

W B. Dawson

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Oct 9, 1895

(Saturday evening)

(P.P.S. Tuesday. I received this morning yours of Sept. 27 enclosing certificate for which I am much obliged.)
My dear Father,

I have just received a message and a letter from the British Ambassador which runs as follows:-
"I am desired by Her Majesty's Minister to inform you that he has received a note from the Minister of Public Works stating that you are authorised to attend as an 'élève-estrange' the courses of lectures at the 'Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées' and that you should be in Paris by the 1st of next month on which day the lectures are to commence."

(Signed by the Secretary.)

It is a somewhat informal epistle & does not condescend to mention the grounds on which the authorisation is granted nor is any reference made to entrance exams. But I suppose I must consider it all right. It at least comes from

the correct quarter, as foreigners ought to transact all their business with the redoubtable French authorities through their minister and not otherwise. I must therefore consider it in due form, and it is certainly very satisfactory, not to say reassuring, in its general drift.

It now seems as if ~~it was~~ it were almost a pity that I came here so soon; but still I cannot help thinking I did wisely in so doing. I wished to be as well as possible prepared for the examinations in case I had to pass them, and the reading I did, and what more I have still time to do, will I hope ~~prove~~ prove useful when the lectures commence. It was my aim early in the summer to arrange my plans so as to be able to get here by the first of September ~~if~~ in case I decided to go; and I actually did arrive here on the 4th which was pretty close to my time, especially considering that I was undecided almost up to the last moment.

I saw M. Bouthiller yesterday evening, and spoke to him about boarding in a family. He tells me that it is not easy to find accommodation of the kind in Paris being an out-of-the-way mode of living. He thinks also that the price which M. Systerman asks (£225) is most unreasonable and does not think it would be wise for me to change from my present quarters unless I could find a place where I could get accommodation for about the same price as I now pay, & seeming to think too that it ought rather to be less than more. He also said that I might find it difficult to get a proper meal in the middle of the day if I were in a family, as they do not usually cook at that hour, the ~~quater~~ ~~familias~~ ~~being~~ generally absent & taking his déjeuner at a restaurant. I remember, too, that M^r Systerman spoke of bread & cheese & cold meat for lunch, which would be rather slim after having had breakfast of a still lighter ~~and~~ description. His opinions then,

rather confirm my own. I will still
make further inquiries though; but I
do not feel much inclined to change
unless I feel quite sure that I am
going to better myself to a material
extent in doing so. If I could have
a family "made to order" and constructed
& arranged to any liking, I would not
mind giving a good price; but I feel
that as I am at present, I might
"go further & fare worse" and so
wish to be careful: especially as it
would be rather difficult to get out of
a family after once making the choice.
I will keep a look-out in that direction
however, and will also so that I
may be able as far as I can, to do
what you think best. I am ~~expecting~~
~~to understand your~~ now awaiting
your next letter which will be in an-
swer to mine from this address.

Your affectionate son, William.

P.S. I have to acknowledge
yours of the 24th Sept. addressed to me here
and also one of Sept. 21 addressed Poste
Restante.

P.P.S. Monday, Oct 11.

I received yesterday a letter from the Inspector of the School which the porter brought to me, and which I may put in English as follows:-

Sir - I hasten to inform you that, in accordance with a decision bearing date of the 6th instant the Minister of Public Works, on the proposition of the Director of the School, authorises you to follow the courses of the said School in the capacity of an élève externe. The commencement of the session being fixed for Wednesday the 3rd of November next, you should present yourself on that day at the school at half-past eight in the morning in order to attend the first lesson of your class.

Believe me, &c.

(Signed by the Inspector)

This is rather more satisfactory than any previous communication.

gives me the information which I failed to find in the other. The reason they commenced on the third is that the first & second of the month are public holidays.

(Tuesday) I sent a telegram this morning to tell you of my having been exempted from the exams. I thought it worth while, as you have taken so much trouble to furnish me with certificates. The tariff has been raised to 3.75 a word since the 3rd inst: and they take precious good care that all the offices should be informed of the change when it is in that direction. I merely said "Dawson, Montreal, Exempted." which I hope will be understood. I went yesterday evening to a meeting of the Y. M. C. A. which is held in a room in a private house near here. There were only five present as most fellows are still out of town. I spoke to one of them about boarding in a family: & learnt from him that there is a family consisting of a widow & five sons, in this street about 1/4 mile west of here who takes boarders. He is intimately acquainted with her, & promised to enquire her terms & arrangements & let me know. He says she is an earnest Christian. If I decide to change, it will hardly be necessary to telegraph, as I can leave my new address here & it will not be too far to call here occasionally.