

21 Moore Street, Fitzroy
9 Aug 1871

My dear Clark,

If you greet the appearance of this humble missive with a scowl & mutter "neglect-delay" & you will be unjust & in error, for neither of these causes has conduced to make my answer to your last kind letter so late in arrival. No doubt, judging my cases by the measure of your own quicker existence, my delay would be censurable, but then our positions are too widely different to allow this rule to be fairly applied. Since I wrote you last I have changed my lodgings 2 or 3 times & the disturbance caused by these repeated flittings would, with one who has experienced their annoyance, be ample excuse. But you are getting impatient.

I perused & with interest the card of the St John's D.C. Milton sent me & your own outline of the literary struggle then impending. ~~How did the~~

10 August 1875

Yes; this is a specimen of the difficulties that beset me in my correspondence. Last night I had just settled down for a night's writing, had your last voluminous letter before me & was comfortably installed, the others having gone to hear the famous de Murka, when there came a ring at the door & some ladies make their appearance. Of course the parlour is cleared for music &c. You know one has to put a cheerful face on these affairs & make oneself agreeable. The evening, a pleasant one, being thus spent & having to see some of the ladies home - who by the way reside in the house to which you addressed your first letter to me - it is 12.30 when I arrive home, the gas is out & there is nothing for it but to try & scribble some time from office hours on the morrow.

This last idea also proved a "sell", for I have had to spend the entire day in the Master in Eq^t's office, working up a pble matter. To night the house is pretty quiet so I commence again.

I slowly plug away at intervals at Hutton's "monster" but my answer will yet be some time in arriving - Give me assurance, if any, be required, of my all unaltering affection.

~~More~~ ^{Once} more I refer to your reference as to ~~you~~ starting your professional career in Hobart Town & once more I reiterate my opinion that such a step will be unwise. Where is the necessary field, the scope for the proper display of your talents? You speak but lightly of your formidable antagonist, prejudice, & underestimate it. But to sum it up in a word or two, as I have tried to do before, - you can do that which you intend to do far better, far more speedily & more profitably in one of the ~~richer~~ richer & more progressive Colonies - But of this more anon.

Now we have got on legal matters let us finish them.

The Victorian Law as to the descent of realty on an intestacy is similar to the Law, in fact I think the latter measure is taken from the former - In making out our statement, or Inventory, in such a case, we have to give a detailed estimate of the land. There is one wise provision here which I think well commend chiefly to you. (When the ^{sole} legatees, or persons entitled, as the case may be, are ~~only~~ the children or the widow or both of the intestate or testate, the duty is reduced to half - Query, as to the husband, widower, being the person solely entitled. Have you adopted our Married Women's 5th Act (a measure which goes further than the English Statute) in Law yet? We are very busy in the office with an appeal to the Privy Council (which

we hope to get decided in 2 or 3 years) with a course
'Quit, & a Breach of Promise. I shall get some work
experience in all of them. We had varying success in
the Actions I mentioned in my last letter. See 2 (Bank
Actions) we were unsuccessful thro' the Bank Manager applying
on 2 successive days in a state of "tight". We however
gained all our Equity suits. which are now in various
stages of progression; in one to day I issued a Fi Fa
for Pto Costa. (My position in the office is unchanged
& if I stop, as I suppose, I will, I am going in for
an increase of salary, which I think I'll get.) I had
my first attempt at journalism the other day. The
subject was the reform of the Legal Practitioners Act, -
an old, clumsy, absurdly ^{worded} ~~worked~~ & ^{the qualification of} ~~misguided~~ affair. -
Sols from other cols. have to have 12 mos residence,
to pass the Matriculation & the final examination (for
which latter Mr Morris goes up in a day or 2)
The tenor of my letter was to get these disabilities
removed or modified. The "Argus" spoke favorably of
the project & indeed took an extract from my letter
in its leader on the subject. However, it "didn't wash."
The Bill is kicking about somewhere ⁱⁿ one of the
Houses now; where, Heaven knows, for political affairs
here are in such a jumble that it is hard to say
what's what. What do you think of our 'crisis' -
what of the old, what of the new Ministry? The
cause of Free Trade is doomed to fresh delay, it appears.

I was considerably astonished at a letter I got
from C. P. F. in which he detailed in glowing terms
his recent success in his Law Exam - Give him, please
my warmest congratulations & regards & say I'd answer
his letter as soon as I can.

I read with care & interest your able letter on the
Cap^t Punishment Question. I don't know that I hold
any decided views on the subject, save that I wd.
certainly have it abolished for crimes such as that
for which Job Smith suffered.

You must not (if you have not already done so)
omit to read Smith on contracts. & if you can get
hold of a little work by Holdsworth on Real Prop^{ty}
Law you will find it well ~~upon~~ the reading.

Many thanks for your kindness in regulating &
directing my mental pabulum. I trust you will continue
to attend to my wants in this respect & I shall
always adhere to the ~~the~~ advice. Let me tell you briefly
what I have done - Reserve, or suspend, your
judgment of "Smalley" for a month or so.

After some trouble I succeeded in getting "Hypatia".
I have read it before, - years ago, - & my old liking revives.
I am now going slowly thro' it & am just digesting - for
it needs it, - Her lecture on the lessons, ^{that} or rather the
spirit in which we should regard, "hem of Scios".
My enjoyment of this was heightened by my having read
the 6th Book of the Iliad in '69 & by ^{the fact of} every line of
the quotation being familiar to me - I have also
just finished Thackeray's "Esmonds" - a splendid work -
let me entreat of you to read it. The knowledge you
will re-acquire of English History & your pleasure
at shaking hands with Dick Steele, Addison, Bolingbroke
& Swift will well repay your trouble. I suppose you
read Prof. Lydell's last Lecture (the ~~atom~~ Atomic Theory)
I found it a "nut"; but my predominant feeling was
one of disappointment - or should I say pleasure? - at
his ^{own} apparent failure to justify his premises.

Jennypson has excited a great deal of my attention. I have now read all but part of the "See Memoriam" & "Hans". I have taken lengthy extracts from his other poems in Scotland - (in which I am now proficient & which I find very useful in the office - especially as our Mary Clerk often drafts in that manner.) One night a week goes for Latin; - I am reading ^{Horace} Sacti de Moribus with my old friend Edward - who is competing for the English Prize Essay at the University. (subject "Venice - medicorod.") This with Law & the inevitable Newspaper make up my little total. I shall be unable to see any of the Magazines you enumerated until next month when I intend ^{joining} the Athenaeum Library. Well, this is a quiet uneventful life enough, is it not? But it is not unpleasant & what says Horace? *Nil male vixit, qui ratus mori enique pepellit.* The only break I have had of the last month in the monotony of my existence. ~~But~~ was going to a birthday party at Mr Cleverous. He has a splendid mansion (it deserves the term) out at Hawthorne, large ^{in size} & luxuriously furnished. There were about 40 guests but it was a very tame affair. Everybody tried hard, as it is the wont, to look happy & failed miserably in the attempt. I caught myself sighing for my pipe & my seat by the hearth & others I doubt not shared the feeling. They are strict Wesleyans & ~~teetotallers~~ teetotallers, so we had neither ^{wine} ~~wine~~ nor dancing. Here I aired my Eloquence for the first time in *Acta* by proposing the health of the lady I took in to supper, - the lately married Mrs Eggleston.

My sister & I are now living apart. The strain on my slender finances of having to support her

too much of an eligible situation with some friends offering itself, it was accepted & I am at present domiciled for 2 months or so with my old friend Findlay. Here, as far as bodily comforts go, I am better off than at any previous stage of my Melbourne life. My fellow lodgers are very decent fellows but Horace's pitiless expression well applies to them "Sos numerus sumus Et fruges consumere nati." You understand. You meet dozens of them anywhere.

I often meet, see & hear Geo. Stiginbotham - ~~our~~ our joint favorite - It is a treat to hear him in the House. When he first rises you ask yourself, after hearing the first few sentences, "what nervous slow-minded old gentleman is this"? But, gradually, Ulysses-like, his words warm with his thoughts & ~~there have been~~ ^{there have been} ~~charm~~ ^{charm} with his peaceful yet terse, forcible speech and yet noble the House entranced. I have not heard him at his best, nor did I care for his speech on the ^{scheme for} leasing of the Crown land (the failure of which ^{scheme} you deplore, I suppose, with me) I am allowing myself for the time when he "comes out strong" on the constitutional question. But he a trusty sentinel? I think it will be "warm" for the "salutary check on hasty legislation" in this Colony yet. I have only heard Hobart in dr. Equiv. Suits & there was nothing to take my fancy. I fancy Piers a rising man; a opinion which I share by others.

I went very frequently to hear Charles Bright & enjoyed his ego eloquent discourses more than I well say. I ~~never~~ came away without feeling mentally elevated by his keen common sense, refined feelings & extensive & exact scholarship. I shall have more to say of him in my

His average audience, - ~~and~~ an appreciative, earnest & critical one - ~~appears~~
to be about 1500, embracing as it perceives all denominations
of the "Argus", then Manager of an Insurance Company
his now, I believe, in business on his own as
an Actuary - Besides this he is, as you are perhaps
aware, on a travelling Lecturing Tour thro' Victoria.

I have promised to return to H. Town for a
visit in Decr - If my health does not fail
me & if there are no additional calls on my
purse I shall be able to fulfil that promise.

Farewell, my friend. May success & happiness
attend your every step in life & may your future
be as bright as the past & yours it will be.
You will "forgive" these wild & wandering "cries",
you will see perhaps that this has been
written under some difficulties, that my
failure to write before has not arisen from
neglect, & you will not despise your old
friend because he scrawls a rambling &
incoherent letter, when you know that every
week brings you ~~more~~ nearer in "spiritual
affinity" to

Your affectionate friend J. G. Bell

P.S. Please remember me very kindly to every
old friend; especially to Mattou Soey & Edwin;
I take it very hard that Soey does not
write & I should like to know how Soey
is getting on, once more your friend
J. G. Bell