

Broughton to Coleridge, 4/12/1852 (3 Devonshire Rd, Balham, Surrey)

Your note of 25/11. Since then I have been at this quiet place, suffering under a good deal of indisposition. The attack of bronchitis under which I suffered so severely on the voyage and which seemed to have passed its intensity, was revived by a cold ride from Southampton and an introduction to the atmosphere of London. It has assumed the form of asthma, requiring blisters and other active remedies, to which it has yielded but sullenly and reluctantly: and still seems to be, like the Burmese, entrenched and ready for another sally. The consequence has been that I have lain in bed three days, and have sat in my room during the greater part of all the rest; having been in London but twice during very short intervals. This has obliged me to postpone my visit to my mother: but I hope to set off on Tuesday next and to return the week after next; when I hope to be able to come and see you. I am really anxious to do so, in order that I may have fully the advantage of your information and advice upon the whole matter of Colonial Church affairs; and these it is plain cannot be treated of without involving a consideration of affairs in the Church at home. In fact, both are parts of one stupendous whole; and if an attempt be made to deal with them upon any other principle I am sure the most serious mischiefs will arise. Even as to any events and occurrences since last May, I am almost entirely without information. I do know that Mr Gladstone withdrew his Colonial Church Bill: but that is all. The debates on the question (with the exception of his opening speech) have not reached me; nor am I aware whether he (Mr G.) has made any public declaration as to his purposes during the Session of 1853. All that I can do at present is to lay down two principles for my own guidance, of which I trust you will approve. The first is that whatever I do must be done, and whatever I express must be expressed, firmly and decidedly; the second is that I must guard myself against every imputation of coming into these questions as a partizan (sic). I am well persuaded there are persons who would be well content to fasten that imputation upon me, and thereby, instead of by argument, to deprive me of weight and influence. But knowing such

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a charge to be groundless, I should certainly protest, and remonstrate against it firmly yet cautiously; and I am not without hope that an instance or two of plain speaking on the part of one who desires nothing and therefore fears nothing, might have some effect in arousing some from that torpor which seems to threaten to reduce the Church and all her inherent powers to a nullity: which refers us to public opinion as the exclusive exponent of her decisions: an unconstitutional power not to exercised, so far as I can see, through any constitutional channel. At the same time I am quite alive to the necessity of caution: and have in one instance exercised it. Last Sunday I received (in my bed) a visit from Mr Henry Drummond evidently an amiable and respectable man, who wished to enlist me on behalf of a Society for the revival of Convocation: and invited me to attend a Meeting of the Committee. I was not sorry to confess to have so good an excuse for at least postponing this measure: as it would evidently not be wise in me to connect myself with a Society concerning which I knew so little: and was besides aware in what light it would be regarded in at least one of the quarters to which you draw my attention.

My first public appearance ought to be and must be before the S.P.G. for which Mr Hawkins says he will try to arrange a day. The Bishop of Oxford has written to ask me to preach at your Windsor and Eton Union Society: but I have been compelled to plead utter inability to undertake the office. You speak of hearing my voice again: but really a fortnight ago you could not, for I had no voice to be heard, and even now not much. The medical man advised and urged me not to preach or speak much for three months; and I believe his opinion was a judicious one.

I am anxious to bespeak, most confidentially, the consideration of yourself, and of other discreet and well-gifted men whom you might consult, on one point in my proceedings, upon which I do not like to form a judgment for myself. In

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addressing the S.P.G. there are of course the ordinary topics which are called forth on all such occasions. But there is one relation peculiar to myself which might be introduced with the effect of shewing the Great Duke in one point of view in which he has not yet appeared after all which has been said - that is, in connexion, as Prime Minister, with the institution of the Colonial Church. In this he did not act merely ministerially; but took personal pains, and shewed an interest in the matter, as a Church matter, for which the world has not given him credit and to which, it may be, I am the only person living who could bear testimony. My relation of events in 1828 would also evince on his part a spirit of kindness and condescension (towards a curate too) which was very noble and pleasing. May I venture? Again, there is one whom I had reason to love and venerate during an intimate acquaintance of ten years and whose abilities too were by no means to be contemned (sic). "Gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance" were the words which I habitually applied as most descriptive of her. Yet it seems as if by common consent she has been put out of notice and remembrance. The motive of this is obvious. This is the one part of the history in which all is unsatisfactory. My feelings would lead me anxiously to desire to speak six sentences as a record of that goodness which seems likely to be quite forgotten. But may I do so? or will it do mischief? The person I speak of was one who might, I should have thought, have satisfied and fixed the affections of any reasonable man. What I dread is, lest every thing which may be said in testimony of the wife's devoted affection may be thought to detract from the perfectness of her husband who was not so satisfied. Tell me frankly your opinion, and I shall be guided by it. I feel
→ indeed the injustice of such "suppression veri", but nature I believe, ordains that the woman must, when occasion requires, be a sacrifice even to the reputation of the man. Happy are the wives - (Latin tag) who have husbands not requiring such a sacrifice.

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The week after next, as soon as maybe after my return from Sutton Coldfield, I hope to spend a day or two at Fulham with the Bishop of London; with whom I am anxious to have a free conference and full discussion upon many points: and I shall then consider myself so far on the road to Eton if you are likely to be there about that time. If not, and my health continue (sic) pretty good I am not aware of anything to prevent my coming to you at any other time that you can fix.

I have received Mrs Keate's Letters, so full of interest, so suggestive of sad and yet hardly to be called painful recollections. She is evidently very thankful in the middle of sorrow, and has reason to be so. I can hardly conceive the circumstances of death more leniently ordered than in the case of my very dear and venerated friend. I will write to Mrs Keate: but tell her the task of endeavouring day by day to keep down the mass of unanswered letters is a great tax upon my yet feeble powers. This I find will be too late: and will therefore lose two days post. But I could not accomplish more, I am, my dear Col. always affectionately yours, W.G.S.