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1800

21: 18-- March 19: [William Dunbar, Jr.] to Mrs. William Dunbar "My Beloved Mother"

William Dunbar Jr.

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My Beloved Mother

I received your letter a few days ago, to which I can
reply as satisfactorily as possible. Believe tho' in the first place, that
I am by no means insensible to the anxiety of a dear mother who places
her hopes upon her son. I am resolutely determined to be a hard student
whilst in college, that hereafter I may reduce to practice a theory
acquired by diligence. During my residence this Septer in Princeton
I have by no means been idle; & it is not vanity that prompts me
to say it. I assure ^{you}, but a hope of affording you gratification, that is
my bliss I am really not an indiffrent scholar & from circumstan-
ces I believe it is so acknowledged. And farther upon those studies
which were desired by my dear Father, I am thought to rank am-
ong the first or second scholars; I could never have had the au-
thority to speak thus of myself but for your sake. I only wish
that you may know it & then that it may sink into oblivion.

The next sign of my exertions shall be redoubled; but even in the midst
of study, when I reflect upon what is depending upon my
I fear I cannot realize my expectations I am afflicted
the help of our Creator I have a faint hope that
mayly some comfort to my family. Archibald is
studies with energy & he proposes that application
after exalt him to eminence. If he even were you
happy as Joseph Videll has intimated I know, in-
fident that he is a boy who will steer clear of bad
corruption. Joseph, I think, is a young man who may go
without reflection; but even admitting that he is fond of
two sons of our Pa it only argues that he professed a greater
for persons with whom he had long been acquainted, than for
who had never seen his native place, but who dwelt in
distant land, & of whom he knew little or nothing. In
circumstances I know he will speak when he observes
ill conduct. Not long since he wrote me of a youth
stance; he bestowed a little eulogium upon his talents
id improvement in Latin & Greek, but, he intimated that
all was that he was wished, because he was addicted to
wearing. How my dear mother is ^{it} not natural to con-
fessing ^{it} & I am glad, will hate the wicked &
the joy that a mother must

...found of amusement
...judging me by himself, he has told you that my removal
to this place had for its motive, gaiety &c. But he did not reflect that
this is not a time for amusement with me, or rather he did not know
that there are but few parents that can or will afford their children
a subsistence whilst they sport in the lap of indolence & luxury: &
my dear mother, may my parent ever act thus, for in the end, 'tis of
wondrous benefit to the child. - Whilst I resided in Philadelphia
I really did experience the fatherly care of Mr. Vaughan with respect
to my education. I beg that my dear mother may not be troubled with
any apprehensions on that head; And altho' he is a man of exten-
sive business & is unable thereby to write you fully with respect to
us, yet he assured he is never remiss, he used always to see my tutor or
master as often as possible & from them he could be informed of my
progress more correctly than by an examination of his own. This
care has been greatly rewarded in attending to Archibald. From some
cause or other he was not completely satisfied with his situation

...to make enquiries until he had placed him
in Philadelphia where he resides in the house of a
gentle & consequently where he enjoys the double advantage
of private & public lessons. Mr. Vaughan has ever
the University was not the best of seminaries, but there
was fitted for no other institution & it was at my ear-
ly that I came to Princeton, where by hard study I
to enter, for I was deficient in the languages altho'
made tolerable progress in other studies. This college is
only superior to that of Philadelphia, but one of the best in the
States & added to this it bears the greatest name. Altho' a name
is really nothing, yet it frequently procures a favorable reception,
if a man has used his time well he may, when put to the
record with the ideas which grow a name good name, the
boast of him. ^{Again,} If a man professes merit, if by op-
portunity has gained important acquisitions & if he be deserv-
ing of mankind, yet he is often unnoticed & passed by
want of a good name to afford him a recommendation.
Thus has the world often lost the opportunity of ac-
knowledging a member of society.
which you have received, for my disliking the Univer-
sity very miserably of Princeton.

lamed of myself whenever
beholding a piece of composition so badly connected, we cannot
- even a momentary want of penetration, a thing which is so absolutely neces-
- sary to good writing. But however I hope I may be excused when you re-
- member I was so terribly distracted about my situation & future prospects.
But at present I am much more calm & at leisure hours & when I
- ten thinks well of times to come I read with satisfaction, & consider
with peculiar delight the events of history, or I wish to emulate when
I pursue the story of a great man, & what I could desire is to
write well, for by this alone do we rouse into action
thinking powers - - -

In a few weeks our vacation will commence, &
to Philadelphia I shall have my portrait taken, as
much desired, & this my dear mother I assure you makes
- the proud, & if it is in my power you shall be proud of
William. Archibald's portrait is already taken in Phila.

I thank ^{you} very much for the seed you have sent & cannot
extremely grateful for the trouble ^{you have taken} for me. I now
power to perform my promise to Mrs M' Macken
have mentioned in a former letter something relating
had not the pleasure of seeing Mrs Wilson after
- being ^{it} not having returned from an expedition before
- India, but I have not the least doubt that it
- ple present as from its appearance I think it was ca-
be acceptable any where. - I long to hear something
the South Sea, for I have heard that they have been
to the 8th of February. Eliza has given me a most inter-
description of the snow in her last letter together
a remarkable account of the depths of the snow so far
and to crown the climax I am rejoiced to hear of the
acquaintance in the view of a steam-boat & that she
- ed upon her favourite dishes, oysters. Eliza says
all to go tomorrow & take a trip in the boat, Oh
tremendous pair of wings, that I might fly to see
My best love to all the family if you please &
in a perfect state of health, in which, that you
- the advent with & prayer of your most
- love