

Letter 4 to John Rainey from Wellington 24 March 1879

Wellington
24th March 1879

My dear Uncle,

I was very much pleased to get your letter along with some others. I had watched for them for some time. I was beginning to wonder why I was not hearing from some of you. I was very glad to know you were reconciled to my coming. I must answer it this mail if possible.

Just before your letters come one day a telegraphist of the station where I lived came over himself with a telegram for Mrs Balfour from Robert Gilmer asking her if I was there as they had heard through some party that I was. She sent a reply saying I was. Then telegram after telegram came from both him and my father for me to go to them immediately. They sent me money and told me to come saloon passage. I could not leave for a little time.

When I got to Wellington my father met me. We are here since Sam Gilmer keeps the Duke of Edinburgh Hotel here. He is married with one child. They do not live in the hotel, but in a nice cottage a short distance from the hotel. I have seen none of the others yet.

My father keeps an hotel in Nelson. R. Gilmer lives with him.
I intend applying for a school soon now.

We are having our Autumn now when you are having your Spring. New Zealand is very different to Ireland. They do not grow much crops except in the plains. It is a very hilly country, except those plains which are quite level and extend for miles and miles.

Sheep farming is the general ?. One man may have a run of several thousand acres miles in extent. They are called sheep stations or runs. When they go out to gather (muster) up the sheep sometimes they be away a week or more at a time. They take pack horses with them carrying tents bread and rugs. They kill sheep as they want them make a fire and cook them. Several men are employed on one station.

For the cows they are allowed to go almost wild. When they want milk they go out and drive in some cows that have a good appearance of milk and keep them in a fenced in paddock. They then turn the ones they had in out. The milk is richer here than at home. We can have beautiful butter in the very heat of summer. Nothing but the very cream is churned. It is churned in about five minutes.

The climate of New Zealand is much nicer than that of home. We have very wide river beds with several small rivers running through them. In the very heat of summer when the snow melts of the high hills the rivers swell up very quickly. They are then impassible for hours or perhaps days.

Travelling inland is very difficult and tedious. There are few railways. People generally travel by coach or on horseback inland and as to the nearest port then by steamer. They are making a railway now which will open up the greater part of the South Island.

The South Island is far advanced than the North though Wellington the seat of government is in the North Island. We are watching the new governor to come in today. There will be a general turnout when his ships are sighted.

I have seen a great number of Maoris and been speaking to some half-castes. They are all civilized now. No more dangerous than Europeans. They are a dirty people. The higher they are in rank the more they are tattooed. They are very fond of showy dress. They think themselves exceedingly well dressed when they get all the colours of the rainbow on. They are very lazy in their habits but fond of white people. The China-men are the most disliked of any class here. I have seen the Maoris saluting each other. Their form is rubbing noses. They are very fond of begging anything they see.

No person is really allowed to beg here. There is some kind of employment for every person who is at all able to work and those who are not .. put into charitable institutions. People have not to work so hard here as at home and there is a vast difference in the way are maintained. Besides they are so well paid. Plenty of girls have £1-10 and £2 per week. None are paid less than £20 per annum. It is a very poor girl takes less than £30. More cooks are very much employed.

We have splendid fruit in New Zealand grapes apricots peaches egg and other beautiful pieces besides all the other fruits which grow at home.

Hot-house flowers at home grow in the open air. People keep beautiful gardens here. The houses are generally very neat and comfortable nearly all wood. Fires are very common on that account but then nearly everyone insures. I have not seen a fire yet.

I have not seen the real bush country either.

I think very few people would live at home who live any length of time here.

Did you suffer from the severity of the winter? How is your health? I am very glad your eyes got better. I was surprised when I heard you were teaching. Take care you don't hurt your health. You have plenty to do without teaching.

I got your paper. I must send you some. I have not seen any but daily papers and I know there is little interesting in them. I'll see if there are any weekly papers published.

I nearly forgot to tell you there are steam-tram cars in Wellington. They run every ten minutes.

When you write address Masonic Hotel Nelson.

I'll now draw to an end. I must write to some of the others.

All well here. Hoping you are so too.

I am
dear Uncle
your aff niece
Dollie

Letter 5 to Alexander Burns from Wellington March 1879

Wellington March 1879

My dear Mr Burns

I at last am got most of the way I wanted to go. I met some disappointments about the going but they only turned out for the best.

When William Gilmer came he told them I had come to New Zealand, but by what ship or by what port I had come to he could not tell. He thought I had come to Auckland.

Robert Gilmer telegraphed to Auckland and got the reply that I was not there. My father says he could not believe I would come at least be the first to come. Then when they heard I was in New Zealand through some parties they telegraphed at once to me to come. They sent me money and told me to come saloon passenger. At that time I could have come at once without any money from anyone. I have never done anything since I come only enjoy myself.

My father met me in Wellington where we are now staying with Sam Gilmer at his private house. I don't know when we may go on to Nelson. I have not seen any of the others yet. Robert lives with my father in Nelson.

I want you to tell me how much money I owe you as I want to get out of debt if possible. Now don't take a wrong view of me writing this, I just mean what I say. I am sure you stood well to me and made me a very friendly offer so it is the least I can do to strive to get of debt.

I am glad you and S.J. have made up your minds to write once a month. I hope you will keep to your determination and do so. I don't know when the longing for home letters will leave me but not quite so soon as you think I believe. I got a whole bundle last time but did not go to bed till I had read them all you may be very sure though it was about two o'clock at night when I had finished with them.

It was Mr Balfour junior brought over the mail that evening. I met him and asked him if he had anything for me. He told me he had. Oh another telegram or two I suppose. Oh no but a whole budget of letters. I ran off with them at once and commenced reading. The reason I thought of telegrams was everyone who came from the post nearly brought me a telegram or two. One day Sir Norman Campbell bought me three.

So you say you think you will never travel so far as New Zealand. Well of course you know your own mind best. I was thinking of Sam coming but I think he had better stay at home for a few years and study hard. He will then have a higher classification and get a much better school. He may get £200 or £300 a year then.

You are getting on famously teaching science. Tell me how much you make by it. Is Mr McLaghlan gone down altogether.

How does Mr McKinn's school do? Do you have your three assistants still. I don't believe Alex McLeod and his assistant will get on harmoniously together. I haven't heard from Mrs Ballagh since she was married but that was partly my fault as I did not answer her letter till recently.

I have not applied for any school yet. I intend doing so shortly. I think I shall wait until Dr Potterton's certificate. Send yours also. You got none from Mr Dysart. How does he get on now. Are Messrs Bingham and Black taking the people by storm. That is strange about Black? People.

Is Dr Anderson still in town? I met a cousin of his once. She is a sister of Professor Anderson's who sang at the concert the time you had fever. He was lame. She was a nurse-maid in Ch. Church.

I don't see many people I see from Ireland. Mrs Sam Gilmer is from Newtownards. Her name was Miss Martin. She came out very young to Melbourne Australia. Her father and Mr Jameson of N.T.Ards were very intimate. She has two or three of his cartes.

How does Sam Cassels get on? Any sign of him getting married! You did puzzle me about me receiving this five pounds. I couldn't think what you meant at first. What was the matter with Emma McLaren? Is she quite better? Take care you were not connected with her illness. Any sign of Miss McBirney getting married? She should come out to this country and perhaps she might have a chance. Mrs ?Gass gets her girls off famously. Who has she now?

How do you all get on in N.T.H. I mean everyone. Give me all news. How is poor old Mrs Ewart? Your namesakes had a jolly time while their shanty was being propped up. Have they put Sarah to anything?

Oh shame to have poor Miss Joy breaking her heart. It is really too bad to not allow this poor soul to show her beautiful self off in the corner in 2nd N.T.H. Pres. Church. What do you mean breaking the poor girl's heart. Get that house built you were so often talking of and bring Miss Joy to be mistress of it and be Mrs Joy B and amply repay you by her many fantastic ways and humourous poetry.

I suppose there is scarcely one to mention my name in N.T.H. now. No matter I never cared much for it and I suppose never will now be in it again. Oh how does Mrs ?Lavery get on? Any quarrels?

I was very much pleased to have your carte. I must send you some views sometime. I think I'll write no more now. I'll write some again. When you write address Masonic Hotel Nelson. Hoping you are all quite well and getting on nicely.

I am
Very truly yours
Dollie

Letter 6 To Sarah Jane from Wellington July 1879

Wellington July 1879

My dear sister,

I have a good mind to pay you home in your own coin, but I scarcely see the force of doing it as by the time this gets your length the my anger will most have dried out.

I suppose I must confess to having plenty of time but I am as lazy as ever and never out of the way of letter-writing at any rate I have answered every one of yours immediately.

Poor Sam is the one has the greatest cause to cry out against me. I was sorry to hear he had failed in his examination last year. I hope he was successful this time. Has Mr. Burns passed? How do you like teaching? I have not begun teaching yet. I have called on the Inspector and he has my name entered as a candidate for a vacancy.

I'll not have so much opposition here as at home. I like N.Z. very much. All are well here.

I was afraid something was wrong at home as I was dreaming a good deal about you all. I was glad to get your letter and to know you were all in your usual. I had a letter from my Uncle along with yours. I had one also from Ann Mc'Leod about a fortnight ago. Poor girl she seems to be miserably lonely now from the tenor of her letter. She says she has not a girl to speak to.

Changed times forged those old hills. I have not heard from S. J. since her marriage. Anne says she is very happy and came for tables.

I got your carte all right. It is very nice. I have never got mine taken since. When I do I shall send you one, but I won't promise when that may be.

I heard of Mrs. Hamilton's death, some days before I had your letter. What was the matter with her? Does none of them write to you at all!

Mary and Maggie will miss her very much. How do they get on and how does Annie Adair? I hear Sammy Adair and she are on good terms. Do you ever see or hear from Mrs. McBride?

So William McB. screwed up and married at last. I have never seen E. Stephenson but I heard through Andy McAskie that she is in Dunedin. I suppose she did come into this same port I did and went on then by rail.

I have seen Andy McAskie several times. He did surprise me the first time I met him in Christchurch. I did not know him. The next time I saw him was in Wellington one Saturday night. Mrs. Gilmer and I went out to have a look at the shop windows they be so nicely done up for Saturday nights – then, who did I again meet but Andy. He has been out of employment, but he has a situation now I think. We were out walking this other day and he drove past.

He seemed to be on business. I have not been speaking to him since. He gave me a lot of news. ?Janie is married to a Mr. Fred Moore, who came from Omagh. Joe is in a situation at Masterton some miles from here. I have not seen him though he says he saw me. I believe Isaac Ewing died. The Johnnie McA's you know are here.

Duff the young fellow who came out with me is in Wellington. He is in J. Smith's Te Aro House. It is a large drapery establishment. It was very nearly burned this nights fortnight, but for the energy of the assistants, it would have been as well as the rest. It caught fire several times. They had it covered with wet blankets on which they kept a continual flow of water with buckets. One young fellow called Price, one of the assistants gets especial praise for his good work. There is a great sale of the goods now. It is like a fair every day.

This night fortnight we were sitting after tea. Mrs. G. said she heard a fire bell. She ran out to the street and heard the fire was in the Opera House. We then went to the front verandah from which we had a view of a great portion of the town and in a short time saw the fire bursting out in the roof. The building was so high the firemen could not get the hoses to play water up so high.

Very soon the fire spread to other premises. The Bank of NZ was burned, a Wesleyan Church, two hotels and a larger drapery concern besides several other places. The loss by burning is estimated about £50,000. About 3 acres in extent has been burned. It was a dreadful sight. No person was burned. At one time they thought the only way they could save the town was by blowing up some of the houses.

Today, just as we got into church, the fire bell rang out. Men began to run out in all directions of course every one anxious about his own, but it was only a chimney or two on fire. It was soon put out.

The buildings are all nearly of wood, that is one reason the fire spread so fast. No more wooden buildings will be permitted in the town. Earthquakes are frequent here. They do no injury. There is a trembling shivering felt. I felt one. It only lasted some seconds.

Mrs. Sam Gilmer is a native of Newtownards. Years ago I think Mr. Jamieson used to know her. She was then a Miss Martin. Her father lives in Melbourne.

Did you enjoy the soiree in 1st N.T.H.

Has Mrs Wright paid you her promised visits.

How does old Mrs Ewart get on.

You never tell me if Mrs. ?C/L/Rafferty still is your neighbour or how they do?

I suppose you would like to have an idea of what Wellington is like. I'll try to describe it to you. It is built on a hillside. The first street is level with the sea, then street after street runs along across the hill side in tiers. In some places the connections between the line of streets is by steps. One flight is called 'Jacob's Ladder'. The worst of Wellington is it so hilly. There is no place to go for a nice walk without going right through the town first. It is very nice to climb up over the town and stand and look down at town lying below and the bay over from that again. We can see the ships all going in and going out from our verandah.

Hoping you are all quite well. All here are. Goodbye from your loving Sister Dollie.

Letter 7. Uncertain date Winter or spring 1879 as she is in Wellington and not working To Sarah Jane Hamilton

As for myself I never regret for coming so far. I am still in Wellington. When Summer comes Mrs. Gilmer, Edie & I are to have a trip to Greymouth.

I am doing nothing at all, but anything pleases me to do. I have made a good lot of point and honiton lace. I spend a large portion of my time dressing. Sometimes five and six times a day, but ordinarily twice and three times. I have had several new dresses, two hats and a bonnet. I like my bonnet so well. It is a black velvet on satin with a large white feather, dark flower and black silk strings. It suits me so well. I got a black velvet jockey hat and a wide brimmed gathered black silk one.

It has been a great deal of rain lately so that I have not been much out. When the fine weather comes we are going up the country so far as the train goes. The railroad runs by the sea the greater part of the way so I am sure it will be beautiful.

I do not know what you want me to tell you that I don't. Tell me what you want described so minutely. For the country I might not attempt to describe it as I could not convey an idea if what it is like it is so different to anything you have ever seen or can think of. I don't mean so it is surprisingly beautiful but I mean altogether different.

It is a funny thing to be riding in a coach drawn by four horses, two before another with passengers inside & outside for a whole day running across fields, though wide rivers, creeks and river beds. Sometimes the horses are quite up their bodies in water going through the rivers. Except convenient to a town or township there are no roads only tracks but government are fast making roads. It is a wild sight the country. I was quite bewildered. I can scarcely tell you how I felt. The people in N.Z. are much nicer than at home, but more ceremonious.

I have got in a new tooth in the front. I put it off for a long time, but in the end I consented to have it in. It was no pain. I could not speak plain the first day after. I got it in but I feel no inconvenience from it now.

Have Sam and Mr Burns passed their examinations? I shall write to Mr Burns next mail. How does Sam get on? Who is his girl? Does he go up to Croziers still? Did Tom/James Crozier get married to Miss White yet?

What part of the colonies did Mr McCracken and Sam McKee come to? Who else has come? What number have come from around C.B. and N.T.H. lately. I started, the others seemed to follow suit. I see Andy McAskie sometimes and Joe once.

How is Mrs Hynes? Have you been to see her since she changed her name? I had letters from Anne McLeod, Mary and Maggie Hamilton. I have not written to any of them yet. Have you been up to C.B. yet?

How did you let the flowers die? Are there any nice ones? I am watching a vine in the conservatory to bud every day. Mrs. G said I did it ??? plants in the conservatory about a month ago. We have some nice camellias. They are in bloom now. What girl have you?

What was the matter with the last one? Where is Agnes McRoberts? She and her sister should come to N.Z. They would get from £30 to £40 a year.

Where is Jessie? Is she anything changed?

Is Katie Slane anything taller? The little mite!
How do R. Burns family afford to retire into privacy?
Did the Presbetry do that well for them? Is Sam Cassels still going in for Sarah?
Do you do anything at all in the shop? Has my Uncle been in N.T.H. lately? Does he say anything about me or what?

I have not the least idea how much money I collected for the missions, but if you find the card you will see. Have you paid in neither year?
Have any of you even seen ?Guy / Lizy since I came. How are the Bingham's doing?
How are ?Tom/Sam/James Adair and Mrs. Any increase to their establishment or family rather?
I think I .. note to Mrs. Ewart.

Hoping you are all quite well. I'll say good bye for the present.

from your
loving sister
Dollie

Letter 8 Fragment To John Rainey? 1879? probably from Wellington as synagogue built 1870

We have no markets or fairs here. There are sale-yards for live stock where they are auctioned and auction marts for other articles. Of course there are shops and stores for selling things like home for such goods as can be sold in them. Green grocers sell all kinds of vegetables and seeds, for all kinds of seed and grains.

There are plenty of Chinamen here. They grow vegetables and sell them principally. They are very much hated in the colonies. They are very ?mean and generally dishonest. They are trying to prohibit their coming into the colonies at all. Plenty of Jews also. They are as a rule very wealthy. The largest stone building here is a warehouse belonging to a Jew. I have been to a Synagogue during their service. It is a strange service and they seem to pay so little attention to it. They chat & laugh incessantly all through. They use Hebrew books.

The mail goes tomorrow. Write soon won't you. I am quite well and getting along very nicely.

Hope you fare quite well you, Sam and all in N.T.H.
I am Your loving niece, Dollie

Letter 9 to John Rainey

October 1879
Thursday

My dear Uncle,

I had my letter written to post to you by the last mail, but changed my mind about telling you of the school till I was sure of it.

The Board met last week and I am appointed. I begin my duties on the 1st Nov. The Inspector says it is a very quiet place and that I shall have little to do. I suppose I won't have more than 20 or 30 pupils. I may also get private tuitions. I shall have my holidays to enjoy myself. Mr. Patterson told me he would tell me of anything better. He thinks I may soon have far better. However, I seem very well satisfied, £100 a year is not bad to begin with.

If Sam would study and pass an examination or two at home, he would get a good school with very little trouble here.

I do your eyes still continue better.

Good bye.
From your aff. Niece,
Dollie.