passing of arms through the country or harbouring them, or any quantity of gunpowder, which will bear hard on the Volunteers. Rowan is still a private in his corps, I fancy by the advice of Fitzgerald. The Volunteers are still meeting in committees. One corps it is said will parade on Sunday sennight.

The Catholics are still kept suspended – about all but, or all – Grattan thinks they ought to ask for everything or nothing and that now is their only time to get it. They had a conference with Hobart today who began with detailing all they were to get. They told him they wished rather he would specify what he intended to refuse, and they added that their instructions went to complete equality with other of his majesty's subjects and that they could not swerve from them, upon which he desired some days to consider about it and thus again it hangs. Some of the Catholic delegates affect to be warm, but I imagine they are really pretty well satisfied, and yet however wish perhaps to strike their iron while it is hot. They want our society to re-assert our attachment to King, Lords and Commons, as if our principles were still doubted.

I am surprised you think Kersaint's speech Irish manufacture. It was really in the French papers and much more – and many better papers as La Croix'⁶⁰ statement of the defence of the nation. I am convinced that if any one would translate the French *Moniteur*⁶¹ *verbatim* and *celeratim*⁶² he would make his own fortune, and convert the

60 Presumably Charles Delacroix (1741-1805), foreign minister under the Directory.

61 French newspaper.

62 Swiftly.

public mind totally. Their debates about the king etc. are circumstantial to a degree, and our garbled extracts are most shameful indeed. The gunsmiths here petition against this last bill which I should imagine will surprise the north.

I think their first business should be at Dungannon to have prayer every day by ministers in turn. I think they should enter immediately into a solemn declaration of adherence to the cause of reform until obtained. I think they should draw up a few simple comprehensive principles relative to the rights of man and of the nation. I think they should recommend to the nation to wait the event of the session, but if it does not agree to a radical reform that then a national convention is a final measure and a necessary one. I think they should proceed so far as to appoint provisional representatives from Ulster for that national meeting and should specify the very time after the session when it might become necessary for it to sit. This would save the trouble of another meeting of the province. I think that at all events they should appoint a permanent executive committee with powers to call them together again and powers to forward the measure of reform, and this committee should sit in Dublin. I think any address to the King should follow and not precede the great business of the meeting – if it comes first the tone of the meeting will be decidedly flat. I think they should declare against a war (if they be in time), against a militia, and in favour of the Volunteers. If they will do all this they will do well – but they will be worked on and I believe some of their delegates are wrought on already.

I met a Miss Fulton⁶³ at Camac's with whom I had some Belfast conversation. Camac lives in the house formerly Whaley's⁶⁴ or Mrs Richardson's, and by a strange turn I have still a footing there as Mrs Lane is sister to Camac⁶⁵ and her husband is civil to me since my attendance on her near Newry. I suppose I shall still be employed there but the outcry raised against me and all our set must hurt me. Let Sam or you tell me what is meant to be done at Dungannon. I think the delegates in general moderate men and will scarcely come up to their constituents. WD

Robert Stewart will be the shadow of Burke against France. I declare it to you once for all that government and opposition mean to put down the Volunteers and the people – that the Volunteers here and that the city is completely put down – that another meeting cannot be held: that every man is watched as by an inquisition – that the nation is gone if Dungannon does not facilitate a national convention – and remember I say it Friday the 8th of January 1793.⁶⁶

405 8 February

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [389]

In my last discourse, I took occasion to notice the peeping-out spirit of the county of Down, and upon that head at present, I shall only observe that two days before

63 Presumably a Fulton of Lisburn, as they were cousins to the Camacs (*LGI*, pp 251-2).

64 Buck Whaley, author of celebrated memoirs (Edward Sullivan (ed.), *Buck Whaley's memoirs* (London, 1906)); his mother had re-married John Richardson, MP for Coleraine.

65 Turner Camac, brother of Nabob Jacob Camac who died in 1784.

66 However, the postmark is 8 February.

the last meeting the majority of the gentlemen whose names you now see as delegates were violent against a Dungannon meeting, and that bringing them over to it, by the spirited and rational arguments of J. Crawford, was the occasion of the people being kept waiting. Some might say – no matter – we do not want gentlemen – but such a list of men, independent in fortune, constant residents in such a county, of good character and never before in the cause of the people, will in my opinion strike a greater alarm to government than a thousand resolutions which now are unattended to, merely from their number. Another observation I would make, is that most men appear now to be trying who will get fastest forward, some to make up for lost time, others dreading not getting in at the death, and the insignificance with which a man must now be scowled at who takes no part, so that I really believe it would require more talents and address to stop the progress of reform than to complete it, and I really believe, if it is now in any danger, it's from the over zeal or rather false one of rash or designing men. Oh guard against them – let them not, by deeper designs and less benevolent hearts, take advantage of the honest enthusiasm of your own.

Victory seems to await the friends of the people. Would it not be mortifying, that after long and steady efforts they should lose that well earned honour which is their due – by any rash hot-headed measures, which in the moment of conquest would blast their laurels, and leave them to be picked up by those who now step forward in time to be called workers in the great scene. Perhaps all may not now be obtained, perhaps it is not easy to determine what that all should be – and it may not be the worse when obtained, that it has taken time to do so.

The investigation of truth, which now so much prevails, the various occurrences, particularly if there is a war, which may arise, should make the real friends of their country lie by, with cool observance – and I should think it good policy, when their contempt for parliament is so avowed, to miss no opportunity of defeating their enemies by showing what they all profess, loyalty to the King – every thing that can, is construed into want of it. I would foil them in this – and wished, that when the new regiment marched to meeting on Sunday, it had been to the tune of God save the King, instead of this they played the Lad with the White Cockade.

In Joy's last paper, there was a number of 'Thoughts on the British Constitution' relative to the Volunteers, which Sam and I agreed were excellent and particularly well adapted to men of the lowest order and to the present state of the Volunteers. He determined at the meeting of the U[nited] Irishmen to propose a number of them should be printed and distributed through the country; but it would not do – Joy was the printer, and Bruce the supposed author – the very reasons, that to minds of any delicacy, should have determined them to reprint a good paper.⁶⁷ These are the mean motives of many minds, and such can hurt a good cause. I even ventured myself to argue with some of the lads (for they are mostly such) to get the crown added to the harp on their button – but, 'they were bespoke', 'they were too small', 'they were cast', and it could not be engraven etc., etc., and thus a good cause suffers for a button and the Dublin Volunteers may rest upon it.

67 They were reprinted in 1794 in *Belfast politics*, pp 169-304.

Others I now fear dare greater strokes. For a long time, I believed there was none such, and only named as means to damn a cause. I have marked in silence and altered my opinion and now come to that part of my letter which requires a delicate hand. You, nor no one else, likes advice – yet believing from many things I have been turning in my thoughts, that you may be in a dangerous situation, for which I have better reasons that I choose to give, how can I refrain putting you on your guard? There are spirits that like to ride in the whirlwind and live in a storm, that can gild over the darkness of the brow and the sternness of the eye by a studied smile and a courtesy of manner which never reach the heart, nor come from it – men whose life has been marked by eccentricity, not of a kind to gain esteem but to mark them at any rate. With such you are united and most fervently did I hear an honest and wise man pray that with such Drennan was unconnected, a man who knew more of this friend and his general character that you do, who respects his father, but is one of many who knows and suspects the son. The cause has been hurt by his name and it is with regret I have observed that you appear often to stand alone, unfriended, at least by any I would like to name. You appear to have lost some old estimable characters and not to have replaced them. The timid and high flyers of your opponents in politics, I fear you have made detest you, more by the characters you associate with than either your own words or actions, though I fear they have dwelt too much upon republicanism, with which there is at present an association of ideas not favourable, and very different from what I remember – when Bamber, Haliday, and many New Light dissenters, made no scruple of declaring their partiality for that form of government, without its ever being supposed they had any wish to overturn their own. A concurrence of circumstances has made it different now, and I myself am one that would not like one I loved to dwell much on that theme, nor could I relish your being addressed by Isaac Corry as a king-killer, nor being called a Jacobin, though gentle was tacked to it. These ideas concerning you, joined to your being a principal in a suspected society, and master of an eloquent and bewitching pen, must make you looked upon with a suspicious eye, even by the wise and respectable, who may hear of but not know you. May those who do never form such a judgment, and I hope fortunate circumstances may arise, that will prove to all you are good and safe public character, as well as a private one.

Will the being noticed by Lord —, or being one of a junto to raise him into notice at present, serve that purpose – I fear not. He may be good, he may be great for aught I know – but he is an irritated and degraded, rash man of family, of one not famed for wisdom and connected [*sic*]. Oh beware – let not the ardour of a moment betray you into ties and promises. Keep clear of them, nor ever make yourself a ladder for other men. If you were to stop this moment (and I do not know but [it would] be well), you would have gained honour and credit for what you have done. Take care how you risk it. You love and court popularity, the way to get it is not by being too great a friend to the French in my opinion, no man in these times need conceal any fit sentiment on politics, and if they do, I would fear it, and you should not even get a habit of wishing success to a people with whom your country will probably

soon go to war, unless you would at that time be contented to become a suspected traitor. Keep as clear as possible of such, for by your company you will be judged.

I do not wish you to give up any old friend, nor yet to keep those who wish to be new ones at a distance – but if they should be of the description I mention you will require much caution and address, perhaps firmness and steady principle to steer right yourself, and if you can be the means of making others so 'twill be a blessing. I wish well to the French, but hope they nor no other power will ever come here either as umpires or assistants to gain that liberty, which if we cannot obtain for ourselves, we are not worthy of it. We have no business to meddle with the government of France and it is even greater presumption for them, young in the cause of liberty, to meddle with ours. There are family characters and national ones, and I never respected the French one. They have ever been a light, frivolous, deceitful, aspiring people and reckoned false to a proverb in their national transactions. You will say they have changed their character – true – they have of late imitated the English – but it will take time to make them a virtuous religious people, and though a poor historian, I venture to assert no nation so debauched and irreligious is fit to form a republic, the chief blessings of which I always supposed to be simplicity of manners and virtue.

I had wrote this sermon before I received your last to Sam, without date, and it does not contain any matter to make me repent what I have wrote. Why was not the sec-
retary's name at that paper, which went to McDonnell: and as it was not, he must have supposed the person's who was, to be in some danger; and therefore out of friendship to him tried to recover it – and can one man take the liberty of putting down another one's name and that other, H[amilton] R[owan]'s without his leave? I doubt it. Why does the printer keep that paper, when he refused to print it, and what does he want security for? Are you or your society safe with a member such as McNally?

Do you think a man of inferior rank, if W. T. Jones had been in Lord E.F.'s place, that he would have got off as well? No, no, and if you by word or action bring yourself in to their power, what object more unfriended, more destitute than you would be in the city of Dublin, without connection or fortune to support you – almost a stranger in the place, that could be crushed at once without a friend there to regret him. No – in a month hence the fate even of Louis will be forgot for this age till another Whitaker may perhaps prove his innocence. I know not what you could find to read in my last to Mr Rowan. This is a letter you will not like to answer but I beg it and will do better again.

The delegates of the county of Antrim corps meet at Antrim on Monday to which Sam will send Mr Rowan's paper.

406 16 February [17]93

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [390]

Dear Matty, There has been little news here more than the grand political news of war etc. We look out much for the Dungannon meeting and Rowan and Lord

Fitzgerald went down there yesterday morning, but if the meeting be to break up in a day as Russell hinted to me it would, they will probably come too late. There is not much affection here for the meeting either in the government, opposition, or Catholics, and I suppose every influence will be used to evade any determined measures and to unite this country to Britain in the war, on the old principle of standing or falling together. Grattan spoke a little bolder, it is said, on the last night, but they all seem to lie on their oars. I saw a particular account of your Volunteer meeting at Antrim and I think all was done there that should be done. The new prosecution of Tandy and Rowan is only the old one corrected as the fact of distribution could not be well established, and it is now for raising an illegal body of armed men.

I wrote a line to W. Sinclaire to inform me how things were going on at Dungannon, but I did not then know that Rowan was going. I received a letter from R. Maxwell about reform which I shall answer as soon as I can.⁶⁸ I admire Young's Tour through France as much as he does.

I have nothing to add more than that I have not heard from you since yours of the 8th and wish you to write soon. WD

407 17 February 1793

SAMUEL NEILSON AND MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [390A]

Dear Sir, Just returned from the *mons sacer*⁶⁹ I sit down (by order of Mrs McTier) to give you a short faint idea of the proceedings. Fourteen resolutions were adopted – 1st attachment to form of government, 2nd loyalty – 3rd objection to republican principles applied to Ireland – 4 Catholic emancipation, 5 approbation of the reform being taken up by parliament and warning to proceed as they regard the peace and constitution of the country – 6 necessity of reform – 7 abolition of boroughs and extension of franchise to districts in proportion to population and wealth – 7 [*sic*] pledging never to give up the idea of reform – 8 reprobating militia – 9 thanking Volunteers – 10 not to dissolve – 11 a committee to consult the other provinces on the propriety of a national convention and to call a future meeting. I forget the others. The meeting was rather led by aristocracy but the people's spirit was infused into their resolutions. Pollock behaved like an enemy and was reprobated. Dickson of Portaferry attracted the applause of all parties and gave a sort of tone to the convention. He cut Ja[me]s Dawson up most severely as a spy of government and was warmly applauded – I never heard any man express himself to more purpose. After the business of the day was over we reprobated the French war. This was opposed by seven or eight of the Down squires but warmly adopted by the meeting. Sinclaire behaved very well and his opinion seemed to have weight with the meeting. Upon the whole I think the proceedings prudent and useful though not

68 Rainey Maxwell to William Drennan, 11 February 1793 (PRONI, D/456/8).

69 Sacred mountain, i.e. Dungannon.

entirely up to my ideas. I do not recollect anything else worthy of communicating to you and leave the letter to be concluded by Mrs McTier. SAML NEILSON

We are all well, I hope you are so – and I am now too sleepy to add anything more. The first paper I suppose will give you a more particular account of the convention.

Caldwell⁷⁰ spoke a great deal rather violent, and made some of the squires smart. He laughed at their patriotism sneaking in with their recommendations of coolness – he would attend to none of them – bade them write to Dr Drennan, H. Rowan or N. Tandy, or the patriots of Belfast for advice on a subject they were ignorant of, that they had lately shown a little spirit which the people rewarded by sending them there, but that if they did not oppose a war they were not their representatives – but he would do what they desired and withdraw his motion if there could be found twenty men in that meeting for his doing so – but eight went out – he withdrew his motion for fixing a day for a national convention at the request and arguments of Sinclaire but refused doing it to the county D[own] squires – saying nothing that the town of Belfast or its members could request that would not be right to grant.

Ford gave a list of five for the committee for his county and himself one. Neiven objected to it – said Dickson was omitted and that no man was so proper. J.C.⁷¹ joined him and begged that his name should be struck out and Dickson put in his place. No, Neiven would not do that – he made the same observation to Ford – and he also declared he would rather have Mr D[’s] name than his own. Neiven took him at his word and instantly drew a stroke across his name. Pollock opposed every motion and gave much trouble. He spoke an hour and a quarter in the committee, and Dickson in twenty minutes gave him such a dressing that he did not open his lips again. He was warm for a militia as the natural and best defence for the country. He was tedious and the meeting showed they thought so, of which he complained, but was told there was no attending to tinsel after having just received bullion from the two last speakers.

It is now twelve o’clock on Sunday night and no mail come in – 160 Volunteers at mass this day – the Blue Battalion go to church next Sunday – but it’s at the play-house I fear the work will begin – there the military band will be and young Caulfield⁷² has sworn there is one tune they shall not play.

408 Friday [February 1793]⁷³

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [441]

I have just read the Dungannon resolutions and like them on the whole pretty well. They will not come up to the expectation of the public mind, yet I don’t know what

70 Dr James Caldwell of Magherafelt, United Irishman.

71 John Crawford of Crawfordsburn, Co. Down.

72 Possibly a relative of Lord Charlemont.

73 This letter is dated ‘Friday Sep’; the second word is probably in Drennan’s hand, but appears to have been added later, being in a paler ink; however it appears to be a reply to 407 above, and the fact that it was written in February is confirmed by the reference to the deaths of Mrs Hamilton and Mrs Conyngham; the mistake may have arisen because the Dungannon meetings of 1783 and 1784 both took place in September.

could have been added. I know what might have been omitted which is the latter part of the third resolution, that I think coincides with a lying rumour raised and spread by government and gives the sanction of their meeting to it. I know of no such principles as they allude to. It is certain that the soundness of the public mind has received a shock, and has fallen in for a time with the cry of government: how long this will continue I cannot say but I still say that in the interim troops will pour into the North, and opposition will be silent, and all sort of influence will be exerted, and the influence of force will be kept impending over your heads, so that it will be a difficult matter to bring the people as much up as they are at present unless some external circumstances of a favourable nature should happen.

This city I look upon as completely put down, and I question much if there be not more liberty of speech at Venice and even at Constantinople than there is here at present. The liberty of the press is put down and the liberty of speech almost as much so. The secret committee of the Lords examine merchants and tailors about the National Guards, their opinion of Paine and of the state of the North, the Defenders, etc., etc., and Jackson answered to the question, who was the instigator of the Defenders, that he believed it must be government. People are apprehended daily and dismissed, the city basin said to be poisoned with barrels of arsenic, etc. etc. In short, republicanism, rioters, revolution, Defenders, arms, the North, etc., are terms bandied about so that the artful men who have first invented calumny, are successful in not only frightening the timid but alarming the moderate and I think the country has observably lost ground, and will not gain it even by the Dungannon resolves. A day for the national convention should certainly have been named.

I was once at the House and heard much of the United Irishmen from Sir Boyle,⁷⁴ Barrington, Toler, etc., and I really believe was myself the means of bringing out a second edition of their Billingsgate – as they said, look at the United Irishmen, half pointing and looking straight at the gallery where I had an excellent seat. On the whole, I think we cannot expect much from either government or opposition, and therefore look to yourselves. Ponsonby brings in a specific resolution after the Catholic question is disposed of which will be proceed on this day, and I imagine Hobart and the Catholics are now on excellent terms and the Catholics I am persuaded will be looked to as the stay of this government.

Rowan's mother died the night of his return and it is said has left him £2,000 per annum, of which I doubt.⁷⁵ Will his increase of fortune improve his political character? I should imagine not. The House appears nearly unanimous about Hobart's bill. He may well say to the Catholics – What return am I to have for all this: I don't ask any, but you will know the return most pleasing to me and his majesty is the support of government and the constitution. As to your pledge of faith with the North, a few among you as at present may join in the cry for reform to avoid inconsistency, but I am persuaded the mass will be of a better mind. I rely upon you as a body loyal to your sovereign in the worst of times. Such will I suppose be Hobart's

⁷⁴ Sir Boyle Roche (1743-1807), MP for Tralee, Sir Jonah Barrington (1760-1834), MP for Tuam (both *DNB*).

⁷⁵ Mrs Gawen Hamilton died in Dublin, 1793.

treaty, and we shall soon [*sic*] how it will end. The debate continued till ten this morning – House crowded – the night of reform, the galleries very thin.

The Bruces are going to change their lodgings. Robert Bruce lost a cause here which will cost him 7 or £800. I hear Mrs W. Bruce was very ill. Mrs Lennox Conyngham⁷⁶ died a few days after lying in. She had three physicians but not any art could save her. [A.] Stewart of Newton, has taken a house in town – Lord Londonderry is with him, I have not called.

Our society appointed their committee to take the star chamber committee into consideration and are to report tomorrow. Our plan of reform sleeps. The Friends of the Constitution are to come out with theirs. I think the Dungannon committee will find it necessary to call the people before the end of the session unless the nation be cooled before that time. External and internal circumstances may occur which will cause this, and reform will be again evaporated in resolutions. Yours ever, WD

409 Monday, 25 February [17]93

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [327]

Dear Sam, I do not think it incumbent on the Volunteers of the North speedily to make up their mind, for as I said before, they will be put down like those who attempt to go out here. Yesterday about ten file went out in order to breakfast with their Major Ashenhurst. Carleton the police constable and Alderman James⁷⁷ met them in the street, and without reading the proclamation ordered in the riot act, attempted to wrest a firelock out of one of their hands. The Volunteers were not marching, but only going by pairs through the streets. The Volunteer on whom the attempt was made, one Black (I suppose from the north), knocked him down and James was tripped up and nearly left in the gutter. They run off to the Castle, got the picquet guard horse and foot about 200 and went after the Volunteers into the country, and purposely went by the house in which they were breakfasting. The Volunteers gobbled up their breakfast and came by pairs into town. The military came some time after with Carleton and Ja[me]s at their head both pale as death on a black horse and so the affair ended. It is said Black is to bring his action for an assault against Carleton. Nothing was done which could make them be deemed a riotous or tumultuous assembly, but an unlawful one they are made, and even papers distributed to this unlawful combination or conspiracy will be deemed libellous and perhaps felonious by a packed jury, from the terms of the riot act, though that act was made particularly directed to the Whiteboys⁷⁸ etc., under which class the Volunteers will now be ranked. Therefore, be prepared for the consequences – as I cannot suppose that they will attempt to do here what they will not do with you when they have gotten sufficient force.

76 Jane, first wife of George Lenox Conyngham of Springhill, died 20 February 1793.

77 William James, alderman and police commissioner.

78 An agrarian secret society, protesting against tithes, enclosures, etc.

Rowan is in high dudgeon and seems on the plan of quitting Ireland. The Catholics are minding their own business and that alone at least for the present.

The Lord Lieutenant has gone to parliament this day to give the royal assent, I suppose, to the Gunpowder Act which will make a new law against the Volunteers.

Our society has made a report chiefly legal but very sensible against the secret committee which will certainly vex them and draw down their indignation on Butler and Bond. One of our new members used the terms 'citizen president', for which I found fault, and Emmet at great length completely showed the impropriety of adopting such new appellations, as inconsistent with our professed creed. Rumours here daily of what is going on in the North and I am surprised at not hearing from you either this day or last week. Tandy etc. are mute and at present the city is put down. Tell Matty I am neither writing nor even speaking much at present. I see an impending storm – I see an array of men against each other and I feel a somewhat of panic before a battle which I fear is going to begin – God save the right. Yours ever

But in the meantime I go to a ball.

410 27 February

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME ST, DUBLIN [391A]

My letters either miscarry or you will not notice them, either of which is so disagreeable that I do not feel the wonted pleasure in writing. The Sunday after the Dungannon meeting, Sam asked Neilson here, in order to get an early account of what passed there, and as I thought it would reach you before the papers, I prevailed on him to write you the resolutions, and after twelve o'clock at night (as our post now goes out early in the morning) almost blinded myself, adding all the little occurrences I could learn relative to the meeting. This letter went off Monday the [1]8th, yet you say you did not hear from this. Last week the one before, I also wrote so long and particular a letter that I thought to something in it you would have replied. The cautions in it may have offended you, yet such are the times that I cannot repent giving them. So strangely are causes, interests, and sentiments, fears and dangers, blended and effected [*sic*] by each other at present, that I would think it hard for the man of honour and political integrity to know how to steer, and much do I fear greater trials yet await them.

I pity the Volunteers, called on by the most respectable of their countrymen to continue those efforts from which nothing but good was the consequence, for which it is natural for our young men (at least in the North) to run that race so honourable to their sentiments, yet spurned and degraded by a base, cruel and powerful administration, and endangered by every attempt to answer the call of their country, meeting with scorn and contempt, which requires more prudence than youth and spirit generally possess to ward off the most serious evils – now, desired not even to exercise, yet if an enemy should appear and they were not to turn out, I'll answer for it, they would be stigmatised as cowards.

I pity the military also. I sat in the box with three officers at the opening of our elegant new theatre on Monday, who appeared as if they were sent to Coventry. God save the King was the first tune, the officers clapped – all the house did the same, but the gallery, and a few voices in the pit for the second music called *Ça ira*, this was silenced – and they contented themselves with obtaining and clapping the Volunteers' March. Thus this much feared first night (particularly by Mrs Webster) was happily got over. The gallery indeed growled during the night, but after the play a few gentlemen went up and sat, and all was quiet. Indeed we see nothing else here – we eat, drink, chat, sometimes a little warmly, just as during the American war – but not so as either to interrupt good neighbourhood, or our whist.

Mr Bristow indeed, from an ignorant and bigoted zeal which some times lies quiet for a little, but now flames forth in undistinguished cursing and praying, as the effects of his loyalty, stands a suspected person by all of sending to Dublin these ridiculous accounts of the North. As chief magistrate, rector, very, very loyal and connected with the great, they will naturally apply to him for information and they could not to a person more fit to lead them astray, and to believe and colour every old woman's idle tale. Such people in these times are very dangerous and may do more mischief than even the much feared republican. I indeed look upon B[ristow] to be a very great loss to the town of B[elfast], and as far as he can, to be insidious.

As a proof, I shall relate for more reasons that this, a conversation which I was told took place a few days ago at Mr W. Seed's, where there was Mr Bristow, Dr Bruce, Dr White etc. The subject of reform being started, Bristow asked White, 'what price they would be willing to pay for it – would they risk a civil war?' – White – Not the province of Ulster – 'What if the other provinces come forward?' – Why, then it will be the voice of the people – What then? – Why then they will get a reform – How? – From parliament – What, suppose parliament refuses it, how will it be got? – By the point of the bayonet. Your old friend, now the much admired one of Mr Bristow (who allows he is loyal), thought fit to strike in here – said, though he could not go as far as Dr White, yet he confessed his sentiments had undergone a change in the last twelve months, and such that if government went on in the manner they were now doing, he could not answer how much greater that change might yet be, nor would he wonder if Mr Bristow himself would alter.

You seem to look yet to the North. Ulster has done all it can do – the other provinces by continuing their stupid silence, damn their country and betray it in the very instant of salvation. They show government it had no reason to fear the people for their uprightness and point out the North as the only spot they need mind. Accordingly, while they pretend not to interfere with the very Volunteers they most dread, they pour in the army as a strong arm over them, either to prevent their efforts, or to provoke them to steps which may tend to their ruin, if not their country's. For the first time, I rejoice that Sam and you are not Volunteers. In the name of God, let the troops we pay protect us from foreign enemies, and time and chance work out our political salvation – a matter which must shortly be brought about.

The Gunpowder Act occasions the greatest outcry – Holmes, Orr, Sinclaire, Boyle,⁷⁹ etc., etc., all declare they will leave this country and with their young families settle in America, unless a change of measures soon takes place – whether serious I know not.

My mother, Nancy etc., are well. H. Young is some days a little better but never goes out, nor willingly sees any one but Sam, of whom he seems fond, and depends on in every little matter of business. Oh my dearest Will, guard against a vacant mind – is there no safe honourable subject, to which and your talents your pen could do justice? Seek for it I beseech you. We have got Lord E[dward] Fitzgerald on our jugs here as the Man of the People.

411 28 February [17]93

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [392]

Dear Matty, I think it is certain that you must have written to me since your addition to Neilson's letter, yet I have not received a letter since. Enclose one to Mrs Bruce or any one that will give it to me. The military have seized all the cannon of the Volunteers in this city this morning, and will probably search all the houses. This is the gunpowder law – I suppose you will all obey it. Yours ever, WD

412 Friday [1 March postmark]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [393]

Dear Sam, I received yours and Matty's letter this day. Butler and Bond were summoned before the Lords about the resolutions of the United Society relative to the secret committee, and this day they were attended to the House by a great number of citizens who marched in files – I was among them necessarily. The debate has just now ended. I could not get in and stayed at the door with the rest in the galleries.

The debate was carried on most vehemently – first it was moved by Lord Mountjoy⁸⁰ fine and imprisonment, for which precedents were adduced I suppose from the Stuart times – in about half an hour we heard that the fine was to be £50 and a month imprisonment, then it raised to £100 – and at last it has just now ended in £500 fine on both Butler and Bond and six months! imprisonment. They both avowed the publication, and they have just now gone to Newgate under an escort of twenty men, in carriages – the mob very quiet both going to the House and from it. I suppose patrols will go through the town tonight. I hear also that a proclamation was proposed against the society, but the Chancellor said that they had done enough to put it down. One of the papers was pasted up at the door and £100 reward offered to discover who did it. The Duke of Leinster and Lord Mountgarret left the House. Our society meet tonight but nothing will I suppose

79 Presumably John Boyle (d.1800), Belfast merchant and manufacturer, and one of the proprietors of the *Northern Star*.

80 Luke Gardiner, 1st Viscount Mountjoy (1745-98).

be done. You see how government are to treat us. We hear that your cannon has been seized this day.⁸¹ Write to me by return of post. Rowan is not in town, but at Rathcoffey. I have nothing else to add in hurry for the post.

413 Monday, 4 March [17]93

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [394]

Dear Sam, I have little more to tell you that what you find in the papers. No disturbance of any kind happened either on the night that Butler and Bond were imprisoned or since. They are accommodated as well as Newgate can furnish and they seem in very good spirits. Their punishment is almost by every one deemed beyond example severe. There will probably be petitions from the city etc. for the mitigation of the time or the fine, but probably the government would wish the petition from themselves which I believe will never be got. Our society made a condoling resolution in their favour which I read to them at the head of a deputation and which they answered in very firm and determined language. We made an address to the nation, drawn up by Tone, which is good but not enough impassioned, and we hint at the necessity of convention. The process laid down at Dungannon for calling it is so tedious and circuitous that we scarcely know how to proceed, but we had some design of sending a deputation if any committee met. There is a committee of 71 to accommodate our friends in prison. I know not whether the Friends of the Constitution will notice us. It is said Curran will speak of it in the House supported by the two Lord Fitzgeralds.⁸²

The paper which was the cause of this was drawn up by the committee of lawyers, and I had no hand in it. Emmet I suppose had the chief hand in it, and he must feel for his brother lawyer, but is at present on circuit. The Catholics all seem to be sorry, though Butler never was a great favourite, but they subscribe and talk well. The truth is, they are so totally engrossed by their own affairs that they think of nothing else. Lord Edward wants to enter our society but we rather dissuade him. You will see the debate of the Lords in the papers, and what untruths they have uttered respecting Volunteers, etc. The Lawyers Corps have given up their cannon and were well received at the Castle for doing so. The Merchants Corps petition for theirs as their property and promise to take out licence. Our society has I suppose made their last speech for indeed I don't know what they have now to do, if the nation does not choose to act. It is needless to turn out any more victims to ministerial and personal vengeance. Our last paper is signed by Beauchamp Bagenall Harvey,⁸³ and Thomas Russell, but I believe they are safe, both from the wording of the address, and because the Lords have pretty well satiated their vengeance and may now fear universal reprobation. I wonder what this secret committee of lords

81 Six of the Belfast cannon were hidden, one of which was used at the battle of Antrim in 1798 (A. T. Q. Stewart, *The summer soldiers, the 1798 rebellion in Antrim and Down* (Belfast, 1995), p.74).

82 Lord Edward and his brother Lord Henry Fitzgerald.

83 Beauchamp Bagenall Harvey (1762-98), barrister and United Irishman, hanged in 1798 (*DNB*).

is to bring out which they say will appal the nation. I know I have nothing to accuse myself of – and therefore will not be summoned – neither Rowan or Tandy have.

You or Matty will write and I hope you will think of a spring visit to Dublin. I still think none of your letters are opened. WD

414 [6 March postmark]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [395]

I received Matty's letter – I suppose by this time you have experienced the effect of the proclamation and not a Volunteer is to be seen in the North. All you can do is to get as many arms as possible smuggled into the country. Let every man have a firelock in country and in town that if ever anything requires their use, an army may start up at once. I do believe that if the Volunteers resisted at this time in Belfast and about it, they would have the Catholics on their side, but I will not answer for this after a few months have gone over, and the impressions of gratitude which they at present feel are worn away. It is hard enough God knows to be put down in this manner, and it even appears to me somewhat singular how easily it is done. I firmly believe government is a bravo at the bottom, and putting all on the hazard to show Mr Pitt how easily this country can be kept down. Resistance at this critical time I allow would be dangerous but it would be salvation. I am not however to instruct Volunteers, but the Chancellor may truly boast that this is the second time he has put down the people of Protestant Ireland – but the report of the secret committee aims as much in the conclusion against civil as military meetings. The Catholic Committee will not be able to meet again, but they are pretty easy as their business is pretty well over. There will not be anything like even a civil convention allowed, and I suppose even our societies will be attacked. From one thing they will go on to another, and their success against new and against old Volunteers will give them confidence to do anything. Are the people who met at Dungannon on the 15 February prepared for this? Will their executive committee dare to call a meeting after the rising of parliament? I fear not – every day, the people are routed in their minds, and a reform is now again become an idea. Most strange has been the behaviour of Grattan. I cannot solve the problem of his conduct.

Tandy was taken by a bench warrant from one of the judges at Dundalk, either Boyd or Downes⁸⁴ – bills found by the grand jury at Dundalk for distributing a very foolish personal paper signed *Common Sense*⁸⁵ which somehow found its way into our society but never was authorised by it, and I remember I complained of such a scandalising paper being laid on the table one night, and another night when I was not there, Tandy I believe moved that our printer should strike off 3,000 of them, and some of these I suppose he distributed at Dundalk for which he was informed against. He set off for Dundalk, but Butler and the rest, after a serious consultation

⁸⁴ Robert Boyd, justice of the King's Bench from 1791; William Downes (1752-1826), later chief justice of the King's Bench (*DNB*).

⁸⁵ By John Keogh.

on the probability of his being found guilty, and in that case that the judges would inflict punishment without mercy in fine and imprisonment, and on the likelihood that other things were kept in reserve for him, they sent his son after him to advise him to forfeit his recognizance, about £200, to fly for the same. I think it likely he will take their advice. Two years imprisonment would kill him, and less, it is supposed, would not be inflicted.

The first and only society that have taken notice of the imprisonment of our officers is that of the Liberty of the Press at London, where Horne Tooke took notice of it as arbitrary and illegal, gave Butler and Bond as his toasts, was seconded by Sheridan and the affair is to be brought on at their next meeting.

The trial is come on the French and a great trial it will be. They have in my opinion said we will free Europe or perish. All their speeches and reports and addresses manifest that they have not for some time past confined their notions to France, but that their aim is to put the revolutionary power in motion throughout Europe. Whether Europe is prepared for this I dare not say, perhaps as well as France herself before the revolution, but certainly different states are in different degrees of preparation and where they are not very ripe for revolution, they will join and add strength to the combination against France. In truth, the people through the most of Europe, and here as in other parts cannot act, and all their power is collected by government against their wish, their will and their interests, and it will continue to be so until they act somewhere. Where that will be I don't know, but I don't think it will be in the North of Ireland. No convention will arise that will debate this plain question – Are taxes constitutionally levied on those who are not represented in parliament? No. Are we represented in parliament? No – The conclusion is self-evident.

Tandy is returned to town, having employed two lawyers, Dobbs and Mayne, to speak for putting off his trial which I suppose will not be done, all the rest of the bar being against him and the judges to boot.

Might not an address to the Throne signed individually by some hundred thousands in the North, have good effect?

I hope to see you here some time soon – if you keep your promise. WD

415 [9 March postmark]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [396]

Dear Sam, I enclose you our last address, which I think extremely good. It was done by Tone, and should be distributed. I should have written to you this week, but really had nothing agreeable to say. The whole tide of calumny is set so strongly against us, that it is difficult to speak of anything or to anyone, as there is such an eagerness for misrepresentation. Butler and Bond are in good spirits and so they may with regard to their treatment by our society who have [done]⁸⁶ everything that lay in their power to alleviate their sufferings. Seventy-one members subscribe a guinea

86 Word supplied.

a piece for wine and articles of accommodation, and in each in turn gives a dinner to eight in their rooms at the gaol, which costs a second guinea. Last night the motion was made in the society to pay the fine, and I believe nearly £350 was collected from those present. I set down £3 8s 3d which was as much or more than I ought to give, but I believe most of those present did the same. I suppose the society will raise £500 and for the other they must depend on the liberality of their countrymen. Several citizens have offered money, but almost all refuse their names to a petition to the Commons, on this business. Curran called at Newgate, but seemed very backward, and H. Jackson when he was going to mention the business to Grattan found himself shook off immediately and was obliged to pocket the paper, but he first told Grattan that as a citizen of Dublin he should never forget his conduct. Butler and Bond take all our treats in good part and with thankfulness. The honourable brother of Lord Mountgarret and the extensive merchant are supported by us, but this may be proper and I rather imagine Butler is poor and Bond not richer – this between ourselves. Rowan says nothing. He and his father, and Lord Edward Fitzgerald dined there yesterday with Tandy, twelve in company though the rule never to be more than eight: I was not there. Rowan goes to England on private business but will be back, in spite of the good advice he gets from Patrick etc. not to return – but return he will.

I can tell you this. In the report of the secret committee I hear there are said to be strong grounds for suspecting instigators to riots, conspiracies etc., but not a single person is named. This however is done – a powerful recommendation not to let any armed men appear except under the authority constituted by law, and next week will probably see a bill brought in for actually disarming the North. So again take my warning. The Militia Bill is passing rapidly and there must be personal service, or a substitute found or £10 paid. Perhaps it might be proper for the Volunteers to turn into militia and not appoint substitutes. I confess in all this your town seems very inactive as a town; the whole country seems stunned, a perfect inquisition reigns here in companies, in the streets, in the shops.

They are hanging the Defenders at Trim at a great rate. You speak of emigration – perhaps some coalition preparatory to this or threatening it might terrify government, though I rather think they would be glad to get the island freed from us. I never liked the thoughts of going to America, but I should have less much less reluctance in fixing a colony on some of the delightful parts which Young so well describes in the south of France. I should like to see a good plan of such a colony drawn out, provisionally. You have read no doubt the new constitution.

Lord Ed[ward] Fitz[gerald] and I seldom meet but I call in a complimentary manner. He asked the Duke about his intention of entering our society and the Duke negatived his desire with the utmost indignation. This same Duke is for the Militia Bill.

In the Friends of the Constitution here, 26 for noticing the late affair against 18, but after all it was postponed. Does your society's [*sic*] mean to do anything in compliment or in subscription. We have done as much as we can.

The Friends of the People at London have given us a sort of honorary sitting there when any of our members happen to be in London. Joseph Pollock, who avoids me as much as Jack, is to publish a letter addressed to Newry, I suppose about his sentiments.⁸⁷ His motto as I see by the advertisement which promises the publication is 'I am no orator – but speak right on'. In the first [he is] right but in the second he is in great error, for he is the most round-about speaker than ever opened a mouth.

I am really surprised that none of you have a desire to see me were it only for curiosity. Dr McKenna is said to have gotten £300 a year, but so many lies circulate that I can scarcely say anything is true but that I am yours and all my dear relatives and friends. Y[our]s, W DRENNAN

416 Wednesday [March postmark]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [397]

Yesterday's paper, I supposed, would give you a better account of the late transaction here than I could – though I would certainly have given it a little more glow than Mr Joy has done. Sure I am that his recital cannot give the same idea of the matter that is stamped on the Belfast mind – for though the whole, it appears very black – in Joy, General White and Captain McDonnel, are the prominent features – this may pass at a distance, but we know the gentlemen were on the back ground indeed. White was at Carrickfergus and McDonnel at tea with the ladies, so near that, as they heard they [*sic*] clamour, he could not avoid going out and taking two or three soldiers to the barrack. He returned to his party and talked well of what he would have done had he been an officer in the troop. The only atonement made to the town is the removal of all the horse – and for this these daring offenders have escaped punishment, one could hardly indeed at such a time and in the present state of our Volunteers purchase their absence at too dear a rate.

I could myself produce a creditable witness, who in Dundalk heard one of their officers, and would name him, desire them when they came to Belfast not to spare leg, arm or life. They served to this trade with remarkable success in the American war and, to prevent rust, have kept it up with the wretched Defenders, since which they are denominated the Speaker's Bloodhounds. The Belfast troop was their object but they got a hint of their danger. Disappointed in this plan for a tumult, they sallied forth with a ladder, which reached Dumouriez, but Franklin could not be got down even by these heroes. These were signs⁸⁸ I never heard of, and had passed unnoticed but to the two or three incendiaries among us. One of Lord Hillsborough's humble friends pointed out the fit places of attack which were marked on paper. This same man Sam knows voted for that noble man seven times at the last election and perjured himself each time.

You will see that the Volunteers have come on some terms with General White. On Sunday and Monday they certainly triumphed. The town was full of country

87 *Letters to the inhabitants of the town and lordship of Newry* (1793).

88 Inn signs.

men, above a 1,000 men armed met in the new erection,⁸⁹ and though Mr Bristow and Captain Hill Wallace lately justice of the peace went to them and used every argument they could suggest, they were treated with scorn and denial till they heard the agreement made by the Volunteers for these men were not of that body – forty recruits joined the regiment yesterday – the committee sat yesterday examining like their betters, and to say the truth I think with equal wisdom. Now the criminals are gone they departed in triumph with General Dumouriez' wooden head, and while there was a huzza of women and children at their departure, one of these sign-slaying hero[es] slashed his sword on a lad near him, cut him desperately and rode off unmolested. In any other town they would have been stoned to death, but there never was a Belfast mob – happy for us at present, for I do believe it was ardently sought for.

In the universal lie that prevails, Mr Bristow has brought in Sam's name, as having received a letter from France offering this country 10,000 men. This story of his telling we heard several weeks ago, but laughed at, and left it to him to amuse the old women here and in the secret committee with. But Sam has within this last week been asked the truth of it so often, and by men he respects who all agree that Bristow told him it, that he h[as] determined this day to talk to him. He [—] not be too much despised. He has done and will ever do mischief in public matters while his own is gone to ruin, in this he is pitied and treated with more lenity upon that account than he ought to be. He should be put into Coventry, and if he lost his card parties it would be the properest punishment, at least the most effectual one. McNiven, our other government tool, is also a dangerous spy and as such has been black beaned and drove out of all society here, and therefore hates the place. Skiffy Bristow,⁹⁰ half mad, half a fool, and on half pay, goes often to the coffee house, where as a piece of humour but a wrong one, immediately on seeing him enter a parcel of lads begin to whisper, drop ambiguous words and divert themselves at his picking them up. He takes them to his wise father and he presents them to the wise lords – and at their report of them we all laugh and can prove their lordships l—s. Your party at Newgate will be a curious one, at least the Belfast part of it, they are not of my list but may in the present time be good men. H I have heard well spoken of as a decent man, Mc as a spitfire, and Ma—n was since the late election a suspected character – he was thought to have made money there. This I hope will be sufficient to put you on your guard – do not let him be intimate with you. We have had several reports of Rowan. I suspect he is under some cloud.

My fingers are benumbed so with cold the pen is like to drop out of my hand. I hope you stir your own fire. I hope to do it also before a month is out but the state of this town at present forbids it, for there is a crash which keeps Sam well employed for himself, but ill for the town.⁹¹

89 The third Presbyterian meeting house of Belfast, built in 1721-23, was always referred to as the new erection.

90 Skeffington Bristow (c.1762-1810), eldest son of Rev. William Bristow.

91 As a notary public Sam was employed in protesting bills of exchange of merchants who were unable to meet them.

417 24 March [17]93

SAM AND MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET [398]

Dear Will, Having no news is a very good excuse for not writing, and that has for some time been my case, but we think news might be had every day from the capital and are much disappointed when we don't hear from you, because every day and in every opportunity we hear of some person having been apprehended, absconded, and if taken, in danger of being hanged. I wish I could see common sense.⁹²

Last night a quarrel took place between a Carrickfergus man and one of the Invalids⁹³ quartered there. The quarrel became pretty general when the L dragoons interfered on the side of the Invalids, and wounded several of the townsmen with their swords, several of the dragoons were severely beaten but no lives lost so far report says. Certainty is that a company of thirty infantry marched from this for that city this morning between two and three o'clock and General White went down at ten. If any further light on the business I'll tell you when I come from the Washington, for we still venture to go there. Le Blanc⁹⁴ is returned to his wife and family from whom he was torn by the sovereign and a constable early in the morning and carried before General White, who said to him that he had brought himself into a scrape but that he yet had it in his power to get out of it and be a gentleman, if he did not he must come to the gallows. Le B[lanc] answered some of his questions but refused others, on which he was ordered to the barrack from where he was carried without leave to settle his domestic affairs, see his wife, or even get a change of linen. After all this it appears by the examination before the comm[ittee?] that he was innocent for they have sent him home and paid all his expenses, neither have they by any artifice been able to seduce him to say anything to criminate any one here, which I feared as his character is doubtful, but even these you see will sometimes stick to the truth.

I find when the dragoons first engaged in the general scuffle they had not side arms, but ran to their lodgings and brought their sabres and cut severals, and four or five of the inhabitants are committed but none of the military; all on one side, even our town com[mittee?] were obliged to suppress their report because the g[enera]l and of course the magistrates would not agree to any crimination of the d[ragoon]s. I have just received yours of yesterday. Tuesday I expect to have a meeting of the B[allast] Office corporation to pass my year's accounts when I mean to ask leave of absence for ten or twelve days on private business some time in April, when I hope Matty and I will see you. Yours, SM

[IN MARTHA'S HAND]

Leslie of Ballymoney has given notice to the commanders of Volunteers corps that he has had orders as a magistrate to enforce the proclamation and therefore requests they will give up their parades. One company has paraded since and he ordered the

92 ? the pamphlet *Common sense*.

93 Soldiers disabled for active service.

94 See Joy, *Historical collections*, p.419.

constable to arrest the lieutenant who commanded. We have not heard the consequence. As there was nothing but quiet and peace here before the day that the Speaker's Bloodhound[s] arrived, it returned on their departure, and we hear with astonishment the lies told and believed of Belfast. Sam spoke to Bristow about his repeated assertions of the offer of 10,000 French men – he took Mr Rankin and J. Ferguson with him. Bristow's complexion bore testimony against him but he frittered it away as well as he could, and after some hours he came to Sam and again declared his innocence of design, hoped there would be no dryness between them as his regard etc. etc. was very great, and that he considered himself under obligations to him in his profession – which by the bye he was too long of recollecting.

You say if you were called before the old wives in Dublin you would tell all you know. They have given you time for consideration, and though truth is delightful and I would suffer much before I would deviate from it, yet you ought to be well advised how far you ought to go with safety before a bitter enemy with undefined power and no fear of exerting it. If they had wished for information of the true situation of Belfast why did they not commission the Londonderry lordling⁹⁵ to make inquiry among the respectable inhabitants who could be depended on, but it was misinformation they sought for and no sooner was the demand for it known, than it became so plenty and such a drug that here at least it is now not heeded or listened to.

418 Tuesday [26 March postmark]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [399]

Dear Sam, I am very happy to hear of your intention to pay me a visit, for it is requisite to keep up one's spirits in this poison wind of calumny which blows so pestilentially. The word is when the simoon or sirocco blows in the desert, is – fall flat on your faces, and don't open your mouth till the blast has gone over. The secret committee continue their examinations, but it is likely Dr Reynolds⁹⁶ will make a precedent on his side which will stop them, for he has resisted all their arts and threats to answer, until they tell him the nature of their authority, whether they ask him questions as a legislative or as a judicial body. If the first he denies that they have any such right by the constitution, the principles of which he values as much as any of them; if in their judicial capacity he protests against all secrecy as equally unconstitutional. They committed him to the Black Rod,⁹⁷ reported him to the House, and when at the bar he still persisted in his refusal to answer, was remanded into the same custody, from a view that in the interim he might alter his resolution. He sent me a note yesterday before he went into the committee requesting me to call on him for a few minutes. I never saw the young man, but I went immediately

⁹⁵ Robert Stewart, later Lord Castlereagh.

⁹⁶ Dr James Reynolds, physician and United Irishman from Cookstown, Co. Tyrone; settled in Dublin in 1793 and emigrated to America in 1794.

⁹⁷ An officer of the Houses of Parliament.

on receiving his note, and when I came, he was in the committee room. After hearing what had passed there and in the House where Lord Clonmell abused the U[nited] Irishmen in the most scurrilous manner, I thought it an act of friendship to call upon Reynolds this day. Black Rod allowed him to sleep at his hotel and he had come to the House with him at twelve. He told me he had wished to have my advice for though he had resolved not to answer before coming up, he had met so many contrary advices he did not know what to do. I said, I supposed he had adopted a line of conduct now for himself and that a consistency of conduct was always desirable; certainly he answered – I shall persevere from honour and from duty. So I suppose he will come to the bar this evening, and refusing to answer be committed to Newgate during the session. Two Catholics came in and I went away. The Catholics hang upon every one that comes up from the North, and have no objection to their running risk, but seem determined for the present to put themselves in no danger. Reynolds seemed nervous and agitated but not timid and said he felt the suspense most disagreeable.

The Chancellor in the House yesterday opened a new battery and spoke to show that the nest of conspirators had only in view to separate these countries which God and nature had joined. I prophesy there will be endeavours soon made for an union and then our country will be lost indeed. For my poor part, I declare to you I will not stay in it in such a case. Lord Clonmell complimented the Catholics on not joining in any of these schemes, though if there be one nearest to their hearts it is the real independence of Ireland, and for which as much as anything I adhere to them, notwithstanding my dislike of many among them and their mode of conduct.

Rowan writes to me from London that he does not find two opinions respecting the illegality of Butler's and Bond's committal: that Erskine has not come to town: that the *Address to the Volunteers* is not supposed to be libellous and if so, the distribution must be innocent: that our papers are admired: that the late Lord Chatham would have impeached the present lord for permitting a foreign fleet to brave us in the channel and seize a whole fleet from Smyrna unmolested: that Lord Chatham⁹⁸ is all night punting at the pharo table and all day in bed: that the bankruptcies within the last fortnight exceed all those during the American war: that the late bills against insurance etc. are much disliked: that he laments Tandy's eternal evasions. By the bye, I never hear anything of him. I have not a copy of *Common Sense* – Rowan somehow as secretary got a great parcel of them which were thrown into the garret and several saw them there at the auction, for which he has been much blamed. Lord E. Fitzgerald called upon me yesterday but he is no longer the same – as quiet as a mouse – by the lectures of his brother etc. He fears much for the French as indeed we all do here. Gold is raising a civil war evidently through different parts of France to co-operate with the external powers. I took the chair because I never will desert the wreck, at such a time when cowards flinch I was asked would I go into the chair in place of Butler and I said I would not give any answer about it. I was unanimously balloted in, and I accepted of it, contrary as I told them to my

98 John Pitt, 2nd Earl of Chatham (1756-1835), first lord of the admiralty (*DNB*).

interests, personal and professional, but dragged to it by a sense of splendid duty, and a fidelity to one certain tenor of conduct.

8 o'clock evening – Reynolds was not even called upon today but continued in the custody of the Black Rod. I called on him this evening to see what necessaries he might want. He can do till tomorrow without much preparation. He wrote to the Chancellor requesting that the House would either liberate him or send him to Newgate – no answer – he has put them to a non plus. They know not what to do but hope that a system of intimidation will do as he is of a nervous habit, hence his treatment is rather harsh – great hauteur and three messengers in waiting – not allowed to go to the hotel this night, but a bed fitted up for him. He behaved most obstinately yet respectfully before the secret committee – the oath offered four times till at last he said that he knew he was injuring all his interests etc., but that though he were on the rack he would keep silence. Dean Swift in similar case took the book and swore by it that he would not answer them a word. They think they will terrify this very young man, but they are mistaken. The Chancellor said to him as Jefferies said to Sidney⁹⁹ – You are mad, Sir. WD

419 27 March [17]93

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [400]

I have taken an interest in the virtuous obstinacy of this young man Reynolds, and I must therefore tell you that I called on him again this morning, and found him well and determined, indeed all along he has been so much so that without any other reason, I should have thought it an insult to have given any opinion to one who appeared so predetermined. I called at five. He was then at the bar. I called half an hour after and then was informed by an old hag at the door, I know not whether her name was Alecto, Magaera, or Tisiphone,¹⁰⁰ that he was ordered to Kilmainham. I wrote to Butler who says 'Reynolds has been ordered to Kilmainham (the county jail to separate him from Butler and Bond two miles distance) until farther order – poor and contemptible spite. The beneficent society consisting of thirty-one (the major part now here at dinner) have resolved that they will individually entertain Dr R according to seniority for thirty-one days and have appointed a committee to carry this into effect. They have also appointed a deputation to wait upon him this evening with the resolution' so far Butler. Perhaps this measure of Reynolds will put a check in the course and they will not risk to examine whose who, they may think, will be equally obstinate. I suppose Dr Caldwell will be up and in, if he comes up. The doctors are like to pay for it. Yours, WD

⁹⁹ Judge Jeffreys to Algernon Sidney, at his trial.

¹⁰⁰ The Furies.

420 Saturday, 30 March

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [401]

Dear Sam, Reynolds is still at Kilmainham and will probably remain there until a prorogation as I fancy he will not submit. He is much better of[f] than Butler and Bond having a very large room and liberty to walk in a large garden which is almost wholly out of town and consequently he has air and exercise. As for meat and drink, the societies will give him enough of both. I have sent him books and offered him a £10 note which he said he had no occasion for. He behaved still better the second time he was at the bar of the House than the first, and you will see by the papers that the Chancellor questioned him about my advising him to persist, and his answer equally prudent and true that I had advised him neither one way or other. I suppose that Black Rod as they call him had posted off to tell the Chancellor that I had altered the prisoner's mind who was inclined to submit before I had seen him, which was not really the case. All say that I shall be called but I am apt to believe they will not be committing every day without much benefit, when they believe that Reynolds's example will be followed – and followed I think it must in honour and duty and principle. I think his behaviour has altered the case, and as far as I think at present, I should say at once, that I hoped they would not deem it a contempt of their committee, or the least disrespect, that I begged leave for certain reasons and principles, resolutely and absolutely to decline taking their oath. If I were asked what were my reasons, I should answer that I was extremely unwilling to mention them, and that nothing but their lordships' insisting on it would make me mention them, because they had been deemed a breach of the privileges of the House of Lords. If then I should be pressed, I would either read or repeat the tenor of the arguments in our resolutions, and I would stand then silent and prepared for the result.

It is said that the Chancellor and Speaker are to set off for England immediately, that some commercial arrangement is to take place, something preparatory to an union which will be tantamount to it, without expressly making use of the term.

I think you or Matty ought to have written to me. It is at least uncertain whether I shall be called on – most people say I will – I myself think not. Had Reynolds said that I had advised him to persist in his refusal, I should probably have been immediately summoned to the bar.

Our society were addressed by the Broadcloth Weavers of Dublin, thanking us most warmly for our resolution relative to non-consumption of English manufacture.

The French have suffered two defeats. In one, the first, they behaved well and the accounts of the second are not particular but many more must be received before France is conquered. The more they are repressed like air, the more elasticity will they acquire, and the greater will be their power of resistance the nearer the enemy approaches Paris – great joy and laughing here at the destruction of perhaps 20,000 human beings. God, in his power, defend the just side, and in his mercy, forgive these men who hear with such goût the carnage of humanity, but shudder at the death of a treacherous despot.

I hear Caldwell's wife is dead – so I suppose his spirit will be broken and he will not come up. I have nothing else to say. I hope to see you and Matty as soon as convenient. I am neither in nor out of spirits. Farewell. WD

421 1 April

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [402]

I thank you for writing so frequently of late, as you may believe I was for many reasons interested in the fate of a young man who is steady in the right, whither in the eye of the law, I know not – but I think no power on earth should make me take an oath to answer any questions the lords thought fit to ask me – though conscious of nothing wrong yet I suppose there are cases in which they have that right – but at present their proceedings appear so shocking, and most other acts of government, that a man should think well before he would pledge himself to obey all their mandates, lest they might unwarily offend the higher powers of God and conscience. At present I suppose a wise man ought to yield in everything else, such is the sudden reverse in the complexion of the times – that even in this much defamed town, where an insult so gross was offered that it was impossible, even for the connivers at it, not to institute an enquiry, and when in consequence of it, the truth was too plainly discovered to be a formed scheme to provoke a riot in order to procure a butchery of the inhabitants – yet this truth dare not for many reasons be published, and by the silence of the town on that, and the daily ridiculous fabrications concerning it, credulous strangers believe these tales, and that we are all that is represented. Here, I declare to you there is nothing but friendly intercourse, well attended public places, and constant evening parties, and though there is a greater difference of opinion in a few, than rational people might suppose, in the politics of the times, yet those of a public nature make no ill blood, and the only thing that creates much warmth is in repeating the defamation that is daily renewed on the place, all parties agreeing in their being false. The dispute is, what has been the cause – and that spirit, once approved of for freely speaking our grievances – because it was unsuccessful, is now reprobated for having marked us out with a contempt which, as it is unjust, will not last. Government does not scorn the North – they did fear it, and the kingdom respected it – but it stood alone in the moment of salvation deserted by the other panic-struck provinces – at the very instant they might have obliged a despised parliament to grant their just claims, and without a blow – this moment was so strangely lost that I doubt of its soon returning. You know there is a tide in the affairs of men and Irish men have lost it.

The spirit of the people in the North is not put down. They are stunned by a blow that they feel, but it has not killed them and the remembrance of it, at some future lucky period, I hope will make their enemies tremble.

I believe there is not a more independent town than this, either on government or its hacks, as a place of trade I believe its character stands more fair than most others,

a mob of its own inhabitants never disgraced it, nor an act of disloyalty. It is now a most populous place – and as there is no doubt many fools and hot headed ones among us – improper words or unguarded actions may happen, but as yet they have not come to light, and we waited impatiently to learn what the secret committee would bring to light from the respectable witnesses they summoned from this. We are yet however in ignorance. The Star it has been said has brought all this upon us, and the United Irishmen. They are therefore violently attacked, even here, and the great events of the day give place now to these local matters – which however have a worse effect on the temper. The Star we take, and I read it, and its success against its competitor has been the cause of strange things – but Belfast may, and I believe will, have a second paper and what is worse, it will be read. I know none of its proprietors – if they do anything wrong they are subject to the laws, and I hope to nothing else.

I have twice or thrice got warm in regard to the U[nited] I[rishmen]. They were never named before me with disrespect till lately – but since there appears to be a legal right to attack them it has been done to me as a sentiment that I long saw had been cherished, and now burst forth in a manner too pointed [for] one to bear, that had a husband and brother of the number. I believe it will not be done again, and I have the pleasure of reflecting that in all these matters, I have never said a word I had reason to repent of, nor for which I have been censured. Indeed women connected with men whose side is known ought to be very cautious, as they are supposed to be only echoes – and though you know I am too great a talker, I have learned to sit without either giving my own opinion or contradicting others, for which I have got great credit for good breeding.

There has been a budget of letters from J. Hay, none to Sam, and to my great surprise I hear, a long one to Dr Bruce seeming a lure for his going to America. He may try to be the founder of a college there, that he will never be here – yet it was the hobby he rode down from Dublin on but I soon told him he would not go far on it. This night he and his lady entertain the Bristows and Mr Skeffington¹⁰¹ but they are both bad at it. The Academy young gentlemen are lately all declared loyalists. This day twelve month they asserted one of their ancient rights, but they were put down with a strong hand though the pretty one of the Doctor.

Sam is at the assizes. I hope he will be able to fix our leaving this for Dublin Saturday the 13[th]. Can we have a bed for the short time we stay, in the house with you? We will take a chaise for I could not be able to endure the mail. Why do you not name Nancy's going up – though we cannot prevail on her, as she says, she would rather send you a piece of handsome black cloth, for she is sure you would not give a pin to see her, for it is only Sam or I you want, and that if she could afford you any pleasure it would be better to divide it by going up some time hence, when perhaps it might be of more use. Notice this in your next. Beware of Newgate and if your money must be spent there, let it be on others than yourself. You know I told you it was good to know when to stop, I fear you have gone beyond it. Do not

101 Chichester Skeffington (d.1816), later 4th Earl of Massereene.

commit yourself for nothing, and whether they will or not it would be the part of a madman and no one would pity you. I was sorry, very sorry, to see you again c[hair]m[an] and cannot think honour required it, nothing of consequence you ought now to sign, anything trifling is hateful, don't publish.

422 Wednesday [10 April postmark]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [404]

Dear Matty, I have been disappointed at Sam's saying he could not fix upon any day, after you saying you would set off on Saturday.

If the news from France of this day be true, it is all over, and misery will fall on that destined country, more than even Burke has painted. Great illuminations here last night which may either be for the Catholic Bill or for the news from France, but the Catholics in the city did not illuminate, and all the public offices was lighted up. The House is adjourned and Reynolds remains at Kilmainham and will probably do so till the prorogation, unless he submits. Rowan will be in town this week and if the jury be packed, I suppose will be condemned, fined and imprisoned. A Mr Byrne of Dundalk is to be tried this day for distributing the paper called *Common Sense*, and I should wish to know the event. I don't believe they have examined any before the secret committee since Reynolds except the two men who came along with him. Russell was summoned but excused himself on being obliged himself attend Omagh Assizes¹⁰² – he has returned, but I know not whether he has been called upon a second time. Tis a pity you have missed this fine weather. Farewell. WD

423 Monday, 12 April [17]93¹⁰³

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [405]

Yesterday J[ohn] Pollock called on me and as I was not at home desired my servant to let me know he desired to see me, as early as was convenient this morning, I went to him at twelve and he told me with a very terror inspiring countenance that he was just come from the assizes, and that he thought it a piece of friendship to inform me as soon as possible, that he had reason to apprehend I was in danger – and in the course of the conversation, insinuated that he had it on the authority of the Attorney General. I told him immediately and with gay assurance that I was not conscious of having said, written or done anything from which I apprehended any danger, and that I was ready at that moment not only to appear at the bar of any ordinary tribunal, but at a much higher bar, and challenge my accusers to the proof; that I had been desired to conceal my papers, but that I laughed at the idea, and did not care if the whole secret committee were to read them at their leisure, if they could deem any things so insignificant worthy of their attention; that I was obliged

102 Russell was seneschall of the manor court of Dungannon and a JP for Co. Tyrone.

103 This is written quite clearly but Monday was either the 8 or 15 April.

to him for telling me I was in danger but that I had heard so in every company I was in these two months. He told me not to mistake or misreport his words which were that he had reason only to apprehend I was in danger. We talked a good deal about the times, and he inveighed most outrageously against the publications, particularly *Common Sense*, in which I agreed with him as I thought it a scurrilous, personal, mean production. He mentioned having seen you and that you had mentioned your intention of coming up about this time. He talked of the blood of the Defenders being on the head of certain people and I said, God forgive those who utter such things without proof. I again said that I thanked him for his information, but that I did not say what good it would do me, for what I had done, I had done, and not being conscious of anything ill done, or at least with a *malus animus*,¹⁰⁴ I could not alter or correct my plan of conduct. I took my leave and he said, God bless you, my dear Doctor. I think if on our former conference he meant to seduce, his aim at this was to terrify, or to find out whether there was really any ground for terrifying me.

I am sorry you can't come up with Matty. I really want to know explicitly what this man means, or what is either his intention or that of those who employ him. Could this be known by your writing to him? I am certain that they carry revenge so far as to wish to injure me in my profession, and that they have done so with every one of that party with whom I was connected, and my professional connection is chiefly with their party. Grierson has never asked me these two months whose lady I attended, and having met her lately in the street she asked me with a sort of sneer how all my patients were, to which I answered without the least acrimony, though it was pretty cutting – if things go on so, all I can do is to think of America. Pollock said W. Sinclaire¹⁰⁵ had expressed some intention of emigrating, and I thought he wished to know what my mind was on that subject, but I talked always of clinging to the ship till it went to pieces.

Our society is about to raise the fine of £1,000 as soon as it can, the debt discouraging people from entering. The first night 109 members subscribed £465 and there is now to be application made to the remaining 200, as 300 men have signed the books and about 70 have not; if then they subscribe in the same proportion, which however is not likely, £200, more than the sum required, would be raised which might exonerate Tandy; but still it appears necessary to apply to our brother societies and an official letter for that purpose will be addressed to yours at Belfast among the number. H. Jackson, B[ond's] father-in-law, is our highest subscriber, 20 guineas, I suppose Rowan who returned last night, will give as much. Many gave 10 guineas among whom is Emmet – I gave 3.

Byrne at Dundalk who pleaded guilty to the distribution of *Common Sense*, Pollock told me is fined £500 and imprisoned for two years – James the police officer made lord mayor, and Giffard one of the sheriffs. I request you may set off so as to hear Kirwan who preaches for the Orphan House on the 28th, remember this. The game is far from being up in France as you may see. The weather has changed

104 Ill will.

105 Sinclaire was Pollock's brother-in-law.

today and I suppose will delay Matty and Gordon on the road. I should as soon she had come with any one else, for on the whole he has not I think behaved to me as an old friend and townsman, even before the political quarantine began. I don't think Nancy will see me in Newgate – however there is no knowing. Ever yours, W DRENNAN

Young Dr Mitchell¹⁰⁶ called on me this morning and told me he saw Tandy land from a wherry at Holyhead – so I suppose he is self transported.

424 Tuesday

MARTHA MCTIER, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [407]

At half after eight I arrived safe and well at Dame Street where I was received by a very genteel well behaved woman, Will's landlady.¹⁰⁷ He is abroad, his servant is gone for him, and as the post goes out at ten I take this time of his absence to tell my dearest Sam that I went fifty mile this day with very little fatigue, and except yourself could not have got a more agreeable nor attentive fellow traveller than Davy Gordon.

Adieu, I feel myself a good deal agitated – I hope after I see Will it will go off, but at present I can add no more than ever yours, MM

425 [17 April postmark]

MARTHA MCTIER, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [408]

My dear Sam, I wrote last night, I hardly knew what – this day I am quite alive, and happy. My dear brother appears better in every way than I ever saw him, appeared agreeably surprised, if not envious, at my growing so fat and looking so well. I am elegantly lodged or what is much better, comfortably, and Will's man is everything that a servant can be, nor even depends on the attention of his master to procure for me every [thing]¹⁰⁸ he can think of – even to particular nice breakfast bread and mulled wine after my journey. The house from top to toe is neat and elegant and the first lord in the land might occupy Will's rooms. I think you could find a week spent here an agreeable relaxation.

Davy Gordon gave me a sixpence out of my three guineas and I believe he did not do himself any injustice. He seemed inclined to manage well on his own account, and had planned saving our dinner at the Man of War, which we would have done and got here at five o'clock, had we not been twice delayed by want of chaises, owing to the judges, lawyers, etc., from the Dundalk assizes. You will see by the papers how matters went there. On coming to town we drove to D[avy] Gordon's which I could not avoid. Mrs Gordon and Fanny Mussenden pressed me indeed violently to [a]light and drink tea but at that hour I durst not do it. I drove immediately here

106 George, son of William Mitchell, former Inspector General of Barracks in Ireland; nephew of Sam McTier's first wife.

107 Drennan's landlady was the wife of Thomas Daniel, a tea merchant.

108 Word supplied.

and spent four hours very happily with the assistance of a comfortable supper of nice chickens and the said mulled wine.

It snowed from the time we left you till we got to Newry, and having to sit in the chaise there and twice again on the road, with walking for a short time that we had got bad horses, I have got a cold and hoarseness which, joined to this being a very bad day, confines me to the house from choice and made me accept of the repeated invitation of the lady of it (who very well deserves that appellation) to dinner. Sam Bruce has just been here and I find it to be of our party. Rowan is come and he and his party wish to bring on his trial this week, for though some thought time might be favourable to him, yet they depend more on the goodness of Hutton the present sheriff and fear the next. Will seems to have no fear whatever, though Pollock has again been trying to inspire it – one of them must be wrong. What Pollock's design can be I know not, but he certainly has one. Conscious integrity appears to make Will fearless – I hope it will continue to be all sufficient. Pollock is curious about your coming to town. The exceeding fine show of lamp and shop lights made me think on entering that the town was illuminated. It is really a very noble city and improved beyond what one could imagine – well worth your coming to see – indeed I shall but half enjoy it.

I have sent your note and bill to the Imprest Office and given Dr Haliday's to Sam Bruce. This day it is said there are not any failures – yesterday two, Beggs and Armstrong and not till then – and Mr Overand, brother to Fanny Caldwell's husband. As we dined at Hillsborough I picked up an anecdote there of the lord of it, rather curious and not unlikely. [The] late Miss McPherson had for some time ta[—]ed with an air that gave reason for alar[m] not only for the honour of the house but the Blessington estate which in case of a second son went past Lord H[illsborough]. He had the greatest reason to fear his father's intention of marrying Miss Betty and determining to play one of his bold strokes employed a clerk of the Marquis's who became a great favourite and very necessary to him – from writing so like his fine hand on which he always piqued himself, that he employed him to write all his letters and he only added his name. This man he made write a letter as from the Marquis, then in England, to the lady professing the highest esteem etc., but as all further connection must be at an end recommended her acceptance of a young husband prepared for her and £500. The lady accepted both and the old dotard did not know till he came to Ireland that he had lost the only female from whom he hoped any attention, literally lost her, for she is dead. It was too late and I was too tired when we got to Newry to see Goddard.

The day clears, all is bustle, which in a town I like but nothing have I yet seen comparable to C[abin] Hill house. Adieu my beloved Sam. This is a mere nothing of a letter, but unless there is some matter of fact intelligence I believe I shall not write again for I cannot do it here.

Wednesday, up since eight, and at ten, Will walked down, a powdered beau.

426 20 April [1793]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [420]

Dear Sam, I hope your business will allow you to keep to your appointment so as to be here on Saturday next at farthest. Matty seems much better than I expected and seems to have rather gained flesh than lost it. Little news here, but much despondence not only in our party, but in general. S. Dick came from London yesterday. I met him this day in the street and he tells me he is going back again immediately, that the mercantile world is as much in confusion as the political and that he is determined to get out of it as soon as he is able. Neilson is here, but I think he is far from being in the spirits he usually has. I don't know well what has been agreed to in the Catholic Committee but I believe they address the King, Lord Lieutenant, and thank Hobart – a notion even to make the latter a present of a service of plate, but I believe this was overruled – resolutions of thanks to Belfast, Derry and the Province of Ulster, but I believe little mention of reform, much less a pledge of co-operation in it. Keogh has been complained of for negotiating on this side the water underhand and with the under secretary Nepean¹⁰⁹ in England, and for having been the cause of obstructing total emancipation, I know not how truly. There is however a division among them, but I imagine the most are satisfied.

It is positively asserted that many of the members of the Whig Club have acknowledged that they have submitted too much to ministry, that on the meeting of parliament it will be corrected, and that among other things severe notice will be taken of the committal of Butler and Bond. Strong rumours that I am in danger, but as yet I hear nothing of it – perhaps as the distribution of the *Address to the Volunteers* is now abandoned and the publication is the offence, my name is taken with Rowan's and they may find it difficult to prosecute him and leave me. Rowan wished to employ none but our society's lawyers and indeed was half inclined to have no lawyer at all – but Emmet absolutely declined to take the lead and recommended the Recorder and Fletcher¹¹⁰ who are accordingly retained, but the affair goes on in so dilatory a way in the courts that there will not probably be a hearing this term, which he wishes for depending more on the jury appointed by the present sheriffs.

My two months in which I supplied Butler's place as president will be out the 1st of May, of which I am glad. Butler this day or two has appeared flat and told me in private that his spirits were all forced. I dare say he is heartily tired of his confinement, but I don't know what course he is adopting – certainly his friend Dr Burke¹¹¹ hinted to me some idea about dissolving the society at which I expressed great astonishment, and a rumour is spread that there was an intention of ourselves dissolving but I cannot know any author or an authority of it.

Tone I hear gets £800 from the Catholics for his trouble. What your Ulster convention or committee will do, time will show. Reynolds continues. WD

109 Sir Evan Nepean (1751-1822), chief secretary 1804, governor of Bombay 1812-19 (*DNB*).

110 The recorder of Dublin was Denis George, afterwards a baron of the exchequer; William Fletcher (1750-1823), barrister, later judge, was part of Drennan's own defence team in 1794.

111 Dr John Burke, physician and United Irishman.

427 Saturday morn [20 April 1793]

MARTHA MCTIER, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [409]

Dear Sam, After your last to Will, I though you would certainly let me hear the next post how your last tumult ended, but even this day there is no letter. I have left an agreeable Collegian and an Irish priest (on his way to Belfast and from that to France) below stairs – that before the hurry of the day arrives, I may chat a little to you.

Yesterday being fast day I determined not to go in pursuit of what I have at home, a good preacher. On this occasion I made a bishop do and chose Christ Church – Will literally attended me, for if I had followed him I never would have got in. I waited among the crowd till I saw the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Mayor, Archbishop and the rest of them pass close to me – the doors were then for a time locked, and Will would much rather have returned home than solicit entrance. This, however, I obtained and got in to a seat which being obliged to rĕsign, really being turned out, Will was not able to brook and to stand in the aisle. He darted out, upon my assuring him I would stay out the service. He returned for me after it, and I found he had procured a seat for himself locked up with the common council men for a piece of silver, and that I had succeeded below without it. The Archbishop of Dublin¹¹² read part of the service – he is a strikingly handsome man, and read with much feeling and becoming seriousness. He appeared to me however not to have any prospect of being long in this world, nor to be satisfied at leaving it. His appearance struck me so much, that on inquiring into his private character, I found it was no greater wonder, as in his family he is a violent tyrant.

While I was at church several people called on me. I missed Mrs Conyngham and Mary Stafford, met Mrs Gordon, her brother, and Fanny Mussenden who with the old family attention had been employed the day before, without my knowledge, in trying to procure me a ticket this night for the private theatre. She did not succeed and we dine with Mrs Bruce.

At four o'clock yesterday Rowan paid me a second visit, and brought his lady with him. She is a clever, sensible, easy woman. They came to make a request which for some time I refused, but they pressed it with so much apparent kindness and apologies for the freedom that I complied – it was, that its being fast day and U[nited] Irishmen's night they thought we might be disengaged and dine with them in the family way. They sat till with [*sic*] a quarter of five on a morning visit, and an hour after I was dressed and at their house in Dominick Street. The gentlemen went to their club, and Mrs Rowan and I had a very agreeable conversation party till eleven, when, in an elegant house, servants, etc., we sat down to four very little dishes. For fear we were abroad Mrs Gordon obligingly brought cards with her for Monday – I promised for myself, Will being out. She met him, but he pleaded engagement, Davy Gordon never having asked him before. Tuesday and Sunday I am to be with Fanny Mussenden at her aunt's and some public place, and Wednesday, with my old friend Mrs Orr. A gentleman who came here when Will was out, who I did not

112 Robert Fowler (1762?-1801), Archbishop of Dublin (*DNB*).

know, sat with me an hour, and in order to procure me a seat to hear Kirwan, wrote a letter to a gentleman who has one in the church where he preaches on Sunday 1st, so that I hope there I will be secure of not being turned out.

Perhaps you will be with me – strange that you do not write. I forgot to tell you the [—] thing in the Bishop's discourse that struck [—] and in which I think he descended much both from his own dignity and that of the place he then filled – in recommending it to every person singly to serve his country by endeavouring to be good and virtuous – here at least, said he, we may all be United Irishmen. I did not pay him much attention nor saw no one that did. His manner was not good, and the female figure on the Kildare monument,¹¹³ for viewing which I was better fixed, took place of him. The weather has been very unfavourable and this day is desperately bad, but I got the best of it, two hours before Will was up. Will Macartney¹¹⁴ walks in here often and is the whiffle more than ever, he threatened me with two visits in the day – but I hope he will not be as bad as his word. I have seen no one yet that appears so genteel in the true sense of the word, more kind, and proper, than Will's landlady, with three fine children, a large exact house, three servants and a well regulated family, and John is a treasure to his master – without whom I know not what he would do for he depends on him for even winding up his watch, and other day I heard him whisper to his master to carve the chicken. He had got salmon for our dinner yesterday and was much disappointed when we went out. MM

You cannot conc[eive] what a loss the want of my wa[tch is her]e – do try to put me in a way to g[et it.] My cold is almost gone.

428 22 April [17]93

SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO MARTHA MCTIER, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [410]

No doubt my Matty will be much surprised at not hearing from me, but on Friday your mother filled a blank and I did not like that you should receive one from her and me in the same day. I received yours and Will's last night and am happy to find you are doing so well, be as comfortable and happy as you can. It is my misfortune not to have it in my power to share it with you only in imagination, for I find it will be impossible for me to leave this even for two days, for never had I such a flow of business as since you left me, and never did I see anything so serious and alarming as I now experience every day. Hu[gh] and I write every night till near nine, and I am terribly frightened for some of our friends but this to yourself. I thank my stars that I have no concern in trade.

While they are talking, for Mrs Mattear is here, I am scrawling this and hardly know what I am writing, but I must take the opportunity of filling out the tea. You are sure if any further disturbance had happened here I would have given you early intelligence of it, even though I should have taken it from my smoking time. I don't

113 The Kildare monument is in the south transept.

114 Probably brother of Rev. Dr George Macartney of Antrim.

dine abroad and beside the great influx I have had a great deal to do with shipping, my charge for writing for one, which I expect to finish this evening, is five guineas which they seemed to think moderate. I hear nothing of the Pattersons moving but I suppose they will in time. I have not been at Blackwell's, nor do I know whether he has the things ready; I am preparing to have the front of the house, the hall, and stair head window done. Make your own time and yourself easy and happy and I'll be so and do all I can to make matters easy for your flitting. I'll write to Will and to J[ohn] P[ollock] as soon as I can get time. Yours SM ever [sic]

22 April [17]93

I opened this to tell you that the evening there was all the appearance of a riot, and good reason to believe the military intended one against the *Star* office. Haslett¹¹⁵ getting a hint of it went between five and six to Bristow who gave him a letter to Captain Barber¹¹⁶ requesting he would be particularly careful of his men this evening. H went to the barrack, B[arber] was not there. He met him afterwards in the street, delivered Bristow's letter. B[arber] told him he had heard it whispered and that he left his dinner to see that his men should be kept in order and that he had his picquets ready in the barrack in case of any disturbance. Between eight and nine two recruits drunk, struck several people in the streets, they were beat by the mob.

The officers and some young men of the town met in the crowd where a servant of a young officer swore he would defend his master and made several strokes at some of the crowd, on which he was knocked down and his master drew his sword and Barber laid his hand on his when Henry Joy McCracken¹¹⁷ stepped forward and desired him not to draw it, Barber said he was a ringleader of the mob and a rascal. McC[racken] replied that he was his equal and would have satisfaction. B said that was an improper place and he did not know him. McC said Mr Bristow would tell him who he was and his name was – and he was ready to speak to him anywhere. Whether it will end here no one can tell, through all the crowd this evening I did not see a young man that was not armed with a stick or some good weapon.

The owner of Franklin took down his sign this evening and got a letter from the sovereign¹¹⁸ to the commanding officer telling him what he had done and that he ought to be protected.

429 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [414]

Dear Sam, I suppose Matty has told you any news that is stirring and I have little more to say than that I am much disappointed at your not being able to come up

115 Henry Haslett (1758-1806), Belfast merchant and businessman, one of the proprietors of the *Northern Star*.

116 Lucius Barber of the Royal Artillery.

117 Henry Joy McCracken (1767-98), United Irishman (*DNB*); cousin of Henry Joy of the *Belfast News-Letter*.

118 i.e. Bristow.

for a day or two, which is certainly very surprising. Times here are as bad as with you, and so much is political and mercantile fears operating in every breast that you can scarcely hear anything in a bookseller's shop or a coffee room but a whisper. I was this minute accosted by a lawyer who in the lowest tone nuzzled in my ear an enquiry how Dr Reynolds was, and I answered him loudly that he was very well, saying what the devil do you speak in a whisper to me as if it were treason to ask about a friend's health; if things be come to such a pass, let us lock up ourselves in our closets. The shop was divided into three or four whispering *tête à têtes* at the time, one in each corner. Rowan told us this morning that Emmet would be brought in as one of the three who went to the printers with the Volunteer address and that the printer was threatened by government if he did not give him up, as they were sure of Butler and Rowan.

The Catholic Committee have given £500 to Butler for which he is in part indebted to their joint hatred of the Chancellor. Bond is left to himself and our society, but perhaps has some promises made him, or perhaps is not supposed to want assistance and he has not done anything particularly for their cause. Tone gets £1,500 which is certainly very handsome, and I believe well deserved, and in addition to £500 which Jones got a year ago, he now gets £500 more and a promise of another £500 when their funds enable them. A resolution to this purport, that a parliamentary reform is as necessary to the real interests of the crown as to the liberties of the people, and that they are ready to join with their Protestant fellow citizens in every constitutional measure for attaining this great national object, will be proposed and it is said will be easily carried or something to that effect – but it all depends on Keogh who I believe still leads them all, though pretty generally suspected of having bargained with the minister on the other side and Hobart on this with respect to every article of the present bill, and perhaps to have submitted to a condition of drawing off from his new friends in the North, not suddenly but gradually so as to save appearances.

It appears strange that Belfast can bear such a state of apprehension. Why don't they call a town meeting, and in an address to the executive power of the country detail the state of the town for some time past, and desire that some instructions may be given officially to the military or that they will not answer for the consequences. Some decisive measure of this kind of justification for what has happened and what may happen is certainly called for, and not to sit down perfectly silent and passive, or as it were lying in wait for a riot. Let the town speak a little for itself and not give foundation to the terrible calumnies every day propagating against it. The Lieutenant was very dry and laconic to the Catholics who went up with the address, so far as it is reported, only to say I thank you, but one can scarcely believe anything.

I don't know whether it will be proper or dignified in you to be writing to Pollock. I have never seen nor heard of him since. Neilson, I hear, had a great deal of conversation with McCormick, Tone, etc., but he did not communicate to me anything that passed. Reynolds is at present exclaiming against the Catholics and says they will not mention a reform – others talk of the necessity in some time of an Ulster

meeting and if possible to threaten a serious and momentous emigration for the dropping away of individuals is of no account. The course of this summer must certainly show something important one way or other.

Franklin's head taken down will quell your riot. That was the point of honour which given up will satisfy. You want some mountain men. WD

430 Wednesday 3 o'clock [24 April 1793]

MARTHA MCTIER, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [412]

Much indeed have I wondered at being ten days absent from home, and not a line from you, nor did my mother's entertaining letter account for it for I was led to suppose it a secret letter that spoke of nothing but bacon and politics, and as an interesting subject in the day always impressed my imagination through the night – I rose this morn after many troubled dreams of you and a woman who had supplanted me.

And is there really no hope of your coming for me? I put off going to see Mrs Abington¹¹⁹ in expectation of it, got two seats secured for Kirwan on Sunday; and two for the Gentleman's Theatre¹²⁰ on Saturday and if I had been in the parliament house (again[st] which time I suppose all things in regard to political danger of Will will be determined), I would wish much to get home. Enquire every day for an opportunity which you will much more readily hear of than I can.

The weather has been very bad and it has already cost me near a guinea for chair hire.

Many strangers having called on me and invited me to their houses, with very marked civility, among these were two Mrs Emmets and their daughter, a very pretty Mrs Johnson and her daughter, a beauty, and accomplished young lady – these two appear to be Will's chief favourites. Kirwan the philosopher¹²¹ sat here an hour yesterday – and I spent it very agreeably. There is little of politics in Belfast to what one hears here – except in mixed parties but where the company know each other, they go much farther in both sides than in Belfast. And there are no other denominations than loyalist or republican – but as I have procured a frank I have made Will promise to give you some [of]¹²² the political matter. This day we hear that they have insisted on McDonnell the printer giving proof against Counsellor Emmet for having along with Butler and Rowan distributed the *Address to the Volunteers*. Friends fear and enemies hope Will's danger, yet he remains unattacked and in good spirits.

The Catholics have rewarded their best friends well. Will had no claim on them, rather the contrary, for in the last publication he named them, it was in an assurance that it was not their cause but that of reform he was engaged in. Poor Jones will be little the better, if what I hear is true – that his mornings are spent in dram-drinking, and his evenings in wenching.

119 Mrs Frances Abington (1737-1815), actress (*DNB*).

120 The Gentleman's Theatre was a small private theatre in Fishamble Street, directed by the Earl of Westmeath, which opened in March 1793, and continued until 1796.

121 Richard Kirwan (1733-1812), chemist and natural philosopher (*DNB*).

122 Word supplied.

I never spent so much money on a Sunday as the last one. I went to Strand Street and heard Dr Moody and from that time till five returned visits, and if a chair crosses the bridge though so short a way as from Dame Street it is double fare, also double after twelve at night. At eight I got my hair dressed and went to the Rotunda with Fanny Mussenden and Will, and spent four hours very agreeably at what well deserves the name of promenade. The rooms are grand, and I never saw the striking effect of fine lustres and well light streets before. We went from the round room at eleven up to as grand a one, the tea room, a long one filled with tea tables, at which we procured with great ease and little expense (to the ladies) all we wanted.

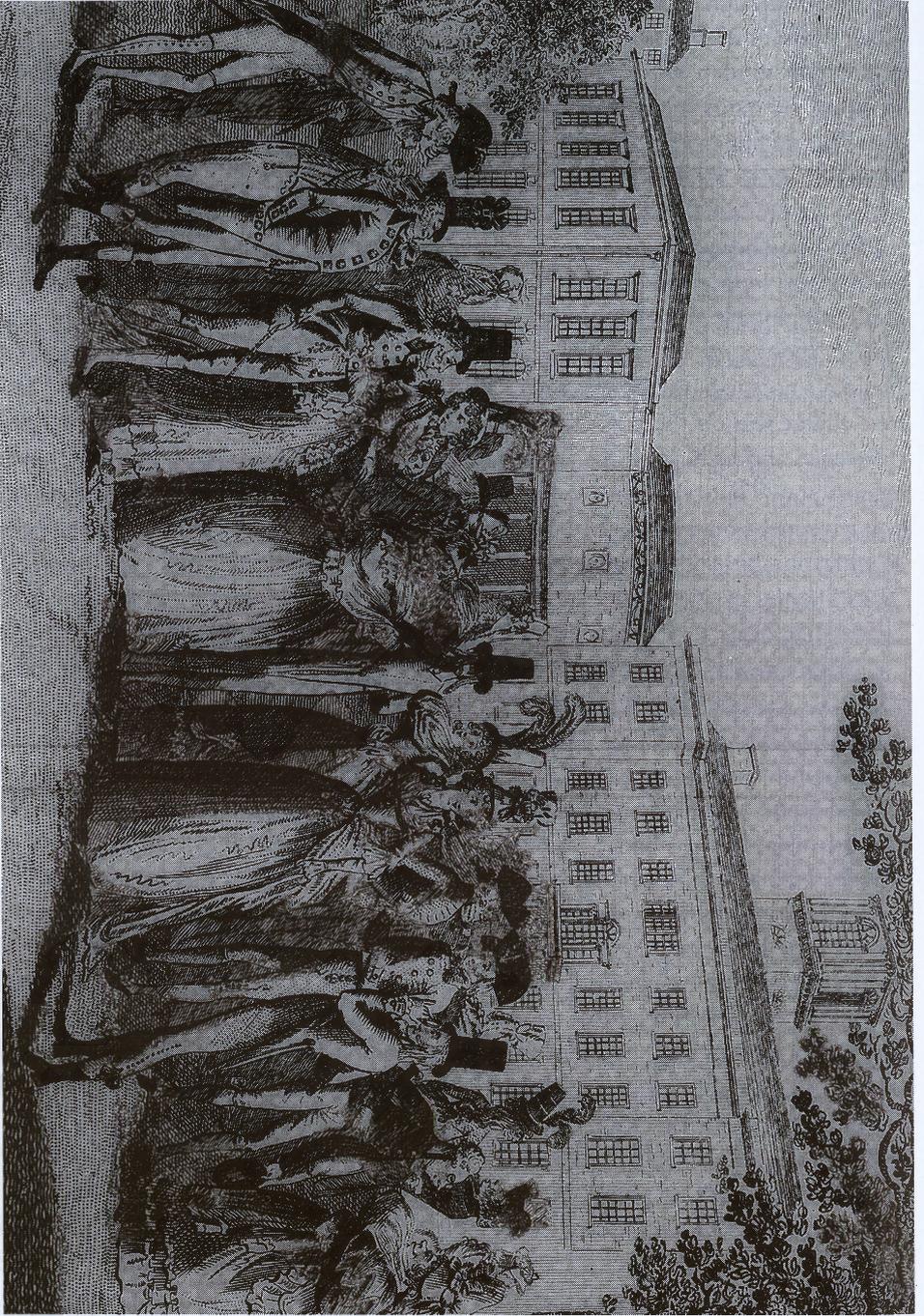
I have not been at much expense for dress – indeed had the rules for the season allowed me to wear my satin I should have not paid anything for that article, but I could not appear in it. White muslin is the prevailing dress, and finding I must on Will's account go among strangers, I have been obliged to buy one. I gave Dr Haliday's note to Sam Bruce and desired him to get the money and pay himself whatever charge was on the papers you sent him. He muttered somewhat about a small difference and as he gave me no further account of it, I suppose that difference is against you. That two guineas therefore and the three for my journey is off the ten you gave me. I have not bought the bed nor anything else, the weather having been so unfavourable and still expecting your assistance. Rowan has just been here. He looks like the devil and laments your not coming up. I do not on his account for I cannot like him.

I wrote a few lines to Mrs Conyngham the day after I came to town and got a verbal answer that she would call upon me that day or the next. She came the third with Mrs Davy Gordon on her second visit, who has been remarkably civil. I was not at home but saw her when I returned her visit on Sunday, for which day she had invited me to a family party which I declined. She hoped I would come to her some day this week but on me telling her I was engaged for them all she said, she was so herself. I then said, it was lucky I had been so when she asked me. Oh she replied, I would have put off an engagement to have had you. This however I found there would have been no occasion for, for meeting her at Mr Gordon's, she discovered she was to have a small party at home on Tuesday, and asked Fanny Mussenden and I to go, any time before twelve. I was in a few doors of her at ten, but did not go in. She was as fine as a horse, and as subjects on which her wit was most conspicuous don't do for mixed company, she had little to say, but that little indicated a mind much pleased with her house, fortune, and high company.

We dine at Dunn's on Thursday. I applied to him for franks but could not get them. They have a handsome house and very lovely children. I played shilling cassino¹²³ with her, at which she showed so much displeasure with a young gentleman her partner, he told afterwards he determined to lose the rubber, and did it accordingly. Her card for Thursday mentioned Saturday also, if we were engaged the former day. I called on Mrs Hartigan¹²⁴ as a civility I thought proper to pay one who had been

123 A card game.

124 Daughter of John Pollock of Newry; Mrs Sinclair was her sister.



The Rotunda Gardens in 1790

friendly to our family, but determined not to accept of any in return. I hoped to see Mrs Sinclaire but I did not get in. This was but yesterday – and when I see them shall try to form my travelling party with Mrs Sinclaire. Jenny Mathews has just been here, and invited me to dine with them on Saturday. I pleaded the engagement to the play which she says is put off and has promised, if it is not, to let me go to it – but seems very desirous I should go. I refused an invitation to Dr Emmet's which I am now sorry for, as Will wished me to see them. I could write you some more interesting matter but think it better to refer it till we meet. This is the only good day we have had, and I have refused going to walk that I might answer your first letter. I have got a connoisseur in bacon to choose my mother's, and hope to have it sent safe to her. Will you tell me how to recover my watch? Will has promised to write for this frank, but I see no time he has left as we dine out.

Nancy's bonnet has been a prize to me and quite the thing. I wish I had something to do for Betty or Sally. Give my love to them, Margaret and the Doctor, etc., and write whenever you receive this if you care for your affectionate MM

431 24 April [1793]

SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO MARTHA MCTIER, [DUBLIN] [411]

My dear Matty, The enclosed I got at the Post Office and opened it, but did not read a word of it, if any news in it let us know. We have been since my last tolerably quiet, though not at all free from apprehension. Yesterday morning the sovereign sent for Henry McCracken, to speak to him about what passed the night before between Captain Barber, he wanted McCracken to make an apology to Barber, he refused. Colonel French was present, who talked a great deal about his soldiers being insulted in the streets and that he would give them orders not to suffer it, and he swore by God if there was one gun fired from any window at any of his people he would immediately burn the town, and he would now order three regiments more here and bring back the dragoons. This occasioned a desire in a great many people here to have a town meeting called and this day Vance and I called on the sovereign with a requisition signed by a great many. He scrupled about calling the meeting until we saw Henry Joy who would explain to us what passed in some company the night before where an association to preserve the peace of the town and to prosecute offenders. It is a very good paper and quite unexceptionable but I not sure that it to [*sic*] preclude the town meeting, a great many signed both. I think our greatest danger now of being involved is from a parcel of little blackguard boys who gather in the streets at nights, and groan [*sic*] the soldiers and their cry is smell gunpowder. John Macartney¹²⁵ has very prudently sold his house to John Hamilton who gives him three hundred guineas for it. Tis past and I must go and dress. I am going to dine with Dr Mitchell and his mother at A. Buntin's, which I would have declined but that he is offended at me. I leave this open till after the post comes in.

125 An unsuccessful Belfast businessman.

Tis now near nine and Henry not returned from the office, I cannot wait as I have just received a message from the sheriff, some affidavit I suppose from the people that Archd tells me are with him at McGuighans. For ever yours amen, SM

I promised to sup at A. B[untin's], B[etty] and M[argaret] there, S[ally] at the play, here protesting¹²⁶ alone, since you left this, average number of bills about ten each night.

432 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST¹²⁷ [367]

The Catholics have come to a resolution pretty strongly expressive of their attachment to a reform sanctioned as it has been by the House of Commons in its principle, and after doing this the committee has dissolved resigning their trust, and considering their duty as performed. How they will act in consequence of this resolution is not easy to say, but it certainly is as explicit a document of their political belief as a body, as any Dungannon resolution on the part of the Protestants, and therefore they are in this business at least abreast with the other part of the nation – and indeed considering the declared enmity of the English minister to a reform and the supposed aversion of their royal benefactor to the same measure, I think their resolution indicates a decided and honest public mind. There was I hear but one or two negatives.

This certainly forms a groundwork for national co-operation and a progress, a motion forward on the part of the North, to take the state of the nation into their consideration, and to see whether with the declaration of the Catholics for reform and that of the Protestants, and the sanction which the House has given to the principle, whether with all that, there will be any step forward in putting any plan into execution. The inequality of representation will still be more glaring now that the Catholics are emancipated, than it was before – for in the counties the electors will be increased greatly merely to return the same number of members, and in the rotten close boroughs in the same counties the proprietors will keep them as excluded from the Catholics as ever, and even they will find it difficult to get into the freedom of any more open boroughs – so that the representation is really more monstrous than before, the counties and one or two cities being all they can get into by their emancipation. This certainly must make them as steady friends of reform as we are, even from selfish motives. Our society is to draw up a state of the misrepresentation of the country as soon as may be which will be a twin of the English statement. The Catholic Committee grant £2,000 for a statue to the King, and as they are now fellow-citizens, it certainly would be right to elect them into our meetings, and make them fellow labourers with us, before they are worked on by government.

I don't know whether Rowan will get his trial pushed on, this term; it is certain that the crown lawyers mean to proceed to outlawry against Tandy. It is thought

126 i.e. protesting bills.

127 With note on cover: the King a. John Tisdale & others – affidavit of John Tisdale, memorial of not being proprietor of the *N[orthern] S[tar]*.

here that the spirit of Belfast is at a low ebb indeed – ought there not to be a meeting of the Dungannon committee merely to talk over the state of the country? My chairmanship is out next night – I suppose they will elect Harvey for the next quarter and I will escape Lord Dillon's¹²⁸ threatened bill. The Houses sit on Tuesday. Failures whispered here, but trade I should imagine to be more panic struck than really struck down – like the people. Perhaps you will still find time to come up. WD

433 Begun on Friday and ended on Saturday

MARTHA MCTIER, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [417]

Dear Sam, Though I wrote yesterday, as by mistake I happen to have a frank dated for today I will not let it be useless. I have seen Mrs Sinclaire and she seems so uncertain what time she will leave this, that on her I can have no dependence. I then turned to little Rainey,¹²⁹ but he has changed his mind and does not go down for his wife.

I am engaged till Thursday and should be anxious about getting home, if I do not hear of company the week after next, and therefore beg you will enquire for some, though my time here has been very pleasant, both within doors and abroad. The only dull day I have spent was at Mrs Dunn's. I walked the whole morning. Hair dressing and chair hire, for the Counsellor, cost me 3s 6d, and the party consisted of the old doctor,¹³⁰ his wife and daughter – the son perfectly silent, the old man asking the questions of dotage, the old lady knitting her stocking – no fire – no cards – and before ten, I took my leave, hesitating whether I should then go to two other parties, which I had refused. They have very lovely children and seem blind to everything else. The only person she made enquiry for was Sally,¹³¹ and it was slight. The second time I saw her, I mentioned her Aunt Getty¹³² – but she turned the subject, as if in a fright.

I think I can get carpeting here cheaper and better than in Belfast, and as we must have it, at least for the stairs, I beg you would just get Miss Patterson to send you word how much it will take from the foot of the stairs to the room we call our own, and cross again from the other two bed chambers. I can also get very pretty papers, even so low as 10d a dozen, and wish you would let me know how much it would take for the drawing room, and determine by trying the carpet you have, whether you will buy one for the drawing room or the parlour, and let me know how much I shall buy, for I can get it here, at the first word, 4d a yard cheaper than in Belfast. A quarter of an hour will do all this.

128 Charles, 12th Viscount Dillon (1745-1813).

129 Possibly Thomas Rainey (d.1799), notary public, United Irishman, and brother of Mrs Bruce senior.

130 Rev. William Dunn (1714-95), minister of Cooke Street then Strand Street congregation, Dublin; his wife was a daughter of Rev. Patrick Bruce of Killyleagh; they were parents of Counsellor John Dunn.

131 Sally Mattear, Sam's sister.

132 Mrs Dunn, formerly Jenny Bateson, was the niece of Martha White of Orangefield, who had married James Getty of Belfast in 1755 (Registry of Deeds 177 520 119107).

I spoke to Sam Bruce since about the bill and his charge on the papers, which I was glad to hear was but a few shillings. The two Mrs Emmets and Miss called again yesterday, and again I was out. They had invited us for both Thursday and Saturday, and spoke to Will with such seeming desire to have me on Sunday evening, that he promised for me, though being to hear Kirwan from ten in the morning, and afterwards to go to the Circular Road,¹³³ was so much in one day that I had refused every invitation for the evening, but Mr Emmet's and a Mrs Johnson who has not yet invited us, were two places Will seemed so eager I should go to, that I will comply – though I shall be a witch.

I suppose John Macartney has been hurt by the times. I have several times heard that there is one man in Belfast much feared, but never heard him named – Batt, I have reason to think hardly pushed – but surely in his purse proud family he will not fall. The bankers also I would suppose pretty safe, at least from hurting others. My fears therefore turn on the Fergusons, or C[unningham] Greg. By the bye I have just heard a melancholy account of poor J[enny] Greg from Caroline Mussenden who had a letter from Mrs Hobson, Jenny's friend now in London with her, who says her arm is in a dreadful state, Hunter¹³⁴ attending her, that she does not yet know whether there will be any operation, but if it should be advised Jenny is determined to submit to it, and Mrs Hobson to stay with her till it is over. If you do not get me down soon, I will have no peace with the Mussendens, who want me to go with them to Portarlington¹³⁵ if but for two days. They go by water there, and would return with me here the same way. I am glad I have it in my power to accommodate one of them with a seat to Kirwan – I hoped it would have been yours.

I never saw Will in such spirits. He is the life of every company we have been in, and though there is little reason for this in the business way, yet I plainly perceive his character both as a man and an author is respected, nor do we ever walk the street without my perceiving some token of it. I resisted going to see Mrs Abington on Monday, rather than be uncivil to a sister in law of Mrs Bruce's, who had engaged me for that night. Tuesday is one of six card assemblies at the Rotunda, the most fashionable public places at present – and as all the fine people and beauties go there, I intend getting a peep at them. The Mussendens have urged me to this, and I am to be of their party. It is dangerous to hint here, or repeat, a report of a failure, for which there are some prosecutions set on foot. For some days Mr Dick was spoke off but his having been in England, returned, and gone back in twenty-four hours, I suppose gave rise to this. My mother may have an opportunity (if Mrs Getty is not gone) of once more surprising her with the death and burial of an Aunt Smith who died here three months ago.

Mrs Kingston's letter was the poorest I ever saw from her. It appears to be what she would not choose – that of an old woman. I hear Kingston of London has failed.

133 At this date the Circular Road was where the most fashionable people of Dublin went to drive, like Rotten Row in London.

134 John Hunter (1728-93), surgeon and anatomist (*DNB*).

135 Co. Laois.

My own old particular friends meet and treat me with much affection and among them I meet with very animated interesting discourse and plain sixpenny whist. I neither saw nor heard from Mrs Conyngham since – nor would I, if I was to be here a month, enter her doors.

Mrs Gordon has been hurrying liveries for her servants again¹³⁶ Sunday – just to take me to the Circular Road. I cannot help distinguishing – but these are such little matters that you will be apt to scorn the writer. I have left letter to Will in order to fill the frank more to your taste.

I wished to tempt the girls to let me execute a commission for them and therefore enclose a pattern of a tabbynett,¹³⁷ 6d under the usual price, which I think would suit Betty and last her a long time. The spring calicoes are not yet come out. Write soon.

Oh my watch, my watch.

434 27 April [17]93, franked by Jones Agnew

SAM MCTIER, BELFAST, TO MARTHA MCTIER, BUT ADDRESSED TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [415]

My dearest, I received yours and Will's last night dated on Wednesday and was much disappointed at not hearing from you this evening. Tis now half past eight, and I am so tired writing since a little after ten in the morning that I only write because you desire me, and must leave a great part of the business of the day to finish tomorrow. Hugh is yet at it hammer and tongs. I have not read a line even in one of the Belfast papers this week, last night when I was at my pipe they read to me the two n[umbers?] of the *Patriot*, a silly thing.

The people here are up on hearing that the Catholics have declared for a parliamentary reform. If they would stick to this we would yet get it. One day this week Dr H[aliday] dined at the Gordons with Colonel French and many other officers. He told me he had determined to avoid politics, but that they were brought in head and shoulders and that he got warm in defence of the town. I since hear that French and he were both so warm and had such high words that the company were very uneasy. Haliday said the people of the town wanted what he always thought and always would think they had a right to, a reform. The other asked how he would get it. He answered by application in every way. French swore they never would get it, but by submission, that he would order three more regiments here and fix seven soldiers in every house and bring back the dragoons – they met next day and both acknowledged they had been too warm.

I never had a thought of writing to J[ohn] P[ollock] until Will mentioned it. Buy the bed and when an agreeable opportunity offers come home that we may flit.¹³⁸ All that S. Bruce would have to pay for me could not exceed seven or eight shillings.

136 i.e. against, meaning ready for.

137 A watered fabric of wool and silk.

138 i.e. move house.



The Rev. Walter Blake Kirwan (1754-1805), preaching on behalf of the Female Orphan House, Dublin

These times will go hard with our friends the F[erguson]s in Linen Hall Street and Woodville, but I think it now certain their great danger is over. Ever your SM

435 Monday [29 April 1793]

MARTHA MCTIER, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [418]

My dearest Sam, The scene at Peter's Church yesterday was altogether of an extraordinary kind indeed – we stood for about an hour at a paling put up on purpose before the door of the church, for which the day was favourable. A guard of soldiers prevented our getting farther, the door was sometimes unlocked and the guard called on to let a gentleman in black pass, or some one or two individuals. Among these I got in to a little court where I stood, and in about half an hour after, the gentleman who was to procure me a seat, and Will, got to me and along with another party worked our way through the church door. It was then but thin, yet our seat could not be obtained. We therefore placed ourselves on one of the many forms in the aisle, and I took my seat near the pulpit, and directly facing the door, through which all the people of fashion in the lower part of the house walked up close to me. This was so very favourable that I refused to go into a seat, which hundreds wanted, till the press became so great that absolute fear of being hurt made me accept of the seat kept for me, to which one of a dozen, black gowned gentlemen with white rods conducted me before the sermon began: I was still well situated during the church service for doing what everyone else was, amusing myself as if in a public place of entertainment. There was beauty and characters sufficient for me – the finest lady in the seat read a cassino fan – two seats behind me sat the interesting, handsome, fashionable Lady Fitzgibbon, the Bishop of Killala, Isaac Corry, a very handsome young Ponsonby, and four other young men of fashion. Ponsonby, however, is now said to be the favoured man.

All was bustle and the women entered with as much delight in their eyes as if they had got into heaven – no attention to the prayers, to very delightful singing – all talking in the seats – in the outside these staff officers pressing through, trying often in vain to obtain a sitting for some friend. Among these church officers, to my great amusement, I recognised my old friend Jack Winder, tripping still on the light fantastic toe, but with an old and withered visage conducting the great to their seats.

An awkward plain looking man ascended the pulpit in the midst of confusion. In one instant, still attention dwelt on each face – no one moved, and even seemed as if ceasing to breathe. He read the Lord's Prayer – not well. His text was the Good Samaritan. I was prepared to find his action disagreeable, violent, and unbecoming the pulpit but I did not think so – though once the cushion fell which he lifted without any confusion. His voice is good but not delightful, nor does its tones touch the heart. It serves him however for he never got beyond it, even when most violent. What I admired most in him was the forcible language he expressed his liberal and sound sentiments in, sentiments which most of those who heard him

were less used to than I was and which they would be startled at, if they heard them in a meeting house, but from Kirwan, as the fashion, and aided by the strongest language I ever heard, they carry conviction, which if this man continues to preach I think may do great service. When we meet I shall perhaps have it in my power to give you an idea of this wonderful man.

I wish I was at home for though I have every reason to like this, the expense I am really obliged to be at begins to make me uneasy.

Saturday, we refused dining with Jenny Mathew but went to a very genteel party in the evening. We met Mrs Conygham, the Hartigans, Mrs Sinclaire and twenty others. I was surprised at the elegance of house, furniture, plate, servants, supper etc. etc. I went at eight o'clock, no whist to be got, Mrs Conyn[gham] will not play it. I was of her party at cassino and as only shillings little did she relish it. At this I lost thirteen games, and then cut out. When the gentlemen came up, I hoped to recover by joining three of them at whist, as they told shillings was their rate. They all played well – but to them, I lost eight games more. This, and a shilling for my cards, three for my chair and 1s 7d for hair dressing, made the expense of that evening £1 6s 6d – tell it not in Belfast – but you know I make it a rule to confess all my sins to you. Last night, I spent an attic even[ing] at Dr Emmet's – but half a crown to Kirwan, who really made me tremble at the smallness of the sum, and a shilling for chair hire, with 1s 7d for hair-dressing, still kept up my expense. We got invitations for a friendly party this evening at Hartigans, and card enclosed in a kind letter for a formal party on Friday, both which I declined. We are to be at Will's favourite Mrs Johnson's on Thursday, this night at Mr Hutton's,¹³⁹ tomorrow we dine at my old friend's, Mrs Thwaites',¹⁴⁰ and go in the evening to the card assembly. On Sunday I breakfast at the College, and Monday also, and after that I would be very glad to set off for home – but I repeat it you must try to hear of someone for me to travel with, for here I cannot.

My greatest pleasure has been in the civil things said to me of Will, and how much he dwelt on the pleasure of meeting me. Mrs Emmet told me that her son said he did not believe there was a happier man in Dublin than Drennan the night his sister arrived. Indeed I can judge of it, in every way, but what is therefore needless words. He is greatly improved in general conversation, particularly among the women, is in excellent spirits, and really says many good things. As we passed Lady Fitzgibbon's seat, I[saac] Corry called out to him by his name so loud that I could not but believe it was done to point him out to the rest of the party who instantly turned their eyes on him, and I never walk out with him that I do not hear someone say, that is Dr D[rennan].

Marsden¹⁴¹ has died immensely rich and has fixed a blot on his wife, not undeservedly, by leaving her not a penny beyond her settlement of a hundred a year

139 One of the brothers of Mrs William Bruce.

140 Mrs Augustin Thwaites, formerly Elizabeth Smith.

141 Daniel Marsden/Marston, husband of Kitty Corry, sister of Isaac Corry; Colonel Browne was the husband of another sister.

and £2,000 a piece to each of her daughters – two sons get the rest, Colonel Brown their guardian, I suppose she must get a pension

I hope you have answered my last letter. Rumours yet of Will's danger – I wish they were over before I leave this. How came you to say you were disappointed at not hearing from me on Saturday when you did on Friday – this is unreasonable.

I have one other frank and perhaps shall fill it. I beg you may tell me whatever you hear of poor Jenny Greg. MM

Rowan sends me the Belfast papers. I enclose you a Dublin one relative to him. They are playing the deuce at Newgate in regard to expense which is to come off the society and therefore mean and unworthy conduct in them. There was to be a meeting however to consider of, and put a stop to it – wines, fruits, mistresses, etc., in profusion. Will's tailor contributed to this on Saturday, and out of respect to him Will made one of the party.

436 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [369]

Dear Sam, There is a dreadful earthquake in the mercantile world that shakes every house and has already tumbled several. Comerford and O'Brien,¹⁴² principal in the cotton line, have failed though with goods to the value of £70,000. It is said they have bills out for the sum of £180,000. There was a meeting of their friends on Sunday, a day before their failure, and Byrne, Braughall etc. with other Catholics, for they are of that persuasion, offered £30,000 to O'Brien but was answered that it would not prove a stay. They had on Friday expected letters which would bring them remittances to the amount of £15,000, and there came in but £200.

Cope¹⁴³ and Binns great house in the silk line and in the general trade are openly said to be on the brink of failing, if not absolutely so – a bill of theirs for £700 said to be protested this day. They were offered £40,000 support by Latouche¹⁴⁴ etc. Cope sold an estate for £17,000 the other day some thousands under value. Shaw is gone off on a trip to London – which seems ominous. Grattan and Forbes were at the Exchange talking of the modes of relief, but the merchants differed and government probably will differ from both. The scheme in England must it is said be reprobated by every merchant who is not in the last distress. It must disclose every merchant's property, the interest they pay for the exchequer bills, the depreciation these bills must suffer, the various expenses attending the valuation, the property, the kind of goods, raw or manufactured; the whole scheme must be attended with such certain though somewhat more distant loss, for such temporary and palliative benefit, that the remedy is supposed here worse than the disease. Every person concerned in the cotton manufacture it is said will suffer next to ruin – and all this, the failures here, the failures in England, the retreat of Dumouriez, and for aught I know the partition of Poland, will be attributed to the United Irishmen.

142 John Comerford and Dennis Thomas O'Brien, leading Catholic merchants.

143 William Cope, silk merchant, a founder member of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce.

144 Probably David Latouche (1729-1817), governor of the Bank of Ireland, 1783-91.

My address to the Catholics it is said will be opposed on the ground that they are one with us and not a separate body. I think Neilson is somehow in partnership with the Catholics here and has perhaps made some others (W. Sinclaire for instance) of the same mind. Certain it is his paper is off, and I am much mistaken if our society will not soon be off too as far as Catholic is concerned. Yours has been silent all along because your leading men are more under Catholic influence than ours. Recollect all this business and tell me your thoughts. We are choused. I depend more on many Catholics who have not lately taken the lead. I speak without selfishness – I owe not a guinea to a man of them in way of obligation nor I believe ever will. They suspect me as an incendiary and I, many of them, as cunning, uncandid, close, plotting and circumventing – between ourselves. Ever yours, WD

437 Wednesday morning [1 May 1793]

MARTHA MCTIER, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [413]

Dear Sam, Is it design or inattention that makes you not answer me in regard to the carpeting, etc.? You must also see that without purchasing even the bed I shall be in want of money, and you do not put me in any method of getting it. I know you desired me to get what I wanted from Will – but his whole stock is forty guineas, which he lodged with Sam Bruce, not having desk or attention fit to keep it, and I would not like to break on it.

I would not have an idea of buying anything here for the house but what is absolutely necessary, and cheaper or better than what I could get in Belfast. These I think are chairs and carpet, the bed I have not yet had time to look for – and as for spoons, do for them what you choose. I have wrote a few lines to Mrs Batt for further directions about her chairs and the direction for her husband's ship, by which I shall send some for ourselves, of a form, painting and price which suits us – being simple rush. I am amused with Mrs Donaldson's party and her errand. I have sent to the White Cross as the most likely place to hear of anyone going to Belfast, for which I wish much to set out next week, though nothing but the expense would prevent me staying a little longer. Parliament is prorogued. I was at the Rotunda last night in a blaze of beauty and elegance and with one who took care to point out every person and thing worth noticing. Often I wish for you.

I have engaged two seats for Mrs Abington's benefit on Monday but could only get them in a second row in a lattice.¹⁴⁵ This is my first night at the playhouse and shall be my last in public, but I could not resist seeing her. Does no one at home ever desire you to name them to me? Well – no matter – I wish my purse would aid my remembrance of them – but there would be so many claims of gratitude on it and so grateful to me the paying them that I doubt I must not venture one. Ought I not to bring something to H. Cromby?¹⁴⁶ I met Mrs Conyngham at the assembly

145 The upper boxes were called lattices.

146 Hugh (b.1778), son of the Rev. Dr James Crombie; probably Sam's clerk, referred to in previous letters.

with two beauties matronising¹⁴⁷ whom she seemed very proud, though not of family. She would have been willing however to have left them and formed a card party with the Mussendens and me but we declined it – and she did not succeed in getting any. She spends part of the summer in the north but at Spring Hill and Derry – of her Belfast friends she seems shy of enquiry. If I construe right there is an attachment formed in her house, which may turn out but disagreeable to some of the friends. It is between Dr Saunders' son and Mary Stafford, who she told me had refused two very good offers lately. He is intended for the bar and to go to the Temple shortly. He is much attached to his aunt¹⁴⁸ for whose sake she says he prefers living with her to his father's house – but of this, if I am not mistaken, there will be news.

The Rowans were both here yesterday. She is a very clever woman and says much of her anxiety in regard to her husband, but she is well formed both in body and mind to bear it. There was something he was to through [*sic*] today and she expected the result would be his imprisonment, though certain that a few words of apology might save him from this and a fine, which she supposed from the belief of his fortune would be a heavy one and what he could not at present pay without injuring his family – as the fortune by his mother will not afford him anything for a year.

The general opinion in regard to Will I find is – that they will not meddle with him for fear of his pen, nor bring him before the secret committee for fear (of what would there fail him) his tongue. Of this he is so sensible that I find he chooses to argue at a distance – for even at his examination at the College¹⁴⁹ here, he tells me he stuck it horridly, partly owing to not being able to speak Latin and being examined in it much more fully than he expected. I have got my mother's bacon and shall send it by a carman who says he will leave town tomorrow – it weighs, cloth and all, a quarter hundred and 26 pounds. Write till I forbid you. I am disappointed in getting a frank this day so know not, how, or when they may go. MM

438 Thursday, 2 [May 1793]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [370]

Dear Sam, The city appears as quiet as usual, but you meet knots of manufacturers on the quays begging for relief, and probably there will be parochial meetings for this purpose, who may take this opportunity of expressing their detestation of a war that has been the cause of such national calamity; but many think that the war has rather accelerated or ripened the evil than been the sole cause of it. They date the origin of the calamity from the period of the Protestant ascendancy resolutions, in which the corporation of Dublin was so distinguished, and in which the county of Limerick led the way, headed by the Chancellor and all that faction which have seized on the government of Ireland. At that time the Catholics were driven to great despair and were resolved to go to extremities rather than be again driven from the

147 i.e. chaperoning.

148 Mrs Conyngham was the sister of Dr Arthur Saunders of Dublin; his son Thomas died in 1794.

149 The College of Physicians.

door of the constitution – a contest was expected – both parties had joined issue – the prospect was black, and a storm apprehended. At that time merchants and houses particularly in the south began to draw in, and we are now feeling the consequences of the panic which has been for a year past influencing the credit of the country.

Government has all along done what it could to create and spread this panic, and in my opinion to be denounced for being accessory to the ruin of the credit and character of the country. They sanctioned every calumny as soon as invented: they instituted a secret committee to generate and hatch libels on the land; to foster reports of plots and desperate designs, to create and keep up mutual distrust and to agitate the mercantile interest with alarms kept up from day to day, or when report died, to give birth to another; for this men were successively summoned up from the country and affidavits, the most absurd, sworn against them merely to carry on the plan which was professedly against French principles, but which were really intended to divert the country from reform, and which like all cunning schemes has ended in the ruin of public and private credit and consequently in the deficiency of that revenue which has supported these monopolists in their power, in their patronage, and in their pensionary system of government. Our society has been a useful target for their arrows, and they have really and truly stabbed the nation through our sides, and the nation has been so blinded by a thousand falsities, as to give them credit for destroying the only sincere, disinterested association of men that ever sat for so long [and ruining] the capital of this country.

It is said that the Privy Council have appointed eight commissioners among whom are the governor and deputy governor of the bank, Wilkinson and Jaffray, with two or three of the directors, Dick, Allan, Crosthwaite,¹⁵⁰ etc., to examine the security which merchants in necessity can give, and then, along with the concurrence of the bank, to grant them such a portion of the exchequer bills or assignats as is judged prudent. These are to be issued to the amount of £500,000 and the evil of much paper is to be cured by the addition of much more. Dublin was never so full of gold as at present, all remittances coming up here in coin, but what the manufacturers of the north will do for their small payments, God and our good government will tell you. Comerford and O'Brien failed exactly for £67,000 and might have done so for £200,000 as their credit was great the day before and had they called a meeting of their friends a fortnight ago they might have stood. Last year at this time, their goods were carried away as fast as they could load them and now and for some time not a bale is sold. Some say that the hearth-money tax is to be levied before its time and that they are already beginning to do so.

Reynolds wrote to Sharman some time ago relative to call of the committee and never received any answer. The Catholics resolve to act individually, but how they can by doing so co-operate for reform is more than I can tell, or how by a total discontinuance of publications, our society can regain its reputation is another

150 Abraham Wilkinson of Bushy Park, Alexander Jaffray, Samuel Dick, John Allen and Leland Crosthwaite of Clontarf, see Malcolm Dillon, *The history and development of banking in Ireland* (London and Dublin, 1889), p.46.

problem. I imagine that the only committee they have left in existence, under the pretext of managing a plan of education for the Catholics, is really intended to be an agent in the business of reform, but everything is kept a secret at least from me, which is undeserved. I still think that most of them wish our society at Old Nick.

A resolution of economy is to be read to Butler and Bond showing them a statement of accounts, of which you may judge by one article of fruit being £12 and wine £100.

It is said here that all concerned in the cotton branch will suffer extremely and that Grimshaw¹⁵¹ must go. WD

439 Saturday, [4 May 1793]

MARTHA MCTIER, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [416]

My dear Sam, I have this day two kind letters of yours unanswered. I hope to get one more and therefore beg you will write it immediately on receiving this, and let me know what paper the drawing room will take and what the parlour – separately – for you could not suppose I would buy them the same – either price of [*sic*] pattern. I would be glad also to know the exact quantity of bordering for each, at which I cannot even guess, as I do not remember whether there is a surbase.

If you can find the notes of a song in the parlour which I got from S. Simms and you have a frank enclose it to me.

I yesterday met McClean¹⁵² in the street. He addressed me and seemed desirous of obliging me. I begged he would let me know of any person going to Belfast that would join in a chaise. He said he often did, that his brothers were to be here this week, that Mrs Sam Brown¹⁵³ was to be here this day and to stay a very short time. I got him to take a message from me, and he promised to let me know the success of it this morning. I shall keep my letter open till I hear. Why would I put you or Will to expense in conveying me, from which I could receive no pleasure, for it is not company I regard nor want of it I fear – it is the expense solely I want to avoid. I saw Mrs Donaldson and her party yesterday. She was very well and thought herself the better of her journey. She played the cards the night she came, yet gave out she would not see anyone for several days, and sent that message to old Mrs Bruce – but her servant being out we all popped in on her.

At the society of U[nited] I[rishmen] last night there was an address to the R[oman] Catholics read, founded on their last resolution before the[y] dissolved in favour of a reform. It was received with unbounded applause, but Emmet and another gentleman declared the language was so fascinating they durst not trust themselves with it at one hearing, and begged it might be referred to a committee. It was so and Emmet got the paper home. I suppose it will be adopted, printed, and that you will like it – it is very loyal and complimentary to the Catholics.

151 Nicholas Grimshaw, cotton manufacturer at Whiteabbey, near Belfast (d.1805).

152 One of the five Belfast McClean brothers.

153 Wife of Samuel Brown (1741-1818), Belfast merchant.

I believe Will was glad of an opportunity of speaking in their praise, at a time when all thought of receiving any benefit from it must be over, and when some might suppose he thought himself overlooked by them – which was not the case, though he thinks they do not like him – but these things are not the ground work of his endeavours. Butler is behaving very ill in Newgate and Bond, a virtuous Presbyterian¹⁵⁴ with a rigid wife and father in law, is likely to be corrupted there. A Mrs Blosset,¹⁵⁵ wife to a counsellor of that name and mistress of Butler, goes there frequently, the only woman among a dozen of men, sometimes with her husband sometimes not, joins in the devouring fruit etc. and all the rarities of the season, and her servant follows her out with a loaded basket. Will has declared his resolution of not subscribing another guinea, but as he thinks the society pledged to support them he does not care to damp it by bringing forward any resolution but I suppose Rowan will, who is much displeased.

Yesterday we dined at home, Will bespoke cold lamb and John, who had heard me admire some sausages I saw, procured some of the very best pork ones I ever tasted. Several times Will has insisted on opening a bottle of fine claret sent to him by Jemmy Kennedy – but I still shamed him out of opening one for himself, but he quoted Nancy's direction to drink a pint of claret every day – declaring it excellent advice to which there could be but one objection. The cork was therefore drawn and we finished our bottle of burgundy. You may believe me, when I say I wished often, you have my share of it. A cork naturally brings a screw to my mind. Read asked me half a guinea for one on a very new construction. I would not buy it till I was quite sure the Doctor¹⁵⁶ had not got one. The carman asked a penny paid for carrying the bacon which would come so high that I waited to hear from Mrs Batt about what time the ship sailed. Why won't you get the direction for my watch? I think it very hard that I am obliged to borrow one here.

'Tis now five o'clock and [——] has not called. I am going to d[ress for] the private theatre – so shall seal this. Yours, MM

I have bought Mrs Mattear the leather for two pairs for shoes which cost 6s and 6d. I enclose the bill for the bacon. Where Will lodges is one of the first tea warehouses in Dublin and a fine shop with all on a new construction. Among an amazing variety of teas, they tell me they have good green at 6s 6d but I did not try it. I have bought Nancy a gown for 1s 7d added to her guinea.

440 4 May 1793, franked by J. Dunn

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [421]

Dear Sam, Tell my mother that I send her as a little present a flitch of bacon which I got carefully packed up, and beg that she will not pay for the carriage as it cost me 1d per lb.

154 Bond was the son of a Presbyterian minister.

155 Presumably the wife of Counsellor John Blosset.

156 Mattear.

Little news here – Rowan's trial not till 3 and 7 of June. He wants to force the trial but cannot get it done by a number of vexatious delays in the law.

Sheares,¹⁵⁷ a lawyer and a fierce republican, is elected our president last night which will not add much to our popularity. I proposed a short address to the Catholics on their late resolution for reform, but [I know] not whether it is to be printed, as I rather imagine the Catholics wish themselves well quit of our society, however they may carry it on a little longer, they think it has served its end. I still wish you could get time to come up even for a day.

Butler and Bond are living at too great a rate in prison for our finances. I shall not subscribe one farthing more. Think of 160 thousand manufacturers out of employ in Scotland, and 3,000 even in Wiltshire.

I should imagine the war must be soon over or Britain will fall even with the assistance of five millions paper bills. Yours ever sincerely, WD

441 Saturday, 4 May

SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO MARTHA MCTIER, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [422]

My dear M, I am now wishing for your coming home, and perhaps I may hear tonight from you of the time being fixed for your departure. On Monday I move my office, and then I can be mostly with the workmen, which I find very necessary. On Monday I'll send you twenty pounds, will that be enough? In the mean [time]¹⁵⁸ get from Will, it will break upon his stock only for a few days.

We have had many surveys on the house. The Doctor¹⁵⁹ seems keen for the girls taking Andrew Smith's part, and they seem doubtful. We could have a drawing room nearly as good as theirs, a spare bed chamber and a second spare bed in a closet, and instead of paying we would have rent coming in. It would cost very little making them two distinct houses and I think it would be comfortable being so near [each]¹⁶⁰ other, what do you think of it? If it should take place it will [mean]¹⁶¹ some little alteration in my scheme.

H. Young is very ill these two days past, he was in my room this morning with me before I was up, and said he was in a very bad state of health and that he came just to tell me that his wish was that all the land should go to his Aunt Drennan and her children.

I have hourly enquiries about you from everyone about you and bundles of compliments, but you [see]¹⁶² I am that sort of a man that I never either deliver or write any. I mean to lay out five guineas on a watch for Hugh but I think you had better bring him something that would please him. Here I stop till after the post. You never say anything of candlesticks.

157 Henry Sheares (1753-98), barrister and United Irishman (*DNB*).

158 Word supplied.

159 Dr Mattear, the 'girls' were their sisters Sally and Betty.

160 Word supplied.

161 Word supplied.

162 Word supplied.

No letter from you, therefore I have only to add that we are as busy as bees having twenty five bills this day. Ever your true SM

442 Tuesday, [7 May 1793]

MARTHA MCTIER, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [423]

Very thankful I am to my dear Sam, for his so frequently writing and at a time when I know how much he must be hurried, while I am spending his gains and without his company. On myself however I lay out little, yet am every day at expense. Yesterday I had a variety of entertainment, and to me, very delightful. We breakfasted in the College, and walked in the park, through the different halls, and that noble room the library, and the still more amusing one, the museum where I saw much to admire – till three o'clock; we then went to a room just opened, the Shakespeare gallery of paintings,¹⁶³ where I could willingly have spent the remainder of the day. This cost but a shilling. Of the many pieces there which all bore the name of masters and their different excellences, I am not a judge, but the two struck me most, from which I slowly removed and frequently returned, were from King John – the one, where Arthur pleads with Hubert for his eyes, and his look of supplication I never shall forget – the other, when Hubert has promised his safety, and orders him into keeping – the resigned, dignified, melancholy of this princely boy, clad in a simple white garment, with a beautiful, interesting, sickly face – I could have ruminated on for hours. The first of these pictures has four figures, the Prince, Hubert, and the two murderers. One of these with the most dreadful countenance holds the tongs, red hot – the other turns his eye, rather off the scene – while Hubert with a face of natural goodness, but determined refusal, turns from the upheld clasped hand of the supplicating boy.

Whether I would have seen all this, if I had not been impressed with the highly finished story, I know not, but I can hardly restrain a tear upon recollecting the picture – yet, came home and listened to two scenes of real woe, though not unmoved, yet with dry eyes – Mrs Hartigan and Mrs Sinclair's account of the duel fought that morning by Harry Davis,¹⁶⁴ and a young man who I believe was unoffending, by the account of Davis's own relations, the affair is shocking. Yesterday, Powell lay at the point of death, and suffering much. They fired at the same instant and on Powell's falling he cried out 'Davis I am glad I did not hit you'. The affair took its rise from displeasure in Davis at the Lord Mayor, on some behaviour of his relative to recruits. Of this he had spoken often, both in public and private, and in a manner which his friends disapproved of. It had however been somehow made up, when at the Rotunda on Sunday night (the scene of late of such indelicacy and riot as obliged

163 This gallery, on the same lines as Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery in London, was opened in May 1793, but did not achieve the same success (Robin Hamlyn, 'An Irish Shakespeare Gallery' in *Burlington Magazine*, cxx (July-December 1978), pp 515-29).

164 His death was noted in *Anthologia Hibernica*: Lt Powell, late 40th Foot, from the effects of a duel in Grafton Street, 8 May 1793.

it to be shut up), Davis meeting Powel, addressed him with some indifferent detail, which ended with 'that rascal of a Lord Mayor'. The other desired him to take care, he was his relation, and this was all the ground of quarrel. They fought in the park, where Davis got, disguised, in a coachman's greatcoat, hat, etc. He does not seem to have many friends – but of this, nor any part of the affair that comes from me, do not speak. Mr Hartigan¹⁶⁵ was on the field – his wife told the story here with composure. Mrs Sinclair sat trying to conceal her tears.

In the evening of this day, I went to see Mrs Abington. The house was crowded, as it was her benefit, and she performed here three principal characters: Caroline Mussenden, Will, and I got seats in a front row of a lattice and I was very well entertained, though with less state, elegance, etc., than on Saturday night, at the Gentleman's Theatre.

This is fitted up in a very high style indeed, white and gold, white satin drapery with real gold lace, pit, box, lattice and gallery on a par as to company, or rather the gallery chosen by the ladies of quality, where in noise they imitate the plebeian. Mr Ash, the chief performer, sending them word the other night that the noise was so great he was put quite off his part – the answer was sent by Lady Fitzgibbon that it was her. The first in the house gets their choice of seats, we took ours in the pit, surrounded by some of the first quality belles and boobies in the nation – three of these lords were indeed strongly marked as such. The band were all gentlemen, and no God save the King. The house being all covered with dark carpet which hides a row of very shallow steps that goes through the centre of the pit, on my entrance into this earthly paradise I missed my foot, and realised a dream I have often had, of falling when I entered a room of company. Do not however be much alarmed for me – it was just at the entrance, where the light was not strong and the crowd great. I had a long and round gown, fell decently, soon got up – for down I did come in spite of all my endeavours, and without any assistance – and acknowledge, I had satisfaction in finding Fanny Mussenden and three others, who came in after me, give the same account of themselves. On Fanny saying she wondered how she did it, the gentleman who assisted her told her nothing was more common, after dinner.

The play was 'The Miser' – not favourable to genius – nor was Leslie's fat face and person. He did it admirably, and with much expression of face, but not a bit better than Row.¹⁶⁶ In the farce of O'Keeffe's,¹⁶⁷ the 'Son in Law', there was two characters, of a French dancing master, and an Italian singing one, done with exquisite humour and taste, dancing in the one, and the old song of water parted from the sea sung by the others, with more taste than anything I ever heard, for these characters were not made buffoons of, they were not caricatured – but were such as an attentive parent might fear to be – what these were, men of rank and taste disguised.

In such a place I looked almost in vain for something to find fault. The shallowness of the steps I was willing to make one – but it would not do. I turned my eye

165 Hartigan was a surgeon.

166 Richard Cox Rowe (1754-92), celebrated comedian who died in Belfast and is buried at Knockbreda, Co. Down.

167 John O'Keeffe (1747-1833), actor and dramatist (*DNB*).

above them and as a motto read 'for our friends'. I was not yet quite in humour and found great fault with the motto, said it was tasteless and only fit for a country ale house. At this there was much laughing in my party, they asked me what I would have put in place of it. I answered, anything – 'for our enemies' would have had both more heart and taste – the laugh was increased. I was introduced to Andrew Caldwell at his desire. He came here on Sunday morning, the one after, in his coach, brought his sister, and took me with them, where he said he had never been before on a Sunday, the Circular Road, asked me to dine on Tuesday or Wednesday. I wished to evade going there, as I know they are fine people – I pretended engagements. He said he would name Monday, but that they would not be able to get company, and hoped I would not refuse them on Thursday. I could not, though my suit being worn, or dirtied out, in the service, I would rather not.

He called again yesterday when we were out, and afterwards, his sister, in the coach to take me out, and left cards for Will and me on Thursday. I suspect they take me for Mrs Dr Mattear, though Mr Caldwell visits and entertains Will often, and as he is what is termed here a great democrat, perhaps chooses to show civility to his sister. Lord Edward F[itzgerald] called also yesterday – and you may believe I was sorry at missing him, though his visit was to Will. Keep all this littleness to yourself, and to light your pipe.

I am sorry to find your plan in regard to the house anyway undetermined at this time. You know my sentiments in regard to it, from very frequent conversations where I was happy to agree with you. You always declared you would not part with the dressing room. I also wished to keep it, and to reduce the rent by parting with those parts of the house least agreeable. This could not be the case if you accommodate the girls, and there is a great change in their sentiments if they could like any of it. Whatever is your own choice and your advice I shall most willingly acquiesce in, and only add, what I hope you will not think wrong, that I would not on any account set part of the house, but as a quite separate one to any person, and that I would wish to retain what would be comfortable to ourselves (of which you are a very good judge) and an apartment that might now or in future be so to another.

The candlesticks I will do nothing in myself because I am not a judge of either the price or workmanship. I think the cheap little glass ones may do us very well. I saw them at all the card tables in a very genteel house and entertainment at the green. We will want a pair of supper ones, which probably you may get in Belfast, and cheaper of glass also.

Mrs Donaldson went this day to court. Will was to have gone with her, but she was hurried away before she had time to send to him. I have not heard the result. If you intend buying Hugh a watch, that may do, but let me know whether the Doctor has got a screw to please him – as I would not throw away half a guinea. I can hardly read your letters till Will pulls them out of my hand and comments with much surprise and humour on the amount of what you must be making, which he calculates at £600 a year. He wishes H[amilton] Y[oung] in heaven and you would

excuse him if you knew how little he has – yet certainly he never was in such spirits, nor in better health.

Next week, I am told there are many Belfast shopkeepers to be up, and perhaps I may get down with some of them. Write again to your ever affectionate MM .

Since I began this Mrs Gordon took me out in her carriage to return visits on the other side of the water, having had a second from Mrs Conyngham I returned it, but she was not at home.

443 Wednesday [8 May 1793]

MARTHA MCTIER AND WILLIAM DRENNAN, DUBLIN, TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [424]

I received my dear Sam's, and his note, just after I had been at McClean's to inquire whether he had delivered my message to Mrs Brown. He either did not, or I got no satisfactory answer, but that she leaves town tomorrow, which knowing it only now I could not do, and shall give up thought of it till next week when I hope to succeed.

I wrote to you yesterday so fully about everything that I have nothing further to add.

Of the house, I know little except the three rooms. I had proposed before your improving the old drawing room, and was told it could not be done. Will that part of your buildings, most expensive to keep and the most useless to us, set as well without part of the house, or is there any more of it to go with them? I know not what to buy, nor say, but repeat what ever you do, I shall try to approve of. Can you make separate yards and other convenience – and have you money to lay out at present on these alterations? I shall only beg again that you will (whoever you set to) have quite separate houses and if it is proper, retain me a room for a friend. Had this plan been proposed when I was on the spot I might have been better able to judge of what would have been most convenient for me. But of the convenient you are sufficient and above that, I suppose, does not become me.

The Liberty¹⁶⁸ mob has been going through the streets all day – starving tradesmen, the people all shut their shops. I think the whole world is going to destruction and most heartily join you in rejoicing you have nothing to do in trade.

Mrs Donaldson has been in court these two days. She was on the table above an hour and acquit herself as usual, laughed at the lawyers and told some of them they asked very trifling questions. One of them was twice rebuked by the judge when cross-examining her. Will determining to have Mr and Mrs Daniel, with whom he lodges, to dinner while I was here, we have engaged them today – to her indeed I owe much civility. We first thought of taking in a number of his acquaintance in a drum, as she gave us one last night in Will's apartments, but as we could not take in all I feared his giving offence – and he has only some young men – and I have got the Orrs and Bruces to come in the evening.

I must dress myself, and then a salad so shall bid you adieu for the present. Yours ever, MM

168 The Liberties were districts of Dublin, mainly to the south-west, which lay outside the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor, and which included some of the poorest and most overcrowded areas in the city.

The Liberty weavers in the silk, worsted, and cotton lines are in great ferment and the women are in a rage. Some of them this morning attacked some of the bakers' shops, and where there was bacon to be sold, and in a panic the most of the shops in the city were shut for half an hour, but the guards were ordered and I believe still are parading through the Liberty. More danger is apprehended on Saturday night or Sunday when they will become sensible of the extent of the evil. The Catholics wish our club to be perfectly silent at present they say, but I believe they mean for ever. Cope and Binns, and Comerford and O'Brien, report says will soon go on as before – but all is distrust and the worst is apprehended through this month and even to June. WD

444 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [419]

As I have a frank for today I will not let it lie quiet useless, and if you will write immediately on the receipt of this you may yet give me some little directions that may be of use to me, and as you have plenty of workmen in the house, it will not be much trouble to get one of them to set down the exact quantity of paper it will take for the parlour and the bordering. If you know the size your drawing room is to be, set down what that will take also, and the number of yards of bordering.

Any time I have to spare which is little indeed I am trying to put Will's shirts in order. They do not want much either in number or quality. I think you ought to encourage H. Young to make his will, which is right in every situation. Nor would I like it the less that it would at present be favourable to my mother's and his family, in a way too that could never be termed unjust. Would he could, by any means not dishonourable, be induced to settle now on Will what would be of much importance to him at this time, and to the other a trifle, it would do neither discredit – nor you, if you could bring it about. You may be tired of long letters, so I shall now bid you adieu – ever yours, M MCTIER

I hope everything in regard to the house is fixed agreeable to you and the girls. They only can know what will answer them, and you must judge for yourself, and at present for me as you know my sentiments – both for the present and future.

445 14 May 1793, franked by J. Dunn

MARTHA MCTIER, DUBLIN, TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [425]

I wrote a note to Waddell Cunningham and called where he lodges at Mr Lindsay's in Sackville Street to see whether he could take me down, but as I have not got an answer I suppose he does not like it.

Will has made me ask a party here for tomorrow – but as several do not come if I thought I would be here next week I would have a select one, such as I was one of

last night at Mr Gordon's with the Mussendens, Caldwelles, etc. These two families have shown me particular civility, and here I can entertain them with the utmost ease and genteelity, everything of rooms, furniture, etc., etc., being complete and at my service. I have bought stair carpet, the bed, and paper for three rooms. I do not believe I could get a pair of plated candlesticks with branches which are put in when you want them, and are therefore the most convenient for us, under six guineas. These serve as four candlesticks at supper and a pair at any other time, which with glass ones for card tables might do us – or would you rather have glass ones for altogether? Let me know – this I think would be all the plate we would want.

The Hamils are in town, he called to see me. The Dunns asked us to dine with them on Sunday but we declined it, so did the Mussendens with whom I drank tea at Mr Gordon's. I had Lord E[dward] Fitzgerald half an hour the other day when Will was out – he is a lovely faced youth. Will breakfasted with him on Sunday. The Rowans are left town.

446 [undated]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [426]

W. Cunningham, I believe, cannot take down Matty but he takes down £30,000 for the accommodation of your merchant manufacturers. This is your share of £200,000 which the bank here grants to government for the purpose of relieving merchants a little in the discharge of their acceptances, but how it can make the shuttle go more briskly in either the linen or woollen branches is hard to say while the natural vent of the goods in foreign parts is kept shut by the war, and while at the same time England is disburthening her glutted market upon us and throwing all at an underselling rate into our market when she cannot dispose of her goods abroad. A general system of protecting duties to fend off, at such a time as this, would appear the best remedy, and it is said that the cotton branch in this country prospered so exceedingly, merely by the efficacy of such duties, which ought to be extended to every article imported from England, so far at least as to give Irish manufacturers a preference in the Irish market. There have been aggregate meetings here in which measures suitable to the urgency of the starving manufacturers have been adopted, such as distribution of bread (which by the bye is generally commuted at the whiskey shop, for what these people get without labour is always spent at the moment), parochial collections where people subscribe to a certain sum which they expend on Irish manufacture at such a time and the shopkeeper is to engage to get so much more from the workman: but all these schemes seem partial and local, a salve for a sore not a cure for a consumption, merely palliative and inadequate, but to be grasped at by the urgency of the circumstances – What is the cause? War. What is the cure? Peace. What will prevent relapse? A national House of Commons.

Government here names eight or ten men as commissioners to examine into the property and goods of all kinds which the merchant must give for security before

he receives 50 per cent or 75 in exchequer bills to discharge his acceptances, but it is asked, will he put the manufacturers to work for this while the market remains closed, or will his creditors be more easy when government itself becomes a principal one, and keeps the greater part of his property in pledge for the payment of its loan to him. Sheares,¹⁶⁹ one of our society, proposed at the aggregate that government should itself purchase out and out so much goods that lay unsold and uncalled for, that it should take them out of the home market altogether, and export them on its own account, which would make more careful convoys and more secure trade. Several of our society are on the city committee, so many indeed that the government men are in a great dudgeon about it and half inclined to leave it, if they did not wish to keep up popularity in the Liberty. Quintin Dick, a brother of Sam's, and a London factor, has failed – acceptances of Cope in the bank, merely for some weeks, to come to the amount of £60,000. Grattan attended the aggregate meeting but spoke by an interpreter.

I should think that as the matter is national so should be the means taken to redress the evil. Every town ought to be invited to return delegates to an immediate meeting on the mercantile interest of the country, or at least so many as are materially concerned. In this meeting they would find their weight and they would be competent to enquire into causes, as well as to get remedies for effects. They would find, if they sought at all, that the cause was the war, and they would themselves, or at least impel others to petition the King to put an end to this most disastrous war, and thus form a ground work for opposition to stand upon, if they wish to reprobate this war in parliament. Did not the linen trade in the year '84, by resolutely determining not to buy a piece of linen in the market, get the obnoxious oath repealed, to the great sorrow of our friend Pollock, and if such was the weight of that trade what would be the power of the whole in checking this accursed war? But perhaps government with their grants, etc., will pension and enslave the at present necessitous mercantile and this disastrous state will only end in strengthening the very hands which have been the cause of it.

Our society is to return a state of Irish representation. Could you get that of Down and Antrim as particular as possible? My compliments to Sinclair and Neilson. I acknowledge myself jealous and suspicious and I have reason – not with respect to them, but many others. Yours ever, WD

447 Saturday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [427]

Dear Sam, Matty is busy preparing to go to the Gentleman's Theatre tonight and desires me to tell you that Mr Cunningham sent her word that his carriage was full and could not take her; and that she never heard anything about T. Stewart's going

169 Henry Sheares or his younger brother John (1766-98), barrister and United Irishman; both were executed in 1798 (*DNB*).

down. Robert Wilson¹⁷⁰ and she had agreed to go down on Monday, but he has called this morning to let her know that business prevents him leaving this until Wednesday, when she will I suppose certainly set off.

Little news but the terrible conflicts in France. Russell first and then one Moore from the county Tyrone were examined before the secret committee, so that I think they broke through the precedent set by Reynolds and have set him up as a singularity rather than in the light he would have been, had they followed his example. This was done by some Catholics' advice as far as regards Russell, and even Butler thinks now it is needless to make more victims and advises all to submit to be examined. He was of a very different opinion about a month ago. The usual topic at Newgate is the torpor of the people. The secret committee have been hunting after secret clubs and sworn associations of which the brotherhood paper made them conjecture to be in Dublin – where it is not – true – though in the North I believe there are such.
Yours ever, WD

448 Sunday night

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [428]

My dear Will, I got to Belfast after a very pleasant journey on Saturday evening. Business of Mr Wilson's retarded us for a day, which I contrived to spend very agreeably, but as I am hurried a little at present, I shall only tell you that I am perfectly well, and found all our friends here so, but this day Sam is so ill with the rheumatism in his arm that I do not know if he will be able to write to you tomorrow, and I depend on him for giving you then an account of a fresh tumult with the military, which happened here last night, and in which a young man of the name of Birnie was wounded by a soldier, and it is said, dangerously. I saw bands of the soldiers driving armed through the street without officers, met by them drunk, desired to turn and go home, but allowed to proceed – in short, the appearance, words and actions, of both soldiers and officers were shocking, but as I was a good deal taken up by welcomes etc., I neither had, nor at present can give you particulars to be depended on. Yours ever, MM

449 Tuesday night, [30 May postmark]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [429]

My dear Will, I met with much matter, both of amusement and instruction, after I left you, which at the time I thought would afford subject for an agreeable letter – but it has vanished, and left the writing apathy in its place, which comes on me often at the very time I wish most to rise above it.

170 Robert Wilson, Belfast businessman.

Sam is rather better, he can cut his meat, but not put on or off his clothes. We wish much to get our papers,¹⁷¹ as the want of it prevents our painting and therefore going home. The Miss Mattears' part of the house is ready and I find they are impatient to go in to it, even before their own is set. My presents were received not ungraciously. Nancy's eyes dwelt much on yours nor did she make one supposition, but just asked the price, and I believe thinks the tooth pick very elegant. Now do attend to the following directions, nor think them too little. In the first place, pay seven shillings for a handkerchief I bespoke for my mother, and add it to what I owe you and say what is the sum total in your first letter. If possible send me Horne Tooke, though Rowan may have got it he will not refuse it to me when I promise to return it in a few posts, but if it is to be sold in Dublin, buy me one. If it will not be too heavy for a frank enclose it, if it is, send it by Mrs Donaldson.

Of the riot here on Saturday I cannot give you the particulars, nor what steps are to be taken in consequence of it, but some I suppose must, as on Sunday the horror at the transaction appeared universal. The officers were all drunk, part had dined with Sir James Bristow and part with A Buntin. Birnie's life was actually saved by Mr Bristow at the expense of his own – this was the act of the man, but as the magistrate nothing has nor will be got done. I had a great levee on Sunday – Dr Bruce and Mr H. Joy among the first, they look like the lion and jackal. Dr Haliday also called as he had to go close past the parlour window, he also with the rest enquired for you, and to all their enquiries I answered with spirited triumph – that you had stood your ground well, neither recanting nor flinching, neither courting prosecution, nor what I believe was wanted, flying it – but without fear declaring yourself ready to attend any summons you might receive, and to own and vindicate any part of your political conduct that might be attacked, that this I believe was what they did not wish for, and that you were therefore I believed more the object of their respect than vengeance.

The Doctor asked much of Kirwan of whom he has a mean opinion, however his abilities might persuade the ladies to part with their money. He remembered himself having gone to a sermon for the support of poor freemasons determined to give but half a crown, when lo! even poor Matt Garnet drew from him the yellow slave.¹⁷² I longed to say, it was Drennan did it.¹⁷³

Joy treated Sam very ill about your little pamphlet of the proceedings of the oath which he had given to Neilson. Joy heard Sam had got it, and sent to him for it. Sam replied he had lent it to Neilson. He then sent his boy to Neilson with Mr McTier's compliments for his paper. Neilson gave it to the man saying he was just in the very act of setting it and hoped he would be kind enough to return it soon. Joy sent it back with Mr M's compliments but Neilson who had learned what road it had gone asked him how he durst come with such a lie in his mouth, that he was like his master a dirty little rascal and beneath his notice, or he would give him what he deserved.

171 i.e. wallpapers.

172 Probably a guinea.

173 Drennan had written a sermon for Garnet who was his old schoolmaster.

I implore of you to apologise to Mr and Mrs Daniel and the young gentlemen in the shop, who were remarkably civil, for my abrupt departure. You know I thought I had four hours before me. Write and fully. My mother is in dudgeon – there was a great deal too much bacon, the man charged four shillings for carriage, I did not write, you never do. Rectify this I beseech you. H[amilton] Y[oung] is worse than I dare tell. I saw him this day and he wrung my heart. He is now starving and in hope of being able to procure death – four days and nights he has not been in a bed, nor eat nor drank – he doses on his chair and looks like stone.

450 Thursday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [431]

Dear Matty, I shall pay the seven shillings for the handkerchief, but John says they will scarcely have it ready to send down tomorrow night by Mrs Donaldson's maid, who goes in the mail, and with whom I shall send Horne's trial.¹⁷⁴ Her mistress carries the sermons to you and I shall write to Mrs Crombie tomorrow. You borrowed eighteen guineas from me which with these seven shillings is the amount of your debt. Sam's rheumatism (or as you spell it reumitisam, in which there are four faults) will prevent him from taking up arms, though indeed I think the whole town seems to labour under the same complaint. Why don't they send a spirited remonstrance to the Castle or a cutting one to their representatives concerning the situation of the town? I cannot see how fathers or brothers or sons can answer for not doing something which may advert a danger that is always ready to light upon every individual that walks in the streets. I suppose your entertainment on the journey was in being a go between of Master Bobby¹⁷⁵ and the lady, or as the musician would say in conning B in alt, for if I remember the young lady she is made of melting materials. Did you stop in Newry – a town where there are pleasant people, however much it is abused? I see Bruce and Joy are about publishing their annals, and I suppose the work will be worth reading, and I don't think Neilson should set his face or his paper against it.

I dined yesterday with the Emmets in the country who spoke in the handsomest terms of you, as all the people here do, and they asked me to dine again on Sunday. They have made their house a very fine one, but we happened to take a walk in the evening to a place that was just advertised to be sold belonging to one Shannon who has failed. It was a place to dream of – the neatest, sequestered spot I ever saw, and the Emmets walked through it with a pleasing, mortified feeling, saying how pretty a hermitage, but how damp it must be, how small the rooms, and that it was delightful to visit, but would be a miserable dwelling. I never saw a neater cabin, or the opposition between white walls, white gates, white railing, and the deep green of the alleys and copses and meadow better illustrated.

174 Horne Tooke.

175 i.e. Robert Wilson.

You complimented me too much to the doctors and H. Joy, for in spite of your thoughts of me, no one on earth is so sensible of his own worthlessness. I believe I never really either liked Bruce, much less Joy. Our minds only met in some points. Theirs meet better though it is by the one rising above his level and the other sinking below it. The one appears to me a literary shop boy, and the other a principal obliged to act as a school master, and not acting well. I do not hear a word of news here excepting frequent accounts of riots in the country about the militia and today it is said, pretty confidently, that at Athboy there was a skirmish with the military in which two soldiers were killed and a Mr Hopkins,¹⁷⁶ a magistrate, severely wounded.

Tell Sam that it appears strange to me that none of the societies in Belfast have spoken a word on Catholic emancipation or on the resolution of the committee. Our society is said to be so unpopular even with the Catholics themselves that they dread to hear from us one word either of compliment or of complaint, and they think that the outcry would be raised by all the aristocracy among them if we were to address them, that the Catholic Committee were tainted with the principles of the United Irishmen and therefore would rather we were gagged for ever than speak a word at present. I should think it incumbent on your societies to say something about the matter, not to throw the labouring oar totally upon us. [—] the principle, or the reason of your silence I know not [—] it argues that you think all has been done for the Catholics that ought to be done, and that everything is doing for a reform that is necessary. I should think that saying something in print relative to this matter and the state of things in the North present and eventual would be no use until the sessions be over, and the people are then fully convinced that nothing is intended to be done for them in parliament. I shall write to you often. Ever yours, W DRENNAN

451 Monday [18 June postmark]

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [430]

Dear Matty, I expected to have heard either of you or from you for some days past, and I must attribute your not writing to the hurry you are in in your new establishment. As to me, nothing has occurred and since your leaving this which either I or even you could feel any interest in. My interior is much as it was, and I know of nothing more remarkable than my payment of five guineas yesterday to Mrs Daniel for my new curtains etc. in room of the old which were destroyed.

I hear Bruce is to be up the latter end of the week, and I request you will desire him to put in his pocket a letter from J. Hay descriptive of the state of that part of America in which he resides, as a gentleman, a friend of mine who is going there, is very desirous of seeing either that letter of any other of Hay's which contains similar information. I sent my mother's handkerchief and your gloves by a carrier to Belfast, as all my interest has not been able to procure a frank from Dunn and I scarcely know another member.

176 Sir Francis Hopkins (1756-1814), 1st baronet.

I have seen your friend Rowan but once since you left me, as he keeps close at Rathcoffey. I wish that Sam, if he has it, would send up by Bruce, Rowan's letter to him respecting the rise and fall of the national guards. Hargrave's¹⁷⁷ opinion is very favourable for Reynolds, distinguishing the powers of a committee from those of the House and asserting that the law and usage of parliament does not justify the administration of an oath by the committee. Many precedents justify, as far as bad precedents can, the arbitrary authority of the Lords in judging contempts and in fine and imprisonment for a certain time. Mr Neilson did not return the copies of the addresses and this stops our publication. Our society is splitting, and I suppose will soon adopt the mode of Belfast in keeping silence, as I shall do. There is evident sign in my mind not only of coalition in the House of Commons, but out of the House, and I am more now in the mind that Ireland does not desire much alteration in her state. For my own part, I should very readily, if I had anything to venture, make in a short time one of a party to the banks of the Loire. Yours ever, WD

452 Monday, 1 July [17]93

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [432]

My dear Matty, I just now heard of your riot at Castlereagh, that five were killed, twenty wounded, and that Lord Hillsborough had shot the first man. Can all this be true? Here there is such denunciation and abuse of us and our society that it is hard to bear, publicly called and stigmatised as men without all religion, without all principle, and for the first time it begins to make me melancholy, as the end must be to alienate every one from me, and make me exile in the midst of society.

I hope Nancy has gotten completely the better of her bruise, and I really wish that if she could make it any way convenient for her she would come up and stay with me for some time. Tell her this, and press her to do it if not very disagreeable to her. I am indebted my half-year's rent and I think Sam must lift the £50 in the bank and remit some of it to me along with the 18 guineas you borrowed from me – or if Nancy could bring them up.

Mrs White, Mrs Fleming and Mrs Heron, Thwaites' relative (one of 49 years of age, no very desirable job) are all the patients which I expect soon to require my help,¹⁷⁸ and I see little likelihood at present of having more, while I am generally deemed an instigator of every riot and murder that happens in the country, or to associate with none but those who do wish for such scenes. Bruce was here for a day and the next he went to Killarney with his brother Sam. He looks well and in good spirits. His children seem very fine ones. They stay at old Mrs Bruce's, and his lady at Mr John Hutton's,¹⁷⁹ where I dined with them the day he stayed. He mentioned

177 Possibly Francis Hargrave, author of *A collection of tracts relative to the law of England* (Dublin, 1787).

178 Elizabeth, sister of Bartholomew de la Maziers; wife of Luke White (1740-1824), financier; Mrs Fleming was a daughter of Samuel Dick; Isabella Thwaites married William Heron in 1792 (Dublin marriage licence).

179 John Hutton (1757-1830) was her brother; Thomas Russell gave Wolfe Tone the nickname 'John Hutton' because Hutton and Tone's father were coachmakers.

that the *Star* people were all wishing to give up the paper, if they could dissolve their agreement: that the paper would certainly drop, and that Neilson was now quite deprived of his political boldness. Mr Daniel wishes to know whether Mrs Ramsay approves of the samples of tea which he sent her, before he sends her the order itself.

Have you read Pollock's pamphlet and what is your opinion of it? I thought it should receive three or four letters in the *Star* by way of answer, for to write such a volume as his would be absurd – and I had finished a first letter, but I am uncertain whether or not I shall send it, as going on would cost me more trouble and time than it is worth. He certainly triumphs over Belfast rather cruelly, and I wonder what they think of him. This accounts for his keep off from me for some months, of which I told you I could not divine the reason, but he did so from the time he meditated his literary vengeance. I am told some of the opposition now acknowledge that they have bungled the business, but their terrors of republicanism absorbed entirely their hatred to government measures, and Browne¹⁸⁰ one of their cabinet assured a person who told it to me, that Lord Charlemont was almost frightened out of his wits, and that the hearty concurrence he gave to government drew opposition along with him and made ministry do all these things that otherwise they would scarcely have ventured on.

Write to me at length, if you be at leisure. For my own part, I plainly see I shall not be able to keep up even to my annual expenditure which is not more than I think it was in Newry, about £180, and what I shall do, or where I am to go is not easy for me to determine. Were there peace, I should prefer living on £50 in France, to living on £200 in this country which I am beginning to think a very worthless one. I can certainly have little or no reason to expect that H. Young's living or dying will have any effect with respect to me, of whom he knows so little and that little I should imagine not much to his taste. Do you see him, and what is his real situation? I should suppose it principally in his mind and that he has often in America been in such situations. I suppose by this time you are fairly settled and that you will write often to me as usual. All people who have seen you while here are punctual in their enquiries about you and all rejoice in your welfare. I am, dear sister, ever yours,
W DRENNAN

No rejoicings, nor no orange cockades to be seen.

453 Sunday

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [433]

My dear Will, As Sam is directing a letter to Dunn with an account of C. Roberts' death I take the advantage of a frank chiefly to send a message to Mr Daniel – for at present I have not time to enter upon several little matters in regard to yourself, and when I write to those I love I hate to be cramped. Mrs Ramsay likes the samples of tea very much, and regrets she had purchased her fine ones before I came down,

180 Probably James Caulfield Browne (1765-1825), MP for Carlow borough, and Lord Charlemont's nephew.

however as her quantities can be but small, I suppose she will soon have an opportunity of applying to him. In the mean time, she requests he will send by the very first cars three guineas worth of the tea I bought for 6s 6d, and a guinea's worth of chocolate in flat cakes, by way of trial.

There is not in my opinion any reason for the despair with which you appeared possessed, when you wrote your last but one. You can, without any difficulty I dare say, continue to live as you have done for some years – independent, your own master, and even express your sentiments, either by speech or pen, on whatever subject you choose and how you choose. This may perhaps (and it is a perhaps) keep you back in wealth but even this, I would suppose, if you conduct yourself with a dignified prudence, will not be long the case but if it should continue moderate in your expenses and you may always afford a publication of sound principle.

You cannot be disappointed by any patron nor no one can rob you of £120 yearly,¹⁸¹ at which the needy man of pleasure might bestow a smile of contempt – but considered by the frugal, and one made so from probity, in times such as the present it is a glorious little sum, which will help to keep you in the right path, but can never lead you out of it, and the small part of the Cottown that is your right may do more in establishing both your virtue and fame than an early possession of the whole. Fame – the love of it is natural to all, but the approbation of the good and moderate, delightful. What hurts me most is that while you deserve this, you should by unlucky circumstances, or a mere want of well-bred pliability of manner in trifles contribute, with the temper of the times, to rob yourself of it, and by this hurt both your fame and practice. I thought I saw this, perhaps I was mistaken. But if you determine to ride your hobby horse, and find it is one not generally approved, you are the more called on to double your attention to other little appearances, which may make up for this and allow you to enjoy it. This I have no doubt might soon be the case and the women in particular be convinced that the politician might be a very safe and agreeable accoucheur.

Pollock's book I imagine will be little read. I could not get through it, for of all style, his is to me the most horrid. His pamphlet is spoke of here by abhorrence with some and contempt by all. We had a large company of men dining with us the other day, though not in our own house yet, I was where I have not been for years, at the head of my own table. I found myself elated with an unusual spirit and determined Dr Haliday should feel a little of it. Buntin asked me if I had read Pollock's pamphlet. I answered, I had attempted it, but that these local matters were poor twice told tales and no one ever minded them, that I could not conceive what put it in H. Joy's head to serve up a hash of this kind a second time to the public, the contents of which they were heartily tired of, at the time, in particular, that weak sophisticated attack [on]¹⁸² the strictures on the test, with its feeble defence which [e]very real friend to both authors wished an end to, though to the first there had been a trinity of genius. I laughed and rattled this with the greatest ease, and though but three days

181 i.e. the income from Mrs Drennan's property at Cottown which he would inherit.

182 Word supplied.

before Haliday told Sam, on his saying there was nothing worth preserving but Jeraboam, I beg your pardon, there were some excellent things wrote then – yet taken and hinted at thus by surprise he did not get out one word, and the rest of the company were as silent, but much better pleased. The Doctor is evidently wanting to recover the dinners and society he long well relished with us, but my esteem and regard, he has forever lost. Your schoolfellow, the companion of your boyish days, the friend of your riper years, were sanctioned by your father's beloved friend – nay I believe assisted in a public attack upon your heart, which I am convinced they every one thought false. The state of my mind at the time might have shielded you, it perhaps occasioned its making a stronger impression, but the more I think of the whole proceeding, it is apter to make a lasting one, and now that I am found able to bear the subject, I perceive it has made an impression on many, much to Dr Bruce's disadvantage – to this indeed, I see many things concur.

This day I received compliments from Mr G. Hamilton, who told Sam he had a letter from his son, in which he mentioned the offence taken by you at Archdale's¹⁸³ speech and the letter he had carried expressive of it, with the answer. I join you in thinking the affair went off well. You were fortunate in having such a friend as Rowan who on such an occasion was certainly a very proper one. I do not know what you anticipated in regard to Sam, but he seemed perfectly pleased with the affair. I smiled at several parts of it, particularly your defence of religion by a duel – none of the rest of the society feeling hurt on this particular and Archdale's caution in saying he meant no aspersion of this kind to any one, though he had made it publicly on a whole body.

Several melancholy changes poor H. Young's mind has undergone since I came home. It is from bad to worse, and I know not what will be done with him but fear it will end in being obliged to get some person from Dublin, who can see by his standing in awe of him that he does nothing improper – for at present he frequently adds much to his disorder by madeira of which he will drink two bottles in a day, one before breakfast. This having been lately the case and Sam as usual sent for, he swore he would not allow him it and conquered by a struggle. He took off the key where the wine was, and the next morning before he had breakfasted there was a message that Hammy had broken the door and drank a whole bottle. He has taken it into his head that he is plundered and robbed, particularly by the niece¹⁸⁴ of whom he had formerly been fond, and lets no one go out of either front or back door but by his unlocking it. The doors themselves are a curiosity and opened by him must startle anyone.

He told Sam yesterday he was plundered of everything – where was his land that he had in the county of Down? – Just where it was – Well that is to go to my Aunt D[rennan] and her family. This he appears very steady to, yet it has been suggested to me that if he dies without a will, his freehold property – that is, the very valuable concern, his house in town and the Cottown of which Miss Young has a part – will

183 Richard Archdall (1750-1824), MP for Ardfert (see PRONI, T/965/6).

184 Amelia (c.1771-1845), illegitimate daughter of his elder brother Lennox Young; later married Edward Lindsay.

go to Jack Young, the only male heir by the father.¹⁸⁵ This lad was in America, he was genteel in appearance and married a pretty girl of doubtful character, failed in whatever way they were in here, and then went to New York in hopes of Hammy's assistance which he gave them till their conduct offended him, and on being defrauded by them of £300 he entirely cast them off. He was not long here however till this same Young was after him at which he expressed much displeasure, told what he had done for him, his return for it, and that he was determined to throw him quite off. He therefore refused to see him, and neither he nor Miss Young did during several months he stayed here. At last he brought over a pretty smart girl, his daughter, and being a foolish talking fellow declared it was with an intention that she should live with Miss Young – that for himself it was of no great consequence, as he would be heir to all Hammy's property. Within the walls of the old cloister, however, the young lady was never admitted, and after being kept here at the boarding school for some time in vain and writing a pathetic letter to Miss Young, she procured from her three guineas to help her home again.

When I was in Dublin, Young came in one of his distressed fits to Sam's bedside in the morning and told him he wanted to settle his affairs. Sam desired him to make his will. He said he had done so in America and left all to his sisters, but that the will had not been signed. He desired him to consult his sister and that he would call upon him and do in it what he chose, but when he did, there was not a word on the subject, the state of his mind showing itself in the greatest irresolution about everything, and this common aversion to will-making seems very predominant in this family. Sam spoke to Mr Isaac,¹⁸⁶ who ought to know more of the affairs of the Young family than any other person, and he said if he died without a will his sister was his heir. But Isaac appears to me much failed and if he has a good law opinion, I suspect it is from custom. He should certainly have enquired about my grandmother's will, whether there was any record of it, etc. Both brother and sister I am satisfied stand well affected at present to my mother and her family, but I fear even they are ignorant of trouble that may arise in regard to the Cottown, and which if anything occurs that I see can be taken hold of to make it a more settled matter to our advantage I shall certainly lay hold of, nor thing [*sic*] it wrong, but it is a delicate matter, and they are people we know little of and must be careful of doing harm instead of good.

Remember me affectionately to Mrs Orr and her agreeable well-bred young men. The delay of the workmen in repairing our house has been a mortification to me in nothing so much as preventing my begging a visit from them during the vacation, as that was the time I suppose it would have been most convenient for Robert, but I hope not the only one. At present there is hardly an inducement to visit Belfast – not a public place, a pretty girl, nor a smart fellow, streets dirty beyond enduring, no Bruce on Sunday, no politics any day, and a general gloom, or a forced ga[iety]

185 Jack Young was Hamilton Young's first cousin; he and his wife Alicia lived in Dublin, apparently apart; their elder daughter Frances visited Belfast in the 1790s.

186 Counsellor Simon Isaac.

in every face. My respected friend R[ainey] Maxwell is in England on a tour of pleasure. He writes that on the road he met the — Regt, hand cuffed and tied together with straw ropes for fear of desertion, marching on the road to honour and glory. The recruits here are in the hold of a ship in the same situation. Nancy will not think of a visit to you, at least at present, which she says would only add to your expense and so shortly after mine, have an odd appearance. She says her leg is better, but I fear it will at least be troublesome. No one ever had a more narrow escape of a shocking death. You will observe, what you have had often an opportunity to do, how little my letter corresponds with the beginning. MM

454 Friday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [435]

Dear Sam, I write a line with some papers which he [*sic*] sends down to Mr Hamilton. Much talk here of unlawful meeting bill of the Chancellor's. It goes to prevent your convention and any re-meeting of Catholic conventions, or of any meeting to represent the people or any part of the people in parliament. A clause is inserted declarative of the right of the subject to petition, and a clause making it felony not to disperse in half an hour after the command of the magistrate is to be expunged. Lord Charlemont moved a call of the Lords and when sixteen or eighteen did come he never opened his mouth. These sixteen have read the bill three times, and then it goes to the Commons who are summoned by circular letters on Wednesday next on Forbes' request. The Catholics take it in dudgeon not a little from personal hatred to the Chancellor and want a city meeting, but I suppose they will scarcely get it for they don't want the democrats to move in it and the moderate men are sound asleep. Digges¹⁸⁷ the thief sent a private letter of Tone's to the secret committee on which the Chancellor expatiated much in the house, to prove a plot for separating the countries. He complimented Lord C[harlemont] and Mr Grattan as being men incapable of such infernal plots. Weather here amazingly warm — I can scarcely write — the session will end I suppose this month.

455 Wednesday, 17 July 1793

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [434]

Dear Sam, Dunn gave me a frank yesterday and I enclose you the letter you sent me. The unlawful assembly bill is much talked of here, particularly by the Catholics at whose meetings it is levelled, and it is driven through at so rapid a rate by this Jehu of a Chancellor, that it will pass into a law before the people well know what it is about. I suppose you have seen a copy of it. It ought to be entitled a bill to promote tumultuous meetings, inasmuch as it prevents any interposing medium

187 Thomas Atwood Digges (1742-1821), American adventurer and informer.

of representation, delegation or deputation, which might moderate or regulate the expression of public grievances, so that, even supposing the grievance to be partial, still the number of the petitioners must endanger tumult, for it is said; there is no Irish act limiting the number who are to subscribe or present a petition, and if the grievance be general, this act necessitates the whole nation to assemble or rise up to redress it. The right of petitioning will, by this bill, devolve entirely on the individual. The nation can exercise it, only in its personal capacity. Ought they not then as soon as possible to do what this bill points out to them? Nothing certainly would be more useful, nothing is so much wanting as a full and fair representation of the real state and situation of this country to be laid at the feet of the throne, in [*sic*] behalf of the people of Ireland, inasmuch as there has been and continues to be much reason to apprehend that the grievances of this country originate from an Irish cabinet concealing or misinterpreting the sentiments of different descriptions of people, and by this means, counteracting or defeating the good or supposed good intentions of the sovereign.

The town of Belfast has been particularly abused by the Chancellor, the confidential minister here, and it is astonishing to me how it can submit to such calumnies on its credit and reputation both as men and merchants, without saying a word for itself. I think nothing would be more noble and more timely than an address to his majesty from that town, asserting and vindicating the honour, credit, patriotism, and loyalty of its people, deprecating the royal assent to this bill, showing how this country has been misrepresented by the Irish cabinet, and concluding with specifying the various reasons on account of which, you beseech his majesty to remove from his councils now and forever, John, Lord Fitzgibbon, Lord High Chancellor of Ireland. Such a representation to be subscribed individually, by every man that could put his name or his mark, might go over with dignity and with effect. But the fact is, you are all cowed by this bouncing bully of the law, and I much doubt whether it can be your duty at such a time to persevere in a pettish silence, when every remaining right is thus insolently torn from you, and your miserable countrymen every day murdered before your eyes. If you do not meet and declare your sentiments of this bill and its author, why – you deserve all that you have got, and more. I would rather meet and threaten emigration than do nothing on such an occasion. Our society, if it dies, dies hard. Its duty as a sentinel is to apprise the country when it sees the flash that danger follows, and it has entered into sensible lawyer-like resolutions on the business. Today it is to be debated in the Commons, and I suppose will receive one or two alterations for the credit of the opposition and then pass by a large majority.

Twenty or thirty Catholics were offered to the Guild of Merchants for their freedom. The two first, Byrne and O'Connor,¹⁸⁸ were rejected on the ballot and then the rest were withdrawn. The rancour and revenge of the Protestant ascendancy still survives, and the Chancellor at the head of the Irish cabinet keeps up the venom.

188 Probably Malachi O'Connor, merchant and United Irishman, and subsequently a friend of Drennan.

The Catholics are now going about begging for an aggregate meeting, and they cannot get one of the city men formerly on their side to sign their names to a requisition – such is the torpor, or such is the huff taken at the supposed lukewarmness of the Catholics on getting their emancipation. If the Belfast people do nothing, it will tend to show that they are not half pleased with the Catholic conduct of late and whether they wish to show this, let them judge. But our enemies should not discover any disunion, and for my own part, the affair is so truly a national grievance, so much and so equally against Protestant or Catholic convention, that I think it is the business of Irishmen of all denominations to notice it, though they never speak more. Lord Mountgarrett, Butler's brother, died of a raging fever. Butler gets nothing by it and never got more from him than a dinner. If Neilson can favour me with any written documents respecting the business of last session, I shall thank him. France will do well, though Condé be taken and though Valenciennes may fall. The constitution is much applauded, the rebels are defeated, the intriguers are arrested. Paine loses his respectability as a man, as he did in America, gets drunk often, boxes at coffee houses, and even the sans-culottes call him low. Tell Matty I shall write to her soon and thank her for her long letter. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

456 Friday, 20 July 1793

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, [BELFAST] [436]

Dear Sam, The conversation here still turns upon this bill for tumultuous meetings which will pass the commons this day, by a majority of more than 100. They all agree that anything like convention on the part of the people would be to substitute one parliament for another and the only objection is to make the law perpetual, and to prevent it having a retrospective crimination against all past meetings at Dungannon and against Catholic Convention sanctioned by the King himself. Certainly (at least in my opinion) a national petition to the King on the part of the people would be a great measure. Societies of United Irishmen ought not, need not take a part in it, nor any individual marked with opprobrium should draw it up, but if you get such a thing done in Belfast, I should suppose the Catholic leaders here would concur and co-operate. Newry certainly relishes the idea which has been suggested to them.

Mr Muir of Scotland is arrived here, and intends in a day or two to go down to Belfast in his way to Scotland, where he will stand his ground. He seems a very sensible, honest, intelligent man, and I shall give him a line of introduction to you and Mr Neilson. He takes his dinner with me tomorrow and I think I will ask Bruce who is just returned from Killarney – though perhaps it will be better not.

Dunn told me he declined being C. Roberts' heir, and this was certainly very disinterested if Roberts left much fortune. I enclose you our resolutions, very sensible, calm and composed and pleasing to the Catholics as more of them were seen in the society last night than has been for some time past. Tone however never appears there. Reynolds' squib was justified. The grand jury met in the room he stays, and

while he was absent some of them whipped away Paine's picture and took it to the Castle, expecting I suppose a reward, but they were desired to steal it back again which accordingly they did. Agnew I believe will deliver a petition from Reynolds to the House of Commons. J. O'Neill must surely have damned himself by his late conduct in this bill to strangle the voice of the people. Agnew has refused to deliver in the petition, chiefly by the direction of his party with whom he acts. I mentioned to him in the street, that I should think he might present a petition from any aggrieved person without implicating himself in the subject, and that though he might consider it as his duty to act in general with the minority he ought to look to the opinion of the county which returned him in many matters. The county grand jury were moved to present the last address, a copy of which you have enclosed, but the question was lost, eight Catholics were on the jury and some United Irishmen, Hampden Evans one,¹⁸⁹ the foreman, and a man of £3,000 a year property. The French will stand against the world and by their new constitution they will conquer the world. They will conquer as Barere¹⁹⁰ says by sending an army of blessings among mankind. The insurgents are certainly defeated. The Brest fleet of thirteen sail is out – their destination not known – but perhaps to fight Howe.

Some alterations are made in the bill, as by striking out conventions in the preamble etc. I am fixed not to write any more addresses as all parties seem to dislike them – but I shall tell you how affairs go on. WD

Saturday

The society has ordered the publication of the resolutions relative to the Con[vention] Bill in the *Northern Star* for three times, for which he is to be paid by our treasurer and I am directed to desire it to be done.

457 Wednesday [August postmark]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST POSTMARK], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [437]

As this is intended only to be a commission for John, you must excuse my giving you the pleasure of paying fourpence for breaking the seal. He bought what I last applied to him so well that I must repeat his trouble, and beg of him to send down by the mail coach immediately on the receipt of this, two yards and a half of stair carpeting, the same of that I bought a[t] 2s 2d a yard. If he is at a loss to recollect it, Mrs Bruce has of the same – also two dozen more of the same narrow green and white bordering he bought for me.

If there is a ship coming here from Dublin, I request him to put on board for me three chairs unpainted, the same of those I bought from the man on the quay – one arm one, the rest smaller. I am preparing for company and my house is almost completely neat and genteel – I have only light to add, that John as well as you can hit it to a T. MM

189 Hampden Evans, United Irishman and friend of Drennan, arrested in 1798 and banished.

190 Bertrand Barère de Vieuxac (1755-1841), French revolutionist and only surviving member of the Committee of Public Safety.

458 Thursday, 16 August

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [438]

Dear Sam, You and Matty must excuse me for not having written for some time past, having done little or nothing, and having as little to say. Politics are quite dead here and I suppose it is the same with you. Butler and Bond came out this day having paid their fine, which I believe was except thirty or forty pounds totally raised within the society, which having done so, will I imagine decline politics in future. The Catholics are quite disinclined to continue longer and only stayed because it might be deemed disgraceful to quit it while these gentlemen were in prison. They all think that this instrument for reform is totally unserviceable, and that its unpopularity is so great, partly by its own imprudence, partly by the arts of government, that keeping it up would rather injure reform than advance it. Butler and Bond disobliged them much, not only by their expensive mode of life in Newgate, but by speaking in terms of unqualified disapprobation not only of the Catholic behaviour in general but of certain individuals among them. It may be necessary perhaps to call twenty of the principal among both persuasions in the society and put the question, after having enjoined secrecy – dissolve or not? For certainly they have now some pretence for it, this quietism bill as it is called so effectually cuts off all communication among the people, and if we go out at all, it should be by a renunciation of all political concern, until the people are better prepared to hear us, or to believe that our intentions are sincere. The troops at the barracks and Castle are to be under arms, as if something dreadful was preparing for this night, not that they think so, but merely to bamboozle the moderate men. The society addressed Reynolds, and Butler and Bond, and these addresses with their answers you may mention to Neilson to publish as advertisements in his paper and charge it to the society. I am heartily sick of politics. Tell me any news. Farewell.

John sent the things to Matty. You sent me £40 and I lent to Matty £20 9s 6d and the things come to £2 4s 1d – in all £22 13s 7d. Write to me soon. Ever your WD

The captain's name is Edward Morrison of the *Peggy*. He will deliver the chairs.

459 1 September [17]93

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [439]

Dear Sam, The word 'immediately' in your last would seem to require an immediate answer, which I am not well able to give, but I will do it as well as I can. Certainly the sky, or at least my horizon, has been for some months past a good deal clouded, but whether it will continue so is hard to say. I believe for several months past, particularly last winter, most people who knew me supposed I should certainly be imprisoned, and this idea is only now beginning to wear away, but while it lasted I certainly had no ground to expect an increase but rather a sensible diminution of business. This has accordingly happened and as I have almost exhausted my

capital, there is certainly great room for reflecting what is to be done, as my horror of running into debt or of opening accounts even with my best friend is very great. But I flatter myself still that as I am now supposed pretty much out of danger, I shall at least return to my old revenue, little as it is. My first year here was £105, my second £187, my third £170. What has past of this year has fallen off but this month I shall have earned 30 guineas, which gives one a little cordial, for in the seven former months of this year I made only 41 guineas, and I think this sudden falling off is to be ascribed in part to the general supposition respecting me. I never expect to make more than a competence, but if I could do that I should not very willingly leave Dublin, though it has been not so agreeable to me in several things as I imagined it would be, and in the very things in which I imagined it would be, and in the very things in which I imagined I should have found most pleasure.

As all patriotism has something selfish in it, and perhaps ought to have it, I reasoned that I might derive personal advantage from my public spirit and it is only what may be called the chance of war, that has proved I was mistaken in my supposition. When I was two years here, I thought I felt I was growing stationary and that stationary practice if small was exceedingly precarious, and most likely from any mischance to sink into nothing. I felt that I was unknown and I acknowledge this to me, so little gifted with any personal endowments, to the last degree disagreeable, and with this feeling seconding my natural inclination, and my primary motive which really is the good of my country, I made a speculation in politics, partly to get myself known, and by the fortune of war and the change of men's minds, I am known and shunned for the very same line of conduct which I firmly believe helped me forward in Newry, and gave me a little eclat independent of my profession, which assisted me in that profession. I am indeed surprised that a man like me, democratic without being popular, social in his mind and yet repulsive in his manners, has made so much as I have done, without help from some of whom he expected it (I shall ever think with reason), and with one competitor, Law, who took off all the influence which might have been disposed to exert itself in my favour, and who between ourselves, with all the practice which his active friends obtained for him, would not and I believe has not scrupled to use professional manoeuvres to displace even little practitioners from that little they have. I could give you proofs of this, but it is not worth while to take up the paper with a gossip and a midwife. Surely even my real friends, even my mother would excuse me for attempting to rise a little above the hard humiliation of my part of the profession, and to be a man with two hundred a year, rather than a cackling, cawdle-making gossip with as many thousands. You said, why profess this branch? I did so from what I supposed the necessity of the case, and the impossibility of making a livelihood without it. For that any man should like it is an impossibility.

I do believe that what I all along suspected will be experienced by every person who is attached to any political reform. You see it disclosed, in a resolution of the Mayo jury, that they will not associate as gentlemen with any who are for innovating on

our excellent constitution – Good God – I don't believe the days of the most bigoted superstition ever beheld such a thing. What they are not ashamed to profess, others and particularly in Dublin are not ashamed to practice, and if one's oldest friends hang aloof, what may not be feared from those attached but a little more to one man of the profession than another, when all means are used, and women make it their business to vilify and calumniate persons as incendiaries and Jacobins, and atheists, and work on the female mind when their natural credulity is increased by the weakness of their bodily frame. Much therefore is certainly to be apprehended, particularly as even those whom I may suppose to have endeavoured to oblige, and to have suffered very considerably in that endeavour, have never shown the least disposition to befriend me in my profession; I never received more than a single guinea from a Catholic in my life – and I believe they have given credit to stories of my republicanism and violence, and imprudence, and enthusiasm, and poetry, thrown artfully in at times by one or two much in confidence, which they could never prove by anything I have ever said or written, or done.

I do believe that Siberia is better fitted to be a republic than Ireland, and I do believe that every day will bring on a coalition of the Protestant gentry and the Catholics of consequence, directly opposite in its nature to the supposed alliance lately in train between the Presbyterians and the Catholics, an alliance to keep everything much as it is. I do believe that our pretended alliance is broken, and that there was some tacit condition on the other side, that it should be broken. I do believe that Mr Burke was called into the closet of the King who acknowledged his numerous obligations for benefits to himself, his family and his government, and asked Burke what return he could make for his abuse against France and his good service to the cause of monarchy. I do believe that Mr Burke answered to this effect, nothing for myself, but much for three millions of my loyal and suffering countrymen, the friends and the victims of their attachment to monarchy. Sir, I warn you to do this immediately, an alliance which a little time will make more natural than it now appears, is about to take place between three million discontented Catholics and half a million disaffected Presbyterian republicans, deeply intoxicated with French notions and French practices. Break this alliance or Ireland is lost to Your Majesty. The constitution will be changed even here and monarchy itself will be endangered. I do believe the King said, Burke, Burke let it be done, let the Catholics be emancipated immediately and let me get the credit before it is too late. I do believe that to Mr Burke's influence and the King's reasonable panic, all was accomplished without any communication with the Irish cabinet, and that the grand juries and the Chancellor and the council here were laughed at by the Catholics here who were well instructed what was going on in the back stairs' conference.

I do believe that the Catholic commissioners were instructed to endeavour to break the new union, that they have endeavoured to do so, that they however could not prevail so far as to prevent the Catholic Committee from their resolution for reform, but that in reality they will make it merely waste paper. I believe that the

opposition to our little address on the subject of this resolution, and to impress it in the minds of the people, was obstinately opposed on this account, and that every endeavour has been used on the same account to frighten or to seduce as many members from our society as they can. I do believe that our society is detested by some among them, detested by government, detested by opposition, detested by the aristocratic Catholics, detested by the Protestant aristocracy, and all for being friends to a reformation in the constitution. Such is my present belief in the politics of this time, into which I have wandered without designing it, and which I should not wish to be disclosed as my sentiments. You may say what others have said, that I am too suspicious, and that a suspicious temper is always a sign of a disposition to madness. I believe it is so, and yet I believe that I shall never go so far, and that I see, though short sighted, as far into the Catholic mind as others. I do not like it – it is a churlish soil, but it is the soil of Ireland and must be cultivated, or we must emigrate.

I am off my scheme of a retrospect of the session. I know all the material facts are behind the curtain. We in the pit were entertained with a pantomime – but there is a power in motion which may soon counteract all our little schemes. The present is the most awful moment which this world ever saw – all hangs on France. I declare to you it is my firmest conviction that not a thing has been done there which ought not to have been done. It is true many terrible things have happened and much ferocity has been displayed, but ferocity on the one part must meet ferocity on the other. It is a lion attacked by tigers – providence has ordained that the nation which is to make the old world new, should be France – and every trait in the character of that ardent, impetuous, ferocious, great nation fits it the better for the mighty task she has to perform. Her ferocity is her virtue, and were she less so, she were lost – and the world, the world that watches so many dogs upon this noble suffering animal, without sympathy and without even selfishness, would be lost along with her.

To return to myself – I am very unwilling to quit this place until farther trial, and to end my circle where I began it – at Belfast, a town which has probably the same feeling for me as I have for it, which I esteem but do not love, which I am somewhat indebted to, and to which I have endeavoured to return the obligation. The balance is pretty even. I have still another reason which I cannot at present mention even to you. I hear there has been a severe action at Dunkirk which ended ill for the combined armies – may the sea cover them and their host. WD

September 3. Tell our friend Neilson, I received the packet this day. It has not altered me in the sentiments I expressed in this letter, but it shows me the ticklishness and danger of writing a retrospect. You may read to him my theory on the whole business. I think still that we have been hummed, but I believe the Catholic mind will still go on, whether their leaders wish it or not. I shall not show a single letter to any one unless he thinks it proper.

460 Monday

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN] [446]

I am just in the act of removing once more to a house of my own which is well situated, large enough, and convenient, and is now completely clean from the garret to the kitchen where I have got a pretty little English girl, who blackens the chimney and whitens the hobs every Saturday. All therefore is fair at present. I stole out one day before Sam Hyde went to doze at my once dear little cabin¹⁹¹ to take the first view I had of it since the day of horror when I left it. Each dear little plant in the once bare field was recognised, though grown to perfection, and I spent [-] hours there without much vacuity of mind.

But as usual I wander from my subject which was to request you would give me some lines, the fewer the better if well expressed, for my father's picture. I mean them for the outside of the cover that encloses the picture, a situation you may perhaps make use of – if you do this elegantly – I will gild you and your shell which proclaims you for years. Take care of the enclosed which is in answer to one I received relative to a commission. I have given up every thought about politics. The French affairs are now got beyond my comprehension. I know not who is right or what is wrong but that their [neig]hbour have no business with them and will certainly repent their interference. Ireland is sinking by a violence of bad measure in such a hurry of absurdity and tyrannick acts that it's probable the violence of the distemper will throw itself off by one effort when least expected. Government runs the risk, and the people see that nothing but arms is left. I am reading, and only now, Boswell's life of Johnson¹⁹² with which I am quite delighted. Johnson himself never wrote so agreeable a one. It is quite charming flattery to read his weaknesses. You are writing a little history – take care of your authorities, say nothing you cannot prove – for one wrong assertion will damn you – and never get leave to die. MM

461 Wednesday, 25 September 1793, franked by J. Dunn

WILLIAM DRENNAN, DUBLIN, TO MARTHA MCTIER, BALLAST OFFICE, BELFAST [442]

Dear Matty, As I suppose you have been returned for some time from your jaunt, I expected to have heard from you, if not for a very accurate or philosophical description of the Giant's Causeway, or a poetical one of Lough Erne, at least to tell me some little traits or other respecting the party, and whether you have come home as well pleased with each other as when you went out, which is always a rare occurrence. You have written so seldom that you have been in part the cause of making me cultivate another and, you will forgive my sincerity in acknowledging, a more agreeable correspondent. I have also had a good deal more business these two months past than I had the former part of the year, and this, with somewhat more than this to which I have alluded, has occupied my mind pleasantly enough without the least

191 Sam Hyde had bought Cabin Hill in 1789.

192 James Boswell (1740-95), *The life of Samuel Johnson* (1791).

attention to Irish politics, for which I have got a squeamishness, that I think, though perhaps you do not, will end in making me for the future a good sort of a table talker, like the most I see around me. Neilson has been here for some days, striving to patch up the rent coat, with some of the Catholics, as Keogh, McCormick, Tone, etc., that is, they are striving to humbug each other, but of the result of their conference pro and con, I have not as yet been informed.

I should wish to write rather than speak to my mother, and even to you, on the subject I am now entering on, and yet I feel an awkwardness in doing it, which I really believe the sense of duty and propriety on my part could alone make me get the better of. I could wish to comprise what I am going to say in three words, but as that would be difficult indeed I can only tell you that I have received, at length, a letter which engages me another's for life. I wish it were in my power to inform my mother that this person is a woman of great family, or of large fortune – I wish so not only to please her, and you, and Nancy and all my friends, but for my own sake, am I in a degree concerned that in an object of such importance, my apparent and real interests, my seeming and substantial happiness should not have coalesced. She has to me the first and most indispensable quality – I love her – and however puerile this reason, if it can be called so, may appear to everyone who has not a similar feeling, it is the reason which has prevailed and ought ever to do so.

I remember, my dearest Matty, that the only affair of this kind in which I ever went to any serious proposal was founded rather on my esteem than on my affection, my sense of merit rather than my sensibility towards it, and I believe I was treated just as I ought to have been, though it left a deep impression on my mind yet without affecting me much at the time, and the letter which I received from her was I well remember, though I burned it the moment after I read it, as hard-favoured I was going to say as herself.¹⁹³ My friends, you and my mother seemed to approve of this attachment which was a sort of feeling compounded of esteem, prudence, and accustomed deference to opinions of those who have been always most anxious for my happiness – and may I not now in return, after what I may now call a sacrifice, though a willing one, to their judgment, obtain from them an assent, a consent to my own choice, without having adviser or confidant in the business?

The lady who is to form your brother's first and I trust last attachment is Miss Swanwick¹⁹⁴ (a name you will say made to be melted into another) of Wem, in Shropshire. Soon after your leaving Dublin, she came to Dublin on a visit to her sister Mrs William Hincks, where she stayed for six weeks, and where I met her frequently. I wrote to her after she returned home, and have done so frequently, have obtained a correspondence, and the same prudential motives which once operated in making me wish for a connection, are now the chief reasons repeatedly alleged and persisted in on her part, and I believe on that of her parents (to whom alone she made a principle of showing my first letter), that prevent a new connection I

193 i.e. Margaret Jones, to whom he had proposed in 1785.

194 Sarah Swanwick (1770-1870), daughter of John Swanwick of Pym's Farm, Wem; the family ran a boarding school and were liberal dissenters.

now presume to say mutually agreeable. I shall not speak of her beauty, of her wisdom, or her prudence, or any of her other qualities real or imaginary, for the truth is I have always thought there is something so secret and sacred in attachments of this nature, that I feel an almost invincible repugnance in making a confidant even of you my dearest sister, and I should blush to say that to you which I have been emboldened to say so often and in so many forms to the object herself. Therefore not a person in Dublin, not even her sisters, is in the least acquainted with it, I believe on her part, and you, and my mother if you please through you, and Nancy and Sam are the only ones I wish to know it on mine. I know not anything that my mother can or ought to do which can facilitate the happiness of her son, more than she has already done. It is not on any view of this kind that I write this letter. It is merely to acquaint you that my heart is engaged, and that I shall take the earliest opportunity which I can, consistent with any degree of prudence, to form the connection of life with the lady whom I most love and who has given me the most reason to be grateful to her, as long as I live. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

462 29 September 1793, franked by C. Skeffington

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [443]

Dear Will, From our very agreeable tour, we returned that day fortnight we set out, and what I believe is uncommon, better pleased with each other the longer we continued together. With weather was just what one would wish, fair, calm, grey and no dust, we had horses that never stumbled nor required correction, and a driver, honest, sober, and humane. The state of Mr Young's mind made it difficult to persuade him to undertake this jaunt, and still more so to continue it. To get him to do this was attended with some trouble for the first week; the second, he grew visibly so much better that the chief purpose of it, appearing to be forward, gave us great satisfaction. An idea of some great evil befalling his sister in his absence had possessed his imagination, and each day he set off before we were up, and on foot, to get to Belfast. We reached Coleraine after we had seen the Causeway on our way to Derry – but here he got from us and walked twelve mile on his return before we overtook him, and it was an equal chance that we did it, coming to where two roads met, we hit the right one and over took him quite spent. The gentleness of his manners and goodness of his heart is such that one must pity but never be displeased with him, though I was a little disappointed at not seeing Derry and Downhill.¹⁹⁵

We went to Ballyscullion – and I am sure for many miles he opened not his mouth. The magnificence of the house however struck him, particularly of one room crowded with statues, busts and pictures, which appeared living. He fixed his eyes on one, and after some time contemplating it, said 'well, I am no judge, but I do think that the most beautiful woman I ever beheld'. You do her no more than

195 Downhill, Co. Londonderry, and Ballyscullion, on the shore of Lough Beg, Co. Antrim, were palaces of the Earl Bishop of Derry.

justice, said I, most powerful have been her charms, of which making you speak has been an instance, also of your good taste for this is indeed the Venus de Medises. He smiled, and you will now credit me, when I assure you that from that moment he grew evidently better. Instead of coming home, we took our route by Armagh, Dungannon, Newry, Warrenpoint, where Venus again revived him in the engaging beautiful Betty Goddard who was there for her health. We dined and breakfasted with her father and her. Young praised her looks, the father's hospitality, and the sweetness of their beef. We drove by moonlight to that beautiful spot Rostrevor, when the scene altogether seemed to soothe his tender troubled mind. We all lay in one room, and improved even to merriment, we went to Bryansford, and spent two days in that sublime park, from thence to Ballynahinch, where we wiled him in hopes of perfecting his cure by his staying there for some time and bathing, but this could not be accomplished. We came home, he dined with us for the first time, walked out once or twice, and is now as low as ever.

He frequently told me he had distress no one knew of. I urged him to tell me it. He had long ago told me that he had been on the point of marriage when the lady died, but this it was not, and I supposed there was nothing but a wrong imagination which occasioned his melancholy, till our return to Belfast, when I learn the following particulars; that soon after he came home he told Mr Campbell (binding him to secrecy) that he had a disorder which he called a dropsy in his bladder, that the physicians in America told him there was an operation which might cure, but if not, it would kill him, and be attended with much pain, and that before he would determine on it, he chose to come over here, and see his sister. Campbell saw it, advised him to consult McClelland¹⁹⁶ – he did so, and he performed some operation which he said would be a temporary relief, it passed for the piles, and not even his sister knows of anything worse. She and all his friends are eager for our going some other jaunt with him, as the last just pointed out what seemed the remedy for his mind, and Edinburgh, as a place he had never seen, was proposed – but since we made this discovery, the case is altered and we are determined to go nowhere without advice. As yet his sister, who depends entirely on us, knows nothing of this additional affliction. He is a worthy amiable man. I talked of you often to him, and I hope did you no harm. I read some of your production of which he gave a just character, and seemed to consider them of value. He told me that till his sister wrote to him that you had left Newry, he always thought you had been a doctor of divinity.

He dwelt with seeming pleasure on the character of my revered father, said he had not a friend he would have been sorrier to have found dead, that none of them had ever given him, when a needy boy, so many pence, nor so much good advice. He dwelt on his tenderness of heart, of which he mentioned an instance that strongly marked it, told him by a gentleman in America, who had seen my father one day in the street of Belfast call a little boy to him, give him some pence, and whisper to him; being curious to see for what this was, he discovered that he was ordered to go

196 Richard McClelland (d.1807), surgeon and apothecary.

to a man who held a goose by the legs with the neck down making a sound which gave my father such pain he begged the man to turn the goose up.

This little incident he thought unnoticed, yet it reached his nephew in America, who thirty years after, tells it to his admiring child – but at this time you I suppose can't dwell with pleasure even on this, and suppose me indifferent or very odd in not taking up the main subject of your last letter, which like many other of the productions of your pen improves (or this at least is less irksome) on the second reading. The first one, I thought the lady who was the subject of it had neither friends, nor fortune. Of other irresistible charms I then thought to read, and flattered myself that my brother was a judge of that elegance of mind and manner, so seldom seen in men, so bewitching in woman, that even family, fortune, and interest gives way to its fascination, nor can we blame the man led by it when he neither forfeits the laws of honour, nor common prudence – no description of this – I love, was the only information and that you had got a more agreeable correspondent. In both I rejoice, and sincerely hope that six and twenty years hence, she may be as affectionate one. On this same second reading I perceive the lady has parents, though who or what is not told, and that it is possible she may have some little fortune, that she has a sister, who at first I feared was that vulgar seeming-notable I dined with in Dublin, but was pleased to find a chance of her being better related. The whole letter however evidently was a kind of apology for which I am sorry you thought there was occasion.

That you are dear to us all, you can have no doubt – and that whatever we would wish in the woman you marry must be purely for your own happiness. High birth or fortune you were no way entitled to – your own limited situation would have made it desirable to have got some, but even this may be done without, and by gaining a prudent woman and an endearing companion add both to your happiness and fortune. Birth in itself is nothing, nor what is called family, yet there is always meaning, and a good one too, in what the generality of the world prize – that family therefore, that by education or example can form the mind to an equality, is always desirable, and a vulgarity here, or in manner, in the woman of your choice, would mortify, would shock me. Forgive me for supposing it. Your acquaintance has been so very short that there is more reason to fear the graces alone may have captivated you. Be it what it may, you are now pledged, and as there was a hint in your last but one of some attachment, I naturally supposed Miss Chetwood¹⁹⁷ of Cork to be the lady – sure your memory is short when you say this is your first tender attachment. What, when on one interview you could address her in a romantic letter – but perhaps your first affair of this kind was esteem, your second (you said) love, your third rapture. One little month, from home too and among strangers, was a short time and bad situation to gain the knowledge one would wish of the woman they would offer to marry. This however you have done, and pledged yourself to, and she runs her risk, but I hope she is of an age to make so hasty a determination more

197 This may be 'Miss C', to whom he wrote poetry in 1787.

excusable. All opportunity of knowing her better is now at an end. If you have had any opportunity of even of hearing her character from a disinterested person I would be glad.

I am sorry you are so situated as not to feel the pleasure of all those little, quiet attentions, so very pleasing both to give and to receive in the growth of an attachment, and by which it is marked more agreeably than in any declarations either in conversation or in writing. I would have been glad you fair had taught them to you – for love might do what nothing else could. Oh! they are the delight of every connection and their flattering assiduities, more soothing to a tender sensible heart than a stronger passion either of love or friendship, unmarked but on great and unfrequent occasions, and I would be satisfied to excuse my husband not dropping a tear on my grave, rather than feel him remiss in that tender polite respect which every woman of sensibility values, and which I daily see the most trifling and worthless obtain. I have seen it, and felt the reverse, with a laughing face and a full heart.

Though no way desirous of being a confidant, I might have perhaps thought it natural in a friendship of so long a standing, to have got some little information of it before it was quite determined – but on consideration I am better pleased it has been otherwise. I nor one of your friends would ever have opposed even by advice your inclinations – in trifles perhaps we may too often have presumed on the experience of riper years, but in every important step, in every situation you have changed to, it was ever your own choice, your own act. We are pleased you are forming that connect[ion] which makes home comfortable, and will we hope secure you a comfortable friend, a soothing, endearing companion, and make you a fond and happy parent. It is time you should try to obtain these chief blessings of life, to which ten thousand vanities should yield, and to do it, you are the judge. It is a lottery – and in your station I believe, the majority are happy enough. There are few of them, at least who have children, that I believe, if they could, would separate. Be assured you have not given any offence either to mother, or sisters, who all join you in thinking affection, or if you like the word love better, ought ever to be the foundation on which to build hope of happiness in the marriage [*sic*] state. You have ever professed and deserved it from them, and they doubt not but you will also secure and possess it in a closer connection long after theirs have ceased.

When you are at leisure, or inclined, we will be glad to hear every little circumstances of our new friend – little she can be ever to us but on your account. You are fixed in Dublin I really hope for life. You have made a footing which I think you ought never (for aught I see) to give up, and which may naturally be supposed, if not your own fault, every day to grow better. I have not a doubt of it. Prudence and propriety of conduct, and a strict economy for some time is all that will be necessary. It will make and keep you independent, you will have preserved your principles, your character, and your best friends unchanged, and marry the woman you love (with I suppose) little or no fortune, and yet I hope maintain her and yourself in the station you were bred up, and perhaps your children in a better. I hope Mrs

Bruce is better – or rather quite well. That name reminds me of what a choice a wise man may make – and among the same set – but surely you are more the man of taste than he.¹⁹⁸ Yet he appears quite happy with a woman I would rather have for a chambermaid than my sister. Every one is on the keep off with her, yet he sees it not and pays her as much attention as if she was respectable, though vain, ignorant, expensive, assuming and vulgar.

I fully intended writing to Mrs Orr, but I have been in a perpetual hurry and engagement this whole summer. Remember me to her most affectionately, and if you do not choose that I should write to her for an account of your mistress, be particular soon yourself, and by no means defer writing to my mother. I believe this is one of the first letters I ever wrote you without one word of politics. Muir drank tea here, he makes honourable mention of you.

463 Friday, 11 October

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [445]

Dear Matty, You desire me to write soon and particularly. Now as for the latter, I can scarcely be more particular than I have been, when I said I have entered into a correspondence which still continues, and is likely to do so for some time, with one that even this correspondence gives me fresh reason to respect, esteem and admire; that I for example have received four letters from her and she five from me,¹⁹⁹ and that I have endeavoured to satisfy her uneasiness with respect to my want of communication with my friends on the subject as well as I could, and by quoting a great part of their kind and affectionate letters to me on the subject, for which I sincerely thank you, and my dear mother, and my much valued and respected brother S. McTier. I cannot therefore be more particular than I have been unless by indelicately sending you the correspondence itself, which from what Nancy thinks of me that I am totally taken up always with one idea, you will suppose has estranged me from politics entirely and made me endeavour to attend to business which is not very attentive to me, as it ought, for I can never be brought to believe that I don't know most of that very subject of which I am supposed to know least.

I saw Muir's trial²⁰⁰ for the first time today, and was pleased to see your letter to Scotland had been read in the court as well as mine – as for mine, when I read it at this distance of time, I really could not help thinking it an elegant little piece of rational declamation, and as for yours to Mrs McCormick, I hear the court expressed great satisfaction and enquired from Mr Muir the character of the lady who wrote it. Rowan wrote a letter to Dundas,²⁰¹ the Lord Advocate, about his appellation of the Irish wretches who had fled, etc., which was left at his house but

198 Martha later confided that she feared her new sister-in-law would be like Mrs Bruce, one of whose brothers, the Rev. Joseph Hutton, was married to a sister of Sarah Swanwick.

199 For copies of Drennan's letters to Sarah Swanwick see T/2884 (PRONI).

200 Muir was tried for sedition and transported to Botany Bay.

201 Robert Dundas (1758-1819) of Arniston, Scottish judge (*DNB*).

no answer has been received. I hope the letter which I saw in the *Belfast Star* of this day will prove the trial illegal and make an appeal necessary.

Butler this day sent a message to the Chancellor and would have done it sooner had it not been for Lady F[itzgibbon's] confinement – the purport is I believe to know if a gentleman can safely wait on him to speak on the subject. Of this however by no means speak but to Sam – it is my private opinion that if ever a duel was called for, it is here, for the sentence was all from personal vengeance and can only be met by the same.

Have you fixed for any other jaunt with Mr Young? As I was going to the Prerogative Office I stepped in for the purpose of seeing my grandmother's will – and it cost me half a crown for not seeing it. My grandfather Lenox²⁰² will is only there, in 1737, leaving Young, Bigger, and my mother residuary legatees, after some trifling legacies, so that I suppose my grandmother either never made a will or it must be lodged in the provincial court. I should think that any will Young might now make would be disputable. I smiled at your account of the effect which the Venus had on him. I have a cast of the same Venus in my room here under which as an excuse I have written,

How the limbs brighten with pellucid grace!
Mark! What a soul, suffused o'er form and face
Dress would such purity of mind conceal
And decency here drops her needless veil.

Lord Downshire dead. Who will set up? Some say young Ford. Mrs Bruce is I think getting better, but very slowly, and she is so niggardly that I am half inclined to take a fee for a pretty long attendancè, if she has the courage to offer it. She is as unpleasant a patient as can be.

I still feel interest for France. The war grows more inveterate and I believe it is not all gasconading what Barere has said, that Carthage must be destroyed – that is Paris, or London must perish. As for Washington I prophesy that in a few years, if he does not fortunately die, he will become unpopular in America.

I met J. Ferguson of Woodville and he said you were going in a few days in Edinburgh. If so, desire Dugald Stewart to pay Dublin a visit next summer. Ever your affectionate brother, WD

464 [undated]

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN] [444]

Dear Will, On looking over my franks I fear I have one too many, and that I made some mistake in sending off my last, which will give you reason to regret the length of it. The winter parties have begun very thick, and I often write in a hurry, which

202 Robert Lennox, merchant of Belfast, died February 1733; Alexander Young and James Bigger were his sons-in-law (Jean Agnew, *Belfast merchant families in the seventeenth century* (Dublin, 1996), p.231).

I detest. You will have one great advantage for young beginners who require economy, living in a city so large as to preclude observation, or seeming particular by retirement. A genteel situation, lodging and servant, and when you can, a well bred woman for your wife, and a neat plain carriage, is all that Dublin will require in your appearance for I imagine neither clergy nor physicians there are called on to entertain much. Your situation I think very pleasant, particularly to retired people, so central as to be convenient in many respects, particularly as you have not a carriage, and I would suppose favourable to your business, at least change might be prejudicial. Perhaps a small house will appear to you to be a more saving plan, but I doubt it – unless something very tempting should offer. Taxes are very high in Dublin and you would be surprised to find the sum the very necessaries, even bed and bedding and decent furniture come to – by degrees you may pick these up and, where you are, cheap. Mrs Bruce, who has all these things and has ever been an excellent manager, after repeatedly trying both, prefers as the most economical a lodging. I would be sorry you would find it necessary to come down in any particular. The appearance of it would be a loss to you at present. This however I may be wrong in – your future lady may have reason to judge better, I only mean to give you my opinion on a matter which some time hence I would not speak upon – it may be natural for her to like to be on the other side of the water, but it may also be more prudent for you not to wish it.

I spent last night at Dr Bruce's, and knowing his lady had been much in the family with whom you are about to connect yourself, I would not forbear giving the conversation a turn which led to what I wanted, without her (I am sure) suspecting in the least my design. It is a very large family – strange that in so long a time keeping a school it has not been more lucrative, singular also that at so early an age a daughter should have the superintendence while a mother lived – some way she must be uncommon, to have gained upon you in six weeks to such a degree as to set aside instantly every advantage of fortune and connection and to pledge yourself without knowing the blood, character, etc., of the family you were entering into. Forgive me this once – I do not mean any reproach, only to draw a conclusion pleasing to myself, and to which you I suppose will readily assent, that you are most violently in love, and that though it is possible to be otherwise – I believe the object very, very lovely. Upon your first mention of this affair it was so unsatisfactory in the account of the lady (indeed continues so), that upon my hearing by accident that she was a red cheeked girl of the name of Swanwick, and not being able to go to my mother, I wrote her a few lines with this intelligence. There is something very original in her style which, though rather energetic in conversation, appears to be very laughable on paper. I enclose you her answer – it made me fall into repeated fits of laughter, and though you may feel a little differently, it is solely for the purpose of making you smile (not scornfully) that I enclose it.

We have several accounts here of a bad fever prevailing in Dublin; but I hope they are from the alarmists. There is a letter from Scotland mentions Muir's being obliged

to be relanded as it is thought he could not live many days. I fear this is true, yet if it is, the effect may be – I know not what. Two strong Belfast men were a few days ago in Scotland, and fell in with a petty tidewaiter who they discovered to be an officious spy, and the fellow who informed on poor Muir. They invited him to supper, which he readily accepted. The toast master, with a great oaken cudgel by his side, gave Mr Muir – the fellow looked greatly dismayed, hoped he had got into company with gentlemen, and applied to the second one to stand his friend and not see him ill used. His reply was a bumper to Mr Muir, which example was immediately followed by the Scotchman and proclaimed by his companions, to the great delight of the people in the town where he lives despised. At this rate, a ship from Ireland will be as much dreaded in Scotland as one from Philadelphia, and I suppose they will soon be obliged to perform quarantine. You have now two long letters from me unanswered, the time is approaching when they will not be much desired, and dislike to be answered. I therefore hope you will attend to some of the requests I made in my last.

Hamilton Rowan being given for a toast the other night, a militia officer present rose and left the room, saying he was ordered not to stay where such men were given. Brave fellow – I have not found out his name – but as I sup with a great many of them tonight, I intend trying if I can put any of them to flight and be brave. M MCTIER

465 8 November

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO SAM MCTIER, BELFAST [447]

Dear Sam, I am much obliged to you for your letter. I took it immediately to Mrs Rowan who was apparently much obliged to me and you for your attention. She was indeed much affected, but about a minute after received a letter from Mr R[owan] in which he mentions his being bailed by Colonel Macleod²⁰³ and having been entertained with much hospitality at his house. I suppose he will come over after a few days, but will he not have to stand a trial there, as well as one here? No mention however of any motion for it on the part of government at present which is I suppose meant as genteel, a man cannot easily be in two jails at the same time. I think Rowan has shown that the age of chivalry is not yet passed away. Lady Westmorland²⁰⁴ is I hear dying of a military fever and attended by five physicians, though neither Emmet the state physician nor I are of the number. The French are doing well. I prophesied right twice at Dunkirk and Maubeuge²⁰⁵ and I prophesy this night 8th November in spite of 1,400 French being taken at Marchiennes that there has been something more extraordinary which occasioned McBride to come express to London on the 4th at noon, a council to be summoned, another in the

203 Colonel Norman Macleod (1754-1801), MP for Inverness-shire, Lieut Colonel of 42nd Foot, went bail for Rowan when he was arrested for visiting Muir in prison (Wogds, *Thomas Russell*, p.135).

204 Sarah, Countess of Westmorland, died 9 November 1793; a military fever is a fever accompanied by a rash.

205 Maubeuge in northern France, besieged by Prince Josias of Coburg and relieved by the victory of Wattignies on 15-16 October.

evening and a messenger sent off for Ireland. I think Jourdan and Cobourg have had a serious business.²⁰⁶ Winter seems set in and before long I hope you will hear that the French have their own firesides.

As for me, I intend if possible to be in Chester on a day or two after Christmas, the day on which I left Belfast, the day on which I left Newry. I believe Russell to be a very honest and even pleasing fellow but I really am disgusted with the behaviour of some of my oldest friends who have never seemed to know me of late and I believe, God forgive me, I shall never forgive them. I remember when Crombie gave our friends and secondly our enemies as toasts, my mother would never drink her enemies, and she was right in spite of Christianity, it is unnatural. Excuse this hasty epistle which I write hurried without being in a hurry, and believe me ever yours affectionately, W DRENNAN

466 [—]sday night

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [448]

My dearest Will, I have more matter in my head than I have time to put on paper, but having been very faulty of late in regard to you, I might appear unpardonably so if I allowed your friend Mr Rowan to leave this without a line. Mr Butler and he spent yesterday evening with us, and on the short notice I had, I did my best to procure an agreeable party and do you credit. But though Rowan carries this, I venture to repeat there is something in that man's face and manner I do not like. Mr Butler and he both mentioned your suspicion of character and the former requested of you to promise not to suspect him, but he laughingly owned you had refused it. He begged leave to give you as a toast. This night they are with the U[nited] I[rish]men, a meeting which I fear they will have no reason to term respectable. They addressed Butler by Sam and were well answered.

In your last you pray God to forgive you – Amen say I – for like your admired nation (no longer mine) you appear inclined to cast off the precepts of the Christian religion. Who are these early friends you deprecate? I am sure they are not in Dublin. I shuddered least in these revolutionary times you had me in your head – if so, I must ardently pray God to forgive you, but I saw many instances of a suspicion of temper gaining ground on you while I was in Dublin, and that kind of it which must tend most to your unhappiness and has no dignity in it. I mean a perpetual fear of others thinking ill of, looking down on you etc. This you show by your purblind scrutinizing eye, and though honest to everything else, you are not so to your own character, scorn settles on your visage, and you in time occasion the thing which at first was only supposition – but this will make the present like my last, a hard favoured letter. Yet I really did put the very best face I could on it and had picqued myself on success, but I have ever given you full credit for all your perfections and will therefore think myself entitled to suppose you may sometimes err – and if I

206 Jean Baptiste Jourdan (1762-1833), French general, and Prince Josias of Coburg, Austrian general.

think it is in what will be a loss to you probably may hint it to you while I continue a correspondent.

You are going to Chester – but for what – is part of that mystery in which you have enveloped yourself in regard to a matter naturally interesting to affectionate friends, but you might honestly at first have said it was to a boarding school. If you can with prudence spare time for a visit, I think your desire of it is right and natural. If it is to put an end to the affair by marriage, I suppose you or the lady must have means I am unacquainted with, and I again repeat I am sincerely glad for many reasons you are going to be married, and must for many reasons suppose it is to an accomplished wom[an].

Mr Rowan just sends me word he sets off tonight instead of tomorrow for Dublin. Adieu then, write if you love me. M MCTIER

467 16 November, franked by C. Skeffington

MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST, TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, DUBLIN [449]

My mother and Nancy suppose (in this state of supposition concerning you) that you would never think of going to England unless to be married, the former therefore is calculating how many shirts she will get out of a piece of cloth of her own manufacturing, the latter, what colour would be fitter than black for a bridegroom of your profession.

As I, in my ignorance of your plan, and the humility attending a belief of not being at present in favour, can form no opinion, may I presume to ask if it would be much out of your way to go to Belfast. I believe not – perhaps you would rather return by it, and if you bring the lady, so would I. I have a bed at your service, and a good one, or two if she should be attended by a companion – on this at least it will be necessary you should be explicit. I hope it is needless to add that your bringing the lady of your choice with you would be an additional pleasure to us all, and will save Sam and me going up to see her. Your solitary fifty pound, where is it? – I hope yet in the bank. Sure she must have some fortune to assist present maintenance, for as an honest man you could not now say you could support her. That you soon might I have no doubt, but as I see plainly, you will never procure friends but by real merit, that must take some time to make its way. Politics you might have indulged in, and they would have hurt you less than almost any other man, because there was a very general allowance of the goodness of your heart, the honesty of your intentions, and the value of your pen, but that suspicion which haunts you, which is unworthy [of]²⁰⁷ a great, or independent mind, that soreness, and apprehension of ill-usage, or contempt, of undermining, and I know not what, I am sure has been of infinite loss to you. It sours your temper, throws scorn into your face and manner to those you do not feel it for, and I am now well convinced makes you, what nothing but your own suspicion would, enemies. In politics you might have had them but even here,

207 Word supplied.

I would have supposed only among strangers. Who are these early friends who will not even speak to you? – Pollock, a little sore creature, like yourself – but you will soon I hope possess a friend whose steady regard, whose tender soothing, (may be) sprightly animated conversation will put to flight all these demons of your imagination. The prattle of a child will effectually rout them. May you be happy in the possession of such cherubs. The tenderness of your father made them a cause of his unhappiness.²⁰⁸

Hammy Young dozes out life in his elbow chair, and thinks himself the most afflicted of mankind, from the belief that he is thought ill of by the world and has many enemies. This is the present tormentor of his ill-fated imagination which robs him of sleep, peace, and every comfort, though most is within his reach. He sits a dumb and melancholy spectre. No wonder, I did not like to hear that the lady you are engaged to was a relation by blood, as well as marriage to a Mr Hincks,²⁰⁹ you know – can you do this away by any means.

Sam who stands so well with the Youngs, and so necessary to them in their present forlorn state that if he misses going there a day they send to enquire for him, thought it might be of service to you or at least appear respectful to acquaint Miss Young with your matrimonial design. He was not disappointed, so far at least as her appearing obliged by the confidence, and declaring repeatedly she was glad of it, that it was time, and she believed if the woman was amiable, though her fortune was small, that it would tend to make your situation more comfortable. A few nights ago, I sat an hour with her, she made me a present of a pretty gown, and asked for you. I mentioned your design of visiting Chester, but my uncertainty as to the intention. She spoke of it with good sense and a seeming interest, concluded from the lady being daughter to one who kept a boarding school, she was well educated by a woman of character and who likely might herself have been a gentlewoman, though I thought she appeared a little mortified, she inquired particularly about those friends in Dublin about whom I was not qualified to say much. Mrs Hutton²¹⁰ I saw, but would not know her again, and remember receiving a pretty letter from her, rather more sentimental than the occasion required.

On my saying to Miss Young, I did not think the lady's friends would consent until there was a better prospect for her support, she answered, never fear that, and I thought drew up her head. My mother's price for you was just a £1,000, and she can't conceive why, in all Dublin, you could not get a girl with a thousand pound. Mrs D. Gordon for the first time lies in in Dublin. I took some step to secure her for you, but could not succeed, though her husband also wished her to employ you. Her reasons were nothing against you, except your being unmarried, and a prepossession in favour of Dr Law which has occasioned her engaging him, but from what I was with pain a witness to in Dublin, I can easily account for it.

208 He was deeply affected by the loss of most of his children in infancy.

209 Sarah was the first cousin of William Hincks, to whom her sister Susan was married; Hincks had periodic attacks of insanity and was eventually confined in an asylum.

210 Sarah's sister Mary, wife of Rev. Joseph Hutton.

The night of the entertainment to your Dublin friends, there was a party of drunken militia officers parading the streets at the time the U[nited] Irishmen were breaking up, there were several scuffles. The first was occasioned by an Irish shoemaker giving a cheer in the street to the society. The militia gentlemen heard it, and crossed from the other side of the street, called the guard, who however did not act owing to the prudence of one of their officers. Much altercation took place, and a great desire of single combat was put off with some difficulty till the next day, for the shoemaker being tall and handsome and as Captain Gore said, knowing him was taken for a gentleman and Gore swore he was sure he would fight. The news of one of the U[nited] Irishmen being insulted reached the inn where a few of the party still remained, they rose to go home and McCabe determined to take Russell there – on going out of the inn they got among the militia.

Russell went up close to them, did not speak one word, but it seems surveyed them with such a countenance, that after McCabe had got him past them, they pursued and coming up with Russell, demanded the reason for that look of insolence. Here also, there was great danger – several on two – a young man wanted to fight Russell and always cried out he was Lord Cole,²¹¹ which he repeated so often that one of the mob cried out; you are very fond of that title, take care or it may not be long till you lose it. Another officer however would not allow his lordship to fight, but told Russell he was his man. However, on being often reminded that they were but two unarmed men and at their mercy if they chose to bayonet them, a practise now quite familiar to us, they also had the goodness to put off the affair till the next day. It brought reflection, and atonement from the officers, in the fullest and most gentlemanly manner. They sought out Russell and apologised to him in the fullest manner.

McCabe before this, fearing disagreeable consequence, had done all in his power to persuade Russell of what he himself thought, that he had been the first offender by a look which even at moonlight, was it seems, worse than a sentence. Russell therefore complied with his request and wrote an apology, but before he delivered it, the officers came with and delivered theirs. McCabe had just been reading Godwin,²¹² a book which I fear will be of no great use to enthusiastic minds of little depth, and to show his candour and love of truth, produces Russell's apology. The shoemaker's part came next to be discussed. The officers begged there might be no more of it, but that Mr Dawson might be informed it was merely a drunken frolic. Mr Dawson, the shoemaker, however insisted on seeing the last night's hero, and he also apologised, this you may depend on.

I am much interested for this seemingly unfortunate young man Russell. He seems very poor, is very agreeable, very handsome and well informed, and possessed of most insinuating graceful manners. His dress betrays poverty and he associates with men every way below himself, on some of whom I fear he mostly lives. His

211 John Willoughby Cole, Viscount Cole, later 2nd Earl of Enniskillen (1768-1840).

212 William Godwin (1756-1836), radical philosopher; published *Enquiry concerning political justice* (1793) (DNB).

family too are unfortunate, some of them in their character, yet he appears so very interesting that I dare not renew an invitation I gave to Betty Goddard to spend some time with me this winter, and where she would much rather be than with her father in Newry, who unfortunately has lived, and is living with the worst of the sex, which has inspired him with fear and jealousy of the best. His daughter is every way lovely. Rainey Maxwell told me, John²¹³ was lately a patient of yours. He will tread in his father's footsteps and be woman's tyrant.

Not one word is said or heard of the election for the two great counties, more than if it was putting a constable into office. What wonderful changes take place in the public mind – and how minutely it ought to be noted by a wise government. I am told A. Stewart wrote to Neilson upon the bad tendency of this public stupor, and heard a gentleman then declare that if his vote could bring in the twelve apostles he would not give it, nor I unless there had been a William among them. What a fascinating book is Boswell's life of Johnson and how improved is the present style of biography. I ever before thought Johnson a grave sententious moralist only, but surely he was as exquisite in his unstudied reply, as meditated Rambler, and each short sentence of one, conveys all that was possible and in the very best words.

I am turned, quite turned against the French, and fear it is all farther than ever from coming to good. The queen in all I have read appeared very great, and I think her reply to the question about her conduct in regard to her son had a dignity and justice in it that might have escaped the studied fiction of the poet, indeed the charge damned the whole to me. I know not what she was, but they were cruel and cowardly to take the life of this beautiful young woman. Yes – both her youth and beauty should have pleaded for her, but I now believe firmly in what at first I did not, that they are ferocious murderers.²¹⁴

Atheists too, proclaimed disavowers of religion, disbelievers of a future state, death proclaimed eternal sleep by authority – what can this mean or what the end it is to answer? If ever there was an error that could do no harm but might do good, the belief of a future state, if it is an error, is that one never yet did I hear the hurt it could do and who shall dare to prove it may not be? Woe then to the man who would rob us even of so delightful an illusion. In short, to end where I begun, I have taken a horror of the French, and fear we shall prove ourselves short sighted mortals in supposing they and their revolution was to bring on so much happiness to the world. I now think it an equal chance that they are to be the means of some direful evils that in all quarters seem to threaten the human race – but any place rather than Philadelphia. There is a young well informed Spaniard here, son to the king of Spain's physician, he says, he does not think four years more can pass till there is a revolution in his country. I hope it will go on with more moderation than the French. I have not read much of Godwin but suppose it a book that would not do much good, the morality of it, which I hear much extolled, I suppose may be got to as much perfection, and an easier rate both of money and time, in the new

213 Bess Goddard's brother, John Goddard the younger.

214 Marie Antoinette was executed on 16 October 1793.

test[amen]t. How do you like our English Lion? Sampson²¹⁵ is the chief hand. Have you read Mrs Barbauld on public worship or her fast day sermon, if not I venture to recommend them to you. She is an honour to her sex and the most elegant writer I know.

You never sent me the line or lines I requested of you for my father's picture. There was some other request I think I made to you on a similar thought for a cenotaph in conjunction with one put up by the Crombies in the meeting house, but it is so long ago if I wrote it, and you often do not answer, that I am not sure about it. I hear there are neat plain ones, that would just answer the place I would like this in, got for five guineas. One would be odd, but two would be an ornament in the house. Poor Crombie had a wish, and often expressed it to his wife, that something of that kind which might notice him as the founder of the Academy and the promoter of that building should be placed in the portico, just opposite the door. She cherished the thought, and meant to execute it when James²¹⁶ was of an age to assist her in it, and William her third son had determined it should be done, the year he got a bursary from the college. This he got and they were full of executing this affectionate tribute, when a fine monument came over for Charles Hamilton,²¹⁷ with a request from his sisters to give it a place in the house. This was not much approved of but they at last determined to fix it in the very spot Mrs C[rombie] wished for. She immediately told her intention, but that with Mr Holmes and Dr Bruce seemed to spur on the execution of the other, and the place to her great mortification was directly filled up. I wish ardently you and she could yet accomplish your design in that matter – if the expense was moderate it should not rest on you.

How is old Mrs Bruce? I do not think the family here seem to know or say much about her. Give my kindest remembrance to Mrs Orr and her sons. You seemed hurt at the idea of my making any inquiry of her – you need not, that was not my view in writing. Present my compliments to Mrs Daniel and request she will let me know the most fashionable way of making a tabbynett in a dress gown.

So far I had wrote and you will grant pretty fully, when I received yours which gave me both pleasure and pain.

I could not get a frank for that [—] but have succeeded for this, and one rather too close after it, for Wednesday, but which I shall probably use.²¹⁸ Now I know that such a long letter as this generally remains unanswered, but there really are some things in it I wish you to reply to, and therefore beg you will lay it before you and notice any request that may be in it. The last one I shall make is to know your fair one's name – for she and she does not sound pleasingly. I have helped to deliver you (of what I believe stuck in your throat) the word boarding school.

215 William Sampson (1746-1836), barrister, United Irishman; contributed to the *Northern Star* and the *Press*, the poem referred to is a mock epic 'The Lion of Old England' (*DNB*).

216 James Crombie (b. 1775), became a merchant in America; William Simpson Crombie (b. 1777), educated at St Andrews, became a barrister.

217 Charles Hamilton (1753?-92), orientalist and son of a Belfast merchant (*DNB*); brother of Elizabeth Hamilton (1758-1816), poet, satirist and novelist (*DNB*), and Mrs Catherine Blake, and nephew of the Rev. James Mackay of Belfast.

218 To limit abuse, franks were dated.

Well, we'll get on – is her name Madge? – put 'ina' to it – vie with me, no my dear partial brother, it is graces and accomplishments more suited to the bride which I hope she possesses, the girlish charms may delight you yet, those of the half-century matron I hope will be your wife's. My last was written in such haste that I know so little of it I am sure I have made repetitions in this – indeed I find the twice told tale creeping on me – but I believe it is only some particular things which take a strong hold of my mind. I am greatly struck with the spread your address to the Scotch will now have – a paper feared to be read even in the society to which it was addressed, and though much admired by some, not dared to be published nor avowed. Now by the means of government put in a train that I suppose not a house in Scotland but will possess it, and well may their government fear it, for it is well adapted in every line to work on and gain their nation. I now really will have done and only add the blessing of an old woman.

Sunday night – both Bruce and Vance rational and agreeable.

Sac[?ramen]t Sunday

468 24 November

WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [450]

Dear Sister, I have received and read all your letters with attention, and those you have enclosed to me. Though there are many kind things in them all, and all is said which was natural to have been said, and somewhat omitted of what was wished to be said, the impression made and lastingly left in my mind is a very painful one. Though I thank God I have had as little positive misfortune in life as most men, I have yet had but little happiness, and of this I am a judge because I know what I have felt and what I feel. I always supposed that the period of courtship was the most promising of happiness that a man's life could yield, and therefore I do own candidly, if duty or decency could have allowed me to conceal what I have already disclosed, I should have done it, anxious to have as much happiness as I could, and well knowing that what has been the case would prove the consequence, that the period I have mentioned would be embittered and it is so. I feel therefore as a man who feels he has lost a blessing he hoped to possess of the most endearing kind, by no means attributing this to any of his friends or relations who have acted as delicately and affectionately as they have ever done, but to the circumstances of the case, and every hour either at day or night – for if my mother waked one night, so have I more than one – every such hour has lost its zest of hope, without losing one spark of tenderness for the object, and is crossed with so many other thoughts, and I sometimes wish myself out of this part of the world, or only me and another in it. All this perhaps he deserves, some may say, for his imprudence. Well – it may be so, but that does not deprive me the less of my private personal satisfaction.

As it is totally out of my power to tell you as yet whether I shall or can venture to Chester, I need not talk of how I shall return, but certainly it would be greatly out

of my way in time as well as place to return by Belfast. If I go, it shall not be on a visit, and therefore I believe I shall not, as far as I see, be able to accomplish what I wish. My solitary £50 is still in the bank but Sam sent me £40 and I lent £22 to you when in Dublin and since, so is the state of our accounts. I don't believe my girl, for she is unalterably mine, has more present fortune than I before mentioned, yet I should marry her as soon as I possibly could as an honest man has often done in like circumstances.

With respect to the Youngs, it is my private opinion that an attachment to the very name, which is no slight thing with most minds, independent of other circumstances, and this last one which I think much at least in my disfavour, would induce them to retain their former indifference at bottom to our family. Habit and education in certain impressions do not soon wear away – you may ascribe all this to my supposed suspicion always of the worst. No – it is not my real character; it really and truly proceeds from candour and too great openness and sincerity of mind. The same suspicions cross the minds of others and haunt them, but then prudence prevents the betraying these their secrets. I mention them sometimes in social confidence and never think long about them, and therefore am set down perhaps for a jealous and even envious man, when I believe of all I know I am as little so as any.

Mrs D. Gordon has done as I knew she would do, two years ago, if she lay in in Dublin – and I therefore am sorry you [gave] yourself the trouble of writing to Mrs Dunn. I paid Mrs G[ordon] every polite attention by calling etc. for a year after I came to Dublin, and was fully sensible by more things than are worth mentioning that she did not wish to employ me in any way in the family, though I attended one of David's people abroad and recovered him from the jaws of death – and what you were with pain a witness to, I must do again in a similar situation. Mrs Heron's death could scarcely have injured me, as I had neither art nor part in it, as little as Law in Lady Westmorland's death.

Boswell's book I like just as you do. It is the first work of the kind since the days of Plutarch.²¹⁹ Godwin will never be much read – I don't like him. I will enquire about the cenotaphs. I wrote an address to Muir which I hope will find him alive. Old Mrs Bruce is much better and in good spirits, but poor Sam is dreadfully afflicted with sore eyes. Robert Orr is gone to England to the Temple – I wrote by him to James Adair and young Burke at which you will be surprised. As to your last 'request', the lady's name is Sall, Sally, Sarah, which you choose. The Emmets are well – I dined with them on Sunday. Mrs Daniel can't answer your question till she enquires about it. I mentioned my proposed change of life to her. I shall write to you as soon as I hear from England, from her who says, 'the utmost extent of my wishes is that I may preserve the affection of the friends I now have and in some degree merit and receive it from yours'. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

If I don't or can't go to England, I wonder if Nancy could come up and stay with me a short time. This winter will have Mrs Siddons etc. for her. My mother properly rebukes me for not dating – therefore – 24 November, 11 Dame Street, Dublin

219 Plutarch (c.46-125), Greek essayist and biographer.

469 Monday morning 8 o'clock

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN] [451]

As I rise early, and your last night's letter has been much in my thoughts during the night, I shall write a few lines before the post goes out on the last frank I have. Is there no way I can write on this affair so interesting to us all, without giving you pain? Either, I must be much in fault, you greatly altered, or the subject itself of a very extraordinary nature, and yet I cannot learn how. You judged right in supposing the days of courtship delightful and to make them so, a certain number of difficulties are necessary. None that I know of are thrown in your way by others, and what may occur to yourself were certainly foreseen at the first. Nothing new I suppose has started up, fortune remains as it was when you first entered into the affair, and that is the only and surely no uncommon obstacle in your way. Yours must mend in a few years – and as the courting time has so many charms for you, you may lengthen it without imprudence. From the first, I regretted the lady's situation being so distant as to preclude that daily intercourse, which by adding to your knowledge of her might give you additional pleasure, and your particular situation I think might be ground sufficient to form a request for her coming some time to a place where she has so many friends – and if you are both to use your own lover-like foolish phrase unalterably fixed, you must be on that footing you might request it, and she out of prudence to herself comply with it – for surely her knowledge of you must be very slight, but if you are both unalterably fixed, perhaps it's best to keep at a distance – but pardon me, I find a joke on this subject and begets something like a sermon.

How the pleasures of courtship are lost to you by your relations here knowing of your attachment I am at a loss to apprehend, especially as at the same time you say they have not treated you with either indelicacy or want of affection, and I will answer for their not interfering in any further part of this affair – unless in any little circumstance or attention to please they may have in their power. There is one thing however it seems we have been deficient in – I know it not. A material one that I thought you would not like to mention to my mother, and which I own would have been more agreeable coming from herself, I ventured to hint, by affecting a light joking manner, the only way I ever durst do it, and asked her what settlement she would make on Will's wife. She instantly kindled, declared in her strong manner, she never would in the present case settle sixpence – Why sure you will leave him the fortune – Yes – but she would not settle any, nor in the present case could it be required – Suppose the lady has four or five hundred pound and that her all, do you think it would be prudent in her or her friends to give it to a man who, not able to support her at present, might be obliged to spend that till business mended, and then perhaps die and leave her and children beggars? – No matter, she never would, and began to grow so determined in voice and manner I thought it well dropped before she made a vow or promise.

This was all I could do. Nancy proposed giving up her fortune to be settled on you and yours and only getting the interest, the first foolish thing she ever did and

which I confess I opposed with all my might – yours I suppose it will be and more. You have prospects sufficient for the future, and if you can get your kind wish realised (tis not a very extraordinary one), by the yellow fever for instance, of having only you and another self in the place, you may do very well.

My mother has been ill with a very serious bleeding at her nose, which continued an alarming time. She is now pretty well and taking bark with some drops by Dr Mattear's orders. George Portis²²⁰ has married his mother's house-keeper, who was a little girl living in a cabin of Sam's when we were in N[orth] Street. She was a bastard of Alexander's of Derry,²²¹ married a worthless fellow here who failed and went abroad, and during that time it was said she bore a child to another man. She has one at least by her husband. George, who has long been master, has sold the only place left, Galwally, and taken father, mother, and wife to the place that was Colonel Brown's at C[arling]ford – he I hear has got a place at court.

I enclose you a paragraph out of a little book I attempted to read on the prophecies in the Revelations – said to be written in the reign of King William but this is a second edition, if it is not spurious it is curious.

You will never get an answer from Adair. He will not write a letter even in his own business. I believe him a worthy man, but it is probable he will not notice Orr. How you were entitled to write to Burke you best know. Ever and unalterably, MM

470 Tuesday morning

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [452]

My dear Matty will excuse anything which I said in my last that might have obliged her. The truth is I was then and still am in a very perturbed state of mind, though I find I can conceal it better than you imagine, for Mrs Dunn says I dined there and was in very good spirits, when I very well remember I never was in such a sickening anxiety of thought in the whole course of my life, as at that very time. I really begin to think I have some of that tendency of mind which has been in some branches of our family, for I thought I should not have taken up my pen again on writing my last, and now the moment I have read yours, I sit down to answer it. Ah – do not think that wherever my affections may be placed or whatever may become of me I am not unalterably yours. I have at least laid down one good rule, never to allow myself to dispute the propriety of my mother's doing with her own what she chooses, and indeed I judged from the first that as her height of mind would not take in good part my present attachment in which I had not consulted her, she would act in the affair just as the displeasure against the match, rather than against me, would have prompted. As for what Nancy said, I know her too well, and her silent affection, to be surprised at what she offered, and if I should again press her to come up to Dublin for some time whenever she thinks proper, I hope you will

220 Rev. George Macartney Portis of Carlingford, died before March 1799 when his will was proved; he was the son of George Portis, the Donegall agent and collector of Belfast.

221 Probably Robert Alexander (d.1790), of Boom Hall, Co. Londonderry (*IFR*, p.10).

not deem it from any selfish motive, but from a desire of having some companion near me, during a winter that I believe will be otherwise, on many accounts, a disagreeable one. My mother says I used to look over books and pretend reading for fear of speaking, but whatever truth was in that, the fact now is that I cannot read or look into any book, and excepting the dispensatory very seldom and the newspapers once a day, I read nothing, and sleep from ten to nine, or stay in bed that time, from finding that the first negative pleasure in not living, which ought to the first positive one in our fleeting existence.

I don't expect any answer from Adair for my letter was too good a one for a man of great business to answer. As for young Burke, he pressed me when here in the politest manner to write to him which I never did, until my wish to serve another made me seize an opportunity.

Tell my mother that if her nose bleeds often and moderately it tends to save her life, in a person of her habit and time of life, and were it not to bleed, she would in my opinion die. It is the consequence of much blood in a soft frame, but were it to take any other direction, the consequence would be fatal – so let her cherish it. I called lately on the Miss Joys who (I found accidentally) live in Dublin with their brother, a lawyer in Temple Street, in a very genteel well furnished house. I was asked to dine there yesterday but happened to be engaged. They seem good warm-hearted Belfast girls, and more for the French than their cousin Harry.²²²

I suppose you will think it mean in me mentioning even to you, that I think it was a littleness somewhere in dropping my name as a toast of Butler's, in the publication of the Belfast meeting. [As] fame is all the food I have got for the loss of much [—] bread, it should not be taken from me, even though [of a] trifling nature. Reynolds is come up to settle[—] and Rowan asks him to his house in the meantime which is friendly, though Mrs Rowan I believe hates us all particularly Butler, and only condescends to express her liking for Emmet. I hope Sam and you read the papers for really after times will be astonished and should not we. I should like to see two historical pictures – the twenty-one deputies drawn from the life, and Brissot, looking at them steadfastly before he placed his head under the guillotine – and the Duke of Orleans in a cart, casting his last look on his own palace – first in the world, the Palais Royal. Ever yours, W DRENNAN

471 Tuesday, 3 December [17]93

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [455]

Dear Matty, I enclose you a letter of Mrs Grierson in answer to one of mine, for the purpose of asking you if I should read them to any of my friends, or let it remain in silence. Law's behaviour in accepting the retainer I think mean and characteristic, when he knew that I was employed before, and though I shall not condescend to

222 Harry Joy, owner of the *Belfast News-Letter*.

express my sense of this in writing, I am determined not to know him in company or out of it in future. Return it by return of post and tell me your opinion. Mrs G[rierson] wants to put it on her husband but it is herself, for he is wholly under her control.

Tell my mother I received a letter from her for which I thank her. I have not heard from England yet. My circumstances, upon much agitated reflection, are not such at present as will make me marry at the present if I now can answer for myself. Let my mother make the wrist and shirt neck from the size of any small thin man like myself, for when I last sent her the measure they were made too wide at the wrist. The U[nited] Society dined together, but I went to Mrs Siddons' 'Grecian Daughter'²²³ where I admired and wept for two shillings, what would have cost me three crowns to get drunk at the other. If Nancy comes up, she will be rewarded. I can speak then perhaps more fully than I wish or will communicate by letter. Yours ever, W DRENNAN

472 5 December 1793, franked by C. Skeffington

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, DAME STREET, DUBLIN [454]

When I receive a letter from you it is generally nine at night, blindness then, and laziness in the morning, prevents my being able to answer it at least well, by return of the post.

I do not wonder the affair of Mrs G[rierson] vexes you. It is the first of the kind you have met with and such I believe happen to all your profession, but it may not be the loss you apprehend – but no thanks to her. At the time she offers friendly services, she does more to hurt you than any enemy I suppose ever did, unless it might have been one that not having the same knowledge of you, could not be so much to blame, perhaps a government tool who might suggest to him the impropriety of employing you as he was king's printer. Her letter is a very poor one, but it would have been hard in her case to write a good one, unless candour and truth favoured her. Yours, I think very proper – if any was so.²²⁴ Your former intimacy might perhaps sanction it from supposed regard, from any other motive I think you ought to be above noticing it, for however vexatious it may be, her right to act so, even without giving a reason, cannot be doubted.

I am not acquainted with professional forms, but would suppose Law had a right to accept a retaining fee without any impropriety. There may be some rule in these cases which he has omitted, that I am ignorant of, but if it was to speak to you on the subject, I should think it both more delicate and agreeable to let it alone, unless softened by the terms of undoubted friendship. I cannot see a shadow of reason for appearing offended at Law – but if there had, I confess were I in your place I would disguise it. His success would give any disgust you might show the appearance of

223 'The Grecian daughter' by Arthur Murphy (1727-1805), actor and author (*DNB*).

224 For a copy of Drennan's letter to Mrs Grierson, see T/965/6 (PRONI).

envy – and at the best could not hurt him, and would make you only pitied. Civility of manner is all you are called on for that is easy paid to any one. If he does not deserve it, it will be the severest rebuke you can give and the best office to yourself. You asked my opinion on this subject, much out of my way – and I have ventured to give it. But I am inclined to go a little farther, in only making supposition which I shall be glad to find unfounded.

I have long feared that you have indulged yourself more on political subjects than was either safe, necessary, or dignified – perhaps among women or men inferior to them – you have opinions that would startle such. What right had they to them, no, not even in the sportability of conversation, their folly, their admiration, their vanity, might lead to quote and vilely your words, so as to debase and materially injure you – no less, perhaps more, than with conversational men, who might for entertainment or perhaps worse motives, draw you out and succeed in making you say things, that in the present times must be reserved for the ear of a safe friend only. When good matter is only safe with good men – it is not therefore fit for the conversation of the day. Your writings have made your sentiments sufficiently known. They will be more feared, more respected, less hurtful to yourself, by being less common, not the prattle of lads and lasses, not the scarecrow of the blockhead – perhaps – the good and moderate. To the latter, the idea of a republican at present comes robed in blood and murder, an image so horrid that I felt much hurt and provoked at Isaac Corry's address to you – certainly some very disagreeable idea of this kind has gone forth of you, for common politics would not have done it. I was astonished at Mrs Donaldson telling me when I came down, that Mrs Orr told her I had gone much beyond her in politics, and farther than she could approve, astonished because I cannot recollect any political conversation I ever had with her.

Before I received yours which noticed the toast, I had mentioned the matter to Neilson who dined here, in a manner which I imagine he will not forget. I told him the matter was a trifle, but as that had been the third time this had happened I was curious to know the cause – once before he had left your name out, and H. Joy when it was given by some distant society made it Doctor Duncan. Of the two last, he declared he had no recollection, that at the meeting to entertain Butler many were drank that were not published, and your being left out was owing to a resolution of doing so by all who had not been sufferers, that Tone and several others might have taken offence and that their society had ever looked on you as some how belonging more to themselves than any other individual, and that you were foremost in their esteem, admiration, etc. He talked well and I believe honestly, but I took that opportunity of giving him my opinion pretty fully, and declaring as I could do then that they were my own for that you had never hinted the subject to me. I did this with as much calm dignity as I could assume, and it seemed to have the offset I desired – he owned they had been wrong. The papers gave you the story of poor Bell,²²⁵ I shall not enlarge on it. I wrote to Mrs McCormick lately and

225 A reward of 200 guineas was raised by subscription for information about the fatal wounding of Hugh Bell by a man in the undress uniform of the Fermanagh militia (*BNL*, 3-6 December 1793).

indulged myself in one of the best Philippics I ever penned on that licensed liar Dundas, though her husband's patron, and he had clasped her fair daughter having made her a present of an elegant cestus.²²⁶ I declared I would proclaim him such, and think, speak and read the truth, though a Dundas was in every corner of the land – that I should ever remember him and with some degree of pleasure for having been the means of publishing a paper that will do its author honour in proportion as the trial to which it is annexed will brand his name and nation. I sprinkled my letter with what I know will tempt her to read it often aloud.

In a large party I had the other night, I entertained for the first time H. Joy and his wife.²²⁷ Harry is fulsome in civilities to me – on his looking at my father's picture, I told him that I had often applied to you but in vain for a few lines for it. He supposed either Shakespeare or scripture would afford the best and the subject dropped. The next night, I got a letter from him which I enclose and beg you will return, for though not at all what I wanted, being too long, too common etc., I shall preserve them as an obliging little tribute. No – I do not believe Shakespeare can afford me a sentence that will portray that polished goodness, that something more than religion requires, those tones that to a child, to a servant, bespoke the softest justest music of the mind – to a servant in particular I question much if Siddons could catch it – to a child – Oh! it was all he felt and can never be forgot.

Mr Rowan mentioned here his having asked you to dine with him the day he left Dublin, and said he excused you as you said you were to meet a col[league?], something in the way of your profession. It struck me that he might have expected you would have spent some time with him on what might be his last day – the cause was mutual. This led me to observe that the first time you wrote after Butler and he went to town, you had not seen them, nor have you mentioned them since. Have you seen Russell? I believe he is in Dublin. He spoke of you in the handsomest terms, though he told me there was no person he had oftener differed with on political matter, he quoted some of your lines with rapture.

I did not know my mother had wrote, that is one of her grand secrets. If you really wish for Nancy to go up, write to her, for she does not think you serious. Pleasure would not take her – the first time I proposed it, she said she would wait till you were not well, or your wife lying in. I think she would find it very pleasant, for she has not many acquaintance there and she likes to gratify her eye.

I was going to break a scarlet greatcoat the other day till the thought started into my head that it might fit a nephew. I am tired, adieu. MM

473 Saturday

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST [456]

Dear Matty, I send the enclosed with S. Bruce who is half recovered from severe sore eyes, and is going down to spend the Christmas with his brother. I cannot

226 A cestus is a girdle or belt.

227 Joy was married to Mary Isabella, daughter of John Holmes of Belfast.

spend mine where I wished and intended, nor have I the inclination to enter on all the reasons, but I must in justice to one person say, and in compliance with her own request, that she would not have given me the smallest encouragement for visiting England if she had imagined that it was for the purpose of an immediate union, and the idea of a distant one has so much uncertainty attending it as damps my inclination to go, and makes me, after most anxious consideration, deem it neither consistent with honour and good conscience to presume to engage her nor venture even to engage myself.

I think the lines which H. Joy has selected very good, but really have not felt [—] at home enough to write anything equally well ad[—]. I am perfectly as usual with Rowan and Butler. Rowan has lately been nearly entrapped into a sort of compromise with government of leaving Ireland for a short time on their first entering a *noli prosequi*,²²⁸ but has extricated himself with honour. Don't mention this to anyone but Sam. Russell promised to call on me but never did. I really do wish Nancy could pay me a visit, and if she does she might bring the £30 I have in bank. On the 19th I paid my 30 guineas for the last half year, but have not left sufficient for a jaunt of any kind on my part at present. Mrs Siddons is still here, with her brother Kemble to be here. Farewell dear Matty, and write to me whether I write or not.

Bear with your brother and excuse his many weaknesses and failings. W DRENNAN

474 24 December

MARTHA MCTIER, [BELFAST], TO WILLIAM DRENNAN, 11 DAME STREET, DUBLIN [458]

My dear Will, I received a letter from you last night, which though short, merits an answer that at present I have not time to give. This is on a matter of business, and to beg a favour of you.

I was most unexpectedly voted secretary to a society of ladies formed for the purpose of relieving lying-in women,²²⁹ and for three months I must do as well as I can. Our next meeting is on Monday, when I mean to propose a petition or rather application from the members, being a hundred ladies of Belfast, to Lady Donegall²³⁰ requesting her aid. If the proposal is approved of, I wish to have a proper paper drawn up for the purpose, short, sentimental, delicate and respectful, both to her and ourselves. Now — dedicate half an hour to this and send it by return of the post to your MM

228 *Nolle prosequi*, i.e. don't prosecute: a petition from a plaintiff to stay a suit.

229 The Humane Female Society for the Relief of Lying-in Women first petitioned unsuccessfully for rooms to be granted them at the poor house; they then rented a house in Donegall Street with room for six lying-in women; a hospital was eventually built in 1830 (R. W. M. Strain, *Belfast and its Charitable Society* (Oxford, 1961), pp 163-5).

230 Barbara (d.1829), third wife of the 1st Marquis of Donegall.

475 28 December [17]93

WILLIAM DRENNAN, [DUBLIN], TO MARTHA MCTIER, BELFAST²³¹ [459]

My dear Matty's account of her new situation and her letter to Mrs Orr have diverted me much. As for the scheme itself, I have long been in professional opinion against all hospital institutions, and this among the number. They almost always end in jobs, or at least the greater part of the expenditure goes to the support of the servants and different apparatus of the house. The management is almost always neglected after a year or two. The best mode would be a fund dedicated for feeing professional attendance on the poor at their own houses and dispensing relief where it is really wanting. The very puerperal fever which generally takes its rise in hospitals, and kills more than are saved by accoucheurs, is a great objection. At this instant there is a fever in the Lying-in Hospital here which has cost several lives to women and nurse tenders, and yet they are so fearful of its being known that tar is not burned for fear of alarming, though indeed a preventative of no importance except in women's ideas. But of this make no mention, though Mrs Orr is quaking herself for fear of being infected.

If a house be established, the great advice is cleanliness and frequent washing. Simple water is the sovereign enemy against all infectious diseases, when frequently and properly used. Nature has supplied the remedy in abundance, but we trust to a thousand follies, such as vinegar, camphor, tobacco, etc. Wash and be clean should be the motto over the door of every hospital. The wettest climate and the dampest island is the freest from contagious complaints, and heaven washes us when we will not wash ourselves. The bedsteads etc. should be of cast iron, and washing should be very frequent.

As to your letter to Lady D[onegall] I think you will write it better yourself, but why the devil don't you spell better? Will something like this do:

'Madam, A benevolent institution has in itself a natural claim to the sanction and support of the Marchioness of Donegall. To her breast, it will always carry its own recommendation; but, when such an institution takes its rise in Belfast, it would not only be inauspicious to the scheme, but highly disrespectful not to solicit the patronage and protection of one so disposed to confer obligation on the town, and so nearly connected with its noble proprietor. We feel ourselves therefore emboldened by a sense of duty, as well as by an impulse of feeling, to make your ladyship, as early as possible, acquainted with the nature, and what is the necessary consequence, interested in the success of an association for the relief of poor lying-in woman, just formed by a number of ladies in this place. To be the means of preserving lives at a period of danger; to administer afterwards every comfortable accommodation; to remove poor sufferers, for a little, from those scenes of domestic distress which not only endanger life at the time but protracts the search of recovery; to take poor creatures from a home where the transport of the new mother is so often dashed by the

231 D/591/459 is a typescript copy; the original letter was presented to the Belfast Maternity Hospital (Royal Victoria) by Mrs Duffin in February 1933.

wretchedness around her, where she sees, in silence, the smiles of her infant contrasted with the sighs and tears of a starving family. Such are the objects and motives of our charitable institution which will, we trust, be cherished by the sympathy of the sex, by those in the middling stations of life, and not less, surely, by a lady in the first rank of nobility. We have the honour of enclosing the particulars of the plan and we are, with sentiments of the greatest respect, madam, your most obedient and very humble servants'.

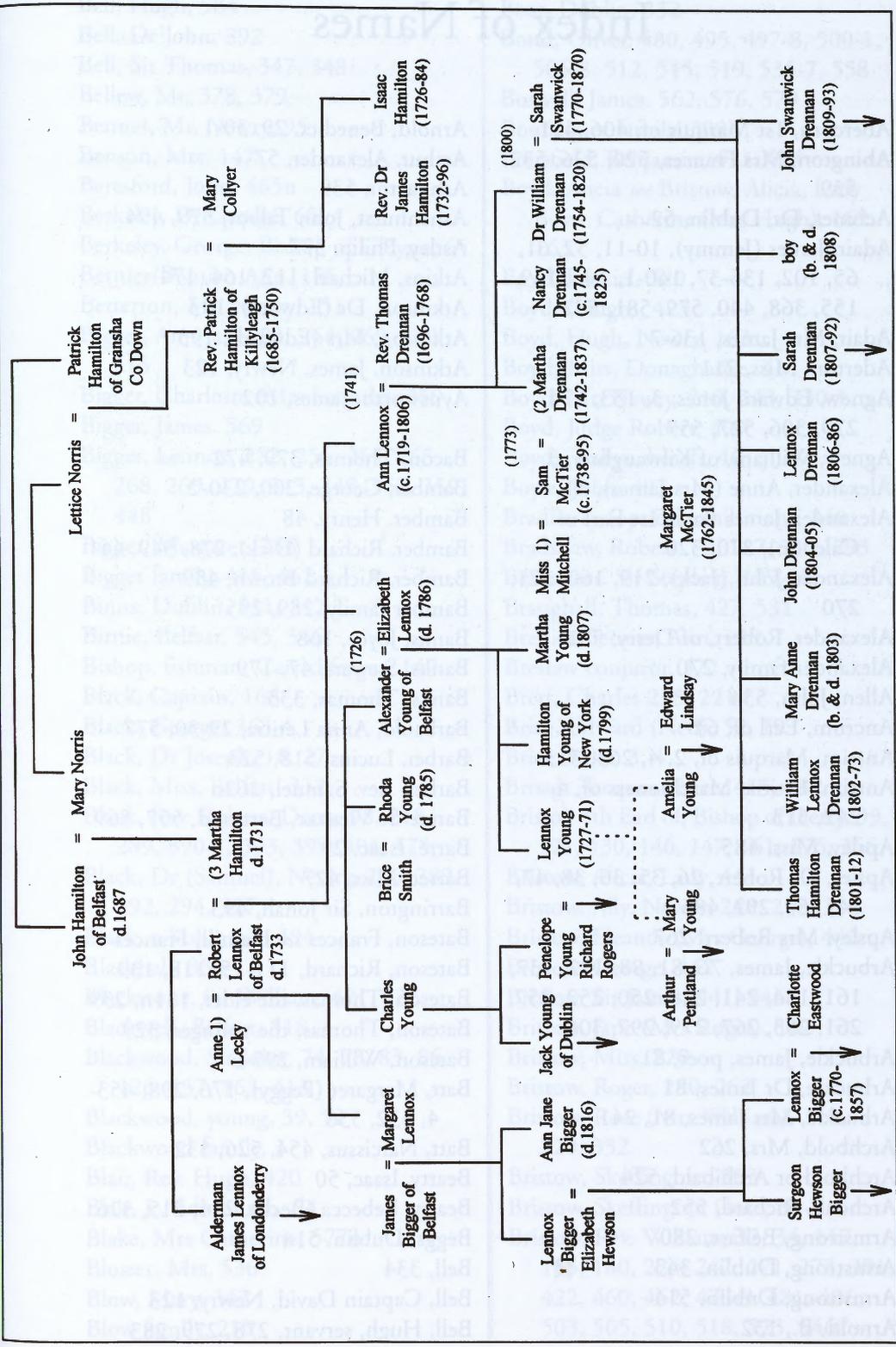
I enclose another letter to Muir, which happens to be printed; if Neilson should happen to ask it, you may tell him that you suppose I will send it to him. Tell Sam, for whose letter I thank him much, our plan of reform will be ready soon, founded on universal suffrage and which will take the lead of Ponsonby's. Emmet was its principal fabrication.²³² My muse inspired me to write some lines on Mrs Siddons which I shall send you some time or other. My muse was always a starveling like myself. Miss Johnson, whom you may possibly remember, is married to a druggist's son. Old Wilson's son whose wife you know, who will have, though an idiot, £800 per annum at his father's death.

My receipt this year £134, and having paid rent and all bills, I have but just five guineas in my pocket. Well, next year may be better. You say you will write long soon. My affair is at least suspended, and with honour on my part and with the perfect coincidence of opinion of her sister Mrs H²³³ on this side. Robert Orr is in London and afflicted with such sore eyes, that I fear an oculist surgeon will be more required than a physician.

Do you still abhor the French? O you are all poor dastards, Sam and Neilson and Matty and my mother, but not my dear Nancy. Come, come and see your brother. Farewell and write soon – In haste, your WD

232 ? fabricator.

233 Mrs Hutton.



Family Tree

Index of Names

- Abercorn, 1st Marquis of, 406, 421
Abington, Mrs Frances, 520; 526, 532, 539
Achmet, Dr, Dublin, 52
Adair, James (Jemmy), 10-11, 52, 61, 65, 102, 136-37, 140-1, 146, 149, 155, 368, 440, 579, 581, 582
Adair, Mrs James, 136-7
Aderton, Miss, 211
Agnew, Edward Jones, 3, 153, 174, 279, 306, 527, 557
Agnew, William, of Kilwaughter, 3
Alexander, Anne (Mrs James), 31
Alexander, James (later 1st Earl of Caledon), 270, 320
Alexander, John (Jack), 219, 160, 221, 270
Alexander, Robert, of Derry, 581
Alexander family, 270
Allen, John, 534
Ancrum, Earl of, 61
Antrim, Marquis of, 2, 4, 263, 313
Antrim, Letitia, Marchioness of, 4, 242, 313
Apsley, Miss, 485
Apsley, Dr Robert, 26, 35, 36, 38, 47, 74, 269, 292, 485
Apsley, Mrs Robert, 267
Arbuckle, James, 76, 81, 88, 122, 137, 161, 184, 241, 248, 250, 252, 257, 261, 263, 267, 279, 297, 306
Arbuckle, James, poet, 81
Arbuckle, Dr James, 81
Arbuckle, Mrs James, 81, 241
Archbold, Mrs, 262
Archbold or Archibald, 524
Archdall, Richard, 552
Armstrong, Belfast, 280
Armstrong, Dublin, 343
Armstrong, Dublin, 514
Arnold, B., 132
Arnold, Benedict, 29, 30-1
Arthur, Alexander, 57
Ash, actor, 539
Ashenhurst, John Talbot, 379, 494
Astley, Philip, 377
Atkins, Michael, 112, 164, 174
Atkinson, Dr (Edward), 193
Atkinson, Mrs (Edward), 193
Atkinson, James, Newry, 123
Aynsworth, James, 102
Bacon, Thomas, 379, 472
Bamber, George, 200, 230-2
Bamber, Henry, 48
Bamber, Richard (Dick), 278, 349, 441
Bamber, Richard Brown, 489
Bamber family, 289, 295
Banks, Joyce, 168
Banks, Stewart, 47, 179
Banks, Thomas, 333
Barbault, Anna Letitia, 29-30, 577
Barber, Lucius, 518, 523
Barber, Rev. Samuel, 262n
Barère de Vieuzac, Bertrand, 557, 569
Barré, Isaac, 29
Barret, Miss, 427
Barrington, Sir Jonah, 493
Bateson, Frances *see* Hamill, Frances
Bateson, Richard, 111-15, 118, 139
Bateson, Thomas, the elder, 111n, 239
Bateson, Thomas, the younger, 329
Bateson, William, 295-6
Batt, Margaret (Peggy), 176, 298, 453-4, 532, 536
Batt, Narcissus, 454, 526, 532
Beatty, Isaac, 50
Beatty, Rebecca (Beck), 214, 215, 326
Beggs, Dublin, 514
Bell, 334
Bell, Captain David, Newry, 123
Bell, Hugh, servant, 278, 279, 283

- Bell, Hugh, 584
 Bell, Dr John, 292
 Bell, Sir Thomas, 347, 348
 Bellew, Mr, 378, 379
 Bennet, Mr, Newry, 95
 Benson, Mrs, 147
 Beresford, John, 465n
 Berkeley, Dr George, 65
 Berkeley, George, Bishop of Cloyne, 65
 Bernier/Brenier, Ann, 185
 Betterton, Mr, Newry, 151
 Bigger, Ann Jane, 83, 264, 269, 270, 415
 Bigger, Charlotte (Mrs Lennox), 359
 Bigger, James, 569
 Bigger, Lennox, 252, 256, 264, 265, 268, 269, 270, 313, 348, 352, 359, 448
 Bigger, Margaret, 256
 Bigger family, 415, 462
 Binns, Dublin, 531, 542
 Birnie, Belfast, 545, 546
 Bishop, fishman, Carrickfergus, 147
 Black, Captain, 166
 Black, George, 363-4
 Black, Dr Joseph, 18, 27
 Black, Miss, Belfast, 332
 Black, Rev. Robert, Derry, 98, 218, 289, 390-1, 393, 399, 404, 474
 Black, Dr (Samuel), Newry, 286, 289, 292, 294, 327
 Black, a Volunteer, 494
 Blackhall, 330-1
 Blackstone, Sir William, 421, 423
 Blackwell, Belfast, 518
 Blackwood, Sir John, 74, 78, 83, 86, 126, 137, 163, 413
 Blackwood, young, 39, 52
 Blackwood family, 3
 Blair, Rev. Hugh, 420
 Blair, J., Edinburgh, 64
 Blake, Mrs Catherine, 577n
 Blosset, Mrs, 536
 Blow, Mary, 343
 Blow family, 210
 Boat, Dublin, 332
 Bond, Oliver, 480, 495, 497-8, 500-1, 506-8, 512, 515, 519, 535-7, 558
 Boswell, James, 562, 576, 579
 Boursiquot family, 309
 Bousfield, Benjamin, 412, 414
 Boyd, Alicia *see* Bristow, Alicia, Lady
 Boyd, Catherine (Mrs Hugh), 162, 163
 Boyd, Ezekiel, 320
 Boyd, (Hugh), 423
 Boyd, Hugh, Newry, 163
 Boyd, Miss, Donaghadee, 41
 Boyd, Mr, Newry, 210, 243, 330-1
 Boyd, Judge Robert, 499
 Boyds, Ballynahinch, 46
 Boyle, John, 497
 Bradberry (optical exhibition), 340
 Bradshaw, Robert, 79, 127, 217, 293
 Bradstreet, Sir Stephen, 129-30
 Braughall, Thomas, 427, 531
 Brenier/Bernier, Ann, 185
 Breslaw conjuror, 377
 Brett, Charles 218, 221
 Brice, Edward (Ned), 52, 79
 Brice, Miss, 3, 4
 Brissot, Jacques Pierre, 415, 582
 Bristol, 4th Earl of, Bishop of Derry, 99, 121, 130, 146, 147, 161, 176, 266
 Bristow, Alicia, Lady, 441
 Bristow, Ally, Newry, 248, 255, 306
 Bristow, Eleanor (Mrs George), 442n
 Bristow, George, 442
 Bristow, Sir James, 441, 546
 Bristow, Jane (Mrs Roger), 162
 Bristow, Miss, 220
 Bristow, Roger, 250, 262
 Bristow, Rose (Mrs William), 118, 220, 332
 Bristow, Skeffington, 503
 Bristow, Skeffington Gore, 31-3
 Bristow, Rev. William, 32, 34, 147, 155, 180, 224, 242, 271, 273, 301, 422, 460, 462, 478-9, 481, 496, 503, 505, 510, 518, 523, 546

- Britt, Mrs *see* Byrtt, Mrs William
 Brown, Dr, of Ballymena, 180
 Brown, Isabella (Mrs John), 299
 Brown, James, 11
 Brown, John, banker, 90, 290
 Brown, Dr John, Edinburgh, 24, 49
 Brown, John, Peter's Hill, 28, 240
 Brown, Mr, at Newry, 164
 Brown, Mr and Mrs, 120-1
 Brown, Mrs, Belfast, 147, 185
 Brown, Mrs Sam, 535, 541
 Browne, Frances (Mrs William), 141,
 143-4, 160, 161, 162, 233, 234,
 246, 274, 275, 280, 327, 347
 Browne, James Caulfield, 550
 Browne, Major, Clanbrassill agent, 252-5
 Browne, Mrs, wife of Clanbrassill
 agent, 252-5
 Browne, Colonel William, 141, 143-4,
 160, 161, 162, 233, 246, 311, 328,
 331, 531, 581
 Browne, Wogan, 484, 486
 Browne, Mrs Wogan, 484
 Brownlow, Catherine (Mrs William),
 352
 Brownlow, William, 186, 189, 205-6,
 223, 335, 356, 463
 Brownlow family, 243
 Bruce, Elizabeth (Betty), 213, 231, 234
 Bruce, Harry, 132
 Bruce, James, Killyleagh, 102, 110
 Bruce, Mary (Mrs Robert), 369n
 Bruce, Miss, Dublin, 53, 176
 Bruce, Robert; 107n, 117, 215, 221,
 251, 369, 494
 Bruce, Rose, 105, 106, 350, 351, 400,
 403, 426, 427, 469, 497, 516, 535,
 541, 549, 557, 570, 577, 579
 Bruce, Sam, 107, 117-18, 153, 172,
 397, 403, 514, 521, 526, 527, 532,
 549, 579, 585
 Bruce, Stewart, 121, 266
 Bruce, Susanna (Mrs William), 290,
 294, 304, 338, 340, 343, 346, 348,
 350, 351, 393, 401-2, 405, 409,
 440-1, 474, 494, 510, 526, 549,
 567-8, 569, 570
 Bruce, Rev. Dr William, 21, 73, 75,
 77, 89, 91, 100, 106-7, 109, 112-
 13, 119, 121, 122, 123, 125, 139,
 140, 142, 144, 145, 150, 152, 153,
 155, 156, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162,
 163, 164-5, 167, 171, 172, 175,
 180, 186, 187, 190, 191-3, 195,
 197, 199, 200, 202-5, 206, 207,
 210, 212-3, 215, 217, 221, 231,
 233-4, 240, 244, 247, 248, 251,
 254, 255, 258, 262, 263, 266, 290,
 294, 297, 304, 313, 334, 338, 340-
 4, 350-2, 355, 356, 360, 361, 363,
 368, 369, 376, 380, 384, 389, 390-
 3, 398, 400-2, 404, 405, 407, 409,
 419, 440-1, 451, 453, 458, 469,
 470, 475, 485, 488, 496, 510, 546-
 50, 552, 553, 556, 568, 570, 577,
 578, 585
 letter from: 399
 letter to: 399-400
 Brunswick, Charles, Duke of, 411, 412
 Brunton, Anne, 272, 274, 276
 Bruyere, Jean de la, 323
 Bryson, Rev. James, 16, 79, 101, 147,
 218, 283, 285, 325, 481
 Buckingham, 1st Marquis of, 288
 Buckinghamshire, 2nd Earl of, 53, 54,
 57
 Bunbury, Thomas *see* Isaac, Thomas
 Bunbury
 Buntin, Ann, 47, 163, 264, 278
 Buntin, Arthur, 179, 211, 212-4, 281,
 305, 326, 330, 332, 356, 359, 380,
 408, 441, 523-4, 546, 551
 Burden, Jack, 316
 Burden, Mr, 83
 Burgh, Walter Hussey, 55, 137
 Burgoyne, General John, 21, 29, 30,
 32, 34
 Burke, Edmund, 16, 73, 75, 293, 356,
 361, 382, 391, 397, 412, 430, 432,
 460, 472, 474, 487, 511, 560

- Burke, Dr John, 515
 Burke, Richard, 382, 384-6, 388, 391-2, 397, 399, 400, 404, 413-4, 427, 430, 448, 579, 581, 582
 Burns, Robert, 317
 Burrough, Mr, of the Castle, 433, 471
 Burrowes, Peter, 370, 385
 Burston, Counsellor Beresford, 403, 413
 Butler, Simon, 370, 372, 376, 396-7, 399, 400, 403-6, 408, 413, 416, 429-30, 432, 433, 443, 444-5, 448-9, 455, 464-6, 472, 474, 480, 483, 495, 497-501, 506-8, 515, 519, 520, 535-7, 545, 556, 558, 569, 572, 582, 584-5, 586
 Byrne, Edward, 373, 380, 384, 427, 531, 555
 Byrne, Mr, Dundalk, 511-12
 Byrne, Mr, Newry, 193
 Byrne, Newry, 328
 Byrnt, William, 292
 Byrnt, Mrs William, 211
- C, Miss, 259, 271, 566n
 Caldwell, Andrew, 355, 540, 543
 Caldwell, Dr, Belfast, 366-7, 375, 407
 Caldwell, Fanny *see* Overdon, Fanny
 Caldwell, Rev. Hugh, Newtown, 21
 Caldwell, Dr James, Magherafelt, 492, 507, 509
 Callwell, Miss, 11
 Camac, Lieut Col Jacob, 172
 Camac, Turner, 487,
 Camden, 1st Earl, 2, 131, 220
 Campbell, Colonel, 246, 248
 Campbell, John (Jack), 180, 253, 288, 311, 565
 Campbell, Misses, 18
 Campbell, Rev. Mr, 73
 Campbell, Dr Thomas, 146, 340
 Campbell, Rev. Dr William, Armagh, 165, 262, 263, 296-7, 317, 335, 390, 464
 Campbell, Rev. William, Newry, 146, 169, 250, 318, 324, 330, 332, 340
- Carey, William Paulet, 380
 Carleton, Francis, 202, 233, 241, 243, 256, 297, 305, 318, 324, 326, 330-2, 352, 354
 Carleton, Mrs John, 233
 Carleton, Oliver, 448, 494
 Carlisle, 5th Earl of, 54, 56, 57
 Carlisle, Mrs, Newry, 100
 Carrothers, Mr, Dublin, 103
 Carrothers, Mrs, 103
 Carson, Belfast, 303
 Castle Stewart, Sarah, Countess of, 349
 Caulfield, young, 492
 Chambers, John, 331, 357, 385, 443, 455, 464, 483
 Charlemont, 1st Earl of, 65, 95, 100, 101, 129, 143, 165, 166-7, 184, 189, 199, 201, 202, 210, 215, 217-20, 223, 305, 307, 356, 357, 360, 362, 380, 387-8, 410, 432, 446, 463, 470, 473-4, 480, 483, 485, 550, 554
 Chatham, 1st Earl of, 2, 27, 28, 32, 34, 35, 45, 174, 321, 506
 Chatham, 2nd earl of, 506
 Chauvelin, Bernard François, Marquis de, 480
 Chesterfield, 4th Earl of, 79, 208
 Chetwood, Miss, of Cork, 566
 Cibber, Susannah, 211
 Clanbrassill, 4th Earl of, 244-5, 248, 250, 252, 261, 263, 265, 279, 307-8
 Clanbrassill, Grace, Countess of, 244, 263, 283
 Clanbrassill, Henrietta, Dowager Countess of, 244-7
 Clarke, Dr Joseph, 343, 352
 Cleghorn, Dr George, 24
 Cleghorn, William, 24, 40-1, 139
 Clements, Mr, 57
 Clewlow, (Rev. James Hamilton), 28
 Clewlow, Miss, 330
 Clonmell, John Scott, Earl of, 358, 462, 506

- Coburg, Prince Josias of, 572
 Cochran, 158
 Cole, Viscount, 575
 Collins, Miss, 249
 Colvill, Mrs Sarah, 355
 Comerford, John, 531, 534, 542
 Congreve, William, 320
 Connor, Mrs, 456
 Conolly, Thomas, 231
 Conron, Ann (Mrs Christopher) *see*
 Kingston, Ann
 Conron, Christopher, 12n, 13, 15, 17,
 21, 35, 51
 Conron, Hannah, 196
 Conron, Miss, 12
 Conway, Henry Seymour, 2
 Conway, Mr, Newry, 252, 255
 Conway family, 391
 Conyngham, Anne (Mrs David), 358,
 469, 516, 521, 527, 530, 532-3, 541
 Conyngham, David, 14, 47, 53-4, 56,
 57, 58, 258, 293
 Conyngham, Mrs George Lenox, 494
 Conyngham, William, of Springhill,
 54, 56, 57
 Conyngham, William Burton, 484
 Cooke, Edward, 465
 Cope, Mrs, 387
 Cope, Miss, 387
 Cope, William, 531, 542, 544
 Corbett, schoolmaster at Newry, 77-8,
 82, 89
 Corry, Anne, 163
 Corry, Catherine (Mrs Edward), 88,
 96, 103, 118
 Corry, Edward, 76-7, 81, 85, 86, 87-8,
 90, 94, 103, 117-18, 161, 233,
 249, 327
 Corry, Isaac, the elder, 84-5, 87, 103,
 144, 196, 202, 249, 251, 257, 263,
 320, 328, 330-1
 Corry, Isaac, the younger, 77, 123,
 125, 128, 152, 162, 171, 172, 173-
 4, 175, 177, 186, 202, 213, 233,
 234, 240-3, 246, 248, 250, 252,
 254, 256, 257, 264, 280, 294, 307,
 352, 354, 356, 388, 443, 463, 489,
 529-30, 584
 Corry, Mary (Mrs Isaac, the elder), 96,
 112, 119, 142, 145, 148, 153, 154,
 158, 160, 162, 211, 214, 216, 249,
 257, 352
 Corry family, 79, 123, 128, 205, 234,
 246, 251, 347
 Courtenay, John, 152
 Courtney, Mr, Newry, 235
 Courtney, Miss, 249
 Cowan, Newry, 169, 170, 171
 Cowley, Abraham, 16
 Cox, Mary, Lady, 346
 Craig, Rev. Andrew, 163
 Crampton, dentist, 414
 Crawford, Adair, 41
 Crawford, Dr Alexander, Lisburn, 256
 Crawford, James, of Crawfordsburn,
 15
 Crawford, Jemmy, 273
 Crawford, John (Jack) of
 Crawfordsburn, 126, 128-30, 132,
 149, 150, 187, 207, 218, 270, 413,
 423, 424, 431, 467-8, 470, 484-5,
 488, 492
 Crawford, M., 330
 Crawford, Maria (Mrs John), 149
 Crawford family, 260
 Crébillon, Prosper Jolyot de, 204
 Crombie, Mrs Elizabeth, 23, 24, 52,
 59-60, 62, 64, 102, 201, 243, 314,
 420, 430, 547, 577
 Crombie, Hugh, 517, 527, 532, 537
 Crombie, James, 577
 Crombie, Rev. Dr James, 1, 9, 16, 21,
 22, 23, 26, 60, 63, 86, 87, 91, 116,
 126, 128, 131, 132, 140, 157-8,
 164-5, 174, 187, 238, 240, 242-3,
 244, 251, 272, 285, 289, 293, 342,
 420, 572, 577
 Crombie, Joe, 132
 Crombie, Mr, Glasgow, 59, 65
 Crombie, William, 577

- Crookshank, Alexander, 125
 Crosbie, (Henry), 379
 Crosthwaite, Leland, 534
 Cuffe, James, 53, 54, 55, 405
 Cullen, Dr William, 60-1, 63, 67, 68,
 70, 72, 73, 78, 94, 182
 Cullen, dentist, 335, 414
 Cunningham, Margaret (Peg), 75, 156,
 201, 259
 Cunningham, Waddell, 34, 67, 79-82,
 143, 147, 150, 156, 177, 179, 182,
 190, 201, 211, 213, 218, 224, 259,
 271, 284, 288-9, 293, 299, 301,
 451, 470, 542, 543, 544
 Cupples, Dr, 32, 34
 Curran, John Philpot, 307, 405, 448,
 482, 498, 501
 Custine, Adam Philippe, Comte de,
 427, 446, 465
- Dalles, John, 332
 Daniel, Thomas, 541, 547, 550-1
 Daniel, Mrs Thomas, 513-14, 517,
 541, 547, 548, 577, 579
 Daschkof, Prince, 27
 Davies, Thomas, 324
 Davis, Harry, 538-9
 Davis, James, Newry, 70, 95, 103, 112,
 123, 243, 255, 331
 Davis, Mrs James, 121
 Davis, Rev. John, 81
 Davis, Miss, of Newry, 95, 103, 264
 Davis, Robert, of Belfast, 70, 74, 257
 Davis family, Newry, 81, 83, 261
 Davy, J., 53
 Dawson, James, 491
 Dawson, Mr, 167-8
 Dawson, Thomas, 102, 103, 104
 Dawson, shoemaker, Belfast, 575
 Deane, Lady, 13, 16, 21
 Delacroix, Charles, 486
 De la Motte Piquet, M., 44
 Dick, Charlotte Anna, 351
 Dick, Quintin, London, 544
 Dick, Rev. Dr Robert, 33
- Dick, Sam, 351, 391, 430, 469, 515,
 526, 534, 544
 Dickson, 320
 Dickson, James, Dean of Down, 160
 Dickson, Mr, London, 11
 Dickson, William, Bishop of Down and
 Connor, 175, 177, 242-3, 273, 291
 Dickson, Rev. William Steele, 467-8,
 484-5, 491-2
 Dicky, Charles, 293
 Digges, Thomas Atwood, 554
 Dillon, 12th Viscount, 525
 Dinwiddie, William, 244
 Dobbs, Charity (Mrs Conway
 Richard), 317
 Dobbs, Francis, 39, 463-4, 500
 Dobbs, William, 20-1
 Donaldson, Jane (Mrs Hugh), 17, 233,
 309, 532, 535, 540, 541, 546, 547,
 Donaldson, Misses, 195
 Donegall, 5th Earl and 1st Marquis of, 2,
 7, 79, 81, 97, 99, 102, 104, 111, 125,
 143, 147, 156, 179, 182, 212, 214,
 257-8, 290, 298, 301, 303, 312, 357
 Donegall, Charlotte, Countess of, 290
 Donegall, Barbara, Marchioness of,
 586-8
 Donoughmore, 1st Earl of, 442
 Dorset, 1st Duke of, 308
 Dowling, Matthew, 433, 471-2, 476,
 479, 483
 Downes, Judge William, 448, 499
 Downshire, 1st Marquis of, 78, 123-5,
 127, 128-29, 143, 172, 175, 215,
 220, 224, 270, 273, 276-7, 308,
 313, 325, 342, 349, 514, 569
 Downshire, 2nd Marquis of, 123, 126-
 29, 131, 138, 201, 214, 220, 349,
 356, 376, 466-8, 470-1, 485, 502,
 514, 549
 Drennan, Mrs Ann,
 character of: 261-2, 267, 291, 572,
 580, 581
 health and illnesses: 86-7, 207, 216-
 7, 267-72, 306, 426, 581-2

- letters to: 5-6, 77-8, 135-6, 285-6,
 350-2, 354-5, 358-9, 468-70
 letter from: 118-19
 makes will: 6-7
 portrait of: 42; *et passim*
 Drennan, Ann (Nancy),
 character and peculiarities: 34, 94,
 200, 202, 204, 207, 239, 272,
 281, 291, 305, 309, 336, 417,
 426, 463, 580, 581, 585
 health and illnesses: 51, 131, 196,
 260, 314, 318, 554, 581
 letters to: 164, 271
 in Scotland: 1, 5, 9; *et passim*
 Drennan, Rev. Thomas, 351, 468,
 489, 552, 565-6
 portrait of: 279, 434, 562, 577, 585;
 8, 17, 49, 104, 565-6, 574
 proposed memorial to: 104, 277, 579
 remembered by Martha: 92, 94, 208,
 324, 420, 437, 450, 574, 585
 remembered by William: 8, 19, 49,
 435
 sermons of: 21, 27.
 Drennan, William,
 on American War of Independence:
 9, 16, 29, 32-3, 41, 44
 'brotherhood', idea of: 254, 357-8
 at Castlecor, Co. Cork: 12-18
 on Catholic emancipation: 165-7,
 171, 178, 356, 361-2, 364-6,
 369, 373-6, 382-9, 399, 406-7,
 412-4, 432, 442, 444-5, 455,
 461, 464-6, 476, 483-4, 486,
 493, 524, 548, 560
 character of: 91, 343-4, 561, 572,
 573, 579
 clothes: 5, 7, 9, 19, 43, 74, 90, 141,
 163, 211, 264, 266, 274, 278,
 279, 307, 345
 duel: 205-6
 education: 5, 18-19, 21-4, 27, 28,
 36, 41, 45, 48-50
 on emigration: 28, 36, 40, 89, 210,
 501
 memories of father: 8, 19, 49, 435
 on French Revolution: 337, 362-4,
 388, 409-12, 414-5, 422, 427-8,
 446, 462, 469, 473, 474, 483,
 500, 508, 515, 556, 557, 561,
 582
 on friendship: 24-5
 health and illnesses: 9-13, 23, 108-
 13, 116, 299, 305, 354
 in London: 10-11
 and Margaret Jones: 68-70, 158-9,
 194-5, 221-37
 at Newry: 67-344
 as a physician: 84-5, 87-9, 90, 94,
 148, 169, 183-4, 191, 223, 226,
 229-30, 268-9, 274, 559, 587
 poetry of: 10, 13, 132-4, 137-8, 195,
 231-2, 249, 294, 314-8, 340,
 352, 377-8, 569, 588
 political writings of: 101, 123, 127-
 9, 135, 137-8, 164, 184-90, 193,
 199, 202, 206, 240, 322-5, 333,
 352, 360-1, 363-5, 371-3, 380,
 383, 395, 409, 417, 421-2, 429,
 432, 446, 449, 464, 474-5, 550,
 557
 portrait of: 259, 261, 264, 279, 281,
 562
 professional earnings: 167, 169, 248,
 294, 322, 352, 354, 358, 372,
 417, 446, 448, 559, 588
 on *regium donum*: 390-1, 397, 474
 on religion: 15-16
 and Sarah Swanwick: 563-4, 566-8,
 573-4, 577-80, 583, 586, 588
 in Scotland: 109, 18-50, 59-66
 spectacles: 213
 on Volunteers: 61, 65, 71, 74, 144-5,
 161, 174, 178, 187-91, 205-6,
 210, 219, 223, 254, 283, 356,
 407, 413, 427, 430, 432, 443,
 447, 449, 462, 472, 487, 494,
 499
 Drue, Belfast, 463
 Drysdale, (Rev. Dr John), 18

- Duigenan, Patrick, 484
 Dumouriez, Charles François, 419,
 428, 483, 502, 531
 Dundas, Henry, 385, 465
 Dundas, Robert, 568, 585
 Dungannon, 2nd Viscount, 273, 303,
 313, 322
 Dungannon, Anne, Viscountess, 52
 Dunn, Jenny (Mrs John), 108, 301, 313,
 347-8, 357, 359, 521, 525, 579,
 Dunn, John, 2, 74, 83, 139, 160, 164,
 165, 175, 176, 177, 193, 282, 301,
 313, 357, 378, 393, 399, 409, 426,
 464, 521, 525, 542, 543, 548, 550,
 554, 556, 562
 Dunn, Margaret (Mrs William), 359,
 525
 Dunn, Rev. Dr William, 525
 Dunn, William B., 307
 Duquery, Henry, 466
- Eason, Mr, barrack master, 136, 175
 Eden, William, 54-7
 letter to: 58
 letter from: 59
 Edmonstone, Campbell, 61
 Edmonstone, Dalmonia, 35, 46, 61,
 63, 64
 Edgeworth, Richard Lovell, 193, 215-
 8, 220, 239, 243
 Edwards, bookseller, Edinburgh, 27
 Edwards, Mr, Dublin, 379
 Egan, John, 405
 Eglinby, Miss, 441
 Emmet, Elizabeth (Mrs Robert), 359,
 520, 526, 530
 Emmet, Jane (Mrs Thomas), 355, 359,
 520, 526
 Emmet, Mary Emma, 359, 469, 520,
 526
 Emmet, Dr Robert, 322, 349, 359,
 523, 530, 571
 Emmet, Robert, 349
 Emmet, Thomas Addis, 355, 359, 373,
 398, 408, 422, 428, 429, 432, 435,
 449, 455, 464, 465-6, 469, 471,
 472, 474, 477, 483, 495, 498, 512,
 515, 519, 520, 526, 535, 583, 588
 Emmet family, 469, 547, 579
 English, Emily *see* Jephson, Emily
 Envill, Mrs, Monaghan, 71
 Erskine, Thomas, 1st Baron Erskine,
 453, 506
 Evans, Hampden, 557
 Evory, Dr Thomas, 343
 Ewing, John, 112
- Falls, Mrs, 212, 216, 223
 Fayle, Mr, Dublin, 355
 Ferguson, Alatheia Maria (Mrs James),
 312
 Ferguson, Dr James, 38, 47, 187, 292
 Ferguson, James (Jemmy), 75, 77, 81-
 2, 137, 293, 304, 312, 423, 424,
 505, 526, 528, 569
 Ferguson, John Stevenson, 304, 526, 528
 Fielding, Henry, 258
 Fingall, 7th Earl of, 361
 Finlay, John, 386
 Fitzgerald, Lord Edward, 476-7, 480,
 483, 486, 489-91, 497, 498, 501,
 506, 540, 543
 Fitzgerald, Lord Henry, 348-9, 498
 Fitzgerald, Mrs, 332-3
 Fitzgerald, Pamela (Lady Edward),
 476, 486
 Fitzgibbon, John, Viscount, 355, 369,
 383, 385, 398, 400, 413, 464, 465,
 476, 497, 499, 506-8, 519, 533,
 554-5, 560, 569
 Fitzgibbon, Anne, Viscountess, 347,
 352, 529-30, 539, 569
 Fitzherbert, Mrs Maria, 280
 Fitzwilliam, 4th Earl, 146
 Fleming, Miss, 469
 Fleming, Mrs, 549
 Fletcher, William, 515
 Flood, Henry, 61, 129, 141, 144, 147,
 152, 178, 184, 191, 199, 210, 231,
 240, 356, 463

- Forbes, John, 193, 240, 531, 554
 Ford, Miss, 211
 Forde, Matthew, 466-7, 484, 492, 569
 Forsythe, Dr James, 210, 292
 Fortescue, of Ravensdale, young, 300
 Foster, Speaker John, 171, 207, 280, 308, 351, 403, 405, 477, 508
 Fowler, Robert, Archbishop of Dublin, 516-17
 Fox, Charles James, 152, 156, 157, 240, 264, 321, 410, 446, 464, 484
 Fraiser, Mr, Dublin, 175
 Franklin, Benjamin, 44, 63, 129, 362, 502
 Frazer, Rev. (William), 20-1, 25
 Frederick William II of Prussia, 418
 French, Colonel, 523, 527
 Frizle, the carman, 156
 Fuller, Surgeon Benjamin, 142, 314, 317, 330, 334, 338, 457
 Fuller, Elizabeth, 141, 142
 Fulton, Miss, 487

 Gallan, Elizabeth, 454
 Galloway/Gallway, Mr, Dublin, 348
 Gallway, Mr, Portaferry, 348
 Gallway, Mrs, 337
 Garbet, Mr, 9
 Gardiner, Mrs, 256
 Garner, Joseph, 175, 315
 Garnet, Rev. Matthew, 49, 215, 309, 312, 342, 546
 Garrick, David, 11, 29-30, 211, 214
 Gates, General Horatio, 30
 Gaw, Paddy, 197, 293
 Gayer, Miss, of Lisburn, 93
 Gayer family, 194
 George III, King, 2, 14, 32, 156, 157, 171, 232, 283, 318-9, 362, 413, 414, 445, 446, 515, 544, 556, 560
 George, Prince of Wales, 264, 305, 319, 320-1, 325, 362
 George, servant in Newry, 77, 90, 91, 94, 103, 104, 108-11, 142, 147, 150, 154, 156, 157, 180, 203
 George, another servant in Newry, 243, 244, 246, 249
 George, Denis, 515
 Germain, Lord George, 29
 Getty, Campbell, 334
 Getty, Mrs James, 525
 Getty, Jack, 238, 258, 273, 276, 314, 317
 Getty, Jemmy, 146
 Getty, Mrs, 72, 217, 267, 402, 431-2, 526
 Getty, Robert, 452-4
 Getty, William, 306, 432
 Gibbon, Edward, 335
 Giffard, John, Dublin, 464, 512
 Gisborne, General James, 429n
 Glass 320
 Glenny, Isaac William, 123, 331
 Glenny, Margaret (Mrs William), 285
 Glenny, William, of Newry, 75, 103
 Glenny family, 69
 Goddard, Bess, 262, 279, 304, 329-30, 334, 565, 576
 Goddard, Eliza (Mrs John), 71, 181-4, 209, 223, 250, 268
 Goddard, John, 48, 51, 127, 262; 263, 264-5, 270, 272, 279, 280, 282-3, 284, 292, 293, 295, 297-8, 300, 304, 305, 306, 307, 310, 312, 315, 316, 319, 322-3, 324, 328, 329, 330-1, 333, 335, 337, 338, 514, 565, 576
 Goddard, John, the younger, 272, 295, 576
 Goddard, Mary, 262n, 279, 304, 329
 Goddard, William, 328, 330, 334-5, 337, 338
 Godwin, William, 575-6, 579
 Gordon, David, 81, 107, 139, 169, 187, 344, 346, 348, 423, 513, 516, 521, 543, 574, 579
 Gordon, Lord George, 484

- Gordon, John, Belfast, 460-1
 Gordon, John, Florida Manor, 484
 Gordon, Mary (Mrs David), 344, 346, 348, 357, 513, 516, 521, 527, 541, 574, 579
 Gordon, Mr, Belfast, 30
 Gordon, Mr, Newry, 328, 330-1
 Gordons, Belfast, 527
 Gore, Captain, 575
 Grace, George, 381
 Grace, Richard, 405
 Grant, Mrs, London, 274
 Grattan, Henry, 83, 129, 143, 144, 147, 199, 205, 207, 231, 240, 321, 348-9, 356, 362, 369, 371, 373, 378, 380, 381, 382, 385, 386, 387, 397, 404, 405, 429, 439, 443, 448, 464, 465, 472, 473, 479, 480, 486, 491, 499, 501, 531, 544, 554
 Grattan, Mrs Henry, 474
 Gray, Thomas, 250, 337
 Gray, Dr William, Dublin, 337
 Graydon, George, 349,
 Greene, Godfrey, 466
 Greg, Cunningham, 260, 334, 477-8, 526
 Greg, Ellen *see* Warre, Ellen
 Greg, Jane (Jenny), 101-2, 176, 314, 326, 330, 401, 431, 526, 531
 Greg, John (Jack), 20, 34-5, 48
 Greg, John (Jack), of Parkmount, 18
 Greg, Margaret (Peggy) *see* Batt, Margaret
 Greg, Mary, 298
 Greg, Miss, 98
 Greg, Sam, 75
 Greg, Thomas, 67, 127, 271, 273, 301, 401
 Greg family, 208, 264
 Gregory, Dr James, 28, 49-50
 Grenville, William Wyndham, Baron, 432
 Grierson, George, 350n, 469, 512, 583
 Grierson, Charlotte (Mrs George), 350, 512, 582-3
- Griffith, Amyas, 198
 Griffith, Richard, 173
 Grimshaw, Nicholas, 535
 Guinan/Quinan, Dr (Michael), 347, 352
 Guthrie, William, 331
- Haliday, Dr Alexander, 3, 4, 6, 22, 26, 31, 35, 38, 39, 47, 48, 52, 55, 60, 63, 64, 67, 70, 71-5, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 85-7, 96, 98, 99, 103, 108-13, 115, 117, 126, 128, 131, 135, 137, 140, 143, 144, 147, 149, 151, 154, 160-2, 164-5, 167, 172, 177, 179-82, 188, 199, 201, 210, 211, 215, 217, 218, 221, 223-32, 234-5, 240, 247, 248, 251, 253, 262, 264, 271, 277-85, 291, 292, 297, 305, 310-12, 314, 316, 318-21, 324, 332, 333, 335-9, 345-9, 357, 360, 363, 367, 388-9, 391-2, 401, 419, 420, 422, 423-5, 441, 451, 453, 457-8, 485, 489, 514, 521, 527, 546, 551-2
 letters from: 111-12, 229-30
 Haliday, Anne, 146
 Haliday, Anne (Mrs Alexander), 3, 4, 35, 46, 48, 97, 146, 217, 232, 264
 Haliday, Mr, Newry, 68
 Haliday, Robert Dalway, 56, 57, 111, 116, 221
 Haliday, Dr William, 281, 289, 292
 Hall, Miss, of Mount Hall, 162, 335
 Hall, Savage, 247, 310, 313, 322, 324
 Hall, Mrs Savage, 322
 Hamill, Frances, 198, 207
 Hamill, Hans Mark, 198
 Hamill, Mr, 219
 Hamill family, 289, 296, 543
 Hamilton, Abigail (Mrs John), 325-6, 334
 Hamilton, Charles, 577
 Hamilton, Elizabeth, 577n
 Hamilton, Francis, 26, 35, 316
 Hamilton, Mrs Francis, 26, 35, 43n, 267

- Hamilton, Gawen, 467, 477, 484,
 501, 552, 554
 Hamilton, Major Isaac, 153
 Hamilton, Mrs Jane, 431
 Hamilton, Jane (Mrs Gawen), 220-1,
 493
 Hamilton, John, 79, 81, 157, 177,
 325, 346, 523
 Hamilton, John, of Ballymenoch, 326
 Hamilton, Miss, Belfast, 15
 Hamilton, Mr, actor, 4
 Hamilton, Robert (Bob), 51
 Hamilton, Sackville, 55-6
 Hamilton, tailor, Belfast, 131
 Hamilton family, 118
 Hampden, John, 29, 161
 Hanna, Mr, 250, 255, 277, 282
 Hardin, Thomas, 180
 Hardinge, Miss, 240, 247, 250, 252, 255
 Hardy, Captain, 296
 Hardy, Francis, 240, 345, 347
 Hargrave, (Francis), 549
 Harper, Thomas, 53
 Harrison, Mary Anne (Mrs Robert),
 83, 93, 181, 184, 185, 194-5, 221,
 223, 224, 225, 235, 238, 262, 279
 Harrison, Miss, Co. Down, 117
 Harrison, Mr, 31
 Harrison, Mrs, 149
 Hartigan, Elizabeth Anne, 69, 127,
 128, 139, 145, 156, 157, 166, 173,
 174, 175, 176, 180, 184, 195, 199,
 201, 208, 234, 251, 256, 257, 263,
 274, 443, 444, 521, 530, 538
 Hartigan, William, 274, 443, 444,
 530, 539
 Hartley, Travers, 82, 346, 349
 Harvey, Beauchamp Bagenal, 498, 525,
 Harvey, Dr William, 355, 358
 Haslett, Henry, 518
 Hastings, Warren, 293
 Hawkins, Sir John, 275
 Hawkshaw, Mr, 52
 Hay, Counsellor John (Jack), 13, 18,
 26-7, 28, 43, 47, 73, 140, 149,
 151, 307, 309, 310, 311, 313, 510,
 548
 Hayley, William, 89
 Hazlett, Rev. Jacob, 296
 Henderson, David, 293
 Heron, Sir Richard, 54
 Heron, Mrs (William), 549, 579
 Hertford, 1st Marquis of, 2
 Hewitt, Joseph, 143, 190, 197
 Hewitt, Mr, Dublin, 53-5, 57
 Heyland, Hercules, 179
 Heyland, Langford, 320
 Heyland, Mary (Mrs Hercules), 43
 Higgins, Mrs, 346
 Hill, Dr George, 5, 8, 9, 420
 Hill, Miss, 39
 Hillsborough, Earl of *see* Downshire,
 1st and 2nd Marquises of
 Hincks, Susan (Mrs William), 350,
 352, 427, 563
 Hincks, William, 350n, 574
 Hobart, Robert, 362, 373, 380, 382,
 389, 393, 395, 433, 474, 476, 479,
 483-4, 486, 493, 515, 519
 Hobson, Mrs, 526
 Hodgkinson/Hoskinson, Mrs, 359
 Holland, 1st Baron, 157
 Holman, Joseph George, 318
 Holmes, Eliza, 454
 Holmes, Isabella (Mrs John), 46, 48
 Holmes, James, 81, 121, 139, 142,
 263, 264, 282, 283, 402, 457
 Holmes, Jane (Mrs James), 108, 142,
 243, 307
 Holmes, John, 48, 55, 79, 112, 182,
 283, 314, 401, 424, 452-3, 479,
 497, 577
 Holmes, Mary, 223
 Home, Robert, 257, 258, 259, 261,
 263, 264, 265
 Hope, Dr John, 48
 Hopkins, Francis, 548
 Horsefalls, Colonel, 329, 334
 Hoskinson/Hodgkinson, Mrs, 359
 Houston, John Holmes, 454

- Houston, Mrs Mary, 55n
 Houston, Mr, Mourne, 154
 Howe, Richard, Earl, 19, 23, 557
 Howison, Alderman Henry, 405
 Hudson, dentist, Dublin, 358, 519
 Hull, James Watson, 273, 288
 Hume, David, 14-16
 Hunter, John, 526
 Hunter, Mr, 81
 Hunter, Mrs, Pine Hill, 26
 Hutcheson, Dr Francis, 162, 172
 Hutcheson, Rev. Francis, 172
 Hutcheson, Misses, Lisburn, 256
 Hutton, Henry, 474, 514
 Hutton, John, 549
 Hutton, Rev. Joseph, 351
 Hutton, Mary (Mrs Joseph), 351, 574, 588
 Hutton, Mr, 530
 Hutton, Susanna *see* Bruce, Susanna
 Hyde, Margaret (Peggy) (Mrs Samuel), 15, 299, 313, 315, 403, 431, 459
 Hyde, Mary (Mrs Samuel senior), 15
 Hyde, Nat, 75
 Hyde, Robert, 75
 Hyde, Sam, 15, 75, 119, 156, 217, 220, 303, 321, 562
 Hyde, Tom, 75
 Hyndman, Mr, Belfast, 424
 Innis, Mrs, 198
 Irwin, Billy, butcher, 425
 Irwin, Miss, 293
 Isaac, Counsellor Simon, 62, 77, 190, 218, 296, 423, 467, 553
 Isaac, Thomas Bunbury, 296

 Jackson, Henry, 442, 493, 501, 512
 Jaffray, Alexander, 534
 James, Alderman William, 471, 494, 512
 Jameson, London, 304
 Jebb, Elizabeth (Mrs Frederick), 128
 Jebb, Dr Frederick, 257
 Jebb, Sir Henry, 387
 Jebb, Rev. Dr John, 251, 320-1, 323

 Jeffreys, Judge George, 507
 Jephson, Mrs Emily, 328, 330
 John, servant, 352, 513, 517, 547, 557
 Johnson, Miss, 588
 Johnson, Dr Samuel, 15, 22, 61, 250, 275, 278, 297, 381, 562, 576
 Johnston, Arthur, 270, 467
 Johnston, Maria (Mrs John), 359, 469, 520, 526, 530
 Johnston, Mr, London, 442
 Jones, Charlotte, 92
 Jones, Edward, 93
 Jones, Margaret, 3, 68-9, 70, 72, 83, 86, 93, 101-2, 115, 126-7, 130-1, 146, 148, 149, 158-9, 167, 168, 172, 174, 178, 180, 185, 186, 194-5, 200-1, 204, 207, 208, 211-12, 219, 220, 221, 223-39, 279, 315
 letter to: 235-7
 letter from: 237, 348
 Jones, Maria, 92, 126, 194, 195, 224, 315
 Jones, Mrs (formerly Miss Patrick), 303
 Jones, Valentine, the elder, 3, 93, 101, 115, 180, 225, 306
 Jones, Valentine, the younger, 127, 218-20, 306
 Jones, William Todd, 89, 90, 98, 101, 130, 142, 167, 186, 190, 198, 209, 212, 213, 218, 228, 231, 348, 370, 372, 376, 380, 400, 401, 404, 409, 461, 476, 490, 519, 520
 Jones family, 101, 125-6, 130, 218, 318
 Jordan, Francis, 478-9
 Jourdan, Jean Baptiste, 572
 Joy, George, 295
 Joy, Grace (Mrs George), 4, 7, 46, 47, 52, 102, 125, 295, 303, 332
 Joy, Henry (Harry), 140, 176, 184, 186, 190, 195, 197, 199, 224, 259, 261, 291, 304, 309, 310, 322-5, 333, 335, 360-2, 363, 365, 368, 387-8, 392, 395, 398, 401, 404,

- 407, 421, 424-5, 431, 440, 449,
451, 453, 457-8, 461, 467, 470,
485, 488, 502, 523, 546-8, 551,
582, 584-6
letter from: 410-11
Joy, Counsellor Henry, 304, 346, 582
Joy, Henry or Robert, 28
Joy, Mary Isabella (Mrs Henry), 585
Joy, Misses, Dublin, 582
- Keill, Mr, nurseryman, 41
Kelburn, Rev. Sinclair, 176, 207, 347,
451, 453, 485
Kelly, Thomas, 55
Kemble, John Philip, 214, 586
Kenmare, 4th Viscount, 361, 376,
378, 380, 383, 385-6
Kennedy, Elizabeth (Betty), 70, 75,
164, 275, 276
Kennedy, Dr Henry, 69, 70, 71, 73,
76, 78, 82, 91, 96, 98, 108-11,
132, 190
Kennedy, James Trail, 6, 12, 16, 18,
30, 32, 34, 43, 51, 52, 67-8, 70,
75, 77, 81, 139, 231, 233, 283,
285, 295, 330, 342, 356, 448, 453,
536
Kennedy, John, of Cultra, 220
Kennedy, Maria, of Cultra, 149
Kennedy, Mrs and Miss, Edinburgh,
19, 37, 64
Kennedy family, 3, 104, 144
Keogh, John, 369, 380, 382-3, 388,
397, 407, 410, 422, 427, 445, 463,
465, 476, 519, 563
Keppel, Admiral Augustus, 50
Ker, David, Portavo, 288
Kersaint, Comte de, 485, 486
Kilwarlin, Viscount *see* 2nd Marquis of
Downshire
King, Dr, Armagh, 218-9, 220, 255,
256, 290, 308, 323
King, Mrs, 431
Kingsmill, Edward, 479
Kingsmill, Mr, Belfast, 360, 417, 440
Kingston, Mrs Ann (formerly Mrs
Conron), 12, 13, 17, 18, 21, 35,
36, 39, 48, 50-1, 195-6, 526
Kingston, Mr, 196
Kingston, Mr, London, 526
Kinlay, Belfast, 13
Kirkpatrick, Alexander, senior and
junior, 388
Kirwan, Richard, 520
Kirwan, Walter Blake, 358, 432, 484,
486, 512, 517, 520, 526, 529-30, 546
Knox, George, 399
- Lafayette, Marie-Joseph, Marquis de,
362, 371, 411, 432
Lambert, Bob, 51
Lambert, Mr, 296
Lane, Major William, 297, 300, 310,
328, 330, 334, 335
Lane, Mrs William, 297, 300, 310,
335, 340, 487
Langdon, organist at Armagh, 132-3,
135
Langrishe, Sir Hercules, 388-9, 397,
430, 433
Lansdowne, 1st Marquis of, 75, 124,
427, 446
Latouche, David, 531
Latouche, John, 464
Lavater, Johann Kaspar, 313, 333, 335
Law, John, Bishop of Killala, 398, 529
Law, Dr John, of Lurgan and Dublin,
109-10, 137, 154, 155, 158, 160,
290, 347, 348, 349, 350, 352, 355,
359, 559, 574, 579, 582-3
Lawson, Mary, 169, 170, 171
Le Blanc, 504
Lecky, William, 400
Ledwich, Belfast, 303
Lee, General Charles, 12
Lees, Mrs, 432
Legg, Ellen, 149
Leinster, 2nd Duke of, 227, 369, 378,
457, 464, 476-7, 479, 480, 486,
497, 501, 506

- Lennox, Miss, 355
 Lennox, Robert, 569
 Lenox, Mr, 258
 Leslie, Edmund, Archdeacon of Down, 243
 Leslie, Henry, 277
 Leslie, James, of Leslie Hill, 122, 127, 392, 504
 Leslie, Mr, 53
 Leslie, Major Samuel, 211
 Lifford, Viscount, 53-6, 143
 Lilburn, 81
 Lindsay, Amelia, 552n
 Lindsay, Colonel Colin, 299, 328, 329, 330-1
 Lindsay, Mr, Sackville St, 542
 Little, Rev. Dr Joseph, 470
 Locke, John, 421, 423
 Loftus, Major Nicholas, 52
 Logan, messenger, 462
 Londonderry, Robert Stewart, 1st Marquis of, 2, 124-9, 131, 132, 139-40, 143, 147, 156, 184, 186, 188-90, 220, 266, 270, 345, 346, 468, 494
 Lothian, 5th Marquis of, 61
 Louis XVI, 360, 363, 411, 412, 418, 460-1, 462, 469, 473, 474, 478, 479, 485, 490
 Lovelace, Richard, 327
 Lowther, Sir William, 118
 Lucas, Charles, 128, 407
 Lushington, Colonel William, 308
 Lyle, Eleanor (Mrs Hugh), 75
 Lynam, Miss, 430
 Lyons, Sarah (Mrs Thomas), 147
 Lyons, Thomas, 47, 147

 McBride, 571
 McBride, Dr (David), 269
 McCabe, Thomas, 187, 213, 258, 283, 317, 355, 575
 McCabe, William, Newry, 213
 Macartney, Arthur Chichester, 473
 Macartney, Rev. Dr George, 135, 348
 Macartney, John, 523, 526
 Macartney, Surgeon, Newry, 68
 Macartney, William, 348, 517
 McClean, John, dentist, Dublin, 414
 McClean, Mr, Dublin, 535, 541
 McClelland, Richard, 565
 McClure, Hamilton, 270
 McClure, Mrs Hamilton, 108
 McClure, Mrs, Newry, 310
 McCollum, Mr, 292
 McCormick, Rev. Dr Joseph, 1, 2, 8, 9, 18, 19, 24, 35, 45, 60, 62, 64, 131, 140, 193, 420
 family of: 5, 7, 21, 23, 26, 39, 41, 45, 49, 65-6
 McCormick, Mary (Mrs Joseph), 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 35, 37, 39, 41, 48, 49, 52, 60, 62-4, 140, 568, 584-5
 McCormick, Richard, Dublin, 427, 519, 563
 McCormick, Richard, gunsmith, 419, 441
 McCracken, Henry Joy, 518, 523
 McCubbery, Belfast, 48
 McDermot, Counsellor Owen, 449, 455
 MacDonald, Captain Donald, 468, 502
 McDonnell, Thomas, 482, 490, 520
 McDonnell, Captain *see* MacDonald, Captain Donald
 MacDonnell, Dr James, 289, 292
 MacDonnell, Randall, 427
 McDowell, Rev. Dr Benjamin, 390
 McGeough, Mrs, 251
 McGuighan, Belfast, 524
 McIlwean, Hugh, 56
 McIlwrath, Colonel, 296
 Mackay, Rev. James, 5, 10, 16, 17, 31
 McKedy, Mrs, 168
 McKenna, Dr Theobald, 371, 373, 381, 387, 398, 404, 407, 445, 502
 Makenzie, Mrs, 4
 McKnight, Dr James, 18, 23
 McKnight, Mrs James, 18-19, 23, 41, 59

McKnight, young, 250
 Maclane, Peter, 257
 Macleod, Colonel Norman, 571
 McNally, Leonard, 449, 455, 472, 483
 McNamara, Mr, London, 382
 McNevin, Captain, 363, 503
 McPherson, Betty, 514
 McTier, Mrs (James), 111
 McTier, Margaret, 33, 43, 53-7, 65,
 70, 92-3, 107-8, 115-16, 119, 126,
 158, 176, 177, 180, 200, 204, 217,
 218, 223, 303, 312, 315, 350, 376,
 407, 523, 524
 McTier, Martha,
 on American War of Independence:
 2, 20, 25, 28, 30-2
 breakdown: 345, 353, 356, 360,
 366-8, 375, 378-9, 400, 402,
 407-8, 410, 416-7, 440, 552
 from Bristol: 116-18
 Cabin Hill: 239, 251, 253, 260, 264,
 267, 270, 272, 291, 292, 303,
 325-6, 339-40, 341, 402, 440,
 514, 562
 character of: 510
 childlessness: 1, 23
 clothes: 18, 108, 521, 574, 577
 criticism of Drennan's writings: 13,
 101, 184, 187, 224, 333, 438,
 450, 459, 578
 from Dublin: 105-8, 513-45
 on emigration: 37-8, 97-8, 101, 179
 memories of father: 92, 94, 208,
 324, 420, 437, 450, 574, 585
 secretary of Female Society: 586
 financial situation: 65, 156-7, 171,
 288, 291, 304, 440
 on French Revolution: 417-8, 460-1,
 478, 490, 562, 572, 576, 588
 on friendship: 20
 health and illnesses: 15, 18, 34, 46-7,
 51-2, 56, 60-1, 63, 67, 72, 83,
 93, 185, 208, 335-40, 345, 353,
 356, 360, 366-8, 372, 375, 378-9
 on religion: 14, 26, 30-1, 266, 324, 576

from Scotland: 59-66
 on Mrs Siddons: 211, 214
 spectacles: 7
 spelling: 152, 547, 587
 McTier, Mrs, High Street, 1
 McTier, Sam,
 ballast master: 239, 288, 357, 401, 504
 purchases and builds Cabin Hill:
 166, 172, 176, 199, 200, 209
 character of: 31, 119, 166, 440
 as election agent: 124-6, 139-40,
 147, 156
 seeks employment: 52-9, 115, 136-7,
 166, 175, 179, 205, 232, 239
 health: 545-6
 letters from: 53-7, 108-16, 120-1,
 360, 363-4, 401, 470, 474-5,
 481-2, 504, 517-8, 523-4, 527-9,
 537-8
 letters to: 59-66, 95-6, 104-8, 111-
 12, 121-3, 132, 198-9, 282, 311,
 341-5, 347-50, 353, 355-8, 360-
 2, 364-400, 403-16, 421-3, 432-
 6, 442-9, 454-6, 463-6, 471-4,
 476-7, 479-84, 486-7, 492-5,
 497-502, 505-9, 511-27, 529-45,
 554-61
 love for Martha: 55, 113, 402
 as notary public: 288, 293, 304,
 339-40, 440, 503, 517-18, 524,
 538, 540
 nurses Drennan: 108-13, 119
 on religion: 31, 110, 400
 as Volunteer: 48, 65; *et passim*
 Magee, 338
 Magee, John, 57
 Magee, William, 28
 Maguire, Arthur, 209
 Maitland, Mr, 141, 253
 Maitland, Mrs, 253
 Makees, 224
 Maningham, 332
 Marie Antoinette, Queen, 362, 363,
 460-1, 576
 Marlborough, 1st Duke of, 29

- Marryatt/Marriott, Dr Thomas M.,
 290
 Marston/Marsden, Daniel, 155, 233,
 530-1
 Marston/Marsden, Kitty (Mrs Daniel),
 144, 155, 233, 246-7, 530-1
 Marvell, Andrew, 462
 Massereene, 2nd Earl of, 348
 Mathews, Jane, 523, 530
 Mathewes, Mr and Miss, 351
 Mattear, Betty and Sally, 111, 119,
 270, 271, 319, 407, 523, 524, 525,
 526, 537, 546
 Mattear, Dr John, 3, 13, 15, 35, 38,
 47, 51, 63, 70, 72-3, 74, 75, 79,
 82, 87, 97-8, 103, 108, 115, 130,
 131, 147, 179, 191, 207, 211, 221,
 223, 224, 225, 231, 238, 239, 262,
 268, 269, 270, 272, 273, 274, 291,
 292, 316-7, 336, 337, 339, 341,
 346, 367, 375, 402, 407, 426, 452,
 523, 536, 537, 540, 581
 Mattear, Mary (Mrs John), 97, 517,
 536, 540
 Mattear family, 43, 216-7, 314, 402
 Maty, Dr Matthew, 208
 Maxwell, Dr, Armagh, 100, 308
 Maxwell, Dr, Dublin, 346
 Maxwell, Mr, 186
 Maxwell, Mr, Newry, 78, 121, 261
 Maxwell, Mrs, Newry, 119, 290
 Maxwell, Rainey, 26, 71, 97, 102, 123,
 127, 139, 142, 175, 181-2, 209,
 214, 255, 272, 299, 303, 305, 306,
 312, 328, 329, 330, 334, 335, 429,
 431, 475, 482, 491, 554, 576
 Mayne, Counsellor, 500
 Mayne, Oliver, 191
 Maziere, Bartholomew, 16, 353
 Maziere, Mrs, Dublin, 350
 Mears, Rev. John, 107
 Melmoth, William, 258
 Mercer, Rev. Dr Alexander, 163
 Mercer, Miss, 193
 Mercer, Miss, Dublin, 257
 Mercers, Dundalk, 297, 299
 Milling, Miss, 282
 Milton, John, 22, 33
 Minchin, Mrs, 359
 Mirabeau, Honoré Gabriel, Comte de,
 362, 423, 486
 Mitchell, Dr George, 513, 523
 Mitchell, Mrs, 352
 Mitchell, William, Dublin, 53-5, 107,
 137, 175, 205, 208
 Moira, 2nd Earl of, 273, 348, 421,
 446
 Molesworth, 4th Viscount, 204
 Molesworth, Major Arthur, 328, 330
 Monro, Alexander, 36
 Montgomery, Hugh, Benvarden, 56,
 90, 255
 Montgomery, Hugh, Tullycarnet, 423,
 425
 Montgomery, Miss, 151
 Montgomery, Mr, 273
 Montgomery, Mr, Newry, 84-8, 90
 Montgomery, Major General Richard, 9
 Moody, Betty, 144
 Moody, Rev. Boyle, 67, 69, 73, 74, 77,
 104, 115, 123, 127, 128, 157-8,
 163, 173-4, 175, 191, 193, 250,
 255, 285, 308, 328, 330-1, 427,
 484
 Moody, Dr James, 188, 191, 231, 337,
 340-1, 343-4
 Moody, Rev. Dr John, Dublin, 107,
 397, 521
 Moody, Miss, 70, 81, 285
 Moore, Dr, Newry, 69
 Moore, Hamilton, 57, 112, 116
 Moore, Hugh, 146
 Moore, (James), 298-9
 Moore, Martha, 165, 167, 170, 251,
 252, 253, 327, 331, 347
 family 246, 306
 Moore, Lady Mary, 368
 Moore, Mr, Newry, 280, 300, 305,
 328, 330-1
 Moore, Mr, Co. Tyrone, 545

- Moore, Dr (Samuel), Belfast, 292
 More, Hannah, 29
 Morris, Lady, 131
 Morrison, Captain Edward, 558
 Mountgarret, 11th Viscount, 370, 433,
 497, 501, 556
 Mountjoy, 1st Viscount, 497
 Muir, Thomas, 445, 556, 568, 568,
 570-1, 579, 588
 Mussenden, Ann, 190, 260, 314
 Mussenden, Caroline, 152, 172, 526,
 539
 Mussenden, Charlotte, 259-60
 Mussenden, Daniel, 121, 130, 152,
 155, 172, 178
 Mussenden, Fanny, 132, 152, 155,
 172, 176, 248; 272, 513, 517, 521,
 539
 Mussenden, Fridiswide (Mrs Daniel),
 99, 121, 142, 167, 172, 176
 Mussenden, Harriet, 89, 92-4
 Mussenden, Mrs Jane, Dublin, 122,
 152
 Mussenden, Jenny, 92, 152
 Mussenden family, 53, 102, 526, 533,
 543
- Nairac, John, 155, 346
 Nairac, Rebecca, 117-18, 155
 Necker, Jacques, 322-4, 330
 Nedham, William, 177, 250, 251
 Neilson, Samuel, 357, 364, 371, 395,
 404, 412, 421, 427, 429, 431, 444,
 445, 446, 449, 451, 452, 455, 456,
 459, 461-2, 464, 466, 475, 484,
 496, 497, 515, 519, 532, 544, 546,
 547, 549, 550, 556, 558, 561, 563,
 576, 584, 588
 letter from: 491-2
 Nepean, Sir Evan, 515
 Nevin, Mr, 359
 Nevin, Thomas, 467, 492
 Nevin, Widow, Downpatrick, 193
 Newenham, Sir Edward, 379, 386, 430
 Newton, Isaac, 8
- Nicholson, Mrs Anne, 352
 Nievens, Downpatrick, 184
 Nollekens, Joseph, 277
 North, Frederick, Baron, 40, 41, 152,
 324
 Northington, 2nd Earl of, 137, 240,
 390
- O'Beirne, Thomas, 193
 O'Brien, Dennis Thomas, 531, 534,
 542
 O'Connor, Malachi, 555
 O'Connor, Mr, 369
 Ogle, Deborah, 263, 287, 297, 300,
 309, 310, 315-8, 320, 325, 327,
 331, 334, 335, 339
 Ogle, George, 422, 484
 Ogle, James, 133, 205-6
 Ogle, Jenny, 168, 172
 Ogle, John, 297, 328, 330-1
 Ogle, Mary (Mrs John), 297
 Ogle, Mrs, Newry, 124, 168
 Ogle, Sally, 331
 Ogle, W., 275
 O'Hara, Charles, 386
 O'Keeffe, John, 539
 O'Leary, Rev. Arthur, 262
 O'Neill, Henrietta, 54, 127, 128, 153,
 162, 164, 214, 243, 246-7, 248,
 252, 256, 270
 O'Neill, John, 1st Viscount, 54, 55,
 58-9, 122, 127, 130, 150, 201,
 205, 262, 345, 557
 Orde, Thomas, 198, 212, 214, 234
 Origen, 429
 Orleans, Philippe Egalité, Duc d', 473,
 582
 Orr, Alexander, Belfast, 47, 67, 79,
 129, 221, 304, 497
 Orr, Anne, Dublin, 190, 367, 376;
 403, 427, 469, 516, 541, 553, 568,
 577, 584, 587
 Orr, Robert, Dublin, 469, 541, 553,
 579, 581, 588
 Osborne, baker, 418-9

- Osborne, William, 384
 Overdon, Fanny, 187, 514
 Overdon/Overand, Mr, Dublin, 514
- Paine, Tom, 362, 410, 416, 418, 453, 480, 493, 556, 557
 Palmé, Sieur, 128, 132-35, 141
 Park, J., Dublin, 190
 Park, Mr, Belfast, 89
 Park, Miss, 289
 Parsons, Sir Laurence, 386
 Patrick, Mary (Moll), 359
 Patrick, Mr, at Bath, 118
 Patrick, Mr, Dublin, 346, 359
 Patrick, Mr, Dublin, 501
 Patrick, Mrs, 280, 346
 Patten, Hugh, servant, 4, 34, 43, 45, 68, 258, 313, 314, 326, 351, 453
 Patten, Jane *see* Emmet, Jane
 Patterson, Rev. Edward, 419
 Patterson, James, 115, 119, 121
 Patterson, Misses, 359, 518, 526
 Patterson, Mr, 79
 Peggy, servant, 119
 Pennefather, William, 346
 Perceval, Dr Robert, 349, 352, 356
 Percival, Dr Thomas, 431
 Percy, Thomas, Bishop of Dromore, 186, 227
 Pétion de Villeneuve, Jérôme, 416
 Petre, 9th Baron, 369
 Pierce, old, 172
 Pierce, Val, 31-2
 Piquet, M. De la Motte, 44
 Pitt, William, 129-30, 153, 156, 193, 199, 202, 205, 208, 210, 273, 321, 369, 382-3, 385, 427, 430, 499
 Pittman, Miss, 244, 265
 Pittman, Mr, 244
 Plunket, Dr Patrick, 24, 45, 122, 139, 162, 343
 Plunket, Surgeon, 122
 Plunket, Rev. Thomas, 24
 Plutarch, 579
 Pollock, Annabella, 69, 90, 92
 Pollock, Carlisle, 89
 Pollock, Charlotte *see* Sinclaire, Charlotte
 Pollock, Elizabeth Anne *see* Hartigan, Elizabeth Anne
 Pollock, Frances (Mrs Joseph), 151, 160, 163-4, 167, 170, 177, 190, 194
 Pollock, Hannah (Mrs John), 428
 Pollock, James, 99, 120, 122, 141, 254
 Pollock, James (brother of Joseph), 275, 304
 Pollock, Jane (Mrs James), 73, 88, 99, 104, 120, 145, 148, 153, 154, 155, 157, 158, 160, 162, 211, 249, 254, 261
 Pollock, John, the elder, 69, 95, 108, 112, 119, 122, 191, 196-8, 435
 Pollock, John, Dublin, 356, 428, 433-8, 443, 444, 455, 464, 477, 483, 502, 511-12, 514, 518, 519, 527, 544
 Pollock, Joseph, 79, 81, 89, 95-6, 98-9, 103, 139, 147, 150, 151, 154, 155, 160-1, 163-4, 167, 170, 174, 177, 184, 189, 193, 199, 205, 207, 213, 214, 234, 244-5, 252, 253, 256, 294, 300, 306, 313, 314, 317, 320-2, 326, 328, 340, 344, 356, 357, 362, 370, 376, 379, 380, 385, 393, 399, 404, 443, 444, 464, 476, 484, 491-2, 502, 550, 551, 574
 Pollock, Widow, 146, 252
 Pollock, William, 154, 162, 206, 249, 287, 328, 330-1
 Pollock family, 95, 119-20, 122, 123, 151, 167, 202
 Ponsonby, George, 349n, 356, 369, 390, 395, 400, 474, 479, 482, 588
 Ponsonby, William Brabazon, 349n, 362, 369, 474, 479, 493, 588
 Ponsonby, handsome young, 529
 Ponsonby party, 427, 463, 464
 Pope, Alexander, 16
 Portis, George, 2, 3, 4, 14, 51, 55-6, 67, 96, 125, 218, 221, 227, 237-8, 240, 289, 581

- Portis, Mrs George, 177, 238, 581
 Portis, Rev. George Macartney, 175, 227, 581
 Portland, 3rd Duke of, 102, 136, 146, 148-9, 193, 240, 390
 Potter, Mrs, Donegall St, 84
 Pottinger, Anne (Mrs Eldred), 348
 Pottinger, Eldred, 467, 484
 Pottinger, Frances, 98
 Pottinger, Henry, 102
 Pott[s], 322, 324
 Powell, Lieutenant, 538-9
 Price, Mrs Isabella, 34-5, 47, 238, 265, 307, 338
 Price, Maria, 265, 308
 Price, Mr, Rostrevor, 267
 Price, Dr Richard, 7, 14, 129-30, 178
 Price family, 235
 Priestley, Dr Joseph, 130, 407, 415, 464
 Prior, Matthew, 16
 Prosser, Dr, 43
 Purcell, Dr John, 92, 343

 Quin, Dr Charles William, 40-1, 45, 139
 Quinan/Guinan, Dr Michael, 347, 352

 Rainey, Henrietta (Mrs William), 108, 304, 306, 315, 429n
 Rainey, Mary (Mrs Thomas), 306, 309
 Rainey, Thomas, Dublin, 117, 525
 Rainey, William, Greenville, 127, 299, 429, 441-2, 453
 Rainey, (William), Mourne, 255
 Ramage, Belfast, 73
 Ramsay, Mrs, 83, 550-1
 Ramsey family, 149-50
 Ranken, Charles, 272-3, 275, 288, 316, 325, 330, 334, 464, 484, 505
 Ranken, Mary (Mrs Charles), 275, 313
 Rawdon, Baron *see* Moira, Earl of
 Raynal, Abbé Guillaume, 129
 Read, Anne (Mrs Christopher), 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 102-3, 145, 146, 163, 178, 182, 185, 186, 189, 199
 Read, (Christopher), 330-1
 Read, James, 145, 162, 257, 328, 330-1
 Read, Jane (Mrs James), 142, 144, 145, 167, 211, 249, 335
 Read, Dublin, 536
 Reeth, 83-4
 Reilly, Jane, of Scarva, 308
 Reilly, John, of Scarva, 307-8, 395
 Reynolds, Dr James, 505-8, 511, 515, 519, 534, 545, 549, 556-8, 582
 Rice, Dominick, 443
 Richardson, Anne (Mrs John), 347, 351, 354, 487
 Richardson, Dr, 54
 Richardson, Samuel, 258
 Richmond, 3rd Duke of, 129-30
 Ricketts, Mr, 178
 Rieley, 189
 Roberts, Charles, 56, 57, 550, 556
 Roberts/Robertson, Captain, 93-4
 Robertson, Mrs William, 64
 Robertson, Rev. Dr William, 19, 22, 25, 29, 33, 36, 43, 61, 64
 family of, 33, 61
 Roche, Sir Boyle, 493
 Rochester, 2nd Earl of, 18
 Roden, 1st Earl of 244
 family 244-5
 Roland, Jean Marie, 412
 Ross, Dr Alexander, 26, 38, 292
 Ross, Colonel Robert, 83, 95
 Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 184, 203, 204, 410
 Rowan, Archibald Hamilton, 219, 220-1, 370, 380, 396-7, 398, 399, 404, 406-7, 421, 422, 423-4, 426, 427, 429, 430, 433, 442-5, 446, 448-9, 453, 454, 455, 462-3, 466, 467, 469, 472-7, 479-80, 482-6, 490-1, 492, 495, 498, 499, 501, 503, 506, 511, 512, 514, 515, 516, 519, 520, 521, 524, 531, 533, 536, 537, 543, 546, 549, 552, 568, 571-3, 582, 585, 586

- Rowan, Sarah Hamilton, 221, 430, 516, 533, 543, 571, 582
- Rowe, Richard Cox, 539
- Rowley, Counsellor Arthur, 31, 39, 48, 100
- Rowley, Colonel Hercules, 125, 127, 137, 175, 201, 345-6, 348
- Rowley family, 345, 346, 351
- Russell, Mrs, 299, 336, 337, 339
- Russell, Thomas, 368, 369, 370-2, 374, 379, 442, 444, 472, 491, 498, 511, 545, 572, 575-6, 585, 586
- Rutland, 4th Duke of, 271, 273
- Ryan, Dr Thomas, 422, 427
- Ryves, Mr, Tipperary, 240, 248, 250, 255
- St Leger, Mrs, 246-7, 256
- Sampson, William, 577
- Sandilands, Mr, of Torpichen, 5
- Sarrell, Mr and Mrs, 32
- Saunders, Dr Arthur, Dublin, 350, 533
- Saunders, Thomas, Belfast, 4, 48
- Saunders, Thomas, Dublin, 533
- Saurin, William, 102, 130-1, 194, 212, 230, 346, 348
- Savage, Francis, 467, 470
- Savage, Henry, of Rocksavage, 220, 296
- Savage, Jane (Mrs Henry), 220
- Savage, Mary (Mrs Francis), 52
- Savage, Patrick, 484-5
- Savage, Richard, 14, 15
- Scot, Dr, Edinburgh, 40
- Scott, Dr, America, 38, 140, 180, 209
- Scott, Martha (Mrs William), 85, 97, 206, 215
- Scott, Miss, Newry, 69, 219, 220, 231
- Scott, Cornet William, Newry, 70, 90, 96, 98, 145, 148, 202, 206, 215, 217, 219, 274, 275, 280, 282, 330-1
- Seawright, Mrs Sally, 108
- Seed, Miss P., 52
- Seed, William, 454, 496
- Seed, Dr William, 28
- Selkirk, 4th Earl of, 238
- Shakespeare, William, 10, 16, 213, 272, 585
- Shannon, Richard, 2nd Earl of, 463, 464, 484
- Shannon, Mr, 547
- Sharman, William, 160, 162, 201, 218, 363, 365, 409, 534
- Shaw, Henry W., of Ballytweedy, 304
- Shaw, Robert, 432, 531
- Shaw, young, 84
- Sheares, Henry, 537, 544
- Sheares, John, 544
- Shelburne, 2nd Viscount *see* 1st Marquis of Lansdowne
- Shenstone, William, 17
- Sheridan, Charles Francis, 364, 405
- Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, 287, 289, 500
- Siddons, Mrs Sarah, 122, 128, 164, 165, 166, 167-8, 180, 199, 204, 211-14, 217, 579, 583, 585, 586, 588
- Sidney/Sydney, Algernon, 29, 507
- Simms, Robert, 370, 465
- Simms, S., 536
- Simon, John, 423
- Sinclair, Charlotte (Mrs William), 104, 120, 163, 172, 177, 201, 214, 249, 250, 261, 264, 356, 521, 525, 530, 538-9
- Sinclair, Miss, 75, 77, 78, 95
- Sinclair, Thomas, 7, 83, 99, 120
- Sinclair, William, 163, 197, 226, 264, 365, 370, 374, 401, 421, 423-4, 447, 458, 461, 463, 477-8, 491-2, 497, 512, 532, 544
- Sinclair family, 104, 208, 251
- Skeffington, Chichester, 510, 564, 573, 583
- Skeffington, Lady Harriet, 478
- Skeffington, Henry, 2, 125
- Skeffington, Mr, 52
- Skirving, William, 445
- Smith, Andrew, 537
- Smith, Brice, 4, 6, 18, 21

- Smith, Jane (Mrs John Galt), 72, 185, 221, 225, 233, 262, 263, 268, 271
- Smith, John Galt, 6, 70, 79, 83, 194-5, 207, 228, 293
- Smith, Mrs Milly, 426, 452
- Smith, (Mrs Getty's aunt), 526
- Smith, Mr, Belfast, 70
- Smith, Mr and Mrs, Cork, 50-1
- Smith, Nancy, Waterford, 32
- Smith, Rhoda (Mrs Brice), 6, 43, 46, 70, 75, 99, 147-8, 150, 153, 180, 185, 194, 200, 204, 209, 216, 426
- Smith, Sam, 213, 287, 288, 289, 290, 293, 295, 306
- Smith family, 309
- Spencer, Jenny, 289
- Stafford, Miss Mary, 469, 476, 516, 533
- Staples, John, 57
- Stephenson, Rev. Dr Samuel Martin, 225, 292
- Sterne, Laurence, 258
- Stewart, Counsellor Alexander, 11, 12, 13-14, 15, 31, 39, 47, 74, 75, 77, 81, 90, 128, 139, 176, 204, 207, 218, 219, 220, 224-5, 248, 263, 442, 467-8, 484, 576
- Stewart, Alexander, of Ards, 39, 107, 110, 113, 119, 121, 122, 149, 150, 207, 232, 266, 271, 288, 368, 494
- Stewart, Amelia (Mrs Thomas), 320
- Stewart, Sir Annesley, 332
- Stewart, Dugald, 5, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 39, 61, 193, 248, 569
- Stewart, Elizabeth (Mrs Alexander), 13-14, 224, 248, 442
- Stewart, Elizabeth, of Killymoon, 204
- Stewart, Surgeon General George, 347, 354-5
- Stewart, James, of Killymoon, 174, 204, 210, 390, 393
family, 230
- Stewart, Mrs (James), 332
- Stewart, Mary (Mrs Alexander), of Mountstewart, 271
- Stewart, Mr, Lisburn, 209
- Stewart, Nelly, 4, 84
- Stewart, Robert the elder *see*
Londonderry, 1st Marquis of
- Stewart, Robert the younger, 341, 342, 356, 391, 469, 480, 485, 487, 505
- Stewart, Thomas Ludford, 304, 320, 388, 544
- Stewart, William, 18, 19, 35, 37
- Stewart, Captain William, 26, 84, 240
- Stewart, shoemaker, Belfast, 328, 331, 340, 343, 347, 348
- Stokes, Whitley, 370, 372, 373, 385
- Stone, George, Archbishop of Armagh, 308
- Stratford, Mrs, 432
- Sunderland/Sutherland, Alexander, 221
- Sutton, Mary Anne, 388
- Swanwick, Sarah, 563-4, 566-7, 568, 570, 573-4, 578-80, 586
- Swift, Jonathan, 19, 29, 255, 507
- Talbot, Charles, 7, 221, 301, 303
- Tandy, James, 379
- Tandy, James Napper, 346, 349, 368, 370-1, 373-5, 379-80, 382, 385, 386, 387, 389, 396-400, 403-6, 408, 411, 413, 429, 443, 445, 446, 448-9, 455, 462, 465, 469, 472, 474, 476, 480, 491, 492, 495, 499, 500, 501, 506, 512-13, 524
- Taylor, Matthew B., 261, 264, 265, 347-8
- Taylor, Rev. Philip, Dublin, 351n
- Taylor, privateer, 73
- Templeton, Dr John, Newry, 68, 71, 73, 74, 78, 84-7, 90-1, 103, 109, 116, 135-36, 153, 160, 169, 170, 171-2, 190, 193, 213, 247, 248, 253, 254, 261, 277-8, 284-5, 286, 294, 299, 327, 339, 348
- Templetown, Viscount, 278
- Thicknesse, Philip, 276
- Thomas, Rev. Samuel, 351
- Thompson, A., Newry, 123

- Thompson, Acheson, 177, 278, 300,
328, 330-1, 347
- Thompson, Mrs Acheson, 277-8, 322-3
- Thompson, Dr, Bath, 121
- Thompson, Ross, 330
- Thompson, Skeffington, 39
- Thompson, William, 47, 267, 287
- Thompson, poor young, 307
- Thompson family, 309
- Thomson, Andrew, 84
- Thomson, Anne (Nancy), 69, 72, 218,
230, 231, 233, 279
- Thomson, John, Newry, 78
- Thomson, Mrs John, 88
- Thomson, Mrs, 41
- Thomson, Robert, 81, 129, 176, 190,
278, 282, 283, 284, 291, 293, 301,
304, 305, 312, 449, 451-2, 461, 464
- Thomson, Turner & Camac, Newry,
297
- Thrale, Hester, 297
- Thurot, François, 44
- Thwaites, Augustin, 549
- Thwaites, Elizabeth (Mrs Augustin),
530
- Tinsdal, 256
- Tippoo Sahib, 384
- Tisdale, John, 524n
- Toler, John, 396-8, 405-6, 493
- Tone, Theobald Wolfe, 368, 369, 370-
2, 374, 376, 396-7, 399, 401, 404,
406, 407, 409, 410, 414, 427, 429,
430-1, 442, 444, 457, 463, 464,
466, 472, 498, 500, 515, 519, 554,
556, 563, 584
- Tooke, John Horne, 280, 500, 546,
547
- Torpichen, Elizabeth, Baroness, 5
- Townley, Mr, Newry, 78, 82
- Trail, Anthony, Archdeacon of Connor,
243
- Trail, Miss, 47
- Troy, John Thomas, Archbishop of
Dublin, 383
- Tules, Mr, Edinburgh, 46
- Turner, Jacob, 274, 275, 322, 330,
331
- Turner, Mr, Dungannon, 469
- Turnly, Francis, 139-40, 147
- Turnly, John, 266
- Turnly, Miss, 26
- Vance, Rev. Patrick, 451, 475, 479,
481, 523, 578
- Vaughan, Mr, 10
- Vincent, Mr, 267, 297
- Vise, Mr, 131
- Vize, Mrs, Edinburgh, 9
- W, Mrs, Dublin, 352
- Waddell, Counsellor James, 348
- Walcot, John (Peter Pindar), 265
- Walker, Adam, 267
- Walker, Mr, Newry, 95, 215
- Wallace, Elizabeth (Mrs Joseph), 4, 7
- Wallace, Grace *see* Joy, Grace
- Wallace, Hill, 20-1, 25, 26, 149, 503
- Wallace, John, in Portugal, 102
- Wallace, Joseph, 7, 332
- Wallace, Miss, 20-1
- Wallace, Major Robert, 125
- Wallace family, 26, 198
- Ward, Edward, 126, 128, 129, 138,
273, 342
- Ward, Ralph, Archdeacon of Down,
13, 15, 160
- Waring, (Thomas, the elder), 300
- Waring, Thomas, the younger, 331
- Warnock, George, 74, 81, 287, 289
- Warre, Ellen (Mrs James), 34, 84
- Warre, James, London, 84
- Warren, Mr, 160, 253
- Warren, Thomas, 427
- Warren, Alderman N., 471
- Washington, George, 19, 20, 25, 30,
31, 143, 362, 410, 569
- Watson, supplier of ale, 280, 299
- Webster, Gilbert, 401, 429
- Webster, Mary Ann (Mrs Gilbert),
332, 429, 441-2, 453, 496

- Weld, Elizabeth (Mrs Isaac), 351
 Weld, Isaac, 351
 Weld, old Mrs, 351
 Westmorland, 10th Earl of, 396, 400,
 408, 442, 456, 465, 473, 479, 495,
 515, 516, 519
 Westmorland, Sarah, Countess of, 571,
 579
 Whaley, Buck, 487
 Wheelan, Mrs, 293
 Wheeler, Mrs, 147
 Whitaker, John, 471, 490
 White, Elizabeth (Mrs Luke), 549
 White, James, of Whitehall, 423
 White, Dr James Campbell, 13, 15,
 38, 292, 321, 421, 451, 464, 496
 White, Dr Joseph, 334
 White, Mr, 23
 Whitestone, Counsellor James, 473, 477
 Whitley, dentist, 414
 Whyte, Major General Richard, 481,
 502, 504
 Wilberforce, William, 411
 Wilkes, poor little, 193
 Wilkinson, Abraham, 534
 Willcocks, Mr, from America, 477-8
 William Henry, Duke of Clarence, 224-5
 Williamson, young, 334
 Wilson, Arminella, 47
 Wilson, David, 481
 Wilson/Willson, Ezekiel Davys, 201
 Wilson/Willson, Hill, of Purdysburn,
 26, 48, 175-6, 177, 295, 332-3
 Wilson/Willson, James, of Purdysburn,
 2, 7, 11, 39, 48, 442
 Wilson, Mary (Molly), 4
 Wilson, Mr, Dublin, 351
 Wilson, Mrs, 310
 Wilson, Nathaniel, 70, 96, 98, 154, 168,
 170, 178, 197, 207, 208, 212, 251,
 257, 267, 271, 283, 285, 301, 304
 family, 307
 Wilson, Robert, 545, 547
 Wilson, William, 139
 Wilson, bookseller in Edinburgh, 63
 Wilson, gave up spectacles, 214
 Wilson, old, 588
 Wilson, writer of pamphlets, 184
 Winder, Jack, 529
 Wolfe, Arthur, 404, 479, 511
 Wolfe, Major General James, 9
 Wolfe, Mr and Mrs, 252
 Wollstonecraft, Mary, 460, 471
 Wood, Widow, 118
 Woods, Dr Loftus, 10
 Woodward, Richard, Bishop of
 Cloyne, 262, 263
 Wright, (Joseph), of Newry, 265
 Wright, Mr, Belfast, 265
 Wright, Surgeon Thomas, 416
 Wyvill, Christopher, 129-30
 Yelverton, Barry, 53, 55, 149, 218,
 221, 257, 403
 Young, Alexander, 569
 Young, Alicia (Mrs John), 553n
 Young, Arthur, 484, 491, 501
 Young, Edward, 18
 Young, Elizabeth, 185
 Young, Frances, 553n
 Young, Hamilton, 50, 413, 415-6,
 420, 427, 431, 438, 440-1, 447,
 448, 452, 453, 458, 462-3, 465,
 466-7, 468, 469, 470, 497, 537,
 540, 542, 547, 550, 552-3, 564-5,
 569, 574, 579
 Young, John (Jack), 553
 Young, Martha, 415, 416, 452, 458,
 466, 469, 470, 552-3, 565, 574
 Zubly, John Joachim, 29

THE DRENNAN-MCTIER CORRESPONDENCE is unique. Between 1776 and 1819, William Drennan, a doctor in Newry and Dublin, and his sister Martha McTier in Belfast exchanged over 1,400 letters, discussing every aspect of their lives. William campaigned for political reform and Roman Catholic emancipation. He was a founder of the United Irishmen, and was tried for sedition in 1794. Martha shared his political convictions and their letters provide a first-hand account of the events which led up to the 1798 Rebellion, and its aftermath.

William became a well-known political writer and a poet. Both William and Martha were widely read and wrote with wit and style, but in contrast to the richness of their intellectual life, both struggled through years of financial insecurity and Martha suffered a nervous breakdown. However, apart from financial difficulties, their lives were satisfying and both had happy marriages. The letters discuss love, marriage, child rearing, medicine, literature, and domestic economy. They detail the growth of Belfast, and the decline of post-union Dublin, contain vivid pictures of friends and acquaintances, and record the most fascinating gossip and scandal. Being eleven years older than her brother, Martha appears never to have believed that he would act correctly without prompting. Her letters contain a perpetual shower of bracing criticism, but at every crisis in William's life she was ready with sound, if strongly worded, advice.

For over forty years the brother and sister discussed, advised, consoled, teased, entertained, and bickered. The measure of the importance of this correspondence to both of them is that it has survived virtually intact, providing the historian with a wealth of information about the period, and the general reader with a unique window on to late eighteenth-century life.

Cover painting of Martha McTier courtesy of Michael Duffin

Background letter from Martha to William

Quotation from a letter from William Drennan to

William Bruce, 1784 (PRONI, D/553/35)



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