

Mind you observe the address

66 Chancery Lane
4 March 1875

Dear Clark

Don't think me lazy ungrateful or unkind. Believe me, I am none of these. I am simply very low spirited & restlessly unsettled. I know I have no business to be bothering you with these splenetic effusions but did I not do so, there would be nothing to write about. You are very frequently in my thoughts - always in my warm regard & often on my lips. I would not lose your friendship - which is at once a source of pride & pleasure - but I am sure you can have little or no sympathy with my present depressed frame of mind. Impatiently you ask "What on earth ails him now?" Nothing. A mere trifle - only the fact that he has a bill to meet in a few days & sees no earthly prospect of doing it. Only that he is confused & unsettled - with prospects vague & aspirations dimmed. That - oh hang it -

Before I go further I must first thank you for your last long kind letter & accompanying gift - Oh dear friend, you would have understood me a little better had you guessed half the feelings & emotions that a perusal of your epistle called forth. I cannot analyse those feelings of pride, friendship, sympathy & sense of loss - but the ~~it~~ predominant sentiment was one of surprise - I felt myself "a fraud" that had I done to deserve kindness at your hands? I felt humiliated. If there be any good qualities in my nature, God know I seem

to have done all in my power to keep them hidden from you, -
not showing you the word phrase - Well, this I know. That comes what
may, I will always endeavour to keep a place in your regard
I not to forfeit the opinion which - right or wrong - you entertain of
me. As to "Hedged in" I read it with great care & interest - Decidedly
I like it, but after all it's a fraud - in one sense - These are the
pure thoughts we ought to have those not - Doubtless it shows up
conventional Christianity & points out the gentle life - It is written
forcibly yet delicately - but the real purpose for which - I suppose -
it was written is disguised - Starting with a vividly natural picture
such as much not ones attention travels forth thoughts in the most thoughtless -
it gradually leads up to the picture of pure christianity, - silently
drawing morals & pointing out errors. But have we come to this?
That our religious stomachs are not strong enough to bear our
mental food in our old homely form of homily & sermon & that
we must have our mental food trabularum secret up in the form
of a novel, disguised & garbed, & till at last we find to our
surprise that we have really been entrapped into reading some
thing Religious? Does not this in itself contain a confession of
weakness, does it offer another concession to thought, does it not
impliedly admit that all our previous formulas & modes of imparting
piety were, if not wrong, at least unavailing - Perhaps - Clearly
the writer seems to start with the fact stamped on his mind that
it will not do to write in the old style; that the characters must not
be too "goody"; but gradually he does do this, until he does, he
wins our attention & enchains our interest, but Christiana & her mother
at last get too good & we at last come to endure them good humouredly.

The same haste & want of care characterises most of the works one sees. There seems to be so much spirit & energy & so many objects on which these can be employed that time seems so short that there is no time to spare for trifling. There seems to be a great deal of superabundant enterprise in Melbourne - one reason seems to be that a great deal of this energy is transitory. The number of people who come to Melbourne only to make their home here for a brief period is surprising. While this fleeting population is here they throw all their energy into the work they have in hand only to leave it & have their places filled by fresh arrivals.

The haste I speak of seems to lead to two sequences. Men of the energetic, hardier kind & the ordinary demagogic type - come to the front by sheer energy & unblushing effrontery. Culture, refinement & above all sensibility seems ready to retard their progress. There is no doubt that Melbourne is a very low political example. Statesmanship is unknown or more directly its field is curtailed. The career of some of the most prominent political men strikingly illustrates this. Take Casey the present Minister of Lands - a man whose political power is almost supreme just now; for example - He is one of the many whose careers have been from first to last adventurous. He started as a reporter. Being gifted with remarkable adaptability & no hatred of dirt eating, rose rapidly. He is not intellectual but gifted only with too cunning & an apparently unobtrusive habit of doing the right thing at the right time. Watching his opportunity, he was admitted to the Bar at a time when admission was almost a matter of form & the profession but lightly prized. He joined the popular party & brought him into power & since this he has with varying fortune always held a prominent place in the political world. G. P. Smith & the present Premier, Keefe, are two more instances. Smith of course you know & Keefe another barrister who like Keefe Casey has never held a brief & is despised in the profession of which he is Fortune's cock the head - is another adventurer - one of those dexterous fellows who creep into power through the chinks of faction & discord.

2ndly. Carelessness in observance of the proprieties - the social & moral laws are openly violated & profligacy is fashionable - the rowdier pieces take best at the theatre - the loudest gabs are the most sought after & admired.

is, very life - suicides & prostitutions are two striking instances of the feverish haste in which life goes by in Melbourne - Intemperance also is general & fashionable - The female portion are excessively immoral - It is impossible to see this in all grades of society & the fact forces itself upon the observant attention with painful distinctness - You can soon see the girls of & 20ths of the married women up in these words - pale, sickly, graceful fashionable, low & lustful - Of course there are exceptions but they are few - only tend to show their failing sister's faults in darker colors -

There are many redeeming features here - You see every phase of many sided humanity - observation strengthens the faculties - & above all you can be thoroughly independent - keep yourself aloof from all that goes on around you - I see plenty that this is the working man's home - the true field for enterprise & industry - But Melbourne is not it appears so prosperous as it used to be - Apparently she owes her sudden rise & rapid career of prosperity to the accidental discovery of gold - That precious metal made Melbourne - Now the supply is failing & thus her great resource is almost at a discount - Has she other sources of Revenue on which to fall back? apparently not - Neither the agricultural nor the Pastoral interests are flourishing & if they were could she maintain her proud position? The Crown is parting with its land in fee in the usual reckless style - Immense tracts are being bought up by land speculation & dummy work is rife - So fast are the Crown lands being disposed that it is calculated that in less than 8 years all the available (I mean of any value) lands will have been alienated - Trade is stagnating - Capital idle - Immigration is discouraged - The Manufactories their benefits do not increase in the ratio it was expected they would & the effects of a thorough Protection policy are being beginning to show themselves very plainly - of course I mean these remarks to apply to Victoria -

Religion is at a very low ebb & that miserable & most abject organ of the Church of England is very very sick - Faith & thought &

Cynicism are the distinctive marks of the literary & the fears Melrose seems to entertain in his "Rocks Ahead" as to the future religion or vocaligion world of the middle classes would seem to be very true in their application as to Melbourne -

another feature is that you can get rid of the city's influence so readily - After your days lock in the busy hive is over & once out of the din & crowd, you can retire to your quiet suburb & spend your leisure at your own free will, undisturbed & alone -

It seems so strange to me who was never happy (!) unless in town that for five weeks I have not seen the city by night -

I am no saint - just the same as of old - Still enjoy the sights & the glaze & the glare - but I am quickened, saddened, healthier & better than I have been for some years past -

One good lesson at least I am learning & that is how to distinguish the true from the false friend, the ordinary acquaintance from a kindred spirit - In the matter of friendship I was as you know impulsive - now the mistake is clear - I made many friends but few true ones - One only finds this out by experience & I must say it is a very bitter experience - You put trust in a fellow mortal, love & honour him, prize his good opinion & fear to offend him - But ('tis an old tale) little by little your idol loses his influence & his power - you find him to be but clay, & clay of a very ordinary kind - you note his failings, weaknesses, meannesses & wonder every day more & more with a certain sense of wounded pride & disappointment how you could have ever trusted or honored this man - We are slow to learn in this respect - seldom or never from the first instances - but as the fact keeps recurring our sense of distrust & disappointment increases; it saddens us & makes us lose our faith in man. We grow reserved, reticent, suspicious & cynical; withdrawing more & more into our selves & regard humanity from more of a "stand-off" point of view. Still there is an uneasy feeling haunting us that tells us that this dance date of feeling is unhealthy, but we hesitate & grow confused in with the struggle between our yearning to love our fellow man & the cold & chilling fact that experience gets to mind - I know of nothing so odious as to mentally except a friend in the mental scales, examine him coldly & critically, note his defects & throw him aside as

spurious - one comfort however remains that in proportion as our judgment grows cooler & more exacting in this respect, so do we learn to cherish all the more dearly & grapple to our souls to those who have been proved to have been made of the genuine stuff.

What rubbish it is my trying to talk or write on themes like these & only make myself ridiculous & would tear this up, but I think I could write it more sensibly

Damn my "I"

The quiet of our lodging house has recently been broken by the arrival of two new lodgers - both acquisitions - in their way - one is Fred Edwards of whom you have doubtless heard & the other is a Mr Fletcher - one of the Masters of Wesley College - a B.A. - young - quiet, gentlemanly & with that curiously composite manner that features the intellectual man - composed & reserved & perhaps a trifle cynical - These are the best substitutes I can find for the friends of old - Here I am tempted to go off into a long tirade "mean" but I checked myself & proceed -

In justice to myself I must mention one fact & when I have done this I can leave many excuses unpaid & trust to your natural delicacy & kindness to palliate what might otherwise appear in light of breaches of faith on my part. I alluded to my sister - My own brother & I defray her expenses between us & having regard to our respective incomes my share is already heavy - thus I get troubled & involved & as said before am already in the shoals of debt. For this I do not repeat & only mention it - in confidence - for the reasons above -

I am all behind in my correspondence - owing JH 1 letter, Dec 2, Fred ^{the other day} & Wotton sent me a long kind & most interesting letter describing your recent doings more especially with reference to the Americans - Ah, dear friend, it did me - In fancy I was with you, pursuing the well known path, viewing the familiar ^{scenery} & dwelling with loving interest on every word & gesture - I generally feel more despondent after reading Wotton's letters - he draws such vivid pictures that my sense of loss is always keener after their perusal - Other things add this feeling - I miss the long walks I used to take & the proximity of the sea - Here we have no opportunities like this. Our holidays

Do you not think too that it is a mistake to insert any writing of the epistolary form in a work of this sort? I have often noticed in many an interesting work that one's interest breaks down at these abominable letters - They ^{never} always seem unnatural & are very often dull. The only exception I have yet met with has been in Thackeray's

Monday! Here I am writing on Religion - a subject I have, as I told you, been postponing. Well having got so far I may as well say frankly that having read & thought a good deal on the subject lately, the last faint relics of my orthodoxy have crumbled away & I have become as bad (as you will it) as the rest of my brethren. All I have to say in my defence is that I have come to my ambascy by dint of honest thought & with a certain sense of regret & perhaps loss.

I tackled the Treasury directly - I always feel ashamed of myself if I do not have a periodical 'plug' at Roman or Grecian literature & I can honestly say that I am always the better for it. Perhaps I do it out of a sense of duty, perhaps because ~~it is~~ when perusing ^{dear} old Horace or poring over grand old Homer, I vividly recall days when work was in se. a source of pleasure & ~~was~~ enjoyment when there was such a thing as enthusiasm pure & simple. Ah me, vous avoyez change' tout cela - I & very much doubt if we are any the better for it.

I want to get rid of myself for a while & let the rest of letters show you that I don't like this namby - pamby sort of sickly sentimentalism I have been indulging in far too much lately - Upon my word, when I think of the ridiculous rubbish I have forwarded both you & Milton lately I'm ashamed of myself. After the next paragraph, then, let the individual wither &c

In few words I am discontented because I am poor to see others with abilities no better than my own getting on so well all round me & I am unsettled because I can't make up my mind whether to remain in Melbourne & bide my time for a good leap or to take the chance of immediately bettering myself by accepting one of the up country situations which are still open to me -

After this the pronoun "I" has no particular bearing on my own case unless by way of introduction or example -

I have now been 8 months in Melbourne & it about high time I ~~seem~~ had formed some permanent view on the place & its people - But I seem as far from being certain in my opinion, as I was 6 months ago - Not even being able to make up my mind whether I like it or not. Advantages & disadvantages seem about equally weighed - One thing however that strikes you prominently is the haste that characterises everything - You see this in almost everything - You see it in the morning as you pass down the broad dusty noisy throng of fellow workers, all apparently bound in red hot haste to their destination - You notice it in the peculiar preoccupied careworn look you see in the faces of all the passers by - old & young - male & female alike - all intent on business alone & intent on getting that business done as soon as possible - You will also notice it in the extraordinary no. of prematurely grey headed men you meet - especially in the merchants & share brokers (& share brokers - Pun!) One consequence of this haste (took perwady everything) is the slovenly careless way in which work affairs are pushed thro. Take our own profession for instance - My duties are extremely light in consequence of this - I have not had so much spare time for years - all owing to this reason - The work is done & the money comes in - This done, people care little how it is done - Examination of documents or deeds is the exception & rather than the rule - elaboration is contemned - I have been astonished to see the careless way in which documents are drawn - slovenly in appearance - Grammar & construction; loose vague bald in language - Take my "boy" for instance, Eggleston - he is an A.D. of Tasmania & an Undergrad here - yet he is just as bad as any other in this respect. I am continually bowling him out in slips showing ignorance of law & practice - Very much responsibility is thrown on the subordinates. In fact if they cannot sustain it, there is only one alternative that is to go. My own drafts & accounts are now passed either without alteration or without notice. They take it for granted all must be right.

So is our own profession singular in this respect -

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are generally spent in the various Gardens listening to the strains of the Bands, & sometimes not so well as this. The inclination to stay in doors grows stronger & stronger & ones promises of visiting friends are continually being broken. I presume I am not - indeed I know it, - singular in this respect.

Dear Friend, I cant go on. Although this letter is assuming decent proportions it is but meagre in comparison to the one I have mentally composed & have intended to write. But since commencing it, fresh troubles & anxieties, monetary & others - have crowded upon me & believe me I am in troubled waters. I cant go on. On the themes of common interest - the Quad - your own writing - & the growing interest in our common ~~sub~~ profession I meant to have said much - Now I cannot. I have not the heart to do it. These troubles will clear away I suppose & my faith, though

dimmed, is still a reality. Perhaps
in my next I may be able to write
more cheerfully - In the meantime look
off over the faults of this. Assured of
your sympathy, even in my failings, I
still dare hope you will look over
my failings - You know you hold
my affection & respect. I look up to you
& would to God I could more closely
imitate you. Perhaps, ~~you~~ ^{who} knows, some
day I may be able to show that I
deserve your regard; - so you will not
desert me?

Since writing the first part of this,
I have received your reproachful note
& this has stung me from my torpor.
Meanwhile, accept this more as an
apology than aught else. I will at once
commence writing you properly & will then
ask you to reserve your opinion,
to remember kindly to my dear friends -
especially Milton, & still think of me as
Your affectionate friend

W. Hill

ps
Although I have said much in despite of it
I must ask you believe that I viewed your
kind presents in their proper light & am sure
I have read, thought over & appreciated them
in the proper spirit - especially the good in -
Will write to you & Fred, soon