

MCGILL UNIVERSITY  
ARCHIVES  
ACC. NO. 1421  
REF. 9/3

15 Hastings Street

Brunswick Square

London 10<sup>th</sup> June 1852

My Dear Aunt

I now sit down to undertake a duty which I am well aware ought to have been performed at least four months ago, & I beg you will excuse me for not doing so, 1<sup>st</sup> on account of my Employers in Leith failing, in consequence of which I had to leave along with most of my fellow Clerks, (the whole of them have left now two of them & one of the Travellers are still idle) 2<sup>nd</sup> as I had some thoughts of proceeding to London, which I did, & after calling upon the Merchants from day to day for nine weeks, my labours have been rewarded, so that the proverb holds good in my case, "it is a long lane which has no turning," for these reasons you will perceive I was unwilling to write you, until I had got settled; I have now got into a Colonial Agents Counting house in the City, to keep the books, where by perseverance & steadiness I hope to get on in this modern Babylon, as it is called by some

I have got very comfortable Lodgings about 35 minutes  
walk from the Office, the work is not very heavy & the  
hours are as good as most folks here, from 9 morning, till  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  past 6 evening, with one hour for dinner, I have been  
there now for three weeks and as far as I can at present  
judge, will be very comfortable. I like London very well  
now upon the whole, it is a wonderful place quite a  
contrast to Edin, it is so noisy & bustling, one may walk  
for hours & see nothing but houses. but I must now proceed  
to answer your kind letter & the queries contained therein  
I am afraid you will have <sup>nearl</sup> forgot it, I have been so  
long in writing, "better late than never" You ask me of  
my employments, recreations, if fond of flowers, animals  
& or if music, parties & afford me most pleasure of my  
employment I have spoken in the earlier part of this  
letter Recreations I am fond of Rowing Cricketing and  
Skating in its season when in Edin I used to be rowing  
or cricketing almost every morning during six months in summer  
by six O'clock, there was four young men in Gilmore Place  
beside myself who had a boat on the canal it belonged  
to one of the four & his brother we had the use of it  
whenever we chose we refitted it last spring & generally

went from 2 to 3 miles up in the morning and back again to breakfast at 8, on Holiday & Saturday afternoons if we were able we either went to Baberton 5 miles or Ratho & taking some sandwiches with us & stopping at Stateford on our way home, where we had Tea, since I have come up here I have not had any opportunities of indulging in either we also commenced a Debate & Essay Society about 8 months ago, six of us including George & myself, which I have no doubt we would ultimately have derived much benefit from had it been continued but we were forced to break it up in consequence of two of our members going to Australia & myself coming to this City there is a fourth leaving for Australia on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Aug<sup>r</sup> so that there will then only be George & another of the members left we all resided in Gilmore Place & had our meetings in our house which were only once in the week for 1 1/2 hours we had an Essay every alternate <sup>evening</sup> written by the members in rotation on any subject which they thought fit except religion or any topic which would lead to a discussion on it the other evenings we had recitation & debates altogether we spent our evenings very pleasantly. I lower I am very fond of seeing growing but I am afraid I did very little to promote their growth altho' we have a Garden & Greenhouse I

4  
used to help now & then in the morning but not sufficient  
to enable Mamma to give it up she and Papa work most  
in the Greenhouse, I prefer working in a Kitchen Garden where  
there is room to move about, & you have not always the fear of  
trampling down or digging up some favourite plant or root.  
Animals I have never had much experience in therefore I  
cannot say much on that subject. Music I am very fond  
of & would go a good distance to hear it well played or sung  
I especially like Sacred or Scotch music. I went to hear  
Mendelssohn's Vitiorio Elijah at Exeter Hall a few evenings  
since it was magnificent the singing was very fine & the music  
so impressive, there was a Chorus of about 600 voices exclusive  
of about 60 instrumental performers. I also went to a promenade  
in the Crystal Palace a few weeks ago to see it before it came  
down, they (the Contractors Fox & Henderson) had 7 Military Bands  
engaged who played for about 3 hours, they all united in  
the Transept about five O'clock & played God save the Queen  
there was about 70,000 people present I went up to the gallery  
to get a better view it had a very fine appearance the people  
all standing with their heads uncovered & the Bands playing  
in the centre after they had finished the people gave three  
cheers & dispersed, great as the number was it appeared as nothing  
now that building is divested of its contents, I think it looks

much more majestic as one can see from end to end and side to side.  
We had a practising on Wednesday evenings from 8 to 1/2 past 9 in  
Minto House. I went regularly, I asked away at 1/2 past seven on  
the above evenings & got up from Leith in time, James Bell led,  
the old I Bell's son. Mr Shearer took no part in it whatever. As  
to parties they are very well in their way & I like very well  
to meet friends now & then. In my last I promised to give  
you some account of our visit to the Exhibition (George's & mine)  
but am afraid I have taken up so much room with my-  
self I will not be able to tell you all we saw when we were  
here I will however mention the principle places we visited  
the Exhibition was among the first but I am afraid it is  
out of my power to describe it in any way save that it was  
magnificently grand, & gorgeously beautiful. I think our  
own department was as good as any, the Austrian French &  
Indian were very beautiful but not much substantiated  
in them the two former had a great many muskets & swords  
& the French had also a number of music instruments  
Pianos as well as brass & stringed, there was also some very fine  
statuary from various countries in fact every one strove  
with his neighbour to be before him I think the American  
department was the least interesting of any in the building  
although they wished such a space they did not nearly

full it, we <sup>British</sup> had entire half of the building with the excep-  
tion of a small piece next the Transept which belonged to  
India who had a strip on each side the transept the greatest  
wonder of all was the building itself which you will no doubt  
have seen by the papers is doomed to come down it has been  
bought by a company & is to be immediately reerected near  
Sydenham about 4 miles out of town, where I think from  
the statements made with regard to the contents, & general  
arrangements it will prove quite as attractive to the Londoners  
& surrounding districts at least seven more so as they will go often  
than it did last year they purpose opening it <sup>it</sup> next May.  
We saw the National Gallery, the British Museum the  
the new House of Lords the United Service Museum the  
Zoological Gardens, Regents Park, the Thames Tunnel, went  
to St Pauls the first Sabbath we were here, to our own  
meeting house the second. I am forgetting myself we were  
only one Sabbath, but 3 weeks, went to our Meeting in the  
evening, saw all through Northumberland house we  
also had an order for the Duke's other house, "Lyon House"  
gone for the Dulwich Gallery which we gave away as we had  
not time to avail ourselves of them, was at Mrs Jessands  
Exhibition, Greenwich, Hampton Court, there are  
some very fine paintings there the grounds are

beautiful had some good fun in the Maze, Windsor,  
were all over the Castle, the apartments we were admitted  
into were very fine the view from the Castle is magnificent  
it was a very warm day & clear, so we had every advantage for  
a good view, I think I have told you the whole of what  
we saw in the way of sight seeing, by the bye we went to  
Ashey Amphitheatre one evening the only one we were  
out after tea, we were generally so tired we were glad to get  
leave to remain at home, ~~It~~ The manner in which  
the Londoners spend the Sabbath appears very strange  
to me it is so different to what I have been accustomed  
to see in Eden numbers of shops are open all day & some  
of those of a kind you would think there was not the least  
necessity for such as Tailors & Clothiers, Boot-makers &c. (if the  
truth were told I do not think there is any need for either  
one kind or another to be open at all) then vast numbers  
of people go up & down the River & by the various Railways  
& at Battersea there is quite a fair every Sunday swings & Shows  
& shooting Saloons and various other amusements I went up  
there one Friday afternoon with a friend & everything was as  
still & quiet as if the proprietors had left the country &  
going along the street of an afternoon you hear peans

8  
playing all manner of tunes & last Sabbath being  
the Queens Accession I heard the Tower Guns firing  
as I came out of Chapel about one O'clock, but you will  
have seen something of this yourself therefore I need  
not enlarge upon it; I see by the proceedings of the Town  
Council of Edin that on Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> April there was  
209 Public houses open within the Magistrates jurisdiction  
& on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June the number had been reduced to  
64 with a population of 66,000, & all this effected by persuasion  
not by compulsion. When we heard you intended  
to come home last autumn & spend the winter with us  
we indulged in all sorts of ideas & hopes but <sup>they</sup> were all  
dissipated. do come soon & spend a few months with  
us we should be so delighted to see you again, I am  
sure you would also to see us, I was very much pleased  
with your narrative, of the excursion you had to the Indian  
encampment. & really do not think you can have turned  
such a grave old lecturer as you call yourself in so short a  
time, but I must now draw to a close as I have written  
far more than I expected I could have done when  
I commenced this rambling epistle but could



92  
not think of copying it, so you must just excuse it &  
take it as you find it, Mrs Newcombe & Miss Walker desire  
to be kindly remembered to you, as also Mr & Mrs Blyth.  
& they are both very much obliged to you for your  
kindness in sending them Mr Dawson's Report of the  
Schools I think they called them. Mr & Mrs Inglis desire  
me to send their kindest regards to you, Mr. I said the white  
window curtains you commenced when in London last  
are still hanging in the room as fresh & white as ever Mrs  
I has been very unwell for 4 or 5 weeks back but is greatly  
better now she is able to be up all day, but has not been out  
yet, the weather has been very cold & disagreeable here for  
some time, Mr & Mrs James Walker are on the Continent  
& I suppose will remain there some time. All the Folk  
in Edinburgh were well by the last despatches there  
is to be a grand turn out on the 19<sup>th</sup> in Edin the inauguration  
of a statue of the Duke of Wellington in front of the Register  
Office, Remember me to Clarence & Howard Primrose  
when you see them. With love to yourself Mr & the little  
ones, give them a kiss for me.

I remain  
Your affectionate Nephew  
James Bell P.S.B.