

Letter 10 To Sarah Jane from Gladstone July 1880

Spring Bank
Gladstone
July 1880

My dear sister

I am going to write to you but I need not say I am answering your letter as I do not recollect its contents at the present. I don't think, however, that seven months will elapse between the last letter you had from me and this one. I know your letter contained some very strange statements. I had begun to think you were not going to write again.

I was sorry to hear by Sam's letter you were not well. Are you better? Have you given up teaching. Perhaps the confinements did not agree with you or you may have had too great a strain on your mind. What is Sam doing! What a pity he was so unfortunate in his surveyorship.

I am getting on first rate. I think every day is improving with me. I do not feel the time passing as there is always some enjoyment on. I think nothing of the work. I never was happier in all my life. We have splendid weather. It has been a beautiful winter.

I suppose you will laugh when I tell you that I have got a horse and saddle of my own. I ride to school on wet days if the roads are muddy. My horse is pretty quiet though he is young. He is four years old. He was just broken in when I got him.

My winter holidays are just over. I went to Wellington to spend them. I had a fortnight. Mrs Gilmer was very much disappointed I did not get down in March. She went up to the trains to meet me. I did not tell her this time if I was going for fear I should not get. She had just given me 20 minutes longer – the night I went – and if I was not in before that time was up she said I would not come.

They are all well in Wellington. My father is not there now. He is in Greymouth. Mrs H. Gilmer and Mrs McWilliams and their youngest children were over in Wellington last March. Dollie (Hamilton's daughter) and (Maggie) Henry's daughter are coming to Wellington shortly. I expect Mrs Sam Gilmer, Edie and the other two girls up here to stay a month about October. Then I shall be going down to spend my summer holidays. I am nearly a year up here now.

This time two years I was on the wide wide ocean. I forgot all about it till Mrs Gilmer said to me on the 12th July morning "Is this not the anniversary of your leaving Ireland". How soon time flies. I saw by a cablegram that there were riots at Newry on the 1st Jly. I believe Newtownhamilton is going to the bad altogether. What a miserable place it must be. I am sure I could never live in it again.

I am getting on nicely with my school. I have 37 on the roll now. When I came there were only 26. After the first two months they have gone on increasing. Everyone seems quite pleased. I hope we may do well when the inspector comes. I wish my own examination was over.

Are Mr Burn's new schools built yet? He is the only go-ahead man in N.T.H. How many assistants have they there now? or who are they? Is Dr Anderson in N.T.H still? Are R. Burns' people and you got good friends again? Have you many flowers? Did many of the geraniums

grow? It seems like yesterday that we collected those flowers. How do the Edgars' get on? Any of them married yet?

John Gilmer is married to a Miss McKenzie. Robert has been very ill with fever. He is quite better. Does my uncle come often to see you now? Is he anything changed. It is a long time since I had a letter from him. I must answer my mother's letter some day soon and after that Sam's. Letter writing is such a trouble to me now. I am nothing like what I used to be. I can never settle myself to write now especially long letters. How is old Ms Ewart? Is she alive still? How are all the Adairs and Hamiltons.

What does Mrs McBride call her baby? How does Mrs ?H/Kynes get on? Have you seen her since she was married? I never see anyone I knew at home now at all. Did Maggie Burns go to America? I think N.Z. would be a better place.

If I were talking to you many a funny story I could tell you that I cannot explain by writing. Sometimes I think will we ever meet again and how? I don't see any probability of my going back. Of course I don't know what may occur in years to come. Did anyone leave N.T.H for N.Z. since I left? Did you ever see ?Guy since? Well well I remember the first day I went to see him. I had no great faith in him, yet he was all right. Is Alex McLean married yet? Do you ever see any of the Corkeys? How does Mrs Gass get on? There will not be many young men to walk out the girls now. How is your shop doing? Anything better? What a sad end Mrs Carragher came to. What will they do now? How is Miss McLaughlin?

It is with a family called McLachlan I am boarding. They are Scotch. Nearly all the people round here are Scotch. Do you ever be up in C.B. now. Any changes there? I never hear from Mrs R Ballagh.

If there are any of the Irish Lace patterns coming about you might send them to me. You know what I mean the lace of muslin nets, chrotchet thread and fine linen thread. I had a lot of tissue paper patterns in your drawer at one time. If you can find any of them you might send them. I have done a lot of point and honiton lace. Honitons look very nice. I am going to work bonnet strings now. I must stop now as it is nearly bedtime.

All here in good health. Hoping you are all quite well.
I am
your aff. sister
Dollie

Write to Wellington

Letter 11 Incomplete. To Sarah Jane 16 November 1880

Gladstone
16th November 1880

My dear sister,

I suppose I may scrape together as much news as you sent to me and keep you from saying I do not write to you. For news part I can think of very little that I can write to you as I should only be telling you of strangers in whom you have no interest. I enjoy myself thoroughly. I have never time to grow lonely here. I wish you could only just catch a glimpse of us sometimes.

I have just written to Mr Lee¹ today to know when the next examination for teachers is to held. I wish I had it over. It is about the only thing that troubles me. Our school is doing nicely. We have 39 on the register now. We call the roll the register.

Our Christmas holidays will soon be now. I am going to Wellington then. I shall have a month. I expect Mrs. Gilmer and her little girl up to see me and stay a while before that they were coming about three weeks past only the weather turned so wet and unpleasant she thought it better to not come till the weather mended. I expect her soon now as we are having beautiful weather just at present.

This is not such a hot dry spring as last was but it is better for cows and grass. I am more than a year in Gladstone now. Our little township of Gladstone is increasing by degrees. We are getting new roads made and that will be a wonderful improvement. The roads were very bad during the winter season.

There is a large river -- the Ruamahuaga -- runs convenient to us. It used to be a great nuisance very often as it would not be fordable. Now there is a splendid bridge across it and we can go over it when we please let the river be up or down. They have a toll though. Every rider who crossed it has to pay sixpence. Poor me has to hand out an odd sixpence.

All are well here as far as I know. My father was ill a short time about two months since. He is alright again. Mrs McMillans (?McWilliams) baby is getting something better, but I question if he ever gets better

¹ Inspector and Secretary Board of Education

Letter 12 Incomplete To Alexander Burns From Gladstone 13 June 1881

Gladstone
13th June 1881

My dear Mr. Burns,

I received your letter alright some time ago though I won't acknowledge to being so slow in answering as you were. I had begun to think I was not going to hear from any of you Newtownhamilton people again. I see by your letter you are getting on famously. You have now got the pigeon's family, that is one of each. How do you like nursing? The house will be quite lively now, yet not so lively as where I am as there are ten here.

I shall write to Sarah Jane too before I close this letter. I dreamt a few nights ago she and I went out on a ride and our horses ran away and left us and we could not catch them by any means. I don't be much out now as the weather is wet and the roads are muddy. It is the middle of our winter. We have had beautiful weather till very lately. It has been a continuous rain for nearly a week. There is a flood. It has just cleared today. I do dislike wet weather above all things.

Our mid-winter holidays commence in three weeks. I am going to Wellington then. When I go I intend getting my carte taken so that you will see what effect three years time and New Zealand climate have had on me.

I never regret the day I turned my back on my native isle. I am far far happier here than ever I would be there. I enjoy myself first rate and am happy and contented and get on first rate. I can't tell you much as the things I take an interest in are all strange to you. You would require to be in the colonies to know colonial ways.

I wrote some time ago to my uncle. I told him the result of the examination, so I expect you will hear of it from him therefore I need not write it again. Somehow I don't feel in a letter writing humour tonight so I don't expect to finish this epistle.

Sam seems to have studied lately. His last letter to me showed wonderful improvement. His carte does not do him justice though. How is your sister Maggie doing in America? Is it long since she left home?

Letter 13 Incomplete to Sarah Jane c July 1881

It did little or no injury in Wellington. I believe it was felt very heavy in Foxton and at the Upper Hutt. At ?/Supurupura station about a mile from here the chimneys were knocked down milk and cream spilled and several things broken. The furniture of this house had a lively dance also. You will be having nice warm weather and long days at this season. The melodious drummers will be displaying their powers too with you. I have seen no processions since I left the old country.

This time three years I was spending my last days in Newtownhamilton and so far as I see they were the last days I shall ever spend in it. It is a long journey between this and there and I am not at all a lover of the sea. I should never fancy a sea faring life. It is too motonous for me. I expect if you saw me now you would think me changed in a great many ways. One thing I am nothing quieter than of old. Oh Newtownhamilton was a dull miserable place to me.

Are there many changes since I left? Is ?McLean married yet? or are you good friends?

How do the O'Hare's get on? Is Miss Burns (?Joy) still alive? Have you any of the flowers we got before I left? How are the Edgars? Any of them married? Do you ever be out at Willie Bailie's? How are they all? I suppose Mrs Ewart is still the same. Do you ever call to see her? I need scarcely ask you if you be in ~~Newtownhamilton~~ Castleblayney? Are they all well there? Have you been to Mrs Burns' father's yet? How are they all? When you write give me all the news in and about Newtownhamilton.

I can think of nothing more to write. I believe I am altogether failed at letter writing. Hoping you are all in good health and expecting to hear from you sometime.

With fond love to all.

I am
your aff sister
Dora

Letter 14 Incomplete. To John Rainey? 1881-2

I went to Wellington. I had two weeks during the Christmas holidays. I intend spending two weeks in Wellington and two in Palmerston. Palmerston is farther north. I believe it is a nice district of country up there.

So you think my photo a good one. I don't like it. I intend getting another taken by a different photographer in the summer. I shall send you one. Sarah Jane promised to send me her own and her children's but she has not done so as yet. Who are the children like?

I am glad they are getting on so well in Newtownhamilton. How many rooms will they have in the new house? Do they still keep the shop? Mr. Dysart² stops a good while with them. It is a wonder he does not get married. How does Dr Anderson get on? I hope Sam and Mr. Burns enjoyed their trip to London. It would have been nice for you to have gone. Did they make much of their science classes this year? I am afraid Sam Adair is not getting on well. He should come to New Zealand.

So they have been debating on the Instrumental question again. Ten/Few years ago I heard them one night on that question. They allow instruments in all the churches here.

Uncle A³. must be growing old now. It is wonderful how well he keeps. Did he know you?

² Mr. Dysart was Minister of Newtownhamilton 2nd Presbyterian Church

³ Uncle A. Was John & Sarah Rainey's eldest brother Andrew.

When you write again don't use so thin an envelope as your last one was worn through and the letter was quite open. The thin paper for writing on is the best, but a thick envelope for wrapping.

I think I have written a long letter. I did not think there was such a long interval between my last two letters. Do the agitators ever give you any annoyance? When you get this letter your winter will be close at hand. Hoping you are in good health and all in Newtownhamilton too. Tell them they might write a little oftener.

With fond love I am
Your aff. Niece
Dollie.

Letter 15 To her mother Sarah Hamilton

Gladstone
Wairarapa
1st July 1882

My dear mother

As my holidays are just now and I am going to Wellington to spend them I want to answer your letter before I go. I dismissed my scholars yesterday for two weeks. I was busy today making out the quarterly return. I go to Wellington on Monday

We are having our winter now when you are having your summer. I was just thinking this morning you will have the drums out in Newtownhamilton today. We never have any demonstrations of that kind here.

I don't suppose there is much change in Newtownhamilton these last four years. There is a good bit of change in me though.

So you have changed your residence once more. I think Mr Burns gave the full value of the houses when they have to rebuilt. Could he not have got ground in the square cheaper? Where is John Shaw now? How are the children? Are old Mrs Burns and Miss Burns still over the way?

I was pleased to hear you were all in good health. I suppose Sarah Jane's children are able to talk by this. Sam and Mr Burns are still at their duties in Townsend I suppose. I am glad my uncle continues in good health. I was sorry to hear of Mrs Adair's death. Sam will miss her.

So Mrs Ewart is still alive. I hope she is better.
We have had a good many deaths lately in this locality. We have had a mild winter for so far. We had some very wet weather but now it is fine & pleasant.

We have good fires in the school room. We have plenty of firewood provided. We are to get the school room painted during the winter holidays.

This will be a short letter as I have not got much news. Next may be longer. Hoping you are all quite well.

Love to all from
Dora

Letter 16 Incomplete To Sarah Jane from Gladstone 16 October 1882

Gladstone
Wairarapa
16th October 1882

My dear sister

What a time you were in answering my letter. I really thought you were not going to write to me again. I intended writing immediately on receipt of yours, but there are so many visitors here I really could not. I think it is about three weeks since I had your letter.

I was glad to hear you were all well. So you have been to the great city of London – a place I never expect to see – you must have been a bad sailor. I never was seasick all the voyage to New Zealand. You never told me a single thing of the sights you saw or your trip. Did you bring the children with you or leave them behind? You might have sent one their photographs. How did Alex and Sam stand the sea?

It is wearing near Christmas. You will have cold weather when our summer is only starting. I intend going for a fortnight or three weeks of my holidays to Wellington, then about a fortnight to Palmerston. I shall go by steamer from Wellington to Foxton and then by rail from Foxton to Palmerston. I am going visiting to a place called ?Landton. I have been going there for a long time. I shall come back from Palmerston to Masterton by coach and ride to Gladstone.

I don't know what news I can give you that I don't. I can't begin to tell you about a lot of people you know anything about as you would take no interest in them. As to any news I can give you concerning myself it is a very little. I go to school and teach every day, am paid on the first day of each month £8-6-8, and after last examination I got a capitation allowance on the successful passes. Our examination will be in March I expect.

I am glad Alex's school is doing so well. They require a new school as they must be crowded in the old one. Is Sam still teaching in Townsend? I expect you have your new house up before this. How many rooms have you in it? Is the other house large enough for you? Do you keep the shop? Is Mr Dysart with you? How does he get on? Not married yet?

So ?Tom Irwin has got tied at last. It is a wonder his relations let him marry. Do he and you speak now? I did not think Jane Maclean would have been his wife. Mrs Irwin will have plenty to do to keep both Burns and McGaffin's families. How does Miss Joy Burns get on? Do you ever go down to see Alex's father and mother? Is James Burns married? How is the girl getting on who went to America?

As to Kate Murphy coming out to New Zealand I think it is the very best thing she could do. She would get good wages here and be sure of a choice of situations. If she comes let her come to Wellington and write to me before she starts and tell me the name of the ship she intends sailing by and I shall write to her so that my letter may be waiting for her when she anchors in Wellington. I cannot go to meet her there as it is too far but I shall get her a situation. If she comes to Wellington she can go to the railway station there and take the train right through to the Wairarapa.

Before starting for the Wairarapa let her send me a telegram saying she is coming. She takes her ticket in Wellington for Carterton in order to come to Gladstone. Any one in Carterton will know me so she can ask for me there.

The way I should recommend her to come is as an emigrant. She will be much better looked after in that way. She wants no one to look after her if she comes by that means. I don't know if there is emigration open now but if not if she likes to wait I shall nominate her if she wishes me to do so. If she pays her own passage she will require some money when she arrives as she will have to look after herself but if she comes as an emigrant they will find her in everything and get her a suitable situation.

On the voyage let her not be ashamed to ask for what she wants, let her look after her own interests. She will find some preserved milks, butter, jam, biscuit or anything very nice occasion also. I mean her to know these things on her own. Let her think nothing of the voyage and the reality is not as bad as the thinking.

I shall do anything I can for her or anyone else who may come. She may take any clothes she likes with her as she can wear the same ones here she did at home. Any clothes does on the voyage.

Where is Mary Walshe? How is she getting on? I wish New Zealand was as near to Ireland as America is and I should pay you a visit. I wonder would you know me. So you think my likeness a good one, well I don't. I dislike it very much. I intend getting taken again. When I do I shall send you one.

The Wairarapa Agricultural Show will be held in Carterton on the 1st November. I don't don't know if I shall go or not. If Mrs. Cooper goes I may go.

I wrote to my uncle a short time ago. I should like to see him now. How does my mother get on? So Annie Adair is soon to get married. She never writes to me, neither does Jane or Anne McLeod or any of them. I think Alex McLeod must be much the same as usual.

I don't suppose you be much up round C Blayney now. Sam Adair must have failed very quickly. How is Willie and his family. Is his wife all right now? How does ?Robbie get on? Sissy ?R/Balson used to be a sweetheart of his and Willie Hunter of Annie's. Where do young Mr and Mrs Hunter live? So Mrs Ewart is still alive. She stands well. Any of the McFerran's married yet?

I don't think I should care for living in N.T.H. now. The country here is much livelier than the town. Some Sundays we have upwards of twenty visitors. One day about five weeks ago there were twenty three horses tied up to the fence all at the one time. The house is never free on a Saturday night or Sunday. That is one reason I did not write to you sooner. I can't sit down to write when people are in.

We have church in the school-house on the first and third Sundays of every month. I mostly attend. The service is at three o'clock so the hour suits me well but unlike what I used to do at home I am always in time here but I have my reasons for doing so as I have a favourite seat and I like to see me it. They try to sing but oh such trying it is laughable. Nothing you have ever heard is equal to it. We are going to have a monster meeting of Maoris at the ?pak here in a short time. The ?pak is only a few hundred yards from this house.

