

c4/c97

21 Moor Street, Fitzroy-

(1)

27 April 1876

Dear Andrew,

Feeling in the mood, I sit me down to write you a short, quiet letter - I am not exactly cheerful + yet not downcast - although I have fallen sadly away from my early ideal I sometimes look back on my unadvised career here with feelings of pardonable pride + think that perhaps I take too gloomy a view of things generally + too scathing an opinion of myself. But be this as it may, I feel I have wonderfully changed in the last two years + in most respects for the better. I urge this upon you because of a certain indeterminate - definable fear I sometimes entertain that I am slowly slipping away from your respect + as a sequence from your affection. (Don't too quickly contradict this - I have another slip to chronicle) Most earnestly I trust this will never be better, wiser, friendlier, may have but a more affectionate one, never - nobody,

what you I owe you? Almost every thing <sup>that</sup> has  
 made me better, more far-seeing, cheerful  
 & cultured - From you I learnt the first principles  
 of enlightened politics, religion, & the humanities.  
 More than this I cannot wish - were you here  
 now I could better express myself, for the  
 gloomy fears that oppressed me when you  
 visited me here have long since passed away,  
 giving place to a more resigned frame of  
 mind.

I am getting disgusted with myself in the  
 matter of letter writing - Not one of my somewhat  
 numerous correspondents but has some charge  
 of delay to bring against me - What is the cause  
 of this? I am not idle - I love my friends -  
 I am glad to pour my troubles into some  
 sympathetic ear, & yet I am always in  
 disgrace - So Ivey for instance I had not  
 written for some six months - And it is not as  
 if I was indifferent in the matter - The burden  
 of my obligations lies heavily upon me &  
 makes me at times unhappy. I gave Ivey 2  
 reasons - which please accept - I am ashamed  
 of my incessant repining & unmanly repining & yet  
 I cannot alter the tenor of each succeeding letter

(2) It grieves my self-love to chronicle failure & to find that in the race for mental superiority I have fallen far behind my early friends.

It would be amusing, if it were not complimentary to you to know how I commence to write to you - I regard myself as a criminal summoned to the bar to show cause why - I must in the first place summon all my faculties to work & must get myself into a suitable frame of mind - to you I feel under an obligation - as a child to its parent - or a pupil to its tutor - to strictly & account for the manner in which I have spent the time & what I have done to merit my place in your regard - Now if on this occasion I cannot satisfactorily account for my time I can at least urge as valid & I hope acceptable excuse.

As to the first, - I have spent my time very quietly, worked hard & done a little good - My duties at the office are arduous & Exhausting, - I especially dislike the large amount of responsibility cast upon me - A slip would, for the first offence, entail severe reproof, for the 2d. dismissal - I have a clerk who works under my direction & of course

I am responsible for his<sup>+</sup> labor. As yet, thanks  
goodness, I have gone on swimmingly & think  
I have advanced in the firm's good books. My  
office companions, tho' not sufficiently original,  
for your taste, are most pleasant fellows to  
work with. In short, we are a happy family  
& agree amazingly. I'll say no more here  
as I shall more fully inflict the subject  
upon the happy Milton. In the evening I  
hate the very sight of pen & ink & prefer a  
solitary ramble (I am now accounted an  
unwieldy individual - tempora mutantur,  
eh?). Not that I am misanthropic; I shall  
never be that - It's my humour - I can say  
no more - Well, this over, I return &  
betake myself to my books - I cannot  
present a favorable balance sheet, for  
I usually confine myself to the acquit  
a little law & slip drench. To this I can only  
add that I have read - studied would be the  
more correct expression - "Romola" "The Annotator  
of the Breakfast Table" - Poe's Poems - more  
Jennyson & "Elsie Venner" - The mention of this  
last brings me to confess my last slip & for this  
I must commence another sheet.

You have pretty plainly shewn that you detest Doeg's religious views, if I may call them such; & would not entertain an exalted opinion of anyone who held those opinions - Alas for me! ~~But~~ I must confess that since I ~~last~~ last wrote you & without being very strongly influenced by Doeg's letter, my free-agency & views received in a final blow in the work I have just mentioned. I intrench myself behind the high reputation, the gentle lovable soul of my author & at present secure in my defence proceed to carry on a parley with you.

Very frequently you find that a work though devoid of any great originality or force will yet very strongly commend itself to your reason as summarising & placing concisely before you certain views which you have dimly held & have <sup>long</sup> been unable to invest <sup>with</sup> in tangible thought & like a skilful judge it goes through a map of

tangled evidence, rejects the useless & specious  
 & having ever clearly the main-end in view  
 brings us slowly but surely to one overwhelming  
 conclusion - So I found it with this book -  
 For a long time past many of its opinions -  
 all shapely & misformed - had found an  
 unsettled home in my thoughts but it remained  
 for some master hand to give them form  
 & solidity. "Elsie Venner" is, as you are of  
 course aware, a work of great & original  
 merit, written expressly to show the  
 influence of hereditary tendencies upon  
 one's <sup>own</sup> minds & modes of life - that man  
 is not a free agent - that his career  
 is shaped for him in effect in advance & that  
 he himself is but the spot of destiny -  
 Must not these views have a materialistic  
 effect & bring you down step by step to --  
 But there, I'll not annoy you further -  
 I am half sorry & half angry with myself  
 for bringing this subject of religion on in this  
 letter - suppose we drop the subject in future  
 or you give me your views if I omit all  
 mention of my opinions? Really, I am

not competent to form an opinion - Very likely  
I shall change my views by the time I write  
next; but before closing this part of my  
letter I say clearly that my present belief  
is this: - persons of a higher nature, with  
nobler views, stronger wills, purer instincts  
may perhaps from their better selves  
build up some vague creed or form of  
belief in some mysterious spirit of goodness  
or divine essence, some "He, They, One, It"  
but for those who from pre-natal causes  
are unable to reach that lofty height & who  
from some cause unknown to them & for which  
they not ~~not~~ to blame, are born on the  
lower scale, I see nothing but sheer  
Materialism. And I was born on the  
lower scale. Ah me! we should be  
pitied not despised. All our childed  
dreams of what was best & brightest  
have faded away, giving place to a  
dull vista of despair.

You remember Gordon's lines

"The beams hold that Heaven allots"

"To every life, with life begin"

Having thus unsatisfactorily dismissed my principal bugbear I can rapidly hasten on to the end of this letter -

My Easter holidays came very opportunely. I was over-worked & languid, but long walks in the bracing weather that then prevailed soon renovated me. Now I feel fit for another long spell of duty.

My prospects however trouble me greatly. I can't make up my mind to stay here for ever, tied down in another mans service - My domestic arrangements are <sup>however</sup> extremely unpleasant that some years, at least, I see no escape ~~th~~ from the toils I have incautiously woven around myself.

There is a subject in which you have perhaps expected me to mention in this letter but which I shall not further allude to than by saying that I postpone the subject until I have the pleasure of meeting you once more - which will I trust be at Christmas next.

Many, many thanks for your last kind letter which believe me soothed me greatly - Your affection indeed showed itself never more sweetly than that passage wherein you referred to the untimely death of my unfortunate brother say for the verses which accompanied your letter I shall cherish them as far as verse finem not only for their artistic merit <sup>but</sup> for the evidence they afford of a rare & pure affection. Again & again I thank <sup>you</sup> don't think too hardly of my scribbles & errors; if I regard life as "intangible bubble that cleaveth an unsatisfied soul", I cannot help it; the fault is not wholly mine, but the loss is.

As requested I send the photo which I hope will be satisfactory - I could wish it to be better, but it will serve the purpose of recalling to the pastor's mind one who left the fold but who has <sup>not</sup> entirely lost the sweets of old associations

For the last month or so I have been engaged in attending to 2 of my relatives who have just left for Western Australia, taking with them a son of the soil, an old friend and fellow lodger of mine, - one Collins, whom perhaps I mentioned before. At my instigation my Uncle engaged him as Station-manager. My Aunt ~~was~~ is one of the best specimens of a class that is rapidly dying out, - a gentle-woman in thought & deed; a gentle, simple-natured, kindly soul; an uncomplaining martyr to a lingering illness & a feeble husband. They are going back to a home now made desolate by my brother's death to struggle through a few brief remaining years with the evidences of their loss ever fresh before them.

Her tears fell fast as I took my farewell & indeed I felt strangely moved, for it is a strange sad thought, that of parting with beings whom you know you will never see again in this world & to whom you are bound by many ties of kinship & affection.

The closing of the Library for repairs  
 had necessitated my suspending my study  
 of Mazzini but that obstacle being now  
 removed I shall be able to produce a satis-  
 factory report on that head when I next write.

I am again in trouble with regard to  
 lodgings - Mrs. Findlay will be stirring for  
 the "profession" very shortly so my quarters  
 is taken up with prospecting eligible sites -  
 My next move will be very likely to Emerald Hill.  
 This being so you had better address your  
 next to "care of Messrs. Davies & Campbell  
 "Soles, 46 Collins St, East"

I suppose you are now in the  
 thick of the debating club work -  
 I am in the cold; keep me however  
 informed of all that goes on - Save for  
 a little recreation I can fancy I am  
 again in the "sexied ranks"

I was amused the other day to find  
 a pretty accurate description <sup>of myself</sup> in the  
 Australasian of the 22<sup>nd</sup>? (I think) under the  
 heading of a clever Critique on a new novel  
 intitled "Dear Lady Disdain" - You had better  
 read it - It's a sneer at "us"

Now I must say good bye - I shall be  
 writing very shortly to Mr. Frodham & to  
 whom please kindly remember me - I think that's  
 all - once more, good bye!

Yours ever affectionately,  
 A. I. Clark Esq. J. Hill