

Addressed to: Mr James Johnston

From: Joshua Johnston, Stromness

Stromness 9th March 1780

Mr Jas. Johnston

Dear Brother,

I sent my son to London by one of the discovery ships the 20th Sept^r last in order to stay at London till the ship time this season for Quebec. Your friend Mr Brymer put him to Enfield to school and writes me the 30th Jan^{ry} last that he and Jas. Irvine were to proceed with the fleet about the last week of this month for Quebec. I wish them a happy passage & you a happy meeting with them. When he left me he was something ailing & is but of a dilicate constitution, tho like the whole of us would enterprise things with the most handy & is full of sensibility, so it requires some caution to keep such tempers especially in youth within bounds, tho they should be indulged with everything natural to a moderate degree till they gain experience. I would beg of you to keep him in your own employ some time at least & to caution him against every roving inclination such as hunting and to guard against the inclemency of the climate you are in. In short I would not (wish) to crush but to temper the ardent spirits (of) youth. He seemed to incline to the sea but (I) think you will easily diswade him from that drudgerous & dangerous course of life. With an independent state, I find that to know the laws of different countries, to study human nature & natural history in general, is the greatest satisfaction. The last brings a man into a certain correspondence with the Almighty Creator & even fits him for futurity, it enlarges the mind, furnishes the largest field for contemplation and makes one happy even here. I need not enlarge upon this subject, but state you (are) in the place of a parent to caution him against all vice & to endure him to virtue and so commit the whole to the Almighty.

I cannot enough express my gratitude to you for your favourable & indeed necessary and seasonable assistance £50 just now & £10 in December last. Since you are both able and willing it would afford you double consolation to think how comfortable you have rendered both our sisters and me. In our circumstances it appears divine in the several instances of your benevolence because I must be plain with you it comes so seasonably and in time of need. All the return we can make is a grateful acknowledgement of it and that you'l pleas to accept of one of the fiddles that I have sent by my son. Another is for brother John. I mean you to have them conform to their number as they were made & the first (?) of my own making. I have also sent you & my brother & each of my sisters a ..ir of salt cellars of my making of Orkney ...ne (?) the first ever done since the creation (in) this country & have also sent you a stone suggar box as a small acknowledgement of my affection and to show you my fiddling, fossile and mechanical genius.

Natural history & especially fossiles has now become my favourite study, the last attainment on this side of time. I would desire of you to send me some of the rock cristal you find the stones your braking up and if possible the manner they ly in the fisture or otherways in the rock and that you'l let me know if it is a shelvy stone or rock & how the strata ly or incline and a bit of the stone itself. My son will tell you how intent I am upon this study and I hope will ease you in sending me these things or any other curious thing in the fossile kingdome. I think or rather am certain I have discovered something in this branch of nature and broke thro the time that saw the earth created not formed out of a chaus as is commonly or I may say vulgarly imagined, but a regular structure and masterpiece of measonry by the real architictor. It's a pleasure to observe the art & oeconomy of the whole to be taught it by himself alone. I shall not enlarge further on this subject.

I pray God grant your nephews a happy voyage and meeting with you and that I may have the pleasure of a good accounts from you all. All friends here are in their ordinary health and desire to be remembered to you all in the most affectionate manner

Dear brother, yours most affectionately

Joshua Johnston