

Wantage 2/1/68

~~My dear~~ children:

James, Edward, Joseph and Rachel

I have at length reached your dear  
 Sister's residence, and mingled with her nice  
 little flock. They are interesting children - and  
 I am sure you would feel gratified could you join  
 me here. Rachel Ann Clarke accompanied me  
 to meet your brother in law about half way - and she  
 drove back to the Park. Lewis & Alfred accompanied  
 their Papa to make acquaintance with the ground.  
 The country is picturesque, the roads improved  
 since I was here before, and the fields fenced in  
 so that there is an almost continuous line of  
 Fencing the whole distance. Brother William  
 showed me the spot where they entertained Prince  
 Alfred, and where he, as Chairman of the District,  
 read an Address to the Prince. They erected a Tent of  
 Rich cloths, and spread one on the ground, and pro-  
 ceeded a hearty though not sumptuous banquet for his  
 "Royal Highness". I understood that two girls, dressed  
 in German costume, stood one on each side of the road  
 holding a blue ribbon, which signified the prince  
 recognized and pulled up. He indulges in driving  
 four in hand: he was dressed in plain tanned clothes,  
 devoted to travelling - small felt hat on his head, no  
 gloves. He alighted, had a watch look to his books,

was very affable, charged the horses for others and drove on, declaring that his horses were fresh enough to take you another stage.

In the mean time Lord Newry came up, not in the least moved from being half an hour behind, but Prince Alfred comforted him (doubtfully) by assuring him that his being behind was a matter of but little consequence. He must not expect always to be on the same footing.

Tom describes <sup>the prince</sup> him as an amiable young man, as one who seems desirous to please every one, all of the children went out with back road when he passed, and <sup>the</sup> waived her handkerchief, and elicited a passing bow - the children are full of the prince, and have pronouns with flags; and a (make believe) bugle.

The country now is much burned up, and the harvest is full activity. This morning Tom had to go to Strathalbyn on business, and took me and Louisa with him. We passed through a country that would be interesting were it clad in rural verdure. We saw two or three blackies moving on, thrashing out the wheat - one with four, another with five horses. They seemed to be doing it very comfortably. The yield of wheat will probably not be an average of 5 bushels per acre throughout the country. Some farmers have absolutely nothing

and have turned their cattle into the fields. There is one in William's neighbourhood, who says he has 500 acres that has so done. Some will bear 15, or 16, bushels per acre or some of their ground, in other parts but little. Brokers tell me they do not expect more than 100 bushels instead of 2000. - One evening making a walk with Fred Mackenzie we saw three men reaping a small patch; as we looked over the fence I saw there is a 40 bushel stubble. I told said I will go and land a tract. I followed and when we came to the thick standing wheat, - not a grain could we find - nothing but shrivelled grains not much thicker than a pin - and yet the heads looked full and the straw perfectly bright - almost too white. How was it? I think that it might be footed.

Strathalbyn is a very pretty Township, and of good size; many of the straits have each a good bridge over the River. (not a large stream) but the bridges superior to the Ludlow Bridge; none of them erected with great judgment.

I have seen Lydia Wood & Daughter and her sons at Mr. Worken, Tom Wood shortly returned to them from England, but they would not receive him; and at length an agreement has been made to allow him something annually, <sup>(£80)</sup> and he has gone away. I have discovered that Lydia Wood is Lydia Brown, the

Daughter of John Brown of Westford, and sister to  
Edward Brown, one of my Antarctic companions.  
Brookholm and Siden alleg long to come to Tasmania  
to reside; and have been talking about coming and  
where - but are talked about the Atlantic Island  
detacher train, beyond Lopez and drawing it, and  
Rt. Stephens plan (Swanwick) the Enas Land  
well, talk does not cool much. It is a difficult  
thing <sup>for a person</sup> to fix, even in Tasmania.

I have thought what you doing - and suppose  
the thing accomplished, and perhaps the best in  
hand - or the best at work. However I must leave  
it. I am not in a position to help with my hands.  
- on going to Strathalbyn. I observed large areas  
of land with thistles dead thorns, and the plants  
they had been barked, or girdled; - but when says this  
- and what caused their death is not clear. It adds to  
the apprehensions of some, that the country will even-  
tually become denuded <sup>of</sup> timber

I expect to return to the 1<sup>st</sup> of October or second day next and  
thereby the shortest course to the port to Melbourne  
Your brother Selvey has been reported daily from the  
sea with his load - sometimes fast. Possibly I may see  
him before I start. It would be pleasant indeed to  
do so. When our off, it is very uncertain indeed  
when I may reach Adelaide, with my dear love  
all remain your affectionate Father  
Francis Cotton