

(1) Ashburton
May 9th / 89

My dearest Aunt.

I have just returned to the Ashburton after a fortnight's absence & find two most welcome letters from you awaiting me & severally dated January & Feby. - The former letter I ought to have rec^d a month ago so it must have been delayed by the Colonial Postal Authorities. It gives me very great pleasure indeed to find from both that you can give such a good & cheering account of your health, I quite think with you that your pleasant trip to Scotland & the change of scene & society it brought it has been very beneficial to your health & spirits. I am glad also to hear that you get Cousin Anne to stay with you occasionally as it must be pleasant to you have a relative to talk to upon Family matters that would not interest a friend no matter

how intimate he or she might be. I am quite sure that you must find in Annie a pleasant kind and cheerful companion & one in whom you are sure to meet with sympathy & affection. Before commencing upon the chronicle of my own proceedings I will comment upon the items of news & reply to the questions your letters convey. First, many thanks for the little books many & various you have sent from time to time the Churchmans Almanach I keep hung up to the tent pole at the head of my bed & very useful it proves to be. The "British Messenger Workman" was also perused by "all hands" with great interest although only one of my party belongs to the class to whom it is specially addressed. With regard to the recent disturbances in N. Bay upon which you observe I made no comment, I suppose you have heard all the particulars from my Uncle. Very little notice was taken of the proceedings down here simply because the war is

becoming stale & it would take a great deal to cause any excitement in the matter. My only regret when I heard of it was that I was not up there at the time when feeling was increased when I got a long letter from my Friend Bousfield who was one of those who distinguished themselves, giving in each of the whole recoutre. One sadly wants a little excitement in this remote corner of the Earth & tho I am not of a particularly bellicose nature it was always an object of my ambition to have a brush with the heavens—

I am sorry that you do not hear more frequently from Willey & that he does not write to either Harry or myself at all. I fear that he does not much relish letter writing as his time can hardly be so fully occupied that he cannot find time for a few lines, I think I shall write to him & threaten to apply to the Society of the Company for information as to his welfare as you did that will work

likely bring him to terms.

You ask how I like Miss Carpenter's young Friend Hurley. I knew him slightly before hearing that he had been at Miss Carpenter's, he seems quick & steady, but a negative sort of individual very little in him either for good or bad, not much education and neither the bearing nor manner of a thorough gentleman, like most Irishmen good natured & with a good ~~bludge~~ but still a fellow whose friendship I should care to cultivate especially as this Country so teems with superior & well Educated men. He has been Cattle & Sheep driving most of the time he has been out here varying this occupation by taking a turn as Survey Labourer. neither of these occupations being considered at all derogatory in this "Free Country" —

I liked the little photo of Furdham you sent me very much and shall be very glad indeed of any more you can send of the same kind in matter what the Locality as I want to get enough

views & utterances to make up a Book.
Any Cartes of Relatives or Friends that
you can send would also be welcome.

I have got most of Aunt Harveys Family
but not one of herself - I got a letter from
H. B. S. today, he also seems to be flourishing
like his vines wh. he tells me bore 4
cwt. of grapes to say nothing of the melons
wh. are food for man & Beast since he
gives the pigs a bucket full per diem -
Bobby he says has cut 4 teeth wh. may
convey much or little meaning according
to ones lights in such matters. Freddy

I am glad to hear is getting much
stronger, I fear however he will be a
difficult child to rear as his system
seems to be very easily deranged -

I was much amused to see you in
one of your recent letters commend the
prudence of Harry & myself in having
during so many years of our pilgrimage
throughout such butterfly wanderings
in many flowerly parterres, kept our
feet clear of the toils, & our hands
free, from the hoined bridle of
matrimony - The picture you draw of

a poverty stricken & children ridden
establishment is neither charming nor
enticing not such as would make one
rush heedlessly & headlong into the married
state. But you must remember that
there is a reverse to all this. Fancy y^r
nephews remaining unmarried till their
Bachelor habits are confirmed and
irreclaimable, ~~and~~ their tempers are soured
& crusty - until they look upon women
as an inferior race but useful as
servants & cooks. until children are
to them a bore & an abomination, cold
trips to amuse their wives leisure, until
they prefer sewing on their own buttons
& making their own tea, talking to
a Bachelor friend of times gone by
rather than of future hopes & pledges,
and a glass of port & the Saturday
Review to the social converse and
courtly blandishments of the most
charming helpmeet in existence -
Verily in this case your hopeful
nephews would be much in the position
of the Elderly gentleman upon record

who suddenly thinking marriage a
desirable thing but not a matter of
much moment rang the bell and
ordered the footman to send up the
housemaid to whom he proposed
without further ceremony - that Abigail
being young & comely laughed him
to scorn upon w^h course dismayed our
friend rang a second time & ordered
up the cook - She being Fat & forty
thought this a last chance & the
banus were published forthwith. Upon
consideration I think there may be
a fat cook or two in New Zealand
to whom my addresses might prove
acceptable even in two or three years
time so nil desperandum, there's
balm still in Gilead, & Eliza for us all.
Seriously you may possibly have guessed
that had your nephews been possessed
of £500 or £10,000 apiece they would both
have been fettered long ere this, for my
own part two or three times did the
laws permit, nevertheless without wishing
to disparage the grapes that hang so

high and are so tempting, or rather
look so tempting, we both have seen
them, admired them, left them behind
us on the dusty way & surveyed.—
Admitting ^{unattractively} to be a laudable institution
& a wife a desirable possession, two
questions w^t being very readily contingent
need not in the present instance be
discussed, I think the prudence and
foresight w^t you extol & w^t we practice
a mistake & a delusion forced upon
~~you~~ ^{us} by circumstances. In this Country
at least where unmarried ladies are
scarce & at a premium a man without
good means must possess either a
great amount of assurance or most ex-
ceptional personal attractions to render
himself acceptable to the ladies, for this
therefore & other reasons I think you
may assume that your nephews have
been compelled to ~~to~~ practice the prudence
they equally condemn & despise —
Had your correspondent been a young
lady I think you might safely consider
all this but the preamble to a speedy

to a speedy intimation that the day
was fixed - but being a young lady
I am not to be credited for any such
beautiful phrases, I may be even more
candid & say that were the most necessary
qualification forthcoming I should
take a journey tomorrow.

And now for the glaciers - I think
I must have told you that about 6
weeks ago my friend Mr Acland pro-
posed a trip to the Haugitatu glaciers
& asked me to join him - I made a
conditional promise to do so but upon
the very day that I should have started
to meet him I had to go to Christchurch
upon business connected with the Survey
Department. In some respects this
was fortunate as it turned out that
Mr Acland's expedition was particularly
unfortunate. He took with him a
gentleman of the name of Paelle whom
I saw at Mount Peel & who has lately
arrived from England also two other
Christch. residents none of whom were
fit to undertake a trip of the kind -
Mr Paelle told me at Mount Peel

that he was subject to heart-complaint but it would appear unadvised mention of it to Mr. Acland. When up at the glaciers this Mr. Paetle was taken very ill with violent palpitations of the heart & was with difficulty got down to a hut belonging to a man of the name of Bell about 12 miles down the river & here he was taken with rheumatic fever. A doctor was got up to him but for 11 days he could not be moved to a more comfortable habitation. In addition to other disasters he broke a blood vessel which made his removal a very hazardous matter since he was brought down over the river-bed in a bullock dray bumping & bumping over the Boulders. How however he has been conveyed in Indian paper linings - in transports with security to Sumner's that is to Christchurch & although he valiantly declares he means to have another trial at the glaciers next year I much doubt whether he will find anyone not ignorant of his bygone mishaps valiant-

enough to accompany him. In addition to this one of the Mr. Bealstons a horn-bred man knocked up so that altogether the expedition was rather a failure - but liking to lose the season for going to the glaciers altogether I obtained a fortnight's leave of absence from the Chief Surveyor & arranged to start on the 20th of last month expecting to get plenty of volunteers & hoping also to induce Harry to accompany me. This time I proposed going to Mount Cook the highest mountain in New Zealand, & a far more formidable attempt than going to the Rangitatu since it involved a journey of more than 160 miles each way. I was disappointed in my expectations with regard to getting volunteers as Mr. Cox could not come & I was unable to send word to Mr. Acland - Harry also was too busy to come. In other respects my trip was most pleasant and successful the weather was a most important consideration being every thing that I could have wished. I started on a

Saturday the 20th mth Mr. Ball an assistant
pupil of mine & one of my men an
old Suffer. I sent them on with a pack
horse and a fresh horse for myself
& drove into Timaru that day having
previously appointed to meet Harry
there. Spent Sunday with Harry in
Timaru & on Monday with the aid
of a fresh horse made a stage of 50
miles towards the mountain. Mount
Cook is situated in the Chain of the
Southern Alps about 60 or 70 miles
South of the head of the Rangitatu river
& at the head of the Jamman River
wh. is the main feeder of the Waitangī
the largest River in the Province. This
first night we Camped about the
middle of Burkes Pass wh. is a narrow
defile between two high Ranges and
wh. is one means of access to the
Mackenzie Plains. These plains
are a large extent of Country lying
Westward of the Canterbury plain
and separated from it by a range
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to 5000 feet high but wh in England
would be magnificent & lofty mountains
It was named the MacKenzie Country
in commemoration of the exploit of an
old Shepherd of that name who was its
first discoverer & who thinking to turn
his discovery to account collected a
herd of sheep from the plain and corralled
drove them into this MacKenzie plain
intending to settle there probably for the
rest of his days. Fortunately the sheep
were tracked & the shepherd caught
just as he reached his asylum -
his reward was 14 years. But to return
to our proceedings - next morning
we started soon after day break and
reached a river called the Fork River
4 miles beyond Lake Elhazo wh is
a very beautiful lake 12 miles long
& at the outlet of wh we were ferried
across swimming our horses. At the
lake I left my Dogcart wh I had
driven so far & the whole of our Camp
Equipment consisting of a tent, 30 lbs
biscuit, a ham, 15 lbs bacon, 10 lbs

of Flour & 6 of Oatmeal besides tea
Sugar & Sundries also my Camera etc
weighs 40 lbs ~~was~~ packed on the pack-
horse. Our possum traps and a box
containing my supply of prepared
plates we carried on the horses we
rode. Next morning was very threatening
& foggy, had the morning been clear
we should have reached the glacier
the same day but my directions being
to steer for a certain hill ~~we~~ ^{was} 10
miles off & therefore invisible, ~~we~~ ^{from the fog} would
bring me to the Tasman River we
took rather a circuitous route &
did not reach the Tasman till near
dunning. When we reached the River we
had 5 miles very rough travelling up the
River to enable the junction of the Jolie
River, a spot I should have reached early
in the afternoon. We got to this place just
about dark & found there to our great
surprise a hut or whare tenanted by an
old Shepherd of the name of Fraser with
his wife & children. This is the most remote
station in the Province, the old man having

taken up a run some years ago extending
from the Jolie to the foot of Mount Cook.
At this place we Camped for the night
pitching our tent as usual. Next morning
we made a start up the River for the
glacier was about 15 miles distant
my party augmented by the addition
of a half castle fellow of the name of Jim
whom I picked up at Frasers & whose
company I was very glad to obtain as
he had been living for some time in
the neighbourhood & knew the run of the
Country very well. As it afterwards
turned out I should have got on very
badly indeed without Jim who proved
an invaluable assistant. The Tasman
River presented a very formidable ap-
pearance the River bed being nearly
two miles wide and intersected by innum-
erable streams into which the River is
divided. When I first saw it from the
top of the hills on the previous evening
I wondered how we were ever to get across
it with the packhorse, but upon trial
this proved no such difficult matter

& we managed by good fortune to get every
thing across in safety. We then followed
up the River on the Southern Side amidst
the most splendid scenery. Mount
Cott, staring us full in the face and
magnificent mountains rising from
either side of the River their bases clothed
with scrub & bush and their tops with
snow. 10 or 11 miles of very fair travelling
brought us to a fork in the River, the
right branch leading to the Great Tasman
glacier & the left to the Hooker. This
we followed for 3 miles more we got
us to the very foot of the Hooker glacier
where we pitched camp about midday.
In the afternoon we went out exploring
that is Ball, Jim & myself - The
Dyer not being much of a walker
preferred remaining as Camp keeper
& Cott throughout the trip. Unless
you already possess a tolerably clear
view of the appearance & nature of a
large glacier I have but little hope
of being able to enable you to form any
adequate conception of one. Firstly

I should tell you that these mountain
Cott glaciers are almost the largest-
known in the world; I believe the
Mer de Glace in the Valley of the
Rhône is the largest in the Alps &
is about 4 miles long. The great
Pasnus is 12 to 14 miles long and
the Hooker more than 10 - The Hooker
glacier is situated at the base of a
smaller one the Muller & we had
to cross every day before reaching the
main body of ice. Fancy a regular
sea of ice many hundred feet in
depth filling up a large valley following
its windings like a river and ending
with an abrupt face almost a wall
from beneath & a good sized river
is gushing with tremendous force - You
must not suppose that all this ice is
however clear & visible, on the contrary
it pushes before it & carries on its
surface an immense mass of debris
from the mountains & over lies the
ice for a distance for some miles
from the terminal face of the glacier

& from beneath w^h the ice only occa-
sionally crops out even then very dirty
& coated by the Contact. It is as
though an army of a million giants
had been engaged ever since the creation
in tumbling masses of the mountains,
titanic rocks varying in size from
a cathedral to an egg down into the
Valley beneath - even the very ice seems
unable to bear the immense burden
laid upon it as over the whole surface
of the moraine you come upon immense
hollows & pits, great cracks chasms
& fissures, occasioned probably by
caves having been hollowed out in the
ice by the action of water & the whole then
sinking & falling in - even as you
walk over it constant groans rumblings
crackings & reports testify to the continual
agitation of the labouring mass - You
may have some idea of the from this
of the great labour involved in walking
over any distance of this moraine - It is
only by jumping & hopping from rock
to rock never waiting long enough on

one for it to give way beneath you
that any locomotion is possible, w^h
Ball was not very expert but from
former experience Jim & I could get
along at a good 4 miles an hour -
The day after our arrival we three
started out the weather being very
clear & fine - after crossing the Mueller
(about 1 1/2 miles of moraine with no
clear ice) we had about 2 miles of
River Bed & then came to the Hooker
glacier here I occupied myself in
taking views in one case ascending
to a little hanging glacier or rather
fender about 2000 feet above the main
glacier - We got home about dark, Ball
rather done up but Jim & self quite
fresh - next day started early intending
to reach if possible the very head of
the Hooker glacier. At 10 o'clock Ball
gave in professing to be done up
he accordingly returned to Camp &
Jim & I continued our exploration - We
got to the terminal face of the Hooker soon
after leaving Ball behind and then

walked 9 or 10 miles up the glacier
getting to the very head of the glacier &
6 or 7 miles further than the highest point
reached by Dr. Haast who is the only other
person who has at all explored these glaciers
he being Provincial Geologist. During
this days exploration we got almost to
the Base of Mount Cook & nearly to
the top of the Range dividing the East
from the West Coast. After the first 4
or 5 miles we found the walking pretty
good, over clear ice, very much cut
up by crevasses but by keeping near
the side we avoided most of these. I
found Jim a splendid fellow a capital
walker & cheerful pleasant Companion
without him I should have done nothing
as after this day Ball had not courage
enough to stir from the tents so he and
the doggie bore one another Company -
next day I went with Jim nearly as
far as our furthest point already reached
as I wished to take a view of the glacier
where the ice was free from moraine.
Had this view been successful it would

have been very beautiful & interesting
as there was a ~~clear~~ ^{wide} expanse of some
miles of ice gradually ascending to
the very top of the Range it was a very
field of snow and ice. Some parts of
the glacier were wonderfully cut up the
ice looking as though it had been all
cut & sliced into a series of small
narrow ridges. After this we shifted
Camp round to the other River on the
Eastern side of Mount Cook & here we
spent two or three more days packing
- about. By this time I had used up all
my plates so that having spent a week
at the glacier we turned our steps homeward
the sight of Mount Cook would alone
have fully repaid me all the trouble
of getting there as from the South Western
side it is a most magnificent sight.
By painting & drawing & engraving that
I had ever seen of any grandeur has
given me such a complete idea of
grandeur & sublimity as did the view
of Mount Cook. The photographs I took
made it appear tame & insignificant
so much so that I was almost inclined

To wash the impressions off after developing
my plates. I certainly intend going up
there again next year & hope to get
Harry to accompany me. I am sure
of plenty of volunteers as all my friends
are now fired with a noble emulation -
I gave very little time to the exploration
of the great Tasmanian as my plates were
exhausted and I was anxious to get
home to develop them - During the whole
trip I was wonderfully fortunate in the
weather. What is most to be dreaded
in these mountain expeditions is a
"hor Wester" this is a high wind
generally accompanied by very heavy
tropical rains wh. raise the rivers
& render them impassable. A hor
Wester would therefore be fatal to the
success of a glacier expedition as
should it come before yr. reaching the
glaciers the quantity of water in the
large rivers would prevent your ever
crossing them and should a hor
Wester here come on when I was up
there I might have been delayed so
long that the supplies would have

run short which would have been
serious. When I went up the rivers
were just becoming passable after
a very violent spell of hor West weather
then followed a fortnight of fine calm
state frosty weather just what I
desired & no sooner had I returned
than the hor Westers again set in
and the rivers were again heavily
flooded - At the present moment it
must be snowing heavily in the
mountains as I see the nearest ranges
are perfectly white and probably the
spots upon wh we camped are now
buried many feet beneath the snow -
None of my views upon wh I depended
most as giving a good idea of the
mountains & glaciers proved failures
but all that are any good I send
you by this mail. I have yet
to get a good view of a glacier
& hope to be more successful in this
respect next year - next year when
I go up I mean to attempt the ascent
of Mount Cook. This has hitherto
been set down as an impossible

undertaking but both Jim and
I ^{are} confident that by taking time
about it the thing can be done. We
should have to cut our way through
or rather over the ice for the last 5000
or 6000 feet & I have no doubt that
taking this into consideration the
ascent would fully occupy two or
three weeks. I think I have written
you a most unconsciously long
letter quite going back to old times.
I stayed a night at Harrys Camp on
my return, he is walking away still for
Old Hoolings who is always in a hurry
to get his contracts finished and till
the cows tail always behind - I
send you a likeness of my goddaughter
taken by myself, I should tell you
however that the photo does great in-
justice to Mrs Cox who is really a very
beautiful woman - as indeed are all
her sisters. The Bishop is now staying
at Mount Somers he is a very kind and
nice old man I have seen a good deal
of him in Christchurch lately as Mrs
Harper has given me - a general

have been very beautiful & interesting
as there were the cliffs exposure of some
beds of the Palaeozoic ascending to
the very top of the plateau into a very
field of carbon and so on. Some parts of
the plateau were more directly cut up the
valleys and through the high land
and a slight amount of a very fine
massive ridges. The fine we follow
Camp extends to the other lakes by the
Eastern side of the mountains & here we
spoke to a tree was clear for a long
extent. The high fine plateau was all
very plateau so that beginning of the
at the plateau we found on steps
the higher of highest. The mountain
have been repaired by the
partly the same forms the South Western
side is a very fine cut. Right.
by the plateau we found a very fine
Charnockite seen at any distance here
from the surface of the plateau sea of
granite & schistosity. The sea the seen
of the mountain. The Schistosity of the
mountain is a very fine cut. The
so much so that of the mountain