JOANNA AND ROBERT

THE BARR SMITHS' LIFE IN LETTERS





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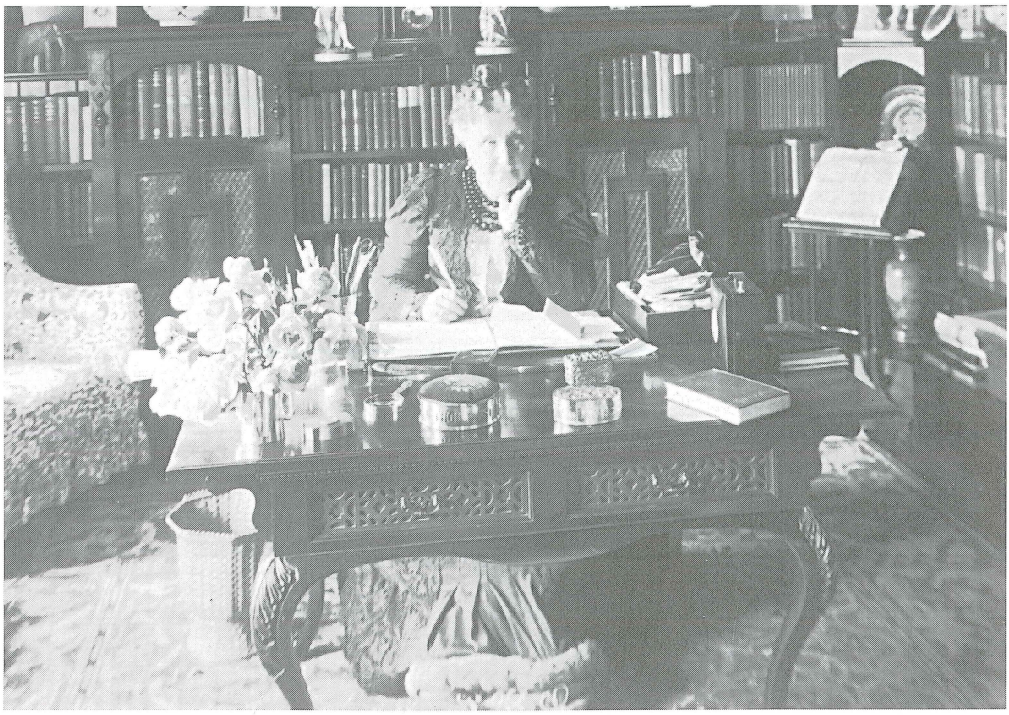
THE BARR SMITHS' LIFE IN LETTERS

1853-1919

EDITED BY
FAYETTE GOSSE



ADELAIDE
THE BARR SMITH PRESS
1996



Joanna Barr Smith at her desk in "The Cottage" Angas Street (family collection)



Robert Barr Smith at his desk at Auchendarroch, about 1900. His printing press can be seen behind him on the right. (ML)

TO TOM

If Tom had not presented his inheritance of his great grandparents' letters to the State Library they might have remained unremarked. And if he had not then loaned his own historic tin trunks, crammed with further correspondence for me to rummage through, this history would have had twice as many gaps as it still unfortunately has.

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This all started simply enough. When I first excitedly read Joanna Barr Smith's letters, unfolding them from taped bundles in the Mortlock Library, I asked whether I could photocopy them? Impossible! But I wanted to keep a record of them for the family. Photocopies not allowed! The letters were too fragile. Could I then borrow them to take home to Sydney to copy? On no account! The only way was to copy them in the library under the eye of the librarian. Out came a pen and notebook. Sorry, no pens allowed. Only a pencil permitted. Thus, with pencil sharpeners and trips to Adelaide did the laborious task proceed. To save time many of the letters were annotated and portions cut out, but it was a reasonable account, designed for the family and to bring the letters out of the dark.

Then came the second phase. Here I must acknowledge my gratitude for the enthusiasm of Christopher Menz, associate curator of European and Australian Decorative Arts at the Art Gallery of South Australia. He was building up a collection of examples of Morris & Company's Pre-Raphaelite crafts so admired and bought in such quantities by the Barr Smith family, and he was curious to know more about what kind of person Joanna was. He read the rough text and recommended it to Ray Choate, University of Adelaide Librarian, who then asked for a copy. And here I must express my gratitude to Ray who read the text with interest and declared he thought it should be published by the Barr Smith Library. However, there would need to be some rewording and editing, many of the passages I had omitted should be brought back in to replace my brief notes, and there must be footnotes to identify people, places and events. This almost meant that another book should be written because all the letters had to be re-read and checked and a great deal of research begun.

Here I must acknowledge my gratitude to Tom Barr Smith, who had presented the letters to the Mortlock Library some years ago. I contacted him to confer about publishing and to ask if, before it went to print, he had by any chance other letters which would fit in? A courier arrived soon afterwards, heaving in two tin trunks, packed tight with an assortment of family letters, business papers, notebooks and various memorabilia from snapshots to receipts. Selecting the relevant treasures from all this was the third phase.

When it all began to join up there were frustrating gaps, often of years, between one batch of letters and the next. Then I turned to the volumes of Robert Barr Smith's letters also held in the Mortlock Library. None of them were addressed to his wife (those are sadly missing), but there were letters to his family and friends which helped to make the narrative flow. Unfortunately, Robert's letters, though copious, are all frail image pressings, in bad condition and difficult, sometimes impossible, to read.

For helping me to identify the people, places and events occurring in the letters I want to thank Michael Saclier, Archives Officer, Australian National University and the Noel Butlin Archives Centre, for help with Elder Smith & Co. business letters; Dawn Melhuish, National Library of Australia for help with Joanna's letters to Lady Tennyson; the Archivist, Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart for help with Joanna's letters to Mother Mary MacKillop and to Father Modystack who directed me towards the Sisters; Mr Keith Borrow for helping from his impressive knowledge of South Australia genealogy; Mrs Molly Bowen for her lively reminiscences; Lady Blackburn for identifying Duttons; Lady Downer and Mr Justice Christopher

and Mrs Legoe for supplying photographs; Dr Jean Elder for help with Alexander Elder's family; Mrs W. O'Halloran Giles for supplying information about the Giles family; Mrs Geoffrey O'Halloran Giles for lending me Great Aunt Jean Giles' diaries; Joyce Gibberd and Dr Eric Sims for identifying various nineteenth century doctors; Mr Anthony Laube who hunted up names and events for me and particularly helped with George Barr Smith; Mr Tom Matters and Mrs Marjorie Scales for helping with *The Briers*; Mr Barrie Macgeorge for help with the mysterious Rachel Luxmoore; Dr Douglas Muecke for help with identifying people and books and quotations; Mrs Pamela Oborn who sent me her transcribed notes of the letters and took me on a tour of Scotch College; Miss Dulcie Perry who helped with nineteenth Century Glenelg, Mrs Donald Simpson for help with the Barr Smiths and Mitchells; Ms Jenny Tonkin who helped in transcribing Robert's challenging writing; Mrs Elizabeth Whyte for help with Alexander Elder.

And in Britain I must gratefully acknowledge the kind assistance of Mrs Ann Solberg Clark for immense help with the Elder family trees; Lieut. Col. Nigel Drew for his family tree and history of the Smiths; Sheila Campbell, Librarian, Kirkaldy; The Archivist, Glenalmond School; Archivist, Trinity Hall, Cambridge; Archivist, University of Oxford; Mr Bridgeland, Headmaster Ardvreck School — all for their thoughtful replies to my queries.

Also I must particularly thank Robin Eaden who became my editor and soon had me alert to my grammar and spelling and became a friend.

Lastly my thanks to my husband Jock who put up with all this and took second place to the computer so often and who read every word and so disagreeably planted firm crosses on my typing errors and incorrect dates.

Fayette Gosse

FOREWORD

Robert Barr Smith arrived in Melbourne in 1854 and the following year began his connection with the Elder family, fellow Scots merchants who had first set up in business in Adelaide in 1839 as traders and commission agents. In 1856 he was joined in Australia by the young Joanna Elder, whom he had met and wooed in Kircaldy before his departure for the colonies. After their marriage Robert and Joanna settled in Adelaide and by 1863 Robert had become sole partner with Thomas Elder in the renamed Elder Smith & Co. and was to maintain his association with the firm until his death, although he officially resigned as Director in 1892. Elder Smith & Co. was vitally involved in the mining and pastoral development of the colony in addition to its original merchant and shipping interests, and prospered accordingly. Subsequently Thomas Elder and Robert Barr Smith were to return much to the colony in philanthropy, and there were few institutions that did not benefit from their largesse. Not the least was the University of Adelaide, which owed its first chairs in mathematics, science and medicine and its Conservatorium of Music to Sir Thomas Elder, the early development of its library collection to Robert Barr Smith and its magnificent Barr Smith Library building to Robert and Joanna's son, Tom Elder Barr Smith.

The Barr Smith family's association with the University Library started in 1892 when Robert, who was then a member of the University Council, gave a gift of £1000 for the purchase of books. This was the Library's first significant external gift, and should be put in the context of the Library's expenditure at the time which had averaged £200 per year between 1877 and 1891. By the time of Robert's death in 1915, he had given additional gifts totalling some £8000.

In 1920, Tom Elder Barr Smith gave £5000 "for the purpose of creating a Barr Smith Library Fund, the interest on which should be used for the purchase of books". A year later this was increased by a further £6000 given by Tom and by other members of the family, including Professor William Mitchell who was the Vice-Chancellor at the time and also Robert's son-in-law (he was married to Erlistoun). When he died in 1941, Tom bequeathed a further £10,000 to this book fund in his will. The University Library still benefits from this fund which has been sustained by careful reinvestment of a portion of the interest to maintain the capital; the remainder of the income is used to purchase books which the Library's normal materials budget would not permit, for example the first edition of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and a facsimile of the Gutenberg Bible, published in 1961, purchased to celebrate the Library collection reaching the 1/2 million mark in 1969.

The Barr Smith Library itself was erected as a result of a generous gift by Tom Barr Smith who, in 1927, offered the University £20,000 to finance the construction of a building to house the University Library. The present Barr Smith Library was completed in 1932 at a cost of nearly £35,000 all of which was provided by Tom Elder Barr Smith. The building is an imposing structure, in the classical style, with a reading room some 38.7m x 17.7m (127 feet by 58 feet) in size. The munificence of father and son are commemorated on a frieze in the reading room:

ROBERT BARR SMITH DONIS PER SE ET HEREDES INDE AB A.D. MDCCCXCII IMPERTITIS BIBLIOTHECAM PRIOREM LIBRIS EXEMPLEVERAT.

TOM ELDER BARR SMITH HANC BIBLIOTHECAM AD PATRIS NOMEN ORNANDVM SVMPTV SVO AEDIFICANDAM CVRAVIT A.D. MCMXXX.

The Library was built to accommodate 150,000 books and 200 readers; the benefactors would be surprised to note that the Library's collections now number nearly two million items (housed in an extended Barr Smith Library and four other libraries and a library-store) and with study places for over 2000 readers.

The letters give a clear indication that Joanna and Robert were serious readers; in the family's possession is a booklet in Robert's own hand writing which lists a considerable number of titles on his bookshelves. This catalogue of his readings would in itself make an interesting publication.

This publication would not have been possible without Fayette Gosse's commitment to her project. Her husband, Jock Gosse, is the great grandson of Joanna and Robert Barr Smith, and the interest and pride in the family is shared by both Fayette and Jock. Having looked at the handwriting on some of the archival copies of the letters of both writers, and noting the difficulties of transcription, one can only commend Fayette for the determination in transcribing them, and placing them into their family history. Fayette also has organized the photographs, many from family collections, which help place the family and their houses both here and in Scotland.

The Barr Smith Library is pleased to be associated with the publication of these selections from the letters of Joanna and Robert Barr Smith. The connections of the family to the Library have been described briefly, and the Barr Smith Press believes that it is an appropriate tribute to the family that our first major monograph publication is these letters. The reader of the letters will gain a better understanding of the Barr Smith family itself, as well as insights into the social and economic life of Adelaide and South Australia during this period. One is aware of their love and devotion to each other and their concern for their family. Their comments on local politics and other happenings in the growing and developing colony puts history into a personal perspective of interested and contributing individuals, too often neglected. Joanna's open and frank communication to her husband about her own life, worries, doubts, and joys give a particular intimacy to the letters.

The Barr Smith Press wishes particularly to note that many of the letters are in the Mortlock Library of South Australiana in the State Library of South Australia and we acknowledge their generosity in allowing us permission to publish from them. The Mortlock Library of South Australiana is the primary resource for the documentary record of South Australia and its people, and houses a considerable archive of the Barr Smith letters. Other letters used in the publication are in the possession of the family itself. The Art Gallery of South Australia is also to be thanked for permitting us to use the reproduction of the Morris fabric on the book cover. The original Morris curtain (Peacock and Dragon pattern) once belonged to the Barr Smiths and was given to the Art Gallery by Mr and Mrs Jock Gosse in 1993.

Ray Choate
University Librarian
Barr Smith Library
The University of Adelaide

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REFERENCES

Tom Elder Barr Smith, great-grandson of Robert and Joanna Barr Smith, who inherited his great-grandfather's collection of letters and papers, presented most of them to the Mortlock Library in the State Library of South Australia in 1969. They form the basis for the present volume.

Robert's letters are reproduced from his own copies contained in the Robert Barr Smith Letter Books, PRG 354/56, Mortlock Library. Quotations from the Letter Books in this collection are followed simply by the relevant volume and page number in brackets, e.g. (8: 148), with no further designation.

Joanna's letters to Robert were given to the Mortlock Library by Tom Elder Barr Smith in 1976, and, unless otherwise specified, are quoted from that collection: PRG 354/51.

Her letters to Lady Audrey Tennyson are from the Lady Tennyson Papers, Australian National Library.

All letters to Mary McKillop are in the Mary McKillop Archives, North Sydney; the two from her to Joanna are in Tom Elder Barr Smith's collection.

Letters from Robert Barr Smith (Bertie) from Africa, together with press cuttings etc., are in the Bertie Barr Smith Papers, PRG 354/37, Mortlock Library.

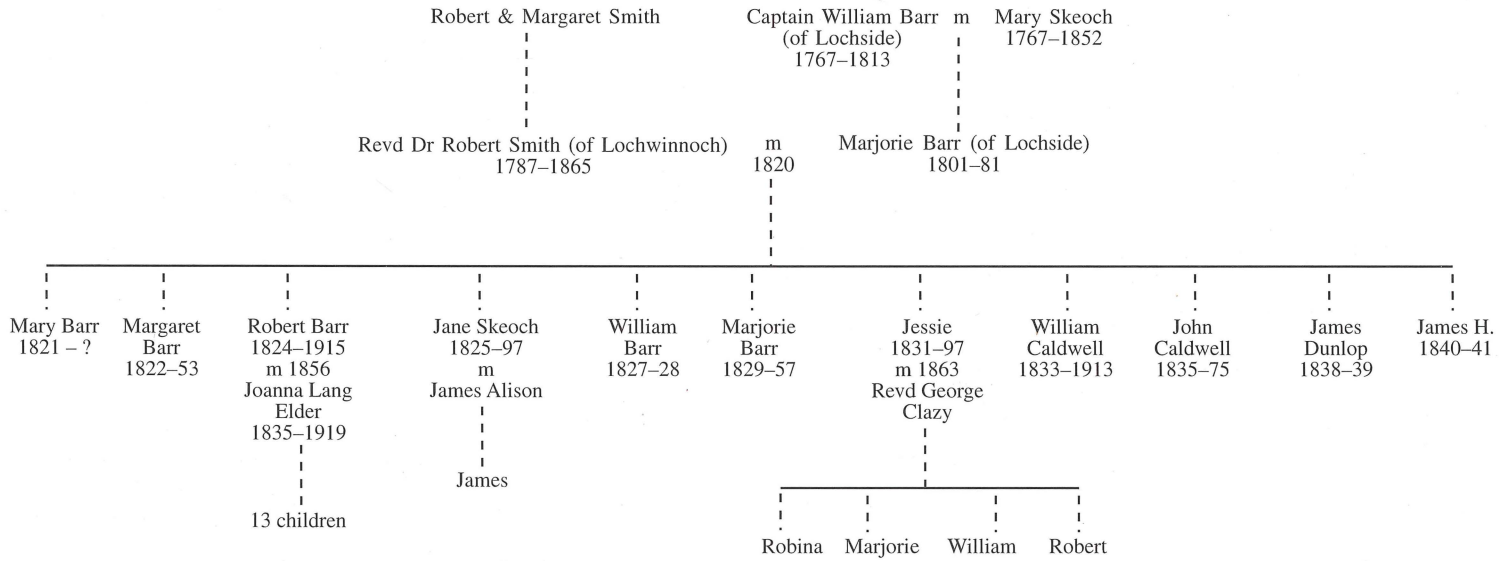
A number of other relevant letters, as well as notebooks and business papers, remain in Tom Elder Barr Smith's own possession, and are designated in the text, following quotation, as (TEBS).

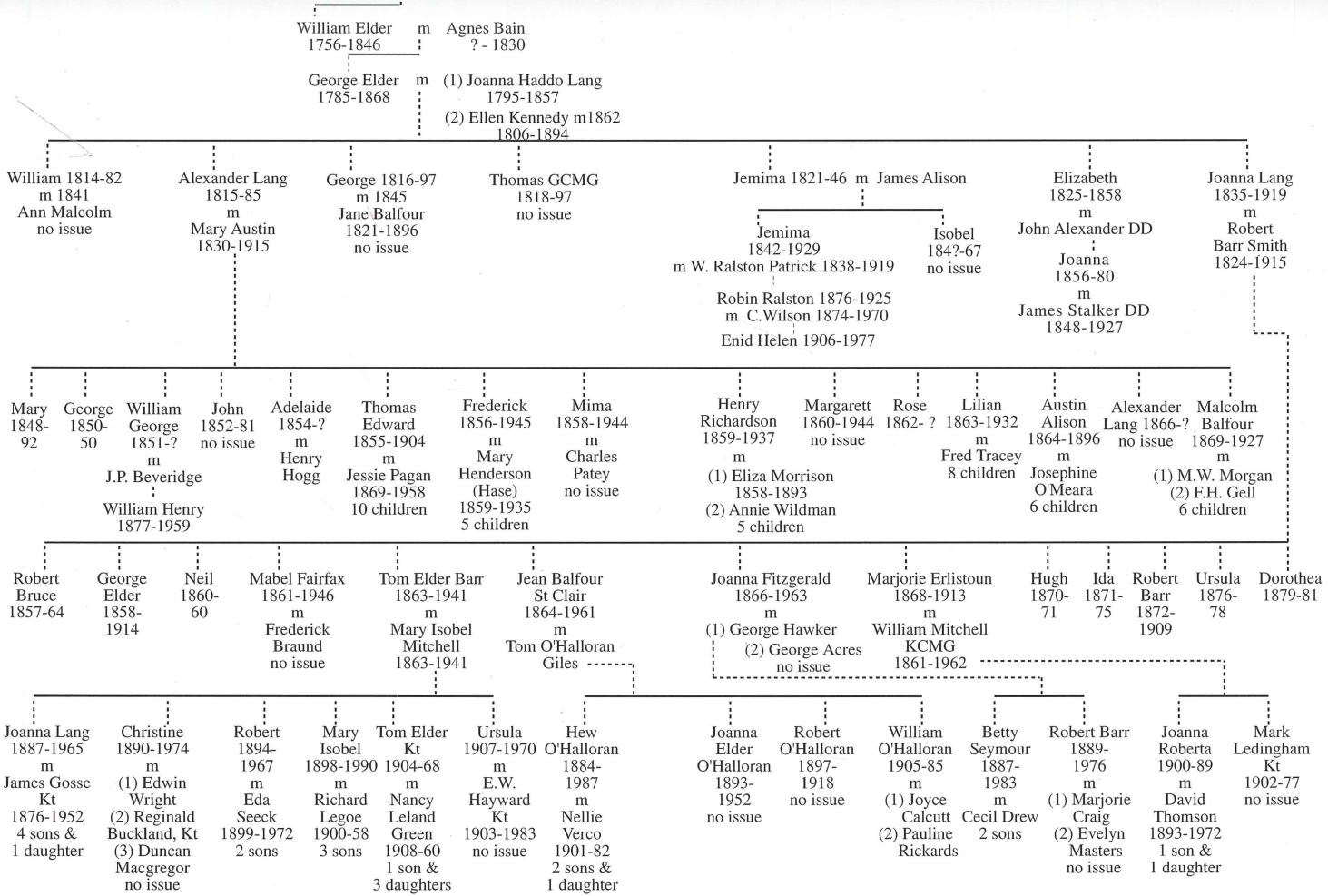
ABBREVIATIONS

ADB *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966-
ANL Australian National Library
ANU Australian National University
BSL Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide
DNB *Dictionary of National Biography*. London, 1885-1900. 22 vols.
First Hundred Years *Elder, Smith & Co., Limited. The First Hundred Years.* Adelaide: Privately printed, 1940.
JE Papers in the private possession of Dr Jean Elder
JGD Jean Giles's Diary. Giles family papers
ML Mortlock Library of South Australiana, State Library of South Australia
TEBS Papers in the private possession of Tom Elder Barr Smith

Books from which quotation is made are normally referred to by author and short title; full details will be found in the Bibliography.

THE SMITHS


Robert & Margaret Smith
Captain William Barr (of Lochside) 1767–1813
m
Mary Skeoch 1767–1852
Revd Dr Robert Smith (of Lochwinnoch) 1787–1865
m 1820
Marjorie Barr (of Lochside) 1801–81
Mary Barr 1821 – ?
Margaret Barr 1822–53
Robert Barr 1824–1915 m 1856 Joanna Lang Elder 1835–1919
13 children
Jane Skeoch 1825–97 m James Alison
James
William Barr 1827–28
Marjorie Barr 1829–57
Jessie 1831–97 m 1863 Revd George Clazy
Robina
Marjorie
William
Robert
William Caldwell 1833–1913
John Caldwell 1835–75
James Dunlop 1838–39
James H. 1840–41


Roderick Elder, b. 1700 - ? m 1750 Christian McCuin (McQueen, McDonald)
William Elder 1756-1846 m Agnes Bain ? - 1830
George Elder 1785-1868 m (1) Joanna Haddo Lang 1795-1857
(2) Ellen Kennedy m1862 1806-1894
William 1814-82 m 1841 Ann Malcolm no issue
Alexander Lang 1815-85 m Mary Austin 1830-1915
George 1816-97 m 1845 Jane Balfour 1821-1896 no issue
Thomas GCMG 1818-97 no issue
Jemima 1821-46 m James Alison
Jemima 1842-1929 m W. Ralston Patrick 1838-1919
Robin Ralston 1876-1925 m C.Wilson 1874-1970
Enid Helen 1906-1977
Isobel 184?-67 no issue
Elizabeth 1825-1858 m John Alexander DD
Joanna 1856-80 m James Stalker DD 1848-1927
Joanna Lang 1835-1919 m Robert Barr Smith 1824-1915
Mary 1848-92
George 1850-50
William George 1851-? m J.P. Beveridge
William Henry 1877-1959
John 1852-81 no issue
Adelaide 1854-? m Henry Hogg
Thomas Edward 1855-1904 m Jessie Pagan 1869-1958 10 children
Frederick 1856-1945 m Mary Henderson (Hase) 1859-1935 5 children
Mima 1858-1944 m Charles Patey no issue
Henry Richardson 1859-1937 m (1) Eliza Morrison 1858-1893 (2) Annie Wildman 5 children
Margarett 1860-1944 no issue
Rose 1862- ?
Lilian 1863-1932 m Fred Tracey 8 children
Austin Alison 1864-1896 m Josephine O'Meara 6 children
Alexander Lang 1866-? no issue
Malcolm Balfour 1869-1927 m (1) M.W. Morgan (2) F.H. Gell 6 children
Robert Bruce 1857-64
George Elder 1858-1914
Neil 1860-60
Mabel Fairfax 1861-1946 m Frederick Braund no issue
Tom Elder Barr 1863-1941 m Mary Isobel Mitchell 1863-1941
Jean Balfour St Clair 1864-1961 m Tom O'Halloran Giles
Joanna Fitzgerald 1866-1963 m (1) George Hawker (2) George Acres no issue
Marjorie Erlistoun 1868-1913 m William Mitchell KCMG 1861-1962
Hugh 1870-71
Ida 1871-75
Robert Barr 1872-1909
Ursula 1876-78
Dorothea 1879-81
Joanna Lang 1887-1965 m James Gosse Kt 1876-1952 4 sons & 1 daughter
Christine 1890-1974 m (1) Edwin Wright (2) Reginald Buckland, Kt (3) Duncan Macgregor no issue
Robert 1894-1967 m Eda Seeck 1899-1972 2 sons
Mary Isobel 1898-1990 m Richard Legoe 1900-58 3 sons
Tom Elder Kt 1904-68 m Nancy Leland Green 1908-60 1 son & 3 daughters
Ursula 1907-1970 m E.W. Hayward Kt 1903-1983 no issue
Hew O'Halloran 1884-1987 m Nellie Verco 1901-82 2 sons & 1 daughter
Joanna Elder O'Halloran 1893-1952 no issue
Robert O'Halloran 1897-1918 no issue
William O'Halloran 1905-85 m (1) Joyce Calcutt (2) Pauline Rickards
Betty Seymour 1887-1983 m Cecil Drew 2 sons
Robert Barr 1889-1976 m (1) Marjorie Craig (2) Evelyn Masters no issue
Joanna Roberta 1900-89 m David Thomson 1893-1972 1 son & 1 daughter
Mark Ledingham Kt 1902-77 no issue

INTRODUCTION

It was Joanna Lang Barr Smith's habit and desire to write to her husband every single day if they were separated. Born in Scotland in 1835 and dying in Adelaide in 1919, she had a long, interesting life, and there were many letters. A collection of these, handed down for three generations, is now stored in the Mortlock Library, the archival section of the State Library of South Australia. It is amazing that some of the fragile notes have survived. This is a record of that collection, slightly cut to avoid repetition, annotated for enlightenment, and linked with biographical passages to make a flowing narrative.

The handwriting changes over the years from a girlish copperplate on thin, coloured paper tucked into tiny genteel envelopes to a strong, bold cursive. The older she grew the bolder her writing became. In her seventies and even eighties her handwriting is splendidly strong and clear and attractive. Some of the short notes, reminding her husband to bring from town some brandy or a bag of flour, are folded up into such minute rectangles one wonders how they were conserved at all. The long letters contain amused gossip, self-recriminations for her short-comings, passionate cries to be loved, or dreaded anticipation of her many pregnancies. All, except the first, express her absolute devotion to her husband Robert Barr Smith and her despair and boredom when he is away from her side.

The surviving letters are dated at irregular intervals, and there are some inexplicable gaps that may indicate lost ones. And though I have tried to identify the people referred to, many of them at this distance of time resist research. Often there are black borders on the paper, signifying mourning for the six of her thirteen children who died in childhood — though not one expresses her grief; one reasons that Robert was at her side during these tragic periods, so she was not writing to him. Only in his own letter books can word of these sad occasions be found as he writes the bad news to overseas friends or relations.

Robert Barr Smith was a man of meticulous orderliness. Apart from bundles kept by the family there are ten weighty volumes in the Mortlock Library containing copies made of hundreds of his letters. Unlike Joanna's, his handwriting is atrocious. Joanna, in a letter to Audrey Tennyson, 17 April 1911, said it always reminded her of the Aesop Fable which begins "A cock scraping on a dunghill". As well, his method of copying makes his letters something of an ordeal to read. His process was to use a press to transfer a freshly-written letter on to paper so thin that it can be read from the reverse side. The transference, along with the fading and smirching of the inks, has left the copies blurred and the writing sometimes unreadable. In over a hundred years the thin paper has become brittle and is now disintegrating and can flutter into shreds. In any case the copies deal with business matters or they are letters to friends and family — never, disappointingly, to his wife. Perhaps those letters were too private to be copied and kept in the same way.

It would be particularly interesting to know how he answered Joanna's passion and melancholy. Outwardly (from accounts) she was forceful, witty and capable, but to him she writes in a self-derogatory way, accusing herself of sinfulness and wickedness when only devotion and self-denial appear. One would expect her to have kept carefully all Robert's letters to her, as he kept hers to him. After Joanna's death in 1919, her daughter Jean O'Halloran Giles was given boxes of her mother's letters to sort. Jean, who adored her mother and who was with her when she died, scrupulously went through the papers, secured any important business letters, decided the others

were personal and private and spent two nights burning them one by one in her drawing-room fire, as she told her brother Tom (12 November 1919, TEBS). Presumably Robert's part of this correspondence went up in flames.

Joanna Lang Elder was born at Kirkaldy, Scotland, the seventh and last child of George Elder (1785-1868) and Joanna Haddo Lang (1795-1857). As ships chandlers the Elders had made themselves prosperous by outfitting privateers in Napoleon's wars. Now her father was a merchant and shipowner at the port on the Firth of Forth, and Joanna's four brothers, William, Alexander, George and Thomas, all went into the family business. William, the eldest, was born in 1813 and Joanna, the youngest, in 1835, so that it was a stretched-out family in which the eldest was twenty-two and a sea captain when the youngest was born. Joanna was therefore only a tot of four when a momentous decision for the Elders was made: in 1839, barely three years after the new colony of South Australia had been founded, they decided to stretch their wings and seek prosperity in the New World. It was arranged for Alexander the second son, aged twenty-four, to set off for those newly-settled lands with one of the Elders' sailing ships laden to the brim with goods to sell and with the intention of establishing business there. The little schooner, the *Minerva*, was only eighty-nine tons, and Alexander took with him a cargo of alcohol, food, gunpowder, seeds and agricultural machinery. He was the only passenger and the voyage took six months. When Alexander sailed into Port Misery in January 1840 with his cargo and rode up to Adelaide, the raw little settlement on the edge of desert and bushland could scarcely have looked more inviting than the name of its port.

Adelaide was just four years old and not well. The settlement had been planned as a kind of Utopian dream by a group of English idealists and theorists. Unlike Sydney and Hobart, which had sprawled up higgledy-piggledy on the base of penal colonies, South Australia had been devised by its founders as an enlightened experiment in colonising. They were to establish themselves on the south coast of the continent — an area which Captain Sturt on his voyage of discovery down the Murray to its mouth had just revealed to the world. Uniquely in South Australia, it was declared, there were to be no convicts, no boatloads of discontented quarrelsome paupers, no military hierarchy and no church establishment. The South Australian promoters were composed in the main of industrious middle-class people disenchanted by the crowded conditions, the rules and regulations, the religious discrimination and the offensive class system prevailing in the United Kingdom. Although this seemed to promise tranquillity and prosperity, muddle and quarrelling took over. "It was one thing to dream of a great experiment in political economy; to command it was another matter," wrote Douglas Pike in *Paradise of Dissent* (p. 46).

The plan of the South Australian promoters was that intending migrants would buy land from the as yet unsurveyed spaces, and that from these land sales free passages could be granted to labourers, tradespeople, shepherds, etc. Orderliness and respectability were among the aims. The town, called Adelaide after King William's wife, was precisely laid out on virgin bush like a chessboard, with streets and squares and surrounding parklands. The planners envisaged space to expand in this vast southern wilderness and freedom to make their own rules and to worship as they wished. The South Australian Act provided for a double government with authority divided between the Colonial Office and a Board of Commissioners, but conflicting policies immediately threatened the scheme. Governors in quick succession who quarrelled with Commissioners, extravagant spending followed by stringent economies and innumerable unforeseen problems had by 1840 brought the little buoyant settlement into a state of depression.

This was the isolated, uncomfortable, charmless spot in which Alexander set about selling his cargo and making a start. Depression and doubt were everywhere, but, notwithstanding their

setbacks, there was a determination and vitality among the new settlers, who had after all taken on this daunting venture out of a sense of the frustration of their life at home and with a surge of hope and ambition. Alexander had that energy and determination. He opened an office and began as a trader and agent while at the same time looking around for land prospects. He bought land — 20,000 acres near Mt Remarkable — in a special survey with the pioneer pastoralist F.H. Dutton, and registered his stock brand, AE, for the first time in 1843 (*First Hundred Years*, p. 13). He not only made himself secure, but thrived, and as conditions improved in South Australia so did he, becoming involved in all manner of activities to promote the growth and development of the place. In June 1840, the same year as Alexander's arrival, his brother the merchant captain William sailed in with the *Symmetry,* bringing 183 migrants. William, still under thirty, had already had an adventurous life, having sailed in 1835 with a fleet of whaling ships to the Arctic Circle where they endured a disastrous experience locked in by ice for months. Some of the boats of that fleet of eleven were crushed and abandoned or vanished, while the wretched sailors sickened and died from frostbite. When William brought his migrant ship to Adelaide he liked what he saw and returned again in 1844 with his wife Ann (Malcolm), to join Alexander in business and to set up house. Soon, in 1849, he was followed by George, the third brother, who had been exploring business opportunities in Montreal. George abandoned Canada and with his wife Jane (Balfour) joined the Adelaide contingent.

The brothers, as the firm of A.L. Elder & Co., prospered in South Australia. Starting as traders, they presently bought land and stock and became metal brokers in the exciting and profitable Kapunda copper discoveries. This caused them to look for business in the transport and shipping of wool and copper and to negotiate to handle the cargoes. Largs Bay, which Alexander named after his native Largs in Scotland, was developed by them for anchorage and loading when the P&O started the England-Singapore-Australia service. Later the Elders obtained the Agency for the shipping line. Alexander became a JP, director and treasurer of the Church of Scotland and trustee of the new Savings Bank, and was elected in 1851 to the first Parliament, the Legislative Council. The brothers seem all to have taken a significant part in the growth of South Australia. This attitude of civic responsibility was a remarkable and unique feature of South Australia's development: the pioneers and those who followed had a sense of ambition and pride in advancing the province as well as themselves. George as chairman was the driving force behind building the Port Adelaide to Adelaide railway, which was a great boon.

Alexander had married in Adelaide, in 1847, Mary, daughter of the Revd John Austin, a pioneer Congregationalist minister and popular preacher. After their first three children were born, they returned to England in 1853. Alexander settled the family into London with his office in Fenchurch Street, where he acted as agent for the Elders in Adelaide for the next thirty years. The youngest of the four brothers, Thomas, aged thirty-six, then went to Adelaide in 1854 to fill his place, travelling out in the *Queen of the South*; a fellow-passenger was Robert Smith, later to become his partner, friend and brother-in-law. Both William and George determined to follow Alexander's trail back to the old country, and by 1855 had returned to live in Scotland in great houses they bought out of their success. William and Ann left in 1854 and bought St Margaret's Hope, North Queensferry, in Fife. The house stayed in the family, bequeathed to William's nephew, Alexander's eldest son William George Elder, until in 1916 it was commissioned by the Navy and became the residence of the Flag Officer for Scotland and Northern Ireland. It now survives as Admiralty House, and is visited periodically by Royalty for lunches and overnight stays. George, waiting until Thomas arrived, resigned in 1856 to live at Knock Castle, Largs, "a modern, elegant mansion", which also still stands, as a private residence. There he settled down to the life of a country gentleman. He was Chairman of the Parochial Board of Largs, a Justice of the Peace and

played a prominent part in the affairs of the Liberal Party. He and his wife were popular figures in the town's social life and both became keenly interested in the welfare and charitable works of the district.[1] Only Thomas remained in the Antipodes to become in time magnificently, extraordinarily rich and respected, and South Australia's greatest benefactor. Soon his little sister was to join him, and Robert Smith, her husband, was to become his partner.

Robert Barr Smith was a son of the Manse, his father being the Revd Dr Robert Smith of Lochwinnoch, a village among the green hills south of Glasgow. His mother was Marjorie Barr of Lochside, a pretty house nearby which Marjorie was in due course to inherit from her father Captain William Barr, and which she left in turn to her son Robert. Dr Smith was a scholar and a man of determination, high principle and evangelical bent. Appointed minister in 1814, he served so enthusiastically among the rural population and new cotton mills of his parish for twenty-eight years that each Sabbath the Church was overflowing and his Bible Classes were packed. But when the great split in the Established Church occurred in 1843, he declared himself a convinced supporter of the radical movement, spoke up against the Establishment at the great Convocation in Edinburgh, then naturally resigned his post. He left his pleasant Manse and comfortable living to lead those of his flock who would follow him into the new Free Church.[2] It was a financial sacrifice. The modest stipend of £283 was crucial to him — he had eleven children and they were now "seriously poor (very)", as Robert described it,[3] and often saved from destitution by help from the Barr family. Robert never forgot the habits of frugality forced on him by these circumstances and began his cautious life-long habit of accounting for all trivial expenses, which sometimes fitted strangely with his later standing as a man of immense riches. Meanwhile his father, in penurious middle age, worked spiritedly to build up a new congregation and a new church and served again as minister for another twenty years.

Robert Barr was the eldest boy, born in 1824, the third of eleven children; he grew up to be studious and high-minded. Educated partly by his sisters' governesses and partly by the village schoolmaster, who was a good classical scholar, he was able in 1838, aged fourteen, to enrol at Glasgow University in the Faculty of Arts. His subjects were Greek, Latin, Logic, Mathematics and the Humanities. Having graduated aged eighteen, he secured his first job in Glasgow in 1842 as a clerk, earning £15 a year, while his living expenses, scrupulously written down, were alarmingly £29. 10. By January 1848 his salary had been raised to £150, and he resigned to start out on his own as R.B. Smith & Co., a commission business (Notebook B, TEBS), taking as partner his brother-in-law James Alison. Alison, now married to Robert's sister Jane, had been previously married to Jemima Elder, who died young in childbirth. Through Alison Robert came to meet the twelve-year-old Joanna Elder as well as her bustling, go-ahead brother Thomas. Three years later Robert's situation had improved considerably. He reminisced in his old age: "in 1851, my grandmother being dead and my mother having come into her share of the property, I borrowed £1000 from her and bought into a business with Andrew Hamilton, who went out to Melbourne in 1852" (Notebook A, TEBS). Robert remained in Scotland to deal with that end but grew uneasy at the lack of co-operation and got into "an ill-tempered correspondence with Hamilton who at last made me remittances. But I had got too great a fright to go on with him as it was. So I sailed from Southampton 4th April 1854 accompanying Thomas Elder by *The Queen of the South*" (Notebook B, TEBS). Before he left he asked Joanna to marry him. Changing her mind about the young man to whom she had so chillingly written the year before (see Chapter 1, p. 1), Joanna accepted him. His intention was to return to Scotland within the year and marry her.

Robert went to Melbourne and wound up his partnership with Hamilton.[4] Then, in October, he visited Tom Elder in Adelaide, who had proposed he join the firm of Elder & Co., as William and Alexander had now withdrawn and George was anxious also to leave Adelaide. It was

a happy idea to get this bright young man with his university training, his good character and background of mutual friends as a partner. Tom knew of Robert's intentions towards his sister, and assured him that if he joined him he would arrange for Joanna to come out to the colony to marry him. So it was arranged. In 1856, aged twenty, Joanna ventured out alone on the long voyage from Scotland. Robert met the ship in Melbourne; the pair were married on 15 April and set off for Adelaide in the *White Swan* on 25 April. In July that year, George returned to England. Tom Elder had also contracted with the pastoralist Edward Stirling and his brother-in-law John Taylor to join the partnership, and the firm now became Elder, Stirling & Co.

Robert and Joanna lived first at Myrtle Bank, a bluestone house which had been rented in turn to William, then George and then Tom Elder. Later they moved next door to Ridge Park, and in 1860 they rented Oaklands, a larger house in Marion, long since demolished, set in 500 acres of farmland. (Myrtle Bank and Ridge Park still exist, now merged as a hospital at Cross Road, in the suburb of Myrtle Bank.) It must have been a startling change for this young woman. The crude, isolated town, created little more than twenty years earlier out of bush wilderness, with its brand-new buildings, its lack of establishment and facilities, its strange landscapes and daunting gum trees, its summer heat and wildness and loneliness, was a far cry from the bracing, confining domestic life in Kirkaldy. But she was hopelessly in love with Robert — and so remained always.

Their first child, Robert, was born in 1857 and their second, George, in 1858. But long before then Thomas Elder had already left the new partners in Adelaide while he went himself on an extended visit back to Britain. He had a vague idea that he might wish to leave the firm in good hands and return to live in the old country, as had his brothers. There was certainly no sense of urgency. Travelling by what was called "the Overland Route", a voyage which might take three or four months, Tom left the ship at Suez to explore Cairo and presently agreed to join a party of pleasant Englishmen bound for a camping adventure (described entertainingly in his *Narrative of a Tour in Palestine in 1857).* He and the three gentlemen, encountered by mere chance, then spent the next three months riding dromedaries across the Arabian desert from Cairo to Jerusalem. They were accompanied by a team of camels to carry their supplies, and several Arabs to cook, make camp, erect and take down the tents and generally look after them. It seemed not to matter to be exploring the Middle East in such leisurely style instead of hurrying on to business talks with Alexander in London or his family in Kirkaldy. He had left the Adelaide office in good hands, so he thought; he enjoyed his holiday, and mused on the possibility that camels might be a solution to travelling in Australia's drought-ridden Centre. Refreshed, Tom moved on to London and stayed there and in Scotland for three years.

Robert, meanwhile, was having problems at home. Before he left, following an excursion he had made up the River Murray by paddle steamer and horses from Goolwa to Albury (see his *Notes from a Pocket Journal of a Trip Up the River Murray 1856*), Tom Elder had become enthusiastic about the prospects of land in the Murray area, and had impetuously bought much land and planned a large extension of business there. Robert was uneasy about this, but "feared to disturb any arrangement made by Tom, who was to me in those days a Panjandrum."[5] The partners, Stirling and Taylor, believing that the firm (meaning Tom) had invested badly and was heading towards serious trouble, decided to quit the sinking ship. They told Robert they intended to retire under the original contract which absolved them of responsibility and which would thus return to them the full value of their entering contract. They informed Robert that they wished to return to the Old Country for reasons of health and family. An exit like this would leave Tom and Robert to face the whole burden of losses. Robert had a poor opinion of the business ability of both these men, but Tom was away and he faced a dilemma and a financial disaster. He solved it neatly for the time being by laying on the desks of Stirling and Taylor, the very next morning, notices of his own

resignation and that of Tom Elder (for whom he had Power of Attorney). This meant in effect that the debts in Elder Stirling and Co. would have to be borne by all, and the company would go insolvent! Taylor and Stirling quickly came round to another view of the matter, withdrew their resignations and agreed to stay on for a short while. It was mutually decided Robert must go to Scotland as soon as possible to meet Tom and sort the matter out.

In April 1860 Joanna had delivered her third son, Neil, who died a few weeks later. Robert and Joanna therefore sailed for Scotland in August 1860 with the two surviving boys.

Apart from clarifying the company's affairs they wanted to visit Robert's father, who had suffered a stroke, and Joanna's father at Kirkaldy who was now a widower, Joanna's mother having died three years earlier. The matter of the partnership was thrashed out in Kirkaldy. "An arrangement was made as to the terms upon which Stirling and Taylor should go out. Stirling left in 1861 and Taylor in 1863. The loss written up was £32,539/11/8 plus a year's profits. A big sum in those days", wrote Robert to George Elder (1 October 1895, TEBS). Both men retired to England; Taylor went to Pinbrook, Dorking, Surrey, hoping to enjoy a life of ease and hunting, but died in his forties within two years. Stirling presently returned to live in South Australia.

After that the brothers-in-law reconstituted the business for themselves alone and named it Elder Smith & Co. This was a workable arrangement in which Tom's imaginative and daring enterprise matched the meticulous financial genius of Robert. The two managed very well in this way for the next twenty-five years.

In 1861 Robert, Joanna (unwillingly pregnant again) and the two boys returned to Adelaide and rented St Clair, a substantial mansion in Woodville, from J.B. Hughes, who had built it as his town house. (St Clair has since been demolished.) There, five more children were born — Mabel, 13 December 1861; Tom, 8 December 1863; Jean, 20 December 1864; Joanna, 3 February 1866; and Marjorie Erlistoun, 11 January 1868. On a sadder note, while at St Clair the first little boy Robert died suddenly, aged six, in 1863. His father Robert was travelling in the South-East. Joanna's letters of the time describe his illness, though not his death. And Woodville was the scene for another terrible blow, when they learned that their second son George, who suffered epileptic fits, was mentally retarded.

While such melancholy events were unfolding, along with the five happy and trouble-free births, the finances of the firm were flourishing. Earlier in the partnership, in 1859, Elder, Stirling, Taylor and Smith had invested in the exploration and development of copper mining at Wallaroo, backing the mine's owner, Walter Watson Hughes, by agreeing to invest cash and accept liabilities. The risk was great, but eventually resulted in enormous wealth for the partners and the Colony. Later there were even richer profits when copper discoveries at Moonta proved tremendously successful. Stirling and Taylor, who were original partners with Hughes, Elder and Robert Barr Smith, returned to England rich men. Elder Smith & Co was now completely owned and run by Elder and Barr Smith, who put their new wealth into extending the Firm's interests — in particular into buying, settling and stocking land on a vast scale. Eventually the brothers-in-law between them owned a land mass described as the size of the whole of Scotland — though it must be added that most of it lay in the dry central areas of the continent.

In 1864 Thomas Elder, remaining a bachelor and confirming that Australia would be his home, bought Birksgate from the pastoralist and barrister Arthur Hardy. This was a house with large grounds at Glen Osmond, which he immediately enlarged, adding another storey, a gas plant for lighting and heating and a massive conservatory which he had shipped out from Scotland and in which he delighted to grow bananas and orchids. (Birksgate was demolished to make way for a housing estate when Tom Barr Smith left it in 1972 for his new home, Beechwood, in Stirling.

But he rebuilt the conservatory at Beechwood, where it still stands in the beautiful gardens created by the Snow family, now part of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens.) Tom Elder also created a private zoo and built a stone tower in the grounds from which he could watch any shipping activity in the Gulf. From the tower's top, with his telescope, he could watch how his yachts *Edith* and *Enchantress* were performing in races on Holdfast Bay and, more significantly, run up the Union Jack on his flagpole and fire his cannon when a ship from overseas was sighted. This was welcome advice for anyone in the neighbourhood expecting passengers or cargo, however frivolously boyish it might seem. He enjoyed collecting animals for his zoo and made wine from the grapes in his vineyard. And he enjoyed entertaining important visitors — the Duke of Edinburgh, Queen Victoria's son, dropped in to Birksgate for breakfast in 1867, and the famous writer Anthony Trollope went to stay in 1872 and accompanied Elder on a trip to his northern stations. The same year he entertained the Duke, Elder and Barr Smith were both fined five shillings at the Port Adelaide Police Court for riding across an embankment at Glanville, so their lives were not all puffed up with self-importance — though by that time Elder, aged forty-nine, was an honorary Member of the Legislative Council. He had already put the idea he had in the Sinai Desert into practice, imported his first camels and started breeding them. They adapted well to Australian desert areas and Elder supplied camels, as well as the encouragement of finance and enthusiasm, to several explorations of the great unknown parts of the continent. In 1869 he felt constrained to pay another long visit to Britain and offered his newly furbished mansion to Joanna. He had only been in it himself for five years and now the Barr Smiths left their rented St Clair to occupy Birksgate for two years, until Tom's return. They then rented The Briers, a mansion at Medindie built by George C. Hawker of Bungaree as his town house. The Barr Smiths always used the spelling "Briers", though it was later known as "The Briars". They could scarcely have been settled into that house (their sixth in seventeen years) before they all packed up again for another long sojourn in Britain.

During the four years at Birksgate and The Briers three more children had been born to Joanna: Hugh Raymond (1870), Ida Thekla (1871) and Robert Barr (1872). Hugh died before he was a year old, but the rest of the children, now eight in number, accompanied their parents when they went to Britain in July 1873, not returning till December 1874. The first summer saw them in Scotland where they took a hunting lodge in Argyllshire. At the end of 1873 they were in London and looking for a house to rent. Failing in this they all moved to Brussels for the winter and those children who were old enough were put to school. Panic set in when Tom went down with a fever, caught from two of the pupils. The rest of the family were sent into the country with servants to care for them while Joanna nursed her boy for three weeks. She was a practised and devoted nurse and young Tom recovered. By April they were back at Hastings, a favoured resting perch for them because of the milder climate of Sussex, and by the end of the year they were on their way back to Adelaide to a new home.

While in Britain Robert arranged to buy The Briers, where they had been happy and which they planned to enlarge. Then suddenly, only a few months later in March 1874, he negotiated for and purchased another house in Adelaide, Torrens Park, whose owner, Walter Watson Hughes, had decided to stay in England — like its original owner, Sir Robert Torrens. Robert then urged Tom Elder in Adelaide to sell The Briers back to its previous owner, which he managed; and when the Smiths returned, at the end of 1874, they moved at once into Torrens Park, which was to be their home for the next thirty years. The house was sold to them complete with every stick of furniture inside and out, but this did not inhibit Robert and Joanna, who swiftly amassed a great pile of chattels in Europe to bring back with them — as if they were to enter a bare space. They *never* "travelled light".

Torrens Park was an impressive Gothic-style stone residence set in fine gardens and fields.[6]

They had barely been there a year when their youngest daughter, Ida, died aged four, in 1875. In 1876 their twelfth child, Ursula Halcomb, was born, only to die two years later. During this Adelaide period, as well as planning alterations and enlargements to Torrens Park, they bought an old coaching inn at Mount Barker and employed the architect John Grainger to build them another fine house to serve as a cool retreat in summer. But in May 1879, before anything was finished, the whole family had again to move to Britain where they stayed until March 1881. Initially they took a house in Edinburgh and the older girls and the boy Tom were sent to school. There Joanna's last baby, Dorothea, was born on 20 November 1879 — only, like Ursula, to die aged two, in 1881.

Of the thirteen children six died in infancy. George, an epileptic, lived to be fifty-six, dying in 1914; Robert died of an accident, aged thirty-eight, in 1909. Neither married. Erlistoun married, had children, but died in her mid-forties. The other four survived into a spirited old age (as did their parents), Tom to seventy-eight, Mabel to eighty-five and Jean and Joanna both to ninety-seven.

By 1880, when the Barr Smith family returned from England, their country house Auchendarroch was finished, and the enlargements to Torrens Park had been effected by Grainger in their absence. But in November 1883, following a disagreement with Alexander Elder who was Elder Smith's agent in London, there was another upheaval when Robert had again to go abroad to organise a new office in London. As usual the entire family (with the exception of George) accompanied him. George had been placed, since he was eighteen, with people better able than his parents to cope with his fits and rages: a retired Scots clergyman named John Gardner and his wife, and a personal servant. Later a house was bought for him at Victor Harbour where he lived in stylish retirement with another keeper, three servants, and dogs and horses.

In 1882 Robert Barr Smith and Tom Elder established Elders Wool & Produce Coy. Ltd, in order to acquire the auction portion of the wool and produce business of their own original firm. After six years this company merged with the parent company and re-emerged as Elder Smith & Co. Ltd. With a Limited added to the title a board of directors replaced Robert and Tom as individual managers. When Robert had to go to London in 1883 to organise a replacement for Alexander's agency, he resigned as chairman and Peter Waite, one of the original board members, took over. Waite, a younger man, was from near Kirkaldy and well-known to the Elders: on his arrival in Adelaide in 1859 Tom Elder had joined and supported him in partnerships of various properties, thus beginning a highly successful career associated with both Elder and Smith.

The fifteen-month sojourn of 1883-85, spent partly in London, partly in Scotland, provided Robert and Joanna with the opportunity to browse in Morris & Company's new shop in London and to choose the quantities of carpets, curtain fabrics, wallpaper, chintzes, furniture and glassware which were to make their two houses in Adelaide remarkable repositories of the fine work of the celebrated company.[7] There is no mention of this in Joanna's letters (presumably she and Robert were always together on these buying sprees), but the enormous quantities of items shipped out to Adelaide from 1883 onwards is staggering, and made the Barr Smith collection of William Morris products a notable one. Their son and daughters also in time became buyers, and in such quantities that the Barr Smiths' has been assessed as Morris & Company's largest account outside Britain.[8] Much of the collection has drifted down to descendants of the family and some is in the Art Gallery of South Australia.

On this visit the family was also able to reunite with the son Tom Elder Barr Smith, then studying at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. While the elder girls attended drama classes in London, Erlistoun studied the piano and young Robert was put to boarding school. In 1884 Tom became engaged to Mary Isobel Mitchell from Ayr; he had met her when she attended the same school as his sisters, Magdala Place, in Edinburgh.

In 1885 they were all back at Torrens Park. By now the family was grown up, the beautiful

houses were complete and they hummed with adult activities — theatricals, riding, tennis, hunting, polo. Joanna had produced her last child and taken on the role of hostess to local friends and distinguished visitors to Adelaide. Torrens Park had been expanded, with a huge drawing room, conservatories and an exquisite theatre, attached to the house, in which guests were urged to join the family in putting on plays and pageants. Joanna gave lavish and innovative entertainments. As well as the balls and dinners and garden parties in both houses, they developed the custom in the quieter Mount Barker of entertaining all the locals at garden parties and teas. At Christmas presents were distributed to everyone they knew in the village. Joanna kept up her reading, was a good conversationalist, both witty and serious, and made some interesting friendships, one with the Catholic nun, Mary MacKillop (now beatified) and another with Audrey Tennyson, wife of the Governor, Lord Hallam Tennyson. With both of these women she kept up a lively correspondence.

Joanna always maintained a close friendship with her brother Sir Thomas Elder, whose house, Birksgate, was nearby. When the theatre was finished the drama classes were put to good use, plays devised, rehearsed and put on, and three of the young men who were roped in to act in the plays eventually became sons-in-law. Tom returned from Cambridge and joined the firm, and Mary Isobel came out to marry him in 1886. In the same year Joanna married the South Australian George Hawker of Bungaree, son of the George Hawker who had rented them The Briers, and in 1888 Jean, the third daughter, married Tom O'Halloran Giles, an Adelaide lawyer and grandson of the pioneer Thomas Giles. The era of grandchildren was about to begin.

In 1887 Joanna and Robert's son Bertie was despatched to spend the next four years boarding at Glenalmond, a public school in Scotland. In November of the following year, Joanna, Robert and the two unmarried girls, Mabel and Erlistoun, returned to Britain to spend Christmas with him. Sir Tom Elder, laid low by an accident resulting in blood poisoning, went with them as doctors recommended a change of climate and feared for his health left alone in Adelaide. The two partners who had played Box and Cox for so many years, one in Australia while the other travelled abroad, were now able to be both in Britain at the same time, as Peter Waite had taken over the reins of the Limited Company.

Early the next year Joanna — gamely, because she dreaded doing any such thing without Robert beside her — fulfilled her earnest desire to take Erlistoun to Berlin. Here her troublesome, moody daughter could develop her musical talent and learn German, and perhaps mellow into a more contented frame of mind. It was an ill-fated expedition, the story of which is movingly told by Joanna in her letters (Chapter 9). While they were still in Berlin came a telegram advising that George Hawker, Joe's husband, had died suddenly in Adelaide after a yachting accident. His unexpected and dramatic death left Joe with a daughter, Betty, under two and a four-week old baby boy. Joanna and Erlistoun hurried back to England, but Erlistoun's illness and business complications kept them in Britain another year, and the family did not go back to South Australia until 1890.

The golden period of the parties and the young people in the dazzling houses faded into a more subdued pattern. News came from England of Bertie's prowess in sport at school and at Oxford, but his lack of interest in study and a tendency to be feckless caused the parents unease. They continued to spend winters at Torrens Park and summers at Auchendarroch, but Joanna was disinclined to travel far, complaining of rheumatism. Robert made several sorties interstate and into the bush and Joanna's letters followed him as before, spiked in those days with Adelaide gossip.

In 1896 Mabel, a keen horsewoman, married her old hunting chum (and fellow actor) Fred Braund, who had been moved from Adelaide to the London office of George Wills & Co., and they went to live in England. Soon afterwards so did Joe Hawker who, after George's death, made a disastrous second marriage to an Irishman, George Acres, an official of the Indian railways. Joe

divided her time between India, Ireland and England but after a separation and divorce from Acres she remained settled with her two Hawker children in the English countryside. In 1898 Erlistoun married William Mitchell, a Scot from Aberdeenshire who had taken the Chair of Philosophy and English Literature at the newly-founded University of Adelaide. (In spite of the name, he was no relation of Mary Isobel Mitchell, Tom Barr Smith's wife.)

There was now a growing band of grandchildren. Tom and Mary Isobel had a family of six. Jean and Tom produced four children and Willie and Erlistoun two. Bertie had returned but did not marry. He came and went, when bidden by his father, to the various stations, and managed to escape overseas for months to shoot game. Though there were still large family parties at Christmas time at Auchendarroch, the town house Torrens Park became too vast and empty for Joanna's pleasure. Her brother Tom whom she was used to seeing once or twice a week died in 1897. This cut a great chunk out of her life. The same year her dear brother George died at Knock Castle, soon after his wife Jane.

In 1899 they made what was to be their last sojourn in Britain. Nothing went well for them. They travelled with Joe Hawker who was going to England with her children to marry the Irishman Acres. In London and in Scotland Robert was beset with bronchitis and longed to return home. They curtailed their proposed trip by six months or so, did not stay for the wedding and cancelled their plans for Europe. Joanna, never one to curb her tongue, declared that she hated Torrens Park, and soon after their return in 1900, when she was sixty-seven and he was seventy-nine, they built a new house at Angas Street in the city. Joanna always described it as a cottage, though there were several reception rooms, three main bedrooms, four servants' rooms and a servants' hall.

It is at this stage that the letters from Joanna to Robert cease, as he became a stay-at-home. Here in the city they lived quietly without the great fuss of entertaining, still moving to Mount Barker for the hot summers and enjoying the occasional company of their married children and grandchildren and of their unmarried son Bertie,[9] when he was at home.

In 1909 this beloved, wayward son suffered a fatal accident, falling down the stairs at Auchendarroch. Then Erlistoun Mitchell died tragically young of consumption in 1913, leaving a young family. And the epileptic George died in 1914.

These bereavements left only Jean O'Halloran Giles and Tom Elder Barr Smith living in Adelaide when Robert turned ninety-one in 1915, and died a few months later, 20 November. Joanna survived four more years and at eighty-four died suddenly on 23 October 1919. The houses were all disposed of — Torrens Park became Scotch College, Auchendarroch became a nursing home and Angas Street became a convent and was subsequently demolished.

Some, but not all of these events are described in the collection of letters which follows. Letters were very important to both Joanna and Robert; she waited eagerly for each mail and spent hours at her desk, hurrying to catch the post. She wrote hundreds of letters as a daily routine, wherever she happened to be: letters to her brothers and sisters-in-law in Scotland and London, to the daughters and grandchildren in England, to her grandsons at the War, beautifully phrased letters to friends, congratulations on birthdays (hoping the receiver will accept the little gift of a cheque), letters declining, accepting, remonstrating, sympathising. One in her bold black hand sent in June 1917 to her son Tom shows the hand-writing as youthful as but more forceful than a girl's, though she was then eighty-two. It reads:

> My dearest Tom,
> Once upon a time (but they were the good old happy days I admit) you had no objections to accept a little gift from your mother. But altho' times have changed I hope you are big

enough to say 'It will please my dear old mother and so I am glad to do it.'

You and I have difficulty in talking together. We are both sensitive — a very bad thing. But our hearts are true — so what does anything else matter?

Yr devoted mother.

(TEBS)

There are a few other letters of this kind, graceful, cool, poignant, in private collections. But here we exhibit the very personal, private and passionate letters of a woman to the husband she adored and respected. Would she forgive this disclosure? Probably not. Joanna was a woman of strong opinions and forthright delivery who expected (and secured) respect and privacy.

There can be no disguising that this work suggests a praise of the Scottish influence. Those seriously-educated, thrifty, hard-working Scots who left their misty homeland of saints and castles and legends stamped their mark on the new lands of the south. Some of the invading Scots made their fortunes and returned to the familiar background of their birth. Others stayed. Tom Elder and Robert and Joanna stayed. At odds with the weather, the isolation, the cultural void, the newcomers created their own social world. For Tom and Robert the vast wilderness of the inland posed a challenge and a freedom. Their imagination thrived on possibilities of development and with their combination of daring and shrewdness and ensuing wealth they became two of the most influential and respected men of their time. Joanna, though never called upon to slog it out in some bark hut, stoically endured thirteen pregnancies and the deaths of all but four of her children and uprooted herself six times to make the dreaded, long, uncomfortable voyage to England, cumbered with family, to establish new households where her husband's driving ambition and business took him. He worked hard.

"My wife complains that I am always writing," he wrote from his hotel desk in Berlin, where one might have presumed they were taking a holiday, to his confidential secretary in Adelaide, Adolph von Treuer:

> But I really am at a disadvantage. I have to conduct the whole colonial correspondence, and I have also to correspond with Elder and often send him duplicates of my letters. I have had the Mercantile Marine negotiation on both sides of the world. The London office refers to me every day of my life. I am working harder here than I did in Adelaide and I have no office and no help and yet I am expected to be punctual with my private correspondence. Yesterday and today I have only been away from my desk one hour each day. Today I began after breakfast. It is 11.20. I am now writing and may be writing till midnight. Then there are so many days when I am travelling and cannot put pen to paper!
>
> (12 July 1890. TEBS)

This constant movement and her husband's excessive taste for work appears to have left Joanna restless. They bought and enlarged and furnished one beautiful house in Adelaide and another in the country, but were constantly packing up to leave them and to move from hotel to hotel and apartment to apartment. It was not until 1903 when they built their final house in Angas Street in their old age that Joanna settled down. All the letters to her husband printed here were written well before that.

People who knew her said Joanna was a witty, questioning and well-read woman, and certainly her relatively infrequent comments on what she has been reading are intelligent and refreshing. "I cannot get up anything like proportionate gratitude for great gifts; but a book or a nosegay will

set my heart all throbbing and fill my eyes with pleasant tears", she once wrote to Robert. He obliged on both counts. Each day it was his custom, when at home, to pick a posy from the garden and present it to her at breakfast. And he bought her books in quantities. Robert in his old age, in a quavering, almost illegible hand, made a list of all the books in their library, and it is a formidable and catholic collection (Booklet C, TEBS). They sent regularly to the booksellers in London with substantial orders for the latest books to be sent out. And magazines: in October 1873 they were receiving regularly from England the *Saturday Review*, *The New Quarterly, The Westminster, The Fortnightly, The Contemporary, Argosy, The Queen,* "a journal on Art and a Children's magazine", as well as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *McCalls Magazine* (Letter Book 4: 470).

In her letters Joanna castigates herself for her temper, but her children were devoted to her (perhaps excepting the rebellious Erlistoun), and her grandchildren "all adored her. The granddaughters vied with each other as to who was favourite grand-daughter. I think possibly Betty Drew and Joanna Gosse were the winners as she gave them the most magnificent diamonds," wrote another granddaughter, Molly Legoe.[10] She herself was devoted to no-one more than her husband, without whose presence she constantly describes herself as wilting and spiritless. From her letters it appears that she had such an admiration for his good qualities of kindness and wisdom that she felt she was no match and was trying with disappointing results to emulate him. She declared herself no beauty. Writing to a New Zealand niece, Josephine Elder, who had unexpectedly sent her son Kenyon to call on Joanna in 1914 on his way to the War, she said:

> Fortunately for himself he has taken after the Austins *[Alexander had married Mary Austin]*. His grandmother was a beautiful woman. The Elders were painfully plain. My brother Alick & I were very like each other & I grieve to say we were the two plainest. However we both had brain — & hearts too I hope.
>
> (20 June 1914, JE)

Joanna's low estimate of herself was not shared by women who knew her. Audrey Tennyson, Catherine Helen Spence and Mary MacKillop all wrote about her admiringly.[11] As she died in 1919 one could hardly expect a description of Joanna from a living soul, but Mrs Molly Bowen, aged ninety-eight and with crystal-clear recall, can speak of her with authority today.[12]

Mrs Bowen counts herself lucky to have known the Barr Smiths, with whom she stayed often at Mt Barker as a child with her parents, the Archdeacon and Mrs Clampett. She praises the old Barr Smith couple, found them kind and fascinating and belies Joanna's claim to plainness: "Not at all plain! It was a face full of character and she had the most beautiful smile. Her voice was low and strong. I can't remember her having a Scots accent — I think I would recall it if she had had a strong accent. And she had a sweet singing voice." Mrs Bowen recalled Joanna singing "Oh! That we two were maying".

As Mrs Bowen describes her from her vivid memory she brings Joanna to life from the photographs of the stout old lady dressed in fussy black, seated stagily in a room at Auchendarroch furnished from top to bottom with William Morris designs.

> Mrs Barr Smith liked conversation and she liked intelligent people around her. At her Angas Street house, they had given up the big entertainments of earlier days and led a quiet life but on Thursdays — I *think* it was Thursdays — between 4 and 5 p.m. interesting people, mainly gentlemen, would just drop in. My father would sometimes call on one of those afternoons and he would come home and tell us — 'oh! I had such an interesting talk there with . . .' it might be a learned professor or a visiting celebrity or some expert in his field — all people who had something worthwhile to say.

Mrs Bowen (in a conversation in 1994) said, as others have declared, that the Barr Smiths were extremely generous — helping people with gifts of money, most often anonymously.

Mary MacKillop describes Joanna in a letter to her mother (21 January 1873):

> They *[The Barr Smiths]* move in the highest society here, and Mrs R. B. Smith is an elegant and accomplished Scotch lady. She is a woman of very superior mind, and why she should so singularly attach herself to me I cannot understand. Both she and her husband know that my earnest desire is for her conversion, and I hope for much good from her visit to Rome . . . She has asked me to keep up a correspondence with her . . . Pray for her return to us as a Catholic, and if it but please God to grant this, the Church in Adelaide will long remember her.

Yet Joanna had the lowliest opinion of herself: in a letter to Sister Mary from Belgium she wrote (30 November 1873):

> . . . Ah, if I could believe in the efficacy of prayer, how much have I to pray for? . . . But you know my hard unbelieving spirit. I seem to get worse every day. I wonder you can take the very faintest interest in me for I must continually wound your spirit and vex your heart. You fancy there are germs of grace in my heart! Alas, so choked with the weeds of worldliness and selfishness, they have no room to spring up into the goodly flowers or fruit of faith! . . .

Wry honesty threads through the letters. She had no vanity, and a sense of humour glints beneath her formality. There is no indication that she was interested in clothes other than when she declared to Mary MacKillop: "Your habit will be an open sesame to you *[in Rome]* where my flounces and furbelows would be a bar to my entrance. For I have not abandoned yet the world, the flesh, and the devil, and still prefer a dress of silk to a gown of cotton" (25 July 1873). Far beyond personal appearance she relished conversation and ideas. Her friendship with Mary MacKillop, the future Saint, began when the young Mary came from Penola to Adelaide and was struggling to establish her schools for impoverished illiterates. Joanna tried to attain religious faith, but had too many unanswered questions. She admired Mary, who, through her bitter trials, quarrels with bishops and her excommunication, adhered unswervingly to her rule of poverty; and the nun was grateful for financial help from this wealthy, "elegant and accomplished" Protestant, among whose benefactions was a substantial contribution to the building of the Josephite convent in Adelaide (and who, on Mary's death in 1909, commemorated their friendship with a marble slab for her tomb). About to set off for England on her 1873 trip, Joanna asked Mary to write to her, and longish letters to Mary MacKillop, though they are out of place in this selection, indicate Joanna's passionate searching for spiritual faith. But for all the holy nun's persuasion and her own longing for spiritual certainty she never slipped over to the Roman Church. Too questioning, too doubtful, too pragmatic for the enlightenment she hoped for, it seemed in the end that her faith in Robert's goodness was and remained her inspiration and example.

And if Robert was her example in matters spiritual it is significant that at his dying he wanted no clergy to visit him. Joanna explained to her son afterwards (Good Friday 1916):

> I have sometimes feared I did wrong not to propose these visits *[from clergy]* — It does not at all matter any outside condemnation but I am jealous of any misconstruction of his personal religious feelings. I shall probably show the other members of the family his letter to Mother Mary, because it is such a decided statement of his faith & his happiness & peace.
>
> (TEBS. The letter has not been found)

Joanna does not appear to have been a strong woman, physically. Rheumatism plagued her from an early age and hampered her travel. She worried constantly about her husband's bronchial weakness, and was forever warning him to button up into overcoats and not venture out in the cold and fog. She complains to him of her loneliness when he leaves her, but does not dwell on her own headaches, which Robert remarks on often in his letter books. Twenty-two years of child-bearing and the anguish of seeing so many of her children die, together with the problems of her son George who, with his fits and rages and retarded intelligence had to live separately from them, may well have contributed to tension and broken health. However, she continued to find life interesting, while always anticipating — wrongly — an early death. She grew from a slim girl to a stout old woman, rather inclined to sit about but always with an active brain and a mischievous sense of humour. When she entertained some of her elderly friends at Auchendarroch once she made them weigh as they went into tea and weigh again afterwards. She made some attempts to lose weight, noted by Robert in his letter books: "Your mother's dieting has made us quite active. No luncheon, no potatoes, no sugar" (10:90). Neither she nor Robert was tall.

She was an avid reader — they both were. "What a house Torrens Park was for books," commented the educator and novelist Catherine Spence, in her *Autobiography*, "the Barr Smiths bought books in sixes and dozens for the joy of giving them where they would be appreciated" (p. 55). Elsewhere she appreciates on her own account that Joanna, "a keen literary critic", had supplied her with countless books to suggest articles and criticisms and encouraged her campaign to achieve electoral reform (p. 64).

Brigadier-General Gordon, the Scots Guardsman, arriving fresh to Adelaide in the 1880s as a young man, reminisced in his autobiography:

> Robert Barr Smith might well be named the Grand Old Man of South Australia. He died at a ripe old age — a charming personality, a shrewd man of business, a most generous citizen whose gifts were munificent and equalled only by those of Sir Thomas *[Elder]*. Mr Barr Smith's principal home, Torrens Park, some six miles from Adelaide and situated at the foot of the hills, was always open house to his friends. I can never forget the many happy days spent there, and who of the many who were privileged to be their friends, can ever forget the charming personality, the sweet ways, and the generous nature of Mrs Barr Smith? (*Chronicles of a Gay Gordon*)

The letters from Joanna to Robert which follow seem to suggest a subservience not apparent to outsiders. It is likely that it was only to Robert that she showed this wilting and pleading side of her character. Her loyalty to him and her adoration of him could scarcely be feigned over forty-odd years of letter-writing. To outsiders she appeared an imposing little woman, intolerant of fools and pretensions, cool in her manner, generous and yet suspicious. If her letters emphasise her faults and failings and inferiority it is because they are lopsidedly biased in favour of the husband to whom they were addressed. That was her inclination. Once loved, he was her life.

To get a clearer picture of their life together and fill in the gaps in her correspondence I have included extracts from Robert's letter books, now held in the Mortlock Library. It must necessarily be a selection only from the thousands of business letters and those to friends and family, distilling the lines here and there of domestic interest from a torrent of information about sheep and cattle runs, mines, banks, investments, droughts, loans, horses, and office matters. They require a context other than this.

The letter books date from 1860 to 1893. Though from their sheer bulk one might expect a steady flow, even here there are tantalising lapses of months or years. Robert's own letters, when not set on business, show him in the role of amused onlooker — sometimes. His is a questioning

mind, but he has strong opinions and a fierce sense of right and wrong which whips him occasionally into a fury. His style is dignified, but with merriment on top of an underlying layer of scholarship. He is teasing towards Joanna, but always loyal and devoted to the one he refers to as "the mother".

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1 Mamie Hall, Museum Curator, Largs.

2 *An Ecclesiastical Sketch of Lochwinnoch Parish*, 1878.

3 Details of his early life mentioned in this and the next paragraph were noted by RBS some time after 1902 in Notebook A, TEBS.

4 RBS came out with £4000-5000 profit. Hamilton continued the business on his own account and some years later became insolvent. RBS repaid his mother's debt. This and other details in this paragraph in Notebook B, TEBS.

5 Letter from RBS to George Elder, 1 October 1895, headed "The History of the Firm from the time of his joining it until today". RBS added, "This Murray River proved a bad affair and we lost a good deal (for that time) of money over it. It never went right from the first." TEBS.

6 Minus much of the surrounding estate, Torrens Park has subsequently been transformed into Scotch College. Its history is detailed in Ken Preiss and Pamela Oborn, *The Torrens Park Estate* (Adelaide, 1991).

7 William Morris (1834-96), poet, revolutionary, philosopher, artist, socialist and member of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, was so disgusted by the decline of taste as hand-craft gave way to machine-made products in the Industrial Age that he began designing and making objects for the home — carpets, papers, fabrics, furniture, stained glass — gathering artists around him for their varied talents. Showrooms were opened in Oxford Street in 1877 to display their products, inspired by the art and literature of the Middle Ages, which attained the status of a cult among those who could afford them. The ambition of Morris, the fiery socialist, was to offer simply beautiful things to everyone, including the working man, but the great cost of producing work by hand instead of by machine denied his ambition its fulfilment.

8 Linda Parry, Morris scholar and Curator of the 1996 William Morris Centenary Exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Letter to F.G., 1995.

9 Variously known in the family as Bertie, Barr, Robert and Wee Chappie. The present writer's usage varies as well, between Bertie and Barr.

10 Betty Drew, née Hawker, and Joanna Gosse, née Barr Smith. Letter 8 Sept. 1982 to F.G. from Molly Legoe.

11 See Alexandra Hasluck, *Audrey Tennyson's Vice-Regal Days*; Catherine Helen Spence, *Autobiography*; William Modystack, *Mary MacKillop*.

12 Mrs Tom Bowen, née Clampett, b. 1896. A lively conversationalist, living in Mitcham. She was a best friend of Joanna's granddaughters, Mollie Legoe and Joanna O'Halloran Giles, though, through spending many summer holidays with the old Barr Smiths, she became better aquainted with them than did the grandchildren on their rare and more formal visits.

CHAPTER 1

GLENELG 1853-1858

The first letter, a brief one, cool and courteous in fine copperplate writing, is signed Joanna Elder and posted from Kirkaldy, the old home where she lived with her parents, to Robert at Lochwinnoch, the Smith family home near Glasgow. She was eighteen at the date of writing, and addressed him thus:

5 December 1853.
Monday evening:

My dear Sir

I have received yr note. I beg as a favour you will not think of either sending or bringing me a ring. I have had my vanity encouraged of late to a great extent by brooches and rings pouring in upon me from all quarters. So I do hope you wont help to spoil me. Indeed it will distress me much if you do. I admire the likenesses very much. They seem very well done. The children are looking well and seem in high spirits. They are going to be in Ayrshire with their cousins. My fond love to your sister[1] and believe me, in haste, sincerely,

Joanna L. Elder.

If this aimed to be dismissive it failed. Robert was quite soon to depart for Australia and she was to accept his ring. This letter proved to be simply the first of hundreds she would write to him — the man for whose love she would in two years' time sail half way round the world to marry.

The next letter in the collection is post-marked five years later. By then Joanna was twenty-three, had been married two years and was living in the blue-stone house, Ridge Park, in Adelaide. The population of South Australia was 109,917 and their first child, Robert Bruce, was born into that statistic on June 25, 1857. In February 1858, a sequence of loving letters was written from Glenelg where Joanna had taken her baby for a seaside holiday while Robert travelled interstate. Glenelg, on the coast, was the fashionable resort for city and country people trying to escape the blistering heat of summer. They took beach cottages or boarded at modest inns or at the new Pier Hotel, opened to acclaim on Christmas Day 1856.[2] Joanna never heads these letters with an address.

1858
No heading; postmarked from Glenelg to the city of Adelaide.
Thursday 21 February

My best beloved — I got your kind little note last night. Many thanks for it. I was watching like a hawk for Monteith.[3] Oh my darling how I miss you. How I am to drag my weary life over the fortnight I do not know. But I know my dearest I shall bore you by writing like this — dear Bob. When I think of the benefit you may derive from this trip I really feel thankful you are gone. And I try, my darling, not to mope — but I do pine for you dear, oh so much.

What a comfort is our boy, our bonnie boy. I think he has never been so loving to me as since you have left, continually stretching out his little arms to me and crying after me. I am thankful to tell you he is better. Dr Gosse came down last evening and pronounced him cutting his top teeth and proposes lancing his gums. I put up my back at that a little but he told me it was really necessary to prevent convulsions. Oh I hope God in his mercy will spare me that trial.

This Dr William Gosse was to have a long-standing relationship with the family, both as their doctor and, later, as grandfather of the James Hay Gosse who in 1908 was to marry Joanna's granddaughter, another Joanna Lang Barr Smith.

[There is more about the baby.] This morning when he came in to me I stood him on my bed and said Where's Papa? Immediately he turned to your bed with such a sweet little comical smile but when he saw no-one there he became grave as a judge and put on such a look of sorrowful wonder, turning to me as if to ask an explanation of the sad mystery. I shook my head and said "Dearest Papa is gone far away." So he shook his head also but we soon began to laugh and giggle. The poor child can be comforted but his mother never can till she has you back again.

I am glad to say the Waterman seems to conduct himself very properly. An ill-favoured countenance is not the index of wicked head in his case. I hear everywhere good accounts of his character. Jenny and he are excellent friends but the niece of James Lloyd & Co holds her head above all Watermen. *[A possible reference to John Sanderson Lloyd (1831-1914), accountant in the office of Elder Smith & Co. Other names cannot be identified.]*

Robert had left Adelaide to set sail for a voyage interstate, but the ship did not start as scheduled, for Joanna's next letter says how pleased she was to get his note from the steamer "last night". She tells him that she and the baby searched for his ship from the sea-shore.

. . . we saw a steamer, the Waratah, steaming down the Gulf yesterday. What could be the cause of your detention I cannot conceive.

I have no end of visitors since you left. I laid myself down in bed last night so thoroughly worn out. Let's see who I had: Mrs Lloyd <u>all</u> <u>day</u>. Mrs Maturin, Mrs Jameson, Miss Bruce, Mrs Robert Macgeorge (impudence!) Miss Taylor and Annie Stirling. Mrs Forster. Then Mr Forster en route to the Wrights.[4] Mr and Mrs Forster left at 11 and I was so wearied. Mrs Forster wished me to dine with her today to meet the Younghusbands.[5] I reflected a little and declined as I thought you wd not like it. Am I not a good girl? Besides, to be candid, I have got so used to going out with <u>you</u> that I cannot bear the idea of going alone anywhere. Stephen Wright came to say that if I would come to their party he would bring me home whenever I pleased. But darling Buttons *[the baby Robert]* being still a little feverish I did not like to leave him.

[Joanna concludes her letter rather ominously:] . . . I am grieved to communicate to you the unwelcome intelligence of the apprehensions I entertained before you left being realised. It is very hard to have such a prospect before me again so soon. I shall try, for your sake, to put a good face on it — but it is a terrible trial. I have been using means to arrest it and am suffering in consequence. But all seems in vain.

This convoluted sentence refers of course to pregnancy, the recurring dilemma for women in those days which, in some similar allusion, occurs in her letters time and time again.

Saturday:

I had the Younghusbands over last night. I was undressing and was obliged to re-robe myself. The weather is screaming today. A furious hot wind and the sun so bright and strong. We are all groaning. I am comforting myself that it will be cooler in Melbourne and therefore pleasanter for you, dearest Bob. Today I hope you will be landing. How slowly the days pass, my love. Oh that you were back in my arms!

Buttons is getting most amusing — so comical and wicked. Dear boy! What a comfort he is. . . .

Ah Bob I fear that you will be forgetting me in Melbourne. Read the enclosed — it is a true picture of an absent husband's constancy and devotion I fear. *[She is teasing. The newspaper cutting enclosed in the envelope is a sarcastically humorous(?) piece about the infidelity of a husband.]*

Sunday:

Buttons is not very well today. He seems suffering much in his little mouth and the heat is so intense.

He cannot rest, poor child. I am a little anxious and think I shall send for Gosse again if he does not come of his own accord. The Taylors came to see me yesterday but I was in bed and they cd not wait until I dressed. It is the second time they have come which is very attentive. I see you went round *[on the steamer]* with Mrs Bloxham and Miss Lawrence. I hope you did not lose your heart. Remember tho' I am not pretty I am loving and true. I believe no-one would love you so entirely as I do Bob.

Monday:

. . . Another fearfully hot day. No sleep last night. I never remember sultrier weather. To add to my woes I was dying with toothache. I hear there is a steamer in from Melbourne — the one I suppose which will bring you back to me next trip.

[Robert appears to be on a fortnight's absence. She writes more about the baby and what a comfort to her he is, then adds:] . . . I have really need to exclaim "Save me from my friends". I am beset with them. They often arrive late at night when I am undressing — they mean it for kindness but it really is burdensome.

Tuesday:

Such weather. It is fearful. I am sick of my life. Dear baby suffers very much from it and I am often anxious about him. Would you were back my dear love for I feel my lonely condition very much. Altho' as I have said, in the cool of the evenings (if it can be called cool) I am inundated with visitors. Forster and Monteith come in and drink brandy and water and my sherry is nearing to a close in consequence of such incessant inroads.

Glenelg.
Wednesday 27th 1858:

My dearest husband,

Oh what weather! Everyone is half dead. It is a great deal worse than last summer — and I say this not on the principle of the sailor's last gale but because I have coolly (i.e. as coolly as possible under existing circumstances) and dispassionately compared the two seasons & I am corroborated in my statement by their times and capable of forming a correct judgement.[6]

And what a night I have had with toothache! Not a wink of sleep — and no kind loving voice to say "poor Jo" or any kind tender arms to creep into and forget my woes. I was crying for you Bob. I woke the other night stretching out my arms and calling 'Bob'

aloud — and clasped a shadow of course. It is a week since you left me my love. It seems like a year. I wonder if we are mutually beginning to feel we could live without each other. And yet with you this would not be a hard lesson to learn. I daresay everything in Melbourne reminds you of happy bachelor days. Poor Bob.

Well it can't be helped now. I hope to receive a letter from you one of these days. Yourself I suppose I cannot expect until the end of next week. I try to be patient but indeed it is very hard. If the steamer passes in daylight Hodges with the "Volunteer" is to come to the steamer for you . . . I am invited to a party at the Maturins tomorrow and I think of going. I am so wretched when alone . . . I am afraid, dearest Bob you will be very grieved and angry at something I have written in my last letter to you. I have been thinking since how wicked I have been. Forgive me dear Bob. And I have been thinking hardly of you sometimes. But it all proceeds from the unhappy state of mind I have got into. Now that it seems almost certain we shall have another baby this year. I am sure I hope I shall be forgiven for my wicked thoughts. . . . If you should get this letter before my other pray burn without reading the little bit of paper enclosed.

Darling Buttons is still poorly with his teeth and this fearful weather makes him very unmanageable. But he is very comforting to me. I look at him and think of his dear Papa whose image he is. I am beginning now to think of returning to our sweet home at Ridge Park. How many happy associations are connected with it. It will be perfectly delightful to return to it and begin the old ways and amusements . . . My toothache is really nearly unbearable. Oh my good, kind tender husband come back soon to me. I can endure nothing without you — but I shall promise <u>with you</u> to go on manfully through all things.

Believe me

Your ever faithful Wife.

[The following letter is undated but from the paper and handwriting appears to be from this same group.]

My own dear husband,

I have been reading over many of your old letters to me today and I can't help feeling how wrong it is for me to indulge in these little wayward tempers and fancies towards you, my best and dearest friend.

I would say Forgive me darling! but I have said it so often and yet so often sinned again that I am ashamed to ask your pardon. Dear Bob, is it not strange that when I love you so much I should vex you so much? Looking back at all our married life my darling I see nothing but love and forbearance and kindness on your part and temper and waywardness on mine. Dearest love I am so anxious today to do better, to turn over a new leaf. But I am so frightened lest my good resolution should fail and I should wound your kind heart again by imaginary jealousies and fancied grievances. I do not desire to be excused because I am from natural causes nervous and irritable at present. Because I recollect it has been ever the same. But dearie, I fear I shall eventually cool your love. Can you take me to your heart as warmly now as ever? Oh I hope so darling and I shall indeed try to do better. Always remember I left all my friends to come to you. Let that please you a little. Come home as kind and loving as you can be. Please believe me.

Your fondly attached and true wife.

In October 1858, as Joanna had predicted in her distressed letter, a second child was born. It was another son. They christened him George. Within eighteen months a third son, Neil, was born, in April 1860. Neil lived only a few days, but there are no letters commenting on this.

Robert was embroiled in the turmoil with his partners, Stirling and Taylor (see Introduction, p. xix-xx), and arranged to go as soon as he could to discuss the future with Tom Elder in Britain. Tom Elder had been away from Australia almost three years (having departed in 1857), during which time he had, as well as his excursion to Palestine, made more travels in Algeria and Spain (described in his *Notes from a Pocket Journal of Rambles in Spain,* and *Travels in Algeria 1860*). Meanwhile the partnership in Adelaide was threatening to disintegrate.

As soon as Joanna was sufficiently recovered they set sail with the two little boys. On the voyage the steamer was delayed on the rugged south-west coast of Australia at King Georges Sound. Small boats from Adelaide, which was more often than not bypassed by the overseas steamers, regularly called into the Sound to fetch and carry mail. So it was here that Robert had word from his office about the Wallaroo copper mines in which the Company had risked investment. Elder, Stirling & Co. had gamely financed W.W. Hughes to develop a mine when copper was discovered on his property the year before, 1859. As the mine succeeded and the copper began to build Hughes's fortune, Robert contended that it was not fair that his company should take all the risks but get only a small share of the rewards. Now an agreement had been reached. A document signed by Hughes divided the profits of his copper mines between the five — one fifth each to Hughes, Stirling, Taylor, Elder and Barr Smith. This was comforting news.[7] In fact it was to make all five men extremely rich, for in the following year they enjoyed even greater profits from the neighbouring Moonta Mine.

The steamer recovered, the Barr Smiths sailed on, and the next letters in the collection were written by Joanna in Scotland in December of that year.

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1 Jane, married to Robert's partner James Alison, who had earlier been married to Joanna's sister Jemima: she had died in 1846 in childbirth.

2 "... fittings and furnishings were of the latest, for Moseley had briefly returned to England to select whatever was fashionable in hotel resort. The construction of the jetty began during the next year". Dulcie Perry, *The Place of Waters* (Adelaide: National Trust, 1985), p. 48.

3 T.F. Monteith (1816-1886), pastoralist, broker, and later Mayor of Glenelg. Perhaps he brought mail down from town.

4 Her callers were people significant in the early history of South Australia. Mrs Lloyd may have been Charlotte, née Watson, wife of John Sanderson Lloyd; their son became a prominent Adelaide businessman, Sir Howard Lloyd. William Maturin was Deputy Assistant Commissary General. His wife Charlotte was a daughter of Charles Harvey Bagot. The "impudent" Mrs Robert Macgeorge was probably Emily, newly married in 1854 and newly arrived from London. Her husband Robert was son of the merchant Robert Forsyth Macgeorge (1796-1859) and his wife, who lived at Urrbrae. Miss Taylor was the sister and Annie Stirling the wife of Taylor and Stirling, Robert's partners in Elder, Stirling & Co. Mrs Forster, née Margaret Simms, was married to Anthony Forster (1813-97), a longstanding friend. Stephen Wright (1824-88) was mayor of Glenelg 1857-58. The Stephen Wrights lived at Glenelg until 1866 when they moved to Tasmania. He was a brother of the renowned Adelaide architect Edmund Wright.

5 William Younghusband (1814-63), pastoralist and merchant, was Chief Secretary to the then Government and later Premier.

6 In February that year the temperature reached 107 degrees and stayed above 100 degrees for four days; there were fourteen more days when it rose above 90 degrees. But the records show it was in fact even worse the year before; 1857 and 1858 were two particularly fearsome summers with temperatures day after day in the hundreds fahrenheit.

7 "E. Stirling and the Moonta." Contained in a letter from RBS to George Elder, 1 October 1885 (TEBS).

CHAPTER 2

A YEAR IN BRITAIN 1860-1861

This first return to her homeland and her father does not appear to have been a very comforting visit for Joanna. Nor was all smooth for Robert. A curt note to Tom Elder dated 20 October 1860, despatched from Lochwinnoch, announces Robert's intention of breaking up the partnership and retiring from Elder, Stirling & Co. (1: 8). But by the following December, when a series of letters begins from Joanna in Kirkaldy to her husband as he travelled about Scotland, there is no mention of this. Whatever disagreement occurred seems to have been resolved. Joanna had returned to her widowed father's home, called appropriately Adelaide House. From her Kirkaldy letters it appears that she is convalescing from an illness, the aftermath of bearing the child that died. She pens the first one after Robert has left her to go by train to Liverpool.

Joanna was then twenty-five.

Kirkaldy to Liverpool. [To R.B. Smith Esq. The more distinctive Barr *Smith was a later innovation.]*
13 Dec. 1860:

My own beloved husband,

I have been thinking of you & loving you all day — grieving over your departure yet feeling very happy in the thought that you are happy & enjoying yourself. It must be delightful to be emancipated from the confinements of a sick room for so your kind attendance on me recently may be called. It rains and papa won't let me cross the lintels. I fear poor Jessie will be very dull *[Jessie Clazy, Robert's younger sister, is staying with Joanna]*. Write her or send her some kind message of thanks for keeping me company.

Bertie is very good. Wee Georgie is still throwing himself back a good deal. *[It was not until after this trip that it was realised that George was subject to fits and mentally retarded.]*

I have no heart to touch the piano, Bob, without you. Perhaps you will pick me up a new song if you should hear anything pretty.

I cannot write more — Papa blames me as it is. He is very tyrannical & says writing is bad for my health. Oh dear love, how could I live without you? I could not darling. How could I let you go South without me? I never survive your departures. I am nearly five years your wife so this cannot be called the passionate ravings of the honeymoon can it?

Hiding the letter perhaps from tyrannical papa she wrote again the same day, having been thrilled to hear from Robert and agitated to learn that he had mislaid his luggage.

Kirkaldy to C/o Dr Smith, Lochwinnoch.
December 13 1860
1 o'c Thursday afternoon:

My dearest Life,

I have just received your delicious letter. My thanks and blessing, beloved. I have already written to you today to Liverpool but your note says you leave Liverpool tomorrow

morning — so in case you don't get it I send these present lines to Lochwinnoch for I wish you to have daily assurance of my passionate love. My darling, my best beloved, I am so distressed about your luggage but I hope it has turned up. You know how you obstinately refused to put an address on your luggage, always saying a railway ticket is enough. Its not enough dearest. Let this be a lesson to you & me — for I am quite as careless. And so you slept in your kilt, poor Bob. How I wish I had been there.

Will you please try to get me in Glasgow a pretty copy of "The Christian Year" to send to dear Mary Elder *[Alexander's wife]* who would like it. And please bring me no presents. I'd rather not dear Bob. Please consult my wish in this. Yourself, my blessed treasure, is such an overflowing gift that all else is insignificant & not to be thought of.

[She describes the arrival of her brothers: William was now living at St Margaret's Hope, not more than a day's drive from Kirkaldy.] Tom and Willy have come in in such high health and spirits. I have had a laugh. First time since you went away. But I cannot get out today.

[She complains of a fearful toothache and then goes on:] I think you had better burn my notes. I don't like them to be where anyone can see them. They are only fit for your beloved eyes.

Kirkaldy to Lochwinnoch
Dec. 14 1860:

. . . I wrote you twice yesterday, once to Liverpool, once to Lochwinnoch when I heard you were to leave this morning. You do not tell me anything of your enjoyment at Liverpool darling, nor do you tell me if yr portmanteau has turned up but I hope the best. What a delicious letter I have got today. Oh my own darling laddie how can I ever make you a good enough wife? I feel today all to pieces since I got your letter with love and longing. But joyful thought this is Friday. One more week and D.V. I shall clasp you to my heart. I feel Bob as if I should never let you go but to hold you for ever. It has been for me a weary, weary separation.

I feel pretty well thank you dearest but I fancy I grow leaner every day. Tom and Willy keep feeling my bones saying "Eh lassie what a scarecrow you are!" T. and W. have remained over today and we are going to have quite a dinner party. Willy is extra pleasant and is trying to obliterate the remembrance of anything disagreeable. Tom is very loving. I was speaking to him today about our future home in Australia. I spoke of Parkside *[a suburb on the southern fringe of Adelaide]* but he negatived that at once saying we shd lose caste there, that nobody lived there & it was very important for peoples respectability to live in a fashionable locality. *[This sounds like mockery. The much respected Tom seems quite often to be the subject of private joking.]*

Oh dear. Oh dear. He asked me if I thought Taylor wished home *[John Taylor, the restless partner, who did indeed retire and return to England within three years]*. I said I thought so both on his own and on his wife's account. He said "Oh you know when Bob and I go out we shall just tell Taylor he may go anywhere he likes." What does he mean by that? The subject of my remaining behind you was canvassed. He says in the event of that you and he shd leave in February. That he is only waiting till May on my account. But he also thinks that only my health should keep me — no other considerations. Were I left behind I shd die my dearest life. I cd not bear it. My heart wd break. I think when you return you must at once decidedly negative it and then the matter will be dropped.

The boys and Jessie went last night to hear the most interesting lecture on the finding of Sir John Franklin by one of his discoverers. *[This was the Arctic explorer and Governor of*

Van Diemens Land. William Elder had spent a winter at the North Pole.] They were not home till nearly 12 but were highly pleased. Willy wants Jessie to go to St Margarets tomorrow with them but she has considerately declined until you return. I note what you say about Hardy. I don't approve of silence on the point. On the contrary I should remind Tom and George of Hardy's position in connection with the contract & the probable bias of his mind. *[One may guess that this was the Arthur Hardy who built Birksgate, the Adelaide mansion bought three years later by Tom Elder. She goes on:]*

It is not always prudent to be very candid dearest Bob but I cannot see it would be injudicious in this matter. Prudence, dearest husband is a very good thing. It has always been a missing element in my sadly imperfect character. Yet the longer I live the more clearly I see that prudence (so-called) effectively interferes with the honesty and purity of one's intercourse with this kind.

But I prose my own darling. *[Robert has become accustomed to talking over his business affairs with his young wife. She switches to more talk of loving and missing until suddenly]* . . . Last night I got out of patience with Papa — only for a moment. Then I remembered how my Blessed Example was "subject to his parents" and I choked the demon in its birth. *[This leads to talk of her spiritual progress, reading the Bible etc., but she is obviously more at home on day to day affairs]* . . . Your boys are very well and very boisterous. I grieve to say I had to whip Bertie last night, dear fellow, his temper overcame him and its his mother's temper he inherits poor darling *[Bertie was three].* . . . I think if you shd get Jessie a nice set of lace collar and sleeves she wd like it — and she requires it. . . . I think I must draw to a close my dearest love. I came up to my room to be quiet and have become so cold — there being no fire — that I can scarcely hold the pen. *[This is December! In Scotland!]* . . . My toothache is not so bad today. Had things been different I might have felt uneasy but fortunately (or unfortunately as the case may be) there are no grounds for suspicion. *[Pregnancy?]*

Kirkaldy to Lochwinnoch
Dec. 15 1860:

My dearest Bob,

I have this morning got your kind & delightful letter. Why my darling did you travel all night? You were not so pinched for time and you were cold and could not sleep. Dearest love I could not have slept peacefully in my bed had I known that. I hope you have not caught cold. I am glad you are at Lochwinnoch & you will be able to make some pleasant excursions to Glasgow and round about. I am glad, dearest, you are going to Dalry *[a nearby town where Robert had worked as a nineteen-year old clerk]* although I daresay your recollections of your time there are not pleasant.

I shd like you to bring some leaves from dear Jemima's and Joanna's graves.[1] I wish I cd have been with you. I think I wd like to visit the graves of my lost friends. One feels a solemn melancholy — sometimes a solemn joy in gazing on the place where their bodies were laid and thinking of the spirit's flight into a happier world. *[Joanna's attempts at spirituality were thwarted and defeated as time went on by her essentially practical and questioning nature.]*

You may remain till the end of the week dearest Robert with comfort as you will see by the enclosed. George and Jane do not come till Friday or Saturday if then. *[George Elder's wife Jane, sometimes called Jean, was a life-long dear friend of Joanna's.]* Tom is still here. He has made a singular proposal today. I don't know what you will say. He thinks there will be nothing left for him but to stay with us and he wants to have 2 or 3 rooms in our house in Australia and only dine with us — and breakfast of course — but being in all other

respects a kind of boarder. Que dites-vous mon cher? Of course I cd only hum and ha and say we'd be glad — but without your advice and approval would never think of settling such a point. Neither does he wish it settled yet. But they are all in arms to make me remain another year. Tom says it must be soon settled as if I remain you and he must go out sooner. But take no notice of him of anything I write to you. I have told him, my beloved one, that we cannot part. He laughs and talks of Jamie Hamilton and his wife who cannot sleep a night apart & walk about the roads clasping each other's hands.

We had a very pleasant evening yesterday. Alick Swan came. And we had bagatelle & gossip & all kinds of absurdity for Willy & Tom were in very daft keys. However I went quite excited to bed. As we had later in the evening a rather bitter discussion, we four, (Tom, Willy, Alick & me) upon Mrs Stock *[The Stocks and the Swans were old close friends of the Elders.]* & her proposed tea party on Friday to which the Swans are invited. They say Mrs S. had made us (you & me) decoy ducks & induced some other friends to come to her house on Friday evening & that it was very wrong of me to consent to go. They worried me & flustered me & sent me nervous & irritated to a sleepless bed. *[Older brothers!]*

However I am quite well today my blessed darling. How are you I wonder. You wd not have wanted your letter dearest love at Lochwinnoch had Tom posted it when I gave it to him but he forgot it. I sent it this morning as it contained a little note from Jessie to you but it was absurd to send such an ancient affair.

It is a disappointment you have not told me a bit of news about the business or your enjoyments at Liverpool. I am going to call on your friends the Douglases today. Tom is going out. I seize the chance for the post.

She was upset again next morning when there was no letter on her breakfast plate.

Kirkaldy to Lochwinnoch
December 17 1860
Sunday morning:

...I had hoped the letter I should receive from you this morning would have cheered and dispelled the dark mood which came over me last night. And to see Jessie get one from her mama *[Mrs Marjorie Barr Smith of Lochwinnoch, Robert's mother]* this morning and not me from you when I begged you to send me happy to church is very disappointing. However I mustn't grumble when you have been so very attentive. I write you these hurried lines to say we are all well knowing you expect to hear daily. You would observe the reason for my Thursday's letter's detention. *[She refers to her previous letter which is enclosed and on which she has written sharply* — "Tom neglected to post this!*]*

Kirkaldy to Lochwinnoch
December 18 1860
Monday:

My dearest Robert,

It was a frightful disappointment to get no letter from you this morning. I really felt hurt as well as grieved and I sent you a saucy message by Jessie which pray forgive.

I am keeping the children today as Sophie is washing so you must forgive a hasty scrawl. *[She starts again]* I have your very kind letter now. Many, many thanks. Why so delayed? I have been dull & out of sorts since Saturday, finding no peace or comfort anywhere. I went with Papa this morning to St Bridesdale to call on Mr Swan *[Patrick Swan, the provost, an old friend]* and Mr Douglas — the latter & the Swans are to dine here on Wednesday. If you are home dear Robert so much the better. But do not hurry. I should be glad if you remained

till Saturday & went to your various old friends up & down the West. Mr Swan persecuted me today with poor Willy's likeness. He said "my brother was very fond of you in his life & therefore I think you will like to possess his likeness." Wasn't it kind?

I have sent Tom's letter dear Robert. It is very nice as it could not fail to be when you wrote it.

I am much obliged for Mary's love *[Robert's eldest sister, unmarried and rather cranky, who lived with her parents]* but it is as surprising to think what I have done to gain it — as it was to me to know what I had done to justify the total lack of civility and kindness of so many long years. Write & tell me if we may expect you on Wednesday but do remember my dearest Robert that I shall gladly wait for you till Saturday if by so doing you will increase your enjoyment.

Kirkaldy to Lochwinnoch
December 19 1860:

My own dearest Bob,

Your long kind letter just received & I hasten to send you a hurried note to reach you tomorrow morning but I fear the ice may tempt you to remain. First thing I said when I woke this morning at my usual time of 5 o'clock, "My Bob will be here tomorrow," but I am so afraid of being selfish, dear Bob, I have never said Come back soon in case I wd deprive you of some enjoyment — but you know there is no happiness or peace for me in your absence. I am restless and tossed & will tell you how wretched I have been when you come. I could not tell you before in case it made you unhappy or shorten your visits. Georgie is on the back of my chair pulling me about so forgive this awful scrawl. *[Her writing is immaculate.]* My dearest Bob — the books have given such delight. Bertie says "Oh I wish my papa would come back". That beloved Papa we all love so much. Is it to be tomorrow dearest? Oh is it? Or must I wait? But I feel as if to wait another day after having had the prospect given me would break my heart Bob.

Dearest I fear if you come tomorrow at 4 o'clock I cannot get up to the train. Papa is having those gentlemen at dinner at half past 4 and he won't like it if I go away at the time they ought to be received but I'll try. As you know I am very particular about giving your arrivals and departures all honour by my presence first and last. I do think dearest I am better though I am not without frequent local pain but I do think I feel better & stronger. You will be glad to be apprised that the other question you asked me I can answer in the negative!!! *[No pregnancy.]* But for how long I cannot tell. Oh I do hope you will come tomorrow. I send you Rachel's[2] & Lizzie's letters to read for amusement. Thank you for the tract, my dear husband. I shall prize it. I have no time this morning to enter into any subject least of all one of such a character but we will talk together of this. *[She sounds less than enthusiastic about the tract?]*

My darling, I am in a fever of excitement when I think of your coming. I feel my cheeks flush at the thought. Oh dearest, dearest precious and most ardently beloved will it be tomorrow or must I wait? I should so like when these gentlemen are here to have my husband to encourage me. I am nervous without you at entertaining strangers.

I hope you enjoyed yourself at Glasgow & Daltry yesterday and today at Kilmarnoch. I hope you will. I hear so little of any aunt save Aunt Dunlop that I did not even know we had relations called Taylor even. Your Australian letters Tom can see tomorrow. Papa is feasting on them at present. Things look brighter in the South don't they? We could get J.B. Hughes' house I daresay if you like *[St Clair, Woodville]*.

It is so cold dear Bob. I am quite miserable. The snow falls fast. I sleep so badly. Ever since you left I have had such restless, unquiet nights. Oh for your arms again — and your warm neck to snoozle into.

My own dearest Robert, farewell. Is it only till tomorrow?

It must have been and he must have turned up at the railway station, met or unmet, for there are no more letters in this group. The next ones are three months later from Joanna in London, where she had settled with the boys and a nurse, and directed to Robert who was heading back to Scotland. Robert had apparently just left London and this is her first communication. It is written on her own cream paper with a crest and J.S. at the top, but the letter is undated and only the postmark on the envelope to set a date at 27 March 1861.

London to Lochwinnoch
Wednesday afternoon: [27 March 1861]

My own darling and ardently beloved,

I write a few lines because you wished it, not because I have anything to say, saving that I love you & long for you. Oh when will the weary days pass & bring us together again. I have been crying at intervals all day till Jane & Mrs Walker appeared to urge me to go to Kew with them. *[Jane and George Elder were in London from Knock. Mrs Walker is unidentifiable.]* I was too miserable for that however & cd not get up my spirit to go. I think Mrs Walker thought me a great ass. But that of course does not signify. I do hope you are getting along comfortably. This day is endless. I have not had my dinner yet but it seems 24 hours since breakfast. I am sick & done up with grief & want of sleep. Oh do write me often Bob. I assure you I am in a very low state of mind & do not know how I am to get on during the next week.

You were very kind to me last night dear Bob. I shall not soon forget. I am a cross-grained exacting woman I know but you know I love you desperately and foolishly. Take care of yourself of colds & accidents by horse & by rail.

Sent from 11 Gloucester Place, Wednesday afternoon. The children are quite well and happy. George said to Jane last night that he thought you regretted selling your Wallaroo.

This was Hughes' Wallaroo Mine, in which Tom and Robert now each had a fifth share. It appears that Tom bought part of Robert's share and this became a bone of contention among the brothers, mentioned in various letters to come.

London to Lochwinnoch.
March 29 1861
Friday morning:

My dearest Bob,

I am this moment in receipt of yr kind letter. Many thanks. This is one of my gloomy days. There is a letter from Jane today. With the careful prudence which characterises your family she says nothing of the cause of Isa's exodus. I do not agree with you dear Bob that it wd be right to let Isabella get entangled in an engagement with a beardless boy like Stan Guthrie but I feel very sorry for him, poor fellow, and wish it could be otherwise. I suppose Jane will be very glad to receive Isa as she is a great favourite?

This Jane would be Robert's sister, who married the widower James Alison, previously married to Jemima Elder. Isabella (Isa) was one of the two surviving daughters of James and Jemima Alison. The other sister, Jemima, was to marry W. Ralston Patrick and live at Trearne, Scotland, to a ripe old age.

I am sorry dear Bob you had such a long & fatiguing day of it on Wednesday. Do take care of yourself & don't get cold or over-fatigued. I feel very vexed indeed about Jessie and your mother & shd be very glad indeed if any arrangement cd be made by which they or at least one of them might still make a visit to London. Perhaps you will be able to do something in the matter. I hope Miss Smith was not over-tired *[the non-favourite Mary of Lochwinnoch. Joanna adds that she went with George and Jane Elder to have her likeness taken but that George would not allow her to pay for it. And she complains:]* — I have had another bad night with my ear-ache . . . dear Bob, dear Bob, dear Bob my heart longs for you.

This is Good Friday, a great holiday & Church Day here. I shall get better in the afternoon when I go to Hampstead I dare say. Do take care and don't get ear-ache. I am keeping the children this morning to let Sophie go to church.

In her next letter she describes the visit to dine with her brother Alexander Elder and his wife Mary who had moved from Porchester Square out to Carlile House, Hampstead (where they were still living up until 1869, and where the last six of their thirteen children were born).

London to Lochwinnoch.
March 30 1861
Saturday morning:

The post is not yet arrived but I hope there is a letter else I shall be desolate indeed for the day. I am up early as usual for me when you are absent for I cannot sleep — and last night I had a horrid night with bad dreams, nervous fears etc. Oh dear Pet how I long for your return. Bertie kicked me and knocked me all over last night, poor wee fellow. They (he and Georgie) came home in a state of great excitement last night. They had had a most uproarious morning at Hampstead *[with Alexander and Mary and their eight children; five more were born later]* and they were both crying to come away — I mean they cried with grief at being obliged to leave. Mary wished us all to stay the night, but I thought it better not. I enjoyed myself too — as much as is possible without you by my side. I grudged to see Mary edging up to her husband and poor me with none to cuddle up.

[The happy day, she says, was spoiled only by an observation made by Alick, that no-one could love at thirty as he had at twenty] He said "I never could feel the same ardent affection after twenty that I experienced then."

Joanna was then twenty-six and Robert thirty-seven. She was mortified, disagreed vigorously with her brother, and begs Robert, in her letter, to reassure her that Alick's opinion is quite at fault. As Alick by this time was a man of forty-four with a wife and vast family he could be excused for finding Joanna's attitude romantic.

But Mary Elder was also vexed by his comment:

Mary winced under it a good deal and said in a very bitter tone "Don't forget Joe he said that" to which Alick replied that he had no desire to forget — that it was true and the case with every man. He was insistent that you could not, at 30, give one the love you had given someone else at 20, either in depth, purity and unselfishness or intensity and he got the Oxford Essays to prove his argument which extract I copy & enclose to you. *[And so she does, two pages neatly copied out. Scholarly, but not as entertaining as her own letters.* The Oxford Essays *(1860) were much-discussed and vilified essays by seven writers, six clergymen and one layman, presenting provocative views on religious and philosophical subjects. Joanna then demands naively:]* — Dearest tell me if this is true & this your own experience. Tell me honestly because it could not make to me any difference for say what Alick likes — I

would infinitely rather have the matured love of thirty be it less warm or less intense than the other. But the discussion pained both Mary and me as we both knew we were not "first loves." *[Alick seems to have touched a raw nerve.]* Ah! we poor women with our yearning and craving for love and our jealous fears that we don't possess it or, possessing it, may lose it. Are we not to be pitied? Not condemned.

Fred Grant & his mother called at Hampstead yesterday. He is a nice pleasant fellow but not much in him I fear. Mrs Walker and Jane called also. Jane looks as if she was in a nervous excitement. She was very pleased to hear about Isabella Alison. Ann and Willie *[Elder]* were here also . . . Ann has taken a great dislike to Dr Wilkinson as he asked her some very nasty questions when she went to consult him . . . whether it is your fault or your husband's that you have no children to which poor Ann, blushing violently and ready to kick W.'s shins replied she didn't know.

Joanna then brings up the subject of her father. Robert was due next at Adelaide House, Kirkaldy, his father-in-law's house, and she begs him to discover what is wrong with her papa. There was certainly something difficult about George Elder's behaviour at this time. He was now a widower, Joanna's mother having died four years before, and Joanna had earlier, at Kirkaldy, found him demanding. Their relationship does not appear to have been either warm or friendly as hers was with her brothers.

I wish, dearest love, you would clearly ascertain if papa wishes to see me again or if it is the case, what they all say, that he would like an excuse not to. Isn't it very strange that he has never written to Alick although the day was fixed for his visiting them at Hampstead? They only heard incidentally he was not coming. Write me fully what you think is his wish about my going to see him before leaving, dearest.

[Then she prods into what was to prove a hornet's nest:] — When Alick went home and told Mary about the Wallaroo she got quite put out and accused him of robbing Joan's children. *[Joanna was sometimes called Joan by her brother.]*

My dearest darling I have just received your long delightful letter & the books. How kind to send me a book, dearest Bob . . . I fear I cannot get up anything like proportionate gratitude for great gifts but a book, a nosegay, will set my heart all throbbing and fill my eyes with pleasant tears. Many, many thanks my own dear love. The children have not come down yet to get theirs. Georgie, whenever Joe says "Where's Papa?" says "Poor." This morning he ran up to your bed & turned down the clothes screaming "Papa, Papa," & you should have seen his face of blank disappointment at seeing nobody. Bertie's face is covered with scratches from Georgie's nails.

Was it not strange that I was just writing about the Wallaroo when the post brought me your letter with the account of Tom's reception of the news of the sale? I am sorry you have written to Alick in the way you have done. I understand Alick so thoroughly — he'll not give you credit for purity of motive at all and after our conversation on the subject yesterday I feel convinced he will say — "Ah, Bob regrets his sale and wants it back." I hope however my fears may be groundless.

This "Wallaroo" was the Wallaroo Mining Company in South Australia, that had grown out of the discovery in 1859 of copper on Walter Watson Hughes's sheep run (see Introduction, p. xx). Hughes and his brother-in-law, Captain John Duncan, two Scots sea captains turned Australian migrants, had been financed by Elder, Stirling and Company, and the risky venture finally produced great wealth for the directors as well as providing a great economic fillip to the colony of

South Australia, replacing doldrums with optimism. At the time, 1861, when Alexander criticised his brother Tom for buying a portion of Robert's shares in the mine, it was still a gamble. Years later Robert described the situation to George Elder: "So far as Tom Elder & I were concerned whilst the Wallaroo & Moonta brought us profit it also added to the burden of our finances. In fact we could not have carried on these mines but for the large credits in the sheep farmers' accounts . . ." (1 Oct. 1895. TEBS).

Joanna continues with her gossip.

> Poor Isa! Had there been any love-making between her and Stan beyond flirting?
>
> Dear, dear, dearest and best of Bobs, you do not, you cannot believe that I can think of "others as better or purer men, kinder or more generous husbands." Why do you write that to me Bob? To your wife who adores you and believes in no-one in this world saving yourself?
>
> You do not deserve that I should mourn for you & long for you as I do if you can think of me as doing anything so base as that. Darling, darling, dearest love of my heart. I adore you. I esteem you. I am so much wrapped up in you that my heart is sore with so much love. Why do you write such words as these. It is cruel. I fear my letter savours a little of "Yelvertiniana"[3] & I remember that you thought her letters unwomanly & immodest.
>
> I kept Mary's baby *[Margarett Joanna Elder, Alexander's and Mary's tenth child]* a long time yesterday & felt strange emotions. Oh dear. Oh dear me. I have got no likeness but the one I had before I was married. I have taken it from its frame again & cuddle it up. Your slippers, you dear old man, will I hope be ready for your blessed feet next Saturday.
>
> I wish, dear Bob you would tell Tait to make me up a parcel of wool for the colonies. *[She goes on to specify that she requires 10 lbs and identifies which particular shades of wool, and after this sharp switch into practicalities signs off for the night.]*

London to C/o George Elder Esq., Kirkaldy
March 31 1861:

> My own beloved Bob,
>
> I write you a line although it is Sunday because it might reach you a little sooner than my Monday's letter and thereby gratify you, you dear old hunks. I can get more from you tomorrow. It is miserable to be a day without — Dear, dear love of my heart. Is it to be Thursday or Friday or what day shall I strain you to my heart? *[This, after five years of marriage and three children! And the likelihood of another in the making!]*
>
> I have a letter from Tom last night. He says he has given you £3000 for your Wallaroo. You do not say this in your letter. Perhaps it has been an after determination on his part. He says he buys it as he wants no other partners introduced and money to him is not an object as it is to you. Very true.
>
> Maggie *[unidentified]* and I took a long walk yesterday down the Strand. We were terribly frightened by a man who kept following us everywhere. Waiting at shops till we came out & behaving in an odious manner. Whether it was Maggie's attractions or mine that induced him to follow us up and down I don't know but it made me very frightened.
>
> I have been <u>obliged</u> to return to the bath without your advice darling. That medicine Wilkinson gave me last kept me in a horrid <u>state</u> — but the one result so much desired has never been attained. Oh my dear God — my dear, dear Bob. *[The fourth child is apparently on the way. And indeed eight months later, back in South Australia, Mabel was born.]*
>
> Tom says positively Papa is coming up to London. I wish you would try to find out when. I have only two letters from you beloved — and you have been 5 days gone. You do

not say if you have got over the fatigue and I hope you have, dear love, and that you will come back to me strong and hearty. I expect to have a treat today in reading that delightful book you sent me darling. We are going to Mr Lynch's. *[For his sermon. A prospect which seems neither to please nor divert her.]* . . . I cannot say my own Bob, that this separation has done me any spiritual good. I do not think it has. I need my husband to help me and guide me. I try to pray and I read my bible. But I do not feel the better or the happier. Oh yes I do need my good Bob to help me on the way. Dearest, dearest husband I hope you will never faint by the way or turn back, but go on in the right path, growing better and holier year by year. I do think you are a good man and will get to be a most heavenly one — and oh surely your poor sinful wife will become more like you.

I am invited to a discoursive dinner at Hampstead on Wednesday to meet Mr Lynch *[the preacher at Alexander's church]* and Ridley. Do you think I should go? I am obliged to draw to a close as it is nearly church time. You will be hearing that dear, good, heavenly man, your father preach today.[4] I envy you. Give him my best and fondest love. I must write him immediately. I wrote you a long letter yesterday. Farewell my own beloved husband. Believe me your devoted and very loving Joanna.

After this outpouring Joanna broods still more on her loneliness and passion. The babies are put to bed. They are not very well, she laments. Then she takes up her pen *again* — the second letter for that day, or rather night:

London to Kirkaldy
March 31 1861
Sunday night:

. . . I cannot resist writing you, altho' I have written you today already. My mind is filled with thoughts of you and my heart with love for you. Today I have looked back on our married life, as though through a glass, and have seen standing in solemn array all my shortcomings and imperfections — and in bright relief shine out your never failing goodness, kindness and worth. My more beloved, this afternoon I sat over the fire brooding and I thought seriously, sadly, yet it may be profitably over byegone days, my darling. I saw so many times when I might have been kinder start up in reproachful memory. This was the prevailing feature in our reminiscences — times when I might have been kinder. Ah, my love, at this moment I am wiping my tearful eyes for at this moment again starts up the cruel memory of times when I might have been kinder.

I said this afternoon and I repeat it again — so help me God, I shall in my future intercourse with my husband have the law of kindness more thoroughly developed in my heart. And on my lips. It is true, my dearest Robert that I love you devotedly, ardently, entirely but I seem to have had as it were scales torn from my eyes and a new, bright vision of what has been imperfect and sinful in my very love. My love has been selfish, jealous, exacting. My own, it is my solemn intention, my heart's most earnest desire, next to being Christ's servant to be to you from this day a more unselfish, self-renunciating tender wife. This is not sentiment Bob, my tears are falling like rain. God help me I have been a sinful woman — a very erring wife. Oh help me, dearest, to be a better one, and be loving to me. Bob I am so lonely tonight. What would I not give for your arms.

I am alone. I have just put the dear children in their beds. Bertie is singing & preaching himself to sleep alternately. Just before we closed the shutters I was gazing down at such a pleasant family scene in the house opposite. The elderly gentleman has been a widower & his two boys are home for the Easter holidays. They were all having dinner. The lamp was

lit but the blinds undrawn so I saw everything. The wife smiling pleasantly & helping the boys & the papa sitting looking so contented.

It made me weary for you so much dearest Bob. Will you be home to me on Thursday night? But no, I must not selfishly harry for else where my good resolutions.

We had a beautiful sermon from Mr Lynch today. I was wishing so much you had heard him. It was on the First and Second Adam. I have read 2 of the Oxford Essays since you left — Baden Powell's and Jowett's.[5] Lynch says Powell's is the worst in the book but adds "Let us not speak unkindly of the dead." I think Jowett doubts more than Powell. At least his doubts are more general & universal. The other man keeps harping on the miracles to the exclusion of most other controversial points. I wish you could buy me Melville Adamson's book "Christian Charity" at Mr Crawfords & read it my darling. Its very nice. I shd have liked to send it to your eldest sister *[the unloved Mary Smith]* but as she would not read it its no use. *[She discusses the book further but then]* — Maggie has just come in from church so I must close. She leaves me tomorrow morning early so I am all alone till my own, own darling husband comes back to my arms.

She was desperately lonely for him, and there is never any evidence that Joanna was anything but an utterly virtuous, utterly devoted wife. Why she castigates herself is a mystery and seems to be a part of her personality. Perhaps she felt a guilt that she could not unquestioningly submit to the firm religious attitudes of the Smith family. By accounts Joanna had a strong and striking personality. She was wilful and possessively in love and certainly dreadfully, sickeningly distressed when parted from her beloved, as her letters to the end of her days show. There is hardly a letter that does not contain an overflowing expression of deep love and longing for him and shame or denigration for her own failings — as she saw them.

The next morning she writes woefully:

London to Kirkaldy
April 1 1861:
Monday forenoon:

My own, own darling,

I am made most effectually miserable till I receive another letter, by hearing you are ill — oh my dear Bob. No wife to smooth your hair and kiss the pain away. I am indeed unhappy.

I have already despatched you a long letter so have nothing to say but that I am wretched about you. No matter whether it is "mere bilious attack" or not, you are in bed — you are in pain — oh my dearest Bob why did you not tell me this — I cannot go to Anne's tonight — It is impossible. I am very very unhappy. If there is no letter tomorrow I shall be desperate. Bob you shouldn't alarm me so.

Your very unhappy but most devotedly loving Wife.

I have been nervous about you ever since you left & now my worst fears are realized.

What shall I do. Bob come home. I cannot get on any longer, I feel so wretched.

[What a fuss and bother one feels, reading this a hundred and thirty odd years later. Even Joanna began to straighten up and take stock and adds] — What have I written. Dont mind me Bob but write instantly. Oh Bob you are ill.

In the same envelope as this wail she had slipped a later, less hysterical letter:

Monday morning:

My own dearly loving husband,

I have just received your delicious letter. How could you take me up about the "unsat-

isfied heart" Bob? I assure you Wilkinson *[the doctor]* could never suppose I had an unsatisfied heart. He said to Mary I looked very dull. She said that my husband was away. To which Wilkinson replied "Ah. That is sufficient explanation." Ah my darling here is Monday — a little patience & I shall soon have you in my weary longing arms & I don't think I shall ever be able to let you go again.

Maggie has left this morning — poor girl, she was sorry to go & so was I to part with her. I have a very high opinion of her & have enjoyed her visit very much.

There is no doubt of my condition now. Already I can see it. You may laugh as you like but it is true. I feel well enough bodily so dont think I am ill dearest. It is my depressed mind & excited nerves that keep me wretched. I shall be all right when you come back to me, my life & my sole joy. When Miss Hanks brought me in your letter this morning you should have seen her face because, poor body, altho' she has got no husband I think she quite understands what a nice thing it is & she at least does not doubt my love for you. I cried out "Oh is it a letter from my dear husband?" and she looked so comical & kind. Oh my own dear Bob I have never loved you so much as I do at present. Nor so purely & entirely. I wish the days might pass more quickly but its only 10 o'clock on Monday morning. I am going to Dover St. to tea tonight and to the German Fair in the afternoon to get a box of bricks for a birthday present for Willie Elder *[Alexander's third child, William George]*. He is 10 tomorrow. How nice it will be when our Bertie is 10 — and Wogey stealing up to him. You know there is only 15 months and a few days between them. *[Alas! Bertie died when he was only six.]* I fear November must be my next time of trial and I do dread it terribly. I do not feel as if I should get over it.

This is a very unconnected letter my own dearest Bob, begun last night. But I think some things in it will please you & warm your heart yet more to your own Joe. Ah my love, if we are spared to make another home. If God gives me life & health you'll see it will be a happier one even than last. Altho' with the exception of some dark, dreary times our life during the last five years has been very happy. But it will be happier in days to come.

Geo & Jane go to Ben Rhydding today for a fortnight. I wish I had any paper photograph to send you but they are not to be finished off till Wednesday. The children have just come down, Georgie has given me a very wet kiss to send Papa. When we ask him what he wants you to bring to him he says "Po" so Bertie bids me tell you you are to bring Georgie a po and him a fourpenny whip. They are both well & looking so sweet & delightful.

I am quite pleased to hear of Tom's liberality. The extra £100 will be very seasonable won't it darling. I think on the back of it I must have some new baby clothes. I think my fourth baby will deserve some new duds with such a rich father! ... I close with thousands of kisses ... Ah my dear pet I am your lawful wife — its no shame to be mad about you.

Ever, ever your Joanna Smith.

London to Kirkaldy
April 2 1861
Tuesday:

My own beloved,

What a relief to get your letter this morning and to know you are better. It is impossible to tell you how I have worried & fretted over your illness. I fear I wrote you a very unconnected note yesterday which may annoy you dearest but when I got your letter telling me you had been in bed it drove me to my wits end. I could not go to Dover St. but sat brooding all night till I got so eerie I was afraid to take my candle & go to bed. Georgie

awoke this morning with a sort of croup spasm which has settled down into a most distressing cough — worse considerably in sound than he ever had it before so you may fancy how bad it is. Bertie was ill yesterday afternoon also & is still poorly today — oh I wish you were home. It makes my heart leap tremendously to hear you say you weary to get back to us. Ah my precious beloved Bob how glad I am it is so. It shows your poor broken-down Joe has still some power to charm you & to retain your precious, precious love.

Alick and Willie are much disappointed at the issue of the Wallaroo. I enclose a note from Alick only for your perusal. I wrote him telling him to send me £5 as I thought perhaps after paying the weekly bills — and you being absent till Saturday I might want it. However Willie still expects to get the half share as Tom promised it to him when he thought of purchasing it before. Mary was here yesterday. I thought she was stiff and cold but she invited me several times to stay at Carlile from today till you returned and seemed hurt when I declined but how could I leave my children. Besides when you are away I do not enjoy going anywhere. All I care to do is to sit & wait till my darling comes back. I do not know how you got no letter from me on Sunday. I have written you every day. Sometimes twice. This is my fourth to Kirkaldy. I suppose I need not write again for if you are to come by Thursday's express that involves you leaving Kirkaldy before the post is delivered in the morning. So I think I need not write again unless Georgie gets worse. I am very uneasy about him. He is so very fat just now. Such a bad subject for anything inflammatory. Oh try & not miss the train on Thursday. I cannot wait any longer. I shall be in a fever all day lest you should lose it. I wrote Jessie yesterday and told her if any arrangement could be made for her coming up for a limited time I should be happy. I have Georgie on my knee so excuse this horrid scrawl. *[The writing as usual is immaculate.]*

I bid you farewell and oh let nothing prevent our meeting on Thursday for I do assure you Bob such disappointment would make me seriously ill.

After all this Robert must have returned to her side for the English letters finish here. In her last one she enclosed the note she had from her brother Alick, who seems fond of his sister and writes affectionately that he is glad to "supply your very moderate wants". He hopes she would visit them on Wednesday, and adds — "Tom has snapped up the shares but I am vexed at Bob telling him I did not care about it. He should not have said that for I did care about it and am awfully disappointed. Less however at the purchase than at Tom's greedy greed. You, however, are to get £3000 so I must congratulate you."

The Wallaroos remained a contentious point.

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1 "Dear Jemima" was Joanna Barr Smith's late sister, married to James Alison, and the Joanna mentioned here was Jemima's and James's daughter. Jemima had died aged twenty-five. Subsequently James Alison, Robert's business partner when he was in Glasgow, married Robert's sister, Jane Smith, so that Robert and Joanna were now doubly related — Robert's sister having married the widower of Joanna's sister.

2 Probably her distant cousin Rachel Luxmoore, writing from South Australia. Rachel later appears frequently in the Australian letters. She is listed as having arrived in Adelaide 24 September 1859, on the *Orient*.

3 Possibly refers to the celebrated trial of Viscount Yelverton in 1861. Yelverton secretly married Maria Longworth, in 1857, of whom his family disapproved, then claimed the marriage was not valid and married a respectable rich widow in 1858. Maria sued him for restitution of marital rights. Litigation went on for eight years, from 1859, and was a sensation in all the papers; it became the theme for various novels and plays on the subject of bigamy, e.g. *Lady Audley's Secret, John Marchmont's Legacy*. In the end Yelverton won the case but lost his reputation. All London (and elsewhere) followed the case as today it follows the Royal scandals.

4 Dr Smith had suffered a stroke in 1859 which paralysed him; he had to give up preaching and church duties and was confined to the house. He still occasionally took a small service in his own drawing room. (Obituary, *Renfrewshire Gazette*, 28 Jan 1865.)

5 Baden Powell: not the Scout, but Professor of Geometry at Oxford, who outraged high churchmen by arguing against miracles. Benjamin Jowett, Master of Baliol and Professor of Greek at Oxford was a well-known interpreter of the Scriptures who advocated new liberty of thought and bolder criticism. It was said of Powell that he would certainly have been prosecuted had he not died first.

CHAPTER 3

ADELAIDE 1862-1873

By the end of that year, 1861, Robert and Joanna and the two children were back in Australia and renting the fine mansion St Clair, in Woodville, built by J. B. Hughes as his town house. Their fortunes had burgeoned with the prosperity of the Wallaroo copper mines. Joanna's apprehensions that she might be left behind in England were unfounded. Nor does Tom appear to have gone to live with them as he had suggested in Kirkaldy; indeed, he was to buy a grand house for himself. But she was right about the pregnancy. Their fourth child, Mabel, was born in December 1861.

The Barr Smiths stayed at St Clair for eight years and had four more children in six years: Tom, Jean, Joanna and Erlistoun. They all throve, and the house could accommodate the additions as it counted thirty rooms — including a large ballroom for which Joanna, in an almost perpetual state of pregnancy or post-natal recovery, would have had little use.

During this period the partners Stirling and Taylor retired, and Tom and his brother-in-law restructured the business which was to be known as Elder Smith and Company for the next twenty-five years, with Tom and Robert the sole partners. Wealth came to them at first through the Wallaroo and Moonta Mines, and then by investment in land and stock. The brothers-in-law, who seemed to be an ideal combination and who remained loyal and true friends, had their distinct while complementary attitudes. Robert described their partnership in a letter years later to George Elder:

> The difference between Tom's squatting adventures and my squatting investments is substantially this. My investments have been made within what you may call an inside and settled zone — and broadly speaking were intended to yield, and did yield as a rule, income from the beginning. Tom's investments were in enormous tracts of outside country which required very great outlay, and for a very long time gave me no return at all, indeed some of them ended in total loss. Tom also had bad men as partners or in charge. Indeed he never had one good man until he got Waite who is an excellent organizer of sheep runs.

(George commented in his old age that he never liked Peter Waite: "Self-interest is his only motor-power, and he is such a nervous uncertain fellow that at any moment he might play the fool and wreck the interests of those connected with him"; letter from George Elder to Robert, 11 September 1896, TEBS.)

> . . . in building up these gigantic properties, which for so long gave no returns, Tom required an enormous Capital. He wisely refused to borrow anything outside or from the Banks, on the principle (and a sound one) that <u>his</u> borrowing outside, in any way, would weaken his credit, and, sympathetically, the credit of the firm. . . . So all the Capital he required was borrowed from Elder Smith who might go into debt — Tom <u>never.</u> (1 October 1895. TEBS)

Tom never married. In his way he borrowed the Barr Smith family for his own. As Joanna

produced her children Tom took great interest in his nieces and nephews. He led a busy but indulgent life, leaving Robert to cope with the financial balancing. In 1863, aged forty-five, he entered the Legislative Council and remained in parliament for a total of twelve years (1863-69, and again 1871-77). South Australia had cut loose from the strings of the Colonial Office and had had its own government, an Assembly and a Legislative Council since 1857. "On three afternoons a week for four or five months of the year, merchants, squatters, bankers, agents of various sorts and professional men (particularly lawyers) left their chambers and warehouses to carry on the public business of the country" (Hirst, *Adelaide and the Country*, p. 65). There were no political parties and no payment of salary. Sessions were stormy and the ministries formed one after the other — no one lasting generally more than a year before being reconstituted: "In 36 years ending 1892 there had been 41 ministries of less than an average duration of 12 months" (Hodder, *History of South Australia,* 2: 72). Much time was spent, as now, in bickering. The members of both the House of Assembly and the Legislative Council at this time were nearly all residents of Adelaide, for the big pastoralists in the main placed managers in their outback stations while they chose to live comfortably in the city.

As one of the largest land-owners and wool-brokers, Elder was particularly interested in debates on waste lands — on which he delivered a passionate speech on 12 January 1869 — but speeches of his are recorded on a variety of issues. (Parliamentary proceedings were recorded fully in the daily paper, *The Register,* as well as in the South Australian Parliamentary Proceedings.) Over his years in Council he fulminated about the rising National Debt (17 December 1867, 7 August 1868, 2 November 1876), was in favour of a new Land Bill with free selection and deferred payments (30 October 1872), spoke up for legislation to allow married women equality regarding property (18 October 1872), and on the Bathing Bill of 1873 he declared that to build a bathing pavilion at Glenelg as proposed would be unsightly and spoil the beach for riding! (9 December 1873). He said he would like to compel persons of both sexes to wear bathing dresses. (A Mr Perkin demurred, saying the Council must respect the feelings of those who would be shocked by such an idea. It was of course unthinkable in those days for both sexes to bathe together in the same place.)

In October 1872 the Town Hall bells rang out, flags were flown and the Government offices closed as the first direct message from London to Adelaide came through on the newly finished Overland Telegraph Service. It had taken less than two years to place the lines and poles through 2,000 miles of almost unknown country inhabited only by Aborigines, and Adelaide was justly proud and excited. Now instead of months, communication with the old world was only minutes away by telegraph. Banquets with fine speeches were held in London and Adelaide. In the Council Tom Elder remonstrated that he was "woefully disappointed at the paltry £1,000 given to Mr Todd", the builder of the Line, "who for years had planned this work and now carried it out with success". Were they, he asked, as they would throw a dog a bone, to offer Mr Todd such a reward? (28 November 1872).

Elder was not one to pontificate. Records of his parliamentary speeches indicate he was brief and to the point, but he used some fine rolling phrases. His longest speech (looking ahead to 1874) was to advocate the exploration of the Lake Eyre area. And he offered free use of his camels as a help. He became a great pioneer of outback Australia, and, inspired by his camel trek to Jerusalem, in 1866 imported his first carefully selected 120 camels for work in the outback. With these he started his own camel stud at Beltana and the beasts were to prove reliable and often life-saving transport for travellers in the dry desert. He himself was constantly travelling, to his distant stations. In 1862 he had joined with Peter Waite in buying several outback stations. Waite, trained as an ironmonger, had ventured out to Australia from Scotland in 1859, aged twenty-five, to help his

brother James at Pandappa, north of Hawker. The next few years were dreadful for him. His brother died and drought laid waste the land. Elder bought in as partner and supported him financially with the original and other runs; this proved successful and Waite later became a director and then chairman of Elder Smith & Co. Ltd. Waite was an innovative, clever and hard-working man of the land. At his instigation and with the funds now to do so, Tom and Robert began an original, ambitious and costly scheme to fence their lands and sink hundreds of dams and bores in order to cope with the devastating Australian droughts.

An enthusiastic traveller himself, Tom Elder, as he became richer, later financed various journeys of exploration, thus opening up the mysterious unmapped areas of the inland and west Australia. He despatched his camels for the exploring trips he promoted, and lent them to other explorations. And he became wonderfully philanthropic, giving away huge sums to charities and, more particularly, to educational projects.

In 1864, just after becoming a politician, he bought a house of his own, Birksgate, which preoccupied him with its additions, alterations and furnishing, as described in the Introduction. But while her brother's life expanded delightfully and her husband worked diligently, Joanna was kept busy with her children at the house in Woodville. Perhaps Robert did not go so often on business trips, or perhaps the trips were to the outback country where he and Tom were amassing these vast parcels of land, and perhaps on those journeys there was not much in the way of mail service. Whatever the reason there are few letters for a score of years — only brisk notes dispatched from home to the office for day-to-day emergencies. An exception is the cry of anger and dismay from Joanna after Robert had left her for an interstate journey, and she received startling news from him just as he was leaving his office.

St Clair, Woodville to Currie St.
March 13 1862:

> ...This is the only opportunity of writing to you and altho' it seems scarcely worth while to send you a letter <u>today</u> having only just parted yesterday ...
>
> I felt parting with you sorely. Alas! for me that I could see no sympathetic sorrow in you. On the contrary as I looked down the road I saw you galloping joyously off. "He loves but he rides away".
>
> News from home did not tend to remove my dismality. On the contrary you can fancy the shock I received when I read your note and found that my father has been so thoroughly lost to himself as to make a second marriage in his 78th year. My dear Bob the act is unworthy of him. It is simply disgusting. As for the results of it I think Rachel analyses it very correctly by saying he may be more comfortable but certainly less happy for I believe he will live to know himself a derision in the eyes of his own children. *[Rachel Luxmoore, a relative of Joanna's, appears to be staying at St Clair.]* This is a sad position. Willie, it seems, kicked up a fine babbery. I dont wonder at it.
>
> There's a great deal on the subject I <u>could</u> say but which I had better not write.
>
> We had a busy morning packing up for the Bay. I wish we were not going. I feel such a dislike to change.
>
> Mab and I slept upstairs — the cunning monkey *[Mabel was three months old]* did not give me an hour's uninterrupted rest. The boys are allright but very wild and unmanageable. My dearest love I want you back so much. I am terribly cut up by the affair at Kirkaldy.
>
> Rachel is heartless enough to send you her congratulations on the acquisition of a mother-in-law!

It appears that the elderly father had unexpectedly married a Mrs Ellen Kennedy. The rift was

final. Joanna was hurt by her father's second marriage and never mentions him again in letters to Robert. The elderly bridegroom died six years later (1868) and, though she visited Kirkaldy again when next she was in Scotland in 1873, she stayed not in Adelaide House but with friends.

As their family grew in number year by year Robert and Joanna added a dining room and another bedroom on to St Clair. The usual turmoil of builders in the house disrupted them. Joanna was pregnant again, and on 21 March 1863 Robert wrote to George Elder:

> Just returned from a miserable February at Glenelg to a half-finished house at Woodville. It is not easy to say by what we suffer most but the change at least has the advantage of a drift in kind of misery. The most startling thing is the death of poor James Waite *[Peter's brother]*. I believe he was his mother's favourite & my dear wife with her normal thoughtful kindness is writing to Mrs Waite. Tom no doubt advises you of our problem with Taylor *[he had just quit the partnership]*. From his last letter he was apparently in better spirits & hunting at Bauldry. (1: 373)

Robert goes on to urge George and Jane to come out. But the George Elders were not tempted.

The parting with John Taylor appears in the end to have been quite an amiable one. Robert continued to write letters to him in England inquiring anxiously about the second Mrs Taylor — an Adelaide girl, Miss Harriet McDermott — whom he had just married and who was ill. But it was in fact Taylor who died, suddenly and unexpectedly; Mrs Taylor recovered, had a baby son, remarried, and never set foot again in South Australia (Spence, *Autobiography*, p. 29).

Then comes a shocked undated note from Joanna. It would have been written in December 1863:

> Poor little Teddy Luxmoore is dead. *[Edward Luxmoore, aged five, son of William George Luxmoore of Kensington, died of scarlatina, December 24 1863.]* Isn't it dreadful? Rachel has gone away. I have sent the carriage with her. She was so dreadfully cut up — I did not like her having the fuss of train and omnibus. My dear Bob, is it not sinful of me to fret over trifles when real sorrow is stalking abroad?

But real sorrow was indeed stalking Joanna and Robert.

In 1864 Robert was visiting in the south-east of the Colony and two letters went out to him from Joanna.

No heading (but it would have come from St Clair)
Tuesday morning, 5th April:

> My ever dear Husband
>
> To the vulgar <u>green</u> as a colour has a painful significance. It means grief. And it is supposed to embody all the sorrowful emotions of the bearer. You will observe I chose <u>green paper</u> and I desire it to have a significance to your dear eyes. I do not think I ever before felt so sorrowful in letting you go from me. My heart felt bursting and I watched you with the spy glass until the train vanished in the distance with the sort of feeling that I might never see you again. This I hope is an absurd feeling produced by nervousness. I hope Old Time will stir his stirrups a bit & jog along somewhat faster than his wont & bring you back safely to my longing arms and heart.
>
> I recd. last night your kind note by John Luxmoore *[younger brother to William and Rachel]* — the stamps etc. and have begun this letter altho' I have not the most remote idea to where I am to send it. I have got one night over — Mabel was very wakeful, and I was consequently very serio. We had vague apprehensions too of a thunderstorm, which did not raise my spirits — as you may fancy.

I had a visit from Mrs Little last night *[the railwayman's wife]*. They are in great woe. He had received orders to quit at once and in your absence they have persuaded me to ask Tom to intercede with Hall for poor Little's forgiveness. Whether Tom will do it or not I dont know. Indeed I feel very doubtful. But I go up in the Dog cart with James this morning at 9 to try. I could do no less for the poor people are in such distress and catch at a straw. The children are quite well this morning. In the night Mamey kept saying piteously "Wheres Papa" and when I shewed her Beppy in your place she exclaimed indignantly "Dats not Papa. Dats Barty." She did not cry for you but she evidently missed you much.

Bertie is a good boy and I hope all will go smoothly in your absence and that you will have a pleasant time. Try and throw off all domestic worries and disagreeable reminiscences. Enjoy the present & dont cut short your trip by anything short of illness or accident.

I shall finish my letter tomorrow when I shall perhaps know where to send it.

Poor Mrs Jefferies was buried yesterday. There was a large attendance. How that poor man must have winced as he came back to his desolate home.

I stop for the present . . .

April 6th

I have the satisfaction of telling you that Mabel has been absolutely crying for you this morning *[Mabel was two and a half]*. When she woke up she began asking for you & would not be comforted when I told her you were not to be gone a long while. Poor wee thing. She is very fond of you.

I recd a telegram from you last night from Wellington. Am glad to see you are so far safely on your way. I am wearying for your Strathalbyn letter which I shall get today I hope. Always address me to the store as I suspect the Blunts.

My own dear love I took your old blue flannel coat to sleep with me last night. It was indeed a poor substitute, but its not the first time in my life I have taken shadow for substance. I am resolved to say nothing to you which will depress you so the only plan is to keep off myself. I could not get Little continued altho' Tom was very kind & went down to Hall at once. But the new man had been appointed & it seems that poor Little has been endangering lives lately, as the train very nearly ran into one paddock the other night from his neglect in signalling. There was a letter to you from the Crown Lands office yesterday, which I have transcribed. . . .

I met James Alexander *[unknown]* in town yesterday. He seemed to want to come down so I reluctantly invited him. . . . I think we are going to have a thunderstorm today. The air is stifling and a most oppressive stillness which almost always indicates thunder . . . Rachel is extremely kind & the servants with the exception of Sophy *[the nursemaid]* behaving very well. I send a telegram to McGraths Flat today which I hope you will receive. Do write to me as often as you can my own Bob for you know my anxious nature & I never have you for more than five minutes out of my mind . . .

Thursday morning.

Mamey has been again not quite crying but mourning for you. As soon as she was awake "Where's Papa." She has got a little cold, but they are all otherwise well today. Last night I recd your precious letter — Also a telegram from Robe (I did not know you were going there). I am rejoiced to know you are getting on. Do not curtail your trip my own Love for any feeling of consideration for me. I can live while you are away. Altho' I certainly

cannot enjoy life. . . . Lily Hall is recovering but poor Rawlings has lost a fine boy & his other children are ill. It does not abate. But we shall hope the best and trust in God to spare our dear boys and our darling, darling girl illness or death.

I am acceding to your desire to write you to Penola which I shall do tonight. I need not telegraph to you at all except there is something important. . . .

And now my dear boy, my love, my longing love to you. Remember that this absence of yours is to me a positive trial & you honestly can commend me for my patience — at all events if my patience is doubtful my love cannot be. It is strong as death.

(TEBS)

A second letter was despatched three days later.

Sunday afternoon,
April 10th 1864:

My beloved, I had your letter from McGraths Flat last night. But it was of course anticipated by your kind telegram from Robe. (By the bye you did not tell me you were going there) I am sorry to tell you I am sitting by the side of a little invalid. Poor Bertie was seized yesterday with his old complaint. I did not like to send for Gosse at first but at night he got into a high fever, talking as usual incoherently & frightening me very much. So early this morning I sent for the doctor *[Dr William Gosse, whose practice was eighteen kilometres away at Kent Town]* who pronounced it to be a threatening of his old complaint but taken in time. We administered oil which I fear I must repeat as it has had no effect & if that & an injection has no effect I am to send up for him. I quite expect to get round without this and I shd not spoil your pleasure by telling you if I were not anticipating this letter by a telegram to Mt Gambier on Tuesday by which I fondly expect to convey to you the welcome news of the child being all right again. My throat has taken a turn for the better this morning. There was a great deal of pain with it. All the others are well thank God and everything going on smoothly but oh my dearest and best how I miss you! How my heart yearns for you. Will it be long now Love for I feel as if I could not bear your absence much longer. But dont hurry, my dearest Bob.

Rather paradoxical isn't it. Bertie calls me off to read to him, poor boy. I shall finish this scrawl tomorrow.

Tom *[Elder]* came down to dinner. He & Rachel & Mabel are gone down in the buggy to the Semaphore to see if the mail is in. You amused me about the "dearest Joe." I am frightened to put any love in my telegrams as J. Luxmoore takes them and I shd not like my feelings sneered at. Dear, darling husband, how I love you.

Monday Morning.

Bertie had another dose last night, he's been very poorly all night. However his medicine has had some effect & I expect we'll be all right soon. He wont allow his stomach to be touched yet however which is a symptom I dont like. I trust tomorrow to be able to say "all is well".

Jim rather played up in the buggy last night & Tom said he was very glad to get Mabel safely home. Tom was in an excellent humour yesterday. Most kind. Darling Georgie fell on these two steps at our door last night & cut his head at the back. I was very frightened as it bled a good deal. He cried a great deal for him & did not show his usual pluck.

Mail not in yet as far as I know. Oh Bob when are you coming back to me. I cant live without you & I am getting anxious about you. Dear love have mercy on me & return as

soon as you can conveniently — And dont surprise me by coming unexpectedly for I am too nervous to bear it. Come in the evening if you can that I may soon get into your arms & into rest & peace.

Bertie sends love to his dear father.

Your ever dear & loving wife Joanna Barr Smith. 11th April.

(TEBS)

Four days later on 15 April 1864 Tom Elder sent this telegram to Robert at McGraths Flat:

Dear Bob — Bertie died yesterday of dysentery Joanna is wonderfully well and composed but anxious for your return — the Funeral is postponed till then & I am living at Woodville Telegraph immediately when you will be home.

(TEBS)

There is no sequence of formal letters from Joanna after this sad episode for some time. Robert continued his steady flow of letters and in August that year wrote two to George Elder, the first dated 5 August:

I have to own your kind note of June & have to thank you & your dear wife for all expressions of sympathy. I do not know whether Joanna will succeed in replying to Jane by this mail or not but if not I daresay Jane will excuse her. The loss of Bertie has been a trial to his mother from which she may not rally & she has had the additional sorrow of seeing our little girl laid down with fever & in considerable danger.

She is better now but still very weak, the constant nursing & care of this child has deprived Joanna of the little strength of courage she had before.

I am reminded by Young that I have not replied to your previous letter. It came at a time & treated of a subject which will I believe interpret and explain to you my silence.

The tone of my letter to your brother *[Alexander]* does not meet your approval. From my point of view it appears as if you did not consider the provocation I had received (I do not say this by way of complaint) . . . if however I was 'ungracious' your brother had his revenge. His reply which reached me Monday after my little boy's death, contained a degrading accusation & was (shall I say it) insulting. It need not be made the subject of explanation between us. I therefore had provocation full and something by way of interest for I did not choose to recriminate by any single word. Let him rest satisfied with this additional *[insult?]*. I would not now have said so much but that it seemed necessary to notice your letter & I hope we need not again drag it into our correspondence. (2: 30)

There is throughout their association a tension between Robert and Alexander which from time to time tightens into a clash between them. This is one example from several that appear in the letter books. Perhaps Alexander resented the in-law who seemed to be taking over such a position of authority in Adelaide. Rows flare up, feelings are ruffled and then calm generally ensues again. There was always pleasantness and affection between Robert and his other brothers-in-law, George and Tom. After this outburst, the cause of which is not known, the following letters to Alec in London referring to the business of shipping and wool are written in finest copperplate by a clerk and prefixed "Dear Mr Elder . . ."

Though there are no proper long letters from Joanna there is a series of little undated, unaddressed notes which give some idea of the day-to-day running of the household at St Clair:

Glad Mr Gollan is coming down *[Joanna's handwriting on a single sheet of paper]*. You will then have a pleasant evening I shall leave the cellar key in the pincushion. Please send the Bible to Mrs Mullet at once.

My dear friend Bob, How good you are! How can I ever repay you for your thousand kindnesses? I never can. Yr ever devoted Joanna.

My own dear forgiving Love, how I try your patience! How I worry and annoy you! But I love you, my dear husband, fondly, truly, eternally — so bear with me & perhaps I'll get more bearable in time ... I'll have dinner at 6 punctually.

Another note reads:

Dearest Bob, not being able to produce butter or eggs in the village I am compelled to send James to town with the cash. He can bring down the brandy &c. I am awfully wretched today physically. As long as I have your love I can't very well be wretched in any other way — Ever yr devoted Joe.

and (on black-edged mourning paper):

My dearest love, A bag of flour please. May come in the dray. And there is still a dozen English Ale in the house. Not more —You can send or not as you like. Do try to come home soon.

Their fifth child, Tom Elder, had been born in December 1863 and a sixth, Jean Balfour St Clair, the following December 1864, only a few months after little Bertie's death. Joanna was fairly tied to the nursery but there is one proper letter, in a mourning envelope, dated 1865, Robert having apparently set off on a trip into the country.

St Clare, Woodville.
16 August 1865:

[She relates that she has sent away the children's nurse. who was] ... a bad, ungrateful girl. This morning Rachel drove down to the Semaphore and got Lizzie to come in the meantime as yesterday I found the three quite too much *[as well as George there were the three babies Mabel, Tom and Jean].* Anger being the dominant passion yesterday & having hands & head fully preoccupied I was spared the pain of grieving over your departure ... when I saw you drive off in such style & evidently in such good spirits I felt unselfishly glad — I think it will do you good and I hope you'll enjoy it. I hope Mrs M. won't starve you. At any rate I'll take care you have comforts awaiting yr return ... Mary Gardner was down yesterday. She told me the Youngs was a very grand party — the Dalys were there and they announced it was their last appearance in the evening as they had both resolved to stay at home for their baby's sake and Mr John George said they never went out of an evening without thinking how much happier they were at home!!! *[Sir Dominick Daly was the Governor of South Australia from 1861 to 1868, when he died in office.]* Domesticity will cease to be only us Bob if it becomes common amongst the upper crust. — Rach brought down a story yesterday about Arthur Hardy being in great difficulty ... but I suppose it must be a mistake. *[It was not: Arthur Hardy, who had sold his house Birksgate to Tom Elder, finished up a bankrupt.]* ... afraid I wont have time to patch your trousers my hands are so full. My throat is most troublesome but I have no time to think about it. I was thinking of showing it to Gosse today if I go to him. But my head aches so I dread the Port road ...

Mr Cameron said to me on leaving he was afraid this season would impress you unfavourably with the Hummocks *[the run near Clare to which Robert was heading, and of which the pastoralist Hugh Cameron was a former manager].* I hope you wont be disappointed dear. You'll be glad to see the Darling is rising ... The children tore up the paper when I was out of the room otherwise I was going to cut out an advertisement which I don't comprehend to the effect that the partnership between Tom Elder and S.J. Stuckey &

> B. Stuckey & H.L. Galbraith was determined some day, I forget which of June and signed. I dont know how that bears on the case at all.

(Elder was sued for libel and breach of partnership articles by Henry Galbraith after an angry altercation. Elder lost the case and was ordered to pay £1000 for libel and £100 for wrongful dismissal. The Stuckeys were also partners with him in the property involved in this case. The *Advertiser,* Adelaide, 27 and 28 September 1865.)

Mourning paper is used sporadically for Joanna's letters — it must have been necessarily to hand in those days. While their cherished son Robert, their first-born, had died, it must have seemed a bitter irony that the second son George, now diagnosed as an epileptic and retarded, flourished. Robert's father, the venerable Dr Smith, had also died in January 1865 in Scotland.

During these years business was expanding for Elder and Smith. They extended into the buying, settling and stocking of land on a vast scale. The brothers-in-law individually or together joined with other would-be pastoralists or financed them, and between them eventually owned an enormous land mass.

For five years Tom had been making his improvements to Birksgate, attending parliament and making land deals, but in 1869 he sought leave from the Legislative Council and set off for an extended trip back to England and Scotland. He offered Birksgate to his sister, and the Barr Smiths quit St Clair and moved to Tom's house, where they remained for nearly three years until the owner returned and they rented The Briers from G.C. Hawker.[1] During these four years Joanna had three more confinements. Hugh was born in 1870 but died in his infancy; Ida Thekla was born in 1871 and another boy in 1872 to whom they gave the name Robert — the first son Robert having died ten years before.

A startling cameo of life at Birksgate comes at the end of one of Robert's business letters to Tom when he adds that Peter Waite has brought him a dog "which is handsome in the eyes of a sportsman or dog fancier . . . he is very gentle and even follows me to town every day and plays with the children. He is rather given in the drawing room to lifting up one of his hind legs against your gilt console & one day, at dinner-time, he pissed on the cake basket. But these are things he can be easily be broken of dear Tom" (3: 252).

This is not Joanna's style of description, but this period lacks letters from her and it sketches something into the gap. Another letter from Robert touches on her friendship with Mary MacKillop. This terrifically inspired and active little nun had started with Father Julian Tenison Woods the religious teaching order now widespread and known as the Sisters of St Joseph. Joanna, despondent over the deaths of two children and the dreadful disability of a third, was admiring of Mary's courage and faith through all her setbacks. Joanna would have liked to have such faith and the comfort deriving from it, and the future saint believed she could bring Joanna into the folds of her church. But though generous to the Roman Catholic nun struggling to establish schooling for poor children, and though religious matters were discussed seriously when they met, Joanna was never convinced. When Julian Tenison Woods invited them to attend a mass in January 1869 Robert replied for both of them:

> My dear Father,
> I have been thinking over your proposal to perform mass at Mt Lofty and have come to the conclusion that it will be more proper to decline it.
>
> My wife has been the subject of much remark lately in connection with your church & there are now many people who will not believe when told she is not a Catholic.
>
> I do not think it is wise for a lady to provide such remark unnecessarily. You will agree with me . . . (3: 106)

This in no way stemmed the friendship between the two women, who continued to see each other while they were both in Adelaide and to write to each other when they were not, though Joanna never converted to Catholicism, and remained uncomfortably pragmatic and questioning as years went by.

In an entirely different vein is a letter from the following year, January 1870. Robert wrote to Tom Elder, then in England:

> The great topic of the week is the separation of Mr and Mrs Forster — there never was anything like it. They were married on the 1st December. You would have thought they both knew what they were doing. *[Both Mr and Mrs Forster were marrying for the second time. Forster's first wife died in 1864 and Eliza, his second wife, née Macgeorge, was the widow of Francis Faulding who died in 1868. Forster was fifty-seven and his bride forty.]* For one month their amount of satisfaction in each other was unprecedented. No boy or girl ever fondled each other more tenderly. It was edifying to see them & the wives about Glen Osmond were rapidly becoming discontented with their own lots & wishing they had married old men. My Joanna said "old men are so much nicer!" It lasted a whole month . . . then she shut herself up and declared that nothing, nothing, nothing would ever make him her deary Tony again. He is my partner in Mt Murchison. She is my partner in Hummocks. But it is not a station matter and I cannot interfere. I am torn on every side and deeply distressed. My present sympathy goes with the husband as there is no reason except *[marriage?]* which one can guess at. . . . It is all as mysterious as the Roadmender's authorship . . . or the ultimate disposal of the body of Moses. (3: 191)

(Margaret Fairless Barber wrote *The Roadmender,* a popular work of Christian philosophy, under the nom-de-plume of Michael Fairless.)

Later in the year, Robert begins a long letter exultantly:

Sep 11. 1870 Adelaide.

> Dear Tom
>
> The first thing to tell you is that Joanna had another son on the evening of the 8th inst. & I am glad to add she & baby are getting on capitally. Of course she is still in bed but as well as can be expected in the circumstance. (3: 310)

This was Hugh, their eighth child. He died within a year.

It was during this period of their lives that Robert and Joanna began to use both his names as their surname. The Smiths became the Barr Smiths (though it was not hyphenated), while Robert's younger brother back in Scotland also rearranged his name — but more oddly: William Caldwell Smith chose to be known thereafter as William Smith Caldwell.

No other letters have been found from either Joanna or Robert for the period between December 1870 and June 1873, but one can assume that they made the move from one house to another. Early in 1873, having just begun to settle into The Briers and with two more babies in the family (Ida, born a bare three weeks before the baby Hugh died, and Robert Barr, born a year later), the whole family uprooted again and moved en masse to Britain. Joanna asked Mary MacKillop if they might continue their correspondence while they were away, and Mary agreed.

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[1] The Briers, a mansion in Medindie, still stands. For a time it became the McBride Maternity Hospital, but has recently been reconverted to a private house. Strangely, the Barr Smiths' daughter Joanna was to marry George Charles, the second son of the George Hawker from whom the Barr Smiths bought the Medindie house in 1874 and to whom they almost immediately sold it back. Old George Hawker lived in it then until he died.

CHAPTER 4

SCOTLAND — ADELAIDE 1873-1879

It was a more formidable family entourage this time. For their second trip back to England in 1873 Robert and Joanna took along their eight children: George, Mabel, Tom, Jean, Joe, Erlistoun, Ida and Robert. They had engaged a German governess, Miss Fickert, who sailed in one ship with the five younger children and George, but Mabel and Tom, more responsible, travelled on another vessel with their parents. As an old lady of ninety in 1945 Joe Hawker told this writer how, when she was seven years old, they set off on the long voyage with not only their governess but their very own cow on board to ensure the children and particularly the babies had their fresh milk. In the tropics the ship became becalmed and food was so perilously short that the Captain asked whether they might kill the cow for meat — and did. And so the passengers feasted on Beef Barr Smith. It made a great impression on Joe. The old lady also mentioned that she had never been to Sydney. It would never occur to her, she said, though she travelled many times between Adelaide and England. Thus the new settlers had imposed their attitudes on their children and thus it remained for a long time. Adelaide looked back to England for its home, its recreation and its model.

The Barr Smiths' travel plans were thwarted when the steamer carrying the parents and the two older children "broke down between the Sound and Galle" —King Georges Sound and Sri Lanka — as Joanna wrote to Mary MacKillop (25 July 1873); so that they were obliged to proceed up through India and were too late for the excursion they had planned in Europe. Whatever happened in the interim, by June the whole family was reunited in Scotland amid pouring rain. They had taken a house, Knockdow, in Argyllshire, from where Robert wrote to Tom Elder — the usual rigmarole of wheat and loading vessels; then he adds a more personal and irate note about their ex-partner Sir Edward Stirling, who had just died in London:

Knockdow
10 June 1873.

> This unworthy was consistently mean to the bitter end. Fancy his conduct to his wife, fancy his knocking out of his later will the only act of kindness he had ever contemplated — a miserable £300 to Miss Spence!! *[Catherine Helen Spence].* As to Miss Taylor *[Stirling's sister-in-law]* £1000 it is a downright robbery. He owes her three times this as wages as Upper nurse & housekeeper. Yet with my views I am bound to believe the old rascal sleeps soundly in his grave — & some four or five millions of years hence — if he ever rises again (which I consider doubtful) he may be regenerated & become a happy . . . member of the great and collective humanity of that time. Let us wait & see . . .
>
> . . . The St Vincent made a very long passage & we were worrying a good deal before she came in. The children were all well, except Georgie who appears neither better nor worse. I went to a doctor who treats this complaint specially. He gives me no hope of a cure.
>
> *[Illegible]* . . . about going back to the colony. Joanna is writing about Birksgate, and I

tell her that your reply will depend [upon whether you wish to remain in the] colony, or to move about, leaving me as in fixture. We have spent so much of our lives without a fixed home, that I must put my foot down now — somewhere ... the lack of it to a large family is intolerable. After I hear what you say I will try Hughes & perhaps Hawker *[to buy their Adelaide houses]*. It may be that 10 months residence will change our depression. In the meantime we deeply regret leaving South Australia and are by no means fascinated by the life we observe ... We have been living until last week in hotels & this is not a pleasant kind of life... It may be judging hastily but so far we do not think to have gained anything by leaving South Australia. Twenty years is a long part of one's life. Friendships are formed & interests created which do not die out at once. To tumble yourself into the midst of strangers who do not care a brass farthing for you — to subject yourself to live in a disagreeable climate where it is always raining is doubtful wisdom. I do not return, however until I know where I am to go for really with my family & at my time of life a fixed home is a necessity. (4: 1)

To Walter Hughes he wrote the next day, 11 July :

We find we made a mistake in coming here. The rain is excessive. The children have hard times of it after the Australian Experience & are all (except Georgie) set upon returning (4: 36)

Joanna for her part wrote to Mary MacKillop:

Knockdow
Towards
Argyllshire
July 10, 1873

...We have taken a shooting in Argyllshire and shall be here till we have slaughtered all the grouse and partridges. It is a pretty wild place, 6000 acres on the Kyle of Bute which reminds me that the Earl of that ilk *[the third Marquis of Bute]* has passed over to your church — and will, I hope, do you some good with his money and his influence. I sometimes go out on the moor with the dogs and as I stalk through the heather and sniff the mountain air, a thrill of enthusiasm sometimes passes over me. It is but an evanescent glow however. When I get back and feel my rheumatic knee (for I have got a rheumatic knee since I came to this diabolical climate) give me a twinge I long for a more genial clime where skies are bright and the rain does not fall <u>every</u> day.

But you will be surprised, I daresay, to hear we are thinking of returning to Australia. We neither like the climate nor the usages of English life. There is so much conventionalism — we are sick of it all ...

It was not for lack of company that they were feeling disillusioned about returning to Scotland. Robert added a list of their visitors to one of his long business letters to Tom Elder :

Knockdow July 9 1873

My sister Jane and James Alison are here right now. Mr and Mrs Gilbert next week & Alec and Mary the week after. Annie Elder & Jeannie Alison are at Knock & come to us when they leave. I have been aboard George's new yacht. Forster & Swan have been with us for a week *[Anthony Forster, their old friend, and William R. Swan, former partner]*. Swan left us yesterday to look at the estate of Glengowan which he & I are <u>talking</u> of buying — though not altogether pleased with it. (4: 44)

To his brother, Willie Smith Caldwell, Robert comments on his name change from Caldwell Smith, and complains of the dreadful week's shooting — eight brace his largest bag:

Knockdow
Sept 10 1873

> . . . Joanna and the children do not find it very lively. There are no neighbours & the children are accustomed to bright days & fare sadly with this dripping. The moor is a very difficult one to walk & at this season even with good weather — which it is not. . . . We have many a time heartily wished ourselves on the other side of the globe. However we get to London on the 29th & will see . . . (4: 116)

They left Scotland at the end of summer, having presumably finished off the grouse and partridges, and, failing to find a house that suited them in London, moved as a family to Brussels for the winter. Joanna wrote again to Sister Mary, who was on her first and only trip overseas, to seek audience with the Pope and to establish the Rule for the Josephite Order.

Hotel de Bellevue
Brussels,
October 11th.

> My dear Sister Mary,
> We arrived here yesterday after a very stormy crossing at Calais. I am sorry you did not give me the address of the young girl at Coblentz you wished me to see — as I am leaving this on Monday to run down to Wiesbaden by Cologne and Coblentz to see if the Baths will cure our rheumatics. I am leaving the children with Miss Fickert at this hotel till I return. We have nearly fixed to stay this winter in Brussels. There is a school here where some members of my family were educated. I find I can get two floors in the next house with a door of communication through, which would be very nice for the girls going on comfortably with their lessons — they are all such ignorant little . . . *[the rest of this letter is missing]*

2 Rue Neuve Ste Gudule,
Bruxelles
Belgium
Nov 30th 1873:

> My dear Sister Mary,
> I have been wandering over the face of the earth for many weeks, which must be my excuse for not writing to you. I have been all over Rhineland and have been trying the baths at Wiesbaden for my husband's rheumatism. Down also to Frankfurt on the Maine and after that back on a visit to Paris. I have fixed all the children at school here in Brussels and my husband and I intend to radiate from this convenient centre all over Europe.
>
> I am in receipt of two letters from you. Very many thanks. I am much interested in all your proceedings. Your Scotch letter[1] pleased me very much, i.e. it pleased me very much to think you were in the land of your 'father's folk'. I have an extravagant love for Scotland. In going to Oban, which you did I suppose by one of the Clyde steamers, probably the 'Iona', you must have passed quite close by my summer home, Knockdow, Argyllshire. Your letter to Coblentz is too late. I have already been there. I was delighted with it. The old fortress of Ehrenbrechtstein is magnificent. This mails letters from Adelaide are all very satisfactory I fancy for us all. We have bought 'Briers' our last home in Adelaide — a place for which we have a strong affection. We are going to add to it and hope to go out next

October. You will be out before us. I am quite resolved to be in Rome in Holy Week this year, but I fear you will be gone by that time. . . . My husband is going over on a visit to Scotland in a week or two. Perhaps he may see you in Edinr. But his special homes are in Ayrshire and Renfrewshire. Be sure to let me know your future plans, dear Sister Mary. Ah, if only I could believe in the efficacy of prayer, how much have I to pray for? What a daily hourly cross I have to take up in my own family — a cross year by year getting heavier as my unfortunate son grows older. *[George was now fifteen.]* But you know my hard unbelieving spirit. I seem to get worse every day. I wonder you can take the very faintest interest in me for I must continually wound your spirit and vex your heart. You fancy there are germs of grace in my heart! Alas, so choked with the weeds of worldliness and selfishness, they have no room to spring up into the goodly flowers or fruit of faith! We live here in the shadow of Ste. Gudule, the beautiful old cathedral of Brussels. Its bells awake us and call us to our daily duties. I always think of you whenever I look at it or hear the deep, solemn chimes.

Adieu. Heaven keep you. Heaven keep us all.

Ever, dear Sister Mary

Your friend Joanna Barr Smith.

2 Rue Neuve Ste Gudule
Bruxelles
6 January 1874:

My dear Sister Mary,

Your kind letter received. Thank you very much. Did I tell you we lived in a house next to a pensionnat where my daughters are being educated?[2] Well about a month ago fever broke out in Bruxelles — Two of the young ladies took it — and my boy Tom. I have been nursing him nearly three weeks, having sent all the other children and servants into the country to avoid infection. He has not got the turn yet but is going on favourably and will do well, please God. Last night we thought the angel of Death would come for one of the young ladies whose lungs had become congested — in addition to the fever. But today she is a shade better and will, I fancy, pull through. A Sister is assisting her mother to nurse her. I must make her acquaintance when I get the chance. Belgium is so unhealthy that the Convents are all nearly empty of Sisters, they being employed nursing the sick.

I can only send you these brief lines dear Sister Mary, and explain my sad position. I wish you a very happy New Year and a speedy reunion with your beloved helpmeets in the South.

Ever your attached friend

Joanna Barr Smith.

Tom recovered and they, or Robert at any rate, returned to England some time after this and certainly before the end of March, for on 30 March Robert sent a telegram from Hastings, Sussex, to Tom Elder in Adelaide: "Bought Torrens House with everything. Send lists & plans of rooms. Sell Briers. Dont let. Try Herbert Hughes & Hawker." (4: 142)

Sir Walter and Lady Watson Hughes, with whom they were well acquainted through their shared mining interests, had decided now to live permanently in England. Robert had met them in London and arranged to buy their Adelaide house, Torrens Park. The excitement justified the expensive telegram to Tom Elder — the overland telegraph line between Adelaide and Darwin having just been completed, thus linking Australia by telegraph to the rest of the world.

"The telegram, I grieve to say, cost £13", moaned Robert in a letter following it which contained the sale note; he went on:

> You see I get <u>all</u> as Hughes left it — 'furniture & effects' and hence I want your lists to see what I have got. Hughes' statement to me is that I just have to go in and light the fires — nothing having been removed except plate & silver, not even an ornament from a mantel piece. 'There is, he says, a clock in every room.' However upon further examination he subsequently stated that he had sent an order to sell Mrs Hughes' carriage . . . (4: 142)

here the letter drifts into illegibility.

The sudden purchase left them in somewhat of a fix. "I have been so long without a house and now have two!" Robert wrote (4: 140). "I feel I shall never be happy until it *[The Briers]* is sold. It has just occurred to me that Simpson might buy it if you can take his bill. Arthur Hardy might give you £1500 and his Mount House."[3]

There seemed to be more to do than just "go in and light the fires." Angry letters flowed out from Hastings, where Robert was then staying, to Adelaide as the Barr Smiths learned that the agents in Adelaide were disagreeable and uncooperative. They would provide no lists, resented the sale and would not allow the Barr Smiths to go ahead with the building of greenhouses on their newly-acquired property. Robert wrote in exasperation to Hughes:

Hastings July 16 1874.

> He *[Tom Elder]* is not mistaken about the resentment felt in Torrens Park. Harvey *[Elders office clerk]* refused list *[of goods and chattels]* without your legal assent & Tom's refusal to give Gavin Young *[Hughes's brother in law]* a few worthless orange trees without my written concurrence. I will be glad to take over Torrens Park <u>at once</u> . . . if you approve I will join you in a telegram & pay the expense of it myself *[the ultimate argument]*. (4: 277)

By good fortune The Briers was sold again within a month — and back to the original owner George Hawker. By June Robert and Joanna were on the move again, this time travelling in Europe with George and Jane Elder and picking up *en route* various pieces for the new home even though it was supposedly left fully furnished — except for Mrs Hughes's carriage.

They bought lavishly — mosaics from Florence, glass from Prague, 320 square metres of parquet from Switzerland, a case of pictures from Rome, another case of pictures from Munich, two cases of picture frames from Florence and an assortment of Dresden china, lamps, a case of material for making ice, cases of wine, and a box of toys (4: 215, 229, 369). Back in England Robert ordered brasses for his carriages from Birmingham and greenhouses from Brompton (4: 246, 274). They also bought five paintings by an obscure French artist, Ignace Fantin-Latour, whose work had been recommended by a friend in London (Legoe, *A Family Affair*, pp. 22-23). These turned out to be the only masterpieces they bought. There is also a letter from Robert paying a cheque for jewels — "a set of 5 diamond stars, a diamond brooch & a pair of opal & diamond earrings (small)" (4: 281). All this miscellaneous bulk, large and small, had to be shipped home for them.

No letters from Joanna to Robert have appeared for this period, but there exists a small bundle of notes (TEBS) that the parents wrote to their children, who remained in either London or Brussels under the charge of their governess while Joanna and Bob travelled through Europe with George and Jean Elder.

> My dearest Tom *[Joanna wrote from Paris, 10 May 1874]*,
>
> I see your Papa has written you such a nice, long letter that there is really nothing left to say. I must congratulate you on yr marks, I see a decided change in you, my dear boy, and it pleases me so much — I am very anxious that if you dont grow up a very <u>clever</u> man — you may at least be intelligent and well-informed. And to accomplish that you must be very <u>diligent</u> now with your lessons . . .

This to a ten year old! It is perhaps not surprising then that in their later life both Tom and his mother Joanna lamented that they were unable to express their feelings for each other, though there was great love between them.

She wrote to the little boy again about an excursion to Versailles, and again from Berlin:

> Thank you for your nice letter. There is some bad spelling in it but you are certainly improving. Oh be diligent, dear boy, for you are far behind other boys of your age. Try to improve yourself and be a credit to your parents. You are at all events a very kind son to yr mother.

A more relaxed letter was posted to little Tom from Kirkaldy that year when Joanna at last returned there.

Invertiel Bank, Kirkaldy
Sep. 1. 1874:

> My dearest Tommie,
>
> Here I am in my native town, the place where I was born. It looks pretty much the same as it did when I was young but almost all my old friends are gone or changed except the kind old friend with whom I am now living — and one other, Mrs Wemyss *[Isabella Wemyss remained a valued friend. Her daughter, Mrs Honeyman, visited Joanna at Torrens Park twenty years later].* I am going to have luncheon in my father's house today.[4] I shall see all the old chairs & tables that were familiar to me as a child. Wont it seem strange Tommy?
>
> Tell Miss F. that I was invited to dine with Carlyle and yesterday I had the pleasure of two hearty handshakes from him *[Thomas Carlyle once taught at Kirkaldy].* A delightful old man. He is staying in this town with the Provost *[Patrick Swan, an old friend of the Elders].*
>
> Yesterday it was so stormy crossing the Firth of Forth I was nearly sick — and one little girl was most dreadfully ill. She held her head as if the pain was more than she could bear.
>
> Your papa has gone out to make a call & I am going out immediately also — I shall go to Bobbie Salmonds, the famous confectioner, and buy you all a packet of real, genuine, Scotch mixtures. He is nearly as good as Littlejohn.
>
> In passing through Edinburgh yesterday I went and ordered for you silver medallions with our crest & motto for your Scotch Caps. I ordered three. One for B.B. when he is old enough to wear a Scotch Cap. *[Robert Barr was then two.]*
>
> My love to all. I go to Lochwinnoch tomorrow. In haste, Yr ever loving Mother.

One of their last concerns before leaving England was to try and find a tutor for the children. Robert wrote to a Mr Dale who had been recommended by Edward Stirling (the son of his late partner), now MA Cambridge and a lecturer and surgeon at St Georges Hospital, London. Robert set out his requirements: "The eldest girl is 13, the boy 11, & 3 other girls 10, 8, 6. They are backward but not stupid. They will be found polite & well-behaved but badly educated. We have moved too much about when they should have been at lessons" (4: 379). The result of this is not revealed in any further letter.

It is interesting that Robert also wrote letters to Alec from Hastings — friendly and quite warm letters. The old row was either solved or buried. One, just before they take their departure, ends — "In the pleasant hope of seeing you Wednesday at Southampton" (4: 321).

They were back in Adelaide by the end of the year 1874. They had been nearly two years abroad and now were to install themselves, after all those different houses, into Torrens Park, where they were to stay for the next thirty-odd years.

Torrens Park, still extant as the coeducational school Scotch College, stands on a slope rising

up to the Adelaide hills with panoramic views over to the distant St Vincent's Gulf, upon which the ships of those days began and finished their long voyages. Now standing in a tame, red-roofed suburb, it was surrounded then by bushland and forest, and with only the beginnings of housing. The city, where Robert had his office in Currie Street, is about seven kilometres away. Torrens Park owed its name to the lawyer Robert Torrens, who built it in 1853. It was and is still a beautiful building, of pale local stone, with steeply gabled slate roofs and a somewhat Gothic shape. There was a tower and narrow, arched windows, and it stood in 134 acres of grounds, part of which had been established as an orangery, a vineyard and a banana plantation. When Torrens returned to live in England in 1865 as so many of the early settlers did, once they had made their fortune in the new Colonies, he sold the place to Walter Watson Hughes who with his wife lived there on and off (but mostly off as they were more frequently in England than Australia) until he sold it to the Barr Smiths. When they moved into Torrens Park the house had already been considerably enlarged by the Hugheses and had a sufficiency of reception rooms and stables, though it seemed a little light on bedrooms for the large incoming family and staff. They made extensive additions over the next decade but at first added only a fine conservatory, twenty metres by seven, enthusiastically ordered in London as soon as they knew they were returning to a home of their own. This was shipped out in kit form and to it were added shade houses and cooling and heating systems and a wealth of exotic plants to emulate those they had so much admired at Birksgate.

By the 1870s the copper findings at Wallaroo and Moonta ensured that Hughes, Elder, Barr Smith, Taylor and Stirling were making extraordinarily satisfactory profits, along with two other new partners, George Waterhouse and G. Hall. The period of the sixties, seventies and eighties, fired by the mineral discoveries, projected the Colony into a flurry of development. Elder and W.W. Hughes, being both childless and now very rich, made a magnificent gesture when in 1874 they gave £20,000 each to create Adelaide's first University. (Later Tom was to endow a Chair of Medicine and a School of Music and gave further amounts for the Art Gallery and for explorations of discovery, as well as great sums for schools, churches and charities.)

Incidentally, Walter Watson Hughes had always been close friends with his sister's husband John Duncan. Wanting to preserve his name and having no child for this purpose, Hughes arranged his will to make his nephew John Duncan II his heir, so long as that nephew should change the name of his own son John Duncan III to John Duncan-Hughes. As it happened, although the renamed John Duncan-Hughes begat sons those sons remained childless, so the plan for perpetuity was thwarted. Tom Elder had no children and neither did his brothers George or William. But their brother Alexander and his wife balanced this infertility with fifteen children including four fruitful sons, and there is a large scattering of Elders today in England, Australia and New Zealand. Of the three Elder girls from Kirkaldy, Jemima (1821-46) had two daughters before her early death (Jemima Patrick, née Alison, Joanna's favourite niece, and Isobel), and Elizabeth Elder (1825-58), who married John Alexander, had one daughter only — Joanna Haddo Lang Stalker, née Alexander, who also died young and had no children. It was only Joanna Barr Smith who compared favourably with Alexander Elder. She and Robert parented thirteen children, although six died as infants and only four grew into old age.

Robert wrote to W.W. Hughes in June 1875: " Elder is already preening his wings for a flight into Egypt, reversing the progress of the Israelites who fled from Egypt. Elder is quite sure you are to accept his offer to meet you" (4: 541). Nothing came of this venture however. Tom busied himself with affairs of the Council; he had his nephews John and Edward from England and their friends to stay with him and took them into the outback and over to Tasmania. He also built a house at Glenelg, Seafield Tower (yet another tower), and did not leave Australia for two more years.

Adelaide at this time was very different from the tented and temporary settlement which greeted Alexander Elder when he came ashore in 1840. The ramshackle village had solidified into a handsome small town with some fine public buildings, a Botanical Gardens, an Art Gallery, Public Library, University, hospitals, a cathedral and so on. Railways radiated out into the country. A deep drainage system (Adelaide was the only city in Australia to have one) had made it the "cleanest and healthiest city in Australia" (Hodder, *History of South Australia,* 2: 70). The people who had money had built fine mansions for themselves scattered round the environs, and quite close in, where now stand packed rows of suburban villas, were bushland and villages. Winding driveways led past lodge gates through orchards and well-tended gardens to handsome houses where those who had prospered lived in style and comfort with ball-rooms and stables and servants. The owners went to the Adelaide Club if they were members, played polo and hunted, joined the Legislative Council, conducted their business in town and visited their stations. The wives made calls on and entertained others who were either rich or significant, or visiting grandees. It was a small society but a serious one. Manners were expected to be impeccable, boys were sent back to English public schools and universities while the girls were drilled in French by their governesses, and the pecking order was observed from the Governor down. Governors were all selected by the Colonial Office. They were Englishmen considered in London to be suitable for the job, and appointed with no consultation whatsoever with the administration in South Australia. Obviously Adelaide was an almost entirely Anglo-Saxon community, proudly detached from, sometimes offended by, but still drawing its model from British society. The Barr Smiths were at the top of that pecking order and Torrens Park became possibly the grandest of all the houses.

Despite their pre-eminence in the little pool of Adelaide society Robert and Joanna kept level heads. Owing, one imagines, to his upbringing Robert had no delusions but a healthy contempt for grandeur. When Tom Elder was knighted in 1879 he wrote teasingly to him in England:

> My dear Tom,
> I congratulate you on having got safely through the difficulties of Court presentation and on having received your letters patent. Your arms. I do not mean those with which your mother furnished you at birth, but your "coat of arms" supposed to come down to you from remoter ancestors. Barlow the coachmaster *[at Birksgate]* insists that as a knight you are entitled to a distinct blazon — gules — a lion rampant . . .
>
> (*History of the Beltana Pastoral Company*, 1965)

Robert leant more towards modesty. Later, in 1900, when he was asked by the then Governor of South Australia Lord Tennyson whether he would accept a baronetcy, he politely declined. Although, Tennyson wrote, he knew how Mr Barr Smith felt about such honours, he urged him to sink his private sentiments so that the Queen could thus be seen publicly to testify her sympathy with men of public spirit and public worth in Australia. Robert, courteously refusing, explained: "I know I have done nothing to earn this distinction and the acceptance of it would be inconsistent with the spirit of my whole life." He put the letter away and never mentioned it. Only after Robert's death, Joanna enclosed the correspondence of sixteen years earlier, 20 April 1900, in a letter to her son Tom (Good Friday 1916. Both letters TEBS).

After 1874 when they moved into their new house there is a gap of five years before Joanna's next letters to Robert. In November 1875 Ida died of diphtheria.

Robert wrote to his constant friend Price Maurice:

December 4. 1875

> I intended to have written to you very fully by this mail but I am sorry to tell you my mind & attentions have been distracted by the loss of our very dear little daughter of 4 years. She

> died 26th November. *[He goes on with the news about sheep and country conditions as usual and finishes:]* It is strange how one shrivels into one's own concerns — strange & pitiable. (4: 574)

Ida died in November and Joanna was already pregnant with her twelfth child who was born in April the following year. They called her Ursula and she was greeted with great joy. But she was destined also to die within two years. Fragments of their personal life emerge from Robert's business letters which went out to Tom, Alexander and George and to various associates and friends. Mixed up with them are letters to his own family in England.

Robert wrote to his mother at the end of 1876:

> . . . children have colds but go to Glenelg for a change on 22 December. My dear wife & I are quite well & are to remain at Torrens Park behind the children. George goes to Glenelg. Tom is probably travelling with his tutor *[Tom was then 13]* after he leaves there as we think it rather too dull a place for him & propose to break it up. Little Joe & your namesake *[Marjorie Erlistoun]* have taken to bringing every Sunday each a sermon of her own composition. This done entirely of their own suggestion. I think the spirit of their grandfather must be at work in them. (4: 662)

Now that Tom and Joanna both had large houses, money, and a reputation for hospitality, they were somewhat beset by young relatives sent out from Britain in search of opportunities. Both Fred and John Elder, Alec's boys, paid long visits, and the Clazys' son George also visited Torrens Park. Their company was enjoyed and they were entertained and taken around the country and given work. Less welcome was the Alisons' son James, who preferred the rough company of the crew on the voyage out.

"My dear Sister," Robert wrote to Jane Alison in December 1875, "the Callingore arrived 3 days ago with your son James and Mr John Elder. James only wants to be a sailor. I cannot tell you how much all this has annoyed and grieved me." He goes on to say how he plans to send him to Fowlers Bay, and tells her frankly that the boy will not go into an office, mixes with ruffians and is rough and drinks too much (4: 583). Four months later he wrote to her again: "I have given him one trial — he has left of his own accord" (4: 630).

A year later Robert wrote to his mother at Lochwinnoch in some distress when the boy came, uninvited, to Torrens Park:

> The intention to send him here was carefully concealed from me because it was known that I wd object to his coming. I have already said that I bitterly resent James Alison being saddled upon me. I have done my duty by Jane & her family & I do not grudge any pecuniary claim which might have been made . . . but I do consider it unfair that I should, in this small place, have to face the disgrace of the connexion. That from the companionship of men who are now working out a sentence for brutal assault & attempted murder — he should come back to my house blinking with his night's debauch & dirty in his person to outrage us all with our servants (in taste & good feeling greatly his superiors) & make our children open their eyes with wonder is, I think, too bad. Why, his Uncle John has a farm near London & a nice wide place & he and his doings wd be safely buried there . . . Jane is deeply sensible of John Alison's kindness because he insists that Jamie shall go out away from him as passenger and lends him the money!! I shall be glad to give him a much larger sum to get clear of him . . . simply a question of who shall have the responsibility & nuisance of looking after him. You select me for this office & you send him to me without giving me a chance of refusing. . . . *[after some more of this]* . . . The children are all well. Your namesake is the cleverest of all our children. (4: 727)

At this stage relations between Robert and Alexander Elder were again cordial, and Robert wrote news of Alec's son John, who was staying with them. There was talk of a nurse, as he was frail, and he in fact died two years later.

Adelaide,
Jan. 27, 1876

My dear Alec,

John is getting on very well considering the weather (hot) which of course interferes with his strength. Tom goes to Tasmania 13th February & John will go with him . . . *[he seems]* content to run about in the garden with the children. Joanna is feeling the weather much. The Children are all well & have recommenced lessons under the instructions of the Revd. Slaney Poole — the last Poole was one without water. Speculation in the paper that Tom is to be knighted. *[The knighthood came in 1878.]* (4: 595)

To his sister Jessie Clazy he wrote at Christmas, enclosing a cheque for £100:

> Glad to hear of your daughter's musical talent. They do not get it from "our side" for a more cracked-voiced and tuneless lot than the Smiths I never knew. Joanna and I are at the Park alone *[children at Glenelg]*. This is the anniversary of the Colony which is today 40 years — about my own age. I am going down to Glenelg where a grand luncheon is to be given by the commodore the Hon. Thomas Elder M.L.C. (4: 673)

Now, in 1877, Robert first mentions in a letter to his brother-in-law George that their son George is to try living away from home. The retarded boy was now nineteen — tall and strong. It was difficult to cope with him and the other children fast growing up. It was arranged for him to board with the Revd John Gardner and his wife. They were old acquaintances, as he had been assistant to Dr Smith at Lochwinnoch before going to Adelaide. When John Gardner moved to Queenscliff, Victoria, a pleasant seaside resort, it seemed an excellent plan for George to lead a settled life there with the quiet old couple, and elaborate and precise arrangements were made. George was to have a servant-companion to look after him as his fits and rages became more difficult to cope with. The specifications, agreed to by the Revd John, are all set out in Robert's letters. As well as a well-ventilated bedroom, a stable, horse and carriage were required for George. "He is a good rider but a fall or two from his horse warned us of the danger." Mr Gardner was also requested to see that George had "walking & plenty of it. He requires no wine or beer."

> The great defect of his character is indolence and inactivity. This arises partly from his disease and partly from our faulty training, under wrong medical advice. He is unwilling to exert either mind or body. He will walk with you if you start with him. He will do anything with you in which you join him. He can sing nicely. But patience must be taken in teaching him words. (4: 687)

George stayed with the Gardners for the next nine years, after which a house was bought for him at Victor Harbour where for another ten years he lived comfortably with a staff of people to tend him and where he had visits from his parents and was popular with the local folk. He lived on thus, looked after by various helpers and servants and spending his last years in a household in Somerton where he died in 1915.

To return to 1877. Tom Elder had sought leave from the Legislative Council in October 1877 for "urgent private business". As it happened he never returned to the political scene.

Robert wrote to Tom in England:

Adelaide,
November 1 1877:

> . . . a set was made upon me to stand for the mayoralty. I was assured that I wd go in probably without opposition & that I wd have a chance of being Sir Robert when H.R.H. the Prince of Wales came out to the Colonies next year. I however refused the bait & gilded hook & Henry Scott snapped it up. *[Henry Scott was elected Mayor 1878.]* (4: 739)

Among other business one of Tom's pleasurable tasks was to go to the Paris International Exhibition as Honorary Commisssioner for South Australia. He also paid a visit to Kirkaldy where he was asked for a subscription to a Free Church proposed there. "He made the deputation stare by handing them a cheque for a cool thousand. It caused some embarrassment, I am told, at the local bank for cool thousands have been out of date in Kirkaldy since the linen trade collapsed" (*Register*, Adelaide, 26 February 1878).

It was during this trip "home" that Tom was knighted. Robert had little time for titles but wrote cheerily to George Elder in May 1878:

> Three or four days ago "one heard of" Tom having been created Knight. I am glad of it, as I think it will give him pleasure, and I like him to have anything which makes him happy.
>
> We have had only bickerings — many a one — but he has been a staunch friend in the main for many a year. So I rejoice in his joy. I'm afraid his absence will cause him to lose his seat in the Council as Joe Fisher tells me with so many away he does not see his way to hold it any longer.
>
> . . . Since last wrote I have been to Moonta and Wallaroo on visit of inspection — the first for many years for I do not like these mining towns. Moonta is going on tolerably well & cd be made to pay dividends even at present prices.
>
> John *[Elder]* has been here. N.Z. climate did not agree & Australia suits him best. (4: 858)

Robert had written in friendly mood to Alexander, 18 April:

> My dear Alec,
> I have the pleasure of your lines of 14th February and notice how thinner your household has become *[various members of Alec's family are travelling abroad]*. But then they were all apparently in the way of enjoying themselves & it is the privilege of parents to be unselfish & the prerogative of the child to be exactly the opposite. I cannot imagine anything more pleasant for youth than this wandering in foreign & strange lands although I cannot say that my leisure in S.A. & the glimpses I got of the deserts have made me picture to myself the hot & glaring Palestine as exactly the place I shd like to visit — its sacred associations notwithstanding.
>
> . . . Up the Nile in a lazy manner with a pipe in one's mouth & an awning over the deck is a different story for an idle self-indulgent man as I confess to being. I had no letter from Tom Elder last mail but Joanna and Mabel had & he seemed to be getting on well. His heart however is in S.A. He left it reluctantly & counts the hours until he returns. (4: 819)

Another letter of April 1878 to George comments rather wistfully, after the business rigmarole:

> Joanna says it will be impossible for us to go home next year if there is War. I assure her that the acts of God & the perils of the seas are always more real evils & danger than the Queen's enemies.
>
> The fifteenth of this month was our 22nd wedding anniversary. What a dreary thought

> it is that in the nature of things I can hardly see another 22 years *[but he did!]* & looking back upon it — what a paltry space of time. (4: 809)

He gossips with George at the end of his business letter to him, 13 June:

> We have been much scandalised by the Mitcham pastor turning out to be a black sheep in all possible evil ways. He was old Hullabaloo Hughes' chosen professor but not a good performer. . . . We have been overrun with Lords this week. Viscount Ebrington, Earl Fortescue's eldest son who has neither a back nor front to his head. Lord Ronald Gower, brother to the Duke of Sutherland. (4: 885)

In the same light-hearted vein he wrote to Tom, 10 July 1878:

> Glad you enjoyed Jervois' *[the Governor's]* banquet. Somehow or other I have a repugnance for Sir W. J. He is such a jerky, jumping-jack fellow with no repose or dignity. Then he is, I fear, more kinds of an ass than most people & he has a tolerably high estimate of himself. Altogether I dont feel drawn to him. (4: 911)

And on the same subject, 8 August 1878, to his friend Anthony Forster, now living at Hastings in England:

> I see you do not like Sir William Jervois. He is a restless fool. Edith Baker says Nature intended him for an upholsterer. He is great on carpets & hangings. This silly government is building for him 3 miles beyond Morialta, in the very centre of the stringy-bark wilderness, an enormous house.[5] Next demand will be for an addition to his salary as he cannot keep 2 houses up on £5000 a year. (4: 948)

While the tone of these extracts may sound flippant they are as a rule codas to long and serious letters which he sent off regularly to Tom especially and to other business people. Some of his letters to Tom are of twelve and fourteen pages of his handwriting and are divided by headings. In one, for example: *Horses* (both Tom and Robert were passionate about horses, their breeding and racing), *Enchantress* (news of Tom's racing yacht), *Elections, Pridmore's Case, Scott & Co., Mines, 10 Acre Blocks, Pekina, A. L Elders A/c., Boucaut's Pastoral Proposals.* The little personal bits are only a line or two at the end. On 7 August 1878 his apology for a scrappy letter — "I ought to have written longer but owing to an entire day being wasted in celebrating the birthday of that shady young man the Duke of Edinburgh" — shows what a devotee to work he was (4: 946).

Joanna often lamented her short temper when writing to Robert, but in his own letters there is frequently quite a display of fury. In a series of letters to his mother in 1877-78 he is greatly concerned about the tenant his mother has put into Lochside and who has apparently been chopping down trees:

> The pig-headed barbarian does not seem to realize what an utterly wanton impertinence it is on his part to interfere with your timbers. Deriving from his father no doubt a hereditary mania for cutting wood he finds vent for his ancestral instinct by cutting and carving the living plants as his father did the dead. I wd just as willingly turn a mad dog amongst my sheep as allow him to remain within reach of our primeval forests. (4: 727)

The correspondence about the loathed tenant and the desecrated woodland goes on for a year until, presumably chided for it, he ends with "Falling in with your wish I have written to W.B. Dunlop *[a cousin on the Barr side]* that I will not in any way interfere with the Lochside arrangements" (4: 1022).

In August 1878 a row erupted again between Alexander and Robert. Alexander complained about financial arrangements to do with the Torrens Tin Company, and Robert wrote angrily to Tom in England, setting out in meticulous detail the payments made and the losses sustained and the calls that were made, and finished by suggesting that the losses involved were aggravated by Alexander's own mismanagement. "It does seem strange that when the other share-holders, Will, George, the Stirlings and so on refusing to go beyond this strict legal responsibility — and when you & I meet the case as we have done, we get no credit for it — rather blame & ill will" (4: 960).

Next month, 3 September, he wrote to Tom again on the subject: "Not going to mention the Tin Coy more", but only abandoned one irritating subject for another — a visiting black sheep, Lord Henry Fitzroy, eldest son and heir to the 7th Duke of Grafton. Lord Henry (later known as the Earl of Euston) went to Australia after a disastrous early marriage to a courtesan and chorus girl. His mother, the future Duchess of Grafton, was Lady Anna Balfour, so the Cecil Balfour mentioned would be a relation. (For fuller details, and the Euston scandal, see Chapter 6, note 13).

> I cannot tell you when I have been more ashamed of myself after the event than I am of a transaction I had with this fellow. When Cecil Balfour was out he interviewed me twice at great length on Fitzroy's position & necessities. I told him plainly that he had been nearly coming to grief more than once & that want would come upon him as a ruined man as certainly as death. Balfour said that under such necessities it was not possible to let him go down & that he himself would see to it for the honour of the family that any loan made to him in case of need would be duly met. Specially he said that the £100 I had already given him he would insist upon remitting us. He half got me to say that in absolute need I would, within certain limits, interfere & he assured me I could run no risk in doing so.
>
> Now all this is pretty talking but my answer should have been 'Give me the authority from Lord Charles Fitzroy' *[Lord Henry's father's title before he succeeded to the dukedom four years later]* for I did not think Balfour looked like a millionaire & I extracted bills of lading for some flour he had ordered. But I was stupid & did not ask this authority. . . . I have been tempted however & have fallen for the extent of £200 which was the smallest thing that would enable Fitzroy to go on. I took his bill for £300 to cover my previous loan & it goes home to Alec by this mail. If it be not accepted & paid you must write to Lord Charles Fitzroy (he has thanked you for your kindness the hypocritical old serpent and debauchee!) The throne, the Church, the House of Lords will be in danger if you & I after all our kindness shown to the heir of a dukedom, the first-born of a house which for 7 centuries had as ourselves observed, a consistently evil reputation (worthy of its origin) are left in the lurch. *[The first Duke of Grafton was the illegitimate son of Charles II and his mistress Barbara Villiers, and several notorious eccentrics and blackguards were descended from him.]*
>
> He, poor fellow, (Fitzroy) has about £150 a year & is conducting himself with the most perfect propriety (for a Lord's son) but he can no more help betting upon a horse race than he can help breathing — and of course he always loses. If you are beat I can put him in gaol, that's all, and that is exactly the head & froth of my folly. I am left to do the dirty work instead of Ikey Coleman & Joe Thompson. Fool. Fool. Fool! (4: 964)

Joanna had complained often enough of the dripping, dismal weather in Scotland and the appalling fogs of London, but summers in South Australia were hard to endure — the high temperatures, hot nights and searing winds. Joanna with Ida's death as well as the birth and later death of Ursula had a stressful time of it even in the grand new house. This was the black side. But on the positive side a building instinct, which may have lain frustratingly latent for years as they rented house after house, emerged at this time and they commissioned a young architect, John Grainger, to convert an old

inn at Mount Barker, twenty-two miles away in the hills, into a refreshingly cool retreat for them during the hot summer months. This was a thirty-roomed house of like magnitude to Torrens Park though more chunky and Georgian in appearance. It took, naturally, far longer to build than was promised or expected. They were making plans to leave for England again as soon as Tom returned from overseas. George had now gone to stay with the Gardners. Then tragedy again overtook them. The adored smallest tot, Ursula, aged two, died suddenly in 1878.

Robert wrote to Tom at once:

> The event of the month for us was a sad one. Our little daughter Ursula died of croup on the 13th after a few hours illness. The pet of all she was & the amount of love we all lavished on her it is impossible to describe. *[Robert describes how he had driven the children to the picnic race on the Saturday and all were perfectly well. On Sunday they were in the garden knocking some loquats onto the lawn]* Joanna skinning them and feeding her. On Monday she took ill and died of suffocation Wednesday about 1 a.m. To Joanna the loss was overwhelming. R.B. *[Robert Barr]* too took the disease and she had to sit up nights with him but today we think being out of all danger ... I had intended to have written you very fully of this opportunity — the whole of my time has been taken up otherwise. ... *[then follow, in his systematic way, the pages about mining, finance, the Wallaroo question and so on.]* (5: 12)

He wrote also to Joanna's brother George and to others of the family, with the tragic news, saying Joanna was too heart-broken to write, for no child of theirs had been more cherished and cosseted by her than this last little one and the sudden loss of her was unbearable. Joanna herself suffered a collapse. Letter after letter sent from Robert to Tom and to his English relations end with his anxiety about her — her headaches and her fretting and despondency; but at last he was able to write to George, 22 February 1879:

> Joanna, barring an occasional headache looks blooming. She is much stouter than she was but I hope you will see us all for yourselves when Tom returns — 1880. We are all at the Semaphore Jetty House Hotel occupying the upper story of a public house with a view of our neighbours wherever we turn our eyes. We came to Semaphore for the sake of R.B. who always wants a change of air in summer. Mt Barker has been very disappointing, for after contracting to get the keys on 15 January, the 15 March wont see it ready & as we start in October or November next who knows when if ever I shall inspect the house that Bob built. (5: 188)

In April he wrote to Tom , again very anxious about Joanna's health.

> *[It is annoying]* to interfere in any way with your arrangements but I do not think I would be justified in delaying for any purpose whatever — she must go either with or without me & I do not think it wd be safe to send her alone. Day before yesterday she was worse & today a good deal on her bed but mainly *[it is]* her nervous system & nothing but a change from Torrens Park will do her any good. All this might have been avoided if that infernal contractor had kept to his time & let her have a change. (5: 257)

Indeed they left for England without getting into Auchendarroch, their planned summer retreat. It was still only in its final stages of building when they sailed off, earlier than they had intended, on what was always for Joanna a frightening sea voyage. And she was pregnant again.

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[1] Written from Invernevis, Fort William, 19 November. The other letter from the Convent of Notre Dame, Liverpool, 7 October 1873. Both TEBS.

2 Jean and Joe tried to trace the old house when they were in Brussels in 1922. "It must have been pulled down & built over." JGD.

3 Arthur Hardy, from whom Tom Elder had bought Birksgate, now lived at Mt Lofty House. This was rebuilt after the 1983 bushfires and extended into a luxury hotel.

4 Adelaide House was "an imposing residence standing in its own broad grounds" in Wemyss Field (*Guide to Kirkaldy,* 1905). Since demolished to make way for Council Chambers.

5 Marble Hill: it was destroyed by bushfire on 1 Jan. 1955 while the then Governor, Sir Robert George, and his family and staff were in residence. They only escaped with their lives by fleeing draped in blankets and sheltering in a ditch.

CHAPTER 5

SCOTLAND — ADELAIDE 1879-1883

By August that year, 1879, the parents, with Mabel, Tom, Jean, Joe, Erlistoun and Bertie and Miss Fickert, were installed in a hotel in Scotland and Joanna writes to Robert, who has gone to visit his mother and afterwards to the grouse moors. Young Tom, sixteen, has been for an interview with the head of a boys' school which it is hoped will prepare him for Cambridge. The interview does not sound promising.

Royal Hotel, Edinburgh to Lochwinnoch
Wednesday night (probably 6 August: envelope dated 7 August 1879):

My dearest Bob,

You desired me to send you a telegram tomorrow, mainly to convey news of the Potts tea-party. It wd make a long telegram so I write you this note in the hope it may reach you.

I was very glad when the boy came home. I was feeling for him internally a good deal. Knowing it was more or less of an ordeal for him. Juvenile Potts took him all over the College & grounds then he came into tea — but before tea Mrs Potts said she wanted him to see one of the tutors. So he was led unresistingly into a small room where a seedy-looking master with a long, dirty shirt interviewed him. Then came tea, and introductions to sundry other small Potts & after tea when he was coming away, Mrs Potts said to him "Tell yr father that one of the masters has examined you & he thinks you wd do better with some private tuition than at present in a public school — but say that Dr Potts will write about it."

So I fear Tom's doom is sealed & we must make up our minds for his rejection. I am sorry for your disappointment dear Bob.

Tom was delighted with the College & all its arrangements & I think is sorry that he cannot go. He saw Duff — the fortunate boy who has passed such a good examination. He is going up to Cambridge now.

I must tell you I do not like the look of Drumsheugh at all. So I think you shd close with Grosvenor Crescent at once. *[They were looking for a house to rent, and did take 21 Grosvenor Crescent, Edinburgh.]* George was quite right about the building going on. It wd be insufferable. No 29 is a larger house than No 21 but if Grosvenor Crest looked dull, Drumsheugh looked a thousand times duller. Mabel & I went about the shortbread to the little shoppie in Rose St. & sent a tin to Jean. Then we went to Littlejohns & got cake & lollies! I feel very lonesome tonight but I must get used to it. Many a lonesome night I'll have during the next few weeks — but if you are happy my dear what does it signify. I hope you have had a happy meeting with your mother & find her looking well. You will enjoy going over Lochside tomorrow. I wish I was with you ...

(This and the next four letters TEBS)

Royal Hotel, Edinburgh to Edgars Restaurant, Bowling, Dumbartonshire
August 11th 1879:

My dearest & best,

Yr telegram has just arrived. I am glad to know you are all safe & comfortable before I turn in. Mr Buchanan is very kind to send you fruit. I am sure from your multitude of slain birds tomorrow you will return the compliment. I grieve to enclose Dr Potts negative. I opened it for I recognised the post mark, Keswick & I have sent a polite reply thinking you wd be too busy for the next few days to trouble your head about an old Pot.

Mabel & I went out this afternoon to get a present for Miss F. *[Miss Fickert. Through all the long years she worked for the Barr Smiths she was always addressed thus].* I chose her a box with ivory brushes & had her monogram put on. That is £5 gone of what you left me. A daft man came in to Littlejohns when we were there & gave us such a fright. He came in saying "What a smell of beefsteak" & kept repeating this, glaring fiercely round. Miss Littlejohn said he always called out the same thing. I shd infer from that a beefsteak was the last thing he eat before he lost his wits & the memory of it is indelibly fixed on his poor, vacant mind, just as the face of the murderer is sometimes left on the retina of his victim's eye.

I do hope you'll have a pleasant & prosperous day tomorrow, my beloved old man *[12 August is the opening of the shooting season].* The thought of yr return on Friday keeps me alive — otherwise I shd die of grief at being without you. But dont come away on Friday if Saturday holds any grouse inducements. The only thing to remember is to telegraph to yr mother your deferred visit. Tell Tom I shall write him tomorrow. Kind regards to Dr Stirling *[Edward Stirling, who had advised them on a tutor for the children].*

12th August 1879:

. . . I do hope you are having a pleasant day & good sport. You ought to be happy seeing that a Britisher is never really so, they say, unless where "killing something".

What a prose you are about packing your clothes! I fear you had bad times for want of yr nightshirt & sponge. I send you your letters. I took the liberty of opening . . . *[writing illegible and letter torn].* It was fat & looked like having enclosures. The photos of Kaulbacks dont make me anxious to possess the originals — excepting Tasso, which seems a lovely portrait. Dietz I see is charging you £75 for his picture. But I have a sort of idea that Dietz is one of the best of these Müncheners*[?].*

We are all well today. Coogee is full of life. I think of sending her across to Millpack today. *[Cannot identify Coogee. Their youngest daughter, Erlistoun, was eleven.]* Alexr *[Alexander, their butler]* says they get a drive round the island for 1/- a head. Cheap isn't it & for poor people like us that is a great consideration.

I long to taste a grouse. I hope this year to eat one of my son's shooting. I trust your weather is as good as ours. Its heavenly here today.

I saw poor Flora's dead face yesterday at Knock *[Castle, George and Jane Elder's residence. Flora unidentified].* Isn't it sad for her mother. Oh my dear Love. I wonder what will be our next blow. But I must not write so gloomily. I hope you will enjoy this shooting time very much & not find the walking too hard on yr dear old fat sides. Best love to you both. . . .

No date or heading:

My dearest Bob, I enclose yr business letters. Yr mother's I scarcely understand. Perhaps you know what it means. Of course I wd not be likely to introduce any family unpleasantness on Saturday. Do you not think it is too much for her — such a host of us going in

upon her? She does indeed seem failing, poor body *[Marjorie Smith died two years later, in 1881].* What a pity she is not made happier in her last days. I was very glad to get yr telegram last night. And oh Happiness! Tomorrow is Friday.

I am just going out to order our household linen. It will be all they can do to have things ready by the 1st. It will be nice dear Bob to have a home of our own again — I wish I knew I wd live over my confinement — for I think I wd be a better wife now & make you happier. At all events I cd never love you more ...

Joanna, six months pregnant, was to have their thirteenth child in the house they rented at Grosvenor Crescent, Edinburgh.

18 August:

My dearest Life — as Pamela's husband would begin his letters. *[A reference to Mr B., the philandering husband in Samuel Richardson's novel* Pamela *(1740).]* You know Pamela's husband had been no better than he shd be. Yet after the priestly benediction what an admirable Crichton he became. Such a husband! Such a father etc. etc. & always called his wife his Dearest Life. Well my dear old boy I infer from yr telegram today you are not in a very good humour. A bad day has perhaps put you out or can I flatter myself you were vexed that I did not write to you? I fear it was the first — not the last-named cause. I am very sorry you had a poor day but this maybe will be a good one. Here it is cool & dull — no sun whatever. We are all very dull without you & count the hours till Friday. I went to Knock yesterday to see poor Maggie Symmington's Yankee children. Very nice children they are but they speak thro' their noses & "guess" & "calculate."

The Cook, the under housemaid & John are away on an excursion today — all very happy poor things. Wd I could feel the happiness of having a holiday again but that has passed like last Spring's flowers.

Dr Heron Watson is to go to St Margts *[St Margaret's Hope]* today to have another consultation over the laird. I fear poor Willie's illness is going to be protracted. *[Her brother William Elder began to winter each year in the South of France to restore his health, but died in Cannes three years later (1882).]* Enclosed is a letter I got from Willie. You see things have come to a climax at the Square. It will make it all the easier for you on Sunday. The enclosed from *[illegible]* contained no fresh account. No letters to you save grateful acknowledgement from the receipts of yr grouse. Love to Toz and hope to have you back no later than Friday ...

While the Barr Smiths lived in Edinburgh the two older girls, Mabel and Jean, went to a school in Magdala Place. There is a family story that Tom and his friend William Anstey Giles for a lark cycled up from Cambridge on their "penny farthings" and wheeled into the school to surprise the girls. It is reported to have caused a small sensation, and it was then and there that he met Mary Isobel Mitchell, a fellow pupil at this establishment, with whom he fell immediately in love and whom he later married. Tom was sixteen and did not enter Cambridge for another three years, so the family legend is a bit wobbly. (Jean Giles, who went to find it again in September 1922, noted in her diary that Magdala had turned into Eglinton Crescent.)

There are no more letters from this period. Joanna's thirteenth and last baby was born in November and was called Dorothea.

By the time the Barr Smith family returned to Australia in 1880 the country house Auchendarroch was finished and the enlargements to Torrens Park, which had been commissioned to be effected while they were away, were complete. There were now more bedrooms, a

larger drawing room and a new billiard room. And plans were afoot to build a little private theatre as the children now in their teens were forever dressing up and devising plays.

Another bereavement hit them in March when the little Dorothea died. Joanna became ill again with grief. Robert wrote to their son George postponing a visit from Queenscliff.

Adelaide
April 5 1881

> Your mama got your note ... she is in bed. We're wearying to see you & most anxious that you shd come round but I think ... not. She must get a little stronger. ... delaying for a few days ... whenever she's able to be up without pain I will either write or telegraph & Mr Gardner & you & I will arrange passages with the steamship company. ... The loss of this little sister has been a great blow. We loved her very much.

To Tom Elder, abroad, he writes weekly of Joanna's headaches and low spirits:

Adelaide,
July 14 1881

> Only Joanna & I are going to try what a change will do. She, poor thing does not get rid of her settled gloom. ... Sometimes she says she must set out on her wanderings again — & you need not be at all surprised if when Tom goes home to college next year there is a proposal to accompany him. (5: 410)

And the following week at the end of one of his long letters to Tom:

> The Rev. John Gardner with us, having come round to lure George back again but the boy is firm upon it that he does not wish to go back & I dont know how it will end. It is a bad job for Gardner. (5: 422)

Robert's mother Marjorie Smith had died in May. She left Lochside to him in her will but Robert never lived there. In the end it was his brother Willie Smith Caldwell who made it his home after his years as a doctor in India.

By August Joanna was recovering and Robert wrote to Tom, 11 August: "We have some people dining tonight. Joanna's first attempt at hospitality" (5: 440).

From now on a series of letters in the letter book indicate the progress and the anxiety of getting Tom Barr Smith accepted for Cambridge. He had been to St Peters School in Adelaide, but there had been interruptions during long periods overseas and his indifferent grades did not offer easy entry. In September 1881 Robert wrote to his nephew John Elder who was a Cambridge graduate to inquire about a suitable tutor. He said he was not happy with the coaching Tom was getting in Adelaide from a Professor Kelly (David Kelly (1847-94), Irish professor of Classics and Comparative Philology at the University of Adelaide since 1879).

> I daresay he is a good teacher but he distinctly promised to give up lunching at the Club and billiards in the intention of being with Tom earlier in the day to direct his studies. He never comes in till 2.30 & Tom leaves at 6 punctually & for that I am paying him at the rate of I suppose £700 a year. Dr Sternberg is not so lazy as Kelly ... (5: 480)

John recommended his own old tutor, the Revd E.C. Adams, whom Robert immediately engaged. He was pleased to tell Tom Elder of all this and gave him the news at the end of his 28 October letter.

> We propose to send Tom home with *[Captain]* Hector. Mr Adams, John's old tutor has written accepting Tom as a pupil. George comes back here in January & as the girls are grown up his mother thinks she will keep him at home now. . . . I like to think of you all three larking about Cannes and visiting Grasse. *[His brothers have joined the ailing William Elder on his summer holiday.]* (5:571)

To the Revd Adams, 7 December 1881, he wrote the first of many letters of instruction and questioning, first of all pointing out that his son's name is Tom, *not* Thomas.

> Professor Kelly who has had charge of my son gives him a letter of introduction to an intimate friend with whom he says it would be useful to work for a few weeks of preparation. But I prefer that he should go to you on arrival & though you have only announced your willingness to take him after Easter, perhaps you will kindly advise him where he should live until he can come to you. He will present himself to you on arrival. I enclose a certificate of character which will account for him since he was 14. He has never given me any trouble & though his education has been desultory & his *[achievement]* is small I am glad to say he has latterly been working more earnestly & making some progress . . . Our plan to leave 6 Jan *[to reach]* Southampton about 28 February. . . . Constitutionally *[he is]* not strong in his lungs & *[as a]* native of a warm country, has not been accustomed to guard against weather. In Edinburgh he had congestion of the lungs & was very ill. (5:609)

Tom Barr Smith left in January and the letters continue — to him as well as to Mr Adams. Robert tells the latter he has communicated with one Joseph Prior of Trinity College, who has intimated a willingness to take Tom under his wing (but who proved to be no help whatsoever). Adams was apparently doubtful of the likelihood of the boy's passing the entrance exam in October, and Robert writes that he would be "quite content that he should spend an entire year with you in preparation & go up either next May 1883 or even October 1883 as you may decide" (5:632).

As the entrance exam for Trinity proved so difficult of achievement Robert wrote that he was "making inquiries about Pembroke — a small insignificant college. I fancy Trinity Hall. Failing that Jesus but that is a 'fast' college" (5:684). In April Robert comments that the family has come down from Mt Barker: "We have spent altogether a pleasant summer there but the distance is against the house. This will be cured when the railway is going."

He reproves his son for not calling on his Aunt Mary Elder on his way through London (5:694). Later in the month he wired Tom that his Uncle Willie Elder had died, and writes to a Sydney friend about this (17 May):

> Tom Elder back. Seems to have enjoyed his poor brother Willie's society. He spent 3 months with him at Cannes joyfully — left him well and heard of his death only at King George's Sound. About 18 months before Joanna & I spent 3 weeks with him also at Cannes so that strangely enough we each saw a very hearty, energetic fellow as he was in those days. (5:714)

He followed the telegram to Tom with a letter, 10 May:

> Your uncle arrived by the Carthage . . . his horses have begun to win races. Miss Spence is staying with us & there is talk this morning of her coming twice a week to 'educate your sisters.' She read us aloud last night a story she had just written 'The Hen's Language' — a very clever story for children. She read it with great spirit. There is a 'Baroness' with an

> unpronounceable name, von-something or another beginning with a W., coming once a week for music. Erlistoun has been very troublesome lately & yr mother & I are thinking of sending her off to Edinburgh. (5: 708)

In the event the Barr Smiths decided that it was not fair for Catherine Spence to interrupt her writing and preaching to coach their children. Nor was Erlistoun shipped off to school at Edinburgh.

Tom did not pass the entrance exam to Trinity in May, but Robert wrote kindly, on 30 May:

> After all there were only 75 vacancies out of 119 aspirants. Sorry about the failed exam. Don't worry. *[He adds with comforting unconcern that John Jervois, the Governor's son]* has engaged himself to Miss Florry Price (H.S. Price's daughter) & is so excited. He came to the Park on Sunday & talked about it like an idiot. . . . Old Mrs Austin, (Rev. J.B. Austin's widow & your Aunt Mary's step-mother) is dead. Very sudden. Went to Melbourne for pleasure & found a grave. *[He thanks Tom for the present of a pipe received.]* I bless you every night I smoke the Meerschaum. I never had such a pipe in my life before. *[Even so he cannot help but chide Tom for some misspelling in his last letter.]* (5: 724)

It was decided to try for another college, and Robert continued to rhapsodize over his beautiful new pipe for several letters.

In October he wrote exuberantly to Tom: "Dear Tozzy, I am in for it at last and yesterday gave the order to commence the theatre. It is to stand behind the kitchen premises and you enter thru the green houses" (5: 787). This private theatre — very rare in Australia — is now restored as such by Scotch College.

The only letter of Joanna's emerging from this period is undated, unheaded and unenveloped, but the postscript mentions Garibaldi's death, which was 2 June 1882. Robert had gone to his station The Hummocks, at Snowtown, near Clare. She wrote:

Sunday.

> My dearest Love,
>
> We have got over the first twenty four hours of your absence but are finding our Sunday inexpressibly dull without you. Tom [Elder] has just been over for a few minutes en route to the Stables with the Scotchman with the veneer of English & a young fellow called Cholmondeley. I rather like the Scotchman. He is well-mannered & quite a man of the world.
>
> Hedley Todd *[son of Sir Charles Todd, superintendent of the building of the Overland Telegraph cable between Adelaide and Darwin]* got a nasty fall at the Hunt yesterday. A.J. Baker also came to grief but the old fool ought to keep on his feet now. He must be nearer 70 than 60 I am sure. I'll send you the clipping with the account of it from tomorrow's paper. There was a great turn-out of people. Mabs & I drove to Kensington to see Mrs Watts & we quite got into a string of carriages as we drove along the Mitcham Road. I had a note from John Jervois *[the Governor's son]* saying he wanted to say goodbye & that he & "somebody" would come to luncheon tomorrow. I hope to get a telegram from you tomorrow my own dear old boy to say you are safe and well. Oh how I miss you — you must <u>never</u> go away again. I can stand one day & the night — but I do take very badly with more.
>
> Tom's horses "Boys Wife" & "Bomba" have arrived. Also his "variegated timbers". We had Ed. Hawker *[George Charles Hawker's eldest son]* yesterday as usual & today Francis has turned up. They are all out stilting at this moment. *[Joanna had introduced stilts as an enter-*

taining? recreation on the lawn.] It was miserable to take up my flowers today without you. *[She went regularly to tend the graves of her dead children at Mitcham Cemetery.]* The place was looking very nice. Three large pieces of stone lying close to the graves suggested that Burnett had been up and was going to start the terrace.

Monday. Not a scrap of news of any kind my dearest boy. There is no telegram from you yet. I send these hurried lines to Snow Town, feeling very uncertain as to whether they will reach you or not. All send dearest love and longing for yr return, my dear old man. Believe me, Yr true & loving wife. Garribaldi is dead. (This letter TEBS)

The next letter is from Robert to his son, 9 August. There are pages about horses and racing. Both Tom Elder and Robert were fascinated by horses — racing and breeding them — and both the Barr Smith boys, Tom and Bertie, were addicted horsemen. Horse talk complete, Robert continues:

This yahoo Rt. Wemyss, son of your mother's old friend Mrs Wemyss of Kirkaldy — I enclose for your amusements one of his letters. He has fallen in love with Mab. He calls me 'uncle' & you see folds even you to his sympathetic bosom though he has never seen you. I sent him to Melbourne for a holiday & he brought back as a present to your uncle Tom! a very loud patterned stock necktie. He is beginning to be with all his good nature, a little bit of a nuisance. Fortunately he is 500 miles away & I can stop him coming to town.

Your mother will have been telling you all about our ongoings with Forbes, the war correspondent of the Daily News.... He should make £1000 by his lectures. These sort of men are always interesting if they are not blackguards & their company is more stimulating than the humdrum of what we meet here. Cautiously taken a little of this stimulant is worth taking. I am always curious to see & in some degree to know any man or woman who has made him or herself famous for almost anything — except vice of course.

Whilst you are in the old country you should seize the opportunity to seeing & hearing all you can, I am afraid to recommend to you however, (during your youth) any closer intimacy.

Erlistoun I am glad to tell you is very much improved. The tableaux pulled her out of herself *[the Barr Smith girls had been putting on plays and tableaux in the drawing room at Torrens Park]*, & she has been pleasant ever since. Edward Hawker is very constant in his attentions *[Erlistoun was fourteen, Edward Hawker twenty-two]* but we see little of Frank Fisher *[son of Robert's good friend Joseph Fisher]* who is, I fancy becoming more & more poor beggar — he may not however have lost his own self.

[He adds a post script:] I forgot to say that Malcolm & Stirling came as a deputation to ask your uncle Tom as President of the Club to give the usual Hunt Gold Cup. To my astonishment he refused. They then applied to me but I said it was the President's privilege & I could not interfere. *[Robert had been President the year before, 1881.]* I have given no Hunt Meet this year & they have not asked for a luncheon. The institution has not had its usual vigour. (5: 756)

Luncheons at Hunt meets could be large and elaborate. When the Barr Smiths hosted them they might entertain 500 guests.

Comment about Forbes brought an answering and derogatory one from Tom at Cambridge. It came months later. These interchanges took so long; Robert's letter about Forbes was written in August, Tom responded to that in December and the February following Robert wrote his reply (quoted here out of sequence) — six months in all. Robert adopts a lecturing tone:

Adelaide,
Feb. 16 1883

I got your last pleasant note with Mr Anstey's amusing note enclosed. It is all very funny no doubt nevertheless though Anstey despises Forbes — Forbes is the better man of the two. Old Anstey is kind & amusing & well-mannered in the world's estimate no doubt but I imagine he is intensely selfish & overbearing. People complain of Forbes because he wants polish but bless my soul what would you have? A rowdy boy he runs away from home half-educated & spends much of his youth in barracks & camps as a common soldier.You dont get polish there. Still the life by which he has managed to raise himself to notoriety & fame was itself a rough one & yet you say he wants polish. (If Anstey had had to raise himself & educate himself as Forbes has done, clever as he is he would have stuck in the mud.) Besides there is something ungenerous in Anstey's notice of Forbes in such contemptuous fashion. Forbes with his associations with Anstey, dear son to whom I speak feelingly & lovingly, was doing his best to pay Anstey a compliment & to evidence his interest in him & his belongings. Anstey thrusts aside the kindness & cavils that he has never made money by farming & that Forbes misspells the name of the place!

They think the noisy cackle of their borough
Is the murmur of the world. (5:818)

Robert wrote two gossipy letters to his old friend Sir Arthur Blyth, the Agent General in London. The first begins with talk of the governor's departure from Adelaide to take up a new appointment in New Zealand:

Adelaide,
November 25 1882

My dear Sir Arthur,

. . . Sir William Jervois has been very friendly & his wife (though not well-suited for a Governor's wife) is a charming & excellent woman. Miss Jervois is very nice & very good exactly what a young girl should be. Lance Stirling's end approaches *[he was about to marry Florence Milne]*. We have asked him to a farewell dinner on the 8th of next month at the Club & we shall have no doubt a strong muster of the usual For he's a jolly good fellow — for Stirling is immensely and deservedly popular. . . . I saw Florrie Milne at the Polo match looking with loving eyes on the daring feats of her lover *[Lancelot Stirling introduced polo to South Australia]*. She is a most amiable girl & immensely satisfied with her lot. (5:793)

With the second letter, 15 December, Robert sent pictures of the tableau of "Lochinvar" his daughters had presented before two enthusiastic audiences at Torrens Park in October, "not without hope these will prove interesting to Lady Blyth."The photographs are not now with the letters, but Robert described them, listing the cast and the programme, which included the names of Mabel, Jean, Joe and Erlistoun, and a number of their young friends — Miss Jervois, Edward Hawker, Lady Baker, the Misses Todd, Hart, Price, Hardy, Marryat and Tomkinson and Messrs Herbert Hardy, Percy von Treuer, Barton, Haggard, E.M. Colley, Moor, Robertson and George Dean. Robert added that George Dean was married "yesterday" to Miss E.T. Smith, the daughter of a rich brewer.

[Dean's] mother nearly fainted when she heard of the honour awaiting him — such is the power of Gold.

The Jervois family leave us immediately. There is to be a dinner for Sir William who on the whole is popular & has some good qualities. The Robinson who takes his place is

spoken of as a religious man & a stickler for etiquette *[Sir William Robinson, Governor of South Australia 1883-87]*. Tom Playford and the E.T. Smith have left by the Polaris. Mrs Alexander Hay has a wonderful green satin gown just now embroidered with thistles which cost a mint of money and takes everybody's breath away. (5:801)

Agnes Hay, née Gosse, was the daughter of the Barr Smiths' old practitioner Dr Gosse. When the rich and elderly Alexander Hay married her as his second wife she became somewhat of a joke for the grand, pretentious manner she assumed.

Then comes the joyful letter of 4 December 1882:

Your letter announcing your passing came after the P&O boat had gone but I hope I was able to catch her at King George's Sound with a telegram . . . You ought to have telegraphed direct to Adelaide as your mother has been in a sad way — sure that you would send a message & if not you then Mr Adams who had instructions to telegraph previously.

Your mother was driven to desperation & in another week would have been seeking an augury no doubt from the entrails of a fowl or the flight of a pigeon. On Sunday we went as usual in the morning to the churchyard. She got some comfort on the way home by finding an old horse-shoe. 'That', she said 'tells me that he will pass.' Additional assurance was given her by a single magpie flying across the path as we neared home. Sunday week when we were coming the same way the horse-shoe was hanging on the fence. 'That', she said, 'is Tommy's shoe', and it quieted her.

Young fellows are not half so grateful as they should be for their mother's love, which is perhaps the most intense & least selfish love they will ever know, begging Katie's pardon. *[Who is Katie?]* (5:798)

So Tom was now a student at Trinity College and achieved his degree three years later.

1882 saw a change in the affairs of the company also.

The growth of the affairs of the partners and their firm was such that in 1882 they established Elders Wool and Produce Company Limited to acquire the auction portion of the wool and produce business of the original firm.

The first directors of the new business were some of the best known figures in the State — Robert Barr Smith, the Hon. A.B. Murray, M.L.C., the Hon. David Murray, M.L.C., the Hon. John Crozier, M.L.C., the Hon. R.C. Baker, M.L.C., Walter Reynell, and Peter Waite. A more impressive Board could hardly have been chosen. (*First Hundred Years*, p. 37)

There should have been less pressure on Robert now that there was a board of directors to share one part of his work.

Robert wrote to thank the tutor Adams for all his help and from now on Tom Barr Smith was on his own, though Robert saw to it he had his weekly deliveries of home gossip and sound advice. Joanna wrote regularly also but the letters have vanished. Robert wrote on 27 December, delighted to learn his son had got into a rowing "eight". After the congratulations he continued:

All well at Mt Barker. I leave in the morning & get back at night leaving Adelaide about 5 o'clock. We have not yet got into the full swing at Mt Barker but after all the notabilities have called, the Hon. J. Ramsey, the Misses McFarlane & Mr Horne, Mrs & Miss O'Halloran . . . Your sisters & I ride. Mab has discovered she can ride over any orderly fences on Trig. He is not a willing jumper . . . She sits beautifully & has undying pluck. On

> Monday the mother wanted to see her & I promised to give her a hand on Tully. The less said about my riding the better but I managed to keep always somewhere between the ears & the tail. Mab rode like fairies backwards & forwards into the little lucerne paddock behind the garden. R.B. was almost crying because Jobber could not be persuaded to try . . . You have never called I fear on Lady Blyth . . . you should go the first time you are in London. (5: 808)

Robert was pleased in February to learn that his son was planning a trip to Norway and Sweden in his long vac, and the letter about Forbes (16 February) already quoted contains much fatherly advice about the trip, for which he also sent Tom some money:

> Go to Sir Arthur Blyth *[Agent General for South Australia in London]* & he will get you letters of introduction to the Swedish consul in London. See everything & everybody. The King is most accessible. I hear there is not a flunkey about the palace. You will be asked to take tea with him in his country house near Stockholm. He will make much of you as an Australian & will be glad to hear about the Adelaide hounds & the Morphettville races. You can describe a sheep farm & old Muslim to him & give him the various athletic performances of Malcolm *[a station hand whose athletic prowess seems to be a family legend]*. See that you have a decent fellow with you. I am told Stockholm is a very loose city & those men to whom you have introductions may consider it their duty to introduce you to vice. I am very glad however that you are to see Norway & Sweden . . . they are off the beaten track. (5: 818)

In the summers now the family always stayed at Mt Barker. It was often more convenient for Robert to stay overnight in town, sometimes with Sir Tom. He wrote to George Elder in February:

> I slept last night at Birksgate. Tom has two young men staying with him & is as happy as possible.
>
> I have been two nights with Sir Henry Ayers *[since 1881 a widower]* & have found him vastly kind. I read a threatening letter from Moonta last week informing me that I was oppressing the working men at the mines & as their blood was 'boiling' they would repeat here the discipline to which they had subjected tyrants in Ireland. I do not however carry a revolver nor have I communicated with the police.
>
> We are awaiting the arrival of our new Governor, Sir William Robinson. The coming of a new Governor always makes a little stir in a place like this. The theatre at Torrens Park grows apace *[Robert describes it]*.

It was a big project: a complete theatre, separate from the house, with stage, stage machinery and dressing rooms, and an auditorium twenty metres by ten to accommodate 200 people. (A comprehensive account of its construction and final appearance, with photographs, is given in Preiss and Oborn, *The Torrens Park Estate*, chapters 9 and 28.)

> By the time it is done we shall be leaving for England, Joanna indeed suggests the wisest thing we can do is to go before it is used. But having yielded to the folly of building it I am determined to stick to my post before the work is closed. I have no architect.
>
> All well at Auchendarroch & the knight in Birksgate. Much love to Jean & many thanks for her kindness to our Tom. —Your affecte. Bobus. (5: 814)

Another letter to George Elder, 6 June 1883, finishes engagingly: "Kind love to Jean. I always think

of her when I go out to a party as I, on these occasions, wear the beautiful striped stockings she made me long ago" (5: 851).

In 1883 Alexander resigned as agent for Elder Smiths in London to give more time to his own business affairs. It now became imperative to set up a London office and Robert started to make plans for another trip abroad to do this. He resigned his chairmanship of the new Elders Wool & Produce Co. Ltd and Peter Waite was installed in his place.

There remained a problem with George, who, having stayed with his family since Tom left, was adamant that he did not want to return to the Gardners. On 25 June Robert wrote to a Miss Forsyth who presumably lived at Auchendarroch, perhaps as a winter housekeeper:

> I find however George greatly dislikes this proposal *[to return to Queenscliff]* & in his unfortunate condition I do not like to force him against his wish for after all we can do nothing for him but to make him happy. It has occurred to me whether without interfering with your plans I could make any arrangement for him at Mt Barker which would be agreeable to you. I now simply name the thing — leaving all details to be settled if you at all entertain it. . . . either George & his man should board with you & have rooms allotted to them at one end of the house; or that they should have rooms allotted to them . . . & keep a servant for their own work. In neither case should I expect you to take any responsibility with him. His man has attended to him for 3 years & is very respectable. Thybell would give him whatever carriage exercise he requires. You would not be brought into contact with him more than you choose & I would have the satisfaction of feeling that if you saw anything radically wrong you would kindly write to Sir Tom Elder.
>
> Please understand that if you do not entertain either of these suggestions I shall look out elsewhere & our arrangement stands exactly as before. (5: 867)

Some arrangement was made which suited George, for in August Robert wrote to his brother that they would be setting sail at the end of the year, adding: "*[We shall]* not come straight to England. We will be soon enough in London — dreadful weather, fog, ice, rain, snow, sleet & wind" (5: 872). Plans were made to meet Tom Barr Smith in Europe. Robert wrote from Adelaide, 8 October 1883: "Hope we shall all meet in Venice 1st January 1884 . . . only cholera or any bobbery of that kind would prevent it" (5: 876); so presumably they did.

It was the Barr Smiths' third such trip in ten years. Leaving their son George and two splendid houses behind them, they were to make shift in hotels and apartments for the next eighteen months. When they left Adelaide Joanna was forty-nine and Robert sixty.

CHAPTER 6

BRITAIN AGAIN 1884-1885

By now the previously close clan of Elders had dispersed. Joanna's brother William, the sea-captain, was dead. His widow Ann lived on in the big house St Margaret's Hope — an isolated situation peering down from woodland to the bleak North Sea. She was regularly visited by her husband's brothers and by nieces and nephews, the grown-up children of Alexander and Mary. Alexander and his family had in the seventies moved from Carlile House, Hampstead, to Campden House, Kensington; in a letter to her nephew Hew O'Halloran Giles, 28 May 1936, Mabel described it as

> a large property in those days — the loop of the carriage drive branched off from Church Street, Kensington. The house was a big handsome building with a large garden and old trees where now all those Campden Hill Mansions and the whole of those modern streets and buildings are — the other side of High Street, Kensington. . . . I used to stay there sometimes with Uncle Alick, Aunt Mary — and their 16 children.
>
> (JGD)

(There were only fifteen children in fact, and two of those died in infancy.)

Campden House was very close to Hyde Park where Robert and Joanna had taken an apartment, but perhaps a coolness had developed with Alec's resignation. Certainly there is now no mention of cosy family visits in Joanna's letters. Robert, in an indignant letter from Adelaide to Tom Elder in London during the Torrens Tin Co. fracas of a few years back, had written (14 August 1878):

> I think it was a wonderful pity you used my name to Alec in this business. I see he dubs me Mr Smith in his note to you, and he has not replied to a kind letter I sent him. This makes me feel that the old fires are only slumbering & it requires but a touch to make them flame. Hence my regret to be mixed up with this troublesome arrangement from which, except so far as you were concerned, I sought to keep myself free . . . (4: 960)

and he continued with a long explanation of the business with facts and figures to justify his stand in the matter.

Alec's business in London was as a merchant banker and agent for many large companies. His older sons had already been out to Australia and to New Zealand with the idea of taking up land somewhere and in 1878 Alexander bought a run in the North Island of New Zealand which he christened "Langdale," and invited his sons either to work with him in the London office or try their luck at Langdale. His four younger boys, Thomas, Henry, Austin and Malcolm, journeyed south during the next few years. Thomas returned to England but the other three made their homes in New Zealand, married and had large families. William, the eldest of Alexander's eight surviving sons, was to inherit St Margaret's Hope from his Uncle William after Ann died, in her nineties. The next son John, who had been such a favourite when he visited South Australia and

had suggested his Cambridge tutor, the Revd Adams, as a tutor for Tom Barr Smith, died in his twenties from consumption. Thomas Edward, the next, tried New Zealand but soon returned and the fourth, Fred, who had toured around with John, inspecting land and providing opinions, chose not to go at all. As well there were six Elder daughters. They seem to have been studious girls, advanced for the time. Mima and Lilian went up to Girton, and Margarett to the University of London. Although Lilian Elder was the same age as her cousin Tom Barr Smith and would appear to have been at university at the same time, and Alexander Elder Junior, who did not migrate to New Zealand, was of an age with Joe Barr Smith, only Margarett is ever mentioned in Joanna's letters — when Jean reported that she saw Maggie and her father in church, but "fortunately" was not recognised.

Joanna's letters from London show her to be fully occupied with her four sight-seeing and out-going daughters. There is no mention of the hoped-for meeting with Tom in Venice, but by April, the date on her first letters, most of the family is ensconced in London, though Tom is up at Cambridge and Bertie away at an English boarding school.

This was the twelve-month sojourn in England and Scotland which fortuitously provided Joanna and Robert, while in London, the opportunity to browse in Morris and Company's new shop for lovely things to adorn their expanding homes. The poet, philosopher and designer William Morris, whose ideal was to displace the vulgarities of the new mass production of furnishings by reviving the simple and beautiful craft of the medieval, the *pre-Raphael* age, had gone to great lengths to create the right vegetable dyes for his carpets and fabrics, and his brilliant designs for these and for wallpapers were so acclaimed that he had orders from Queen Victoria for St James's Palace and Balmoral. Morris was an ardent socialist, and to his dismay, when he opened showrooms in Oxford Street in 1877, he became instantly fashionable: only the rich could afford the painstakingly hand-crafted things on sale. When asked once by the gentleman whose house he was decorating why he was pacing up and down muttering to himself, his curt reply was "It's only that I spend my life ministering to the swinish luxury of the rich" (Bradley, *William Morris and His World*).

Nonetheless, Morris's urge to obliterate what he considered the appalling styles of the day and to return to simple artistry kept him going, and he or his firm were keen to advise Robert and Joanna on all aspects of their so-distant houses. It was not a case of an ornament here and there. Morris and Company were involved in every detail of the furnishing and decor of every room; thus was achieved the Morris Look. The Barr Smiths ordered lavishly, instantly becoming most favoured customers. They exceeded the buying spree in Europe which followed their purchase of Torrens Park ten years earlier. Now they ordered carpets, wall hangings, quantities of curtain fabrics of silk and velvet; chintzes and silks for chair coverings; wall-papers, chairs, tables and shelves, all from Morris and Company. They conferred about how the new rooms in Australia were to be painted, how the shelves to contain the blue and white china were to be arranged, what height to hang the curtains.

The Barr Smiths had fallen out with Grainger over his tedious delays with Auchendarroch and Robert declared now that he had no architects. But he consulted the London architect who had helped him design the theatre, Neville Ashbee, who was a Morris lover. Silks, woollens and cottons printed with the characteristic stylised designs were shipped out in bolts. Boxes of braids and fringes, rolls of wallpapers with accompanying dados, and boxes of delicate glassware in the exquisite amber and green, were dispatched. Joanna bought design kits for embroidery with the silk threads and instructions for the girls to work — as they did beautifully — cushion covers, table cloths and, later, ambitious large portières and screens. The embroidery section of the shop was run by May Morris, William's daughter, who was also one of the principal designers; she was the same

age as Mabel and friendly with her. It was quite a frenzy of buying. Back in Adelaide the builders at work on the construction of the theatre and the reshaping of three drawing rooms and a dining room at Torrens Park were sent detailed instructions from the other side of the world by the slow postal service — where a mirror should be hung, where an arch created, exactly what colours of paint should be used. Robert was consulting both Ashbee and Morris and letters streamed out from England to Adelaide giving new orders about what was to be done, in particular with the theatre under construction — the cornices, the lighting, the colours, the flooring. The William Morris style was about to be launched in Australia. None of this flurry appears in Joanna's letters — presumably they were together while the big purchases were proceeding — but there is a steady stream of documentation and instructions from Robert's letter books of that year (Vol. 6, the last half of 1884).

In London they took an apartment in Great Cumberland Place, Hyde Park, hired servants and dealt with numerous invitations and entertainments. With their own new theatre in mind, the elder girls began drama lessons with a Mrs Dallas Glyn — Isabella Dallas (1823-89), a renowned actress who took many leading Shakespearean roles and now gave lessons. (She married but later divorced a journalist and writer, Eneas Glyn, and had "A fine figure a little inclined to portliness", according to the *DNB*). Mabel, now twenty-three, was always the keenest performer and pleased to recite when asked. She was undoubtedly the enthusiast who propelled Jean and Joe to the Drama School. They all had piano lessons. Erlistoun, sixteen, the girl of difficult moods, was passionate about music and spent hours practising.

As soon as Robert leaves London to visit and have business meetings, Joanna takes up her pen to him and characteristically drops into a depression to write woefully about the boredom of her days without his presence.

London Great Cumberland Place, Hyde Park to The Royal Hotel, Princes St., Edinburgh
April 3 1884:

My dearest love,

I was infinitely relieved by your telegram last night. I had been feeling low all day and towards nightfall I began to realise the possibilities of an accident. There is always a railway accident when we are in England, I observe. You can understand how glad I was to hear you were both safely housed. I suppose you felt a pleasurable glow in again seeing the place which is to both of us full of associations — to me, however now, mostly sad. Today I suppose you are at Kirkaldy. That has also certain associations for you altho' I know, dear Bob, you must sometimes wish you had never seen the Lang Town — or anybody in it. However Destiny had arranged all for you and for me. And if we could only be a little more optimistic you and I should be happier.

Our old butler Alexander came to see us yesterday. He looks well and seemed much interested in us all. His master Sir Curtis Lampson *[promoter and vice-chairman of the company which laid the Atlantic telegraph in 1857]* is a man of 78. He goes every day to the city and business and has breakfast at 8 o'clock & comes home to dinner. Occasionally he takes a holiday & goes deer-stalking as he used to do at 30. There's a man for you. I quite picked up heart when he told me all this & said to myself "Why my old man has a good 18 years yet to work & to play", and this Lampson is as brisk today as ever. He is a Yankee & was knighted for something in telegraphy I think Alex said.

Joe went alone to her first Dramatic Comedy lesson yesterday. She had to recite a bit from The Hunchback to her master & the result is she has got a part in a little play called "Our Club." Mabel had to forgo her lesson by reason of the Gavin Youngs coming to

luncheon & having to go with them to the matinee of 'School for Scandal'. *[Gavin Young, an Adelaide surveyor, was married to a sister of Lady Hughes and they had sometimes therefore occupied Torrens Park when the W.W. Hugheses owned it and were overseas. Young had been proprietorial and difficult when the Barr Smiths first bought Torrens Park, where he was then living.]* It was very successful and they all enjoyed it. I did not have the spirits to go with them. *[Her spirits still descended rapidly every time Robert left her. She laments that she has to go to a dinner party that night, and concludes]* ... I hope you'll write something but I shall not be exacting.

[She suggests that if he is too busy to write he should telegraph instead, adding a taunt:] No doubt it grieves you to part with a shilling instead of a penny but then you are saved elevenpence worth of personal trouble. Miss Fickert's nose is still very bad & her mouth is also inflamed, so she cannot keep in her Rodways *[false teeth. Dr Rodway was a dentist in Adelaide]*. Poor thing she looks a hundred years old & oh so ugly.

London. Great Cumberland Place Hyde Park to Edinburgh
April 4 1884:

My dearest love, Somehow I had hoped a few lines from you today. But I have been disappointed ...Your telegram was very satisfactory.

[She describes her dinner party given by some people called Mills:] I did not enjoy myself much but the people were being nice and very kind. The Miss Taits were there, the Archbishop's daughters,[1] and Sir Anthony Hoskins *[Lord of the Admiralty 1880-82]*, Lady Hoskins and Captain Johnstone of the Dryad, a very nice man. He took me down to dinner.

Captain Hector *[of The Carthage, which plied regularly between England and Australia; a friend of long standing]* came & fetched me & brought me home at 11 o'clock. The Miss Taits were delightful. The Arthur Mills are people who belong to a quite different set from ours. I felt a little out of it. They were all well-bred people though and my feelings of shyness soon wore off.

Miss Burnett has come to stay with Jean and they are away to the Picture Galleries this morning & I am sending them out in the carriage this afternoon. *[Gertie Burnett was a lifelong friend to Jean.]* Mabel and Joe are going to their stage dancing ...Also to the Dramatic School Shakespeare class. What a mercy these girls are willing to work & occupy their bodies and minds. Erlistoun I think practised 6 hours yesterday and Joe sat at the piano four hours at a stretch. This is the result of the "Parsifal" fuss. *[Wagner's* Parsifal *had its first performance at Bayreuth 1882. Though it was fifty years before a repeat performance took place, the music created a storm of approval and disapproval.]*

This is yr meeting day. Give my very dear love to my brother George. I hope the meeting will go off well & that your guzzle afterwards wont be too much for you all in the way of indigestion. What will Tom do? I suppose he is not one of the privileged ones who is permitted to eat of the *[Montreys? (illegible)]* viands.

...We are getting on here indifferently well. I am low and dull without you and have been thinking I would rather face the Atlantic than be left without you for two months *[a trip to the States had been mooted]*. I have been reading Swift's Life and find it harder than ever to understand his relations with Stella and Vanessa.[2] I feel that if I had been either the one or the other I shd have made it pretty hot for him. But these are the men who get life's best portion of good women. Miss Fickert's nose is still wonderful to behold. She is low-spirited & petulant, poor woman. After all Life's hard for her. How much better off am I with my husband and children.

I hope you are taking care not to catch cold.

London Great Cumberland Place to Lochside, Renfrewshire
April 5 1884:

. . . At last I have the great happiness of getting a letter from you. It is a delightful letter. I shall have it buried with me. I wanted to ask you to visit the Kirkaldy graves but I knew you had so little time I did not like to give it to you as a fresh duty. I am very grateful to you for going my own Bob, but you are the kindest and dearest as you are the best of men.

We all continue very low. Even with Miss Gertie Burnett in the house we don't get up our spirits at all . . . I sallied forth with Gertie, Jean and Erlistoun and saw Barrett Wilson at the theatre. I did not like the earthquake scenes at all. *[Presumably this was Wilson Barrett (1846-1904), the actor-manager famous for his roles in melodrama. She was terrified of earthquakes and twenty years later, experiencing one there, declared it was the reason why she left Torrens Park]* . . . it is a clever play but there is something wanting and the end displeased me or rather I shd say left me dissatisfied. But the three young people liked it . . . Today Gertie & Jean are going to the Saturday Pop at 3 & Mabel & Joe are going to make their debut in the new T. cart. Of course the carriage & the cart can't go out the same day so as they are going straight to Hampstead Heath Erlistoun and I are going to take a hansom & accompany them. Beasley *[their new coachman]* has just brought the cart round to let us see it & has pirouetted half a dozen times round the crescent. Tomar is looking very brisk & well set-up this morning. His star gleams on his forehead — just the thing I don't like about him.

The cast of harness looks very well. There's a whip wanted & a rug. Mabel gazed with delighted eyes at Beasley's circus performance. Such a respectable-looking old buffer he is. I don't think we made a mistake in him at any rate.

Seymour Street is thickly laid with straw. Some poor soul in his extremities. *[There was an epidemic of cholera in London at that time.]*

Do you see Euston's case in the paper today?[3] Whatever can he have brought on the thing for? Its all as plain as a pikestaff & yet he told Godwin only last Sunday it was going to be alright. Mrs Crawford & Mousey came to call yesterday. I asked if some of them would not come & dine with our young people & please tell Tom I saw no sign of a refusal. Mabel and Joe had a most disagreeable experience at the Dramatic School yesterday. Mrs Dallas-Glyn is a violent-tempered woman & did nothing but abuse them. Accused them of affectation & ignorance & I fear they deserved it all but still, poor things, it was hard, for as you know they are usually treated very differently, even I may say with a little extra consideration. But it is right that at a school like the Dramatic there shd be this levelling up.

Nevertheless the woman herself is a vulgarian, but clever and an excellent teacher. Mabel and Joe feel this & altho' daunted they are not vanquished, and intend to throw themselves entirely into the thing, trying to their temper and nature as it is. The dancing class was also a trial. It is a sort of Ballet business. But all this is so useful to them if they intend to do some acting. They did not get home last night till dinner was half over, 7.30 p.m., & I was in a fever of anxiety about them.

Charles our footman is behaving admirably. We are most comfortable in the house but oh my dear I miss you so. How can I let you go to America?

. . . I have a headache today. A theatre at night almost always gives me one. It is the gas and the bad air. Mrs Arthur Mills is going to send me reserved tickets for Moody & Sankey & I am going *[these American Evangelists caused a sensation in London with their revivalist*

sessions]. Perhaps I shall hear a word in season that may change my life.

Adieu my best beloved.

London Great Cumberland Place, to Lochside, Lochwinnoch
April 6 1884
Sunday:

My dearest love,

I got your telegram last night & am glad to know you are comfortably settled in your ancestral halls! I can imagine you this morning wandering all over the place, full of content, regarding the growth of your trees & swelling in the promise of Spring. It would have been nice for us both to go to Lochside for August and September. *[Lochside was his mother's house, about which Robert had become so angry in earlier letters when she rented it to a man who felled some of the trees. Mrs Smith left Lochside to Robert in her will and now he has let his younger brother Willie, a doctor in the Indian Service, use it.]* I suppose the house wd have held us & Willie would have sublet it to us. Long ago you and I used to dream of this, did not we? Life has become something very different to us since the old days when the children were young and the care connected with them bounded up by the nursery walls. But there is nothing fixed yet for our summer doings and if you have a fancy for living once more in your mother's old home with your own family and you and Tom getting some shooting somewhere — drop America and I'll drop Germany and see if you care to come to any arrangements with your brother Willie — I shall like it personally very much.

We had a nice afternoon yesterday. The cart is a great success. Only Slee is absurd in the back seat. He weighs it down & he looks far too big.

Erlistoun & I took a hansom & we drove along with the cart to Hampstead Heath. We then got out and rambled all over the Heath, sitting occasionally on one of the benches to rest.

Who should we come across but Mrs Willie Bird & her tribe out for the country air, just as we were. She had her nice little English-born baby with her which made me feel sorry & jealous. *[It was on Joanna's previous trip to the UK, in 1879, that Dorothea was born. She only lived two years.]*

Jean and Gertie are away to hear Stopford Brooke this morning & they are going to St Paul's in the afternoon. *[Brooke was an English divine and man of letters who resigned his position as chaplain to Queen Victoria to join the Unitarian church; he preached at Bloomsbury.]* Mabel & Joe are going to Moody & Sankey partly because of the association with their ponies I believe. Erlistoun & I are going to stay at home together. We will have our dear little R.B. *[Bertie, now at boarding school]* on Wednesday which will be a great joy to us. I sent him one of the boxes of Edinburgh Rock you sent which arrived yesterday & gave great satisfaction.

I am keeping my promise of writing every day but I have no news to give you dearest Bob. *[This after several crammed pages!]*

I never go out, scarcely. I have not been in the carriage since you left — except for the dinner at Mrs Mills. Mrs Giles *[Tom O'Halloran Giles's mother]* says she never saw anyone go down as I have done. I always told you that I am a watch of which you are the main-spring. And I simply stop when it is broken. I do not believe I would live long if I lost you.

I don't want to work on your feelings at all — & I am glad you are in Scotland & enjoying yourself — I only want you to know that I could not bear a separation long.

London Great Cumberland Place to Paisley.
April 7 1884
Monday:

My dearest love,

Where to address this I do not know. *[She sends it care of her brother-in-law the Revd George Clazy who lived at Paisley.]*

I got your second long, delightful letter written from Edinburgh this morning. So glad to get all your news. I think you have been having quite a pleasant time of it in Auld Reekie & now I hope you are enjoying yourself thoroughly in the country.

Mr Fisher turned up yesterday just as I had finished my letter to you. Why, oh why my dear old boy did you not tell me of John Farrar's death? Fisher could hardly believe that I did not know of it. *[Anne, the wife of Robert's good friend Joseph Fisher, was John Farrar's sister.]* I wrote at once to Mrs Fisher and explained that you were so busy before you left we never had a quiet time together to talk. I asked Fisher to come & dine which he did in the evening & made himself very pleasant to us all. He is a good soul. He told me all about your meeting & your dinner afterwards & he seems to have enjoyed himself thoroughly in Edinburgh. George's extraordinary memory seems to have impressed him in no ordinary way & he admired him speaking so much.

[Then she fills in with her so-called "no-news". Bertie's school has announced an outbreak of measles:] . . . so I'll have the dear little soul home tonight instead of tomorrow, which will be a great delight to us all. Gertie Burnett left this morning. She has gone to the Boat Race but her sympathies are with Oxford. We all abused her to such a degree . . . Tom Giles was here yesterday afternoon *[from Cambridge. Four years later he married Jean Barr Smith.]* Old Anstey came as usual. I think he is quite fond of me. *[George Anstey (1814-95), then 75, was a great friend and patron of the Giles family. Tom's older brother, William Anstey Giles, was named for him.]*

Mabel & I went together to St Paul's to hear the anthem and Cannon Liddon's sermon. We heard the former but, beautifully & distinctly as Liddon speaks, we were too far back to hear, so we coolly got up and came out. I felt as usual the influence on my spirit of all these grand old cathedrals but when I came out under the clear vault of heaven — I threw it all off & felt it was all fudge.

The men, a whole troop of them, have come to paint the drawing room ceiling — such a morning we have had — putting away china, taking up carpets. I fear it will all be a fresh expense & it seems very hard we shd be tortured as we have been since coming to this infernal London. Last night I dreamed I was home and in my own room. I felt so happy. But alas! I woke & I was in Tom's little bed.

Mab has just come back from the dentist. She is crying poor dear for there is to be no end of bother with her teeth. I need not write you all about it however — but it must be done & she will probably then be right for many years. She is such a good girl.

The Devil has been in Erlistoun for the last few days. She has not been at all kind; so I am going to punish her by my resentment. I feel I am too easy with her & constantly trying to keep her in good humour is no use. She ought to study more. But alas! my dear love, we parents are obliged to play very second fiddle sometimes. It's hard when your children show that they don't care for you.

This is the start of a recurring theme. Erlistoun was withdrawn and moody — presumably troubled by increasing deafness. Mabel and Joe were sunny and vivacious; Jean was shy and awkward but loving. Erlistoun and her mother seemed always at odds.

The rain pours & has been pouring for hours. What a good thing you are having good weather in Scotland. I'm glad you saw Mr Buchanan but nothing would induce me to cross that Grosvenor Crescent threshold or even to pass the outside. *[She refers to the house where they stayed in Edinburgh during their 1879 visit.]*

I enclosed your letter to me to Tom. There was such a laughable allusion at the end.

Fisher says you wont be back before this day week. If then. Well I dont worry if you are happy & well. Now do take care of cold my darling boy.

How can you talk such bosh about Jim Hector. But of course you do it to amuse me. Well goodness knows I need amusing . . . The luncheon is coming off in a couple of hours. I'll write how it succeeds.

Robert must have teased her about Captain Hector, who had shepherded her to the Mills' dinner party. The next day she writes to Knock Castle, where he is staying with her brother George and his wife Jean.

London Great Cumberland Place to Knock Castle.
April 8 1884
Tuesday:

My dear husband,

If all this tirade about Alice Hughes and Captain Hector is aimed at me I think it is both very wicked & very unfair.

I find it hard to believe that you could, while absent from me & knowing as you do how my heart was aching for want of you, to try & hit me in this roundabout way. It is so unlike you for you were ever generous. But there is really no question of generosity. You know right well that if ever a man had a wife utterly devoted to him, who had never compared any other man to him feeling that the man couldn't come near him by miles — and who had never had a happy moment apart from him, that man is yourself & that woman is ME. I write ungrammatically but you will understand me. Somehow I feel that you have been writing at me & I feel sorely hurt. I thought I wd not write you any more — but there, I relented. I have got so soft-hearted over you lately.

You seem very pleased with Lochside & so does Tom & so I suppose if Willie will let it to you you will arrange at all events for us to go even if you & Mabel go to America. But I fancy that is just the month that Willie would like to have it for himself. It is the shooting time & the time he wd be having his friends to see him.

This is our Ursula's birthday. She wd have been 8 years old.

Bob is very happy to be home. I don't think he is improved except mentally. *[Bob (Bertie) never proved to be the satisfactory industrious son that his elder brother Tom was.]* He is rougher & talks in a kind of way I don't quite like but I suppose we must expect that . . . Will you please give Jean *[Elder]* my best love. Tell her it will be alright about Buxton. If the Alick Elders remain a longer time than she expects we must just arrange a meeting elsewhere. Jean & Gertie went to church on Sunday & there she saw her Uncle Alick & Maggie. She said she never thought her uncle was so plain till she saw him on Sunday. Fortunately they did not recognise her. *[The old, friendly relationship the two families once shared must have evaporated. Alexander Elder died the following year, 1885.]*

The next day she is remorseful to Robert about what she describes as her "slightly carping letter" of the day before:

London Great Cumberland Place
9 April, 1884
Wednesday:

> . . . but you wd understand it & make allowance for my little show of temper. You will admit that you ought not to have gone on about Hector as you did. But you did not mean it my darling boy did you? Your letter this morning is so kind & good that I have forgiven you everything.
>
> I am sorry to hear about your throat & George is suffering too I hear. It is all these abominable East of Scotland winds.
>
> I was at Miss Bridley's yesterday *[a friend of Anthony Forster's at St Leonards-on-Sea]* and have made the acquaintance of delightful people & what's more I have accepted an invitation for you & me to dine with them. It is Swan the electric light man *[later Sir Joseph Swan; he preceded Edison by twenty years in inventing the incandescent-filament electric lamp]*. His wife is delightful & I hear it is one of the most interesting houses to visit — because you are always getting such surprises at table to do with the Light which is the motive power in the household. It even drives Mrs Swan's sewing machine & she has a little machine in her pocket & lights up her ornaments. I thought Mr Swan was just the man to interest you.
>
> I have also got into the good graces of the Miss Wills — you perceive I have taken a new departure!
>
> But as one must relax one's lofty mind occasionally I took our B.B. this morning to Mme Tussaud and he and I stayed in the Chamber of Horrors till we got quite eerie . . . The girls got on much better at the Dramatic yesterday. Mrs Dallas-Glyn was not so hard upon them & did not tell Mabel again that she was "abominably lazy & affected." Fancy poor Mab being affected! We had Schrader *[the music teacher]* yesterday. He finds the girls much improved in their music. Erlistoun is <u>right</u> again. She has had a tantrum — poor thing. She can't keep the Devil out at all.

Referring to Robert's letter from Lochwinnoch she is horrified to hear of Jean (Serin's? the name is illegible) position in the cemetery:

> . . . It seems unkind to meddle with her remains but Fancy! Your dear mother not lying beside her husband! It's awful. Have you decided on the change? Or are you only talking about it?
>
> I don't have much to say *[an odd comment — often made]*. Unless I discuss abstract subjects and after the put-down you gave me in regard to Stella and Vanessa I am afraid to venture on this debatable ground. *Nevertheless* . . . I have been reading Emily Bronte's Life & at last I understand all the story of Branwell B. He was a tutor in a family. Had a liaison with the mother of the family. She was 15 years his senior. When the husband who was an invalid found out he turned Bronte out of doors. Bye and bye he died, but the widow, who was rich, became remorseful after her husband died — refused to marry Bronte. Bronte being passionately in love became desperate. Drank early & late — and finished himself absolutely — got up as he had always intended to do when his death agony came on — and was <u>20 minutes dying</u> standing up all the time. Charlotte cd not look upon this awful scene and was carried off hysterical. *[Joanna had very possibly been reading the newly-published* Emily Brontë, *by A. Mary F. Robinson (1883), which gives all the details she mentions.]*
>
> I find Emily more interesting than Charlotte. Did you ever read her book Wuthering Heights? I wish you and I could go a pilgrimage together to Haworth to see the grey old

> parsonage where these wondrous sisters lived and the moor from which they drew their inspiration. Shall we go? Yes? We might go on from Buxton if we go there. But I fancy the Elders *[Alexander and Mary]* are to meet Jean there part of her visit at any rate.
>
> We might take some excursion, you and I. I am so sick of this great city.

Robert, then aged sixty, was going backwards and forwards on business, and, all through this period in England and Scotland, must have been in a frenzy of letter-writing himself. One of his self-imposed tasks was to negotiate on Catherine Helen Spence's behalf with the London publishers Trübner & Co., to whom he wrote on 17 July:

> I have a letter from Miss Spence. She prefers her own name on the book viz. "The Agnostic's Progress"... Having regard to all you have said to me as to the poor prospects of Sale for the book & your unwillingness to publish it anonymously I feel I must try some other plan for it. *[He urges them to return the manuscript.]*

Robert and Joanna were staunch friends: having read and liked Spence's book in MS, they had, according to her *Autobiography*, offered to take it to London and find a publisher. Trübner was interested, but he died, "the matter was not taken up by his successor, and my friends did what I had expressly said they were not to do, and had it printed and published at their own expense" (*Autobiography*, p. 63). *An Agnostic's Progress from the Known to the Unknown* was published privately and anonymously in 1884.

In August the family had moved to the Scottish highlands and Joanna posted off some letters from Nairn, where she stayed in an hotel while Robert went off exploring, travelling around Scotland with two of the girls. Possibly the family spent all of August and September at Nairn as there is no further reference to taking over Lochside, and it was from Nairn by the beginning of September that Robert was despatching his hundreds of orders and requests. Whilst trying to organise the London office he was scribbling out message after message (500 pages in his own handwriting in a seven-month period) to his brother-in law, his secretary, his building contractors, his butler and his gardener, as to how to decorate, paint, paper and landscape the new additions to Torrens Park and where to accommodate the furniture, pictures, china, glass and plants which were being crated over in one ship after another (Preiss and Oborn, *The Torrens Park Estate*, p. 83).

> Bruister *[the steward at Torrens Park]* was expected to distinguish between a case of wall-paper dispatched from Hampton & Sons in London and six cases shipped from Hamburg for the bedrooms; others were for the drawing rooms, and there was a Schmidt gilt mosaic paper for the Theatre coving. There were brass fenders and grates from Longdems of Sheffield for the Theatre, a grate and tiles for the Small Drawing Room, ten cases of chairs to be used in the Theatre, engravings and paintings, cut glass from James Powell & Sons, and cases of brass goods, drapery and china ... some of these goods had to be collected and despatched to Mt Barker ... (Preiss and Oborn, p.89)

Some articles were to be stored unopened until the family returned. They also sent home the linen, plate and books bought for use at their London apartment, and there was a bill of lading for eighty-four cases of wine. On 2 September Robert wrote from Nairn to his brother-in-law Tom Elder:

> I now enclose a coloured sketch of how Joanna wants the Torrens Park hall painted ... I think I asked you to get two or three tenders and to telegraph the amount if it was over a certain sum. The painting of the house however is of more importance than the theatre — we have to live in the house ... (6: 179)

From London and Nairn sailed out directions as to how to remove and where to place the huge mirror near the new window they were having made in the Large Drawing Room; to make sure the theatre floor was not laid until *after* the ceiling was painted, how to install the new gaslights in the auditorium, where to put the bath, etc. etc. Letter after letter went out with advice of despatches — bulbs, seeds, plants — and Robert made sketches of how the garden beds were to be laid out. On 12 August he mentioned to Bruister that, as well as the stove he was sending, "I may probably wish to bring out a pair of dogs with me" (6: 124).

To Peter Waite he wrote from Scotland, 24 September 1884:

> I see you have made an arrangement with Reynell *[Walter Reynell, director of Elders Wool & Produce Company]*. You did not see him fit for the Mercantile part . . . he a little wants nerve.
>
> I am not going to take any part in the management but were the company not as successful as expected I feel that a certain sort of obloquy would fall on Sir Tom & me for the public bid on the strength of our good name & known success . . .
>
> I took a shooting here for the mere purpose of forcing myself to take violent exercise. In London I do nothing but sleep, eat & drink wine & a walk in the city exhausts me. I walked yesterday shooting 7 hours without feeling done & walked about 3 miles afterwards to where my trap was. I brought in 9 brace of partridges & pheasant & I have 3 hares. Each of these birds if you count the expense will cost me 30/- or £2. But what of that? There is an American snob here who pays £10,000 yearly for his pheasant party. (6: 350)

No sign of Robert's excitement or anxiety shows in Joanna's letters to her husband, which kept their steady pattern of trifles and the usual declarations of boredom and despair which erupted whenever she was separated from him. The only anxiety seemed to be for his well-being and the only excitement that of anticipating his return to her side.

Nairn to C/o George Elder Esq., Knock Castle by Greenock
September 19 1884:

> My dearest love,
>
> We have got one day and night over since you left and must try to do the best we can to support life until Monday. I do perceive in you, my friend, a strange readiness to go off with yr 'cawrpet bawg in your hawnd' to take little trips that separate you from the wife of your bosom. But its a man's way.
>
> I had a letter from Tom *[their son on vacation from Cambridge]*. Your brother *[Dr Smith Caldwell]* had to go to Mrs Cochrane Wilson's funeral so Tom had to go on to Ayr by himself but he met Mabel *[Mary Isobel Mitchell, whom Tom had met when she was at school with Mabel and Jean in Edinburgh]* on the Hand and almost at once she introduced him to her sisters and cousins so that Tom felt quite on the spot for the balls, and feeling he'd have no difficulty in getting partners.
>
> At this moment yr telegram from Fort Augusta has arrived. Thank you for it, dear Bob. You are a good, kind soul altho' you do go away and leave me. I have had a letter from Jessie. You had better write to Central Hotel for Monday 29th. Three double bedded rooms and two single bedded and a table at table d'hote for 17.
>
> *[She has also had a letter from Jean Elder and says:]* I do hope she is not vexed for my not going to Knock. You must explain to her my dear Bob what I feel about Largs and Edinburgh. What a nice long yarn you and George will have on Sunday. I hope that you

will concoct some scheme which will bring Sir Thomas to reason. I can't for the life of me see how things can be arranged so as to let us go out in January. I think you'll find that one of the Wool Compy. magnates will come to England to arrange matters. I should not wonder if Waite proposed to come. Dash it all! I wish we had never come home.

The next letter, undated, follows on:

My ever best and most dear,
I do not know if this will reach you in time but I wish it. As if Mabel and Joanna got letters and old Bosie did not the silly old man might feel affronted. *[Robert was heading off towards Loch Awe in the Highlands.]*

You and Mabel will have a really exhaustive view of Scottish western scenery. I am rather sorry I have not been the canal route but at my age, with Death not far off what does it matter? I often wonder at your anxiety to see places and things for you, as well as I, are not long for this world.

(She was not yet fifty and destined for another thirty-one years; Robert lived to be ninety-one.) Then she discusses their son Tom, who has written to her from Ayr, Scotland. He sent her his dance programme and she notes how he danced *nine* times with Miss Mabel Mitchell at one of the balls:

Poor boy! He reminds me of a moth fluttering round a candle. Doesn't it seem like yesterday since he was a little chap in petticoats? Cowper *[the poet]* was right — "Time which spoils all things, will turn my kitten into a cat."

It is very dull and ghastly here. The hotel is nearly empty. I hope dear Joe is getting over her shyness and that she will be her own sweet natural self at Knock.

Did she fret to be stuck in this "dull and ghastly" place, in an empty hotel, instead of enjoying the comfort of her houses in South Australia?

By December 1884 the Barr Smiths were back in London, preparing for departure despite her premonitions. As Joanna was back with her husband her letters to him stop. But his go on.

"Yesterday was Lord Mayor's Day & I went with Joanna & the children — & sat in a shop window in Farrington St. for several hours to see that most foolish of pageants", Robert remarked to Tom Elder at the end of a long letter about business, 11 November (6: 350). He had little time to waste for now he was longing to return to Adelaide. His activity in letter writing astonishes. His spidery scribbling crams the fragile pages in the massive volumes. Several business letters are written on Christmas Day, one, of five pages, starting almost apologetically: "I am not in the office today" (6: 461)! He wrote to the patient Bruister on Christmas Day to say:

What a pleasant thing it must be for you to have four sets of tradesmen in the house at the same time. I hope they will not lay the theatre floor until after the ceiling is painted. It would never do to erect scaffolding and drop paint on the floor we have taken so much pains with. *[He sends his best Christmas wishes to Bruister and Mrs Bruister].* [6: 456]

And, on 31 December 1884, in a final order to Henderson and Marryat, his beleaguered builders in Adelaide:

I am sending you this mail plans of book-cases, and mantelpiece for the small drawing room, i.e. the room on the right hand side as you enter Torrens Park Hall. Paper for this room & for the larger Drawing Room were sent 14 days ago ... I presume there will be no difficulty in getting these book cases made ... Paint Samples. The samples of paints for the

> drawing room ceiling and woodwork were I understood sent off last mail with the wallpapers. The sample colour which I send by this mail is for the frames of the mirrors in the large Drawing Room ... *[and so on and on, till finally]* ... The instructions forwarded are to assist you to carry out exactly what Morris & Coy. have planned. (6: 470-72)

And so, preceded by crates of furniture and papers and glass, eighty-four cases of wine, ten cases of cane chairs, one case of drapery, as well as their own luggage and possibly two dogs, the Barr Smiths made their way back to Adelaide, arriving early in 1885.

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1 Lord Archibald Tait (1811-82) converted from Presbyterianism to the Church of England in 1827 and was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1869.

2 Jonathan Swift (1667-1785), essayist, poet, author of *Gulliver's Travels.* The stories of his close but ambiguous relationships with two women, Esther Johnson and Esther Vanhomrigh, are told in his letters to the former, published as *Journal to Stella,* and the poem "Cadenus and Vanessa".

3 The Earl of Euston (1848-1912) was the eldest son and heir to the 7th Duke of Grafton, and the same man to whom, as Lord Fitzroy, Robert had regretted lending £300 in 1878 (chapter 4); he was now involved in a notorious divorce case. Euston (as Fitzroy) had married in 1871 Kate Cooke, a Variety Theatre actress and courtesan; he had settled £10,000 on her but now petitioned for nullity on the grounds that his wife still had a living husband, George Smith, at the time of her marriage to Euston. Kate declared that her husband had drowned at sea, but it was proved the drowned man was a different George Smith and that her husband was still alive. Then it was argued that she could not have been legally married to George Smith because Smith himself had a living wife when she married him in 1863! Lord Euston pleaded that he was twenty-two when he married Kate. Differences had arisen between them and she had gone to live with a "betting man". Lord Euston lost caste among his friends and had gone to Australia to work. The trustee of the £10,000 had meanwhile made off with the money. The annulment was not granted and the case was dismissed, on the grounds that Kate's marriage to the bigamist Smith was "illegal".

The Earl of Euston never succeeded to the title: he died aged 64, while his father the Duke lived to be 97. "The descendants of the [first] Duke of Grafton have been chiefly remarkable for their indolence and longevity," wrote Brian Masters in his book *The Dukes* (London: Blond & Briggs, 1975).

CHAPTER 7

ADELAIDE 1885-1887

1885:

The Barr Smith family was back in Adelaide, and three years unfolded for them to enjoy the two lovely houses they had created and which by now were quite stuffed with their trophies from Morris & Company. The household hummed with grown-up amusements and activities and the years between 1885 and 1889 seemed quite golden ones for this family. Joanna expanded like the houses and became a formidable hostess. There was no end to the entertainments, balls, polo matches, suppers accompanying the theatricals, dinners for visiting celebrities. Robert and his children, especially Tom, Mabel and Bertie, were all keen riders, and the Adelaide Hunt Club met regularly at Torrens Park. There is a description of the luncheon put on there for the opening of the season, 6 June 1885, when a large crowd of hunters and friends tucked into Saddle of Mutton, Boned Turkeys, Roast Fowl, Spiced Beef, Aspics, Chicken pie, Pigeon pie, Ham, Tongue, Trifles, Creams, Jellies, Meringues, Fruit Pies and Tarts. After the Hunt the Barr Smiths put on afternoon tea for all.

Later in the year, on 15 December at 9 p.m., the Theatre, which by all accounts was exquisite, opened with scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* and a two-act comedy, *Checkmate.* The drama classes in London were put to good use in the perfect little theatre, and the girls' friends were roped in: the cast included Mabel, Joe and Tom, who had graduated from Cambridge and returned to join his father's business, as well as Tom O'Halloran Giles and Fred Braund, later to be Joanna's sons-in-law. One of the leads, Major Gordon, was suddenly called back to his regiment to subdue a mutiny and his place was taken at the last moment by a young professor from the university, William Bragg, a future Nobel Prize-winner. The theatre could accommodate 200 people on charming rush-bottomed chairs designed by Morris & Co — the very chairs which Robert was arranging to have despatched on the previous 31 December. When the occasion required it, chairs could be removed and dancing take place on a sprung floor. There were proper curtains, lighting and heating, and all was on such a professional level that at times real professional actors were called in to perform. Sumptuous suppers and dinners followed in the reception rooms and conservatories. Concerts and tableaux were also organised and invitations to these lavishly catered entertainments were eagerly sought. Sadly, none of these are described by Joanna, who must have had her hands full in the organising of them.

In summer the family moved up to Mt Barker where three acres of formal garden, three acres of orchards and forty-two acres altogether surrounded the handsome house, and the entertaining of friends and neighbours continued. It was said that everyone in the Mt Barker environs at some time or other was entertained at the hospitable house, and as well as these parties the family were enthusiastic enough to organise a theatrical programme for the villagers at the local hall.

Even so, as Robert wrote to his friend Arthur Blyth in London, 20 September 1885:

> The mother is well & I think happy. The girls are not so dead set upon South Australia as they were — they miss some of the enjoyment of your side & I am by no means sure that you wont see us all in London again but Elder is very opposed to it. (7: 66)

Three months later (19 December), as the summer advanced:

> We have had very trying weather this year so far. I have never felt the heat more & Joanna never so much. In fact she was crying out last night for Galway again. . . .
>
> The Governor *[Sir William Robinson]* has again been putting his foot in it. He had the singular want of tact to say at Linden *[the house of Mr and Mrs Alexander Hay]* that if we did not join in the Federal scheme "Victoria" would have an action for breach of promise against us. This would have been fearfully suggestive to old Hay of Jamie & the McGiody case. The Governor has been justifying his remarks at Pt Pirie last night & the Register this morning 19th Dec. gives him a dignified reproof & tells him kindly what he ought to think & how he ought to govern. (7: 109)

In 1885 Tom Elder, seeking, like his sister, relief from the grilling summer heat, built a house on the top of Mount Lofty. It was to his specifications, of massive proportions in the Scottish Baronial style — a fortress-like construction with a tower. Built on the slope of the hill, it allowed a sheer descent of more than a hundred feet from the platform of the tower to the ground. He called it "The Pinnacles". It was a man's retreat and a quiet household, unlike bustling Torrens Park, but his cheerful niece Mabel was always welcome and urged to visit. She was a most favoured relation — indeed, Elder left The Pinnacles to her in his will; but by that time Mabel was living in England and, having no use for it, sold it.

There is one solitary note from Joanna in 1886, when she wrote to Robert:

March 31st, 1886:

> My dearest Bob,
>
> I got your kind note tonight. A pleasant little surprise. But I hope you wont stay away another night for a very long time. The house is miserable without you. And we'd rather have you ever so crabby & snappy as not have you at all — you dear pipkin!
>
> The dogs have been fighting again tonight. But they have fortunately separated without much bloodshed.
>
> Tomorrow being the 1st of the month will you kindly bring me home £20 for wages. Do not forget <u>on any account.</u>
>
> I sent you a telegram received from Mrs Stone to which I hope you sent a reply.
>
> I enclose a note from Mrs Downes & will you please write General Downes, Elsternwich, Melbourne, what you think about the house. Do please <u>telegraph</u> as you may be the means of stopping their letting the place if there is a delay. *[She is searching for a home for Tom and his bride. General and Mrs Downes have just left Adelaide to live in Victoria.]*
>
> I suppose Tomasso will decide on Ballengeich. The Makins house is very nice, but I suppose they will only sell — not let.
>
> I am sorry Gas Anderson has an enemy on the Board, but we have all many enemies. Why shd he "differ from the kindly race of men?"
>
> I have a letter from dear old Anstey tonight. It strikes me he is failing a little. His style is not so clear and clinking as it used to be.
>
> I hope you will bring me home lots of news, <u>scandal</u> etc. Howard has really got Preiner's place!

Now goodnight my best beloved. Thank heaven tomorrow night will soon come & we'll have you again.

Ever yr devoted wife JBS

The next year, 1886, in May, Mary Isobel Mitchell came out alone from Scotland, as Joanna Elder had done years before, to marry her love — her dancing partner at the balls in Ayr. It was a welcomed match. Robert, in his courteous but practical way, dashed off a letter to Mary Isobel's father (her mother had died after her thirteenth child was born, and Mary Isobel, the twelfth child, and her siblings were brought up by their father and eldest sister):

> My wife is announcing to you the safe arrival of your dear daughter who looks well & happy. The wedding is fixed for Wednesday 5th. *[He adds that he is settling £10,000 on his son]* — with reversal in case of death to your daughter in her widowhood. (7: 190)

In July the same year, young Joanna Barr Smith, aged twenty, married George Hawker, the pastoralist from Bungaree, Clare. There are no letters from the mother about the weddings, though in a business letter to his friend Thomas George Pleydell (who had been bank manager at Moonta and was now a banker in England) Robert tacked on a reference to "my son's marriage. My daughter Joe has followed suit. We had a big ball 2 nights ago. My wife and I hate such things but sometimes they must be done" (7: 241).

Robert wrote to George Elder in August 1886:

> Have had staying with us an Oxford man the Revd John W. Owen *[author of* The Larger Hope, Some Australian Sermons, The Common Salvation*]*. He is here esteemed the cleverest Anglican in S.A. There is no doubt of his culture & mental vigour. Imagine my surprise when I found he had never heard the name James Martineau & did not know there was such a man as Frederick Harrison. This shows me how entirely Oxford shuts itself out of certain intellectual movements which are pressing around us & reminds me of our friend Archdeacon Dove's question when Sir W. Morgan was at the height of his glory — chief secretary of S.A. & inaugurating the broad & comprehensive policy — "Who's Morgan?" asked Dove. (7: 279)

James Martineau (1805-1900) was an English philosopher and Unitarian preacher, Frederic Harrison (1831-1923) a liberal professor of jurisprudence and from 1880 president of the English Positivist Committee.

By the end of that year, 1886, Robert and Joanna were becoming anxious about their third son Bertie. He was then thirteen, and though he excelled at sport was not the student his parents wanted and expected. Robert wrote to his friend Arthur Chippendale:

> We have all gone up to Mt Barker rather earlier this year as we return earlier for certain engagements. We have got a tutor for Barr *[Mr Frank Adams]*. He was not improving at St Peters College & I did not like not to give him the benefit of the hills in summer. I am a little unhappy about him . . . he is easily led & does not drop into the best kind of companionship . . . I do not attach much importance to his idleness. I have been accustomed to this — his mother says the influence of his home is against him — dogs & horses. He is a splendid cross-country rider but that doesn't carry him far in life or make a true man of him. *[He adds gloomily]* This place is in a confoundedly depressed state & almost everybody is insolvent. . . . we have had bad seasons three — we go on borrowing money. (7: 325)

Thus entered into their lives another Mr Adams. If he was any relation of the Revd Adams who guided Tom Barr Smith into Cambridge nothing of that is ever said. He was the second master at Glenalmond, an esteemed public school in Scotland, and had taken a trip to New Zealand for his health's sake. Some of the Hawker boys had been to Glenalmond and knew the master. In February 1887 Robert composed a tremendously detailed letter to Mr Frank Adams, who was in New Zealand and about to return to England where he intended starting a small private school. It includes a reasonably detached perception of the boy's character, and a similarly detached view of the English and Scots relations.

> Dear Mr Adams,
> My telegram has informed you that we have made up our minds to let Barr go home with you — it is a great wrench to part with him for he is perhaps the brightest influence in our home but we have not to consider that but what is best for his future.
>
> Nothing I believe would have induced his mother to let him go except your promise to be in loco parentis to him at all times. For after all this is what a youth most lacks in separation from his family — the ever watchful jealous eye of parents on his physical & moral well-being.
>
> I may put down a few things as they occur to me which may be useful to you in his management, & which you can, when you have considered them, discuss with me . . . when we meet in Auckland. *[They have decided that Robert will take young Barr as far as New Zealand, meet Mr Adams and see the two off on the ship taking them to England.]* His education — as to the mode to be adopted I at your request leave in great measure to your judgement.
>
> I liked the idea of his being put to work at once at Glenalmond. His mother thinks it would be a great matter that where [he goes] he should stay as constantly changing from school to school is bad. *[There were discussions, apparently, about whether Barr should go to a prep school before starting at a senior school. He did, as it turned out, go to Dalvreck School, Crieff (which in 1894 changed its name to Ardvreck).]*
>
> Mr Hawker tells me he did not find his boys learning much at Glenalmond. I do not know how long they were there, & possibly the boys were idle & stupid. You spoke of possibly sending him to your brother who has youths under his care. I have been indoctrinated with a fear of private schools & their influence. Some person said they were all mostly "hells". Certainly the poison, if it is there, is concentrated. It depends almost entirely on the tone of the youths who are with your brother at the time. . . .
>
> I quite concurred with you in not cramming him as if for a civil service exam. The idea is to send him to Oxford or Cambridge when he is 18 or 19 & we think it always does good for a lad if he has some definite aim & intention. . . .
>
> He has not a very 'open nature'. We tried hard to make him speak <u>exact</u> truth, not nominal truth giving sometimes a false impression. We sometimes thought him inquisitive — a good quality when properly directed but not when it takes the direction of prying into things which cannot concern one.
>
> Rather given to braggadocio I fear in the company of other boys. This we fought against as making him an object of contempt & unpopularity.
>
> I do not think tho' that he is unpopular with his companions at any time, still anything savoring of boasting or blowing should be checked at once.

I think he's easily led into mischief. I think if he were in bad company & mischief going on he would have a tendency to try & take a leading part in any riot. I dont think he would ever initiate anything of this kind himself. He enters without much self-restraint into what is going on around him.

For the rest having said so much bad I may say I believe you will find him a bright companion — polite, obedient, amiable & kindly in all his ways. Here he is content to be with his mother & sisters, his ponies & dogs. He lacks discipline & method. . . . Of religious education (doctrinal) he has had none. He has never been told to believe one doctrine against another.

So far as I could gather your thoughts on the subject your beliefs are very much like my own. My wife & daughters attend the English church. I do not attend any church but was brought up in the church of Scotland.

His health is excellent. But he is, as all boys in Australia are, careless. There is no necessity here for care & my oldest boy nearly killed himself by want of attention to having warm clothing — & from sitting in wet clothes. Barr, I feel sure, will never of himself take a coat with him, anywhere.

Holidays. You were good enough to say you would care for even these & I do not relieve you, even from these responsibilities! But there are certain relatives to whom it is right & proper the lad be shown, who will expect this & who will be glad to see him . . .

I am afraid I cannot save you from a general description of those of my relatives & my wife's relatives with whom we have not quarrelled.

I have two married sisters. Mrs Alison & my unmarried sister live at Stranraer, Wigtonshire, Scotland *[these were Jane Alison, née Smith, James Alison's second wife ("Jeannie" Alison was still living at Stranraer in 1922 when Joe Hawker went to visit her), and Miss Mary Barr Smith].* My other married sister is Mrs George Clazy *[Jessie Clazy, née Smith].* Her husband is a refined, intelligent gentleman and they have a family — boys among others, about Barr's age & propose to make arrangements with my sister that Barr may go to her whenever he has a holiday & likes to go. The boys were rather rough when I saw them but there is no harm in them & the parents, tho' too indulgent, are well-principled & kind.

My brother Dr W. Smith Caldwell lives at Lochside, Lochwinnoch, Scotland. He was 25 years in India & is a retired surgeon-major. He is full of kindness & sympathy with boys & Barr would delight to be with him for there is shooting & horses. Still, my brother's acquaintances are likely to be rather worldly people & brandy-loving old Indians & for any lengthy period it is not the sort of environment I would choose for Barr who is fond of the society of 'grown-up' people & is attractive to them in turn.

My wife's brother Mr George Elder & his wife live at Knock Castle. They are more than kind but they have no children. I have more confidence in Mr George Elder's judgements (by a long way) than I have in the judgement of any relative I have. But Mr George is 70 so don't trouble them with a child for too long a stay.

Mrs Ralston Patrick, Trearn, Beith, who is my wife's niece & Mrs William Elder, St Margaret's Hope North Queensferry. *[Jemima Patrick, née Alison, was the daughter of Joanna's sister Jemima, who died young and was James Alison's first wife. The fine house Trearn was still standing in 1922 when Jean Giles went to call on her cousin Jemima and her children and grandchildren. It has since been demolished.]*

I'm afraid this long rigmarole about relatives may provoke a smile. My wife will

write to you about his health — she says he is inclined to bronchitis but I dont remember his being ill since he was 4 years old.

Salary for this: You are to be his travelling tutor from Auckland to England — I to pay your travelling expenses & a salary of £200 a year. (7: 377)

Robert and Barr set off in March, initially by train from Adelaide, then to take ship from Sydney across to New Zealand. Joanna directed her first, as usual distressed, letter to her husband precipitately, almost as soon as he had left town.

Mt Barker, to Messrs Gilchrist Watt & Co. Sydney [shipping agents].
Overland to Melbourne & Sydney.
18 March:

It has just occurred to me that if Mabel drives over to the Junction[1] with this letter this afternoon, she will be sure to find some one in the train who will post it for me in Melbourne tomorrow morning so that you may get it in the evening and I daresay you will be glad to know how it fares with your poor old Joe — I was fearfully demoralised yesterday after you left me. Tom was goodness itself to me poor fellow. It is not often nowadays I break down, but when I do it is pretty bad. But I need not go back on that — seeing that Bogatski tells us not to talk much about ourselves. *[Karl von Bogatzky (1690-1774) was a German hymn-writer.]*

We got up here at 7. A very cold night & all of us unprepared for it. You went away dear Bob without a rug, but of course you will buy one, as altho' your ulster is pretty warm, it will never do for you to travel in N.Z. without one. A spare rug will be handy as I gave mine to Barr so you need have no qualms about buying one, my dear economical old pig.

Their son George was on one of his regular visits home. He had left Victoria and the Gardners' house and was now being supervised by a new guardian, Mr John Thorley, who was with him at Mt Barker. She continues:

George was most kind in his reception of me last night, and ever since has kept presenting me at intervals with some fresh marine curiosity. John's researches in conchology have been something unprecedented.

I lay awake a great deal last night, listening to Bobbie and thinking of Tennyson's line "ticking away the little lives of men" until I got very nervous. I could not light my candle & read because my eyes were so inflamed with crying. I was so thankful for the daylight and Anne with the tea seemed an Angel visitant. This morning yr telegram from Ballarat arrived. It is a lovely day & I hope you are both enjoying yourselves. I have a letter from Tom Giles telling me Steve is very ill with his eyes & miserable, and has asked Tom to write & ask me if he may come up here for a few days. *[Stephen Ralli, much loved son of the Barr Smith's old friend in England, S.A. Ralli, had taken up land and was dealing in horses. He generally stayed with the Barr Smiths when in town.]* I dont like to refuse — but I do hate visitors. However the fellow being ill, Mabel has written to say he may come. I thought perhaps my boy might want kindness some day & if I did not extend it to another it might come back on me. How my old Calvinistic training crops up. But I suppose it is impossible to expect anything else.

Of course there is nothing to tell you of up here. I shall never have much to write you. You will have correspondents in town I hope who will keep you au courant of the events of the outer world. I dont know where or when I am to write

you but I can always reach you with a telegram shd there be any necessity . . . Molly *[Tom's wife, Mary Isobel]* writes me this morning that Tom was taking Jack *[untraced]* in to the Private Hospital last night. He got better in the afternoon but had a relapse which shows you are right about D.T.s coming & going. . . . I believe we are to have the Lover on Sunday *[she refers to Jean's suitor Dr Charles Todd, son of Sir Charles Todd of the Overland Telegraph]*. Jean offered to put him off but I said no. I want her to have no sort of grievance — I hope I'll be able to be more civil to him than I was the last day. Stephen's company will be rather a relief and take off a little of the awkwardness.

Oh Bob will the six weeks of your absence ever pass? Here is only the first day & it seems an eternity. You see we have not been separated for such a long time — and never for very long that I dont seem able to bear it.

I dont suppose you will read much in the train. You will be so anxious to get a general impression of the country. But you have Roland Cashel *[a novel by Charles James Lever, 1862]* which will amuse you. I daresay you will scarcely recognise Melbourne now. Changed days, Bob, from the tin erection in Bourke St which was considered rather grand thirty years ago. Oh well: we have changed too. Gone all the elasticity of youth & the capacity for entering into life's pleasures. Only regrets are left — and the chill feeling of disappointment that comes with age. But as long as we are left to each other, beloved, there is still something left in life.

I am sending no messages to my darling boy because I enclose a little note for him. I am so glad he went off in good spirits. I fear the time when his heart will fail will be when he leaves you in Auckland. I found the plan of the Mariposa after you left in yr bedroom & enclose it.

And now goodbye, vein of my heart. Think of me sometimes and believe me Yr ever devoted, loving Wife.

(This and the following six letters TEBS)

Mt Barker to Sydney
Sunday
March 20. 1887:

My dearest Love,

Last night I got yr kind letter from Ballarat. Also one from my dear boy for which thank him. His sisters are writing him by this chance. Indeed I believe it is our last chance. I think this letter with anything like luck shd be in Sydney on Wednesday. It cannot be before as we heard at the last moment there was no overland train from Adelaide to Melbourne on Saturday. So that this must wait & go on Monday. Take note of that dear Bob in coming home. You cant get the express on a Saturday although I dont see why it shouldn't as the train gets in quite soon enough for the engine-driver & stoker to get to church!

Well, dearest Bob, you seem to be getting on all right except in the matter of meals. That I hope will mend as you go on. I never have been able to understand your wasting your whole Friday on an uninteresting place like Ballarat! When you might have been seeing the sights in Melbourne. I hope you saw the pictures but perhaps you have left that till you are on your return journey.

We are getting on quietly enough here in all conscience. Poor ophthalmic Stephen arrived last night & seemed to be glad to get beside us altho' a duller evening no man ever spent I am sure. About 9 we sent him to the billiard room, with

a pipe & the whiskey bottle and then we all ran upstairs to roost. I dont think he will stay long as he is really mending, thanks to Willy Giles *[their friend Dr William Anstey Giles, last noted in England]*. He says Willy is splendid at eye diseases & has treated him very skilfully to have got the disease under so soon.

I am so sorry I cant give you the result of yesterdays elections but they certainly will from the office. Steve says there were grave doubts at the Club as to Stirling (Dr) and Symon getting in.

The Adelaide Club, the Gentleman's Club founded 1863, was a home from home for many members of parliament who at that time drew no salary and so were mainly men of wealth. Robert was a Foundation member, Dr Stirling joined in 1864 and Sir Josiah Symon in 1881. Dr (later Sir Edward) Stirling did not win back his seat in the House of Assembly. He gave up politics and devoted himself to collecting Aboriginal cultural artefacts. Sir Josiah Symon, an anti-Protectionist, was also defeated.

What a godforsaken country is this which rejects men like these & puts in nincompoops & blackguards. Enclosed is a protest from our poor old friend at St Pauls *[Revd John Owen]* who is banging his head at a stone wall as usual & must have a headache & a heartache for his pains. I enclose his letter too. Did Goyder *[the Surveyor-General]* tell you his son George was engaged to Miss Matther? Oh! Generations unborn!

Our friend with the D.T.s is safely lodged at Dr Goerger's private hospital & mending. *[Dr Görger practised medicine in Adelaide from 1877 to 1890, when he returned to Germany. He ran a nursing home on South Terrace from 1887 to 1890.]* I hope when he comes out he will go back to the other side, unless Tom & Molly have some quixotic ideas as to keeping him out of temptations by having him under their own eye. But I daresay our dear daughter-in-law will study her own comfort & convenience more than that. They talk of coming up to Mt Barker to see us in April but I half think the hills will be too cold for the infant *[Joanna Lang Gosse, née Barr Smith, born February 1887]*.

The Bishop & his wife come on the 15th.

I suppose you have given orders for yr letters to be sent to you from the office as none have come here except one application from some Sunday school for the use of the Paddock, to which I did not reply. You know my hatred of that kind of thing so I thought I'd just let them find out in due course that you were out of the Colony.

I am writing in my nightgown, having got up early. I must now dress however & resume later on. Perhaps the Lover will bring me some election news from town. He must know the latest news at all counts.

Afternoon — Dr Todd arrived in due course. He can give us very little election news except that Stirling is out & Playford *[Thomas Playford, orchardist and politician, later Premier]* & Turner — & Cohen is a long way at the head of the North Adelaide Poll *[Lewis, later Sir Lewis Cohen, merchant and politician]*. Surely that's a disgraceful result. Just to give you an idea of your future son-in-law he told us at dinner he never knew there were elections on — & it was only by seeing the crowds of people about and the sort of air of excitement about everybody that he thought of enquiring anything at all & beyond these items of news he knows nothing! Miserable ignoramus! Fancy a son-in-law like that. Poor Jean is in a state of delightful excitement & whenever he makes a remark more than usually idiotic, laughs & looks around at

us as much as to say "Isn't he an original?" Stephen is very pleasant to him & does not seem to feel at all put out by seeing the sort of philandering that goes on. His eyes are a little better this afternoon & he & Mabel are going for a tandem drive & Jean & her lover are going out with Pitty Sing. He goes down fortunately for us, by the 6 o'clock train so we wont have any more of him for another week it is to be hoped.

The weather is very hot again but the nights here are cool & pleasant. I am feeling very lonely today. I think on Sunday I miss you most as you are always at home on Sundays. Next Sunday you will be at sea — nearing New Zealand. I cannot remember anything to say to Mr Adams except to adjure him to be kind & indulgent to my dear little lad. His teeth will have to be seen to sooner or later. They say the American dentists are the cleverest of them all but I dont suppose anything can be done to Barr's teeth at the present time. But it might be worth while to have them looked at. Meanwhile Barr ought to be instructed to use his tooth brush regularly & keep his few remaining teeth as clean & nice as possible.

Oh I do miss you so much my dearest Bob. I feel as if the six weeks would never pass. I hope you will never go away and leave me again.

I had a letter from Joe *[their daughter Joanna, married to George Hawker].* They are now putting George's knee in plaster. Joe says they wont pay me a visit just now as we shall have such a dose of them in winter & I am glad she has some sense of that kind for it is exceedingly tiresome to have her husband about all day an idle man. I think I will have to keep Butcher & Kettle in the stable as I have no other beasts to make use of if I wanted to go out myself or send friends. But I'll have a crack with Alford on the subject. For instance when the Kennions are up they will want to be driven about constantly. *[Dr George Kennion, Bishop of Adelaide, and his wife were touring the district for confirmations and to meet parishioners, and were to stay at Auchendarroch.]* I think I'll get a great deal of comfort & pleasure out of the Victoria with a driving box, more especially if it is made comfortable in the back which it never has been. It will be ready I suppose by the time you come back. You'll have no trap to drive me about in though. But I dont think you care as much for that as you once did. I dont know where or when I am to write to you again. I must wait your instructions. I hope you are taking care of yourself and wont on any account expose yourself to cold. Remember how ill you were in England and avoid the beginnings of a cough.

Give my love to my dearest Barr. Oh how I long to have him back again & how I am always fancying I hear his step on the stair, or his whistle in the yard. Alas. Alas! Goodbye my dearest love. Think of me often.

Always yr devoted wife J.B.S.

The lapse of time before the next letter suggests that letters Joanna sent to Robert at Invercargill went astray. The next envelope is addressed to Melbourne.

Mt Barker to Menzies Hotel Melbourne
April 7 1887:

My dearest Life,

Your first letter from New Zealand only reached me last night. I had been almost a whole fortnight without a line, but thank you my darling for the telegrams. They kept me from utterly collapsing. It is a sore trial to me that you expected letters but did not get them. Try & realize Bob that you carried your own mails to Auckland, & that unless I had written before you went away there could not possibly be any

letters waiting for you. Barr might as reasonably expect letters at San Francisco. We wrote of course by the following mail, knowing you wd have them sent to your next destination. We did not expect you to pass so rapidly through the North Island! It was a great pity that in the hurry of leaving you omitted to give me a sketch of yr route but I dont believe I cd have caught you up with letters. Your children will tell you how I have worried over not being able to communicate with you — and not hearing from you. Altho' when I did get your Auckland letters last night they opened up all my pent up floodgates & made me unfit for everything. I dont think my dear you can possibly realize what these three weeks have been to me. Three weeks today since I parted from you both — but I begin to think from the tone of yr letter that you wont be away quite three weeks more. Probably not much over a fortnight. I am happy to think you will get two fat letters from me at Invercargill. Tom & von Treuer *[Robert's private secretary]* directed me always in writing. I feel very sorry for you darling. You must have had a miserable time in Auckland. I knew the farewell would cut into you. Oh I hope we have done right.

I was glad you went to the theatre — it wd have been too dreadful to spend that first night in solitude.

I remember the Balbirinie-Vans by name. If she is kind to my little lad she will have in me a grateful friend for life. When I am writing to you Bob I have constantly to take off my spectacles & wipe my poor old eyes which continually fill with tears. But

"Tears are the showers that fertilize this world
And memory of things precious keepeth warm
The heart that once did hold them"

This letter which I begin today I shall just keep going on till I can send it to Melbourne because I need not again try New Zealand. You will be very glad to have a budget waiting for you at Menzies. I wrote a private note to Blyth brothers about yr Auckland letters. *[Neville and Arthur Blyth had been ironmongers, land investors and politicians. Sir Arthur, a particular friend of theirs, was Agent General in London.]*

Good Friday 8th. This is a public holiday but Mab & Jean got Mr Rossi *[William Rossi, the postmaster at Mt Barker]* to promise that if Mr Thorley *[George's minder]* went to the back door at 9.30 he wd give our letters & papers to him. So we are in luck. Especially so as the English mail is in. I enclose a letter from Jean *[Elder]* & you will see from the latter part of it that George has his uneasy times & sleepless nights like the rest of us. I did not send it to Tom to read as I generally do for fear of making mischief. There is a second letter from Rudolph Schwartze about Dulwich *[a public school for boys in England; Schwartze, in London, was an occasional correspondent]* enclosing masters, circular etc. but I'll just keep it now with the other till you get back. Theres also a letter from Herdman[2] asking you to exhibit "Prince Charlie" at the Exhibition as an example of his style as he has nothing else ready or suitable to send. You will see about that when you get home. Oh how I long for that happy day my Robertus. Never more must you leave me until one or other goes to that longest journey of all from which there is no homecoming. I have got the second proof of you & the boy together from Duryea. *[Townsend Duryea (1823-80) was a professional photographer in Adelaide who specialised in portraits and views.]* I like it better than the one I sent you to Auckland. I have written a long letter to Barr by the "Valetta" leaving tomorrow to Stavenhagen's care *[Edward Stavenhagen, of Mecklenberg, Germany, had*

become the head of Elder Smith & Co.'s London office]. What do you think of Sir John Downer K.C.M.G.? I send you the Register's opinion. I fancy it gives tolerably general satisfaction. *[John Downer, lawyer and politician, lost the premiership through being absent from South Australia to receive a personal knighthood from Queen Victoria in 1887.]*

So terrified am I that by some extraordinary chance you shd arrive in Melbourne sooner than we anticipate, I am going to send off this letter so as to go to Melbourne on Monday & arrive on Tuesday the 12th. Then I'll follow up by other letters next week if I find out you wont be so sudden in your movements as you have been the last few days. Why you cant have staid *[sic]* a night in Wellington I dont believe. I cannot understand the rapidity of your movements at all. I think I told you in one of these fat letters lying at Invercargill that Mabel had agreed to recite at the Oddfellows Hall, Nairne, next Wednesday the 13th for the benefit of Mr Gower's church. She is going to do Bingen *[the word is not very legible, but "Bingen on the Rhine" was a popular and bad poem included in* Bell's Standard Elocutionist *(1884)].* I think it is now her best recitation altho' a poor poem. She is getting up Sara Bernhardt's recitation "The Last Rose of Summer", spoken with a rose in her hand. I think it will be pretty & taking — a sort of concerty thing.

Alfred has asked to go to the Onkaparinga races on Monday *[the Annual Easter Picnic steeplechase]* & I have said yes as none of us are going. Mab says she has always gone with you & she'll go with no-one else.

April 9th. Pouring rain! There has been no rain like it this year. It has gone on all the morning but whether it will last c'est une autre chose. I have been cheered, my darling boy, by the receipt of your letter from that jaw-breaking place beginning with an O! written on the 31st. I was so interested in your mud bath. What lots we'll have to talk about when you get back. & that weird mountain that you were starting for! I am glad to know you are safely out of that uncanny North Island for I believe that one day it will be blown up & disappear into space. *[Joanna was terrified of earthquakes. She did eventually experience one, years later, at Torrens Park.]*

I am posting this today because it wont reach its destination till Tuesday. I am now making myself miserable over your sea passage to Melbourne. When the wind blows my heart fails me altogether. I am thoroughly low & nervous the last few days. Mabel & Jean have been preaching me excellent sermons on my many blessings & the sin of being low-spirited. If either of them had a husband like mine from whom they had scarcely ever been parted for thirty years they wd then not be surprised that I shd fret & grieve over my separation from him. "They jest at scars who never felt a wound."

It looks very like as if the rain would last. Would that it would! I had a letter from Erlistoun today. She comes home next Wednesday. *[She has apparently been staying at Bungaree with her sister Joe Hawker.]* Edward has been up there & she felt the awkwardness of meeting him she says very much. *[Edward Hawker, who had been "very constant in his attentions" when Erlistoun was fourteen, seems to be a rejected suitor.]* Poor Erlistoun. Its a pity she is not more true blue. There is much good in her but her character wants honesty. It is her pride that makes her hate what is mean & base. She has not inherited your strong sense of honour which is a terrible pity. I always feel that with these younger children Miss Fickert has not been a good or elevating influence.

There's a letter to me from your sister Jessie. She has sent her two daughters

[Robina and Marjorie Clazy] to Paris to a Madame Dubons in the Champs Elysee & Jessie expects them to come home speaking French fluently! Isn't it wise of her to send these girls away like that. You'll find they'll turn out very attractive women & if they'd remained in Paisley! Good Lord! Aggie *[daughter of the Revd Clazy and his first wife and therefore Jessie's step-daughter]* is engaged to her half cousin W. McEwan. His mother it seems was "Mrs Mary Crawford, St Johns Hill". This young man is a doctor but its all undecided yet & a secret so dont let on in yr letters you know anything about it.

My dear darling husband more letters will follow this one Monday. Your absolutely devoted

Joe.

Mt. Barker
Thursday 14 April 1887:

My dearest Love,

Yr telegram from Dunedin dashed away all hopes of your speedy return but I am very pleased as well as disappointed for I was thinking that in your haste to be back you were curtailing yr enjoyment in new scenes. Staying too short a time here & there to take everything in & enjoy it. I write you this little note today just in case you come on quickly from Invercargill. You will find three letters, previously written, at Menzies Hotel & altho' there is nothing new I shall send you this tonight & it will be in Melbourne on Saturday. If I write from here on Monday you wd not get it till Wednesday. I enclose two letters that came by "Orizaba". There was one also from Mr Clazy. Mr von Treuer wrote that perhaps it wd be easiest to send Mr Clazy's back to him as his son George was always writing to him to see if his father were not arranging money matters for him — so I sent it today to von Treuer. I hope this was right. I am again making myself unhappy about yr passage from Invercargill. The glass is falling and I dread a storm. How thankful I shall be when I get a telegram from Melbourne. You'll stay there a day or two I suppose as you said you wd likely go to Mt. Macedon but dont stop long I beseech you. You will perhaps meet Mr & Mrs D. Murray. She will give you a message from me. I had letters from Chippendale *[Arthur Chippendale, a particular friend of Robert's in England. His wife was an actress, and when they visited Torrens Park while the theatre was being built she was full of advice].* He has just got back to Reigate. Erlistoun comes back from Bungaree this evening. Mab goes to Aldgate to fetch her. The Bishop & his wife come tomorrow. I shall be a happier woman next Thursday than I am this Thursday.

Jean & I have strained relations just now. It all proceeds from this wretched Todd — I cant always play a part but my disgust sometimes becomes manifest. Then she gets hurt of course. There is nothing in the shape of a quarrel but we are just constrained in our manner to each other which is unpleasant. We never speak of him now at all. She thinks she punishes me by silence regarding him & his doings but I heartily wish I was never to hear his name or see his ugly face again. I'm not spiteful Bob but I sometimes feel so horribly disgusted at the idea of this fellow coming into such close & intimate relations with us.

The Concert at Nairne last night passed off very well. Mab recited very nicely & seemed to please the people. Mr Samwell *[the Revd Samwell of Mt Barker]* went with us. It was quite a dark night going but we had the moon returning. I think I'll go

down to the Park end of next week, even if you dont come back. Mabel is tired of Mt Barker. The new cook is there & the house getting ready. So I fancy it will be wiser to go down & begin to settle in. I am very dull today & with a headache after last night's dissipation. Tomorrow is our wedding day. Dear, dear, dearest Bob. Oh what pain to be separated on this anniversary. But I shall be with you in spirit my own love. This has indeed been a very trying separation for me. I could never consent to it again. You, travelling about & having yr mind constantly diverted, cannot understand the hunger of heart I have endured. I feel so utterly alone. Perhaps I shall be able to write again I daresay I shall hear your plans more definitely bye and bye. Ever, thine most absolutely,

Joanna Barr Smith.

Will you try in a music shop for a song "Lullaby" by Brahms. Mabel wants it.

Monday I am glad the Sunday is over. Mr Pleydell came up & spent the day & in the evening we went to church where we were kept till 9 by the Confirmation Service. Miss Fickert writes me she thinks Mrs Schofield will be a comfort to us *[the new cook?]*. She seems to be a good manager. I have not seen her yet of course but I have written to her today that we will all be home to dinner on Saturday evening. The glass keeps very high but it is very cloudy & I cant understand why the rain is holding off. We must have it soon surely. I have just despatched a telegram to my friend Walt at Lobethal to say we'll be over to luncheon tomorrow. The Bishop is very anxious to see Lobethal & he always wants his wife to share his pleasures. He is a most devoted husband — throws you, mon ami, completely in the shade! And Mrs Kennion is beginning to look very old & plain & he is barely in his prime & a very good-looking man he is. We all much prefer her. In fact we have all got to be very fond of her. She is most sweet & amiable in all her ways. *[Mrs Kennion was a sister of an earlier Governor, Sir James Fergusson.]* I think I could get to make a friend of her. We all feel the charm of her good breeding & good manners & it is certainly a treat to come across that sort of thing for I do think one of the drawbacks to Colonial Society is the absence of suavity & consideration for the prejudices of others. The Kennions stay with us until Wednesday.

I had thought I might get a letter from you today. Alas no. Our clothes have come from Paris by the "Orizaba". I sent the Customs invoice to Mr von Treuer. I wonder if you are getting a smooth passage or if you are being knocked about. Oh what a time we have been separated to be sure. I fear my Robertus you have learned to do without me, which will indeed be a "Pretty howdye do". Well I have not learned to do without you Bob. I wouldn't care a pin for life without you. I only got the map from Gilchrist Watt *[shipping agents in Sydney]* on Saturday. I think Barr ought to be at San Francisco by now surely but it must still be a long time ere we hear. I dont think I'll have a chance of writing again as I am always a day behind with the overland express here. Adieu my beloved.

April 16th 1887

This I believe will be my last letter to you. I shall finish it & post it from here on Monday & it will reach Melbourne on Wednesday *[Joanna's tortuous calculations of mails!]*. Mr von Treuer said your boat left Invercargill on Friday & arrived on Wednesday at Melbourne but you say in yr telegram of yesterday that you are sailing today therefore you wont be in Melbourne until Thursday. Mabel will go over for

you to the Mt. Barker junction on Saturday morning — & we are proposing to go back to Torrens Park the same afternoon if agreeable to you.

The Bishop & Mrs Kennion arrived yesterday and are going to stay until Wednesday. They are very pleasant inmates & I feel them rather a relief as we are certainly getting horribly moped. Tomorrow he has three confirmations, Echunga first, then he lunches at the Goyders. *[George Goyder, the Surveyor-General, lived nearby in Aldgate.]* After that Hahndorf — and Mt. Barker in the evening. Mr & Mrs Goyder called here today. Also Mr Tomkinson & his daughters & Miss Stow.[3] Mr Tomkinson threatens to keep up his family at the Mount all winter which is disgruntling them terribly and they give him no end of cheek which he takes meekly.

Can it be my darling Bob that this day week I shall have you all to myself again?

I shall forget all my misery when I see your dear soft eyes. The Bishop tells me Sir Henry Loch *[the Governor of Victoria]* was quite upset parting with his boy & could not get over it at all. So you & I are not singular in feeling so broken-hearted over the loss of our chappie. We keep on writing him, his sisters by the Orient Line & I write by the P. & O. & I begin to hope we may get a letter one of these days, probably from Honolulu. Poor little lad. I fear he will feel very lonesome sometimes.

It is so cold up here now. We are glad of fires. I hope you have not had a touch of cold. It has been a bad aggravation to this parting that I have heard from you so seldom, except by these unsatisfactory telegrams. Your last was from Christchurch dated 31st March. I spent my wedding day anniversary very sadly. I wondered if you remembered it. I had fear you forgot it amid all yr changing circumstances. Small blame to you dear Bob. This will be the fifth letter from me at Menzies I believe. You'll be sick of them.

Now I must not prate & weary you with personal matters. I must try to write you what will interest you externally. First of all the Mt. Barker elections took place yesterday. Result of poll. — Cockburn 728

— Landseer 490

— Poor Lance 461

Dr (later Sir) John Cockburn (1850-1929), a country doctor and politician, was an ardent Federationist and an advanced liberal, active in securing payments to members and a progressive land tax. Lancelot (later Sir Lancelot) Stirling rejoined the Assembly the following year and was a member of the Legislative Council from 1891 to 1932.

I am awfully sorry and I think the Stirlings will feel it greatly. Did I tell you, (I think I did) that Lance is very unpopular in his own district. Strathalbyn and Club-land are two very different spheres. He reigns supreme in the latter of course. In Strathalbyn he wont even buy a lb of sugar. So the shop-keepers have been taking their revenge. Tom (Barr Smith) wrote me saying Lance had been in to ask him to write me to get Thybell's vote for him *[Carl Thybell, the Norwegian head gardener at Auchendarroch, whose specialty was topiary]*. I had a little difficulty in tackling Thybell. He is quite unlike the ordinary Bristol labourer. He has a conscience & a mind & altho, to use his own phrase, he is "young in politics" yet he has his fixed principles & they go out for the protectionist. I did a little wheedling business & left him saying I was sure he wd please you & me if his principles wd allow him by voting for Stirling & said a few spiteful things about Cockburn but you can see from the state of the poll Stirling never had a show at all.

These elections signalled winds of change for the South Australian Parliament. The new breed of politicians brought in payment for members and encouraged representation from members who *lived* in the country areas, rather than the rich landowners who chose to live in town. Joanna's letter continues:

> Afternoon. Imagine my surprise dearest love at getting a telegram from you at about 1.30 from Xchurch. I cd not believe my eyes! And you are at Anama tonight *[a station near Christchurch owned by their friends the Peters]*. That is good news. You will be among friends & will be more like feeling happy than you have been at all since you left. You are pushing on at a fearful pace, Why, at this rate you will miss my two fat letters at Invercargill with their enclosures & clippings and a letter from E.M. Young *[their bank manager]*. I begin to think now I'll have you in my arms before very long & Oh how happy I shall be to have you. I shall post this letter to you in plenty of time for Melbourne. To think of all my scribbling & not one letter I believe will have reached you! But you will surely get them some time or other. Yr business letters must have shared the same fate as yr private letters.
>
> You will be grieved to hear Symon is knocked out of his election *[the brilliant lawyer Josiah Symon. After his defeat he left politics, but worked to sponsor Federation. He towered over his contemporaries in his understanding of law and as an advocate]*. I enclose some clippings. He will wish now he'd stood for Sturt. But do you notice it is all this class of men who are rejected at these elections. I have not heard yet whether Master Edward Hawker has got in or not but I'll have heard before I close.

Edward did get in, but resigned in 1889 to go to England. But here the letter ends without conclusion. As it happened Joanna need not have concerned herself about the insufferable Dr Todd. All had changed for Jean's matrimonial future within a year.

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1 The Overland Express Adelaide-Melbourne had started with great acclaim in 1887. It had a whistle stop at Mt Barker Junction.

2 Robert Herdman (1850-1940), Scottish artist. His large painting *The Rebel Prince* hung at Torrens Park and later at Angas Street. Its valuation after Joanna's death (1919) was £30 whereas a pair of Fantin-Latour's paintings were valued at £4.

3 Samuel Tomkinson (1816-1900), banker, politician, director of several companies; a friend of Robert's and mentioned in several letters. Catherine Stow (1856-1940), the writer and collector of Aboriginal legends, was a particular friend of the Barr Smiths. The Tomkinson girls were enthusiastic amateur actresses and Ada was a playwright for the Torrens Park theatre.



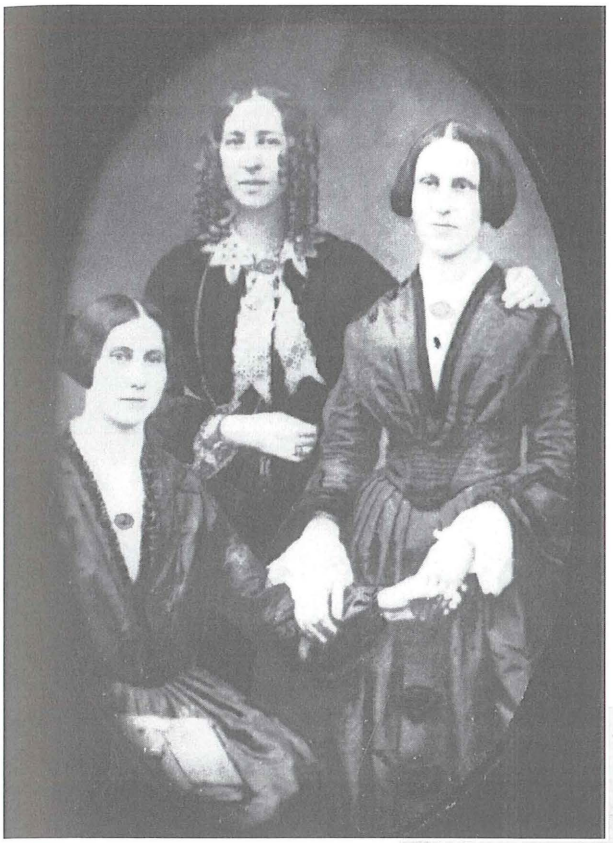
Joanna Elder Barr Smith, probably in her wedding dress (family collection)



Robert Barr Smith, taken at Largs, Scotland (family collection)



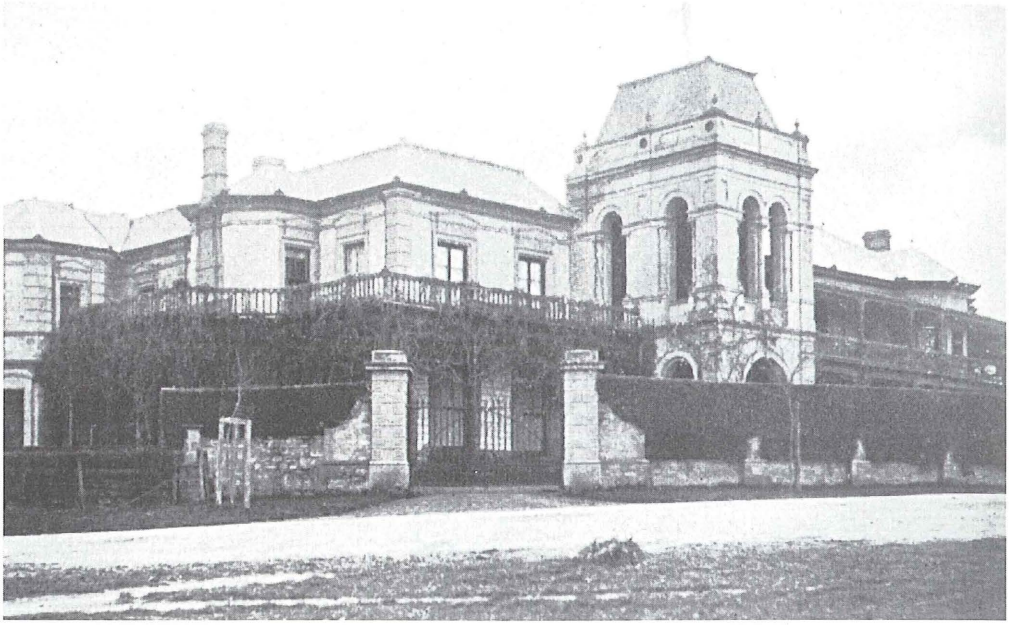
The Manse at Lochwinnoch, Scotland (family collection)



Joanna Elder (left) and her sisters (family collection)



Joanna Barr Smith and her son Tom, about 1864 (family collection)



Auchendarroch, Mount Barker, about 1900 (family collection)



Joanna Barr Smith (family collection)



Joanna Barr Smith reading, Largs, Scotland (family collection)



Tom Elder Barr Smith, about 1880, the Cambridge years (family collection)



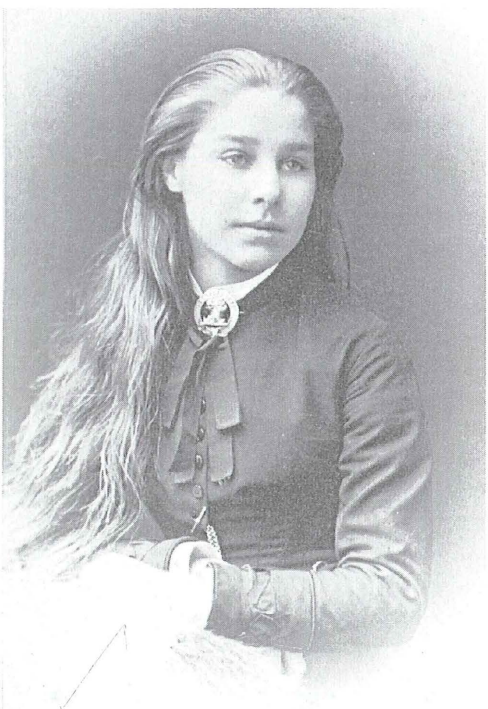
Bertie (Robert) Barr Smith (family collection)



Mabel, Jo, Jean and Erlistoun Barr Smith (family collection)



Jo Barr Smith (family collection)



Jean Barr Smith (family collection)



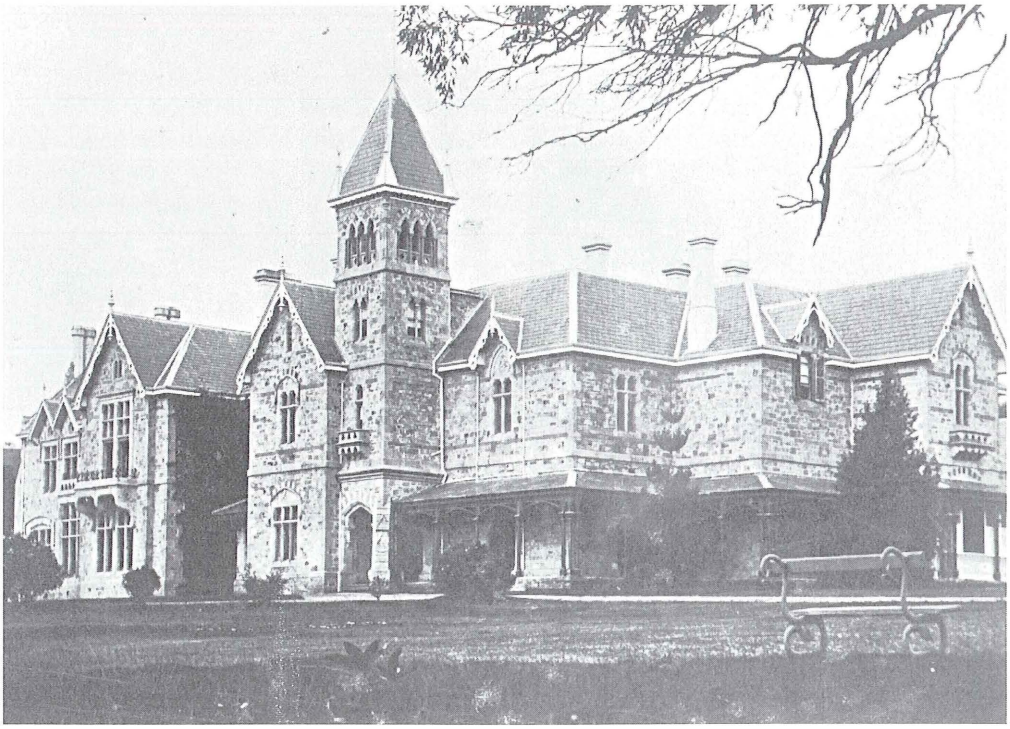
Mabel Barr Smith (family collection)



Knock Castle, Largs, Scotland (family collection)



St Margarets' Hope, North Queensferry (now Admiralty House), Fife. Recent photograph. (family collection)



Torrens Park, about 1883 (family collection)



George Barr Smith
(private collection)

CHAPTER 8

ADELAIDE 1887-1888

As soon as Robert arrived back in Australia he began to write weekly letters to Barr and almost weekly letters to his tutor, so anxious was he about the boy whom he dearly loved and whom he had sent so far away. He unburdened a little to his sister Jessie when he wrote to her in April from Adelaide:

> I have parted with my boy with great sorrow, not knowing if I shall ever see him again. He is a most lovable boy, bright & pleasant in all his ways — a little too easily led & quite capable of going wrong if he falls into bad hands. I hope there is no danger of this. I have sent him away because I thought it gave him the best chance of growing up a worthy young fellow, whatever the consequence, I have acted not from choice but from principle — God knows. (7: 416)

He mentions that Joanna is also writing weekly and so are the sisters, but those letters are all lost — only Robert's meticulous copies remain. The parents are anxious by 5 May as there is yet no news of their son's arrival in the States. Robert writes to Mr Adams:

> I conclude you would go through America slowly. I got back from New Zealand in about 5 weeks & was much interested in all I saw, tho' a little bit lonely.
>
> The Bishop has been staying with my wife in my absence & he has been urging upon her the great advantages of a large public school & especially of Eaton *[sic]* where he was educated. I am trusting absolutely to you in the matter & that you are not to be guided by my pre-conceived notions. I accept Dr Kennion's & Mr Schwartze's opinions *[the latter was advocating Dulwich]* that a small school is not the safest place. (7: 440)

Robert writes to George — he longs to go to England himself to see Barr settled, but comments: "No immediate prospects of England. Bozzy is very captious."

"Bozzy", Tom Elder, almost seventy showed little signs of slowing down the cracking pace of his early life. He had been thirteen years in parliament; he had vast properties; he had two imposing mansions and a large beach house; he had numbers of stations with their managers, homesteads and stock throughout the north; he had set up a breeding station for camels, imaginatively importing three different kinds — the Mekraua for speed and the Scind and Kandahar for strength, thus building up extremely good herds — and brought out Afghan camel drivers for them; he was always ready to lend his camels for exploring expeditions and enthused about and paid for some of the expeditions himself. In 1875 he became interested in racing horses (with excitements and disappointments), then moved into horse-breeding and built up a fine stock of thoroughbreds at his stables at Morphettville. His most noteworthy purchase was Gang Gang, for which he paid 4,000 guineas. He achieved a win in the fastest time then recorded at the Melbourne Cup with

Dunlop, from his stud. He was responsible for opening up vast territories of land considered unusable because of its extent and dryness, and he encouraged Peter Waite's clever schemes, spending lavishly to secure strings of waterholes and to fence into paddocks the wide outback runs. He was always keener on business and sport than polite society.

The bachelor life appeared to suit him and now that he had amassed a great fortune without the responsibility of wife or children he enjoyed the pleasure of giving it away to causes which appealed to him. He followed with interest the growth of the University of Adelaide which he and Hughes had founded with their initial gifts of £20,000 each; in 1884 he gave £10,000 to establish a chair of medicine — and left a bequest in his will for another £20,000 to the Medical School. He liked to buy animals for the Zoo, lions and camels and in particular an elephant, and gave the Zoo money to build a pretty rotunda in the grounds. When the sluggish River Torrens was converted into a lake he gave the Council the rotunda which is still such a feature on the lawns at Elder Park. He gave money to help establish a Chair of Music and himself established a scholarship to the Royal College of Music in London. He adjusted his will to leave a legacy of £25,000 to the Art Gallery, stipulating that it was to be spent *entirely on buying pictures*. He arranged with his solicitors the welcome legacies which were to give more thousands to the university, to schools and to churches. In 1887 he was awarded the GCMG — a rare and high distinction. But he had absolutely no intention of retiring, as Robert declared he would like to.

While the two men met daily in their office to talk over their joint and separate affairs, Robert squeezed out the regular flow of letters. One correspondent at this time was his friend W. S. Peter, who had migrated to Adelaide from Dundee at the age of nineteen, then moved to Anama, a station in Canterbury, New Zealand. Robert visited him there, and, some time later, wrote:

17 May 1887

> Dear Peter,
> Enclosed is picture of Erlistoun who has passed her University Exam & is entitled, as you see, to wear a gown.
>
> The time for getting fresh Sturt's Pea seeds is not yet. I have sent an order to one of our northern stations to collect. Some dahlia seeds & a small packet of books for the young ladies. I have not got <u>all</u> the books I wanted but if a bundle pops in at any time through the post they will guess which of their admirers it comes from. Touching sugar-gum seeds I am promised a quantity. I send you also a packet with which to experiment just now. My fear is your frosts will be too much for it in its infancy. Once a bit grown it does not seem to feel it. (7: 454)

And to the daughters, 24 June:

> Dear young ladies,
> Some time ago I sent off a small case of books for you. I did not know that your pater was in Wellington. . . . I wrote to Miles & Coy. Christchurch to receive the case & send it on to Anama. I hope all came right in the end. I am sending two cases of oranges from my own garden which I hope will arrive in good order. We opened our Exhibition this week with a flourish of trumpets & everybody said the ceremony went off well. I did not see it. I don't like Exhibitions so I pretended I was ill. (7: 471)

"The Adelaide Jubilee International Exhibition of Arts, Agriculture and Manufactures, in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the province, opened June

1, 1887 and closed January 7, 1888. It was visited by over three quarters of a million persons" (Hodder, 2: 116), and was judged a great success and a happy presage of the future after years of drought and depression. Robert's comments on the Exhibition remain disparaging.

To W.S. Peter, Anama Station July 9th, 1887:

> Dear Peter,
>
> I have the pleasure of your kind letter to me & one from the young ladies. It is a singular coincidence that a letter from me to your dear daughters addressed to them all should cross a letter from them signed collectively. The truth is I am in love with them all & I thought it was less liable to misconstruction if I paid my addresses to them in a body.
>
> Our Exhibition is on now and is declared a success. I have not visited it yet as I hate Exhibitions. I have been shamming illness too to get out of dinners & banquets. I have had bronchitis & do not go out at nights. My friends are greatly alarmed about my state of health. (7: 487)

To his valued friend and secretary Adolph von Treuer, now travelling abroad, he wrote (29 June):

> . . . Elections for the upper House is over. Simpson the Tinman top of the list with 260 votes & my poor friend J. B. Spence at the bottom. ... One notable feature was that the constituencies rejected every body who had been in the House before. ... Not everybody I should say for Angas was once in the House but that was so long ago & he had seemed so insignificant a member, it was forgotten he had ever been there. (7: 475)

A more charitable account of the pastoralist John Howard Angas in the House is given by the *ADB*, according to which "He became impatient of time-wasting talk of parliamentary business and although he attended sessions conscientiously he never sought ministerial office". "Simpson the Tinman" was Alfred Muller Simpson (1843-1917), whose father's firm Simpson & Son Ltd still makes stoves, washing machines etc.

The parents were relieved to get news from the travellers at Albany, New York. At once and on the same day Robert wrote to both of them. To Adams, 30 June 1887:

> Delighted to have good accounts of Barr's health & spirits & that you had found him companionable & pleasant. I know by telegram . . . that he is placed for the present in Crieff *[at Dalvreck, the preparatory school in Crieff. Again Robert had been urged by Bishop Kennion re Eton]* but I am totally ignorant on the subject *[small private versus large public school]* & I am not going to do my son mischief by ignorance against other people's better knowledge. (7: 483)

To Barr, 30 June 1887:

> Your letter from Albany N.Y. arrived today. We know by telegraph of your safe arrival & going to Crieff. I hope my dear boy you will be happy & do well. I shall be very anxious to know how you get on at Crieff & what the tone of the school is and how it is for education. I am so much in doubt whether a private school or a large public school is best & safest.
>
> The Exhibition has opened . . . Your mother & I are going together next week.

Of course the place is crowded with strangers but as George Hawker Joe & her new baby have possession of the house we have had no company.

I notice a good many mistakes in your last letter. Thus 'no' instead of 'know', 'staid' instead of 'stayed', 'kink' instead of 'kind'. These are trifles but your previous letters were free of such blemishes. It is a pity to get careless. Separate your sentences a little more making each new subject a paragraph with a fresh heading.

I have written to Stavenhagen that if the salmon rod, trout rod & fishing tackle which I bought are still unsold he can send them to you <u>if you write for them</u>. Do not cumber yourself with them if you have no use for them but you are in a fishing country & may get fond of it. (7: 479)

To Barr at Dalvreck school, Crieff, 5 July 1887:

. . . Town full of people and there is no end to so-called "amusements" going on but I have not been to any of them.

I was in the Theatre this morning & Mabel was reciting to your mother & me. They are planning another entertainment soon. It is to be chiefly musical. Schrader *[the girls' piano teacher]* Miss Puttman and others. Mabel reciting occasionally. There is to be a great meeting of doctors from all parts of the world & they come to us on the 31st August. We are thinking of getting up a play for the doctors.

Did I tell you that your mother has bought a hansom cab & prefers it to everything. She has much rheumatism in her knees & the cab is easier got in & out from. (7: 490)

A letter from Robert to von Treuer (abroad), 22 July, mentions the British actor Wybert Reeve, who had become friendly with the Barr Smiths when he first visited Australia in 1878. In 1887 he gave up touring to live in Adelaide as manager and later lessee of the Theatre Royal until retiring in 1900. He was a keen adviser when the Torrens Park theatre was being built, though Robert complained later, in 1888 to Neville Ashbee, the London architect, "Mr Reeve, who planned the stage arrangements, now lays claim to everything. I try very hard to keep to myself the credit of the outside . . . and to you the internal decoration and colouring" (8: 16).

. . . Wybert Reeve took up his abode at Torrens Park. No-one will go to see the sort of thing he puts on the stage & I dont wonder at it. With all my friendship for Reeve & willingness to see good I never did enjoy a single performance of his. The Opera is now on but I am told it is doing badly financially tho' the company is a good one. My wife & daughter go tomorrow night. I am going to dine with Sir Henry Ayers to meet Lord Carrington. I am to meet him again at R.C. Baker's (who was a school fellow). His own name was originally Smith so he cannot turn up his nose at me. The first of his family to be ennobled was a well-known lawyer, & friend of William Pitt, who placed him in the peerage when he got into office. A wit of the day who was living with Smith at the time, scratched upon a pane of glass these lines —

Bobby Smith lives here.
Billy Pitt made him a Peer,
And took the pen from behind his ear.

Smith turned the Wit out of his house & never forgave him.

I do not know how consular matters are getting on since you left. I look forward to being superseded as incompetent. My last consular act was to take a man's clothes out of a pawn shop. (7: 499)

To Barr, 20 July, he mentioned simply that he had dined twice with Lord Carrington:

> He is a Smith. He is extremely frank & good although he is a Lord. (7: 507)

To Dr Thomas, 26 July 1887:

> Dear Dr Thomas,
> I told Sir Thomas Elder that in your opinion it is absolutely necessary to Mr Peter Waite's health he should give up work & go for a trip to England. He at once said that in such a case there is no alternative. He cordially approves of your giving advice for any course which you think is necessary for Mr Waite's safety. (7: 505)

Did Waite go? Was he on the verge of a breakdown?

To his old friend Anthony Forster, first mentioned by Joanna at Glenelg in 1858 and now at St Leonards-on-Sea, Robert wrote 29 July 1887:

> I am in a perfect fog as to when I wrote you last & what I said to you. For reasons which must be quite evident to you my letters are too abusive & impudent to bear copying. Fancy Froude *[the nineteenth-century historian]* if I should take it into my head to make him my biographer dealing with my letter book & publishing my letters to you. Society would be upset. (7: 506)

To Frank Adams at Glenalmond, from Adelaide, 29 July 1887:

> . . .You advise me & I think with great wisdom that he should not have too much pocket money at school . . . but I am anxious he should want for nothing which can make him comfortable at holiday time. He must be able to hire a horse, be liberal to servants & so on.
>
> I may say I have perfect trust in Barr in money matters. He has been accustomed to have money & has never abused it. (7: 509)

Among all this he was interested enough to write, 6 September 1887, a long and complex letter of philosophical discussion to his new acquaintance the Revd Owen, who, fresh out from Oxford, had been found by Robert to be ignorant of contemporary philosophy (Chap. 7).

And the next day, 7 September, he writes to Barr at Crieff:

> *[After a page or so about horses:]* . . . I have bought a house at Pt.Victor for George *[now twenty-nine]* & he & John Thorley are going to settle there permanently. John & he both like being at Pt.Victor & it is a splendid climate summer & winter. I have got a very good house with a nice garden & a good lump of land, stables & all conveniences & I am glad to see poor George settled before I die. I cannot be long with you now at my age!

John Thorley was a widower who had worked as a valet with some rich employer who travelled the world. He created a pleasant world for George at Seaforth. There were two housemaids and a gardener to help make it so. There were roses in the garden and flower beds and peacocks. The decorations in the house were much admired by the locals, who liked the chandelier, the cut-glass doorknobs, red velvet curtains looped back with gold cords, the elegant furniture and the two five-feet high Chinese vases. Far from being a recluse George was well-known to the local community. Calls were made upon him and John Thorley and a select group of people were invited to George's birthday parties. Victor was within a half-

day's journey from Adelaide and his parents visited him regularly. George and John were to stay at Seaforth for the next ten years. (Details about Seaforth are from Laube, *Settlers around the Bay*, pp. 133-35; they were told him by the son of one of George's housemaids, Annie Buxton.)

Robert's letter continues:

> Erlistoun is not doing so well in Greek as she did in Latin. I fancy it is because she is working with Lulu Gardner but I dont know. Whatever it is she has taken some tantrums & refuses work & D'Arenburg is very disappointed in her.
>
> *[Barr, according to information sent by Adams, had got into mischief at school, and Robert goes on:]* I was a little startled when he told me you had been deprived of all your pocket money, literally 'cut off without a shilling', but I recognize the wisdom of your being placed always exactly on a footing as to money as the other boys around you. If you are to be distinguished from them let it be rather by wealth of intellect. (7: 533)

To Frank Adams he writes a fortnight later:

> I see your mind inclines to a public school of some size. It is an advantage at University & even in after life to have been at Harrow, Eton or Winchester but all this is subsidiary to the bringing one's boy safely through the fire & I feel I will be content with whatever you do. (7: 525)

Robert has had word from von Treuer, his German secretary, from London and writes rather mischievously (26 September):

> You have got to Bremen or some such outlandish place in that barbarous country Germany where, (as I have often assured Miss Fickert) men work their wives in the ploughs. I trust you have not degraded Mrs von Treuer in this fashion but intercourse with such a nation may produce a sad change in you & who can tell?
>
> Will you kindly purchase for me an aluminium opera glass of the very best quality . . . What is wanted is an ordinary-sized lady's opera glass neither too large or too small & as aluminium is very light you can get slightly larger than any other metal & yet not have them cumbersome. *[Business news follows. Then:]* The House of Assembly is going on bit by bit buttering up the Protectionists. I would say therefore to you bring out my opera glass in your bag — every gentleman (especially at sea) is accustomed to carry an opera glass. (7: 553)

To his sister Jessie, 29 September:

> I understand my good young friend & dear niece Aggy is going to marry. *[He sends £50 for Aggy and £50 to Jessy]* as an acknowledgement of the trouble & expense you are put to with Barr. (7: 559)

And to Stavenhagen in London on the same day he writes:

> My sister's step-child Miss Clazy is being married. . . . We have committed the incredible folly here of passing a protective tariff. Just as we seemed through the return of good seasons likely to get over in a measure our difficulties we, through stupid legislation, throw away our chance — & prepare for great complications & depression which will come to us many years hence, & prove a more chronic evil than any we have ever known. However there is nothing for it but submission. The

place will hold together in some fashion as long as I will, in the selfish reflection which I sometimes make when I am thinking dolorously of the stupidity around me, & perhaps within me too. (7: 559)

To Frank Adams at Aldecar Hall near Nottingham, from Adelaide, 28 September 1887:

Thank you for the report on Barr's progress at Dalvreck school. *[More about schools. He speaks of Mr Adams' proposed new coaching school:]* I am pleased you have made a commencement at Aldecar Hall & have read your prospectus with much interest. You may be sure I shall miss no opportunity of advocating your claims . . . Would it be an advantage to look to the colonies for recruits? (7: 565)

To his New Zealand friend Peter on 6 October he continues his moans about Protectionism. Then:

As we are going to have payment of members it will become an object to all kinds of loafers to get into the 'ouse. However I confess I have no exact idea what effect payment of members will have I have no doubt it will produce a change. And I dont for one moment say the poorer members of the House are the worst members or the least conscientious — I do say that the constituencies are very easily led & very apt to go off on a false scent.

I am glad to tell you that on Sunday week I saw on my lawn a nice flock of starlings. From this I hope they are going to stick to the place, but George Hawker Jnr who was sitting on the verandah with me tells me that they all for some reason take off here for the Sewage Farm & there are to be seen in their thousands. My blackbirds do not increase so fast as you would expect for the reason I think that when the vegetable gardens use the creek water in summer, the birds I judge, follow the running water . . . We have a Kirkaldy lady coming to us on Saturday. Née Carstairs. She came out with Joanna in 1856 & they have not seen each other since. She married a Victorian squatter called Bell, a Scotchman who was killed by lightning! (7: 568)

To Barr, 6 October 1887:

I am glad you have been at Knock & that you enjoyed it. Your Uncle George & Aunt Jane are very anxious to be kind & although there were no young people about I do not see that you always need boys of your own age beside you . . . I am glad that you went & stayed a week. This I take it is the proper time to stay. Yes, strange as it may appear to you our dearest & most unselfish friends do not like us to stay too long. Even little Bobbie Smith's relatives get tired of him sometimes & you know from hearsay what a sweet child that was.

[As both Barr and Mr Adams favour Glenalmond as his future school he writes:] I do not attach much importance to your Aunts' opinion of the school. No doubt whatever Rugby, Eaton, Harrow, Winchester & some of the largest public schools are more fashionable & it is an advantage & an introduction in after life that you are a Rugby man or an Eaton man but it seems to me that you will wisely chuse if you select the place where you will be safest & have the greatest likelihood of making progress with your education.

I think I have vaguely hinted at it already but I feel I ought to say it more plainly now that I am finding great difficulty in getting away from So. Australia owing to a good many circumstances which I have not yet been able to master. If your uncle

> would consent to go out of business I would give it up & arrange a transfer but so far he refuses & I do not see my way to go without this. Something I daresay will turn up but I do not wish to deceive you as to the difficulty. Your mother is wearying much to go to you & daily pines over it. She has offered to go, taking Jean & Erlistoun with her, but the truth is I am getting so old I do not like to be separated from your mother at our time of life. You may depend upon it we are all doing our level best. . . . *[He includes an account of the Hunt Club Races, and ends:]* It is always a great delight to me to get your letters my dear boy but you have so many expecting letters it may become a tax upon you. If at any time you find it so, do sacrifice me as I can stand it better than your mother. (7: 572)

To Edward Hawker (Joe's brother-in-law, who used to act in the Torrens Park plays), he writes mysteriously, 11 October:

> I do not know whether your writing to me *[about a land transaction]* is in any way intended as breaking the ice, & so affording me the opportunity of saying something of the circumstances which unhappily destroyed our friendship. If so I at once willingly say 'Let bygones be bygones' & to bury the past if <u>you</u> feel such a thing is possible to us now. I need hardly say that it has pained me to write to you in the way I did & yet even so I recognize that if we are cordially to resume friendly relations it must be absolutely without on either side explanation or apology of any kind. (7: 576)

The previous letter to Edward Hawker (as set out in the Index) which might explain how the difference arose has been torn out of the letter book.

To Barr at Dalvreck, Crieff, 7 October, Robert describes the Hunt at Mt Barker, and continues:

> We had a large lot of people yesterday to luncheon. I am getting very sick of my Sundays & tried to bolt down to Morphettville but the mother would not let me. We had Louie Peacock, Rose Hawker, Adelaide Stow, Willie Giles & a young Canadian, your Uncle Tom, Mrs Bell, a friend your mother had not seen in 31 years. They came out together in the Wallman Castle. Then afterwards came Professor Watson & two sisters who are visiting us. I imagine you can see us all on the front green & though it was heavy for us you would have had no objection to be there. (7: 589)

To J. G. Pleydell, London, 19 October 1887:

> I return herewith papers which you kindly sent me from London & which perhaps you may like to keep as a <u>memory</u>. But it is strange how soon matters which were the cause of great heart-stirrings become to us things of supreme indifference.
>
> Nothing brings this out better or more frequently than the reading of old papers. We smile over things which once caused us rages, & calmly burn as worthless trash, the records of our grave scruples & the conscientious doubts which held us in thrall, congratulating ourselves that we happened to have a chance of destroying them before anybody had an opportunity of discovering what fools we were. Probably we remember in no unkindly fashion the man whose head we had, a short time ago, have liked to punch — mentally we begin to make excuses for him, to suspect we ourselves were in the wrong. And it is well it should be so — otherwise we should tear ourselves to pieces with passions — the hall giving way to the vibrations of the machinery. (7: 591)

Frank Adams had now left teaching at Glenalmond to start his own small school, Aldecar Hall in Nottingham, and Barr, to improve his chances of getting into Glenalmond, was with Adams in Nottingham for some coaching. Robert tells of this to his London friend Rudolph Schwartze, who is ever ready with suggestions for Barr's education, then continues (24 October):

> I see by the Telegraph you are having a bad time of it in London — not to speak of Ireland. I conceive that we are approaching important changes in the social conditions under which we live & that most of the young amongst us will see a new order of things. I am satisfied that no organic change of any magnitude can be brought about without some suffering even when the changes are in the direction of good. For instance I suppose there can be no doubt that Fish might be educated to live out of water but the individual fish upon which the experiment is begun will suffer a good deal. (7: 592)

He writes anxiously to Frank Adams at Aldecar, 10 November, concerning Barr's teeth and a dentist, and advising about hiring a pony rather than buying one. He goes on:

> . . . His uncle wrote me that his clothes were very shabby when he was at Knock Castle. I wrote instructions to him to think to dress carefully . . . He should up to a point acquire the habit of being careful as to his personal appearance. Clean & fresh-looking (his garments free of spots & stains) he should always be. I am sorry he went among his Scotch relatives with his old misfitting Adelaide suit. (7: 604)

And to Barr at Nottingham he writes by the same post:

> I have written to Mr Adams about your clothes. I am sorry you went down to Scotland with that dreadful Doolette suit. *[Sir George Doolette owned the house Ballangeich which Tom and Molly were renting. Doolette had made a fortune in the Golden Horseshoe Mine in Western Australia and had built an archway in his drawing room to duplicate a giant horseshoe. Perhaps his taste in suits was equally deplorable from the Barr Smiths' point of view.]* A suit which from the moment I saw it I said do let it alone. I think Bogatzky has something about carefulness & cleanliness in your attire. You may depend upon it this goes a long way. I do not want you to be a puppy as I know fellows who are always thinking about the cut of their trousers & the glossy state of their hats. That is wrong, very wrong. Shun being a puppy — it is enough that you possess one. But on the other hand there is our dear Steve — and though his eyes are full of tenderness & love & we all dote on him, yet still we mourn that his coats are threadbare & his trousers sometimes torn & scruffy. A stranger sees a dirty lad or one disreputably clothed introduced & their first instinct is aversion. Therefore dress well & see that your garments are clean and not glazed or worn out at the elbows & insist with the tailor to make them fit you fairly well. Acquire habits of tidiness and do not bring disgrace upon the family . . . I have said to the mother I will make the supreme effort to go for a 3-month visit to England if I cannot do better than this. . . . I cannot start so far as I can see in less than 12 months. (7: 608)

To Barr at Nottingham, November 1887:

> We are all now settled at Mt Barker *[not for long as it transpired]* & had a grand entertainment last night for the Presbyterian Church. Mabel recited twice. The Misses

Schomburgk and Mavis sang. So did the Rev. Samwell. Percy von Treuer *[son of Adolph, his secretary]* & Ralph gave a screaming farce & all went merry as a marriage bell, merrier in fact than some marriage bells.

I rode over on Moonraker (who is a lovely hack) to see poor old Goyder who has broken down badly. Fred Braund went with me on Bagmaid. Then in the afternoon Fred Braund took all the girls to the Hon. T.E. Ramsey's to a picnic. Four horses in the wagonette with Produce (a horse you dont know) & Doctor (I'm not sure if you have seen him) in the wheel & Arabia & Larry in the lead. I stayed at home with the mother but Alford said the team went well. . .

Although it is wicked of you to care for horse-racing I send you the account of the Melbourne Races & only hope you will not make bad use of it. Dunlop bred by your Uncle Sir Thomas, won the Cup in the fastest time ever made — beat the record & carried top weight.

Goodbye old Chappie. I am wearying to hear what school you have fixed upon. (7: 611)

Then unexpectedly there was a dramatic turn of events as Tom Elder became seriously ill — an event which was to alter the regular pattern of their lives. Robert wrote to George, 28 November, filling in details after a letter Joanna had already written to her brother, about Tom's sudden illness and the danger caused by

the rupture of a small blood vessel in the calf of the leg probably six weeks or maybe 2 months ago. The ruptured vessel discharged into the tissues & surrounding parts of the leg & of course the blood clotted.

Under ordinary circumstances & I believe with him with <u>rest</u> the blood would be absorbed without decomposition. But Tom went about as usual & the clotted blood discomposed & became poisonous. On Saturday fortnight Sir James Gibson Craig was staying with him & he was going about with his guest of honour Sir Herbert Sandford *[English visitors to the Exhibition]* as usual & Sunday I believe he felt his leg but on Monday he wrote me a note to say he had a bad leg & would not come into the office. I went out & saw him. His leg was very swelled. I saw the doctors. They <u>all</u> declared there was nothing to fear — it was merely a local attack from a neglected injury . . . But day by day the leg did not improve & his temperature rose until it reached 105. They realised he was drinking poison into his system from his leg & they were almost too late to save him. Then followed the operation of which Joanna has told Jean *[there is no record of this]* and we are now very confident that the action of the poison is stayed & that he will make a speedy & satisfactory recovery.

He is an enormously strong & sound man & he has behaved throughout with the utmost pluck. Submitting to all the operations, except the first, without anaesthetic & not uttering a groan. His mind has wandered constantly but he knows everybody . . .

[Robert then asks George to] order from Fergus 3 dozen photographs of cabinet size of Joanna. Jean will see what she has in her album. Also, if Fergus can hunt it up, 1 dozen of a photo taken I believe 7 years ago — Joanna is standing, has a fan in her hand & a shetland shawl over her head & crossed on her breast. (7: 620)

Robert hurriedly writes to J.B. Watt of the Sydney shipping agency, 28 November:

This serves to introduce to you Mr Waite who is Elder's partner and, in a smaller degree, my partner in a number of runs. He goes to Sydney to see if he can assist in

any way in shaping your land measure. As he is the best organizer of a run on a large scale in South Australia & as he is clever all round I think your people will find that he can help them well with advice.

I intended to accompany him but he knows 50 times as much as I do & Elder's illness makes leaving him impossible. (7: 624)

The next day:

He *[Elder]* is much better than he was but still in a very critical condition & gives us much anxiety. My wife is with him & I have been obliged to leave Mt Barker & am daily & all day in the office. (7: 626)

By 3 December Robert was able to write to George at Knock Castle that Tom was now out of danger:

But after I wrote to you things became worse with him, & even Professor Watts who from the first was the most hopeful, gave him up as hopeless.

Watson (Professor of Anatomy) & a very clever fellow with large experience in hospitals, has, since Tom's getting better, admitted to me that he has never in his experience known a case of recovery from blood poisoning after it had gone so far by a man of Tom's age.

He owed his recovery to Gardner's skill, careful nursing, indubitable pluck on his own part & a marvellous constitution. Gardner *[Doctor]* told me he had rarely had through his hands a man as perfectly sound & strong as Tom.

He has always been able to recognize Joanna & me but his mind constantly wanders after recognition & he is very confused as to time & place — generally supposing himself in a house not his own.

We shift over today from Birksgate to Torrens Park as our presence at Birksgate is now not required & makes a lot of trouble for servants. Jo will go over daily & spend some time at Birksgate & we will look after him as well as if he were in our house.

In such cases recovery is very speedy but I do not expect he can go to business in any way for months & I shall do what I can to prevent his attempting it. At best it would be but a mere sham of work.

There is nothing new here. The public has been taken up with the presence of Lord & Lady Carnarvon but I have been unable to meet them.

Tom's visitor was a Tory baronet from Lothian, Sir James Gibson Craig. (7: 627)

Robert to Barr, 16 December 1887:

I saw your Uncle Tom this morning. He is decidedly better but it was 1000 to 1, the Doctors said, against his recovery.

We are going up to Mount Barker tomorrow. The first time since Uncle Tom took ill. The girls dont like being left alone but it makes them value their parents more. It is when the well is empty you know best the value of water. Ahem!

... Old Mr Goyder to everybody's surprise, turned up at the Park at <u>breakfast</u> this morning. He is going to write to you he says. I took him down to Glenelg *[Tom has now moved to his house on the seafront of Glenelg]* & he waited until I had seen Uncle Tom & then I drove him up to King William St. Norman Goyder is the clerk at Hummocks. He is coming down to a Christmas holiday & I am allowing Jack Goyder to go back with him & stay a week or two.

> *[There follows talk of horses:]* I mean too to jump Buttercup at the Mt. Barker show. I am also telling Norman Goyder to bring down the 'Ghosts' for as two of my horses are out of order & I have six down at the Park, it wants a lot of quiet horses.
>
> By the way I dont think you have ever been to Stranraer to see your Aunts Mary *[Smith]* & Jane *[Alison]* & your Uncle James *[Alison]*. I dont suppose you would find much to amuse you but as there is a railway you could spare 3 or 4 days to go — a day there & back & one or two days in residence so that they may not feel they are left out of your sympathies. I mention this because your Aunt Mary Smith has written about you. She is a very wrong-headed, ignorant old Calvinist but she has always been fond of you and though the bare-faced manner in which she proclaims your superiority to all boys past & present & to come is a little too too we must take people as we find them & endure patiently such rubbish as even this.
>
> *[More talk of horses and of the fruit now growing at Mt Barker — apricots, peaches, pears, apples, strawberries and cherries. Pressed for time he concludes]:* I am alone in the office & have besides to visit Sir Thomas at least once a day & he is 6 miles off at Glenelg.
>
> Your mother & I go up to Mt Barker tomorrow. I am driving Buttercup & Peter. (7: 637)

On 30 December, Robert thanks Barr for his Christmas present — a Life of Darwin.

> Now I must tell you about your uncle. He is much better, mind & body, but still feeble looking & he hobbles round the room on crutches . . . He is feeling the heat very much & at last has made up his mind to go to Mt Lofty. (7: 644)

It was the last time Tom was to stay at the Glenelg house.

Tom was now installed at The Pinnacles. From the time he took to his bed and nearly died, in November 1887, until the day he went back to the office on 17 May 1888, Robert was in touch with Tom Elder daily by letter, sometimes twice a day. Initially Robert and Joanna left Mt Barker where the family was installed for the summer, returned to town, and Joanna stayed with Tom. Later, returning to her own house, she visited him daily and then two or three times a week. Robert visited him also two or three times a week but it was difficult for him as he now had to manage the office without his partner. Tom, weakened by the slow recovery and frustration of immobility, began to loosen the ties which bound him. He put his Glenelg house on the market — or rather Robert did it for him and negotiated the sale. He gradually came to the decision to sell his stables and his thoroughbred horses. Soon it seemed Robert would be able to realise his dream of selling the business and retiring, as it became apparent that Tom would not again be an effective partner.

So Robert began to put the machinery in motion to sell Elder Smith & Co. In the end it was decided that it would cause less of a disruption to the firm if Elder Smith & Co. amalgamated with its offshoot of six years before — the Elder Smith Produce Company. There would be a Board and, for the start, Robert would become the managing director until such time as he could drop that responsibility. Robert wanted to cut loose from the management to become simply a member of the Board. He saw a not-so-distant time when he and Joanna could slip off as they both longed to do, to see their youngest boy so far from their care at his Scottish school.

The daily letters he wrote to Tom Elder from his office concerned the development and establishment of the Limited Company. But he also had to get Tom's decisions on the house at Glenelg. And there was the question of the stud farm at Morphettville — which horses to

sell and where to sell them? Letters and memos went daily out from the office to The Pinnacles about that, about the management of Birksgate, and about the state of Wallaroo and Moonta and their other business dealings with banks and mortgages.

There were many decisions to be made and Tom, wandering in his mind and on crutches, was not an easy man to deal with. At what price would he agree to sell Seafield Tower? The list of stock at Morphettville had to be considered — forty-three thoroughbred mares, twenty-seven thoroughbred yearlings. What would they do with the furniture from Glenelg? Robert was asked if he would take Tom Elder's seat on the Legislative Council. He did not want the extra work but was willing to keep the seat warm for a time. Robert had to pester Tom to confirm his verbal promise to lend camels for the Geographical Expedition.

When Tom had a minor set back, Robert wrote to George at Knock, 27 January 1888:

> I do not know that I have written to you since the 9th. I think there is a "gap" as Mrs Edward Austin said when somebody was looking at her 12 or 13 children, all of which came tumbling in at 12 months' notice. "But one died" said Mrs E. Austin to her sister. "Do you perceive the gap?"
>
> Tom is better. He had a tumble from his sticks sliding on the parquet. He got a black eye & his knees damaged a little. He took to his bed for 2 days & suffered nothing more.
>
> He takes an interest in all business & domestic matters & has made Joanna give notice to his Butler and Housekeeper (who he has not liked) & is otherwise hitting about in quite a vigorous style. I send him a resume of the business of the day & visit him twice a week.
>
> I am glad to tell you he continues just as anxious to be out of business as I am & is rather impatiently demanding what progress I have made. The truth is it takes some time & thought to prove what we have to sell & to make it all plain to the buyer . . . I offer my goods first to Elders Wool & Produce Company who are an organized & young, well-managed concern.
>
> Of course I must still keep an office open for the private business, runs & suchlike, which Tom & I have. If these things were settled I think I will skedaddle from So. Australia for a time.
>
> Tom wavers about going, or rather I should say he does not waver for he is completely opposed to leaving now. I think he shrinks from the worry & exertion, but I dont think his being stronger bye & bye will make any change. For several years he has been most unwilling to move much. There is no change in our arrangements — children at Mt Barker, we at Torrens Park. The Exhibition is over . . . Sir Herbert Sandford, the English Commissioner, was very nice. He is an out and out Scot. We have got our Mayor E.T. Smith, made a K.C.M.G. I used to rival him but now he is Sir Edwin.
>
> We are very grateful to you for taking so much notice of Barr. He writes today from Paisley on his way to you for Christmas. He tells his mother that he prefers Knock to any other place. Tell Jean that I can see he has developed his father's love for her. (7: 689)

These extra worries did not deter Robert from his regular letter to Barr. He wrote in January:

> Your mother & I drove over from Mt Barker last night & found him *[Uncle Tom]* very well. He got up from his seat & with the help of two stout sticks hobbled about the room. . . . I should not be surprised if he complied with the Doctor's strong recommendation to take a trip to England. . . . Mabel is away with Norah Herring on a driving excursion *[which leads him into a discussion about horses, picnic races and so on.]*
>
> . . . Edward Hawker is to dine with your mother & me tonight. Did you know we had quarrelled? Well we have kissed & made friends again now. George, Joe & their baby at Mt Barker for three weeks. George is a model husband & father & spends his whole time in cuddling them (Joe & Bessie). Bessie is a lovely child but not so bright as little Joe, Tom & Molly's picaninny. We call the one Lumpus & the other Daemonia.
>
> I hope you will not allow anything I have said about picnics & racing of any kind to interest you. I am weak, weak, to tell you these things as nothing can be more unworthy than to become a purely horsey man. But I remember your old predilections when you were a child of Wrath & I fancy it may please you to think of these matters in a classical and philanthropic spirit. (7: 650)

Robert writes anxiously that same month to Frank Adams, who has commented that Barr seems to lack concentration:

> Barr is dreamy. I remember how once I had to dress in his bedroom & he would pull on half of one of his stockings & sit holding his foot with his eyes fixed on vacancy but his soul not in the room. This was when he was 10 or 11. *[However when his reasonably good marks were revealed he wrote:]* The mother, seeing his 82 for Tennyson said "That's me" & I seeing his Science said: "That's me." (7: 697)

And to Barr, perhaps to spur him on:

> Prof. Kelly says *[of Erlistoun]* that her Latin exercises are the best he has ever seen. Yet she refuses Greek (perversely). (7: 700)

On 20 February to Barr:

> Just returned from a visit to George at Victor Harbour. Dreary place but air is superb. He has excellent servants. (7: 746)

The notes and memoranda continue to pour out from Robert in the office to Tom at The Pinnacles through February, trying to complete the sale of Tom's possessions, deciding which horses from Morphettville to sell and where to offer them. With his remarkable generosity to university and civic causes and to charities and churches and odd quirky adventures which took his fancy, it is interesting how the invalid quibbled about the price he was to get from the sale of his house and his horses and boat, all of which are dealt with in Robert's daily letters — as well as negotiations to ease them out of their own private company.

On 14th February Robert sent a note to Sir Thomas:

> Negotiations going on smoothly. They stipulate I shall be chairman to give a start. This I cannot refuse. There is, of course, the additional difficulty, supposing Staff provided for, what is to be the mode of <u>management</u>. Who is to be the Boss or is there to be more than one? (7: 738)

But at last Robert was able to write to George Elder, 27 February 1888:

> Tom is healing rapidly. Very anxious I should close the transfer of business & I am pushing it on as well as I can. He feels of course lonely not being able to run about as of old & as soon as he is fit for it I think I must get him to come into the office & see to his private matters as an amusement to him. As he recognizes that we intend to go to England at the end of next year *[The Barr Smiths and Tom Elder departed in fact at the end of 1888.]* he readily assents to going with us. I am going to Melbourne 8 March for the sale of Tom's horses. (7: 766)

He tries to get his young horse-dealing friend Stephen Ralli to join him in Melbourne, but Steve has been hit by hard times and cannot leave. Robert writes to him, 29 February:

> I see you cannot go to Melbourne & perhaps it is as well as self denial is always good for us, but I think we could have been very jolly once there, having similar tastes. I shall take my son Tom as poor substitute. *[Much talk about horses.]* I enclose Barr's last letter. Please return. (7: 769)

When Robert travelled from Adelaide to Melbourne with Tom, Joanna's daily letters to him began to flow again. She was installed at Auchendarroch and began writing even before her husband had left his office in town:

Mt Barker to Currie Street
March 5, 1888:

> Best and dearest of living men,
> I thought you would send me a loving line by tonight's post just to cheer me up for well do you know that in your absence there is no happiness at all. The day has been a very quiet one. The girls & I working chiefly, talking a little, thinking much & sighing often. Mrs Duffield & old Mrs Cockburn came to call. The latter is madly fond of flowers — went up the garden and filled her bag with zinnia seeds — saying they were the finest she had ever seen.
>
> *[This is a calmer Joanna than in the past. She discusses her share portfolio, of all things:]* You ask me what I pay out of my profits? I distinctly understand that I paid for Junctions and *[indecipherable]* and that you made me a present of the Almas. You came home one day saying — I have brought you another present. That was the 25 Almas. I suppose you are giving me the Souths as a present too. Kind doggie. You talk away to me about the folly of these mining speculations, then why the dickens do you encourage me in it by buying me some shares?
>
> I do hope, darling boy you'll have an enjoyable time in Melbourne. You'll be happier this March than you were last because the pain of parting with Barr was hanging over you . . . I'm sorry to say I must have offended Miss Fickert this morning as she went off in a huff. It was because I laughed at her cages of birds & said she was filling up the wagonet. What a pity she gets into rages for so little. *[She reminds him to see Mrs Brown in Bourke Street and to give her the money for the Cook's fare over. It will be between £3 and £4. She discusses possibilities of others who have applied for the job.]*
>
> I have not a scrap of news except that the Rev. Samwell has announced his intention of coming up this evening & boring us. De'l take him.
>
> Tomorrow I go to fetch my Mabel home *[Mabel has been staying for company with her Uncle Tom at The Pinnacles]* — I need not say with rapture. I shall see you I hope on Wednesday my heart's beloved.

Mt Barker to Currie Street
March 6 1888

Dearest Life,

I have your sweet, kind letter tonight. You seem a wee bit triste & I wish you were home beside us, that we might try to cheer you up, altho' for the matter of that, we are not very bright ourselves — we all seem to realize that we are losing you for a week & that is anything but enlivening.

I have been to Mt Lofty & fetched the first-born daughter home. She brings in an atmosphere of breezy life which we have been sorely in need of. Tom was very much on the spot but just a trifle peevish. Very, very much relieved that the Moonta strike was over.

Can you not sell my Junctions at £8 ? I am very content that you have not bought the Souths. I'd better try & overcome my gambling mania.

Met Mr Paltridge *[Mt Barker character]* in the village tonight & completely bowled him out of time by telling him you were going to Melbourne. "What! Not going to be at The Show!" To their minds not to be at The Show is like being kept out of Paradise. I suppose the girls will have to put in an appearance.

We shant have much time to hold language with you at Mt Barker Junction *[the Melbourne Express pulled up at the station for just a few minutes]*. I did not know you were going to try for sleeping berths. Its a long, weary drive. I shall think of you as I turn into my comfortable bed. In fact when shall I not think of you during the next week & longing for you my best & dearest friend.

I think you will get this about eleven tomorrow. Thybell came to see me in great trouble tonight to say the maids had forgotten to give him your letter last night & he was afraid he could not answer it so that you would get it in time. But I told him Yes.

[Then she adds mysteriously] There is something going on between Jean & Tom *[O'Halloran Giles]* & I fancy in a day or two it may culminate. If it does I shall send you a telegram on Thursday. . . . I spoke to Uncle Tom about it today & he is highly in favour of it. Says he thinks he is the pick of the young men in Adelaide & that he, for one, will give the engagement his thorough approval. I cant enter into all the details & you know how eccentric Jean is. But if it goes right in addition to the telegram on Thursday I will write you all these details. Of course I know it has your cordial approval dearest Bob so we dont need to consult you before coming to a decision.

Thank you for your rose, my dear love. I shall keep its withered leaves till you give me a fresh one.

Joanna does not expand on Jean or mention the detested Dr Todd, but next day wrote hastily from Mt Barker.

Mt Barker to Menzies Hotel, Melbourne.
March 7 1888

My dearest Bob,

I want now to explain to you Jean's position with Tom Giles. He began to speak to her on Sunday & she said she got into one of her states — & broke away from him not letting him say any more. When she told me this on Monday evening she expressed regret at what she had done & said she felt she had not treated Tom well.

I said "Why not write to him then & explain you feelings to him?" She said she would. She said she liked him but she funked the idea of marriage. She showed me the letter she wrote, a very good one indeed & if Tom had not been a baby in love matters he'd have taken the train to Mt Barker & clinched the whole thing. But being ignorant & timid & afraid of disgusting Jean he writes proposing an understanding between them which may merge into something more decided as time goes on. I have put my foot down & I look to you very well, my beloved, to back me up if the matter should ever be brought before you & I have said I'll never sanction anything of the sort. It must be yes or it must be no. I'll have no shilly-shallying. If Jean is in grave doubt about it let it be no, a Thousand times no, at once. I have reminded her of his years of devotion & fidelity to her & told her both you & I would be delighted if she married him but I have used no persuasion. I am very, very sick of our daughter Jean's silly, mawkish, unreal sentiment & I have a feeling poor old Tom O'H would be better without her.

But by the next day Jean had taken her mother's advice:

Mt Barker
March 8 1888

. . . Got your two telegrams today and was delighted to see that our noble steed put in a decent appearance at the Races *[although Tom had given up racing Robert still ran his horses, one of which was competing in Melbourne]*. That beast has real grit. He'll be sure of a win at Oakbank. I am so glad you & Tom saw him run. I expect today was real enjoyment to you both.

Today Jean wrote accepting Tom Giles. Please tell Tom but no-one else just now, I think. He is a good fellow. I gave her a rare good talking today — upon the duty of thinking less about herself & more about others. I said she was without a doubt a most unselfish daughter but I did not consider her unselfish in any other of the relations of life. I told her to rise up at once out of her present unhealthy state of mind & determine to be happy herself & make Tom Giles & all of us happy. Already I see a good effect. You will laugh but it is true.

I have discharged the boy today — on the spot & refused to give him a character. When we ordered the cart to go to the Show today for Mabel & Jean he told Slee he would not go & went off early in the day leaving everything as it was. Slee came & reported. So I said he was not to be allowed to return at all — except to get his wages. He came back again in the afternoon & declared it was all a joke. That it was a sportive way he had! I said, "Well you must try jokes on other people now." He said, "Will you give me a character?" I said no & I wont allow my daughters to give you one either. The Revd Sam Weller *[Samwell]* has got Mabel another boy. We have engaged him today at 12/- a week. He is only 16. Not an Apollo but has been accustomed to hard work since he was 9 years old & I have given him a thorough talking to.

I enclose your own dear boy's letter received tonight & he seems in better spirits.

Captain Angel has spent the afternoon here. What a man! He has gone into everything that has anything to do with the bowels of the earth. He says, "Well I have made £40 to £50,000. Of that I take £5000 & go into all these mines & there is the possibility of making millions — and suppose they were all smoke & I lost all it would only be a small part of what I'd already made. What do you think of his reasoning? There's something in it. Do you know they have discovered platinum in the

Alma Mine? My friend you should have taken some more shares. But the great coup is the Mount Robe Mine. You've missed a great deal in not going into that. Willie Gilbert will make a colossal fortune. In the future we'll be quite poor people here. Everybody will be so much richer.

The Tomkinsons turned up here today & Mr & Mrs Stow. Mrs Stow was awfully droll & paid me many pretty compliments.

Jean & I are alone in the house tonight. I have let every servant go to the Entertainment at the Institute. Also Thybell & Slee & his wife. I hope we don't get any frights! We have got the gallant Koko & Bob to protect us. *[Dogs ? Cats?]*

The next letters are addressed to the Currie Street Office, in Adelaide:

March 20, 1888.

Dearest old Icicle,

I have your nice little note tonight. I am dead tired with my drive to Mt Lofty today. Mabel went with me & her uncle has persuaded her to go back on Thursday & stay with him till Monday. Tom seems very weak mentally I think. Jean has had a very successful interview with her mother-in-law & her 3 new brothers. She seems just thoroughly delighted with everything. Its quite pleasant to see such a change for the better & I do hope, poor girl, she will have all the domestic bliss she expects . . . You & Erlistoun will be very chummy & happy together tonight *[at Torrens Park]*. I hope you have talked her over to the Greek lectures . . . Is any entrance fee necessary for this year? *[Erlistoun, having passed her entrance exam, planned to go to the University.]*

I am lost without you tonight. I simply hate it when you don't come home to us. The house is like a house of the Dead. So still & so echoey.

There is an undated letter which appears to follow:

The Piggery. 9 p.m.

Most dear of men,

It was indeed a nice surprise to get your kind letter tonight. Two telegrams too, during the day. So I did not feel so God-forsaken, or should I say man-forsaken as I generally do when I am left in the lurch by the Gay Old Dog that amused me.

Your description of your interview with Tom Giles amused us all very much. Poor Tom! I daresay he was not so comfortable inside as he looked outside. Jean went to see Uncle Tom today & he was most effusive to her & told her she was doing the wisest thing she had ever done & praised Tom Giles up to the skies. Isn't he funny? He would not let Mabel come home so we must trust to luck for her not meeting her cousins. *[Whoever these "cousins" may be. Nothing further to illuminate this.]*

It has been such a winter's day here — rain, rain & chill wind. I can imagine Mt Barker anything but a Garden of the Lord in winter.

Mt Barker to Currie Street
March 23 1888
Thursday night

Thou faithless one,

Nary a line from you & I go heartsore to my lonely room, feeling neglected & down-trodden & I dont know what. You should never begin these little attentions to me if you dont intend to keep them up.

Will you take Mabel 15/- tomorrow when you go to Mt Lofty please. Dont forget to give it to her. You & Erlistoun will be having a tussle tonight at bezique. I had such a nice letter from her this morning.

These last letters indicate what an upheaval there has been in the family with Tom Elder's illness — Joanna at Mt Barker and taking wearying drives across to Mt Lofty, Robert at Torrens Park so as to have closer access to his office, but also driving often to Mt Lofty; Mabel, as often as not, staying with her uncle; Erlistoun in town during the week for her Latin lectures (and nothing further said about Greek).

Mt Barker to Currie Street,
March 27 1888:

Dearest old Scatterbrain,

No wonder you forget my drivelling little messages with so much as you have got on your brain. It was so unimportant that I did not take the trouble of telegraphing. For I only told you to say to Miss F. the brown paper parcel was Betty Hawker's frock.

Mab has come back, brimful of funny stories & has been making us laugh all evening over "trifles light as air" & yet told so funnily. Mabel is writing to see if Mrs MacLean will go to the Races with Jeanie & Tom & you.

The next day Joanna received a beautiful box of flowers.

Mt Barker to Currie St.
March 27 1888:

My dearest man,

What a nice long letter you have written me. Two indeed! Your letter to Tom Rossi is a miracle of wisdom & I'm sure you will save his soul. *[Tom Rossi, the son of the local postmaster, had just secured a good job with an office in town and Robert, while congratulating him, warned him not to gamble on the stock exchange and get into debt beyond his means.]* I agree with you that he is not improving & I think the reason is he has a fool of a father. The boy is clever & may turn out all right but I admit that there are strong potentialities for evil in his nature & proclivities. I should make it plain to him that unless he gives his word of honour not to hold a single mining share you will warn Mr Fulford.

I got a box of roses & violets by Slee. Did you pick them? I fancied from the violets that maybe Erlistoun was the sender. Whoever it was may heaven reward them for the room has been scented with them ever since.

[Joanna is about to return to the town house for the autumn and winter and has given a farewell party for the local Mt Barker people.]

. . . The luncheon is over thank goodness. It was heavy — very. They were all underbred people & these kind are so hard to entertain. Old Mr Mill refused to begin to eat until everyone was helped which was embarrassing as the different courses succeeded each other.

Will you please ask Mr von Treuer to send Mrs Dove *[Archdeacon Dove's wife]* our yearly £25 for the school choir & organ.

Is it the case that you are putting up John Baker for the Club? *[Presumably John Richard Baker (1866-1927), the son of Hon. Richard Chaffey Baker, a business associate of Robert's and invited to go on the new Board of Elder Smith & Co. Ltd.]* I have got an awful pen & can hardly get it to write. I'm so glad you'll be up tomorrow, you dear

old chap. It is dull, dull without you. I am glad the Moonta meeting passed off well. You excel at a thing of that kind. I don't wonder people come to consult you about all sorts of things. Solomon was a noodle compared to you. How about the Junctions & the Souths? Don't you think they ought to be sold? I think I'll have nothing more to do with mines, Bob. They say the Blochs will never rise again. Dont forget to go down to the station & say goodbye to Mr Mais tomorrow. I suppose Mrs MacPherson arrived today. I hope she will turn out a trump but really with Chow *[name of cook or name for food?]* we can never be far wrong.

We are busy packing tonight as Anne *[Joanna's maid]* goes down tomorrow by train. I shall be glad when we are all settled in Torrens Park now. We have had a hot wind all day & will have another tomorrow from all appearances.

Heart's delight, as Captain Cuttle used to say,[1] Goodnight . . .

Meanwhile Robert was keeping up his supply of letters to England. Barr is told that Mabel is a good deal with her Uncle Tom, that Jean is as happy as the day is long and quite changed and sportive, and that Erlistoun continues well with her lessons. It had now been decided that Barr would start at Glenalmond, the old public school in Perthshire, at Michaelmas. That was in 1888, and he left at Michaelmas 1891 to go to Oxford, having put in a creditable performance, more on the athletic side than academic but finishing up a prefect.

Robert wrote to Frank Adams, 23 April 1888:

> We will hope much from the competition of a public school. While there is disappointment in finding those mental peculiarities which you describe making his progress slow there is on the other hand much to cheer us in your assurances that his moral character is seeming to strengthen — no doubt under the influences with which you have wisely surrounded him & which your personal interest in him has seconded & confirmed. Touching my visit to England I can say nothing definite yet. The arrangements I am trying to make advance very slowly. Even when concluded (if they do not conclude themselves) I cannot leave at <u>once</u>. Then there are the questions of the season here & the season with you; to fit in with Barr's holidays & my wife's fitness to make the sea voyage, the sea always being a great tension & evil to her. The latest suggestion is that one of my daughters (Mabel) should accompany me & that the mother should remain with Sir Tom Elder for he too is a factor & possibly a troublesome one in his reluctance to go & the impropriety of leaving him alone. Then I cannot risk London myself in December, January or February. You see what a troublesome affair it is but we really do not mean to disappoint the boy . . . You know one idea was his meeting us in Rome or Venice & you were good enough to say that if you found it favourable you would like to come too . . . I suppose Barr would tell you, if he knew it, that his sister Jean is to be married in October to a young fellow here, a barrister & Cambridge man — a clean-living very worthy man of 26 with whom the parents have every reason to be satisfied. (7: 883)

To Barr, 9 May:

> They packed me off to a performance at Albert Hall Pirie St. in which Mab took a small part. The play is supposed to be a Greek one in which Mab came on as a slave & in the end, poor creature, having incensed the Athenian mob they try to kill her but she poisons herself & dies at the foot of her master — but not until she has discovered that Miss Wilkinson is her daughter. You are no doubt struck by the novelty

of the situation & plot. The play was written by Mr J. Short, the little fat man who used to play comic parts so wonderfully well. I think you must know him. Mab did her part well & so did Percy von Treuer who had managed to make himself hideous as a wine-bibbing Athenian larrikin. Short himself was a ridiculous figure. He was always solemn & in trouble & speaking in tones of horror, despair & wrath. But as he had bare arms & his head & belly are as big as his legs are small & as he had wrapped (for economy's sake) the family table cover (which is blue, braided with white scalloping) round his belly & called it no doubt a toga, & as he had drawn his thin legs into a pair of net stockings it is impossible to imagine a figure more grotesque. He looked something like a barrel on top of a vermilion painted frame, his head & grey wig a galvanized tin bucket standing on top of the barrel. *[There follow several paragraphs about horses at races and polo.]*

. . . I am getting a little on with business arrangements & have disposed of one serious difficulty, the main one in fact, & I think it is now possible we may get away some time in November. Your mother is trying to brace herself up to face the sea. If we go your Uncle Tom will be with us. Jean, it is supposed will be married in October. I have bought the house at Mitcham *[for the Giles]*. Jean preferred being near Mitcham *[but Robert thought a house in Adelaide would be better as]* in "country" implies keeping a carriage & horses . . .

The Revd Samwell is leaving Mt Barker & coming to Mitcham. We all like him & I think your mother & sisters will find him an agreeable neighbour . . . I gave your brother George a beautiful well-bred retriever. He writes me last week that he is poisoned. So Ni Ni has lost his companion. Ni Ni is very fat & old-looking now but still gives great whacks with his tail. (7: 933)

At last, 9 May, Robert was able to wrote to George at Knock:

Tom comes into the office tomorrow. He is also ordering, I am told, a new suit of dress clothes as he is going to drive with us on the 24th to meet the Governor & Lady Fox Young & a few celebrities, great & small. He is also quite determined to go with us to England. He never wavers in this. . . . I think he realizes how completely solitary he would be left. The truth is we could not <u>all</u> leave him & probably Joanna would stay. But as I never tell him this he keeps up to the mark & is determined on the trip. I have got rid of the lion of a bad account by a sacrifice of over £16,000. I hope to get away in November.

On 25 May he wrote to a Mr Withers, presumably in the shipping office:

Dear Mr Withers,
My wife & family are leaving for England on the steamer 19 November. The doctors here strongly urge Sir Thomas Elder to take a run to a cold climate & it is possible I may arrange that he & I shall accompany my family in November. I would require 2 good-sized cabins for the women of our party — a good cabin for Sir Thomas & a small cabin on deck for myself.

If I cannot get away in November Elder will stop behind with me & go when I go.

Possibly you have heard rumours of a change in our firm. It has become necessary owing to Elder's illness.

I cannot announce anything because nothing is yet concluded but you may be

> assured that nothing will affect the carrying on of the business on the old lines under the old people . . . (7: 963)

And again to George, 18 June:

> The Amalgamation with the Produce Coy was carried on Saturday as per enclosed slip from The Register. Elder & Smith kept Bank fixed Deposits, sheep runs, mortgages (to tune of £700,000). I showed all & gave them their choice — they properly left them with us as being strictly speaking investments not trade. (7: 986)

With all these other things to settle Robert still found time to dash off a little note to the Revd Owen, now at St Pauls, who had apparently borrowed a small sum from him:

> I see plainly your debt to me gives you annoyance & that it vexes you, circumstances having prevented you from redeeming it. I am unwilling that you should have this worry. I have instructed Mr von Treuer to cancel your bond in my books & I now ask you to accept the said £50 as a present & as a mark of my esteem for you personally. (7: 951)

To Neville Ashbee, the London architect who had sent designs and advice for the theatre and drawing room additions at Torrens Park, Robert gave a good account of the turmoil of the last few months in his letter of 16 July 1888:

> First & chiefly is Elder's illness. He from a trifling accident got blood poisoning & from a singularly robust man was reduced to the lowest point, & in fact was within measurable hours of the grave. In no instance in my experience or reading have I heard or come across so wonderful a recovery.
>
> But tho' he has got beyond all danger & comes daily to the office he is not equal to any continuous *[exertion?]* of any kind.
>
> I have therefore in the last eight months the care of his illness, the whole of the business & the organizing & carrying out of a change in the business to a Limited Company. With all these things my hands have been very full & I am getting a little weary & care-worn.
>
> My family now is much smaller — Tom is married. Joe is married. My son Barr is in England at school. Jean is going to be married in October & then we start in November. There will be my wife & I & two daughters.
>
> Touching the theatre — it continues to be much admired by everybody & I may say this — that your part of it is a complete success. (8: 16)

By the second half of the year 1888 the new pattern of their lives was falling into place. Tom Elder and Robert Barr Smith had disposed of their business which had thrived over thirty years. Elder Smith & Co. had become Elder Smith & Co. Limited, with a Board and shareholders. Peter Waite was to be Chairman and Robert managing director. Elder's Glenelg house was sold, and also his stud farm. He was reasonably active again but mentally confused, and he did *not want to be left behind* when his sister, her husband and the remaining two unmarried daughters left Adelaide.

Robert wrote to Barr, 6 August:

> We leave here on 19th November & are not due at Brindisi until 22 December. Yr holidays start 20 December and the question is can you with propriety leave London on 14th December with the Courier? We are almost sure to be at Brindisi on 19th December. (8: 69)

Leaving the ship at Brindisi and completing the journey overland saved time and seasickness. But the answer, when it came, was no. Barr was to start at Glenalmond, and it was not permitted for him to take time off from school. Joanna became ill but recovered:

> . . . But I sorry to say she is much dreading the voyage & has made up her mind that a large steamer is very much more dangerous than a small one. . . . The Hawkers got a lot of prizes for sheep *[at the September Show]*. Your brother Tom put in *[illegible]* his brood mare & got the first prize which was a bronze medal. Of this, I understand, he is very proud. . . . Jean is to be married on your mother's birthday & seems content with her Tom cat who blinks at her with evident satisfaction & purrs in a lover-like manner. (8: 141)

The new composition of the Company was announced and the Board made known. Besides the chairman and the managing director there were the Hon R. Chaffey Baker, Jas. Angas Johnson, James Harvey, A.B. Murray, Walter Reynell and S.R. Wakefield.

Finding time for smaller triumphs, Robert wrote to Barr, 17 September:

> Great joy to find that you had pulled off the English prize in a really credible manner . . . I am so anxious that you should be a clean-living gentleman and not a loose & vulgarly cad as so many young fellows are.
>
> We are going for 10 days to Largs Bay before we leave. There is a good hotel there and the steamer sails from the Bay. (8: 127)

In November Robert resigned, as he had always intended doing, as managing director and Walter Reynell took his place. Peter Waite remained Chairman and did not, in fact, retire until just before his death in 1921. Robert wrote his last letter of 1888 to Barr, now at Glenalmond, on 5 November:

> Leaving Torrens Park & going to Largs today till we sail on the 19th in the Beltana.

And so off they went: Robert, Joanna, Mabel, Erlistoun, Sir Thomas Elder. And of course Miss Fickert.

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[1] Captain Cuttle was a genial sea captain in Dickens' *Dombey and Son*.

CHAPTER 9

JOURNEY TO BERLIN 1889

Mabel was now twenty-eight and Erlistoun twenty-one, and Joanna had a plan for the difficult daughter Erlistoun. After the meeting with Barr and while Robert and Mabel went to the old favourite, the Alexander Hotel at St Leonards-on-Sea in Sussex, Joanna set off across the Channel in freezing February heading for Berlin with Erlistoun. It was her intention to find a suitable school or boarding house for her where she could study the piano and learn German. The two Barr Smith women were accompanied by the courier Prein, whom they had used in past travels, and by the redoubtable Miss Fickert. Joanna was now fifty-four, and not used to travelling without Robert. She starts her letters to him immediately on their arrival in Brussels, describing the discomforts of the journey:

Brussels to St Leonards-on-Sea
February 12 1889:

My best Friend,

Many a time today have I said to myself Why did I leave him? And I was quite unable to give myself a satisfactory reply. I have missed you horribly. The half of me & the best half is a-wanting.

It has been a miserable day. All looked well at Dover but when we got out *[in the Channel]* alas there was a "heazy heazy" and no mistake. Erlistoun had to lie up the whole way & I was thankful Mab was not on board. As it was I cd hardly hold on & if we had been 5 minutes over the 2 hours I must have collapsed. We were 2 hours in the boat that does it regularly in 70 minutes. It was snowing in Calais & we have come through piled-up snow all the way. The landlord, with many assurances that he is not thinking of his own interest in the matter, strongly recommends me not to go on for a day. As the news from Germany today indicated no improvement I feel that if I go on after this advice & anything disagreeable arises I shd be sorry so reluctantly I have said to Prein I'll wait here a day & if alls well go on with my programme on Thursday morning instead of tomorrow.

But that prevents me arriving at Berlin till Friday night. Nearly the whole week gone! I fear it will delay my return & I am so fearfully homesick already. E. has been bright & happy all day except for those miserable 2 hours when she looked absolutely corpsey. I am so glad she is so cheerful for I was afraid from what you said this morning she was rueing it. But it is not so I am sure. Her cold is no worse. We have just had dinner served in our bedroom. We had soup, a bit of steak & a chicken. Then an omelette aux confitures and I ordered a pint of Heidseck as Miss F's last blow-out. I enjoyed a glass myself too for I have been decidedly low today. I was thinking all the way how happy I shd be on the homeward route for then I shd be going back to my best & dearest.

You'll be very happy with our dear, sweet Mab. Oh how thankful I am that you are not

with me just now. The weather is really too too. I never felt anything like the coldness & rawness of it.

Brussels to St Leonards-on-Sea
Feb. 13 1889:

My best and dearest,

I managed to get my letter finished & posted before 11 last night & hope you may get it tonight. At all events not later than tomorrow morning. I am very sorry I was persuaded into staying here for another day as I am sure the storm is over and, altho bitterly cold, quite fit for me to go on to Cologne.

I am glad you prevailed on me to drop the night travelling. The railway carriage yesterday, I suppose partly by having deep snow on the roof, got so bitterly cold after sundown that I had to sit with my head completely enveloped in a shawl & we got out a little after 8. I really don't think I cd have faced the night journey at all.

We have no sitting room so went down to the restaurant & got our breakfast. E. and Miss F. are away to see the lion *[a monumental lion that guarded a cyclorama depicting the Battle of Waterloo, on the site of the battle]*. Erlistoun is very pleased to have a day in Brussels as she was a child in '73 she has no memory of it. I have been writing all my Berlin letters for posting on Friday night when we get there. I have written to Herren Bournell, Briderman, von Werner & Abel & hope for some satisfactory result . . . Ah how homesick I am, even worse than yesterday. The feeling of not getting on too worries & depresses me. A day lost is so dreadful when I am just longing my heart out to get back to you. And oh it is so bitterly, bitterly cold! I have been obliged to get up twice to warm my fingers since I began this letter. I heard a curious trickling sound a few minutes ago & discovered that the snow outside the window is melting with the sun & streams of water are coming through the sills & onto the floor. We have 3 windows in our bedroom. I have had a fire put on for we can't sit in a room without a fire in weather like this. There is a small dressing room in which I sleep & Miss F. & Erlistoun have the large room. Miss Fickert means to be kind but her familiar ways sicken me & I fear her patronising airs in Germany will sicken me more. At 12 o'clock they are coming back for me & we are going to see the Wiertz Collection.[1] Erlistoun wants to see those weird & eccentric pictures. We will then have a bun at a patisserie shop & another walk in the Montaigne de la Cour and come in for table d'hote at 6. Go soon to bed and start for Cologne tomorrow at 9. I told Prein to telegraph you from Calais but he forgot. He sent it from Brussels the moment we arrived but I fear you may not have got it till this morning. I gave him a scolding this morning. He never came to take us to the restaurant for breakfast & there we had to sit till it was prepared. He ought to have seen to all that. But he is a good soul & very kind. Only a tuning up will do him good. We cd get no tickets for Berlin at Dover. They are only to be taken in London. So we had to take our tickets to Brussels & from here we will take returns to Berlin. But in this way the saving will not be as great as you, my dear, economical old boy, fondly hoped.

How happy you will be to be with Mr Waite last night. You wd sit jawing till far into the night. Poor Mab wd feel rather out of it & shd have sat for company in the public drawing room which is very well-lighted warm & comfortable. *[More than this place is, seems to be the implication.]*

You will not find my letters the least bit funny. For Life, I can tell you, is very much in earnest for me just now. I feel most awfully lonely & miss you my darling Bob, even more than I thought I should. Erlistoun & Miss Fickert are very happy, and Erlistoun is most

pleasant but I have no sense of companionship with either of them & feel, as I say, just frightfully lonely. I shall never feel anything else till I come back to you & I don't think I'll ever say another cross word to you in anything as long as I live.

Brussels to St Leonards-on-Sea
Wednesday night Feb. 13 (same envelope):

My best & dearest,

I am thankful this day is over. I was seized in the afternoon with the most dreadful home-sickness. At 12 o'clock we went out to the Wiertz Gallery and stayed half an hour. Then we went out to look at old Ste Gudule *[where they had stayed in 1873 and where the children had been at school]* and the houses in Bois Sauvage & Rue Neuve which is no longer Rue Neuve Ste Gudule but Rue de la Banque. I went to Mme Ghemar's house. I saw the proprietor who told me Mme Ghemar had only died last year. He knew nothing of the Galichet, politely asked me to go through the old place but I declined. It is altogether altered. It is now a species of manufacturing. It was bitingly cold & so we came in at 3 o'clock and whether it was the memory of past days or the miserableness of the weather I dont know but I caved in and was obliged to confess that I was just sore with homesickness.

We have been down to the table d'hote & had some excellent Medoc 1878. We could have done without but it seems mean not to order some wine at table d'hote and this is one of the cheapest. Remember to ask for 1878 if you ever order Medoc. Perhaps it is the Medoc but I feel a trifle livelier but how I am to get on during the next fortnight I don't know. I had not the least idea going away from you would take me like this. *[She should have by now.]* I am sending you this note as I fancy you may be glad to get our evening as well as our morning news. Erlistoun is coughing a good deal which makes me uneasy but if she is at all right we are off to Cologne in the morning. I am dreadfully put out at having wasted this day here. I wonder if you went to London today. I do hope not. It is so cold. Prein is away to see if he can get me an English paper. We can't book for Berlin here, either any more than at Dover. Isn't it provoking? We can from Cologne of course but all that nice pot of money we were going to have saved where is it Bob? I bought some wool today & have begun Fanny's slippers. It has been quite a godsend to me. Now I'm going to my bed & hope to goodness I'll be able to sleep.

Cologne, Hotel du Nord to St Leonards-on-Sea
February 14 1889
Thursday night:

. . . Here we are, thank God, at our second last stage. Instead of getting in at 5 tonight we have been kept till past 7. Snow blockings here & there. At Verviers when we arrived we were so late the Cologne train had gone . . . so we had to come on by a local train. And now at this station the Custom people want to make us pay for Erlistoun's dresses, saying they are all new and the special one on which the asses fixed their attention has been to Adelaide and back! They would not listen to reason but have roped and sealed the smaller trunk up and are sending them on to Berlin tomorrow where they say they can appeal to Headquarters. Oh these miserable Germans! More than ever since I travel do I believe in our own land of light and liberty. I have been in a fearful rage over this baggage business and of course let it out on the unfortunate Miss Fickert, nearly reducing her to tears. It has done me good for I have had another day of sore home-sickness and don't seem to get a bit better as time goes on. Why did I leave you, love of my heart? Tomorrow if all's well I shall be at my journey's end. Erlistoun is keeping well and happy. I have just been buying

eau de cologne with my own money of course! Mabel will like some I know & its the genuine article. I was thinking of you and Mab this afternoon at the Nordica concert. I hope you were able to go dear Bob & enjoyed it.

The contrast between the nice concert & the miserable cold train was striking. At Verviers however they put us into a train that was heated all through with hot water pipes so we did not suffer the last four hours.

I wrote you a second letter last night from Brussels. It was a most wretched morning when we left — rain & wind & bitter, bitter cold. Many a time I have been thankful that you did not attempt to come my darling boy. It would have killed you, the frequent exposure.

My letters are most uninteresting but when I get to Berlin I'll have more to say. I never have much time either at night to write for Prein wants to go to bed and I have to get him to post my letters. These days are very wearying for us all & bed most welcome. I do so long to hear from you, It seems months since I left. Never do I leave you again! Erlistoun sends her love & begs me to say she is keeping up her pecker.

We have had some supper & half a bottle of Liebefraumilch — very nice wine. As I never drink anything when I travel I had been 24 hours without any fluid when I got here & was parched with thirst. I wanted some seltzer or soda water or lemonade but none could be got. Only a water called Taurus, a mineral water from near Frankfurt — very good indeed. Like Apollinaris. Prein is very much on the spot. Sorely distressed at this fracas about the baggage. Now my dear husband I must close this wretched scrawl written under difficulties. We have no sitting room. Only 2 little bedrooms opening from each other so there is no quiet. I hope to send you more interesting letters after tomorrow. We leave at half past 8 in the morning & get to Berlin probably an hour or two late so we'll have a weary day. I'll be sustained by the hope of a letter from you when I get there. Are you taking care & doing what Mab tells you?

Goodnight my two beloveds. Oh would I were back to you! The draughty Alexander's sitting room seems now to me a heaven and everything connected with it is delightful. It is a blessing Erlistoun is in such good spirits. I should be more miserable if she seemed regretful.

Hotel de Rome, Berlin to St Leonards-on-Sea
February 15 1889:

. . . At last we are here. Oh dear, oh dear this has been a most weary day. Twelve hours without once getting out of the carriage! The Germans keep their carriages heated & it is not possible to get the temperature regulated at all — so we were simply roasted all day & dared not keep the window open because of the cold & wind outside. I have developed a small cold and Erlistoun, altho better, is not quite well. But I am feeling my cold better since I arrived and am now getting into bed & expect to be as right as the bank in the morning. I began to feel better when I got your dear, kind letters which were waiting me. I am so glad you are keeping allright & able to enjoy yourself in London. But my dear you must not think of Brussels — it wd be a downright tempting of Providence. The bitterness of the weather I shall never forget till my dying day. I shan't mind it in the same way returning as I shall be going back to you my dearest Bob. But I shall be sorry to leave my girl behind but I still think that she is very happy to be here — and to remain. And although that gives me a sort of twinge yet I ought to be thankful for I'd not leave her behind if she did not seem content to me. Alas the baggage! We were not allowed to have

it from Cologne except sent on to the Customs at Berlin so we must wait until tomorrow when one of the hotel people goes with Prein and Miss Fickert & they will try to get it through without charging much. What a country to be sure! Did I tell you we could get no return tickets from Cologne except for a week & I was afraid to risk it. I don't think I'll get away in a week. I fear our £50 is almost gone. You must not be angry if we seem extravagant.

I found Dr Abel's card here & his daughter's a Mme Arnold von Ethinger. Wasn't it kind & good of him to look me up? Tell Miss Bridley *[their London friend who set up the introduction]* I hope to see him tomorrow ... *[She ends with the usual lamentations and loving pronouncements and adds that Prein has telegraphed their arrival.]* I am very dead beat & cd eat no dinner tonight. Not one of us could. Only many cups of tea.

Hotel de Rome Berlin to St Leonards-on-Sea
Saturday February 16
Morning:

... I am feeling much better this morning. To tell the truth I expected to feel the reverse for I had a heavy cold on me yesterday, but Providence has been kind to me all through this trip & I am thankful I wrote to you last night telling you of our journey and of course as yet I have nothing to tell you of what most nearly concerns us but I must begin a letter to you. Before ending it I hope to be able to tell you we have got our baggage out of the Customs without having much to pay. A man from the hotel has gone off with Miss Fickert.

And now about our rooms. We were put last night into a large, handsome room with a partition in it a la Furnivals Inn of dreadful memory — for did not the bill in those, our poor days, nearly floor us! In this particular place there were two beds for Miss Fickert & Erlistoun. There was a small room opening on to the other side. This I had for myself. For this, with Prein's room we had to pay 32 marks a day. The look out was most dreary, down a side street with only a cab-stand & some gloomy municipal buildings on the other side. The weather being so bad I can see we shall not be much out and as for 11 more marks (that is £4 for the week) I can get a nice sitting-room and 2 bedrooms on the Lindens where one can see all the life of Berlin, after some hesitation I have consented to take them for a week. I hope you wont be angry with me. You see it is the first floor that piles on the agony & I really cant go higher up. *[Joanna had to endure arthritis. Her husband was a millionaire.]* As soon as I have got Erlistoun placed we'll drop one of the rooms & probably the sitting room as any visitors I may have will only come at first. As Prein says the difference is only £4 for the week & if you are as rich as you say you are I need not make myself unhappy over it. But I do for I think you wished me to be very economical & you see we were not able to save the money on our return tickets which I had devoted in my mind to a sitting room. For it is more <u>dignified</u> for me to have a nice suite of rooms. Be sure & tell me what you think when you receive this. When I am away from you I am much more anxious to please you & do the things I know you would like ... so try my dear to be satisfied with what I do for I do declare I do it for the best of my lights.

<u>Later</u> Miss Fickert has been to the Customs with the Hotel man & I am glad to tell you we have got everything through without paying. She has also been to her friends & we have before us a batch of answers to the advertisement weeded out by Mr Buxenstein, who seems a capable man. A lot questionable & a small lot to be investigated. Alas I feel rather hopeless & to tell the truth in very low spirits. The cold is telling on me. I feel

shivery outside & shivery inside . . . Its a shame to write to you so despondently my dear Bob but as the day goes on I always get down, down. I am disappointed not to be able to tell you anything I have done but I suppose I cannot do anything today. Besides I don't feel as if going out wd do me good so I shall just take a holiday & start fair tomorrow, Sunday. The Germans don't keep Sunday as we do so I shall be able to go about & make inquiries. I wish I cd see Dr Abel. I seem to pin my faith on him more than anyone else here. I daresay he'll look me up again as soon as he receives my note. At this moment I have received a card from Mr Rommel saying that he will call on me at 6 o'clock this afternoon. I shall be able to ask him to go over the answers. I shall stop for the present my dear Love, I shall begin another letter tonight after I have seen Mr Rommel.

There is another letter, dated the same day, written apparently later:

. . . First of all I must make a confession. I have come away I believe without my letter of credit. Where I have left it goodness only knows. I'd have sworn I had brought it. I left you my keys. Look in my portmanteau. Also in the little red plush letter case I keep for my Australian letters.

I am very sorry dear Bob. I know you'll be put out at my carelessness. I am very put out myself.

This afternoon I had a visit from Mr Stavenhagen's niece, Miss Ellen Bennert, a charming girl who evidently was most anxious to be kind. She insists that Frau von Klentzes is the place for Erlistoun in all respects & she repeats what so many others have said that no good families in Berlin take boarders. It is not the custom of the people or the place. I told her your objection. She said all the inmates were nice & all anxious to learn to speak German. I am not going to be hastily run into anything. I told her I was going to wait & consult all my different referees. I expect Mr Rommel every moment. He named 6. I'll see if he throws any light on the subject.

We have been down to the table d'hote. It is at 4.30 in Germany as all the theatres and places of amusement start at 6. A very sensible arrangement I think. We take a basin of soup or a cup of coffee at 1 o'clock. German dinners don't please me at all . . . Miss Fickert has gone to spend the evening with friends. She is very anxious to be helpful & kind & does her best to cheer me up. I can tell you I'll never forget the 2nd week in Feb. 1889 as long as I live. No letter from you today, beloved, but I know it is not yr fault. You have written only I have not got it unfortunately. When shall I get a letter from my dearest Mabel? This is Saturday night. I have had only 2 letters from you.

Later. Herr President, Frau President Rommel and another lady have been with me and Dr Abel. All the evening. I had my bundle of answers to my advertisement & Dr Abel & Herr Rommel went through them & picked out the very five Mr Buxenstein had picked out. I am forming plans & hope on Tuesday to come to some conclusion.

Next day she was back again at her writing desk:

Hotel de Rome Berlin to St Leonards-on-Sea
February 17
Sunday morning:

My best and dearest,

I have pulled myself together this morning and have resolved to try and shake off this overwhelming home-sickness and depression. I ought not to have come if I had been going to indulge in this sort of thing. And so I have made up my mind to go through with

it now & as cheerfully as possible. I am helped a little by receiving yr 2 very kind letters of 14 & 15. I got no letter yesterday & cd not get up my spirits at all. My cold, too is getting better today, so I must not write to you so dolefully, darling Bob. I have received some very great kindness from that pearl of men, Dr Abel, and also from Herr President Rommel & his pleasant wife. They dont speak English but they had the great good sense & feeling to bring with them last evening a German lady who can speak English with considerable facility. We had a very agreeable interview. Dr Abel was here at the same time. I had my bundle of answers to my advertisement & these two kind men went over them all & picked out the very five Mr Buxenstein had picked out. They took the addresses of the five & they with the other German lady named Stein have promised to find out everything for me by Tuesday at midday. This is a great relief. Write & tell Mr Rommel in London how very kind his brother & wife have been. The Herr President is a very fine looking barely middle-aged man & the wife has a very pleasant, kindly face. Tell Mr Rommel in London that I received a kind letter from Frau von Werner last night asking me to go out to tea tonight at 5 but adding that she must ask me to speak German as neither she nor her husband can speak a word of English. She also named pensions to me & a lady's music teacher which showed me she had not understood my note to her in the very least. So I am getting Miss Fickert to write this morning in German & in German characters a note to Frau von Werner saying I have not the courage to present myself at tea not being able to make myself understood or to understand a word they say. You see the Rommels were much more thoughtful & these people are quite people of the world who would consider me a great bore & quite outside their sympathies. I have not the spirit for anything of this kind.

Later I was interrupted by a visit from Mrs von Ethinger, the daughter of Dr Abel. She is married to a man in California with plenty of money & is home here to visit her father for some months. A very pretty & bright woman disposed to be extremely kind. She begged me to come with her to see Fraulein Crain and her establishment. That is where Mrs von Ethinger went to school. . . . it is a large, beautiful house, the property of Fraulein Crain who has been prosperous & is wealthy but as she told me she could not live alone. She requires the fuller life she has always been used to & still intends to keep on having young people about her.

She is short, plain but a face full of sense and goodness. She lives on her own 1st stage, a very big one, with her parlour boarders. On the stage above her younger boarders & governesses have their class rooms & bedrooms.

I went through every room — all most comfortable & home-like. She said she was willing to take E. if I cd not find a suitable family. She said she cd give her two rooms but recommended me to give her only one as she said it wd be far better & healthier for Erlistoun to mix with the others & sit with Fr. Crain herself & hear German spoken. Erlistoun has got a dreadful accession of cold in the head and deafness. She is now almost stone deaf so I have made up my mind to take her tomorrow to the best aurist in Berlin to see if there can be no mitigation at least. She is willing & anxious to go herself & has talked more frankly about her deafness to me than she has ever done before. (I had to get up here and rush to the window to see the Emperor drive past.)

Well Bob dear I don't think I can possibly place Erlistoun where she will be more safe & more comfortable that at Fraulein Crain's & it is on the first floor. I think my fastidious Erlistoun did not think the Fraulein was imposing-looking enough but was obliged to confess it was a lovely house.

I left it undecided, telling Fraulein Crain that on Tuesday I was to hear the result from President Rommel of the family question. I have asked her to send me a memo of her terms. Then I must find out about the music lessons for her. Prein has just told me that if I post this now I shall gain 12 hours — so here goes. I'll finish my letter after dinner & it will reach you 12 hours later . . .

Sunday night:

. . . Before going down to table d'hote at half past 4 today I posted you the first half of my letter because Prein said by posting before 6 it would reach you 12 hours sooner.

. . . Fraulein Crain would charge £15 a month including everything except lessons. If a second room is required she would charge £22.10. The Fraulein does not recommend Erlistoun having her own sitting room, as she had requested, thinking it better for her to mix with other pupils. The Fraulein could arrange for E. to have piano lessons from a distinguished teacher. I don't think Erlistoun takes much to it for it savours slightly of school restraint but I can't help thinking it wd be a very safe home for her & Dr Abel guarantees Fraulein's absolute respectability & reliability & I feel that she is a woman who wd attend to Erlistoun's physical & moral health. But of course I know it is not the sort of place my peculiar daughter affects. Professor Abel does not approve of Frau von Klentze. He says it is just an American boarding house. But Erlistoun is difficult (as always). Too much restraint. If I could only get out of her a frank, honest expression of opinion but she is so reserved she will say nothing. She is most obedient to me and most kind and nice to me but I can't get at the core of her. Of course it disappoints me and grieves me but we can't get everything dear Bob.

Tomorrow we are invited to Mrs von Ethinger's weekly At Home in the evening & I am to meet some friends of hers and Dr Abels who can speak a little English. I wd fain have refused but they have been so wonderfully kind to me that they seemed to feel my refusal wd not be friendly so I have consented. I wish you wd tell Miss Bridley what a pleasure it has been to me to make the acquaintance of Dr Abel & his family. He is a little like my brother Alick & has ways like him such as putting his head on one side. And a propos of Alick I may say I am not at all surprised to hear of W.G. *[identity unknown, but Alick's eldest son was William George].* I always thought he was a sot. I remember he terrified us when he was in Australia by the quantity of beer he drank. You will be having yr brother today & Steve. I keep thinking of you & what you will be doing all day long & I dream about you at night. I am just as homesick as ever but I keep it down more. I feel it must not be given way to else I shd not be fit to carry out what I have come here to do.

If Erlistoun goes to Fraulein Crain she can go at the end of this week & I can get away on Monday or Tuesday. I told the Fraulein I must wait a day or two to see if all goes well with Erlistoun. How I wish I had you to consult.

My best friend you must not think of Brussels for a moment. You wd destroy my peace of mind. You can come to Dover if the weather is good. I suppose I'll go home as I came — a night at Cologne, a night at Bruxelles. How could you address Hotel de Ville — that always means on the continent a municipal place — there is no such thing anywhere as Hotel de Ville meaning an inn. I wonder you forget our old place, "Bellevue" and at Cologne it is always Hotel du Nord.

The proprietor here sits down to table d'hote with us. There are 70 guests — mostly men. Tonight before we left smoking had commenced. Waiters brought in lights & ash pans. Horrid habit! How glad I am that English people don't do that.

This is an old-fashioned hotel the Rommels tell me. English people prefer the Kaiser Hof or a new one called the Continental where the ways of the place are more English. But beyond our rooms being very dear I have nothing to complain of here and the propietor is a kind, friendly man. I am so thankful to hear you say your throat feels so much better. Perhaps you will have no more trouble till next winter comes. It has been snowing here most of the day. I hope I won't be snowed in & not able to get home. Miss Fickert has gone to spend the evening with her family. She did so last night too. Erlistoun has gone to bed to make a long night of it, being very tired & perfectly deaf. She is very glad to go to see this aurist tomorrow. I think she will feel a good deal being left behind but I believe it will be the making of her.

Dr Abel has given me a great deal of interesting information about things political, social, religious here.

He says that in the next war 50% of the Live must fall. It will be sanguinary beyond belief because of all the improved instruments of war — 18 barrel rifles etc. He speaks as if a sustained peace is impossible. Altho' Bismark, he declared, ardently desires peace etc. his influence on the young Emperor is already on the wane. It is a mistake to think the opposite. He is a headstrong & heady young man of whom Europe will hear more anon. He said Rudolph had received corporal punishment from the family of the Baroness whom he had ruined & that there was absolutely nothing left for him to do but what he did or rather what they both did simultaneously.

He sat with me last night after the Rommels left & a stream of the most delightful talk flowed from his lips. I cd have sat & listened to him all night. I only regretted that you were not present for you wd have been equally delighted . . .

[She turns to domestic matters, abandoning the threatening clouds of Germany for the shallows of St Leonards-on-Sea.] I am glad to hear of the new top coat. What a masher you'll be. I hope it will be a comfort to you. It was much needed as your ulster cannot be very comfortable for walking. *[Robert did not like to buy new clothes.*

She returns to a perennial subject — the career and behaviour of young Barr. At his boarding school, Glenalmond, he was spending what the thrifty Robert considered to be beyond his means.] I am much relieved by yr account of Barr's finances. Barr had to pay £15 or £20 for a bicycle. Then he had to pay for a horse. Then three or four expeditions to Scotland and we know railway fares and living in friends' houses, where servants have to be tipped is expensive — Tom used to say it was always more economical for him to live in an hotel than in his relations' houses. As you gave him the first £45 yourself when he left he has only drawn from Stavenhagen another £45. I dont think that is very deadly.

How strange of Mr Forster to leave his comfortable house! *[Anthony Forster, their companion of Adelaide days, now living at St Leonards-on-Sea.]* But I think Miss Bridley's lodgings are very nice & it is pleasant for them all to be together. Down by the shore during a snow storm is better too than Anglesea Terrace.

I hope my dear Mab enjoyed her tea party but I do wish she wd write to us. To Erlistoun if not to me. I have only had 4 letters from you & this is Sunday night. I have been away 6 days — the longest 6 days of my life. Will you be seeing brother George when he is in London? I dont think Lisbon a good idea for a toper to go to do you?

I fear you will be very angry with me when you hear about my letter of credit. I rather dread your answer but you must not scold me dearie when I am away & I am such a poor creature away you wouldn't know me. Now my dearest Bob tell me you have quite abandoned the idea of Brussels. I think really Brussels is colder than Berlin. I shall arrive pretty

late in the evening & start very early next morning so that if you can come & fetch me at Dover that will be the best plan. As this is not the weather to stay in Brussels one hour longer than can be helped.

The next day Joanna and Erlistoun visited the highly recommended specialist to see if there was any hope of curing Erlistoun's deafness. Disaster!

Hotel de Rome Berlin to St Leonards-on-Sea
February 18
Monday:

Oh my dear Bob I have got a fearful blow. The aurist says he can do scarcely anything for her and that she will soon be stone deaf. Meanwhile music is the very worst thing for the short prolonging of her hearing such as it is and he says she must give it up. Poor poor girl my heart is just bleeding for her. I dont know in the least what to do.

I have received the enclosed from Fraulein Crain *[a prospectus is included in the envelope]* and Dr Biedermann says she is a woman of the highest respectability and that I might leave my daughter there with a perfectly easy mind. I put it to her that she might stay there for six months to try to acquire the German language, for if I bring her home and she is denied music she will simply give herself up to more reading and idleness. But she said she would rather go home than stay here without music. But I am going to die hard. I have sent Prein off to get from Dr Biedermann the address of another aurist in whom he believes more than in Prof. Frankmann and I shall take her to see him this afternoon. If he confirms the verdict of Prof. Frankmann I shall give in and arrange to leave on Thursday and reach home with my poor girl on Saty. I'll wait till Thursday to see if she can hear any music before leaving and to let her see the city — now we are here.

Later — Prof. Lucal confirms what Frankmann has said. Music he prohibits. In one ear she will never hear again. The other he says might be slightly improved but to get better is not possible. Oh isn't it hard? She is sorely stricken, I think for the first time she realizes it. My day has been spent in miserable excitement and I am obliged to ask Miss F. to write and explain things to you. Mr Stavenhagen's niece has come and I have to go with her to a concert, Erlistoun not being fit for anything. I have told her she must decide everything for herself and she is to sleep over it and tell me tomorrow. I ought not to have yielded to depression when I had nothing real to pace me. I have now got something to cry about but I must for Erlistoun's sake be cheerful.

Your devoted wife.

Next morning she wrote quickly again.

Hotel de Rome Berlin to St Leonards-on-Sea
February 19
Tuesday morning:

...Not being able to sleep well I have got up to write a bit to you as my note of yesterday was simply shameful; but you must remember I never had all day until 10.30 at night one free half hour.

It was indeed a day to be remembered. The destruction of all my hopes & plans & a death blow I fear to our poor girl's happiness. Only I don't think she realized what the future is to be for we have not told her.

Professor Frankmann said — don't tell her. I suppose the future means the right ear

becomes like the left, absolutely without any sense of sound. Oh what a prospect for her. She does indeed require all our tenderest love & consideration if she will let us let it out on her.

I have sometimes allowed myself to think that this might happen to her. Dr Giles *[W. Anstey Giles, Tom O'Halloran Giles's brother]* I believe tried to prepare us for it but I suppose we didn't want to think about it & did not permit our minds to dwell on it. She won't speak about it as is usual with the poor girl but I told her yesterday afternoon I left everything to her. I advised her to stay till the summer at Fraulein Crain's & acquire the German language. It wd be a great resource to her in the future to be able to enjoy German literature, etc. For no doubt she has a fine mind, only it is drivelling away with this wretched novel reading and sensational newspapers. It never was a healthy mind like Mabel's but I'm almost glad now I've not opposed her much. If I had even allowed my temper to get the better of me there would have been no kissing or making friends for a nature like hers. She has despised me, I know, for my weakness and she has no great affection for me, but I'm glad now I let her alone.

As regards coming with her I suppose I have incurred the adverse criticism of all my friends, even my best beloved, I feel that you have not been favourable to this scheme but I knew quite well what I was doing & if cruel Fate — I cannot & I will not say a wise Providence, had not stepped in & thwarted my plans — I had & have the strongest conviction that the next few months wd have been the happiest & most profitable of our poor girl's life. Yesterday morning she & I were so happy. She was rising to the occasion & planning her music schemes having almost decided Fr. Crain's was the best place for her to live & she said she wd go on an early day & let me get away back home. And now — but its no use dwelling on it dear Bob. We must submit & of course she is the chief sufferer. Only we shall suffer for her.

She has just come into my room, not having had a good night either. Perhaps for the first time in her life we have mingled tears together. She has decided to come home with me. I put everything again before her but her mind is made up. I offered to stay till the end of the week so that she might see a little of Berlin & hear some music. I suggested we might go to Cologne on Saturday, stay the Sunday there & see the cathedral — she is fond of these grand old churches — but she says no. I think she has it in her head that I want to be home & she is thinking of me more than herself.

As far as I can see at present we'll leave this place on Thursday & arrive if all's well at Dover on Saturday.

Now my dearest I hope you will listen to reason & not dream for one wild moment of coming to Brussels. Do not be so unkind as add to my anxieties by this rash step. I would be a great deal more miserable than I am now if I thought you would do this. Come to Dover if the weather is fine but if it is not fine do let me come on with Prein in due course & oh! won't I be thankful once more to see the once detested Leonardi.

I can't help thinking it is a punishment to me for yielding so much to depression last week — to get this blow.

I have asked Dr Abel and his daughter to dinner. They have been more than kind and in fact I owe any crumb of pleasure I have had in Berlin to these delightful people. Of course I had asked them before we got into trouble but I shall not put them off as they are sympathetic & good in every way . . .

But, like a Greek tragedy, worse was to follow. Later that day she rushed to paper and pen again:

Later: Oh my dear husband it is blow upon blow. I have just got your letter announcing poor son-in-law George's death. I had opened Mabel's first on purpose to hand it to Erlistoun & when I saw "poor George" I thought it was my own George. Oh my poor Joe. Strange what a yearning I have had over my Joe since I left her. She is the one I have been constantly thinking of. The poor fellow must have been killed surely. *[George Hawker, holidaying with his wife and young family at Port Elliot, was injured in a yachting accident and died of septicaemia.]* I feel I'd like to start away to Adelaide at once. I would leave for home tomorrow but I must wait for my letter of credit for Prein says before you can be identified you must know the bank. I am telegraphing you to say I shall be back if all's well, on Saturday. I don't think it would be wise to travel all the way through without breaks. I am so very very thankful you are keeping all right. Never never think of Brussels. I'll soon be back to you now & I come back indeed a sadder & wiser woman.

Ever your devoted Wife

I think if we are remaining on at the Alexander Mabel and Erlistoun should have a front room and Miss Fickert can have the one Mabel is in at present. I can't help thinking that we pay a great deal for these Alexander rooms but I'd like the girls to have the sun. And now Erlistoun must be very careful of cold.

Thus Joanna, who had to cope with death so often, copes with the tragic occurrence of George Hawker's sudden illness and death, on top of the devastating diagnosis for Erlistoun. George's death left his young wife Joe with a daughter less than two years old and a baby son of only four weeks.

In her characteristic way the very next day, stinging from an apparently teasing remonstrance in one of Robert's letters, she responds first to that, swerving away from tragedy and indignantly setting out her case:

Hotel de Rome Berlin to St Leonards-on-Sea
February 20
Wednesday:

First of all you have misunderstood me. I did not wish to write about the sitting room in the spirit you have fancied at all. I really felt genuinely sorry to take such an expensive suite of rooms & cd only reconcile it to my conscience at all by saying 'Well my husband is rich & he wd want me to have every comfort.' I wrote to you in an apologetic strain simply because I know you don't like unnecessary expenditure & in one aspect of the case this was an unnecessary expense. Still I did it, trusting you & believing that you wd approve of it after my representations. I do like to please you & the older I grow the more I hate to displease you.

Neither I nor your children ever for one moment have thought or could think you were stingy. We have never known you but as the most liberal of husbands and the most generous of parents. We only think sometimes that your early Scotch training makes you a little careful in small things. And then, to women, the small things are so important.

Then her anxiety about her two daughters boils up again:

I have telegraphed to you that I agree with everything your letter contains in regard to our dear daughter Joe.

The same idea of Mt Barker had suggested itself to me showing how much we think alike. I see you are not going to commit yourself in writing tomorrow to anything in the

future which might be permanent. I'm sure that is wise. In our home dear Bob the first consideration must be our unmarried daughters. Of course I can write upon this subject today quite differently from you. I have now had 24 hours for I slept very little last night of thinking about Joe & nothing else. The emotional side of the question has passed & my reason & judgement have asserted themselves. It might not be for the happiness of us all to take Joe back with the children for altogether. Poor Erlistoun now will be one of my first considerations in life & Mabel as our eldest daughter ought to be studied. I do not know that to either of them the adoption of poor Joe & her children would be an altogether pleasant factor in their domestic life.

If you and I were alone together we wd have accepted Joe's widowhood as far as we were concerned as an increased joy in our old age.

Poor Joe was ever a dear, kind & loving daughter to us. But if we once took her back & the children we wd have to keep them with us always. I can see that if we were back in Adelaide it wd be much more suitable. There is the nursery wing at Torrens Park. That would suit exactly & I think that in Torrens Park there wd scarcely be an objectionable side to the taking of her back but in our English life that is different. I don't think Joe should be encouraged to come to England unless she is very set upon it, until you have more definitely made up your mind as to whether you are going back or not.

I seem to be writing in such a cut & dried way, my dear Bob. It is a surprise to myself to be writing as it were so coldly & mechanically upon a subject near to our hearts. But I fancy this experience of mine during the last week has left some peculiar impression on my mind. I seem to reason now — more than to feel. Of course this affair of Erlistoun has been a downright blow to me. And the absence of you who have more than half my life softened everything to me has been another blow.

I got your letter of credit this morning. I had given Prein £25 of mine that I have been carrying stitched into my corsets! So we have never felt in the least the want of it. We will certainly bring home £100 intact & more I hope.

I have again put it to my poor stricken girl if she will stay behind with Fraulein F. & try Dr Deranter. But altho she hesitates she thinks it will be best & happiest to come with me. I fear, altho she has not been told, the awful truth has dawned upon her.

Last night in bed I practised speaking on my fingers a long time & found it came quite easy. I used to be at one time with the Herveys of Aida who had seven children deaf & dumb. I think Erlistoun will be a better woman now instead of a worse. She does not seem embittered which is what I dreaded above everything. Oh my dear I think what it is to her to face deafness. I wish you wd write & tell my dear Jean at Knock all about it for altho I began to write yesterday I stopped. I hadn't the heart to put it all on paper.

I can write to people I don't care about on this subject but not to her.

It was snowing here this morning again. Thank goodness it has stopped now. I got such a turn — thinking I might be stopped again.

Oh Bob yr telegram has just come. I have tried to catch you up with one begging you to stop. Now you are adding to my anxieties if you only knew but you are doing it for the best.

But oh if you shd get cold what shall I do?

So Robert ignored all her pleas, and met her in Brussels to console and help her. Her terror that, with his weak chest, he might catch cold and die was unfounded: he may have caught cold (for this

sequence of letters ends at this point) but he certainly did not die. They returned to England and the "discomforts" of the hotel at St Leonards-on-Sea.

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1 Antoine Wiertz (1806-65), painter, sculptor and man of letters. "His museum contains the most interesting collection from a talent as bizarre as it was imposing" (P. and V. Berko, *Dictionary of Belgian Painters* (Brussels: Laconti, 1981).

CHAPTER 10

ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND 1889-1891

In great anxiety Robert wrote from St Leonards to his son Tom, who was in charge of Robert's office in Adelaide:

> I had a pleasant letter from you on Saturday last after the dreadful telegram announcing that most unexpected catastrophe of poor George Hawker's death. I at once telegraphed ... to you to know how Joe and the baby were. Her loss comes upon the poor soul at a time she is least able to bear it & then it must have been so ... *[illegible]* ... for the poor fellow telegraphed to me after the birth of his boy. Of course I know nothing & can only await letters. The mother had gone to Berlin with E. to place her somewhere. They had a frightful journey — railways blocked with snow. I cd not go with her. I did not think to telegraph Joe's news to the mother. I hesitated about ... *[illegible]* ... & she only got my letter to them. She'd telegraphed that she will leave Berlin to come home. *[As to Joe]* she will require help for everything & there is nobody to whom she can turn but you. The little boy will be her first consideration. He is so young & it is the middle of summer. I can do nothing from this side & you must take the matter up as if you are her brother, husband & father rolled into one ... I think it is unlikely she wd wish to go back to Bungaree except perhaps to pick up her things. (9: 60)

Despite this sudden double catastrophe the Barr Smiths did not return to Adelaide for almost two and a half years. When Robert gave up the private company, he and Joanna had in mind the possibility of returning to live in Britain, as so many other Britons who had made their fortunes in Australia had done. They were indecisive. Months in Scotland in the past had left them with no illusions about the climate there. They dreaded the climate in London — the fogs which brought on his bronchitis. And they had become enmeshed in new friendships and interests in Australia and were out of touch with their old kinships and friendships in Britain. The decision balanced on an edge. They had a son and two daughters married and living in Adelaide and unlikely to move away. On the one hand their daughter Joe's disaster might have driven them back to Adelaide. Yet on the other hand Barr's schooling and upbringing were of great concern to them. Now the doleful revelation of Erlistoun's hopeless deafness and consequent breakdown swayed them towards staying in England, which they felt was a better atmosphere for her.

Robert had his own business to attend to in Adelaide, but he had resigned his managing directorship of the new Limited Company with all its overseas demands before he left South Australia. It seems odd that there they owned two splendid homes, had a presumably distraught widowed daughter in need of parental comfort, and three new grandchildren, and yet went on pottering around from hotels to rented lodgings and back to hotels for such a long time. Of all places in England they preferred the milder weather of Sussex. But by April they had moved from St Leonards to Edinburgh and they stayed there until July or August when they rented a house in Aberfeldy in the highlands for a season of shooting, where Barr joined them for the long school

vacation. They stayed in the shooting lodge for August and September. Then it was back to Edinburgh, and by December they were in London. In January, February, March and April 1890, Robert's letters were addressed from St Leonards-on-Sea. But in May they were in Heidelberg and in July Berlin. At the end of July they were back at Aberfeldy for three months and then in London by the end of 1890. From there they moved again to St Leonards before sailing home at last in April 1891.

It is remarkable that after having put so much time and thought into the handsome and lavish houses in South Australia they had spent so little time in them — only a little more than five out of the last ten years, and it appears that, at this stage, there was a real reluctance to return to Australia at all.

"Look at us", Robert wrote to his bereaved daughter Joe on 24 April 1890, when urging her to rent rather than buy a house in Adelaide:

> If we were not tied to Torrens Park I really do not think we would go back to Adelaide. Mab prefers the country here. Your mother is healthier here & Erlistoun is better all things considered to be in England — only we feel that want of a home ... *[He concludes firmly]* Do not rashly fix yourself anywhere. (11:418)

and in the same week, 29 April 1890, he wrote to his son Tom:

> Yr Uncle Tom up in London with the George Elders at the Burlington. He declines to take up a house for himself & has been living for a long time with the Georges who say he is no trouble. He said to someone that if he had not got Birksgate & the Pinnacles he would never have gone back. He changes his plans from time to time. (11:450)

The family stayed at St Leonards-on-Sea through till April 1890 when they moved to Eglinton Crescent, Edinburgh. Here Joanna was pronounced unwell. When she recovered Robert wrote to his son Tom, 2 May:

> As soon as your mother got better I took to the cot with that most odious & painful disease PILES ... Little better & intend to go to Perth tomorrow with Barr who leaves us poor fellow now *[to return to Glenalmond]*.
>
> Touching that youth your mother & I are greatly pleased with him. He is just so kind & pleasant as ever but quieter — and he seems to have left behind him forever all that little selfishness of which ... *[letter incomplete]* (9:162)

Later that month (unfortunately the letter is somewhat illegible) he wrote:

> Sir Thomas is living with us *[in Edinburgh]* but is going to the Paris Exhibition next week. ... We purpose going to the Highlands. I have not got any shooting yet but no doubt one will be found. I would gladly abandon the shooting and remain here quietly. I have got an undeniable desire to rest in one place if permitted. I dislike more and more the trouble of organizing the change, dogs, house, servants ... and for what? I have not said this to the family ... but Barr's heart is set upon it. That is enough for the mother whose ... panting for Highland air. Sir T. paid E. (to me) this compliment yesterday; 'She is the cleverest of the family, Bob, without a doubt ... and she'll be the best-looking too when her face changes." (9:197)

Perhaps they stayed because they were anxious about Bertie who, though gaining colours in all the sporting teams at school, seemed not to take his school-work seriously — hard for the father, who had been so studious himself, to tolerate. But another problem had arisen with Erlistoun.

All seemed serene with her at the beginning, when she returned from Germany. At least no panic sounded in the letters Joanna wrote from Scotland in June when Robert left her to go briefly to London. Their main preoccupation seemed to be with the problems of the widowed Joe — how to help her? where was she to live? — even though the turmoil they experienced on their daughter's account still did not take them home, if Australia *was* home. Erlistoun's "illness", barely mentioned at this stage, kept them in Britain. Curiously, as it turned out, Robert and Joanna *and* Sir Tom were to return, at last, to spend the rest of their lives in South Australia, and it was Joe Hawker and her children, and Mabel also, who were to move to and remain in England.

What exactly was Erlistoun's trouble is not clear, but in the eyes of her parents it was calamitous. She appears to have had a kind of breakdown — not surprisingly, after being told she would soon be permanently deaf and no longer able to accommodate her passion for music. They refer to her being in a hospital and under medical care, though what finally constituted the "fiendish ingratitude & arrogance" and the "dishonourable behaviour" attributed to her in Robert's almost illegible letters is puzzling to assess. Nor is it easy to pinpoint *when* this happened.

Joanna's letters to Robert, who had gone to London in June, have no heading address on the writing paper. (At least they are clearly legible, while the letters in Volumes 9, 10 and 11 of his letter book, which deal with this period, are very badly smudged and indecipherable.) She dispatched her inventive trivialities to him as from a serene household.

Edinburgh to De Keyser's Royal Hotel, Blackfriars London
June 4 1889
Tuesday morning:

Best and Dearest,

I sent you a telegram late last night to announce the girls' arrival at 7 and give you Anderson's telegram which did not come till the same hour. After sleeping over it all I think Tighnault *[a house to rent for a season of shooting in summer]* with the four servants will be better than the big establishment at Blackcraig. It will be more of a holiday for me. Anyone who is not a young man or a girl if they want to come and see us, must live at the Aberfeldy Hotel — people for instance like the Fishers. I have spoken to Mrs Forster and she is quite willing to do without her second one in the kitchen — as she justly remarks, if the moor is right nobody thinks about the house and I have no doubt the moor will suit you and Barr down to the ground. I am therefore sending you a telegram to this effect, as with your usual consideration for yr family you will want to do what they like — rather than what you like. I shd say that if you give £400 for Tighnault the low country shooting shd be thrown in — If not £350 ought to be enough rent. But take care mon ami that we dont fall between two sticks in your arrangements. Mabel is writing you about the Melrose bill. Perhaps it is not so excessive. But in addition to their hotel bill there were the four pounds they started with out of the five you gave them for their expenses and she seems to have spent the £15 and £9 more of Erlistoun's money yesterday. I have told her to account to you for it. I have begun to write down every shilling I spend of your two cheques. So you see I am turning over a new leaf in my old age.

The postman brought this morning for sale the new Edinburgh Directories. I said we were going to get an old one as it was quite good enough for our purpose — but on

discovering that the new one only costs 6/- I bought it and it now lies on the hall table for the "good of all."

Today there has come a long printed document on her Majesty's service and written on the top "Please state if you have a licence for the carriage kept by you at Neaves & Sons, Grindley St."

I have replied thus — "Mr Barr Smith is in London till Saturday night. On his return he will immediately attend to the circular sent him this morning from the Inland Revenue in the matter of the Pack at Mr Neaves' Stables which up to date has not been used. June 4th."

Yesterday there came the box with Mab's saddle and harness. It cost 10/4 and I had to give the man half a crown to take it over to Neaves, Grindley St.

I have a letter from Jessie McIlwraith today with a note from her husband announcing the birth of her boy. She seems to have suffered immensely poor thing, but it was all right. The weather here is lovely, but rather warm. I think it will be delightful to get back into the north again. Erlistoun seems very deaf and rather moody. I miss you so much dear friend and companion of my life. How could I ever exist without you? I was thankful to hear you had got safely up and also that your room is on the first floor. I cd not bear the thought of you being put up high and perhaps a fire breaking out. If you like this hotel and find it nice for ladies — perhaps we could begin to go to it. But I fancy it is hard to beat the Metropole *[the hotel where they generally stayed in London]*. I have got a headache today. I fancy the remains of my thunder upset, and the world looks black. When I got home yesterday I found an invitation to go and lunch with Jane Patrick which had been laying since Saty. *[Joanna's niece Jemima Alison married Ralston Patrick in 1868; this is likely to be Jemima's unmarried sister-in-law.]* I was obliged in excuse of my non-appearance to say I'd go and see her this afternoon. I have to return Mrs Hendry's call too. This is her day. A Mrs Menzies has called in our absence. Do you know who she can be? The card is a snobby one I don't think they can be much. The house is very quiet. I dont know when our domestic life was so serene as at present. What a comfort it is to have no men. You were right as you always are my best beloved. Mab is off to Dr Hagues to finish up the teeth business. Willie Kennedy came to see me yesterday. He is off to Aberdeen for a week. If he were two inches taller and had more back-bone he would be all right but he is rather an insignificant little man. Still I feel pretty sure that if he were to ask Mabel again she would not say nay. But perhaps he wont. Stephen says he would never ask a girl twice. You will get this tomorrow morning before you leave yr hotel and I'll see to it that you have daily letters up to Saturday morning. Take care of yourself and mind the crossings. Give my love to my dear friend Mr Stavenhagen who I am sure will be very kind to you. Try and enjoy yourself. Go to theatres for I know at heart you are a regular old scamp a vaurien. Nevertheless you are dear to the heart of your devoted Joe.

Edinburgh to De Keysers Royal Hotel London
June 5 1889
Wednesday:

Best and dearest,

I am vexing myself over you thinking it necessary to write me every day when you are so full of business and occupations of all sorts. I have yr kind letter this morning & I see you are overdoing it with yr multifarious performances. Today I do hope you will have a happy day. If you are with Chippendale *[Robert's good friend Arthur W. Chippendale, then living at*

Folkstone] I think you will, but why have you thrown over the gallant Kummeser? I think if we are in London next year Mab and I must go and see the Derby too. *[There is obviously no suggestion of returning to Australia yet.]* The weather is delightful — not too warm and so bright.

And now if I forgot to tell you in my last, I do so now — Castle Temple is to be sold. Jessie is keen for you to buy it. You remember it was one of our early day dreams to possess this place Bob. But everything, alas, comes too late. You are able now to buy it but the desire to buy it is gone — at least I suppose so. I enclose yr sister's last note. I have mislaid the first one. I see you dont care about the Keysers. Give me the old Metropole. I desire no better and the cooking seems to me not so bad at all. You dont say anything about the P & O interview. I hope it will go to help the agency being left with the new firm. As you seem to put so much on that.

We are all going on serenely. Yesterday Mab and I called on the Newrys and had tea with Jane Patrick at Abercromby Pl. and in the evening Erlistoun, Miss F. and I played "patience" till eleven o'clock — Then I ascended to Barr's little room which I find more comfortable.

You know, dear Bob, it will be very foolish to hurry home on Saturday if either business or pleasure makes it worth yr while to stay.

Mr Chippendale, kind soul, sent us a box of lovely flowers yesterday but alas, I don't know why it is, his flowers always arrive in worse order than any others. I fancy they dont come straight through. There must be a delay somewhere. I hear there has been another murder in London but I have not yet seen the papers today. The house is so quiet I don't like the stillness of it at all. I shall indeed be glad my love when you are back to us again. It must be pleasant for you to somehow know how much you are missed and how ardently yr return is desired. With all our love.

I am my own Bob

Yr devoted wife.

Edinburgh to De Keysers Royal Hotel London
June 6 1889
Thursday:

Best and dearest.

The enclosed note from Mr Henry came last night. I am replying to it partially, i.e. telling him I have sent it on to you. It seems a nice place and a good house.

[She goes on to discuss the Races.] I see 'Pioneer' is not placed, so you have lost the £4 and all my very bright hopes are dashed to the ground. Why did you not go on 'Donovan'? The race is sometimes to the swift. Altho the Duke of Portland's luck is phenomenal. He'll catch it somehow you may be sure. A man cannot go on turning up trumps for ever.

I am writing you later in the day . . .

[Then a second letter:]
Edinburgh to De Keysers Royal Hotel London
June 6 1889:

My most dear,

I sent you this morning a note of Mr Henry's referring to another shooting to which you will probably reply. I have not heard from you today, but I am rather glad thereat, for I don't want you to trouble writing me where a telegram will always let me know you are

well. Wasn't it curious that I shd tell you in my first letter to be careful at the crossings? Yr adventure with the omnibus leaves me nervous and apprehensive that you are not careful enough.

We all jog on as per usual as Fred Braund used to say. It is surprising to hear that we shall have letters again from the Colony so soon. You in London will be able absolutely to reply to two consecutive mails. I wonder what those children have done *[presumably Tom and Molly and Jo and all their children]* — I sincerely hope they have abandoned the idea of Torrens Park seeing it is so distasteful to them. The heat is great here today. Erlistoun and I went out for a walk before lunch. I came home in a bath of perspiration having had to take a cab. I really feel the heat here as much as I did in Adelaide.

No letters for you and no news of any kind. You seem to be rattling through your business at a great pace but still you ought to go to Burlington House and therefore I don't see how it is possible for you to leave London till Saturday evening.

I have been reading the Liverpool poisoning case today. The plot thickens. There seems to be ample proof of the wife's adultery as well as strong evidence of her having poisoned the poor wretch of a husband. It will be strange if she is hanged for after some sort of fashion she is a lady born and bred. I have heard Maybrick the brother sing at St James' Concerts when we were home four years ago.

I think it wd be nice if we cd get out of Edinr by the middle of July. The country presents one big attraction to me, that is — the possibility of getting out without being seen and therefore without the trouble of dressing oneself in bonnet and garb of a sort fit for being seen in. I just long for the old freedom — picking up an old nob on the umbrella stand and sauntering out just when the spirit moves us. Here, alas, all this is impossible. City life is very hampering altho Charles Lamb used to say "Give me old London at fire and plague times rather than these tepid gales and healthy country air and purposeless exercise."

I was reading a paper drawing a parallel between Lamb and Johnson and really it is quite remarkable how very like they were in tastes, habits — & both had to fight through life against hereditary madness — Johnson too hated the country, "Hills, roads, lakes and mountains to the Devil!"

I wish you were back Bob. I am feeling lonesome. The girls are kindness itself to me but I want my mate, I am tired sitting on my twig without him!

Goodbye my best and dearest,

Thine for ever, JBS

Buzzards cakes are delightful. The sweets not so much approved. Never mind the orange rings.

Edinburgh to De Keysers London.
Friday [7 June 1889]:

My best and dearest,

The end of the week is at hand, heaven be praised. I suppose I may risk you a line to yr hotel as the letters will be delivered in all probability before you leave even if you manage to get home by the day train. This is the day you expect to enjoy yourself in the country with Stephen *[Stephen Ralli]*. Do you know I take out of your letter that you have rather enjoyed this week. A propos of letters — yours written and posted from yr hotel yesterday morning reached me this morning along with yours written later in the city.

We have had another thunder storm — it was very bad in the night as well as yesterday

evening, but thank goodness I slept through it. Kind Miss F. came down twice in the night to be beside me in case I shd be on the rampage but found me sound asleep — and probably snoring.

I am not going to enclose you any letters in case by any chance this may not reach you — but you will be relieved to hear, as it makes what you have done so sensible, that Mr Fraser, semi-lunatic as he is, has refused to let Blackcraig house — only the moor. There is a note from our couthie friend Anderson.

I have a note from the C.J. *[the Chief Justice of South Australia, Sir Samuel Way]* asking me to urge Sir Thos Elder to have his bust done. See the penalties my most dear of having been a philanthropist and spending thousands on unwanted institutions! If you had done these noble deeds your pug nose might also have been handed down to posterity in marble.

Bless yr pug nose. It is in my eyes far superior to the finest Greek or the highest Roman. *[Robert always steered clear of any public acclamation as did his son Tom in due course.]*

The children have gone into Torrens Park. It is difficult really to know whether they wanted to — or whether they didn't want to.

I have written a note to Madam Killiehassie but reserve it for yr inspection first, knowing that you are the wisest of the two of us. Paton shd be written to about a grooms room with bed in it as it is put down in the programme.

And now in case you never get this I conclude my most dear.

Ever yr devoted wife.

You wd not believe what an improvement Dentist Hagues has made on Mabel's mouth. It is quite miraculous and she looks quite pretty now.

There are no more letters from Joanna from Edinburgh. They took a house near Aberfeldy from which Robert sent business letters during August and September, and, as they were together, Joanna does not write to him. But there are glimpses of the family's activities in letters Robert writes to his son Tom Elder Barr Smith back in the Adelaide office. They are worried about Joe Hawker and letters go out to her suggesting houses to rent, or whether she would like to move into Torrens Park? They are anxious about Jean Giles who is expecting her first baby in October. Molly's jars of marmalade are reported to have reached them from Adelaide, and:

> Your mother has gone to Glasgow today *[Robert wrote on 30 October 1889]*, visiting with your Aunt Jean and Miss Fickert. . . . Your mother's dieting herself has made us quite active & she is rapidly getting . . . *[illegible, but surely the lost word must be "thinner"]*. No luncheon. No potatoes. No sugar. (10: 90)

In the same letter he told Tom that Sir Tom had given the mother a huge painting ten feet in breadth by C. M. Hardie: "There are only a few places where it can be hung." He asks Tom to take measurements, suggesting the recess in the Drawing Room and enclosing his own drawing of a plan of where to place it. It was of Robbie Burns reciting his poems to the Duchess of Argyll, and was hung at Torrens Park, then Angas Street and then Birksgate. When Birksgate was demolished in 1972 the picture was sold in the auction and has since been sighted at a restaurant in Horsham, Victoria (Legoe, *A Family Affair*, p. 51).

Robert also included a typically methodical list of the creatures they shot at Aberfeldy: "The following is the bag to date. 867 grouse, 53 partridges, 23 pheasants, 235 hares and 204 rabbits. 1384 head of game so far."

In October they were back in Edinburgh. Robert wrote to his secretary, von Treuer, 12 October, that he was growing fat through lack of exercise after the activity in the bracing highlands.

He wrote to him again, 4 November 1889, heading the letter *Strictly Private*:

> Sir Thomas has announced his fixed intention to go out to Adelaide without us & if he continues as strong & well — I feel pretty sure he will carry out his intention.
>
> You can understand that I dont want to trouble Sir Tom in his present condition with any individual business and the best way will be for my attorneys to arrange it on their own responsibility. You will listen, of course, with respect to anything he may volunteer & carefully avoid the appearance of collision or resistance.
>
> I assume that everything will slide on in a kind of routine way & that really no questions will arise. . . . I think it would be a mistake to bother Sir Tom too much with business. It costs him an effort now to go into details too fully; especially when they are complicated . . .
>
> In following out the above programme you will be careful not to seem to set Sir Thomas aside — I do not think it is necessary to bring my matters (private) before him — though there is no reason why you should not consult him if you wish to do so — and you need never conceal anything from him if he insists, as I never had any secrets from him at any time. (10: 114)

From which it is apparent that Robert has shouldered the load too heavy now for the ageing brother-in-law. As it happened Sir Thomas did not return that year "without them", but drifted around in England and Scotland as did the Barr Smiths.

The gossip presented here is only a foam on the top of stacks of business letters, but by December there appears in the letter book a more illuminating picture of a family gathering in Edinburgh just before they went back to London and Sussex. This is the first indication that something further was amiss with Erlistoun, who now appears to have collapsed with some sort of nervous breakdown and behaved in some way outrageously to her parents.

From Robert in Edinburgh to Tom Barr Smith Adelaide, 4 December 1889:

> Yesterday was Molly's birthday and we had a bottle of Champagne at dinner and I, from the bottom of the table gave the toast "Dear Molly" and your mother from the head of the table toasted "Dear Molly". Sir Thomas and Mabel joined us and the entire circle. There was not much brightness about us but at least we were sincere.
>
> We have been much cheered too about dear Jean Giles' recovery *[her first child, Hew, was born in October 1889]* tho' getting the telegram a month ago proves that we had no need for anxiety.
>
> Erlistoun's illness makes our plans a little uncertain. I go up to London on the 16th to meet Sir James Garrick. The mother cannot get away I fear on that day but in a day or two we expect Erlistoun will begin the course of massage and then the mother and the others can follow me. Erlistoun is as well as you could expect. She suffers more or less from insomnia but that, the doctor says, will go away with the massage. She is said to be quite as cheerful as she ever was. By request of the doctor we have not seen her. The measles is nothing. He calls her complaint insomnia and temporary breakdown of the nerves. There is nothing whatever the matter with her. I mean there is no tendency to lunacy. There is the same intense selfishness and defiance of those . . . *[the copy is smudged here and indecipherable]* . . . I am sorry to say.

> Barr is doing well on the whole. He fears the exams but hopes to pull through. I shall complain of nothing so long as he does his best.
>
> Your Uncle Tom goes to Knock castle this week. Uncle George is to arrive in Edinburgh today — the two uncles go together on Friday.
>
> The Mother is better and braver than you could imagine. I think I am less like my old self than she is. But for us both all pleasure has gone out of life. There is a little bitterness in the thought that this is the reward of 20 years of mother's patience and watchful love.
>
> That there is a great chance of a name which we have borne for so long being smirched in our old age by the fiendish ingratitude and arrogance of our own child. It is so much worse too to have the dishonour come through a daughter than from a son. (10: 282)

It is not at all clear to what this last paragraph refers. Obviously there had been a great clash of wills between these two strong-minded women. And Robert was not only intensely loyal to his beloved wife but had himself such high principles that it would not be difficult to fall out of his favour in such a contest.

When he wrote that letter the family was about to move south for the winter. The London office manager Frederick Stavenhagen had been requested to secure them rooms at the Metropole "as described in my wife's missal" and was informed that they proposed to remain in town for ten days before travelling to St Leonards where Robert had taken a house.

In all their years of travel the Barr Smiths never acquired the ability to "travel light". Although by 1889 their entourage had been reduced to half the usual size (George, Tom, Joe and Jean were no longer with them, and Barr was mostly at boarding school) the party moved from Sussex to Scotland to England and back to Scotland at regular intervals with a daunting burden of luggage. Robert's list of the items to be despatched by rail is in his letter book:

> 14 December,
> To London 2 portmanteaux and 1 French Box. And to St Leonards — 9 Portmanteaux, 2 Dress Baskets, 4 Tin Boxes, 6 French Boxes, 2 Bonnet Boxes, 2 Banjos, 1 Easel, 1 Dressmaker's Figure, 30 Linen Boxes, 1 Wooden Box, 1 Bath (tin), 16 Wooden Cases = Total 50 Packages.

Robert wrote to his son Tom from London later in December, telling him that with Uncle Tom's approval he has raised his salary to £300 a year, and added:

> Barr and Mabel are going to the theatre twice a day. It is positively revolting. The mother and I were at Tosca last night *[the play by Victorien Sardou, not Puccini's opera, which had its first performance in Rome in 1900]*. I was disappointed. It is, besides, a gruesome piece. We go to St Leonards on Friday. London weather for the past few days has been atrocious & the mother is tired of London. Erlistoun is reported favourably. She eats well and is wearying to be with us again. — but her sleep does not come to her and she is still undergoing massage. (10: 368)

By the new year of 1890 the Barr Smiths were installed again at St Leonards-on-Sea. Barr was with them in his school holidays. From there, 8 January, Robert despatched the weekly epistle to his elder son:

> I had the pleasure of your letter and am glad to hear that dear Molly got over her cramp without my bad after results. We are waiting impatiently for the telegram which will tell us she is through her second trial safely

[Molly was due to give birth to her second child and the Tom Barr Smiths were renting Ballengeich, the house built for Alexander Macgeorge and his bride Rachel Luxmoore but now owned by Doolette. Robert suggested they buy Delamere, a house which had just come on the market. Then:]

Erlistoun is reported behaving admirably & quite repentant. But can we trust that improvement to continue?

A somewhat illegible letter, 14 January 1890, from Robert to his daughter Joe Hawker (his "dearest Joseph"), begins by discussing some niggling financial problems she is having with her brother Tom. He continues:

> Also I caution you against brooding too much on the past, it is unhealthy. Thank God when you have a pleasant memory of those who have gone before you, it is infinitely better & easier to bear than disappointment with those who live.
>
> I enclose you a letter I had from Dr Cumming *[of 18 Ainslie Place, Edinburgh]* about Erlistoun. I had a very penitent letter from her but how can you trust anyone who has lied to you & deceived you so long?
>
> Dr Cumming seems to have suggested to her that her [behaviour?] has broken down my health ... that would give a satisfaction to her as making her a sensational centre. Well I have suffered a good deal, but I confess, that my rage & shame, more than equal my grief. To her poor mother I look upon her attack as cold-blooded & brutal. [This was taken after?] singular unselfishness & I can never say or think anything else.
>
> I confess I am not very hopeful for the future. I do not understand a nature of this kind at all. There is no motive with it and no appeal to her that I can see. She is selfish enough, God knows, but [then] I cannot even consult her self interest.
>
> ... Life seems to get more perplexing the longer it lasts & the nearer it gets to the end & yet, my Joseph, I must just say to myself what I said to you — "Don't brood." "Make the most of the circumstances." "Try and lead a healthy & cheerful life" ... (10: 428)

This again sounds like a clash of wills — Joanna being attacked when Erlistoun's frustration & grief boiled over. Robert and Joanna together must have been too stiflingly managing for the free-spirited Erlistoun. She had already to put up with her deafness and the threat of worse deafness to come.

An idea of her suffering and a clue to her behaviour is illustrated in a short unpublished novella Erlistoun wrote.[1] The plot concerns a managing and ambitious widow, the mother of three deaf and dumb children and one beautiful and healthy daughter, Christabel, of whom she is immensely proud and for whom she has hopes of a splendid marriage. However, the beautiful daughter devotes her time and interest to the three afflicted children and refuses to socialise or think of marriage. She feels she carries within her the seeds of the disaster for future generations. Her father has committed suicide. Mrs Tempest, the mother, is in constant conflict with the daughter until, to her delight, at last the girl does decide to marry, falling in love with a newly arrived Lord of the Manor. For Mrs Tempest it is all she wants in the way of a brilliant match. All goes well until the new wife has her first child. She is very ill after the birth and the little boy is taken from her and looked after by nurses. Christabel, recovering, discovers her baby boy is deaf and dumb. The horror makes her ill again. The baby dies and Christabel, convinced this is her own fault for not keeping her resolution never to have children, seizes her husband's pistol and shoots herself dead. Drastic, morbid and melodramatic as this sounds, such ideas must have predominated in Erlistoun's mind.

At the end of January Robert wrote a reply to Dr Cumming (again, some areas of the letter have faded and become illegible):

St Leonards,
31 January 1890:

Dear Dr Cumming,

I have two kind notes to reply to. We must be guided by you that it is unsuitable [for her] to go to her aunt's but I think there is the very minutest advantage in her going as far as the Italian lakes.

Unfortunately she has been travelling since she was a child & loathes it, seeing nothing in it but discomfort. My wife suggests the South of France, but I think Brighton where the climate is good & there is some stir in the streets and liveliness at table. The where does not matter, this is all [she will take?] out of any place. The idea of being grateful to me for a costly pleasure will never enter her head — in the first place it is no "pleasure" and she has been accustomed to these indulgences all her life.

Of course I know she will be glad to go — but only to escape present imprisonment.

I do not believe she has any pleasure in my letters — they are welcomed as indicating the possibilities of change.

I have seen her letter to her mother. It is read to be right, no doubt, but through what a false medium does she look at everything. She says to her mother that when she thinks how unkind and wicked she has been to her mother she "would like to do something to [hurt herself]. It is the sentiment of a poor green-backed novel. She proposes more pain & shame to herself and others, & sees no ... in love, truth, duty & self-search.

Honestly I am glad to take any crumb of comfort you offer me & when you can know & set the date at which you consider it wise to [start] ... & when we have agreed the place I can write her one more letter (which I will submit for your approval).

But before I receive her again into my family, I must have her promise (probably written), that she will not deceive us again & so far lose all self-respect into the bargain.

I am not willing to begin the old life & I must tell her so plainly. ... The mother has told her if the family life is distasteful to her I shall provide any safe home of her own choosing. Mr Harper will want money for her travels. I have today told my London agents to put £100 into the account with the National Bank ... (11:50)

Throughout January, living in the house they rented at St Leonard's, Robert was sending letters back to his son Tom in Adelaide and to his daughters there giving the trivial day-to day news —

Barr has been out hunting today & has witnessed the death of two foxes. He leaves us tomorrow *[to return to Glenalmond]*. (10:445)

And, to Joanna Hawker:

Main object of writing is in connection with a communication from Tom by this mail & my reply thus.

From yr experiences with the first venture with Tom & Molly I have come to the conclusion that you are most likely to be happy if you have a home of your own than by any other arrangement you can make. Now Tom *[Giles]* has written to me by last mail proposing an addition to the Curragh *[the house Robert bought for the Gileses at Mitcham]*.

From the first I opposed the purchase of a house knowing well from my own experience that it is a folly to buy in the beginning of life & that a house which they could barely make do for themselves (with one room given up to a smoking room) would, with children, be impossible. Now with only one child... *etc. etc.* (10:489)

And again to Tom, on having heard from Tom Giles regarding the additions to The Curragh, against Robert's specific advice: "I may say it would be a very great blunder." He adds that he finds it hard to communicate: " — an illustration of that reticence which affects us all as a family & out of which we see the flowering in Erlistoun."

Robert was meanwhile sending out directions from St Leonards to Adelaide about alterations to Torrens Park — "My wife has changed her mind" — and encloses a new plan for the Billiard Room and linen closet (11:21). In another letter to his head gardener Evans, he says he is sending out heaps more chrysanthemums, including eighty-seven new varieties, plus twelve bulbs of *Eucharis Amazonia*, adding, "I think we shall be out in February 1891. I hope to see a good display then." So plans have now crystallized into returning to Australia in due course.

Allusions to the mysterious illness of Erlistoun keep appearing in Robert's letters like a dark thread. On 12 February he was writing to his son Tom (as well as can be made out from the blotched paper):

> Erlistoun goes on well. . . . I often . . . [the?] Green back novel has much to do with her . . . [situation]. I cannot conceive of any book so . . . of novels . . . [suffers from insomnia] and with that damnable . . . in which . . . characterized her she took to distracting herself and with an equally damnable deceit she took [many?] . . . to do so on the sly.
>
> What your poor mother has suffered and endured is beyond description. For example . . . talking 18 to the dozen . . . her mother to strain at conversation on all subjects to please her and draw her out . . . and now . . . for days . . . <u>listen</u> nor <u>reply</u>. On the day after this she announced "whenever I see that I am wanted to smile it makes me more determined to do the opposite." You ask me about her or I would not say so much. I am not going to write about her any more . . . her mind was thoroughly diseased (be the cause what it may). (11:106)

It had now been arranged that Erlistoun was to go to Germany, accompanied by a Miss Snow, and Robert wrote to Dr Cumming on 15 February, requiring the answer to two questions — how long would she be away and on what terms would Miss Snow take her? He emphasised that both he and his wife wanted to be sure that if Erlistoun did go to Germany it must be altogether her own choice,

> . . . and not because "we wish it" . . . Her choice is between Miss Snow and Germany on the one hand and her going somewhere in a temporary way, then returning to you — & ultimately trying re-entrance to the life with her family whenever you think the condition of her mind and body makes it safe to attempt with some hope of success. . . .
>
> <u>Memo 15 Feb</u> *[attached to the letter to Dr Cumming]*
> I have written a letter which . . . you could find it possible to show her. With a nature so perverse it is important she should start with no cause of complaint & sense of compulsion in this which is meant to cheer her.
>
> But the whole question of her treatment is beset with difficulties & I see no light.
>
> Is she to be repressed or encouraged? Made repentant or saved from despair?
>
> She has so persistently repudiated her parents' love, and has so determinedly refused to be happy with them (therein showing a marked, and offensively intended, distinction between them and strangers).
>
> I am of opinion that if she voluntarily gave us up, & went with others she cared to please and be pleased with, it might be best for us all in the end. Possibly her mother might

have some difficulty in arranging for this as a final abandonment of the family tie. Erlistoun ought to have no difficulty.... (11:122)

Mixed up with his commonplace business letters in the books are these indications of deep suffering. The copies stamped on the very thin, fragile paper have faded and frayed away over the years and the ink blotched from the duplicating process. As one leafs through the massive books fragments of paper often disintegrate under the most careful fingering. Consequently the following two letters are incomplete, but integral to trying to comprehend the situation at the end of 1889 and the beginning of 1890; they are reproduced as well as can be with a few guesses and gaps here and there.

The first has no date, but was presumably written early in 1890, maybe March, as he wrote to Joe Hawker on 7 March to say that Erlistoun was better and was to try the "experiment" of returning to the family:

My dear Erlistoun,

I have seen your last letter to your mother explaining to her how you seemed to be put out with her letter to you, and to some extent how it was you conveyed to Dr Cumming that you had given way to unreasonable temper.

So far as I can judge that letter is written in the right spirit, it appears to me to be an open & truthful statement. . . . what . . . through your mind, and this alone is the kind of thing that lacks in confidence. Better tell evil thoughts openly when you *[illegible]* . . . to be giving your confidence, than hide them *[illegible]* . . . of the statements. The professions of your love are good & I believe sincere — what we want from you is <u>performance.</u>

I am going to write you a long letter because when you speak to me I don't want to have to speak to you of the past at all, only I want you to know what I feel. Understand that it may be a guide to you as to what is between us.

I begin by saying that I cd not consent to have you back at all if I did not believe things are to be changed with you altogether. I should have asked you to stay away. I would not have punished you for the past. I should have no heart or wish to do so nor any wish to be unkind. For I should have made another home for you wherever I thought you would be . . . happiest, but I will resolutely refuse to again undergo the pain of seeing you as you lately were, and on the whole it is expedient that I should say so now.

Again, I am convinced that for a permanent change no amount of good resolutions — as to obedience — living pleasantly with [no?] deferring to me or any of that kind, will not suffice <u>alone</u>.

You <u>must see</u> & <u>feel</u> how <u>wrong</u> things were with you in the past. The very basis of any improvement will be your own conviction that these things were wrong & unworthy & your learning to hate them & despise yourself for them.

Without this moral sense I tell you frankly I hardly trust to your resolutions.

Thus you must know & feel in your heart, that to make an appointment with a man or a woman, to sneak out to meet them, to hold clandestine correspondence with them, is a thing wholly unworthy of you, and destructive of your innocence of mind. When you resolve never to do anything of this kind again it must not be because I want you not to do so, but because you feel that the thing is [in short?] . . . disgraceful, destructive of your self-respect, and in a young girl immodest. It never can be right for you to keep up an acquaintance under circumstances which compel you to practise deceit, and the <u>tendency</u> to

deceit . . . you will have to strive very hard against . . . it is more [beastly?] than temper or disobedience, for it saps all our confidence, respect & love.

Upon another sheet I have written out what . . . after the professions of your last letter to your mother, so it otherwise embodies the understanding upon which we may safely build for the future. I do not wish you to write one single word which you don't wholly adopt as your very own. Alter it, add to it, leave it unwritten if you feel that it does not express your mind & yr intention. But this or something in its place, you will please write out and sign. Whatever you so send over I shall understand it is a solemn agreement between us for the future, which you cannot, you well know, break without being guilty of untruth & dishonesty. If you feel in the future that in any respect you cannot carry out your promise it will be your duty to come to me and say "I cannot keep my promise." I make this last provision that I may take away all excuse for your deceiving me hereafter.

Take plenty of time to consider what you write for I shall not treat it as a light promise.

I am glad you explained . . . Dr Cumming . . . great distance to you for he has had a difficult position. . . . I am also glad that you are grateful to . . .

Dr Cumming speaks well of your health & appetite and I hope that as time rolls on the sleeplessness and nervousness will pass away . . . I do not know the exact time of your coming back to us but you must wait patiently & use the time in getting strong & well. The mother has written to you to tell of all our plans I think, and of course has told you of our projected visit to Holland to see the "thousands of acres of hyacinths in full bloom" according to Rookzen [even more?] in Haarlem.

With much love,

Your affectionate Pater. (11:194)

Just before this in the letter book is another letter as from Erlistoun, though in Robert's handwriting. It would appear to be the "other sheet".

It simply begins with no date nor heading:

I am conscious that my life has in many ways been a mistake and in returning to my family I have made the following resolutions which I have announced to my parents, and which I have promised to carry out, binding myself to their fulfilment by every honourable tie.

1st. I recognize that I have injured myself by trying to *[illegible]* . . . myself & refusing to take food. I promise most solemnly I shall never again take any thing or *[illegible patch]* . . . without my parents' knowledge & consent.

If I suffer from insomnia or any other ailments I will at once tell my parents & ask their help.

2nd. I will always take such food as they recommend for the purpose of sustaining my general health.

3rd. I recognise that I have sometimes been unfortunate in the choice of friends & correspondents & for the purpose of getting away from the influence of these I have made up my mind as much as is possible for me, to [break with the past].

4th. I have promised my parents that I shall never again make a secret or clandestine appointment or have such a meeting with any man or woman nor shall I carry on any secret correspondence. I feel that in these things I have been wanting in self-respect & have behaved unfairly to my family and have risked my own & their good name.

5th. I shall as much as is in me endeavour to live happily, and especially to live openly in all things with my family, recognising what my father has pointed out to me viz. that mere passive stolid obedience is but a small part of duty. That it is equally my duty to try and

enter into the family life and to make things pleasant in the family, not shutting myself up silently & selfishly in [my room?] . . . & brooding over my own case.

I will do what I can to conquer my reluctance & to enter into the life of others.

These things have been suggested to me by my father as things it is very [necessary in myself?] . . . before I re-enter the family life.

I accept them fully as my . . . and as being the understanding between us and I sign them voluntarily & with pleasure . . . them to bind me as an honourable promise in every particular. (11: 192)

Robert's letter to his daughter Joe Hawker, posted from St Leonards 7 March 1890, seems to slot in after this: he addresses Joe's grief in the opening paragraphs (which are very difficult to read), and then turns to Erlistoun.

Dearest Jossoff,

I have your pleasant letter of Feb. . . . for which I am much obliged. I am very sorry if anything I wrote gave you pain, or ascribed to you blame. That would be very [bad?]. You may be sure that whatever was written by me was written in love. If it has made you . . . not to fret and feed upon your sorrow it is well. Tho' it sometimes seemed to you that I lacked sympathy.

I do not remember all. I think you were saying to your mother that the happiness of others was a constant reminder to you of your own sad lot, and I replied with . . . will be with those who have something worse [?] than death to steady them. . . . *[Illegible]*

I am glad to tell you I have a letter today from Erlistoun written in a better spirit . . . and I have also a letter from the Doctor saying she never was so well since she came under his care. She is to return to us by . . . if she holds on, and she is full of good resolution.

Of course it will for a long time be rather a responsibility for us — "can she hold on?" Our . . . has been so much shaken & she has deceived us so shamefully & deceit is worse than defiance.

I am afraid at bottom there is not a good-nature to work upon. Through all these evil times she seems never to have said to herself "What pain is this giving others". Nor has she been moved by any sentiment of love. However she is humble enough at the moment if not quite aware that I will tolerate no more the state of things which previously existed. This is not a question of sentiment at all . . . it was . . . to her as well as to us . . . and no sentimental feeling . . . [fear of?] notoriety would prevent us from bringing to . . . such relations and finding for her a new home.

I am told her health is now excellent. She sleeps fairly well tho's still subject to nervous fits in which her hands shake badly. Let us hope for the best & your mother & I have, as well as we could, put away the evil from us and refuse to allow it to wreck our lives. & whatever is in store for us, I dont think we will lie down under it. Your mother has been wonderful all through this misery.

Of course we look forward with some anxiety to the experiment of her return to us, and her care rather complicates the question of our return for the colony — which probably is not a very suitable place for her, for by some sad law she seemed to attach to her, always the worst or the most vulgar people — Lucy Ford, Miss Guy, Miss Parry. She never had . . . with a decent backbone of principle or refinement. (11: 219)

Changing to a happier subject there are a few letters here which refer to how the business in Adelaide is going since Robert resigned as managing director. Interestingly, in view of his later disapproval, he wrote to Peter Waite, 20 March 1890:

> I see with satisfaction that Reynell's position is fully recognized. This will make you easier in your mind in leaving & it is well the proposal comes from Mr Baker who after all is a man of business & determination & excellent when he is pulling with you. (11:290)

Even so there is a slight apprehension of trouble ahead:

From St Leonards to Walter Reynell, Adelaide, 28 March, 1890:

> I note you say it is Mr Chapman's letter signed by you in his absence. I am sorry to say I find the letter very misleading & it has caused some unnecessary troubles ... (11:333)

From St Leonards to Walter Reynell, Adelaide, 6 April 1890.

> Thanks for elaborate returns & reports. Reflects the very highest credit upon your management ... (11:364)

But in another letter to Waite, 1 May, Robert, having already written to Reynell, expresses misgivings. The new managements were ambitions to join in the land boom conditions in Victoria which were to prove such a disaster for that state, and nearly brought disaster upon the newly-formed Elder Smith & Co. Limited.

> Mr Cooper agrees with me that it is impossible to determine the questions — to find the capital, premises & manager in time to open the season in Melbourne.
>
> Now I say nothing about the scheme but it wants, as you say, some deliberating. Mr Cooper says the premises will cost £60,000 we must have a capital of £250,000 to £300,000 for Victoria alone. To do the thing in any way worthy of ourselves I imagine he is well within the mark. Adelaide will become a mere branch of Melbourne in the end.
>
> I will send you to Marseilles. (11:458)

Elders' association with the catastrophic Victorian scheme was to come to a head later. For now Robert watched from afar, obviously with some dismay, but continued his progress from the south to north of the British Isles. They had their trip to Holland and to Germany. Erlistoun returned to live with them and was reported to be making good progress and eating well; her deafness was no better though no worse. Barr, back at Glenalmond, was selected for various teams — excelling at rugby, athletics, cricket and shooting. His scholastic record was not remarkable. However, he passed his entrance for Magdalen College Oxford, going up in October 1891, after his family had left.

By July 1890 the Barr Smiths were back at Aberfeldy. In London they had been impressed by a huge painting exhibited there, by the Viennese J.J. Kramer, *Descent from the Cross*. This had won the Kunstelpreis in Vienna and a grant from the Austrian Government to enable the young painter to travel for two years. Robert decided to buy it and present it to the Adelaide Gallery; he wrote to his secretary Adolf von Treuer from Aberfeldy, 4 September:

> I did not intend to say anything about it till nearer its shipment, but I see from the annexed notice in a Society Journal, its destination has leaked out, so there is no object in silence any longer.
>
> I cannot tell whether I have been happy in the selection of a subject, or that it will please Colonial taste, but I am quite sure I have got a picture of artistic merit.
>
> I saw it repeatedly before I bought it and felt I must buy.
>
> ... I hope it will arrive safely and give pleasure to many (if not all) in Adelaide.
>
> (TEBS, in a collection of letters from Robert to von Treuer)

It did arrive safely, and did give pleasure to many (if not all) in Adelaide, where it remains — the largest picture in the Art Gallery of South Australia. It is generally on exhibit there.

In another letter from Aberfeldy to von Treuer, 2 October, Robert sounds almost lonely:

> Erlistoun is at Paisley with her cousins — and Mabel has gone to Rannoch and is I believe today on the top of the mountain Schiehallion — at least she left determined to make the ascent. We go to Knock Castle on the 6th and shall be in London about the 15th.

By now they were planning the return journey. Back to London, and while Joanna stayed there in Kensington, Robert went down to the more salubrious St Leonards to visit his old friend Anthony Foster. Joanna wrote to him there:

Kensington to St Leonards.
January 12: (1891)

My dearest Love,

I am greatly relieved to get yr telegram that you feel no ill effects of yr journey yesterday. I have just despatched you a telegram descriptive of the weather here — one of the most infernal days we have had at all yet. One of the days Mr Watkins considers especially vile and death-laden. I beg of you — as you love me — do not return to this pestiferous atmosphere till it has become safer. Stay at all events till Tuesday, I am sending a lettergram to Stavenhagen not to come back till this bout of fog is overpast. We cannot go to Hampstead this aftn. as we had planned so I must delay seeing the dear Bridleys. I dread being out late in the aftn, as one doesn't know when and how one may get home.

Dear old Ralli *[their old friend, father of their young friend Stephen Ralli]* came and sat an hour with me yesterday aftn. He is a delightful man with wonderfully clear views on life's values and fine honourable instincts. I have promised that we shall go to Cleveland House next Saturday afternoon pour faire nos adieux — only if you are well enough of course.

For yr letters there has come a line from Thrupp pleading bad times — and begging for an order! Bertie's quarterly bills from Glenalmond & a letter from Turner Florist which I have not opened. That is all. For myself I seem to miss you more than I ever did in the course of my life. What a hold of the truth Emerson had when he said "The pleasures of society? the pleasures of ennui — When you meet your mate that is society." Of course by meeting his mate he wasn't thinking of marriage — he was only thinking of those rare times in life when the soul finds a true camaraderie. Then that soul knows the realization of the word Society as a factor in enjoyment. But it was only in marriage — my beloved — that my soul has ever found its mate. Therefore the whole social paraphernalia is to me but a vain show.

I read last night a big fat book "Aspects of Poetry" by Principal *[Shavise?]* sent by his kind & sympathetic widow. It is a nice present isn't it — in all ways.

Godson Ben came to dinner last night. I was glad to have him when you were away for you don't like him. I think you chiefly dislike him because he is a Boothby. The boy himself is not a bad sort.

Tom *[Elder, who had not yet returned to Adelaide though he kept declaring he would]* seems to miss you. He is very dull but perfectly amiable and easy to get on with. Mr Downer *[A. G. Downer, the barrister, on the Board of Elders]* and his womenkind are coming to dine on Thursday. This will be our last exercise of hospitality. Yesterday was Sally's birthday. I gave her a little warm fur cloak and had her to dinner in the evening, She enjoyed herself immensely & did not over-eat herself until fruit-time came. *[Possibly Sallie Way, a godchild, wife of the Adelaide surgeon Edward Way].*

Erlistoun is happy today I think. She was glad to receive the kindly gifts of her family with their congratulations. *[Her birthday was 11 January, when she turned twenty-two.]* Last year she had neither. I think as parents we must congratulate ourselves on a certain unmistakeable improvement in our youngest daughter & I believe she is full of hopes and aspirations for doing better in the coming years & as all things are possible, (excepting the over-coming of Death) we may yet have reason to thank God that she has lived, sinned, suffered, aspired & attained.

I am writing quite a letter, whereas I began merely wishing to urge you to remain at St Leonards a day longer. Give my love please to your kind host and hostess & with all my heart's devotion believe me — my dearest Bob,

Yr loving wife

Joe

Soon after that they set sail for Australia.

There is nothing more in the letters to explain in what way Erlistoun had erred and wounded her parents. Her action would not have been forgotten, but it was never referred to again in Joanna's or Robert's correspondence. Erlistoun seems to have been remembered as the beautiful, deaf wife who died tragically young of consumption when her children were barely in their teens. It was a surprise to her relatives, 106 years later, that there was this dark period of her life, and it remains a mystery.

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1 "Unto the Third & Fourth Generation." Barr Smith Family Papers, Folder 3, BSL.

CHAPTER 11

ADELAIDE 1891-1892

Their houses upon which they had lavished so much time and money must have seemed serenely spacious to Joanna and Robert when they returned, after the various lodgings of the last two years in Scotland and England, which Joanna had described repeatedly as uncomfortable, boring and ugly. It is evident from her German letters how thrifty and modest this couple were about hotel accommodation. As there was always the underlying possibility that they would never return to live in South Australia, one might have expected them to build or buy a fine house for themselves in Britain, but Robert, Joanna and Tom Elder were all drawn back to live in their adopted land. And this time they settled in and stayed put. More or less!

Robert bought houses eventually for all his children (though he still advocated beginning by renting) — all by choice near to each other. Tom and Molly left the golden-horseshoe house, rented Delamere in Mitcham and searched for a country house for summer living. Joe and her babies had gone to Catton House, and Jean and Tom Giles to The Curragh, both in Mitcham. The mothers could take their infants for outings together in their perambulators. George was apart — still enjoying his house at Victor Harbour with John Thorley.

Instead of the weekly directions Robert used to address from Britain to von Treuer in Adelaide there was now a steady flow from Adelaide to London to the other German — the manager of the London office, Edward Stavenhagen. On 15 June 1891, Robert wrote to him:

> I am giving my 4 eldest daughters £10,000 each in July next. I have not quite determined if I shall give an equal amount to Bertie.
>
> Mr Dutton, the new owner of Anlaby, £24,000 a year, today thanked me for the kindness of my "London Agent" to his sisters, and spoke very warmly about it. *[Henry Dutton, pastoralist, son of William Hampden Dutton, inherited Anlaby in 1890 from his uncle Frederick Hansborough Dutton.]* I suppose that meant <u>you</u>. Miss Mary Dutton *[Henry Dutton's sister]* when I came to South Australia was one of the prettiest girls in the Colony & is not now without personal charms. From your attentions to the Brighton widow we all know that you have still an eye to the fair sex when they are pleasant to look at & not too fat.
>
> The great Sarah Bernhardt is in Melbourne & is to be in Adelaide for 6 nights. I have just taken a box for which I paid £37-16. (8: 225)

Bernhardt's Australian tour was "the theatrical and social event of the decade".[1] She performed nine plays in French, the most famous of which was Dumas's *Dame aux camélias*. In Adelaide she played six different roles on six nights.

Tom and Molly left for England with their two small children, Joe and Christine, as soon as the parents returned thence, so now letters from Robert to Tom were directed from Adelaide to England.

> Dear Tomaso. I today paid into the Commonwealth Bank £10,000 for your account & I am making these payments for the 4 elder children & Bertie's time will come bye & bye.

> The mother and Erlistoun are well. They are religiously attending Halle's concerts.[2] What are your plans about a house when you return? (8: 245)

Robert was making arrangements to sell Lochside, his mother's home, having decided it would be of no practical use for either Tom or Bertie.

Mabel had stayed on after her parents left England. Robert wrote to her there, 11 August 1891:

> My best of all Daughters,
> I have your pleasant note of July 18th and was glad to see you were well and happy and gay.
>
> The main burden of your ... *[illegible]* was "what would you and mother like me to do in the matter of Coming out?" Of course there is no doubt what we would like, but that does not exhaust the matter by any means. The question is rather what is best to be done and that we willingly leave to the good sense of you and Bertie ... (8: 259)

There is talk of her spending some time with Bertie, and Robert writes out the dates of University terms, for Bertie was hoping to go up to Oxford, and wonders if Mabel would have Bertie accompany her home at the beginning of next July. "You I understand would not under any circumstances stay the long vacation in England." Mabel had said she did not want to travel home with Tom and Molly as they planned to tour Europe, which did not appeal to her. And so the letter continues rather inconclusively, but showing what absolute trust they put in this eldest daughter. "I repeat you have an absolutely free hand and your parents are certain you will do what is wise."

During the following months there are regular letters, describing such pleasures as the proceedings of the Hunt Club, a Garden Party which Lady Kintore had persuaded Joanna to give, and Robert's happy announcement that he had taken up riding again, having got rid of his rheumatism. He wrote to Tom in September about the aims of the socialists, and how he went to one of their meetings but could not see how their ideas would work out well (8: 279, 286). In a letter to Stavenhagen, 10 November, Robert was able to tell him Bertie had passed his preliminary exams for entrance to Oxford. Then:

> The surprise of the week is Mabel's resolution to come away 11 December & not wait for Tom & Molly. I think she does very wisely. She can now be a little with Bertie, & Tom & Molly want to wait & see something of the Continent & she has had *[enough of]* that sort of life to satisfy. She wants at least two long months at Paisley. But you must make her get into the through mail train & get to Brindisi right on time. Take a private cabin for her in crossing the Channel so that she can lie down. She is to have a maid with her & I hope will get a good one.
>
> If any letters come for her after she leaves either to you or to Edinburgh these should all be sent to her here unopened. Her mother & I tell her all we think & feel about everybody & everything & the letters are only intended for her eyes ... (8: 314)

He wrote to Barr 16 November 1891 (after a good deal about how to look after Mab's comforts as she prepares for her voyage home):

> ... In your expenditure at Oxford I want you to be neither extravagant nor parsimonious. You will avoid all meanness & dress like a gentleman. If you can get some good rooms at a little extra cost, take them — & have your furniture plain but good ...
>
> Above all things be careful in the selection of your friends. You cannot afford to become the companion of fools or to mix yourself up with a shady lot. Drop a blackguard as you would a hot piece of iron.

> *[Robert tells him he is to be paid £600 per annum, and concludes:]* This is our day for a Christmas Tree for our serfs & retainers. 80-100 of these will sit down in the Dining Room to a substantial meal. Your mother & I will distribute numerous gifts. (8: 321)

The eighth volume of the letter books from this date on illustrates Robert's growing and gnawing concern with the crisis developing in the new Limited Company. The letters to the family in England are spaced out between a stream of local letters to Peter Waite and to Walter Reynell, the chairman and the managing director. Serious financial problems had developed. From the letters it appears that the new management of Elder Smith & Co. Ltd had been dazzled by the ballooning land sales in Victoria and aimed to fly along in its wake. The Land Boom of Victoria in the late 1880s and 1890s was a major catastrophe, well recorded (see for example Michael Cannon, *The Land Boomers*). Prices soared, companies mushroomed, vast fortunes were made. When it seemed no investor in Victoria could go anywhere but upwards the balloon burst, prices tumbled, businesses went bankrupt, banks collapsed, millionaires turned to paupers and jumped off bridges, shot themselves and rushed into various forms of suicide. At the same time that the business world of Melbourne was in its fever Australia was gripped in a demoralising drought and subsequent depression. Robert, cautious all his life, was appalled at the signs of recklessness as he saw Elders, a South Australian Institution, being sucked into the wildly fluctuating affairs of Victoria.

He had formally retired by letter in May 1892:

> Reluctantly I must now ask your Board to accept my resignation as a Director of the Company.
>
> ... I tender my best thanks to the Board, the Managing Director, and the other offices of the Company for the kindness I have received from them, and with the offer of my best services outside, whenever you think I can be of use.[3]

Presumably his "best services" were requested, for his letters for many pages and weeks, even months, deal with little else but Company affairs.

Robert to Peter Waite, 8 September 1892:

> *[included in a business letter:]* E.G. Crozier I daresay is right but how could Reynell allow that clever, clever Angus Johnson to take £10,000 out of him without additional security & without advantage? (8: 440)

Robert to Stavenhagen in London, 13 September 1892.

> Mr Waite is still in bed & I have not seen him since his return from the country. I ought to have said to you that the interest losses which I reported to you occurred in connexion with the stock business which Waite & Reynell took up after I left & against my protest. We have sent a man to investigate & he has reported that the loss is £27,000 for which the Company provided in the last balance sheet £5,000 — all corrected. It is strange that every loss comes through the "Stock business" & the "Branches", both of which were added to the business whilst I was in England with you. The old business stands as firmly as a rock — I have offered to finance the company for 2 years to enable them to pull themselves together. (8: 444)

The book officially produced for the centenary of Elder Smith & Co. states, relating to the new Limited Company:

> The new Company began under auspicious conditions, for seasons were good and prices for primary product encouraging; perhaps too encouraging for, as had been the case at least twice before, an era of abounding prosperity and rapid expansion was followed by a

crisis which shook the State, ruined the over-optimistic, or over-reaching, and placed a premium on prudence and stability. It was such a period which overtook Australia in the nineties — an acute financial crisis in which many banks went to the wall, a violent recession in land and stock values which left many pastoral companies helplessly engulfed in a morass." (*The First Hundred Years,* p. 39)

At this period and in swift succession Robert, who after all was now outside the management, was sufficiently disturbed to despatch ten letters to Walter Reynell, the managing director, and thirteen more to Reynell & Cooper when Cooper was directed to assist Reynell with the formidable problems now encountered. The barrage of criticism went on through the last months of 1892 and into 1893.

Robert wrote urgently to the Chairman Peter Waite, his old friend of many years. Waite and his cousin Matilda Methuen had been married in the Barr Smiths' house at Woodville thirty years before, and the Waites and Elders had played together as children in the early Kirkaldy days. He wrote to Waite, 20 September 1892:

I learn you are in town but not fit for work so I do not trouble you.

I am working away on the lines of my letters to you but manifestly I cannot do anything very definite until you have expressed your views, say inter alia Cooper's appointment, Reynell's resignation etc. (8: 457)

On the same day he wrote to Walter Reynell:

Mr Waite I am told is in town but not fit to go on with any business & I cannot see my way to discuss matters openly at the Board until Waite is fit.

I do not know that he has yet read my letter. He had not done so when I spoke to him.

In my first letter I told him that you & Bakewell had frankly placed your resignations in my hand but that I had refused to say anything in his (Waite's) absence.

I think this could be discussed at the Board — along with all the other matters — & that you & Bakewell should address to Waite, offering to resign & at the same time indicate your willingness to remain & help so long as the Board retains your services ... (8: 458)

The next day he wrote again to Peter Waite, 21 September 1892:

Dear Waite,

Replying to your note of yesterday there is not the least likelihood of my "knocking the concern to pieces" — that has been well done for me already by others — I am moving heaven and earth to provide the means of patching it up, and keeping it going — without "scare" and without loss to shareholders. For this I am racking my brains, and losing all present comfort in my life. I do not think you can have read or understood my letters.

As respects Reynell I have the greatest consideration for him — he, Bakewell and Smith verbally gave me their resignations. I have asked Reynell to send this to you (with Bakewell's) in writing, and we can then consider it carefully.

At present the things which in my mind make for our accepting Reynell's resignation say 3 months forward are these.

A. He permitted to be fixed in the Hamilton Branch the whole of the paid up Capital and he made these phenomenal losses with two paltry country storekeepers — and all this happened, without apparently its entering Reynell's head that anything could be wrong.

To me it is simply astounding that Reynell did not take alarm at these accounts from their magnitude alone.

Long before they grew to their present magnitude his attention was called to them

over and over again. I believe Bakewell deceived him but that is not a sufficient answer for a Managing Director.

B. If you had read my letter to you you would have perceived that in my opinion the whole scheme of the Company's general finance was misunderstood by Reynell and inconsistent with progress and safety. His mode was rotten. Not only did those vile "Branches" which he created absorb more than the whole of his paid up Capital. As if this were not bad enough he was constantly planting large sums of money immovably with such men as Broad — Fisher — Crozier — Cleland & Co., Mosley and so on. This money he borrowed at call or at short dates. If claimed, how was it to be paid? Besides he did not see that some of these accounts did not work at all into the general business and that others did not pay for the risk involved. Carried to the extent he carried it this business was thoroughly unsound and therefore as a business man he stands condemned by it. Let me add on his side that since the disclosure of the losses he has behaved pluckily and well.

C. Take Kidman's account as an instance of another kind of want of business principles — and commonsense. Lately I called his attention to the size of it £22,000. Oh, said Reynell, "They have owed us £40,000". What surplus did their last balance sheet show? I enquired. To which Reynell replied "They don't keep books" — Now I consider a man a dangerous man, who trusts at one time £40,000 of the Company's money to a man (drover and Butcher) who keeps no books, and of whose actual position nothing can be known.

It will not alter my opinion if Kidmans pay us in full as very possibly they may.

D It is a smaller matter certainly, but in the present position of the company, it is our duty to save Reynell's and Bakewell's Salaries; if we can. I think a large Salary is very often cheaper than a small one — but from Reynell and from Bakewell, so far as I can judge, we have not got the skill and protection implied in large pay.

E Reynell, poor chap, I grieve to say is greatly involved — I do not say this ill-naturedly or in any unfeeling manner. He has indicated to me, and to others, that probably the best thing he could do would be to "chuck it up".

Well it is for you to consider, whether this is a desirable position for the man who has the command of our Capital and name. Suppose willy nilly he is compelled to chuck it up?

F The main thing which weighs with me is this.

I see clearly the necessity of remodelling the business — if there is to be any permanent safety for the management or the shareholders.

Not denying Reynell's resources and good qualities (for he has merits as a business man) I have nearly come to the conclusion that he is not the man to rehabilitate the business. It will be a hard job and take some time, for it must be done cautiously as well as firmly — Neither what I see of Reynell in his management of the Limited Company, nor the history of his business career in the past, make me at all confident he has the grasp to do it. It is all a question of management. I wish I could believe him equal to it — but I cannot. I suggested Cooper, partly because of his Caution, he seems to me to look all round an account and better propound it.

I do not know exactly how to fill up Bakewell's place, as I do not know exactly what he does, or who we have, but this I will learn before three months have gone by.

I have been studying the question pretty closely and these are the conclusions to which so far I have come.

I do not deny that the business may go on without this remodelling, but I do deny that it is safe on the present system or likely to be permanently prosperous. I also affirm, that until much of what I have described is done, it is not possible to attempt floating debentures or creating any other outside permanent financial arrangements.

(8: unnumbered but placed after 458)

Peter Waite, said to be unwell and keeping to his bed, was pursued by further letters.

Robert to Peter Waite, 23 September 1892:

I have written to you 3 letters which on account of their great length may be confusing to you.

I now write very shortly without any explanations, what I think should be done.

I am not troubled so much as to the present position of the Company as I am puzzled as to its future management. To prevent hasty exposate *[?illegible]* and not to commit ourselves absolutely to any policy until we know more — I suggest:

1. That resignations of Reynell & Bakewell be accepted, their services, on present footing, to terminate on 31st December next.,
2. At the end of that time Mr Bakewell should go. I contemplate the possibility of your continuing Mr Reynell at a reduced salary of £1200 unless his insolvency or some other cause prevents it.
3. Mr Cooper to take my place on the Board & to have a full voice in the management at a salary of £1200. I dont propose that you should change Mr Reynell's title.

This arrangement saves the company as under the present payments

Bonus	1250
Reynell	2000
Bakewell	1000
Cooper	1000
	£5,250
Less Reynell & Cooper each 1200	2,400
	£2,800

This is a saving we must make for the company to go as something towards their losses.

It is a certain increase of the net profit, whatever that be. Bakewell's place can be taken as to part of it by Mr Reynell & Mr Chapman & as to the travelling by Mr Pearson & some of the juniors.

I have explained these things fully to Mr Reynell & he sees nothing unfair in my proposals.

This letter is to be read in connexion with my other letters as to the policy of the companies as to liquid assets.

Yours,

R. Barr Smith. (8: 461)

Three days later, Robert wrote again to Waite:

I have thought over the matter carefully. I do not see how we are to help ourselves without Mr Cooper on the Board. I think him a good man, but assuming him improved in this direction where are we to find a substitute? I know of none & I know of no other way of providing for the contingency of Mr Reynell's possible insolvency. Have you received their resignations? If so we ought to go on with the discussion at the Board today. (8: 463)

And again Robert to Waite:

> I do not deny Mr Reynell's good qualities. I daresay this kind of thing could not happen again but the possibility of its recurrence is what I want, through Mr Cooper, to prevent & I know of no-one else through whom to work in this direction. (8: 474)

The immediate problem was resolved, as was later described in Robert's letter to Stavenhagen the following 31 January 1893:

> I do not think you need trouble much over the London office danger. As you say there is not room for much reduction — & if the Limited Company is mean enough to accept your offer to pay £50 of Mr Josephson's salary you will debit to Elder & me & say nothing about it to them.
>
> Reynell is a strange & dense character, e.g. with salaries here that were ludicrously extravagant & mismanagement ditto in his own case & around him — his mind wanders away to pruning & altering things he knows nothing of, professing to be guided by me. He does not see that he is wasting time & guilty of phenomenal stupidity in criticizing, & attempting to alter, what I on the spot approved — and for no profit whatever . . . I imagine Downer *[A. G. Downer, a member of the Board]* will now to a very considerable extent boss the concern. Waite is meddlesome enough & full of self-conceit. That is, I think, what spoils him as it has ruined many another good man. Whenever a difference arises he collapses & becomes hysterical — goes to bed & shuts himself up & goes off, if you speak to him . . . you can make neither head nor tail of him — he is altogether out of place — except on a run. When he is sound & well he is very masterful & opinionating, that is the worst of it.
>
> We had our meeting & Downer was put up to speak. Waite was not there & Harvey *[James Harvey, member of the Board]* cannot in the least manage a meeting. Downer did splendidly . . . the reports that had been going about were so extravagant the truth was a relief!! e.g "We had lost £250,000." "We were going to make calls of 20/- a month", & so on. The shareholders were delighted to know they had only lost £60,000 at a Branch in Victoria! & that the Reserve Account & undivided profits would square all losses leaving the Capital untouched.
>
> They made a full confession rather reluctantly. They made the calls with still greater reluctance.
>
> *[Robert added that he was enclosing the letter he wrote to the shareholders, and that he interviewed them afterwards & managed to convince them:]* — that it was better to make an end of all things, especially as the Public were prepared for anything & that nothing can irritate shareholders more or disturb public confidence more than constantly occurring announcements & constantly recurring thousands.
>
> They think (I said) they are to be called upon for 20/- a month. What is so reassuring to be told they are only going to be called upon for 10/- in 3 months? So it was conceded & Downer spoke & the Public approved . . .
>
> Cooper will be associated with Reynell — it was not thought wise to get rid of Reynell when things were so topsy-turvey. (8: 6)

In all this flurry of letters correspondence on other matters was somewhat neglected. But in a letter to Frank Adams in August 1892 Robert had lamented that financial losses had occurred with the new management's change of direction (8: 400), and the next year, 14 February 1893, he expanded openly on this:

> This will be a very short note & is intended merely to do what I thought I had done long ago & acknowledged in some form your kindness & success in pushing Bertie on with his mods *[moderations. First exams at Oxford for a degree]*. I have made up my mind that I can send you a cheque without you being annoyed, & that there is nothing I can send which will be so useful to you. *[He included £100.]* I asure you I appreciate very much the hearty manner in which you have replied to my appeals to your friendship when sometimes I think you had cause to be surly ...
>
> As an apology for my neglect in writing I must tell you that I have had a very bad time of it lately — months of care & worry ending in a serious loss. My successor in the management of Elder Smith & Co. Ltd., not content with the good thing he took over from, must needs carry the business down into Victoria with the result that we have lost over £60,000. Apart from this serious loss the worry & humiliation attracting to so great mismanagement has been to me a bitter pill. I feel that the banner which I have carried aloft in battle for nearly 40 years has been by feeble hands allowed to drag somewhat in the dust. (8: 662)

To his old friend, Captain Hector, in 1893, he also lamented the recent problems, now (it was hoped) resolved:

> I am deeply humiliated. I gave them over a perfectly sound business in which great fortunes have been made one after another until they are in their present pass & unable to pay any dividend. It is deeply humiliating, I repeat. It never entered my head that this management could have changed so much strength into such weakness ... (8: 562)

While Robert was manoeuvring to get his old company back into order, another and lighter side of their life is encapsulated by the letters Joanna wrote to him when, the alarming Board Meeting over, he went off to Melbourne with his favourite daughter Mabel, now returned from England. This was October 1892. Jean O'Halloran Giles was now the mother of a baby son; Joe Hawker, the widow, had her two children; and Tom and Mollie with their two daughters were back from overseas. All of them visited Joanna at different times when she went down to stay at the Largs Pier Hotel during Robert's absence. She took Erlistoun with her but this could not be counted a success.

Largs Pier was a modestly fashionable resort with a select clientele where the family had stayed before while awaiting their passages "home" on mail ships. The hotel still stands on the beach front at Largs Bay — a building of arched-over wide verandahs and ocean views. Largs Bay was nostalgically named by the pioneering Elders after the port near Glasgow when they envisaged it as a port for overseas vessels. The Elders' association with the Peninsular and Orient Line began in 1852, and by 1874 Elder Smith & Co. were its principal agents. The Scottish Largs is close to Knock Castle where George had retired to buy his estate and to become involved in the political and social life of the area.

The move to the Largs Pier Hotel suited Joanna. Her servants were to leave *en masse* for their annual holidays, Torrens Park was put under dust-covers and Auchendarroch, with Miss Fickert's direction, prepared for the summer occupation. And it suited Robert for Joanna to have a little holiday by the sea, as he could then seize the opportunity to go to the Races in Melbourne and do some country sight seeing, which he loved, on the way. This would have fatigued his wife. Mabel on the other hand was an enthusiastic race-goer and traveller and took with her a trunk full of smart dresses. Robert had developed a keen interest in racing and had a stable of horses, but this was his first Melbourne Cup. Joanna, as usual, started writing to him immediately he left at the end of October, first from Torrens Park, which was being packed up for the summer absence.

Torrens Park
October 30
Sunday morning:

My dearest love,

The kind telegram you have sent me from time to time has relieved my mind of all anxiety concerning you & Lady Bountiful *[Mabel]*. I am very glad to hear you enjoyed yesterday's racing & I was surprised you did not add in yr last wire what won the Maribyrnong but I daresay you realized that was not a bit of news that would thrill me at all. I only realized you had not let me know when Tom & Molly came over in the evening & I was not able to tell them.

I think they came specially to know how the wind lay with you & me in the matter of Jim Mitchell proposing to Joe. *[This is an intriguing developement. Joe had apparently been smitten by Molly's brother, Jim Mitchell, visiting from India. Her parents did not welcome such a match.]* I lay low and listened with a strange appreciation of our dear daughter-in-law's finesse to her expressions of disapprobation of Jim's conduct and her intense surprise when the affair broke upon her as she had not the faintest suspicion. I could not help saying how very strange that was as we had all observed it and had been commenting on it. Molly tells me Joe said to her if time could only be put back 10 years how gladly she would have married Jim! Tom Giles says he does not really think that Joe knows aught of George Hawker's infidelity. He says she was particularly deaf at the time of Bob's birth & that a great deal escaped her in that way. Jean thinks differently but I have come round to Tom Giles' theory also — it would be a good thing if she knew the truth but who would be so cruel to tell her? She is going about, poor dear, looking very sentimental and lack-adaisical but expressed to me her determination to get over it and so she will. I think a further Mitchell connection would have been undesirable, so we may congratulate ourselves things are not worse than they are. Tom B.S. says he is sure Joe will marry some day but as she likes this man I am not so sure of that. Only she can make up her mind & recall him. One can never be sure of the heart of a woman.

[She goes on to less contentious news:] The daughters and their children all came to an afternoon strawberry feast in the dining room yesterday. It passed off well. We sat outside afterwards and watched their gambols. They are nice little children. *[The children were Betty and Bob Hawker, Joe and Chris Barr Smith and Hew O'Halloran Giles — all under five.]*

Tom Giles spoke to me about adding to The Curragh *[the Giles' house in Mitcham]*. I said you & I had discussed it. We both thought that with an increasing family it might be wiser to leave it. But they seem keen about stopping so perhaps the best thing is to let the room be added. Tom thinks it will cost £300, then we can wash our hands of all responsibility as to their getting on in the house seeing they are again taking their own way. I think they find the non-payment of rent and the economy of living in such a small way counter-balances the inconveniences of the house's size — and neither of them like entertaining.

There is an awful likeness of you in last night's paper . . . Tom told me Percy Stow came up to him in the Club & said — if yr father wants to bring an action for libel against the paper for that picture of him I'll be glad to be his counsel! It is really a horrible woodcut.

The ladies' letters this week were as usual very fulsome, but of course I liked their praise of Mabel, which I feel was well deserved. *[Probably an allusion to "Victorine", who wrote the indeed "fulsome" ladies pages in the* Observer.*]* I suppose you two are very happy together I hope you wont think of coming back under 3 weeks for the servants must get a

fortnight's holiday & they don't get away for the next 3 or 4 days. If you come back before the 3 weeks you will have to go to an hotel.

I have been thinking that if we are at all comfortable at Largs my wisest plan may be to stay on another week & then go straight up to Mt Barker. I am not fond of careering about the country without you. Its strange how helpless I feel when I am left like this. And Erlistoun being so silent & unsympathetic makes me worse.

We were at early dinner with Joe today. She was very kind but I could not help feeling how awful it would be to me to be left alone in the world. So take care of yourself my dear blessed old man & come back safely to your loving & devoted wife.

I'm sure you will like Gippsland & the Blue Mountains.

I enclose a note I got from Tom *[Elder]* tonight. Poor old chap. You will see how owlish he is for he thinks you had sent him a letter of introduction by a man from Melbourne. I think I'll send you clippings of the papers in case you shd miss them by any chance thro' Nora's neglect. You can repost them to Mr Forster *[after more than three decades of their acquaintance he is still* Mr *Forster]* or somebody. The Oroya is to be in tomorrow. It brings back Jack Bakewell & his wife.

I am going round the neighbours tomorrow to say goodbye. Your stable people will have a grand holiday just now. Nothing to do for a fortnight — three of them — but Mabel let her boy have a fortnight's holiday so there's only Kelly & Walt *[the coachmen]*. I hear the stableman is to stay on until next Saturday. Evans *[the head gardener at Torrens Park]* sent me in last night a jug of roses. I never saw such monsters. Their colour is bad — that ugly harsh pink but the blooms are something enormous.

Torrens Park to Menzies Hotel Melbourne
1st November 1892:

. . . I had such a day yesterday of bustle & fatigue that long before night came I was wishing I never had been born. And then the thunder! It began in the afternoon just as I got to Birksgate & it has rained till now next morning.

Altho I wrote Tom *[Elder]* I was going to say goodbye he was out, driving. So I had my visit for nothing. Yet there was no doubt they expected me. Catch me calling on him again! Not I again for many a long day!

I sat down last evening in the midst of the thunder storm to write you & Mabel — when I heard wheels & here arrived Joe in the middle of the storm. She doesn't mind thunder a bit. She sat until ten so alas I got no writing done. I was only able to do up yours & Mabel's English letters which came by the evening post & then get into bed. I was so weary that malgré thunder & lightening I slept for hours . . . Tell my precious Mab I can send her no letter today but she has plenty of English ones to refresh her. I'll have loads of time to write at Largs. I have quite made up my mind to stay a fortnight at the Bay if they can keep me for really in this kind of weather I could not face going to Angaston. I suppose you approve of this dearest Bob — I don't expect to like it but then I care for no place without you so it does not signify. I do hope you are both enjoying yourselves & I hope Mab is admired.

[She adds that she is enclosing a letter from the estimable Mr Adams (it is no longer enclosed) and comments:] I think we may take heart of grace about Bertie as Adams is a very sharp fellow, quick to detect signs of moral decadence in his boys. I wonder if this Benjamin of ours may yet turn out a comfort and blessing? I am dubious about his exam to tell the truth in spite of all hopeful prognostications — and the question seems to arise — if he

fails, what is to be done? But we wont begin to think about that yet. "Oh Auntie, lets be happy while we can." Sentences from Lady Bountiful are constantly recurring to my mind & come in very a propos. *[The often referred to "Lady Bountiful" is a nickname for Mabel, a comic character in George Farquhar's* The Beaux' Stratagem *(1707), and the title of a recent play by Pinero (1891).]*

We have had a good bit of rain. Bad for the hay-making I fear. I was highly amused at the cool cheek of Kelly yesterday. In speaking of my probable trip to Angaston & Walt driving me — which of course I would infinitely prefer to Kelly driving me, he said "I wd have liked to take you myself to Angaston this year if I cd have left home as I wd have liked to see the country round there." I had such an inclination to say to him "Hang your colonial cheek. Wait till you are asked." I fear a great deal of what Walt says is true & that our fat friend is lazy & self-indulgent. Yr stable-man is planning to get work & return to you. He gets on so well & pleasantly with Walt.

There have been a lot of visitors yesterday. I dont know what the people meant by taking a long, hot thundery drive for nothing.

Did you take my best Negrette & Zambra Opera glass with you that Tom gave me? For your own is new & I am in despair till I hear you have got mine. I admire your sense in taking it — if you have it & I dont grudge it you <u>if you will bring it safely back</u>. The servants are nearly all gone. Three have left for altogether & the rest are taking their holiday. The house is terribly quiet & it makes me eerie especially as in the paper yesterday —"Burglars at Mitcham." They have been caught fortunately. I must now begin my interrupted packing. If the weather was only cool we could all get on much better but it is such a sultry day — not a breath of wind . . . I have a wire from Mrs Swan in which these two words appear "Veggy Free" referring to your "irons" joke I suppose.

This remark is obscure. Mrs Swan was the widow of Robert's old friend and partner W.R. Swan, who had recently died of cancer. The Swans, like the Waites, were married in the Barr Smiths' house, but later, in 1876.

Thus, clucking and managing, protective and critical as is the habit with mothers and wives, she makes her way out of the dust-sheeted house to the boredom of hotel life again without her adored husband, and with the oppressive companionship of the moody Erlistoun. Then follow a cluster of letters addressed from the seaside.

Largs Bay to Melbourne
November 2 1892:

. . . I have your letter today written just before the Cup in which you tell me you are leaving Mabel in Melbourne & going off to Gippsland by yourself. After Kosciusko I need not I suppose, feel uneasy about yr starting out solus. Mab seems to be taking very much to Mr & Mrs Ernest Ayers which is pleasant, as being young, they may help amuse her. *[Ernest Ayers (1852-1921) was the son of the Premier Sir Henry Ayers and Lady Ayers, married to Barbara, daughter of Sir William and Lady Milne. The "young" couple were both forty, which made them nine years older than Mabel.]*

I am not at all up to the mark today as I have had a bad night & have pains all over my limbs. Rheumaticks I suppose. I was in such terrible perspirations on Monday & Tuesday that I think I felt the cold coming down here. For today it is a strong westerly wind & very chilly. I have not gone out today having difficulty in walking. So Erlistoun has been on her own hook all day & is not coming to any harm I hope. Mr Owen *[the Revd Owen, with whom Robert had theological arguments]* has been in sitting with me this afternoon but I think

I am pining for my people. However to my surprise I got a wire from Tom this morning saying he & Molly were coming down to dinner tonight. Very kind & perhaps they will cheer me up. When it gets warm again I am sure I shall like this place very much but the moan of the sea today is melancholy.

You & Mabel will be busy paying your calls today . . . Of course it bores us very often to have people we must not forget that. I see we are to have the Clementsons at Mt Barker. They are a nice couple. I shall be very glad to see them.

Largs Bay to Melbourne
November 4 1892:

My dearest Love,

I got your Wednesday's letter last night. It must have been at the office all day. Somebody brought it in the evening by hand.

I enclose a note from the principal of Way College *[William George Torr (1853-1939), well known as a theologian, writer and later evangelist]*. I wrote him saying you wd not be home for a fortnight but I was sure you wd have the greatest pleasure in telling him all you knew about Kosciusko. From yr telegram I know you were in Gippsland yesterday & I hope you have been pleased with yr little jaunt. You dont dislike taking these hurried trips solus but you'll be glad to see yr old Mab when you return to Melbourne tonight, and you'll have a great day tomorrow for you both dearly love a steeplechase. Mrs Swan writes me Mrs Tom Horn has allowed her mother to go second class in the Britannia & Mrs Swan says the poor lady cant see anything of her friends who are all of course first class. I shd never like Mrs Tom Horn after that. I think that Queensland journey will be very fatiguing. You shd pause before you undertake another, dear Bob. You are not so young as you once were. I have arranged with the Landlord to stay on here till the 15th. Then I'll drive straight up to Mt Barker. I have ordered Kelly or Walt to meet me on Monday at the Adelaide Station & drive me to Glenelg. *[The two sea-side resorts are only about sixteen kilometres apart and now a short, direct route runs along the coast, but in 1892 such an elaborate zig zag in and out of Adelaide as Joanna had planned was necessary]*. I wd like to see Cav Colley *[Cavendish Colley, their old friend]* before I go away for the summer. One never knows in his state what may happen altho' they say he is much better. I have also ordered Kelly to meet me on Thursday at the Woodville Station & let me call on Mrs Connor & then drive out to Hindmarsh to Mrs Evans, Mrs Bay & Mrs Stewart & Pollitt. I'll then catch the train at Bowden & get down here by dinner time.

Last night I went to the Semaphore to see the 'Shooting Stars'. I had promised — & as my rheumatic pains were rather better I got through Mrs Owen a decent cab & we rattled along, calling for Jessie Hall en route. I can't tell you the horror & consternation I felt when I saw a huge hall empty. There were not ten people below and about ten in the gallery. Oh my heart just ached for them, & they had to get through their funny programme to this display of empty benches. They kept up bravely but Dennis said he was glad Camilla *[his nick-name for Mabel?]* was not there to see it & said he hoped I would not tell her. Poor Dennis — he looked so nice in his dress suit. They have given up the Skirt dance. The girl is not in the style of a dancer at all but she looks nice & modest. Mrs Reed in a scarlet blouse & a tam sat at the door selling the tickets! That is if there had been any buyers, poor devils!

I hope there is nothing in the cholera scare. If there is you'll have to turn & fly away at once, but it is so easy to turn a bad attack of colic & diarrhoea into cholera when people

are alarmed — Careful diet and avoidance of chills are the two important rules for life when a disease like this is about. I don't suppose you are much tempted with fruit in Melbourne.

I suppose I write on Monday to Sydney to the Australian Hotel. I'll send you a wire on Monday as you won't get my Monday's letter I suppose till Wednesday. Tell Mabel Miss Peacock came down to see me yesterday afternoon & is coming again next week,

If people like the sea this is a very nice place to stay. For myself I love not the seaside. Queer, when I was born by it.... Erlistoun and I sit nearly in silence all day, for there is no doubt she is much deafer, but she seems well in body and is very pleasant to me and to others.

And there were others. Apart from the other lodgers at the hotel, some of whom were friends, she was visited by Tom and Molly, who went down to join her at dinner the first night of her holiday, and then Joe Hawker took her children down to the seaside for the day and occasional friends called, as related. She was not, at this moment, particularly pleased with Mary Isobel:

My attentive daughter-in-law has arranged with Sewell the florist that every morning I receive by first post a most choice buttonhole — on a large scale. Today the most lovely carnations have come. The two previous days it was stephanotis. The idea is that Joe & Chris send them.

Joe and Chris were Tom and Molly's two tiny daughters. This whimsy struck Joanna as an insensitive gesture, replacing what had become for her a cherished and personal custom — for it was Robert's habit to rise earlier than she each morning and to pick for her a little nosegay of flowers from the garden to present to her at breakfast. Thrifty Joanna laments:

— It is painful to me to think how much I shall cost them for flowers during the fortnight!

Tell Mab I have a note from Mrs Mecham *[?not quite legible]*. She is settled at Miss Noble's & Captain M. still looking out for work. How does he live in the meantime I wonder, spiritless, good-for-nothing. Miss Fickert went up to Mt Barker yesterday to get the house ready. So Torrens Park will be shut up today. Mrs Kinloch *[their admirable cook]* is to stay a week with George at Pt. Victor. I expect Joe today. She writes me she has had a letter from Jim from the Sound *[King Georges Sound on the south coast of Western Australia, where a lighter brought out and collected mail]*. I enclose the bits of her letter so you will see how the wind blows in that quarter. Tear up when read please. *[He must have done so. There is no enclosure.]* I dont think we need apprehend another Mitchell law relation.

Largs Bay to Menzies Hotel Melbourne
November 6 1892:

I have 2 kind notes from you — one from Bairnsdale the other from Menzies. It was at Bairnsdale the Howitts used to live. Glad you liked your peep of Gippsland. You are managing one way & another to have a very good look around Australia, what with the Kosciusko trip & this.

I suppose you answered Principal Torr's note that I enclosed to you a few days ago. I don't know when they start out. You don't seem to have left Melbourne last night as you told me you were going to do but of course I must send this to Sydney for if you have not started for N.S.W. last night you will certainly be going on Monday. I think you are both enjoying yourselves but I've no doubt you'll be glad to get home. I know I will altho' Erlistoun & I are shaking down better now & my rheumatics are ever so much better. My worst trouble at present is that she pretends to hear. This of course goes down with

strangers but I know right well that altho she smiles & utters some commonplace she has not the faintest notions of what has been said. I dont think she realises she is worse. I wonder if you & Mab will notice it. Perhaps it is because we are living in a badly deafened house that it is so much impressed upon me.

There is nothing going that I hear of. I don't hear a word from the office. Tom and Molly started with a great flourish of trumpets — coming down to dinner the first day. But I have not heard of them since. *[Only four days have gone by.]* But I receive from Sewells every day a magnificent buttonhole. This is my clever daughter-in-law's kindly attention. I would so much prefer a fresh rose sent from the Springfield garden daily. It would be more trouble but there would be more sentiment in it. Tom, I hear, was playing polo yesterday and Molly drove up to Mount Lofty to look at the two houses under offer to them. The Henry Giles' & a man Chance's — I suppose the sauce people. *[In the end they, or rather Robert, bought Wairoa at Aldgate from William A. Horn.]* You say you have abandoned the idea of Brisbane. Its a pity when you are so far on your way but certainly it sounds a long, fatiguing journey. Why make up your mind till you see how you feel in Sydney. Perhaps you'll never have such a good chance again & it only means another week. The weather here is lovely. I am so disappointed to hear of wet days for the race. We had a threatening of a thunder storm again two nights ago, but altho' the lightening was vivid & continuous the thunder was not very loud or near.

The Reids, Isabel & her brother, arrived yesterday in the "Oceana". Poor young things. They arrive to very changed circumstances but they seemed in excellent heart. Ah, what it is to be young!

The Rev. Owen left yesterday. He has gone home to pack up & intends to confirm his recovered health by a voyage to Colombo in "Carthage". He sails next Wednesday, I apologised to him for your having neglected to write the letter to Captain Horne that he asked you to do on the plea of you having so much to do in leaving. He said Hardy had been very good to him in the matter of cabin accommodation so is all right.

It seems there was quite a coming and going of acquaintances. Largs Bay was a taking-off and arrival place for the steamers and Joanna had a dress-circle view of the vessels parked on the smooth horizon and the passengers being rowed back and forth to embark and disembark.

What a change on Colonel Gordon marriage has made! *[This would be the young man who once appeared in their Torrens Park theatricals.]* I sometimes cant believe it is the same man. I <u>think</u> it will last. She suits him better than Joe suited Geo. Hawker. She is more a woman of the world & knows how to manage him. I dont suppose I'll see the Ernest Ayers. I have a note from Mrs Clementson. I cant make out from it <u>when</u> they are coming round but I have written to say that I go up to Mt Barker on the 15th & any time after that I am ready to receive them. Kelly of course must stay down until his wife is better I suppose — so there is no saying when he will be available. Walt will therefore drive me up on the 15th. Shall I take the Victoria or the Wagonet & does Mabel wish her boy to drive up her cart or <u>carts</u>? Some indication ought to be given them of what they are expected to do. Three of them up there this summer ought to justify our driving out in style every day! <u>You</u> at all events will be driven up & down regularly when you are obliged to go to town.

I send you Adams' letter to Bertie. I have written Bertie that we cant get back to England for 18 months at least. Poor boy! He seems thankful for the prospect of a house again — I suppose if he passes his Mods you'll let him come out for his Long & perhaps Mab will go back with him if we are all to follow afterwards.

Largs Bay
November 7 1892: to Menzies Hotel, Melbourne.
(A second letter written the same day)

I have posted you a letter this morning & now I am beginning the one to send to you tomorrow morning as I know you like to hear daily. But you & Mab have all the adventures. I here simply sit & wait for the time to go by till we meet again. I see by this morning's paper that Sir John Morphett *[(1809-92), a founder and pioneer of South Australia]* is laid up with pneumonia. I fear that means that the end is approaching for he is 84 years old. The Strike is over also at Broken Hill. After 18 weeks of useless warfare. But I suppose the dividends will never be the same again from that quarter. Are you going to sell your shares now? I suppose the price will go up a bit.

I am going to Glenelg this afternoon. Its a lovely day. Cool here but I daresay hot in town. We continue to be very comfortable here. I had a fit of the blues but Mrs Gordon came and sat an hour with me. Then Dr Giles came *[Dr William Anstey Giles, recently married]* and sat another and after dinner we had a walk to the end of the jetty with the Colonel and Dr Toll (a very nice fellow by the way) so that before I turned into my bed I felt a little less bluey. Mrs Gordon is a very smart, attractive woman & not at all a fool altho' not in the least intellectually clever. They are going to take Avenel. It would not be at all nice for her to be living here when the baby comes.

Willie Giles left his precious Rita at home. I was rather glad. He says Rita was highly delighted with Mabs writing her about her visit to her people. I hope Mab did not put into her letter what she put into mine about the Jones family. *[Dr Giles and Rita Jones were married in Toorak in 1892. She died in 1907 and the doctor never remarried.]*

I have got my spray of stephanotis and gardenia by this morning's post, Sewell is always punctual. Evans sent me a huge case of roses on Saturday, but as they did not arrive till nearly 10pm. it was too late to give them away to different friends here. So it was rather a white elephant to me — and the roses withered in a few hours. I am going to write & tell him not to send any more. I think I'll ask him for some gloxineas. Erlistoun is out with her Kodak to see if she can take anything. The deafness does not improve. We are indeed a silent pair. We shall get on much better at Mt Barker for I shall not be frightened to speak loud but here one has a delicacy in letting everyone around hear our little commonplaces. She is pleasant enough but of course I shd have been really far livelier <u>alone</u>. Joe is a very wise young lady. She understood it wd be more pleasant for her to have Mabel Marryat *[daughter of their friend Charles Marryat, Archdeacon and then Dean of Adelaide until his death in 1908]* with her here than her poor, deaf sister. Joe & I did not allude to the Jim Mitchell affair at all when she was here on Friday. I think it better to drop the whole thing and I am sure Joe will forget all about him very speedily. I think the thing she dislikes most to have said about him is that he is "Molly in trousers." It is quite true. But Joe says the man is infinitely superior to Molly. Their only point of resemblance, she says, is <u>sweetness of temper</u>. Oh Lord! I am very glad you are not having another Mitchell to keep but we have made a narrow escape.

I'm supposing you are still in Melbourne but I really dont seem to know much about you the last three days. Todd I see is back as well as the Ayers. It is nice that Ernest has been so kind & serviceable to you. I am sure he is a thoroughly good fellow. John Baker & young Colley came & sat half an hour with me yesterday a.m. I was forgetting to mention. I am very fond of Johnny Baker. He keeps a nice, kind unaffected side for his friends altho' to the general public I suppose he's a bit <u>sidey</u>. *[John Richard Baker (1866-1927) and Robert*

Colley Baker (1879-1952) were both sons of Richard Chaffey Baker, the politician, and his wife Katherine Colley. Robert Colley was a godson to Robert Barr Smith.]

I'm ashamed to send you such scrubby notes but unless I begin to discuss books with you & that would be sickening at present when you are so much on the qui vive, there is nothing to tell you but how from day to day the daily current of life flows on monotonously. I shall be glad when next Tuesday comes but the time passes wonderfully & when I hear you & Mab enjoying yourselves that makes me feel happier. I hope you have bought yourself a warmer undergarment for the weather has been very different to what you expected. But it will be hot in Sydney.

I suppose they write you from the office all the business news. That sickening pair R — l and W — e. *[Reynell and Waite]* My whole soul revolts at these two men. The one such a fool and the other such a knave — and such a mass of affectation as well. They are glad to be rid of you I daresay. Try, my dearest, to shake free of them as soon as possible and let us have an old age free of care.

Later: . . . I have been blessing you all day for your thoughtfulness in writing by the "Carthage" but Mab will tell you how you misled me with a telegram. You'll deny it of course as you always do but its no use . . . I have witnesses to prove that you wired to me on Saturday to wire you at Melbourne today, Monday. What do you say to that for high? I'm so glad I'm not beside you to get insulted by yr telling me I am a liar!

You'll be sorry to hear old Sir John Morphett has passed away. Cav Colley told me today Judge Boucaut's son has gone mad & been taken to the Asylum . . . I think you'd better not repeat this till I have heard it corroborated as Cav at the same time told me old Sir John was better — and when I got back to Largs Bay there was the announcement of the poor old chap's death in the evening paper. Cav desired to be remembered to you. He is going to keep his bed for another month yet. I am quite well, dearest love, so don't bother your head any more about me & try to see as much of the country as you can — and enjoy yourselves. There are no servants till the 15th so there's no use coming back till after that — stay your three weeks as originally planned. That will bring you back on the 18th.

You give your offspring a terrible slanging in your today's letter. I could not help laughing as I read your letter for there's not a softer, kinder-hearted old Daddy-Long-Legs in this world than you are, & you were just playing at calling your children by bad names! Certainly they have occasionally given us sad trouble with their waywardness & their donkeyishness, but take them by & bye, dear Bob, they are a very good lot & you & I would feel pretty lost without them. Joe of course is very exasperating just now with this absurd passion for this pleasant Anglo-Indian pauper but I believe myself she is already cured and has no more intention of marrying him than I have of divorcing you! And you've got your precious eldest daughter with you.

I suppose it is the sea air but I sleep ever so much better here than I do at Mitcham. I never wake till about 7 and we go to bed about 11 and I never read. The Carthage is lying outside and I am again seized with a mighty desire to get on board and sail away to the old country. We have to go down the Jetty and see her. The Rev. Owen departs on Wednesday. He is a very strange man that. I cant make him out, but he is certainly blessed with a most sweet-tempered wife. He seems to be pretty well off & that makes me have a contempt for his not paying you back the money you lent him. We are in for a bout of hot weather I think. Its provoking you shd have had rain all this Cup Week as you say. I suppose it is your

first and last experience of Cup Week" *[he went the following year also].* It's a good thing to have seen for I daresay its a wonderful sight. You will have to instruct me where to write to you. Its no use my writing if theres a probability you wont get my letters. I can always reach you with a wire you know.

I fancy I shall not find this week so deadly as last. I see the end of everything. Tomorrow week I'll get up to Mt Barker & I'll be much happier there. And then there will be your homecoming to anticipate. It will be such happiness to get you back again. We are rather too old to be parted now for the day is not far distant when one of us must go forth to return no more. *[Similar dire forebodings had been appearing in her letters for thirty years.]*

It was rather a frightening journey to Glenelg today. The sun was very hot & its a tiresome, dusty road. But I was so glad I got down to see the poor chap before I went to Mt Barker. I hope he'll live — but I think its still doubtful. *[Another faulty prognostication: Cav Colley did not die until 1906.]*

Largs Bay to Australia Hotel Sydney.
Wednesday: (9 November 1892)

My dearest love,

The Prince of Wales Birthday — with all the attendant bother and disagreeableness of holiday-making.

Yet why should we grudge the working class the right of making themselves happy at the sacrifice of the idle-classes comfort? It is fair. It is the everlasting and admirable law of compensation. About Sir John Morphett's funeral. I took no steps as I intended to write Mrs Colley a sympathetic letter & say that as you were in Sydney you cd not pay the last possible mark of respect to her dead father's memory. *[Marian Colley (later Levi, 1859-1931) was Sir John Morphett's daughter, sister-in-law to Joanna's friend Cav Colley.]* This I thought was the best way of meeting the case. I regard sending empty carriages to a funeral as a very empty compliment & suitable only for royalty or vice-royalty. However yr son Tom took you au pied de la lettre & wired to Kelly. There was no possibility of taking the carriage as the big horses are not to be had — so it seems Kelly took down the Victoria. Tom himself went to the funeral from the office. I think, dear Bob, it will be better to leave with me another time the right of deciding matters of that kind, then I can weigh the pros & cons. From yr dutiful son you will only get blind obedience, & sometimes that is not what one wants as circumstances alter cases.

I had yr kind letters yesterday. The last from Melbourne. You have been very kind & attentive. I thank you both sincerely. Please thank dear Mab for the books she so kindly sent me. It was very good of her to think of it. Books are always such a treat to me.

Joe & her children spent yesterday with me & Tom & Molly came in the evening. Joe promised me she wd keep up no correspondence with Jim M. but I am not quite sure how far she is to be relied on for this. If she sees some-one else that will be the best cure for her passion for the impecunious Jim for she is rather inflammable.

Pee Waite is well and in town regularly I hear now that you are out of the way! Contemptible brute! *[The relationship had certainly soured. It recovered in time.]* The Rev. Owen sails today — Mrs Owen looks quite perky & I dont think minds the separation at all. Erlistoun is well and cheerful particularly if we are left alone but our affectionate family will not leave us alone. I'll write you a longer letter tonight. — *[The sign of an indefatigable letter writer.]*

Largs Bay to Australia Hotel Sydney.
November 10 1892:

. . . I dont believe my yesterday's letter wd go till today on account of the Holiday. I shall send you a wire to Katoomba. *[RBS is darting about. At some stage on this trip he climbed Kosciusko — no mean feat at sixty-eight!]* I see I am to write to Melbourne tomorrow, Friday, & not to Sydney any more. That looks like turning your face homeward, dearest Bob & I am thankful to hear it. I long for Tuesday morning to get home . . . This living in public has been very trying to me. Not that there has been anything disagreeable. Far from it. And Erlistoun has been agreeable thank God. Joe & the children come here with Mabel Marryat the day we leave. She comes in the afternoon but I am going to take the advantage of an early train.

I expect you will enjoy the Genolan Caves. It will be quite a new experience. I had a note from Miss Spence yesterday demanding the Fortnightly which I grieve to say I had forgotten. I sent it at once before even cutting it up. She wrote how delighted she had been with Lady Bountiful and that she had given herself up wholly to the enjoyment of it. But after it was over in looking around she could not help thinking what splendid possibilities there were in the audience for an exhibition of effective voting. "The Ruling passion strong in Death."

At this moment your first letters from Sydney have arrived & I have been most interested in your accounts of all the difficulties of your journey & found Mabel's latest friend a very interesting person. I think Mab should try & cultivate her but you are staying such a short time in Sydney you have no time to cultivate anybody. I should much rather spend a week in Sydney than in Melbourne and I'm sure I'd like the people ten thousand times better. In fact I could imagine a month spent at the Australia Hotel a very nice place for us. At any time. Mabel should not forget to call on Miss Mort if possible. I think these Austins who have called are friends of the Peacocks. Mr Austin was once at Torrens Park. I fancy my yesterday's letter and this you'll receive at the same moment. I wd write more but I want to catch the first post.

Largs Bay to Australia Hotel Sydney
November 11 1892
Friday:

. . . I am wondering if this is to be my last letter to you at this time but I suppose if I write again on Monday to Melbourne . . . As you say Mab will be closeted with her tailor for some hours there. Poor Mabs! I was sorely distressed to hear of her sufferings. These attacks when they take her are very hard on her but fortunately she has them seldom. I got your wire about the G.E. Nolan caves *[sic]*. I am glad you were interested in them. They must be most wonderful. Even I, with my horror for anything subterranean feel I would like to see them. I think the Australian must be a very nice hotel but personally I should not like to be so high up. Visions of the Royal Hotel Edinburgh 30 years ago would crop up. Do you realise that you & I have really undergone the horror of a night escape from a burning house? No matter that it was quickly got under & came to nothing. The terror of it was just the same. I think we make very little of this experience. Many would have woven strange romancings & exaggerations out of it.

I went yesterday on my calls at Hindmarsh & Woodville and Kelly as I was leaving said "When you are writing Mr Barr Smith will you kindly say that I attended to Sir John Morphett's funeral." Mrs Kelly is still about. I sent a message to Walt to meet me at the

Adelaide Station at 10 o'clock on Tuesday morning. I hope you'll address my letters to Mt Barker now. I shall be glad to get home altho' I've no fault to find with this hotel which is most quiet & comfortable.

Mrs Christy Bagot came again last night & sat with me till past 11. I was just dead with fatigue & sleepiness but Christy was playing billiards below & she had to wait. *[Joe Hawker's sister-in-law Eleanor Bagot and her husband were then living at Largs Bay.]* As she cd not help seeing my utter weariness she at last said she'd go down & see if she cd find her truant man. We got him out of the billiard room but I grieve to say it was in a genuine state of Tom's "exeploshion" that he amuses us with on Sunday nights. Poor Mr B spoke with difficulty & was evidently half-seas over. He said "Hello Mother. I thought you went home long ago." So he went off with her saying he would come back & go on with the game. I don't mean to say that Christy is a drunkard. Very far from it I daresay but this constantly spending his evenings here drinking & billiard playing & going home to his good-natured wife at any hour of the night or morning is not good for any man.

I expect Jean & Hew down today. I love my Jean but oh I shd be glad of a few days' peace. I never get it. But they all mean well & I mustn't complain. Molly & her two come tomorrow. I have sent Erlistoun out for a walk. It is such a lovely day. I had a good stand-up fight with her last night & it has cleared the air a bit. We were dining together. She had been in one of her moods. Mab knows them & really got so insufferable that I stopped in the middle of eating my jelly, (it was dark & nobody about) and said "Do you know what I sometimes say to myself? I say 'I'll be damned before I speak another word to Erlistoun again'" — I can tell you she got a fright.

She said that she is quite put out & annoyed with me because I have stayed at Largs instead of going to Angaston & that all the family think her so selfish for allowing me to do so. I said to her "Right. Well do you know that altho I came here for your health, I have stayed on to suit myself & the family do not think you are selfish in the matter but you make me sick with your want of congeniality & utter absence of daughterly feeling to me." She cried a good deal & asked me to forgive her. Which I did. But I can never go away alone with her again. Never.

Miss Fickert is getting on splendidly with the house change. Mrs Kinloch returns from Pt. Victor today. I went to see Mrs Harold Fisher yesterday. She has the most beautiful boy. I'm surprised Mr Fisher had never described him to us. He is a perfect picture of beauty & health. *[The beautiful child was Claude Hamilton Fisher, and his mother, Alice Fisher, née Smyth, was the daughter-in-law of Joseph Fisher.]*

Largs Bay to Menzies Hotel Melbourne.
13 November 1892.
Sunday:

My dearest Love,

This is I suppose my last letter to you. As there will be no use writing by Tuesday's mail when you are leaving on Wednesday. Perhaps you will change your mind however in which case you will wire to me. I am so glad this is my last Sunday & we'll get away home the first thing on Tuesday morning. The weather is very nice, neither hot nor cold. I grieve to see yr bad luck has followed you to G.E. Nolan & you have had rain. I hope neither of you were the worse of your wetting. You complain of not hearing from me. In like manner I heard nothing from you except by wire from Wednesday until last night, Saturday. Of course telegrams from you are worth sending for you have something to say but what is

the use of my wiring every day to you "All well. Everything today the same as yesterday." I have wired three times about Dove's coming lest by any chance one should go adrift *[Mabel's friend "Dove" was the daughter of Archdeacon Dove of Walkerville, and a great favourite with the Barr Smiths]*. Thinking it would be such a joy to Camilla to hear she was going to have her chum. She seems to have got some friends coming in the Himalaya so takes advantage of that. A wise thing to do as she might have to wait a long time for an escort and perhaps her people thought that necessary. Although I'm sure theres no reason why Dove shouldn't travel alone the same as Mabel did. I have had a letter from the Harmonic Society saying I have been unanimously re-elected for the following year as Patroness but I have written to decline. You approve of that don't you? I think my chief reason for declining is that I have been offended with Mr Cottle & the Chairman's wife (Clucas) has never had the civility to return my call. These two things have soured me. I am a very easily-soured person as you know my dearest Bob. Oh how good it will be to see you again! I wont show you any temper for months.

Molly & her two kids came down yesterday. Really that Joe-Joe is an awfully nice, affectionate child. I'm not sure that she doesn't take the cake. Mabel thinks so I know.

The Lady Erlistoun & I have been getting on better since the rumpus. I gave her a fright. When I do get my temper up I am so violent I give everybody a fright. I notice Mab feels the Sydney climate disagreeable. I remember it well but then we were there in the month of February and that is more steamy than November. So you have seen Mr Thoraith *[?]*. He surely is a much over-rated man, I don't suppose he'll be a long liver for I fear he drinks hard. Isn't it a pity Christie Bagot has taken to drinking? Such a nice good fellow, with such a lot of children. *[There were nine. Most of them went to Canada after their father died young in 1899.]* Mr Hawker was going to add 2 rooms to their house here for them but the Broken Hill Strike stopped him. Nellie is wondering if he will do it now that it is over. He bought Nellie this house & gave it to her as a gift. He is a good kind father to them all. They say Sir John Downer *[at that time Premier of South Australia]* gave a most felicitous speech at the Mayor's dinner the other day and pleased everybody. But we are all wondering how the Governor has been a "powerful agent in bringing the Strike to a close."

I'm sorry the Geo Hawkers are coming here to stay. We must knock up against each other sometimes but it will always be awkward. Caleb Peacock *[politician and once Mayor]* & Louie *[unidentified]* came down to dinner on Friday. Fred Braund also. So we had a sort of "barty". But they did not confine themselves to Lager Beer like Hans Brettman's Guests. I had to stand a bottle of champagne & a bottle of White Seal Claret. The same when the Bagots dined with me & John Baker. So my bill will be a big one altho' Erlistoun & I drink very little. *[Did Joanna exaggerate her despair in separation from Robert? People rallied round her, which they would scarcely do if she was in the morose state in which she chose to describe herself.]* Mrs Gordon & Mrs Toll came & sat with me last night. Mrs Toll was a Miss Mortlock. She is a very gentle, pleasant woman & the doctor is a very good sort. He has been very kind to me here. I continue to like pretty Mrs Gordon. But they are a flighty pair.

No word of Mrs Kelly yet. I suppose Kelly will have to be left at Torrens Park for a month. Why not leave him altogether & keep Walt & the boy up at Mt Barker. But there will be more to do in the driving & riding way when Dove comes. Walt will have to board with someone at Mt Barker as we cant have both him and the boy in the house & its better not to begin him. Mrs Kelly not being up of course there's no-one in the cottage. We'll

come over to the Mt Barker Junction so you wont need to go into town. Oh how delightful to get you back again.

A few days later she was back, safe and sound at Auchendarroch, Robert was with her, the proper ritual of the morning nosegays was resumed and all was well and peaceful (we hope), and, of course, the letters ceased. If they seem sometimes fretful it is doubtless because, separated from her husband and from the routine of their companionship, she herself was fretful — and ever anxious.

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1 Katharine Brisbane, ed., *Entertaining Australia* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1991), p. 119.
2 Sir Charles Halle (1819-1895), pianist, conductor, married Madame Norman Neruda, violinist, and toured Australia with her in 1890-91.
3 Walter J. Young Papers, Archives of Business and Labour, ANU.

CHAPTER 12

ADELAIDE 1893-1894

In 1893 Joanna was fifty-eight, Robert was sixty-nine and Tom Elder was seventy five. It was forty years since Tom had first set foot in Adelaide. He had been imaginative, sometimes reckless but phenomenally successful. Now he was failing. Robert, writing from Mt Barker to his friend Forster in Sussex, appraised the situation. It was 5 March 1893.

> It distresses me much to find Sir T. so helplessly defective in his memory. His brain is allright but as he talks to you he forgets what has been said, repeats himself & misses the connexion of events. So too in writing now, he makes a draft for the purpose of reminding him of what he has written & it has happened once or twice that he has written part of the draft twice over much to the surprise & confusion of the recipients. George Elder too has failed & is much altered . . . He hasn't the very great horror of its being known & thought that there is anything the matter with him so you will say nothing about it. He has been a wonderful man till very lately. He is, I think 78 next birthday.
>
> But what say you of Miss Spence? She begins her last letter to me "After travelling 3000 miles & addressing 17 meetings in town & 32 meetings in country districts, the campaign is closed." *[This was Catherine Spence's passionate project for a different method of proportional representation.]* That is the voting crusade. But the world is not done with her for long. She is just starting for America! You will see her at St Leonards probably before you see us. This campaign has not done Miss Spence any good. She speaks well & has been very well received & in consequence has got rather egotistical & self-sufficient. So that tho' she may be a better public servant today she is not such a simple-minded, charming woman. To use a vulgar expression she is rather 'cocky' & likes to talk about herself. Strangely too I discover that when on a platform she is intolerant of any difference of opinion & does not keep calm.
>
> She has done well but has created no enthusiasm as how could there be enthusiasm about another system of voting — and where opposition to her scheme will also be now, and in South Australia for many a day, when it is discovered that the system is only applicable to large constituencies with say 6 members & is inapplicable to small districts with 1 or 2 members. This to me is the cream of the whole thing, but the representation of his little locality with consequent increased chance of wasting public money in local works is dear to the heart of the average South Australian. (8: 685)

But poor Tom! What a falling off was this! Unlike the indomitable Miss Spence he was slipping into inactivity and dottiness. He had recovered enough from his illness in 1888 to spend two years abroad, up and down to Scotland and London and off to Paris and even, while staying with his brother at Knock Castle in 1890, sensible and inspired enough to write to Baron von Mueller, the director of the Botanical Gardens in Melbourne, suggesting another exploring project. Tom's letter from Knock (28 June 1890) referred to an address von Mueller had recently given

to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science which had been reported in the paper:

> The paragraph referring to Geography has revived the interest which I have always taken in Australian exploration and as you say that "talent, enthusiasm and experience" are available at present, I cannot but agree with you that it would be almost a reproach to permit the opportunity to pass for completing what you properly describe as "the main work of Australian Land exploration."You say that this work in the past has devolved on nine travellers only and that space seems left now for only one more Great Explorer to rank with the nine. This being the case I would like to furnish the Tenth Exploring Expedition, and if you will take the matter up ... I will hold myself responsible for funds so that no unnecessary delay will take place.... Being on the spot and connected as you are with the various geographical societies you will have no difficulty, I should think, in engaging parties suited for the task. I am perhaps asking too much of you, but if unable to give me your personal aid, you may have it in your power to put me in communication with some other party or parties who would fall in with my proposal ... (SRG 506/7/1/33 ML)

From this developed the expedition of 1891-92 organised finally by the Geographical Society of South Australia, led by Captain Lindsay and enthusiastically supported by Elder. Drought and quarrels with the leader unfortunately brought it to an untimely abandonment after less than a year, yet Elder, not discouraged, wrote to the President of the Society, "I shall hold out to myself the hope of resuming this scientific and exploring work at a more favourable time ... "

It was never resumed. By 1894 the weight of his illness had fallen cruelly upon Elder and by the following year he had ceased to manage his own affairs.

Sir Thomas seems to have led an enviable life. He had enjoyed success in business beyond most people's dreams. He had travelled. He was generally in the hub of things — a position he liked. He had remarkable health until his blood poisoning — such good health, indeed, that he managed even then to avoid the expected death. He had built and lived in desirable houses to suit his taste. He liked company and besides his many friends he was visited, if he so wished, by any travellers of note who called at Adelaide — and there were many. In his bubbling enthusiasm for his adopted country he would sweep off such unlikely people as the urbane Anthony Trollope to the dry red plains of his outback stations or down into prosperous mines.[1] At Glenelg, where he was the first Commodore of the Yacht Club, he took part in races and gave ceremonial luncheons. At Morphettville he zealously started first to race horses and then to breed them. He was a champion of the Adelaide Hunt Club — and its President. In Parliament he paid his dues to the province which had been good to him, and his sensible opinions, devoid of puff or pomposity, were listened to with respect.

Having made a great deal of money he indulged himself, but had no taste for hoarding and took pleasure in giving. Out of his great fortune he directed huge sums into what he believed to be worthwhile for Adelaide, his adopted town — to learning (via schools and the university); to music; to art; to the Anglican and Presbyterian churches; to hospitals; to charities; to exploration; and quixotically to occasional off-beat causes which appealed to him.

He was generous to his sister's children, whom he looked on as substitute family. In November 1891 he had written to his nephew Tom and to his nieces, Joe Hawker, Jean Giles and Mabel Barr Smith, four short notes in his strikingly forceful handwriting to say:

> I have the pleasure of informing you that I have paid into the hands of Mr Alexander Martin on your account and as a free gift the sum of ten thousand pounds. (TEBS)

Their letters of thanks express their absolute surprise as well as delight, and in 1893 he had another surprise for Tom Elder Barr Smith when he wrote from Birksgate:

> I want you to allow me the pleasure of making you a present of one of my young race-horses and I wish you to accept the "Neckergate" "Hortense" colt which has been christened "Destiny". May his fate be to win a lot of races for you! Believe me, my dear Tom
> Your affecte Uncle,
> Tom Elder. (TEBS)

In 1894 Elder published privately three engaging, well-written pamphlets, about his travels in the fifties and sixties up the Murray and in the Sahara, Algeria and Spain. Presumably they were written some time before the publishing because his odd behaviour by that time signified the early stages of his mental breakdown. But the accounts are so clear and fresh and his telling of them so entertaining that it is a nostalgic reminder of how he had been.

While poor Tom was declining and becoming a recluse, the Barr Smiths were having their last fling at entertaining on a large scale. In 1892, while Robert was President of the Hunt Club, they gave a splendid luncheon to members of the Hunt Club and friends including the Earl and Countess of Kintore (he was Governor of South Australia at the time), and after the chase entertained 500 people to afternoon tea.

In 1893 Barr came out from Oxford for the Long Vacation, mid-year, and his parents celebrated his 21st birthday with a grand ball at Torrens Park. It was enthusiastically described in the Adelaide *Observer* of 12 August (p. 39):

> Mrs Barr Smith had provided an ample supply of that valuable article, the dancing man, and with Miss Lindstrom's full band, and what is acknowledged to be the best floor in Adelaide, a brilliant success was assured. One charm about a dance at Torrens Park is the ease with which the dancing room empties in the intervals. There were chairs and to spare in the long conservatories and refreshment room, whilst many people sat on the stage & enjoyed the brilliant spectacle from there, many of the older of the guests enjoying the drawing rooms with their comfortable seats and pretty things to admire, only returning occasionally to watch the dancing. Mr Bertie Barr Smith was renewing acquaintance with many old friends and it was a great pleasure to everyone to see the family party united once more in their lovely home.

Then followed a description of what at least twenty ladies wore, their colours, materials, flounces and trimmings. After that, Bertie contracted measles and had to put off his return to college for a fortnight.

It had been a busy week of social events for the Barr Smiths — anathema no doubt to Robert. On 7 August, a week before the dance, they had given a big evening reception for visitors to a Science Congress. The distinguished and scholarly guests were entertained by refreshments as well as songs and tableaux from the stage and the inevitable recitations from Mabel. (Among the guests listed in *The Observer,* 7 October 1893, are Dr & Mrs Todd! Jean's suitor, so disapproved of six years before, was now comfortably married.)

Erlistoun had not settled down in Adelaide, and it had been arranged that she should return on the steamer with Bertie and live with the Clazys in Scotland for a while, paying the relations £400 a year. They sailed, a little late thanks to the measles, on 13 September, on the *Arcadia.*

Robert to the Revd Clazy, 5 September:

> Our invalids are now on the fair way of recovery & off on the Arcadia. Miss Hardy accompanies Erlistoun. Bertie shall leave the steamer & go overland to Oxford & the girls

continue on to London by steamer. Less fatiguing. *[Robert asks Clazy to go to Plymouth to meet his daughter and take her to Paisley. Miss Hardy will go to London. Stavenhagen will pay all expenses. Erlistoun is to have money for clothes and pocket-money and is to travel with the Clazys in Scotland, etc.]* We have no difficulty with her of any kind except her refusal to rouse herself, the way she broods over her deafness & her sleeplessness. We think this trip & the stir of your young folks will do her a world of good. (8: 953)

So off they go, and the next month Robert is writing to his other brother-in-law George Elder with better news of Sir Thomas:

Robert to George, at Knock Castle, 28 October 1893:

Tom is wonderfully well. Presumably he is going to Mt Lofty on Tuesday. His doctors advise this & he apparently accepted the situation. The cook has gone up & all arrangements made, but it was so last year & he changed his mind. On Friday I went to see him & our Kinmont said to me "I think we are going to have a battle royal over Mt Lofty as Sir T. said to me this morning — 'No power on earth will take me to Mt Lofty.'"

It is a pity as it is much for his health that he should go. Birksgate is exceptionally hot. I enclose 2 notes of his. You wd not think from them he had any loss of memory but you see it in conversation & he varies. His health is wonderful. He has regular walks & drives every day. (8: 998)

These last letters bring to an end the copies to be found in Robert's letter books. It did not mean he ceased to write letters He wrote regularly every week to his friends and relations, particularly to his children when away from Adelaide. But, his business career winding down, presumably he felt no need to keep copies any more. Alas!

The next month, November, letters appear once more in Joanna's bold hand when Robert again goes off to Melbourne, for the Cup Week races. Tom has gone with his father, and so have Mabel and a woman friend, possibly "Dovey", her great chum. Joanna has chosen to stay at Mt Barker on her own.

Mt Barker to Menzies Hotel Melbourne.
7 November, 1893:

My dearest Bob,

I had your kind long letter this morning. Also one from my well-beloved Mab. To tell the truth I did not for one moment think they'd care for more races than the Cup, the Oaks & the Steeplechase. That wd, I understand, be today, Thursday & next Saturday. They hadn't dresses to appear so often. But I never for one moment meant to dictate to them what to do and am sorry if I have been the means of preventing them seeing Destiny win *[the horse given to Tom by his uncle Tom Elder].*

I am so glad you went to the Millers' luncheon and enjoyed it. They are nice people I'm sure. And I was anxious for you all to see the arrangements etc. of a tip top Melbourne house that you might compare notes and judge if Adelaide falls far short and how and where. We have heard what I suppose are exaggerated accounts of the splendour of Melbourne entertainments. *[The brothers Septimus and Albert Miller and their wives entertained regularly at Melbourne Cup time. Septimus was President of the Victorian Racing Club. Their descendants still entertain at traditional Melbourne Cup parties.]*

I got your telegram Bob, you are always so kind and attentive to me. I suppose it was in the Murray Handicap Destiny ran third but he ought to have been first. Tiresome beast. 'Hope does not to full fruition run' in his case. I am a little out of concert with him. So is

Tom I daresay and out of pocket too I fear. I suppose people often put money on their own horses.

I haven't been down to the village yet. It has been writing, writing all day long. So many arrears. But the mail is off tonight for England so there's rest for a week. . . . I have been writing Mr Douglas today & saying we cannot take the Shooting for next August. I dread inducing you to leave a climate that suits you for the treacherous & unkindly north.

Schatz is lying at my feet as usual. He is a devoted little dog . . . Thybell is putting in the dahlias today. He and his men have been pottering about in oilskins. *[Thybell, the head gardener of Auchendarroch, had to look after three acres of formal gardens and three acres of orchards.]* Joe has just been over sitting with me this afternoon and has gone home to tea. This has been a wretched, dull dreary day. How can I fill out 2 sheets *[she complains as is her manner]* shut up in a house by myself seeing nobody and hearing nothing from the outside world? It is impossible unless I am disgustingly egotistical. Except with Dr Bickle today I haven't exchanged a word with anybody outside these walls since I came back. But I am not at all dull — only I have got nothing to write about.

The girls will have to let me know if I am to write to them in Tasmania and where? I hope they are making up their minds to stay a few weeks and get into the spirit of the place. I wonder if they ought not to take introductions. I suppose you haven't any of you written your names in the Government House books. If Kintore *[the Governor]* was here he would tell you it was insulting to your Queen not to do so. But you and I are not Royalists. There are always plenty of toadies ready to do all these polite things, so independent minded people can afford to let it all alone.

Mt Barker to Melbourne
November 8 1893:

My dearest Bob,

This is I believe, my last chance of writing to you. You will get it on Friday before starting for Tasmania. Oh dear how I am praying for fine weather. I am very sorry to hear of these pains in your leg again . . . I have always made light of your complaints. And then you would get as right as the Banks <u>used to be,</u> immediately after one of your attacks. However, my dearest boy, I don't like to hear of the pain getting severer and you have planted a sting and an anxiety in my heart which I shall not be able to shake off till you get home again. *[She adds that she would have wired Mabel to prevent him going but knew he would so like the little jaunt to Launceston.]*

I have a delightful letter from my darling Mab today. I like to hear of all these people calling on you & I hope you will accept hospitality when you can. It is more gracious to accept than to throw back people's kindness. But you need have no hesitation in declining Lulu's invitation. I don't think that, nice as she is, that spirit of hospitality is in her. . . . Mabel tells me about the rich heiress Miss Walker. I dont seem to recognise the name but I suppose her father was a squatter. Money brings many worries — but I think probably the want of it brings more.

[Joanna says that Joe Hawker is keeping her company and tonight they will indulge in a game of cribbage.] It is a charming game and will while away many dull hours for us both. You see Mab and Dovie dont like games so I have made Joe learn everything. *[They have also been playing Pachisi and Reverse, but Joanna says Joe beats her terribly at that — and she goes on to discuss the coachmen Kelly and Walt.]*

They will get terribly demoralised I fear for I have not given them a single order since

I came up. You must make them sit up when you get back. When you drive I have absolutely made up my mind that one of them always is to accompany you. The girls must do without driving the days you go to town.

No more letters from Joanna have been preserved from this time.

In March 1894 Robert's faithful friend and manager Frederick Stavenhagen died in London. The weekly letters to Stavenhagen were the source of many interesting pieces of gossip in Robert's letters. At the end of the year Robert suffered another blow when Adolph von Treuer also died. That same year Maurice Price, to whom Robert wrote at regular intervals, died. And Arthur Blyth had died in England in 1891. All these were confidants of Robert who was now suffering the bleak prospect of a prolonged old age with his contemporaries fallen all around him.

Despite Joanna's attempts to protect him, Robert disappeared on a yet more strenuous tour the following year when he went off to inspect the properties in inland Queensland, which had been badly affected by drought. Her first letter is from Mt Barker to Adelaide on the eve of his departure.

Mt Barker
14 May 1894:

My dearest love,

Tom tells me I can send you a line by Mr Pegler so I gladly avail myself.[2] Tom came up yesterday and to my great delight brought Jo Jo, a sweet, affectionate little girl she is and her dainty little presence helped to brighten our sombre house . . . Tom took me out to walk in the garden and was very kind and nice . . . Do you know what I think you ought to do? Instead of buying Elder Park or Cleggets? Let Morphettville go to Auction and buy it. *[Morphettville was where Tom Elder once had his famous racehorse breeding stables. The stud horses were sold during his illness in 1888.]* You will then lay up for yourself an occupation for the rest of your life. Profit there won't be I daresay but you have come to the point in your life and financial condition to do without that. You have plenty of money at present lying unused. Buy the stables mon ami and secure for yourself and your sons a legitimate means of enjoying the pleasures of the Turf.

You will likely infer that Tom & I have been talking over this. Well really & truly very little was said above & beyond Tom expressing his regret that all these fine mares shd be practically wasted — and he did say that it wd be nice to have the place in yr hands. That was all. But I have been thinking a good deal lately about the desirability of a ploy for your old age now that we are not going back to Europe. And I cant think of anything better than this, my dearest Bob. . . . You have always been so unselfish. You have had very few pleasures in your life.

[She goes on to describe various calls she has made:] I went to Mrs Dunns' afterwards. She is a very godly woman but she also said that things had been worrying her lately & she felt inclined to use bad language! I felt so much more inclined to her after that. When I got home I found both the croquet lawns in full swing & Mrs Rossi had arrived with a very remarkable-looking young lady friend of hers who has been singing at the Continental. She wished me to hear her sing. She nearly blew me out of the house. It was a voice for the Town Hall. A very fine organ certainly.

They all stayed very late. Mr & Mrs Beresford turned up & pretty nearly all the village acquaintances — all expressing much regret that my very charming Mondays were coming to an end. Hee Hee!

[The English mail had come and she encloses an extract from Erlistoun's letter describing Bertie sitting at the Clazys with two pint bottles of beer before him.] Now this must put the Clazys to

expense & the young Clazys dont drink. So it disappoints me Bertie had not the good taste to knock off that cursed beer of his in the circumstances. Alas, my darling, our youngest son is disappointing to say the least of it . . .

Mt Barker to Imperial Hotel, Brisbane
May 19 1894:

My dearest love,

I was made very unhappy last night by the receipt of your first letter from Sydney. You had been feeling the cold so much in travelling and you were evidently feeling wretched with want of sleep. If instead of drinking tea you had taken a good strong glass of whiskey and water at Albury you would not have been seized with diarrhoea and obliged to rout poor Mr Yates out of his bed. Your letter vexed me so. I have not been able to sleep properly. I am so terrified you may get an attack of bronchitis I almost feel inclined to start off for Brisbane on Monday in case you should be ill. Why you have taken this quite unnecessary jaunt God only knows. I am sure at seventy you might content yourself at home and leave this kind of fatiguing travel to the young.

I am hoping your next letter from Sydney will be written in better spirits. I shall write to you every 2 or 3 days & send all my letters to Brisbane so that you can get a budget on your arrival there. They will be writing you from the office too with all kinds of news that will interest you most. Why did you not ask Mr Yates to go on to Queensland with you.? Its so dull travelling alone.

Everything is so quiet. We are preparing to go down next Thursday & have our Schatz Competition Party on Monday. *[Schatz is her cherished pet dog, and the competition was apparently for photographs.]* I'll write you a description of it. We are to have 45 people at it — refreshments in the shape of jellies, meringues etc. My last kick-up this summer. Mrs Byard *[the local doctor's wife]* is coming to lunch & she and Dr Bickle are to be the judges.

I have put a pound in the Totalisator on Mostyn & one on Lady Rose for the Birthday Cup through Frank Downer who wrote me these were the two favourites so perhaps I'll win some money.

I have been busy calling all the week & driving daily. The consequence is my foot has become very puffy again & inflamed so I am going to keep it up all today. It has been so well I thought I was quite out of the wood. Old Tom Paltridge says he is so disappointed not to have had a long crack with you about politics & things in general. They say Tomky *[Tomkinson]* has no chance & Mrs von Doussa of Hahndorf told me yesterday Cohen has been spending <u>thousands</u> over the election. Surely that must be a slight exaggeration. *[Lewis Cohen, the eight-times Mayor, put up for the Legislative Council in 1893 but failed. Elected to the House of Assembly, he remained in parliament until 1906.]*

<u>Sunday:</u>

Thank goodness I got your second Sydney letter last night & it cheered me up as you seem to have got no cold & are in better spirits. You say I might have written to Sydney as the office people did but you are forgetting you said yourself it would not be worth-while. I did write you but Tom advised to send it by Mr Pegler which I did so I do not deserve the little slap. We did not realize your making country excursions to Bulli & at this time of the year. But it is still mild in N.S.W. I suppose. I am just sitting shivering today. I cant get walking just now with my weak foot so that my blood does not circulate.

Miss Fickert came back last night *[after preparing Torrens Park for the annual move]*. It is very clean & spick & span she says. You'll be glad when you see it again won't you my dear

old boy? *[and off she goes again —]* I miss you every hour of the day but its no use sitting down and crying for you left me of your own accord. Well I must say I miss you as much now as when we were younger and I'm sure my affection for you is as strong as it ever was. With you alone in the world I could be happy. I always have just you first. Every other tie is subordinate and can be done without.

Dr Bickle has just sent me the returns of the candidates. I enclose it but will wire you the result finally tomorrow to Brisbane as it may interest you. The mail will be delivered on Tuesday morning so I'll be able to make my next letter more interesting with the English news.

I prophesy you'll go to hear the Rev. Sandy Smith preach today but Mab says no you wont. I dont expect you'll get much hospitality showered on you by the Smiths for the late Miss Jolly seems a stinkard by Mab's account. You will see by the enclosed cutting you are considered a generous gentleman. *[Robert had given £100 to the Hahndorf Institute and had helped the Mt Barker Institute also.]* It was copied from the Mt Barker Courier into the town paper.

I am leaving in the bank here a balance of £66.12.8. Mr Moore has made it all up for me from my cheque book as the other book, the bank book, cd not be found. I think you have locked it up for I never had it.

An application came from Mr Jefferis' Congregation to help pay off their debt. I wrote we had grown out of touch with Mr Jefferis of late years and did not care to help. Plain speaking — or rather writing. But they are such a pack of snivels these Congregationalists and Jefferis himself is a canting bounder. *[James Jefferis (1833-1917) was an influential Congregational minister, lecturer and journalist, and advocate of federation. In 1894, after various other appointments, he returned to the Brougham Place Church, renovated the building and almost extinguished the large debt.]*

I am posting you a novel which I think will interest you. It is called "Mr Bailey-Martin" *[by Percy White, 1894].*

Monday:

Lying in my bed this morning I realised you will be as long away from me on this Queensland trip as if you had gone to England! The only difference a drop of comfort being I can reach you in ten days instead of 30. But the separation is the same.

I am going to finish this letter after the people are gone this evening and post it. I'll tell you all the news and who gets the prize, or rather I should say prizes for I have opened my last Broken Hill dividend and got something for each one so there need be no envy, malice or uncharitableness.

Yesterday was such a quiet day. We all liked it & got plenty of reading.

Tuesday:

English mail arrived. Nothing new. I enclose 1 or 2 letters. *[Not in Joanna's envelope now.]*

Yesterday's function passed off very well. The judges gave Mr Clough 1st prize, Mr Moore 2nd, Mr R. Paltridge 3rd. Miss Madge Cockburn 1st, Mrs Gething 2nd, Nora 3rd. I was sorry about poor Nora seeing she is trying to make her living by photography. She was fearfully disappointed. The rain poured down so we had 45 people all inside. By dint of comic songs & a very profane recitation by Mr F. Paltridge & refreshments we whiled the afternoon away.

Today we are packing up as hard as we can. The van comes from Cocking tomorrow. I send you the English letters under separate cover. I have a wire from Tomaso just now to say I can wire you to Charleville today so I shall send you a word of love my darling. Now

I have no more. I enclose cuttings *[there are none]*. Poor Sir John Bray. *[Sir John Cox Bray became ill while serving as Agent General in London, and died near Colombo on his way back to Australia.]* How hurt he & his wife must have felt about Playford I hear he is in a very bad way. And Edmund Yates has gone. Who will edit his "World" now he has left it for the next?

Mt Barker to Rockhampton
May 23 1894:

My dearest Love,

I sent you a letter to Brisbane yesterday Now I hear I ought to have addressed it to Rockhampton. Not that there is anything to tell you *[her usual prelude to a gushing fountain]*.

I got a letter from you last night from Sydney which showed me you were not at all in hilarious spirits. I think what is wrong is you are beginning to realize you are getting old and for the first time in your life you are experiencing the weaknesses & wearinesses of body & spirit that comes with age. I have felt these depressing wearinesses for some time but you have been singularly free of them. I shall be so glad to get you back to my arms, my dear old Love. Believe me it is wiser to stay beside me.

I'm glad you went to the concert & liked Belle Cole. You wrote Mab a very funny letter. We all laughed over it. I fancy you'll get happier when you go driving through the country — you always like driving & when you get in tow with Niall *[J.M. Niall, later manager of Milo]* it will be more cheerful. I hear Mr Pegler is rather a dull dog.

The van with our goods & chattels went down this morning. My next letter will be from Torrens Park. I have unearthed another novel by Geo Moore which I shall take down for you. I had stowed it away on the top shelf of my press to keep it out of the way for George Moore is certainly our English Zola — always dealing with the sordid and unclean, but in a very strong and striking manner.[3] To you and me who have traversed the gamut of passion, it can do no harm and they are interesting — but I should not like the girls to read them. *[Mabel was thirty-three, Erlistoun twenty-six!]* Altho I always have the feeling that Erlistoun knows as much of the soil side of life as we do. I sent you her last letter to read. I cant say I liked it. She seems to be consumed with self — & I think she will miss those Clazy boys sadly when she comes home & finds no domestic adoration. I also posted you to Brisbane a letter that came to you from Bertie. Tom opened it in town & sent it up to me. He seems very delighted with his Caterin win. I wonder if Mostyn will have any luck on Thursday. You quite misunderstand me my dear husband if you think I dont like & sympathise with your taste for racing. I think it is wonderful (but very wise) that you have kept yourself in check all these years & I do hope you'll get some pleasure out of it now. In the first letter I sent you I urged on you the propriety of taking over Morphettville altogether provided it goes to auction. But probably if you can persuade Tom *[Elder]* to keep it on you wd get as much pleasure out of it & less expense. I fancy you cd induce Tom to keep it on & then you cd pick & choose your beasts to take over & race. I shall see Tom one of these days. I'll go over on Saturday.

Joe & her children came up from Largs Bay on Friday & are spending the day at Torrens Park. I have just written to Tom to send an apology at the Levée for the Consul for Sweden & Norway *[this Consul was Robert]*. Perhaps you remembered before leaving.

Betty's birthday is next week *[Joe Hawker's daughter]*. I forgot to remind you but you can attend to it when you get back. Try & get some good Queensland opals. The good ones are not very cheap but they can be made into all sorts of pretty things. The girls would like one I'm sure.

The weather is very wintry. I dont sleep well. I am always shivering with cold. I expect it will be warmer below.

Torrens Park
Saturday 26 May 1894:

My dearest Love,

Your ways, like the Heathen Chinee's, are dark & incomprehensible to me. To come all the way from Bundaburg to Melbourne without a night's sleep seems to me suicidal. I hope sincerely you wont do it. Much as I shd like to have you home yet rather than that I wd do without you for another week. I know how it will be. You'll knock up after it. I am going to risk this reaching you at ... *[illegible]* altho I'm dubious & I hope you will listen to reason & pause in Sydney for a good night's rest before attempting Melbourne.

Yr last letter was very interesting. I thought you wd go & hear the Rev. Sandy preach just for the sake of Auld Lang Syne. You had not seen the late Miss Jolly when you wrote.

I have just this moment read your letter from Brisbane written after you had seen Mrs Smith & the photo you enclose of her makes her really a very good-looking woman & not nearly as old as I thought the Rev. Sandy's wife would be & I see you have been rather pleased by her. Mabel still holds that she is a disagreeable & inhospitable woman.

I have also this afternoon since beginning this letter recd your telegram from Adavale from which I gather you have had a very difficult journey from Charleville & I am again filled with anxiety about you & wish so much you had never undertaken this Queensland trip. I begin to wonder if I'll get you safe home & am very miserable tonight. I have wired you to Adavale *[adjacent to Milo and Welford Downs]*. I am so ignorant I dont know if you are likely to be better off or worse if you go on further. But I must not dwell on my own feelings dearest Bob. You say in this wire you are wearying for me. Not nearly so much as I am longing for your return. Only one half of the time is gone.

The Frank Grey Smiths are over *[Francis Grey Smith was Chief Manager of the newly established National Bank of Australasia in Melbourne]*. I sent Mabel to the York yesterday to call as I thought you wd like me to show them some attention & we asked them to Sunday middle-day dinner. They accepted & I am going to send the Victoria for them tomorrow. I hate entertaining in your absence but I know your feelings for the Grey Smiths is very cordial. She seems to be in very delicate health.

The grandchildren all over today. A nice little lot. Bobbie is a bit off — so sore with his teeth but Joan has quite recovered & is now a most amiable & delightful child & very beautiful I think. Chris is looking delicate but has also got over all her temper & humours & I certainly would not & could not see seven sweeter or more attractive children. This is a comfort isn't it? *[The original five were now augmented by Jean Giles's first daughter, Joanna, born 1893, and Molly Barr Smith's first son, Robert, born 1894.]*

You remember my two violin-playing girls? The older of them suffered from some internal malady. That can be borne & she is told an operation & I am going to get her attended to at my expense. I feel it will be a real good works if I can get her back to health. She doubts the wisdom of it but she is willing to run the chance. Oh what misery there is in the world Bob! Sorrow, disease, death & yet I am sorry to be so nearly done with it. You & I have had very good times & if I can only get you safely home again. I have tremendous longing for you sometimes & I dont think you'll accuse me of coldness when I get you back again heart of my heart.

Tom *[Elder]* & Bayley *[Tom's valet (or keeper)]* came today — Tom looking splendid in

health & tolerably sensible. I said something about Bob & he said "do you mean Bob Barr Smith" so I said "Yes". "Bob" he said, "He's a very clever fellow that" & asked us to go to luncheon with him on Thursday. Well we are going & I will try & persuade him to come to lunch with me the day after. He was praising Bayley Whyte very much which was a mercy.

Mostyn's behaviour seems to have been unaccountable in the Birthday Cup. I enclose you a note I got from Frank Downer this morning. He is a funny fellow. I fear lots of our friends lost money on the horse. Tom Giles insisted one must take the good & the bad with horse-racing.

Lord Kintore called this week before we came down. Molly & Tom are dining at Govt. House next Friday. I have not had a talk with Evans yet. I am letting Kelly go away on Monday. It is kept as the Queen's Birthday. Kelly & I never get on awfully well together. Your billiard room looks so comfortable. How I wish I saw you sitting there in your easy chair smoking your pipe!

Joe has just taken possession of her new house today. She thinks she will like it. It is a pleasant position she thinks.

Sunday:

How I miss you today dear Love. My first Sunday at Torrens Park & not to have you! The day is heavenly. I said to Collins as I came upstairs "How I wish my old man was here to enjoy pottering around this lovely day." To which he replied "Well we all do miss the master greatly & wish he were home".

I have not yet been up to the Graves. For one thing I cant walk too far. My ankle bothers me greatly & I cd not even get into the hansom comfortably. Besides Kelly has to go in for the Grey Smiths. I am going up on Thursday when I go over to Tom's & I'll put my pots & glasses in with a trowel. I dont like going up without you my dearest husband.

After all I am not going to risk this letter to Rockhampton because your telegram says on 23rd May "Do not address Brisbane. Write tomorrow & Friday to Rockhampton. Next week write Sydney."

Schatz is quite happy here again & knows the way about. He sleeps in his basket in the old way & I have taught him to eat his meals behind the pantry door as I knew it wd just break your heart or produce a rupture between us if I ever were to be caught feeding him on the dining room Morris carpet! You see how considerate I am of your feelings! I have not a bit of news for you Bob. I never go out. I see nobody for I am not Chez Moi till the 4th June.

Torrens Park to Rockhampton
May 28 1894:

I have been much exercised *[whenever not?]* as to what I shd do about posting my letters. I wrote you a long letter yesterday intending to send to Rockhampton but you wired me to address your letters this week to Sydney. So I was afraid to send it. This long letter therefore was posted to Sydney. Well, today comes a telegram from Adavale to say you have no telegram from me on Sat. the 26th. Mabel despatched it. I have been miserable since because I can see you have had a trying journey from Charleville & I am so horribly afraid of you catching cold. Oh Bob I am wishing this beastly Qld trip was over & you were back to my arms. Never shall I permit you to make this sort of journey again.

I hope you are speaking the truth when you wire "Alls Well". Tom & I had quite a wrangle over the posting of my letters. He laughed at me beginning so soon to write to Sydney but you know Bob your telegram was quite explicit. On the 23rd you wired 'Write tomorrow & Friday to Rockhampton. Next week write Sydney'.

Well darling this is what I have done but in case Tomaso shd be right I send this short note to Rockhampton in the hope you may get it. You will find longer letters awaiting you at the Australia Hotel, Sydney & for goodness sake stop & sleep one if not two nights. Am miserable over these long night journeys.

The weather here is lovely. Evans and I are wearying for you to be pottering about the place again. He is planting out the long bed with pansies today. He has a few beautiful new varieties. The voices of the children playing comes across the place today. It is a general holiday & I suppose some Sunday school has the paddock. Mr & Mrs Grey Smith dined with us yesterday middle day. The son who was dying when you were over in November lingering till March. A fine, big young fellow in Dalgetty's. Took a chill & developed dropsy at once which took six months to kill him. A strange & horrible malady. I never heard of such a case before.

The mail is at Albany so I'll be able to send you my English letters to Sydney. No honours have come to S.A. this Birthday except to Sir Henry Ayers. The Grand X. He is now G.C.M.G. instead of K.C.M.G. I daresay he will be gratified.

I was called away here to see Mr Whyte *[Tom Elder's valet]*. He does not approve of the new butler, & as far as I can see he & Mrs McPherson play into each others hands. I think it will be always necessary for us to back up Bayley against them for the housemaid, who has thrown up her place, has told him Freshwater's plan is to make himself very necessary to Sir T. and eventually to get Bayley's place. Did you ever hear such cheek?

Torrens Park
May 29 1894
Tuesday:

. . . I shall send you a few lines again today — altho' nothing has transpired. I do long for a letter from you but I suppose I shall get no more. The English mail is due tomorrow . . . I have been over to Prospect today to call on my old friend Isabella Wemyss' *[of Kirkaldy's]* daughter Mrs Honeyman. She has come out for her health & is so much the better for the voyage. Bob is much improved & I think for his mother's sake you must forgive his disreputable past. He has got such a pleasant amiable wife & a little boy. The sins have been sins of the flesh & I believe the woman tempted him. He has not a bad heart.

I have scarcely seen Mabel or Dovey today. They have been visiting both morning & afternoon. As I drove home tonight I felt exceedingly lonesome. If my old man had only been standing on the doorstep how happy I should have been!

Where are you tonight I wonder? Still at Milo I suppose. Oh this weary, weary Qld journey. This has been the worst separation we have ever had for I get no letters. Letters are always a help.

I saw Mrs Hay in her carriage as I drove through the town. Sitting as usual on the wrong side. All these years she has never picked that up! How unobservant she must be. Her handsome daughter seated alongside her looking very supercilious.

Mrs Agnes Hay, the daughter of old Dr Gosse, had become very grand after her marriage to the wealthy widower Alexander Hay. Her reputedly beautiful daughter, Gertrude Gosse Hay, was to marry, a few years later, her distant English cousin Dr Philip Gosse, thus becoming Gertrude Gosse Gosse.

I went to call on Mrs Tate. She was a Miss Charsely & her sister Mrs Maitland wrote me from Madras begging me to be kind to her. She was not at home. The town was looking rather gay I thought or is it the contrast to Mt. Barker. We are going to Birksgate on

Thursday to have luncheon with Tom. I hope it will be one of his good days. Richard Baker called yesterday but I was not to be seen as I had resolved not to be at Home till the 1st Monday in June. It was a pity I did not see him as it was kind of him to come so far but I never knew he had come till night. *[Richard Chaffey Baker, politician, barrister, Attorney General, lived at Morialta.]*

Just now I was called downstairs to see Tom & Bayley. Tom had suddenly taken it into his head when they were driving home to come in to see us. So I think he must be feeling cordial again.

He spoke of Peter Waite. Said he was an awful blackguard, and had swindled him of thousands! Tomorrow is Betty's birthday *[Betty Hawker, about to be seven]*. All the grandchildren are coming to spend the day. What they have chosen to do for amusement is to dress up so we will go over to the Theatre & they will get at the Stage wardrobe & have some fine fun I daresay.

I dont hear any news from the office *[she complains, and goes off into more intricacies as to where letters or wires should be sent* — "to these outlandish parts" — *and signs off]*.

Torrens Park
Thursday May 30 1894:

I have tonight your letter from Charleville. I hope you did not carry out your threat of keeping close to Mrs Pegler in the event of yr camping out! I hope you had not to camp out as I fear the nights, even in tropical Queensland, are cold at this season. The largest half of your absence is now over I fancy. It is three weeks tomorrow since you left & I suppose you are keeping to yr original plan of being home on the 18th. I fear you will come back very done up but with rest & good feeding you will soon pick up & be as fat as ever again.

We have been at Birksgate having luncheon with Tom today. He was not very agreeable. Bayley has had a row with the coachman who has been guilty of great rudeness to him. You see Bayley must keep his own with the servants else they would master him altogether. Tom sympathised with him but you know what Tom is "Everything by turns and nothing long". The man now wants to stay & then Bayley's position will be worse than it was at the beginning. I am strongly of the opinion the man should go. He is a good man at the box but he is not a nice fellow & growls a great deal. I tell you all this in case the thing may be put to you later.

I am sending you in separate cover some English letters.

Life is most uneventful but you will be surprised to hear the girls have persuaded me to go to a day performance of the Mikado at the theatre tomorrow. Jean & Joe are going with their respective children. It is a matinee chiefly arranged for children & as I am getting into my second childhood it is suitable I should go to childish amusements. I have taken the Stage Box. "Such absurd extravagance!" I hear you exclaim. So it is. But the theatre is the only amusement I care for.

Yesterday we had Betty's birthday. A cake and 7 candles in the middle of the dinner table. They all behaved beautifully and that little Joan Giles *[one year old]* is going to be the pick of the basket.

I drove down today after leaving Birksgate to Ashley, Wattlebury Road, Joe's new residence. It is really a very nice little house & the rooms are good, well-proportioned & a very pretty garden. She is comfortably settled & does not seem to regret losing Catton House.

Old William Brookman is dead — von Doussa's father-in-law, born in 1812. Sir Jenkin

Coles *[auctioneer, politician]* has been negotiating with Henry Dutton for the sale of Anlaby for agricultural purposes. 65,000 acres at £2 per acre & is willing to take 4 years Govt. Bonds in payment. Could you not dispose of the Hummocks in this way mein freund?

Sir Thos McIlwraith has been very grumpy to the newspaper interviewers who boarded the "Austral" to take language with him. He absolutely refused to tell them anything about himself or his plans. *[McIlwraith, in 1893 Premier of Queensland for seven months, returned to England in 1895 under a cloud of financial debts.]*

Saturday *[June 1]:*

...We went to the theatre yesterday & enjoyed Yum Yum and Pitty Sing very much. Only I wished you had been beside me darling Bob. I expected a wire from you yesterday. I sent you one to Blackall. Perhaps you have been delayed at Delta & have been obliged to make your arrival at Blackall a day later. Surely I'll get a letter today else I'll begin to be anxious.

We have had a good deal of rain here this last week. Consequently the earth is freshening up & the garden looking beautiful. Mab is over to Prospect to bring Mrs Honeyman for a week's visit before George & Tom *[Mrs Honeyman's husband and son]* come. They come this day week. Today is the first Meet of the hounds. The President Mr Tennant gives the opening entertainment at Myrtle Bank. You were asked to the lunch & Mab & I were invited to the Throw-off.

Tom is coming with Bayley to luncheon today & I am curious to know if the sight of Mrs Honeyman, his old friend Isy Thom's daughter, will kindle some spark of memory in his poor belated mind for she is very like her mother in face, speech & manners.

I have a letter from Grainger today *[Henry Allerdale Grainger (1848-1923), politician and journalist, later Agent-General; not the architect who built Auchendarroch].* He has been very very ill poor chap. Indeed I fear his best days are over. However he is still game. Expects a fiery day at the House on the 12th & is to drag himself there to look on for he cannot do more than that.

Mab has an offer to get admission to the ladies gallery in Parlt. but she has no emancipated proclivities thank the Lord. She is not one of the girls who demand a 'wanderjahre'.

We have got Mrs Humphrey Ward's new novel "Marcella" also Crawford's "Katherine Lauderdale" & Mr Dickens' new novel. All these have come out in the mail in the MacMillans Yellow Paper series.

Afternoon:

At 12.30 Bayley arrived to tell me Tom refused to come. Wasn't it mean of him? I was so angry and don't think I'll ever demean myself asking him to a meal again. And he would not let Bayley stay either. The coachman has apologised to Bayley & asked to stay on — so that breeze is blown over and Bayley's position strengthened. Bayley is an ass but he is a decent & obliging ass so we must make the best of him.

...I had your wire thank goodness at dinner today from Blackall & I'll hear again on Monday from Barcaldine.

My foot is all right now except that I can't walk far & I have not yet been up to the children's graves. I cant walk so far and Kelly has taken the hansom to be done up. I dont like to order out two horses just to take me up the back road. Oh I am so wearying Bob for your return, but I see you are quite happy away from me. I suppose I need not expect you till this day fortnight. Katie Wemyss is with us. She is a nice girl & I think we'll like having her. I enclose Erlistoun's last letter to me & Mrs Hunters *[they are not enclosed]*. You may be interested in reading them. I feel very forlorn tonight.

Molly has been over. She & Tom dined at Government House last night. They have a man cook at £1 a day who gave them a magnificent dinner.

Torrens Park
June 7 1894:

This is my last line to you at Sydney — written chiefly to express my shuddering sympathy as I read of your perils in the Oak Swamp. I got your Milo letter yesterday and felt quite upset to realize all you have been passing through. My dear old Seventy Years, you will be immensely proud of yourself for having done it. It is a wonderful journey for a rich old man to make. Theres no goad of necessity to urge you on. I fear there is a little goad of self-conceit about it. You want to know and say you've done it! A little bit of bravado just as climbing Kosciusko was! Well all's well that ends well — and you are really so hardened by exposure to the weather that I almost think you might risk England and a Scotch winter now.

No news here dear Bob. We have still Kate Honeyman with us. We all like her very much. We expect John *[Thorley]* and George *[Barr Smith]* immediately for his little annual visit & I suppose if you have luck we may expect you back on the 16th or 19th. It must either be the one or the other. I have given you all the domestic gossip in my various letters which you will find awaiting you at the Australia, Sydney. Everybody has been writing to you there.

Fred Braund is coming to dine and take the three of them to the theatre tonight, I shall have a solitary evening, and also tomorrow night as they are all going to an evening party at the Swifts. They were dining last night at Jeanies so I am getting used to solitary evenings & I like them except for my nervousness & fear of burglars which I cannot shake off but increases I think. There has been nothing going on politically here so you are not missing much in the local papers.

Would you believe it I have not been up to the graves yet. I am going to walk up this afternoon & then I wont go up again till you are back.

You will likely be buying "Marcella" to read. If so bring your copy home as I have lent mine before I cd get it read.

And now my dearest love you will have so many letters to read that it is a positive kindness to you not to spin out this valedictory epistle.

There are no more letters from Joanna to Robert at this time; he must have survived all perils and returned to his loving wife as usual.

George, who was expected for his annual visit, seems to have been happily settled at Victor Harbour with John Thorley. Several times a year his parents visited him, often for George's birthday, 11 October, the day after Joanna's own birthday. George's birthday was celebrated in style in 1894 and the proceedings recorded in the local paper, *The Southern Argus*:

On Thursday evening Mr George Barr Smith's enjoyable birthday party came off and 100 guests assembled at the prettily decorated hall and spent a most pleasant night.

The ball began at 8.30, and during the evening there were twenty dances and various songs rendered. At midnight toasts were drunk to Mr George, Mr Thorley and Mrs Barr Smith. . . . All the ladies were dressed in their finery, silks, taffeta and lace abounded.

In *Settlers around the Bay*, Laube remarks that

. . . Mrs Barr Smith, George's mother, often came to visit, and was remembered as a kind woman, standing on the back doorstep at her son's, talking to the Aborigines, the 'poor

> things' whom she would ask the maids to make sandwiches for. She would also give the natives money, although the law frowned on this practice, as the money tended to be spent on 'pottanjie' (whiskey.) (pp. 133-34)

There are further glimpses of George at Victor Harbour, and of Joanna, in Laube's *They Were Trimmers*. The son of one of George's housemaids reminisced in the 1980s:

> "Mother said she (Mrs Barr Smith) was very kind. Once when one of the Rumbelows had lost their boat in a storm she found out and said she wanted to see him. She told him to go down to Port Adelaide and pick out a new boat and have the bill sent to her. . . . Sometimes Georgie would lose his temper with Mr Thorley and give him a thump on the back.
>
> 'Oh Georgie you've broken my back!'
>
> 'Well it serves you right, you should behave yourself!'
>
> Then he would jump out of the window and go off down to the Hindmarsh River and half the town would be out looking for him Once there was an earthquake and old Thorley was hanging onto the window sill in the bedroom and hollering. Georgie jumped out and went off down to the Hindmarsh." (p. 18)

Georgie and Mr Thorley seemed to be settled permanently into the Victor Harbour scene, but it was not to be so.

The last group of letters from Joanna in the Mortlock collection were written when she again stayed behind during another of Robert's expeditions to the Races in Melbourne. This time he took the train with his son Tom. Mabel and Erlistoun were both in England, Joanna was at Mt Barker, and it seems that Molly and the children had gone there to stay with her.

Mt Barker
Nov 6 1894:

> My dearest Bob
>
> It was indeed good of you to write me such a nice long letter. I am interested in all your doings & am glad to hear from Molly that you are going to the Wilsons on Wednesday. What a funny thing of Lady Clarke to show you her grandeur by the light of a taper. Why did she not light up her ballroom and let you have the full benefit of everything? A servant could have done it in 5 minutes. You & Tom seem to have been pleased with her however & she seems to be a thoroughly kind woman.

Lady Clarke (1851-1909), philanthropist, was the wife of Sir William Clarke, landowner, stud-breeder and philanthropist, the biggest landowner in Victoria. The house was Cliveden, a Renaissance-style mansion they had built in East Melbourne (now incorporated into a hotel) which became the focal point of upper-class Melbourne social life.

> I am interested in the Langs. Young Simpson came & stayed with us at Tighnant. He was a nice young fellow & the family had been kind to Bertie. They are St. Andrews people I think. Its interesting to be married to Andrew Lang's brother. Andrew himself is a verra clever child. I have been reading "The Green Carnation" *[by Robert Hichens]*. Its a skit on Oscar Wylde *[sic]* & another young aesthete — rather smart writing. I think you'll be amused by it. Molly is deep in "The Potter's Thumb" *[a novel by Flora Annie Steele]*. Not that we get much time to read except in our beds. The kiddies take up a lot of time. They are looking all the better for the hills change. Bob is splendid *[Tom and Molly's new baby, Robert, born September 1894]* and the dear little wicked Chris lies very near my heart. Joe is always good. I am very proud of my Barr Smith grandchildren. Molly vexes herself sometimes thinking they are extra wild but you and I, Bob, have never been accustomed to very

well behaved children have we? Molly and I always get on splendidly together. She is a dear, good girl and I think son Tom is a lucky man.

I hope you don't keep Tom dangling after you dear Bob for he is young, you know, & has his friends & amusements & cant always care to have "an old papa". He likes to go away golfing. Why not go to Geelong and call on my old friends Bobbie Bell & General Downes your old admirer. *[Downes, retired, had been commandant of the military forces in South Australia during the eighties.]* Dost thou not remember the Cow Robina.

Many thanks dear kind love for your present of the writing table. It is the joy & comfort of my life. But it is very dear. It is £24. However it will make my remaining few years *[there were to be twenty-five years yet]* more comfortable than they wd otherwise have been.

I have finished my letter to Mab. It is yr turn next week. Dont forget to leave cards at the Clarkes & Gardners before leaving. I am sorry you are suffering so much on your poor old points. I too have been miserable for two days with rheumatics. Scarcely able to go up or down stairs. Its a weary thing to grow old. I shall be glad to get you back. I miss you at every turn. Tell Tom he must come on Tuesday & stop a few days with us for I wont be seeing him at Xmas this year.

Mt Barker
November 7 1894:

My dearest love,

I see I am not to hear from you again. Thank you for being so kind in writing. I dont think Molly had a letter from Tom today but when you go away for the entire day writing is impossible. The Cup disappointed. In fact the whole racing meeting has been a disappointment. I hope you & Tom didn't plunge on the wrong beasts.

Life at Mt Barker is a dull, monotonous level. But flat as it is, I'd rather be here than in Melbourne. When one gets old there is no loneliness like the loneliness of crowds. In youth one assimilates the crowded life around, but alas, when old it is impossible. I think you have been rather dull this time in Melbourne so probably you wont go another year.

Molly & the kids are well & we hope to have Tom here on Tuesday morning. We shall be waiting for you on Saturday at Nairne *[near Mt Barker, where the Express train from Melbourne stopped for passengers to alight]*.

You will have a pleasant time today & Tom I suppose enjoys his golfing days greatly. Tomorrow will be another day of excitement with races. I think you should call & write your name at Govt. House before leaving. But it were better for you not to run a risk of meeting Kintore. And really Bob I dont believe its worth while to take any bother in the matter — of course Tom is different & I think both he & his wife like to be on good terms with the Governor. So dont put him off it.

There is nothing of interest to enclose to you today. The post only brought begging letters. I really think it might be worth while clearing out of Adelaide and making a home elsewhere if only to get rid of begging letters.

[Adds:] I think Kintore is coming over on Friday. I shall be up at the Station for you but I'll keep on the inner side as I dont wish to see or be seen. So shuffle out with your traps without looking about for me. You dont want to go down to town I suppose.

Did the Barr Smiths find Lord Kintore too much a royalist? The Colonial Office's selection of Kintore, according to the historian Hodder, indicated a change of British colonial policy: in place of military, naval and high civil officials, the Government had now decided to send out a member of the nobility.

At any rate, with this prospect of a pantomime of elderly people at the little Nairne Railway Station the letter finishes, and it is the last one in the collection.

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1 Anthony Trollope visited in 1872. In his *Australia and New Zealand* he wrote, "I went about two hundred miles north of Adelaide ... I cannot say the country is attractive to a visitor" (2: 209).

2 Augustine Pegler, Manager of Welford Downs, the Queensland cattle run, later incorporated with Milo. They were both huge stations mainly owned by Robert and Tom Elder. At its largest Milo had 500,000 sheep, 25,000 cattle and 1,200 horses. Pegler, a minor partner, moved to Welford as manager with his wife and nine children. Two more children born later were christened Welford and Milo.

3 George Moore (1852-1933) borrowed realistic techniques from Zola and other French writers, particularly Balzac. By 1894 he had published three novels, *A Modern Lover* (1883), *A Mummer's Wife* (1885) and *Esther Waters* (1894).

CHAPTER 13

INTERLUDE 1895-1899

The letters from Joanna to Robert ceased in November 1894 and Robert's letter book came to an end the same year. What happened to all the characters in them? Despite Joanna's constant foreboding of approaching death, both she and Robert lived on to venerable old age and, according to all accounts, lacked not in wit or enterprise. Nor in tragedy. Their lives did not wind down, after all their upheavals, to a tranquil old age.

Soon after the letter warning Robert to avoid Lord Kintore at Nairne Station Mabel, then holidaying in England, became engaged to Fred Braund, who had been appointed to the London office of George Wills & Co. She was hardly swept off her feet, as Fred had been a visitor to the Barr Smiths' houses for fifteen years and the two were great friends, and both passionately keen on horses and hunting. After an Adelaide wedding in 1896, they settled into Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, from where Fred could get easily to his office in the city.

Bertie had begun in 1891 to read Honours History at Magdalen, but failed his finals in 1895. He continued on in England, and his big sister, arriving back in London as a bride, observed his shortcomings with alarm and wrote to her brother Tom, 7 January 1897:

5 Carlyle Mansions, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea

> I have seen Bertie twice this week. Once on Thursday to meet the Adams *[Frank Adams had recently married and was visiting London on his honeymoon]* and on Sunday he came to supper, but I don't think he is well — and his nerves seem all over the place. On Thursday night he ate or drank nothing and said he felt ill. On Sunday he was in good form and his depression gone. He is so uneven now-a-days poor creature and so often complains to me of the blues.
>
> You better not tell father this. Erlistoun writes me not to dilate on Bertie as it upsets mother — I didn't like not to write of his arm because Bertie told me the doctor said it was slight paralysis — and I didn't know how it might end — I have a theory now of my own as to what it was — but as I've nothing to go on I may be wrong & I hope I am. I am going to watch his health very narrowly now for it doesn't content me — and I am often uneasy about him — poor chap. (TEBS)

By 22 July she was writing more uneasily still:

> I am dreadfully concerned about Bertie — He has failed badly at Oxford again and as soon as the exam was over disappeared into space and no-one can trace him — that is three weeks ago.
>
> The life he is leading is simply awful — I am not exaggerating for I know. It is impossible to drag him out of this existence. God knows I have done my best and have had a terrible year of revelations and anxiety.
>
> Even with Mr Adams' help we can do nothing and I am at my wits end. I fear to ask

father to recall him to Adelaide because I know he would disgrace you all there and I do not think it would be right to make father's and mother's old age so unbearable as it must be if Bertie lives at home.

I have kept back everything from father all this time because I cannot bear to pain him — and as long as I saw the faintest hope of pulling him up myself I have kept it back from you — But I cant pull him up — and if it goes on his health will be wrecked.

What am I to do? Can you give me any help? There is no use your writing to Bertie — he wont even open your letter — I have never had an answer to one of mine — He pays no bills — I had two tradesmen here last week demanding payment of bills running since '94 & '95 and the week before a writ was out against him for not paying a bicycle — Mr Anders *[Henry Anders from Elder Smiths' office in London had replaced Mr Stavenhagen]* says our name is being disgraced — I authorize the payment of everything that comes under my notice. I could tell you much more Tom but what is the good — Dont on any account let father know what is going on — it would be such an awful blow to him.

Ever yours
Mab. (TEBS)

His parents could not have been unaware of Bertie's failings. Records show that in 1892 he passed Greek and Latin Literature; in 1893 he passed Holy Scripture; and in 1895 he passed a Final examination for some aspects of Law. That is all the success he ever had and he would have had to pass two other groups to qualify for the lowliest Oxford degree. In 1894 he was photographed in rugby and cricket teams, but was being gated for not attending roll calls or chapel. All Robert's and Joanna's high hopes for their son, from whom they had parted tearfully when he sailed off, aged fourteen, with the tutor Adams to get a good Scottish education, had dwindled to this.

Meanwhile in Adelaide Sir Thomas Elder had become so fuddled mentally that Robert, after consulting George at Knock, wrote to the Chief Justice, Samuel Way, about how best to handle the situation. It was decided that several learned gentlemen should visit and dine with Sir Thomas in order to assess whether or not they considered he was mentally capable of managing his affairs. Conversing with him around the dining table they concluded he was not. He had become senile. One of the group whose opinion was sought was the newly arrived Professor of Philosophy, William Mitchell.[1] As a result it was decided that the Court should appoint an outsider, a man of spotless repute, to deal with his affairs. Robert considered that it would be undesirable for him to be that man or anyone from the office; he wrote to George Elder, 13 May 1895:

The person appointed should be someone of known reputation, a man entirely unconnected with all that has been done in the past and not pecuniarily interested in anything that may be done in the future.

Discussing this with Mr Justice Way we agreed that no more suitable person can be found than Mr J.L. *[later Sir Lancelot]* Stirling. He is a man of undoubted honour & a strong will & good common sense. He stands well here being Chairman of Committees in the Upper House, whilst that office existed, — Director of several companies, knows squatting matters in which Tom is so largely interested, is young (say 45) & very healthy and a good life which in Tom's case is important for I think he will outlive me. (TEBS)

Again, the Barr Smith assessment of longevity was at fault. Sir Thomas died in March 1897, and that same year in July George died at Knock, having been predeceased by his wife Jane in October 1896. George's last letters to Robert commended him for his handling of Tom's senility.

Knock Castle
11 September 1896

> Your whole procedure both as regards my brother's person and his Estate has been most thoughtful and judicious and has my entire approval . . . *[He continued, after dealing with further details of Tom's properties, with his own vehement summary of world affairs]* . . . the conduct of the European Powers in regard to Turkey is simply infamous, but the people of Britain are as much to blame as the Government. We are . . . utterly degenerate. What with our cricket — our football, our golf and our tennis we are utterly emasculated — when we should have had meetings in every parish both in England and in Scotland, denouncing the Sultan and calling on the Government to put a speedy end to this tyranny — not a finger is raised, but the people are as unmoved as the Denizens of the Opera or the Singing Salon.

Thus he thundered on about Europe and Turkey until the end of the letter, concluding:

> We are all well I am thankful to say — we have staying with us at present Jane's niece Mrs Charles Rattray and Constance Elder.[2] In 10 days or so Jean Kerr is to pay a second visit to Buxton to recruit for the winter.
>
> Present our best love to dear Joan and to all your family colonies and believe me ever your most affectionate George Elder. (TEBS)

This was a vigorous letter in his own clear hand-writing for a man of eighty. And all seemed well at Knock. But only a month later George again took up his pen to Robert (29 October 1896):

> My dear Bobus,
> When I last wrote you I little thought that my next letter would contain the astounding intelligence of my dear Jeanie's removal by death. This dreadful event was sudden and unexpected but the shock it caused was somewhat modified by the knowledge that she had for some time suffered from some affection in the region of the heart and that she possessed a presentiment that her call might be a sudden one, and that she must be prepared to meet her God, and it is comforting for her friends to know that few could be better prepared for such a solemn event.
>
> (TEBS)

With Jean's death and those of Tom Elder and his older brother George in 1897, Robert and Joanna lost their three closest relations and friends in a span of only nine months. It was a bleak time for them.

After that they faced an altered stage. By his will Tom Barr Smith inherited Birksgate where he and Molly and their growing family now went to live, and Mabel was bequeathed The Pinnacles, for which, as she was living in England, she had no use.

While Mabel hesitated, wondering what to do with her windfall, further changes disrupted the Torrens Park household. The wayward Erlistoun had met her match — that same newly arrived Scots professor who had been one around the dining table to pass judgement on Sir Thomas's mental state. William Mitchell, thirty-four, from Aberdeenshire, had accepted the chair of Philosophy at the University of Adelaide in 1895. Recuperating from tuberculosis in London, he hoped that the Mediterranean climate of Adelaide might give him a longer life. (It did. He lived to be 101.) Just before Willie boarded the ship he learned that his appointment included also the Chair of English Literature.[3] He and Erlistoun met, fell in love and were married in January 1898. She was thirty and he thirty-seven. They went to live in North Adelaide, and so did Jean and Tom O'Halloran Giles, who had added to their family with a third child born in 1897, a second son christened Robert. (Their house was in Brougham Place, and is now Lincoln College.)

Now there were confusingly three grandchildren, as well as his own son Robert (Bertie) named after the patriarch Robert Barr Smith: Robert Hawker (1889), Robert Barr Smith (1894), and now Robert O'Halloran Giles (1897).

Tom and Molly also added to their family. A baby, Mary Isobel, was born in 1898. (Later came the fifth and sixth babies Tom and Ursula, 1904 and 1907.) Tom, the father, worked seriously at the office, and gladly carried out regular visits to the stations. He was honourable and respected and painstaking, in most ways a model son. He loved horses and racing just as his father did. He took up polo as well as hunting and racing, and he and his wife entertained on a grand scale at Birksgate and had a harmonious and busy life together. But he was never the devourer of books and lover of classics his father was, and there was a reticence between them which Robert regretted. In a letter to Mabel, 12 April 1906, he spoke of a close father-son relationship, commenting "I never had such a relationship with my sons — I have myself to blame but I got on better with my daughters" (Booklet D, TEBS). Certainly all the care lavished on Bertie brought the parents scant reward. He returned to Australia without his degree and went dutifully up to the distant stations like Milo, but did not care for that sort of life. He never married and lived with his parents when in town.

Joanna had spent years attending to the needs of her family, her children and her bachelor brother, especially during his long illness. Now released from those ties and distressed about Bertie, restless in the big house and missing the cheerful companionship of Mabel, who seems to have been the favourite, she became convinced they should try once more the possibility of living in England.

Moreover Joanna Hawker, who had travelled to England to see Mabel, had met and been charmed by an engaging Irishman called George Acres who boarded the ship in India. George worked for the Indian Railways and his proposal of marriage and her acceptance further broke up the family. Joe returned to Adelaide, but arranged to leave again with her two children to marry the Irishman in London, and go with him to India. Joanna wrote to her friend Mary MacKillop (who had been elected Mother General and now lived in Sydney) in 1899:

> My very dear Mother,
> I think you know how very near to my heart was your election to the Mother Generalship and therefore you will understand the delight it was to receive Sister Annette's wire announcing it. I did not know where to address, otherwise I should have liked to wire my joy at once. It is the one place for you in life, my darling friend, and now you will 'spend and be spent in God's service' and the whole community will rise and call you 'Blessed.'
>
> I wish I could have seen you ere I go hence, for oh dear me, I am going away full of misgiving and the future seems dark. My life is so much changed lately, that my husband is quite sure I need a complete change. I get very down on my luck sometimes and in fact there does not seem anything now to live for. You will say this is a very unhealthy and unholy attitude of mind. I grant this, darling Mother, but there's something fundamentally wrong with me — in mind and heart. Perhaps I'll be able to write a better account of myself from England. I think what is wrong with me is that I cannot fit into my altered family relations — and I am discontented and unreasonable. Joanna Hawker and her children go to England with us. She is going to marry again and has made an excellent choice this time.
>
> . . . Won't you write me a little word of goodbye? I go to Melbourne on the 13th to take the 'Oceana' there. Farewell, my beloved friend. Ah if things could have been different!

It was a party of eight. As well as Joe and her children there was, inevitably, Miss Fickert, and they had also brought along Bertie for the first leg of the trip. The cherished younger son whom they

had directed so anxiously to brush his teeth regularly, to avoid wearing vulgar Doolette suits and to be industrious at school and fair-minded in sport, was now a bachelor of twenty-seven and a problem. The ten years of school and university in Britain, interspersed with several delightful holidays with his parents in that island where he could indulge his pleasure in hunting and shooting, as well as a trip back to Adelaide to celebrate his twenty-first birthday with a grand ball, had not promoted the serious and industrious side of his nature.

But Joanna and Robert loved him and hoped for the best, and whether the few days at sea were a reward or a trial they were at first delighted with his behaviour.

When they left Adelaide Joanna was depressed and restless — did not know where she should live — on this side of the world or the other. The family all scattered and going their own ways, she yearned for the old world — though Robert had no longing for the treacherous winters, the fogs and rain which threatened his bronchitis. They made no plans to rent apartments this time — they would relax in hotels, Joanna decided, and make up their minds about a future home.

Now follow a series of almost weekly letters from Robert to his son Tom, which have been kept, and a very few Joanna wrote to Tom — for although she was writing weekly to her daughters these letters are not preserved.

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1 This dinner was recalled and recounted by Sir William Mitchell to the author in 1959, sixty-three years after it took place.

2 Mima Constance Elder (1858-1940), eighth child of Alexander Elder. Later married the Revd Charles Patey.

3 "I boned up on English Literature on the sea voyage out," Sir William Mitchell told the author sixty years later as he recalled this event. His full title was Hughes Professor of English Language and Literature and Mental and Moral Philosophy.



Photographs from personal birthday album compiled by daughters in 1883.

Mabel Barr Smith
as "Summer"
(family collection)



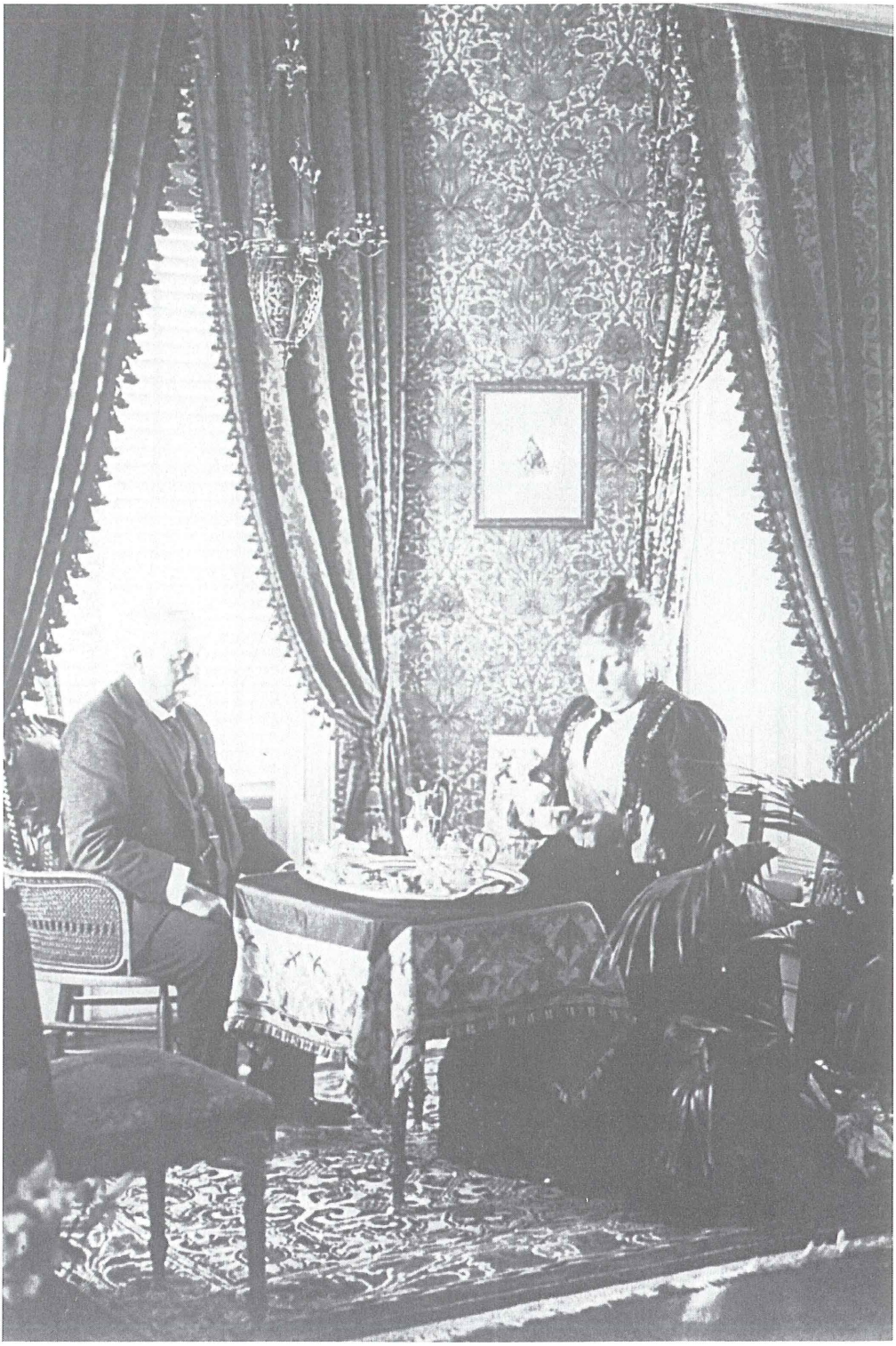
Erlistoun Barr Smith
as "Spring"
(family collection)



Jean Barr Smith
as "Autumn"
(family collection)



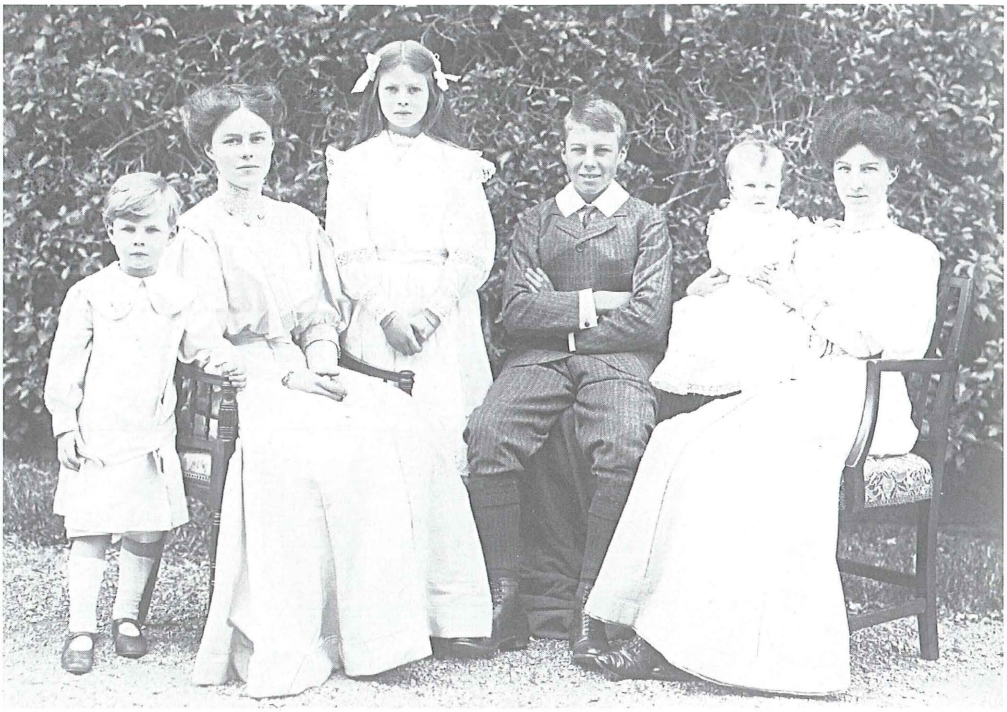
Joanna Barr Smith
as "Winter"
(family collection)



Robert and Joanna Barr Smith taking tea at Auchendarroch, about 1897 (ML)



The Barr Smith Family at Torrens Park in the Conservatory, about 1893.
Standing, L to R: Miss Fickert, Bertie Barr Smith, Tom Barr Smith, Molly Barr Smith holding Christine, Tom O'Halloran Giles.
Seated, L to R: Joanna Hawker, Betty Hawker, Joanna Barr Smith, Jo Barr Smith, Erlistoun Barr Smith, Mabel Barr Smith, Robert Barr Smith, Jean O'Halloran Giles.
Front, L to R: Bob Hawker, Hew O'Halloran Giles (ML)



The grandchildren (children of Tom Elder Barr Smith and Mary Isobel Barr Smith), about 1908. Tom Elder, Christine, Mary Isobel, Robert, Ursula, Joanna Lang (family collection)



Bertie Barr Smith on 'Silverthorn' (family collection)



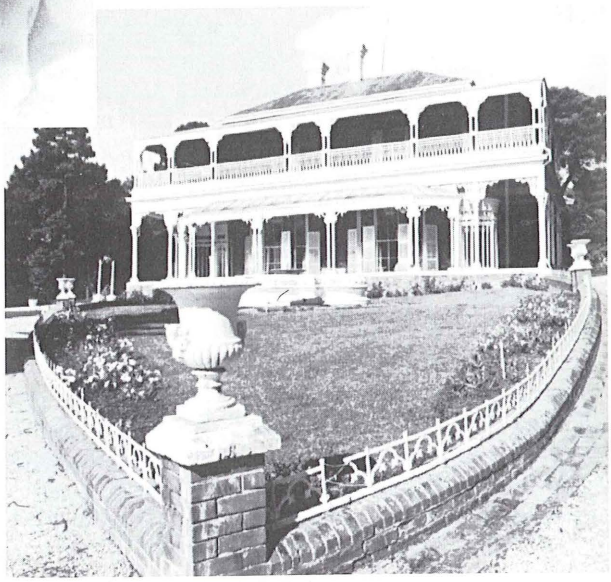
Erlistoun Mitchell, Miss Kate Marryat, Jean O'Halloran Giles, Robert O'Halloran Giles, Hew O'Halloran Giles, about 1901 at home of Erlistoun (family collection)



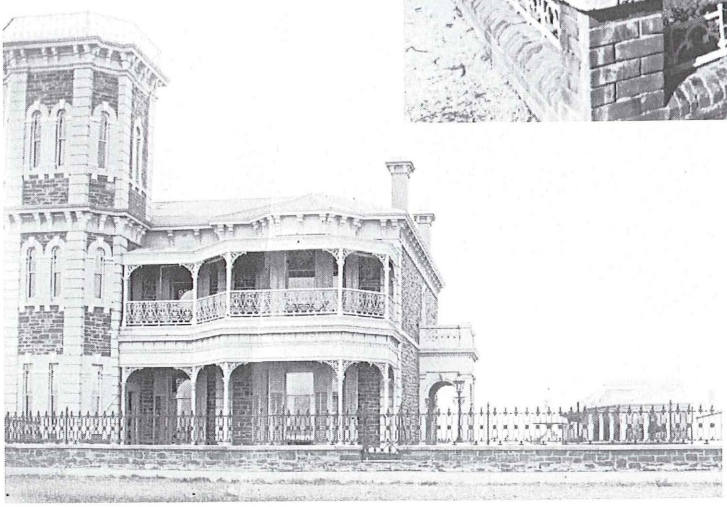
Erlistoun with her children, Joanna and Mark Mitchell (family collection)



Tom Elder
(family collection)



Birksgate
(family collection)



Seafield Tower at Glenelg
(family collection)



Tom Elder Barr Smith
(family collection)



Mary Isobel (Mitchell) Barr Smith
(family collection)



Four Generations: Robert Barr Smith, Robert Gosse, Tom Elder Barr Smith, Joanna Gosse (family collection)

CHAPTER 14

THE LAST VOYAGE 1899

During this trip to England, where they were to make big decisions about their future, Robert and Joanna arranged to share the letter-writing to their two daughters and two sons in Adelaide. Only the letters of both parents to Tom have survived, and are reprinted here (all from the TEBS Collection). They show how restricted Joanna was in expression to her son — unlike her expansive, emotional correspondence with her husband. They also show something of Robert's quizzical, amused style. He comes out of these letters, foibles, prejudices and all, as an endearing, patient though meticulous old man. He was then seventy-five and bronchial. Joanna, sixty-four, was plagued with rheumatism. They both had their wits and strong opinions.

Joanna to Tom
P&O s.s. Oceana
23 March 1899:

My dearest Tom

I dont think I said anything about it in my last but there came on board at Adelaide a delightful case of scissors & all the etceteras for work or for the dressing table & Miss Fickert says she thinks it was sent to me by you. If so dearest Tom, many, many thanks. It will be of the greatest use & comfort to me, but if I am appropriating it and if it was intended for somebody else what's to be done? I wish I felt quite sure. I am using it anyway.

We are about half way now to Colombo. We are to be there with good luck on the morning of the 29th. It is a wearisome voyage. No nice people on board & it is beginning to be very hot & the cabins very stuffy — but we must suffer and be strong. Joe gets on very well. She teaches Betty in the morning in the saloon & Bob goes along to the second class to get his daily lesson from Mr Paton who they say is a very nice fellow indeed. Your father is very happy. He has made friends with all the ladies on board and goes about among them in the most insinuating way. He does not seem so chummy with the men. You see he does not smoke now-a-days and Watson has told him that the first thing he has to do in London is to go to get the little growth on his lip removed. *[Archibald Watson (1849-1940) was Professor of Anatomy at the University of Adelaide. "An erratic, histrionic genius", according to the ADB.]* He says it is an outgrowth at present but if ever it became an ingrowth it would kill him. I think your father got a turn, but since he had one of these growths cut away by Dr Giles in Angas St. he has never, I notice, ventured to smoke. I know it is all right now but I must say I don't feel quite at ease about the possibility of anything malignant being set up in his life. I think it can all be traced to his habit for many years of driving through the hills with a gum leaf between his lips. Some infinitesimal insect has wrought the damage. You had better take no notice of this in writing unless he writes about it himself. And Watson will tell you there is no need for anxiety.

I am going to write to Molly so I must keep my news for her as in that way you get it too. Ah my dearest boy, I never cease regretting that we have left you for it is somehow borne in upon me that we will never get back again.

Your devoted mother

J.B.S.

Robert to Tom
On the Line
27 March 1899:

...To begin with we have had a wonderful passage so far for weather.

The Bight was unusually quiet, and the sea since has only had a ripple. The mother has had no nervousness except I think the night in the dark. Her rheumatism however has become more acute & she finds the bunks very cramping and has had two days of what she calls "the blues". However she seems all right now and Joe and the children are as right as "rivets". Miss F, I need hardly say, is as Bossy as possible.

The ship's company of passengers are a quiet lot. I do not know the names of most of them. Our chief "pals" are Miss Carstairs sister of your mother's old Pal "Bobby" Carstairs whom you may remember and who married a Mr Bell. *[Joanna and Robert were married at the home of Mr Bell, South Yarra, in 1856.]* Her daughter Miss Mary Bell who is cousin to George Russell of Domino fame. The Countess Metternich, a very beautiful young woman & her friend Miss Ryan, a charming Irishwoman — Mrs J.H. Johnson's eldest son, Charlie Angas's cousin, whom the mother and all of us like, and Mr Bickford who looks us up occasionally.

That's substantially our surroundings.

There is also the Earl and Countess of Seafield.[1] I dont know how he came into his title & fortune, but they tell me he was lately a clerk in the Auckland Post Office and she is the daughter of some little body in New Zealand. Such is the "on dit". Apart from that they look very feeble & I have not spoken to either of them. I hopes I know my place.

As all our friends (except Johnson & Bickford) Miss Carstairs & Miss Bell leave at Colombo we shall be a small select party soon.

I have gone frequently to see young Paton in the 2nd Class. He is teaching Bob Hawker 2 hours a day — which is good for both of them. He seems to me a nice young fellow. He is going home to Cambridge. He gave me the address of his mother's brother who is, he tells me, a "don". But the college, Sidney Sussex, Cambridge I have never heard of. He is to take his uncle's advice as to the college he is to enter — but he thinks it will be St Johns. I recommended Trinity to him as being the college with the better name outside.

So much for ourselves and our environment.

Then follow directions to Tom as to how to treat letters coming in to the office for Robert — the Private Letters, the Begging Letters — and a telegraphic code to be used; he goes on to speak of the Great Eastern Steeplechase at Onkaparinga, the racetrack at Oakbank, and thus on to more troublesome news:

...speaking of Onkaparinga reminds me of Bertie. I wrote you a kind of panegyric upon him from Albany and in truth he not only behaved most kindly but he seemed to overcome all his habitual longings for a skinful of something strong. He took a pint of ale at luncheon, and no longer drained the glass to the dregs, throwing back his head and pouring it down in toper fashion.

When I wrote to you I really had begun to hope he had begun to control and dry himself — but alas! on the day we were arriving at Albany I went for something into the smoking room for the first time and there I found Bertie at 11 with a large glass of stout in front of him, smoking a pipe. This explains the pints at luncheon. During the day he seemed to his mother and me he had been at the Bar enough times to affect his look and manner but not fatally. Indeed when I offered a shore friend something he replied "No thank you. I have already had a drink with your son"!! I mention all this because it shows the three or four days absolute sobriety which made him a changed being — his look and manner — did not last. He will want most careful watching. He does not seem to have a particle of backbone and self-restraint. You may well think of this case in connexion with Rob *[he refers to Tom's five-year-old son Robert].*

I think I said to you I now recognize the fatal blunder we made in sending Bertie to a University away from control and domestic influences. It is dead against him that we are not beside him. And if we remain more than a year I think I shall have him home for a visit. You will however be very watchful and you will report faithfully what you see and think — for it is a question of life or death. The "Hall Mark" of University is very fine — but it is dearly bought if accompanied with the "Hall Mark" of the whisky bottle.

Robert to Tom
Passed Cape Guardafui in Oceana 250 miles from Aden
4 April 1899:

Dear Tomasso

A mere line to say we are getting on all right.

Colombo was beastly, we had rain. Otherwise the passage has been a complete success in every way.

The mother is allright but suffers much from rheumatism.

I have absolutely nothing to tell you.

P. Bourgoyne the Australian wine merchant came on board at Colombo. He professes to be now quite immensely rich. Bandies his "thousands" about as if they were cabbages. Stevens, the man who wrote "With Kitchener to Khartoum" is on board but we have not made his acquaintance as yet. I am not making up to many people and of the most I can say I do not know their names.

I gave Chatwood, the Champion Bowler of Victoria, a note of introduction to you, suggesting you should drive him down to Morphettville when he is in Adelaide some 8 months hence. He is a perfectly respectable man and in the Butter trade and wont disgrace you in any way — he is as steady as "old time". You will see what you think of him, it is only necessary to give him that one drive if it is convenient for you to do so when he is in Adelaide. I dont think he understands anything except Butter and Bowls. I have only come in contact with him in discussing Bowls and Bowling Greens. I have given him notes to W.J. Creswell (Adelaide Oval) and to Mr Pascoe the Secretary of our Bowling Club. *[Creswell was a friend and correspondent; he wrote a long letter to Joanna in 1900 about travels in China (TEBS).]*

Yesterday was the Great Eastern Steeple, won, I hear by a horse called "Silverthorn" *[owned by Bertie]* but the report is not yet confirmed. What a jolly day you would all have, and your poor parents sweltering & panting & staggering in this confounded steamer. How much the best of it you all have on shore!

'Oh why left I my home?

'Why did I cross the deep?
'Oh why left I the land?'

Today 45 years ago I left Plymouth for Australia in search of gold. I feel inclined to apostrophise the metal in the words of the Scottish poet, Leyden —

'Slave of the dark & sixty nine
'What Vanity hath brought me here ?
'How can I bear to see the shine
'So bright — when I have bought so dear' — and so on.

With me, it has been all disappointment & defeat.

With love to Molly & the children to Bertie & the office from your affectionate
'Father'

Robert to Tom
Paris, 21 April 1899:

This is the last day for the mail, and I write to you tho' really start without knowing anything I want to say.

I am sadly at fault, and up a tree, from not knowing what I have already said to you or to Martin *[Alexander Martin, Robert's secretary]*.

This is where a letter book comes in — you dont repeat yourself so often when you can refer to it.

The Paris visit has not been so great a success as we hoped for the children. Betty has been in the house for two days — and Bob is today in bed with a bilious attack to which he was helped I fancy by swallowing an indefinite number of siphons of lemonade, and going regularly through the various courses of our 7 o'clock dinner.

Mabel is at this moment on her journey from London, and I am glad to see the Times today makes the Channel smooth. We get the Times of yesterday at breakfast next day — it is on my table when I leave my bedroom, that and also the Evening Standard.

I see that Australian horses have been first and second in the city & suburban yesterday. Newhaven carrying top weight and beating 'Survivor' pretty easily apparently. Lord Rosebury's horse 3.

It is very cold here and the mother is treating me as if I were a delicate child — I am only allowed to go out at certain hours of the day — and in the sun.

She now regrets that she ever left Australia and vows she is to start back in October. We bought some strawberries for the children and Joe and the mother & I divided a box with Miss Fickert. Each of us had three strawberries and they cost 5d a piece.

I paid 7d for one orange at a railway station — and it wasn't, I thought, worth eating. However we get oranges in Paris at 2d each and the mother says they are better than any South Australians!

There are a good many electric cars rushing along the streets, and I saw a fellow on an electric bicycle absolutely scorching through the crowd. I saw all but an accident — how the rider managed to escape running down a young woman I do not know. I thought it was all up with her. I am astonished at the general use of the electric lights. I have seen no gas anywhere. If I find the electric light as much in use in London I shall sell my gas shares for I shall conclude that it is only a question of time when the electric will replace gas — except for cooking & engines. I also find electric trams in use. In Colombo there is an overhead one which works splendidly. And there I think are all kinds — both with cable and stored electricity.

Naomi Hawker has written recommending Joe to sending Bob to a preparatory school for Harrow. *[Naomi was the sister of Joe Hawker's late husband.]* Mabel has written in the same sense generally, and as Joe seems to listen to it I fancy it is doubtful if Bob will go to Edinburgh after all. Paton told me Bob is much behind — has not even been grounded properly — carried on into Latin when he knows nothing of English, doesn't understand, said Paton, which is a "subject" or a "predicate" — the construction of a sentence in English being quite beyond him.

Joe understands fully that he is far behind, and wants something to pull him up to the level of ordinary boys. *[Bob Hawker was ten.]*

The lesson for you from this is to see that Bob *[Tom's son, little Bob Barr Smith aged five]* is properly grounded. I see the blunders I made myself with my own children now — If I had you to bring up again wouldnt I make some of you sit up.

Joe has got from various sources prospectuses and testimonials and the like. I notice they all talk of making the care of "backward and dull boys" a specialty. Of course they do! They thus appeal to a very large class. If a teacher only got bright boys the chances are he would starve while the man who got all the dull boys might die a millionaire.

See to Bob in time. Timothy was "called" when yet a child.

This hotel is very comfortable but is not in a very convenient situation and it certainly has not been patronised by the Prince of Wales — the people who frequent it evidently do not belong to the 'uppa circles'. As to that there is a young woman well painted with hair as black as my Lady Hays used to be,[2] who comes to the table nearly naked. The mother thinks she observes her eying me — and believes she has caught me squinting at the young woman — so the mother's peace is disturbed and she takes a strong view on 'European morals'. We go to London on Monday if the children are well enough to travel of which I have no doubt.

With all love to Molly and the babies.

When they reached London they stayed at the Savoy Hotel.

Robert to Tom
London 30 April:

. . . I see you were neglecting as usual your business and gone to play polo and having the Manifolds to stay with you. I thought you did not like the Manifolds *[polo-playing pastoralists from Victoria]*. I dont exactly define what one may conclude from the following incidents — I leave it to you to say. When I got your note and read it I exclaimed "Tomasso is going with the Polo team after all!!" The mother said "I knew he would go." How did she know it?

The price list of sales which you sent me of horses and traps was satisfactory and the price list of cows as good as I expected. Were two cows left for Bertie? And a little lot of yearling heifers? I dont know exactly what I ought to do to keep down the Park grass. Big bullocks are a nuisance. But small dairy heifers or steer might do provided they are not fence breakers. It is not so much a question of profit as protection from fires. The side next the railway shd certainly be eaten off.

I see Melvin is to sell the furniture from Chateau Stephenson *[a cottage on the Torrens Park estate]*. I told Thybell to furnish the cottage suitably out of it and to take one good chest of drawers up to Auchendarroch and take the chest of drawers in my dressing room down there though no doubt he would attend to this. There was also a standard lamp (kerosene) I meant to keep back but I fear I forgot it. It was good and handsome certainly

cost 12 or 15 pounds & would sell I fear for very little. I notice the 4-wheeler went over my limit. If we return *[i.e. to live in Adelaide]* I am sorry I lost it — it was in excellent order and much more useful than cash as it took 4 passengers. Who bought it?

I see you want another drag. Your last was selected by Lance Stirling and was a poor selection. It was out of date when he bought it and inconveniently light. The drag season has commenced. I see lots about and they are all lower, so far, and more convenient vehicles all round.

I dont think Buttercup was as cheap as Darrivall by a good bit.

I hope to hear that the new Govr *[Hallam Lord Tennyson, son of the poet]* takes the Sligo and Colonel's horses. Good as they are they are inconveniently large and now the hansom is sold I can never want large horses again.

I hope I have not said all this before.

Talking of returning — the mother's only remark is that we shall leave for the Colony next March. My only remark is that we shall by then have got over one winter. The mother says we have no home. We knew we should have none when we left — and she forgets that life in the Colony had become intolerable to her. She exaggerates my likes. I never have any difficulty living anywhere except in London fogs. Tomorrow is the 1st of May and we have had constantly foggy weather since we came to London. But not of course any dense fog. There has been no sunshine today but it looks as if it could be bright enough in the country — the sun is shining behind the smoke.

I am all over my worst except as to eating or speaking. The doctor said it was the result of smoking. Would listen to nothing else. It was not cancer thank God — and quite curable. I imagine I am quite cured now. The operation was nasty and painful of course — I had two restless nights — headache & stiff sore mouth with throbbing gums and on the third night I slept well & everything was endurable.

The man who was our courier has been renamed my valet — but what he is to do for me goodness knows. I always put him out of the room when I dress, but once the night of the operation I allowed him to pull off my stockings. For this I pay him £4 a week — just double the salary young Anders had from the Limited Company.

Dick Kerr & Mrs Kerr were to call for your mother today.[3] I have not seen them yet and have been in the City all day & have seen Sir Thos Sutherland and Barnes (P & O), Kendall (P & O), Mr Cockburn *[later Sir John Cockburn, Agent-General in London]* and some others. The price of wool is splendid . . .

Robert to Tom

Portland House [the office of Elder Smith & Co. Ltd] 8 May:

Dear Tomasso

Just a line as I find I have a little time to spare in the city. I posted a joint letter to Jean & Erls dealing with all the things I have been able to recall to Monday just now. I am puzzled to know why my desks and deeds Box have not been sent away — and I am also without sales of the Greenhouse plants & the Chateau Stephenson furniture. However I daresay these are now at last upon the way. I hope so.

We go Dover to Scotland upon 12th of June and after a month in Edinburgh with Joe we have taken some rooms at Pitlochry. Joe says we shall be dull there — if so one can wander about. *[Pitlochry was a resort in the highlands, not far from Aberfeldy where they used to take a shooting lodge.]*

Doesn't seem to me easy to plan any place where we shall be jolly. I think the mother

is a little more content than she was but at first she wanted to commit me to return next March — missing home comforts she said. Personally I have a great longing for something cooked by *[illegible . . . your Anastasia?]*. The cookery at the Savoy has a world-wide reputation but I cannot stand their d — d fine sauces. I have no objection to live upon cabbage but it must be an honest one.

The mother has again raised the question of driving to Scotland but of course I do not carry her on for two reasons. A. I do not think she wd be happy on the journey. And B. I do not think if I had fixed it all up she would at the last moment start. She said to me ominously — well will you go alone? You may take it for granted nothing will come of this driving proposal.

The mother & I were at the theatre (matinee) yesterday and enjoyed a hearty laugh at one of those preposterous farces which I have never been able to resist. Mabel was there also with Jean Giles' friend Gertie Burnett who is much thinner than she used to be, and of course older also. Fred Braund is out with his artillery corps. Fred was one of the three full patrol privates who were in front of the regiment from the Mansion House down Queen Victoria Street. I am assured it is a very swell regiment — very old — has certain privileges — and tho' I dont suppose it ever went into battle it has a very glorious past history of some kind. The Prince of Wales is Colonel or Patron or something of it.

I am taking a good deal of interest in the Dreyfus case. What a record of perjury, forgery and all kind of wickedness on the part of the heads of the French Army the history of it is. Surely about half of these Generals must be defrocked and sent to the Chain gangs before many months are over.

I have lent Baptiste (my valet) to Mrs Davies and old Davies to go with them to Marseilles and to see them on board the French Steamer. Mrs Davies is the daughter of Isaiah Moss Solomon and she and the mother have become good friends at the Savoy. The husband remains behind. The Mr Davies who goes out with the wife is the father-in-law. You bought the block of land at Aldgate from them. I think they are now well-off. Baptiste, whose moustache is daily growing *[Robert has inked in a sketch of a face with a huge moustache]* came to us from the Davies family. I was glad to let him go as he is not a bit of use to me and will help them. However he is pleasant & honest & sometimes does a message for Miss F. We are keeping him on — partly because you cannot get a good servant here, and partly because he is so ornamental.

I got a great turn the other week — The clerk came in to my room & said "There is a Mr Caldwell wants to see you." I immediately thought of my brother and how best to treat him. However it was a false alarm.

The Buxtons have been very faithful to us. Noel and Mabel have come to the Hotel on two occasions, Lady Victoria has written many invitations and at last has stuck the mother up for May 31st. *[Sir T. Fowell Buxton and Lady Victoria had known the Barr Smiths when he was Governor of South Australia (1895-98); Baron Noel Buxton, then thirty, had acted as ADC to his father. He later became an MP in England.]* We go to Margate tomorrow to be with the "'Arrys" at holiday time. Has Lord Tennyson bought my horses or is he blind & besotted?

Robert to Tom
London 11 May:

I write with little to add to what I have said to Molly.

I went to the Theatre with the Kerrs yesterday (Mrs Morier taking your mother's place) and found my old friend "Dick" as good and pleasant as ever he was. Only quite as

deaf as I am. I told Mrs Kerr that you are now completely under Molly's thumb *[Robert has made a sketch of a man prostrate under a huge thumb]* which seemed to give her much satisfaction. Kerr says that he is under his wife's dictation and complains that since he became deaf his women only mumble to one another and then complain afterwards that he doesn't know things which he never heard.

Your mother I am glad to say, is on the mend. She has had a very bad time of it — throat all but closed and her voice gone. Dr Morier has been attending her. It was no doubt some compensation to her for being ill that she was able to give Jean Casey's husband a job. *[Dr Charles George D. Morier had practised at Nairne, married Jean Casey and moved to London.]* Dr Morier tells me he is doing well professionally — better than he could have done at Mt Barker, and there is no mistake his wife is better & happier than she was in the Colony.

[There are some lines about racehorses and Morphettville.] I hope you keep an eye on Bertie. Molly says he has been bilious. I do not like him to suffer from bile. Dick Kerr seems to be fond of him and predicts for him a great future ...

Joanna to Tom
Savoy Hotel
May 14th:

My dearest Tom,

This is my week for writing to your wife but I must send you a few lines of thanks for yr most kind letter received yesterday. The mails are coming in on Saturdays just now which is very nice. It seems to bring us in touch with you all on the Sunday which is more or less a quiet day. But we are dreadfully tormented with visitors Tom. Its about as bad as it was in Adelaide. I have been in a bed of sickness for a whole week. Laryngitis — my vocal chords being congested and inflamed. But I am better today & went down to breakfast & eat a bit of finnan haddie. It tasted very nice indeed! The salmon too is a treat, but there is nothing else very superior to our own wholesome fare. Grouse has not begun yet. We are going to Scotland in a few weeks but I must return my calls first! The Savoy is a most comfortable resting place & what would be the use of taking a flat & bothering with servants when one can be so well lodged in an inn. Even yr father is quite content I think altho bye and bye I suppose we'll get sick of always being in public. Yr father is very well again & his spirits are returning. He lost them entirely one week & made me very unhappy. His lip is quite healed now & I dont see why he should make himself unhappy about the future. His health is so good except for the necessity of being careful of taking cold. But I think his life will be prolonged by living in S.A. so I am urging him to go back next March from Marseilles as we will be in that neighbourhood. There seems to be a consensus of opinion that we ought to go to the South of Europe in the end of Octr. He says however he'd like to have another summer in this country. Well of course we can make no plans yet. We must wait. We are all very proud of Joe because having been perfectly satisfied that no first class schools take day scholars she absolutely has parted from Bob. It is a very good place to which she has sent him kept by very exceptional men & the boy is quite happy. Mabel had a lot to do with it we think. She is the same old masterful spirit and has a lot of good common sense. She & Fred dined here last night — a very happy pair, drooled to each other — & yet seeming more friends than lovers. I do not think children wd make them happier so things are better as they are.

Your new Governor *[Lord Tennyson]* is determined to make himself popular — & the

lady too. I fancy you will all get on with them — & I am sure Lady T. will take to Molly. I shall hear bye & bye of their being at Birksgate. Theres a letter today from old Lady V. *[Lady Victoria Buxton]* fixing times for us to go to Warlies to stay but I have written to say we never stay in another fellow's house (I have said it euphemistically of course) & we will go for a day with pleasure. I wish people wouldn't bother with us but leave us to our own quiet desires. But perhaps we'd be dissatisfied with that too. One doesn't like to feel absolutely left out in the cold. We think of going to Margate for Whitsuntide & seeing all the trippers — The 'Arrys & the 'Arriets. I like a glimpse of low life. Humanity in every guise appeals to me like nothing else — yr father loves Nature best. Perhaps its a pity we have such different tastes but where cd you find a man & woman more truly fond of each other than yr father & me. If our tastes had been similar we shd probably have palled on each other.

Its so funny to think of you all at the "Rising Sun". Its a capital place for a seaside change, the beach being so handy for the children. Bertie has not written to me this mail. Tell him I am disgusted. I see P. David is now in the Club. Now he'll be patronising everybody. Send me money occasionally & believe me my well-beloved son

yr devoted Mother.

Robert to Tom
London
30 May 1899:

Dear Tomasso

I thank you for your letter of 26 April and I am glad you have made such a thorough inspection of the Hummocks *[Robert had given this property to Tom]*. It seems to me there is not much more to do to it except —

1. By one of Waite's very light £8 to £10 fences to separate in one or two places the plains from the hills so as to compel the sheep to use the coarser grasses on the plains and so save the hills.
2. It is of course a place where eminently the small paddocks system is valuable. and the expense justified. You can then spell a bit of the country here and there — because it wants it — or because you want an extra good paddock for something or other.
3. I think moderate stocking will pay best in the long run and also keep your mind easy & your stock good.
4. Murray *[Ernest Murray, the Manager]* has done excellently for the sheep — and on a small place like that you can easily make them very good. You can do a lot yourself in this direction.
5. I paid extreme prices for one or two places to round off paddocks but I dont think I shd now have a *[?]* except at my own price.

[Robert continues with directions and advice for the rest of the letter, except for a more personal paragraph at the end:] We are going down to Dulwich today to visit Joe's new relatives *[George Acres' family]* — the mother has seen them, but when they called I was unable to leave my room I remember. Toothache or something wrong with me.

I see cholera is carrying off 200 a day in Karachi. It is very serious and alarming to Joe. Love to all...

Unfortunately there is no sequel to this — no word in the letters kept of how they got on with the Acres. Nor did the Barr Smiths, as it turned out, go to the wedding in December.

Robert to Tom
2 June 1899:

I have already written to you by this mail.

[This is a letter about personal financial arrangements — Great Boulder shares — in the main money to be sent regularly to Joanna:] Your mother says she feels her possessions are a little unreal as she never gets anything out of them — and she has no dividends from her Gt. Boulder and other shares for a long time.

Where have they got to — Miss F. gets dividends here!! She gives the following instructions for disposal of her income.

From all sources send her £100 a quarter from your side, and all Dividends on shares which you get in addition.

I am assuming that she is able to draw the interest here on the £27,000 *[illegible. Security?]* Bonds in which she invested the George Elder money *[a bequest to Joanna when he died in 1897].* If there is any other arrangement now as to the payment of this interest (as respects the £20,000 for which Martin arranged with McGill) then you will require to think what you get of this interest from your side — the intention being that she shall have £1200 a year for her share dividends whilst she is on this side.

Send me a memo of her credit *[illegible. Account?]* with the Union Bank. Manifestly in her absence we need not pile up money there.

The income other than as asked for above (to wit £1200) should be invested as you get it so as to produce income. It may be say a deposit with the Wallaroo & so on or as you find practicable.

Robert to Tom
London
7 June 1899:

Dear Tomasso

I am just starting for the 4-in-hand meet in Hyde Park so I only shortly answer your letter of 3rd May.

I am afraid I posted a letter to Molly without closing it. I kept it open to add a word this morning and have no memory of wetting the envelope. No doubt the postmaster general and his satellites are now gloating over our secrets. I apologise to Molly and note your remarks on the elections — which with a little natural prejudice on your part — are fairly near the bullseye.

But what I impress upon you is this practically — the "little wrecker" — makes no change in the position of the Government. The question for your party (I do not say your Conservative M.P.s — they seek office on any pretext and by any means) — is this. Suppose for any cause the Labour members want Kingston out — would it not be the true interests of the Conservatives to keep Kingston in. *[Charles Cameron Kingston, the turbulent Premier of South Australia, was defeated by one vote in April 1899.]* That of course depends upon the circumstances of the house. There can however be no effective Conservative Govt. until there is a majority of conservatives in the assembly.

I am much pleased at this important discovery of gold at Torrens Park. *[Presumably an unexplained family joke. Finding a buried guinea perhaps?]* Now is your chance for selling the place. This important property may be sold at a price which does not represent its value for building purposes alone. The stately mansion & the boundless wealth of the new

Golconda — say 50 or 60 thousand pounds for everything (100,000 capital, 40,000 working capital. The thing is in a nutshell over cheap — dirt cheap.

I hope you will win a race with the Capra filly but I hae me doots from what you tell me.

The cricket team here is doing well for Australia but they managed badly in their last All England match in not giving themselves time to do more than draw when in an hours time must have won.

I have no time for more. I go to the theatre with Joe. And to Oxford in the evening *[?]* Chippendale accompanying me — we come down the River which I am told is prime.

Joanna to Tom
Savoy Hotel, London,
8th June:

My dear Tom

Just as your father was starting for Oxford yesterday I received an answer from the Agent Generals office to my question as to what the amount of S.A. Govt. Stock was standing in my name in London — and as it is only £7000 — instead of as your father supposed £27,000 I write this to ask you to send me by return £300 as I can see I am not going to be a Croesus on this side of the world! Send it direct to me for I dont like old Anders to know all I spend! I am growing scheming in my old age!

Your father went off to Oxford with Chippendale last night. The wind has changed most spitefully to the east again this morning after days of S.A. heat. I made him take his ulster & his cholera belt however if he will only put them on.

Sarah Bernhardt arrived at this hotel last night. She is on the floor above. Oh if I could only get up or down in the lift with her how glad I shd be. I think I may manage it by a skilfully managed bribe to the lift man.

My love to yr dear Molly. Give her the enclosed *[nothing enclosed]*. I shall be writing her next week. This is Erlistoun's & Bertie's week.

With my best love to you my well beloved son,
Ever I am yr devoted Mother.

Now follows a brief note from Robert, only a few lines written on a typed circular, dated 12 June:

Sample circular to the heirs showing in some of them a disinclination to subscribe. I show the circular to prevent other complaints of relatives. The Symingtons did not reply at all and Mrs McKechnie didn't write in answer to the first for a year and then did not offer to subscribe!!

The typed circular reads:

21 Cleveland Gardens,
Hyde Park, W.
12th June 1899.
Dear —

The Cross for the graves of the late Mr & Mrs George Elder is now completed and the order has been given for its erection.

The cost will be £ — If you desire to join those defraying the cost I shall be glad to

hear from you at once, as my list must be closed: but before closing it I am anxious to give the relatives an opportunity of subscribing should they wish to do so.

I am,

Yours truly,

(Signed) Frederick Elder. *[Frederick was the seventh child of Alexander Elder.]*

Robert to Tom
12 June:

Dear Tomasso,

I am obliged to write today as we leave on Thursday and the ordinary days for mail writing are taken up. I am rather stupid at the moment as I have been writing all day & have never left my seat. I feel like an owl. There is however little or nothing to tell you. In my letters to the firm (M *[Martin]* & TEBS) I have said what I think about Baker's proposal to reduce the liability of the Elder shares. I think it is a good thing to do — should inquire — Waite & Downer would favour it but if not so I have no wish to agitate myself about it.

I posted you today a photo of D. Kingsland & I now enclose his letter *[nothing enclosed; Kingsland untraced]*. To me it is interesting to get a glimpse into the life of a man who had fallen out of my mind for years and years. I am not so sure however that I want to have too much of his society. He seems to be a glorified Sydney Kidman and humbugged the firm from start to finish.

Dont tell me they made large commissions out of the Kidmans — they could have made double with another arrangement of the trade and without the awful risk.

I went down to the Crystal Palace and saw two polo matches. *[Longish description of how the Kents and the London Polo teams were matched and played.]*

I enjoyed my visit to the Crystal Palace immensely. At the adjournment I went over to the Switch Back and thought of taking a go for 3d but there were people about and I was afraid that my long black surtout, silk umbrella & bell topper would look a little absurd so I strolled away sighing — and questioning keenly the advantage of being well-dressed.

We are all delighted at Silverthorn's win, I told Bertie in my letter he would win shortly. I knew he must come some day with 10 stone on his back. Now I am afraid he wont get a chance for a long time & probably may be relegated to the hunting field. He evidently won by sheer gameness. I have seen my horses lose often for want of trying and nothing else. Pincio*[?]* was a case in point. He liked to keep company with the bulk of the field and amuse himself looking at one or two in front of him fighting for the finish.

I have given your mother my letters to read. She has locked them away and gone out calling — but I truly think there is nothing else to say to you.

I got the Milo accounts all right.

On 13 June Robert wrote excitedly to Tom: it was the occasion of the first wireless transmission across the English Channel by Guglielmo Marconi:

Robert to Tom
13 June:

I enclose the tape message at South *[illegible. Foreland?]* from France (30 miles distance) by Marconi's Wireless Telegraphy.

Marconi was not there. Signor Winereu *[?rather illegible]* was in charge.

I think it very curious and I dont want to lose — but I thought you and others might

be glad to see the actual tape, possibly the Register might like to see it. Send it back to me when you have done with it. I consider it a curiosity.

Our names of course were first wired wirelessly across France and then civil compliments were returned.

I have been studying the suggestion of increasing the number of shares so as to equalize the 50/- & 35/- men in Elders and I do not see how it can be done fairly by increase of shares. You must content yourselves I think with a reduction of liability and only await the calling up of capital when & if that is necessary to bring about equalization.

Joanna to Tom
Roxburghe Hotel,
Edinburgh
The Longest day of 1899 21. 6:

My dearest Tom,

You are very good in writing to your old mother. But I do not want to be a drag on you. If you write yr father that does for us both & yr dear Molly is most constant and attentive. Never missing a mail without writing to one of us. The mails of course are everything to me but alas, now we are in Scotland we dont get them so quickly. This week we did not get the letters till Tuesday. In London we repeatedly got them on the Saturday.

I am not overly happy in Edinburgh. Too many old associations with those who are forever gone. I think I'll probably get on better at Pitlochry. We have never lived there before. We go in about three weeks — After we leave on the 21st August we are strangers and pilgrims & go I know not where. At this moment a hurdy-gurdy has struck up outside the window "The Old Folks at Home". This adds to my melancholy.

You will either see us back next April or the following Oct. my dear Tom if we are alive. I wish I had your father safely home again & I cant think how I could be so selfish as let him come. Altho' he has had some pleasant times & I'm glad he had his lip properly doctored by Dr Jonathon Hutcheson. The expression of his mouth is changed — the lower lip seems tightened, but I tell him its a great improvement. He has enjoyed nothing so much since he left Adelaide as his trip on the river to Oxford with Chippendale & he is more at home with this gentleman than ever. Chip has certainly been very kind & he is a much improved man. I wrote you a hurried line last mail asking you to send me £300. I am so disappointed you dont post me my Gt Boulder dividends. They would come in so handy. I always was fond of driblets. People speak very highly of the Gt B. & the Ivanhoe now. I suppose I am better not to sell my Ivanhoes?

It was a great delight to hear of Silverthorn's success & it will make Bertie more in love with him.

The opening meet at Birksgate is over — If I had been there I shd have found it rather pathetic, remembering the old meets there when yr uncle, poor fellow, was in his prime. Of course I am very, very glad my children are keeping up the old prestige & I hope my dear Molly will write me a full account of everything. Sir E. T. Smith has always been kind to you — a trifle patronizing of course — but that he cannot help. To entertain him wd not be disagreeable. And these new Vice-Royaltys seem pleasant, unostentatious people. I am so glad the Lady is not going to be a Bazaar Opener!

Florrie Jervois came to see me before I left London *[she was the young widowed daughter-in-law of Sir William Jervois, Governor of South Australia 1877-83].* It was a painful interview — being a link to the past, poor girl, it cut her up a good deal to talk to me & yet she

insisted on telling me all the sad particulars of her "Johnnie's" last illness & death. She is still a pretty young woman. I always liked her the best of the three girls.

You will be going away with Mr Pee Waite about this time & poor Molly will be left lamenting. These journeys do you good dearest Tom altho' they may not be all pleasure. I was surprised to hear the Mitchells were off for six days to Melbourne — but they are quite right to go as they have no home ties worse luck. *[Willie and Erlistoun were childless until the following year.]*

Mab & Fred are so elated because Fred took the prize for tent-pegging & something else too at the H.A.C. last week. Joining the Corps has been an immense pleasure to Fred — to them both in short. If ever there was a happy marriage that is one, Tom. Mab at the moment has gone for a trip to the Norfolk Broads with her second self Joe Maitland. Bertie used to be very fond of the Broads. Yr father & I think of going on our way back to London. We are going also to Liverpool to see our old friends the Shorts. — We'll start for the Riviera I suppose early in Oct.

Now my dearest Tom I conclude with love to you all. I have written Joe Joe.

Ever yr devoted Mother.

Joanna to Tom
Roxburghe Hotel
Edinburgh.
June 22:

My dearest Tom,

I am sending a little Scotch souvenir to my dear friend the Revd L. Payne Crawford *[Domestic Chaplain to the Bishop of Adelaide]* for his birthday 26 July. It may be a little late but I address it to you as I wish you to pay the duty for me and then re-post it to him. I think he now lives at Walkerville.

I am sorry to trouble you, dear boy, but I dont want my parson to have to pay any duty on my little gift.

Robert to Tom
Edinburgh
27 June 1899:

Dear Tomasso

I have your letter of 24 May here today. I am glad to see the drought has broken up both at Hummocks and at Fowlers Bay. You will have a good season at Hummocks and hardly know what to do with your wealth. Murrays illness is very sad. You will not have him long I fear. He is the stamp of man to have there one who will work up the quality of your sheep and who is not too costly. I should be glad to hear how the experiment with X-bred lambs turned out and perhaps you will tell me what price they fetch. Also whether any sub-division of the paddocks has been made restraining the sheep to the plains & spelling thereby the hills. I think you do well to go to Kopperammer — to be with Peter *[Waite]* will be an education to you. Stirling's company would have been pleasant but judging by his own results — he can teach you nothing about sheep.

I am glad Casuarina is sold. It was one of those fancy purchases which we all make sometimes upon faith of imaginary chances. It was to be the Birkenhead of Rockhampton I remember. Mr Niall can blame nobody but himself — it was his scheme from top to bottom. *[J.M. Niall was at one time manager of Milo and later General Manager of Goldsborough,*

Mort & Co. Ltd.] Niall has a kind of cleverness & his career & progress are creditable to him I admit. Still he has not done what he ought to have done with my money behind him. Look at old *[Maslin?]* who was in debt when I took him over — and was actually pressed by Forster & Fisher and could not pay. Niall is clever rather than wise and had a good deal of resource and adroitness.

I hope he will do well as general manager of Goldsborough — but in pushing his own fortune he has not made the most of his chances.

As to the Acetylene Gases I would not advise you to experiment with it. The last thing I knew about it was that a scientist who wishing to show how good it was went into his laboratory and did something with it — we dont know exactly what he did for he has never since been heard of.

We have all our little ways. I can never spell crystal always write chrystal and you always write smoothe instead of smooth. If it is worth correcting you can try. I suppose the word which is in your mind's eye is soothe. I often write one word in mistake for another if they are phonetically alike.

Blackie & Co. have written to me that the 4 volumes of Williams' History of Plants are really all one-half volumes of 2 volumes. As I did not get the first half volume I could not discover this for myself. 1/2 volume 1 came long after the other three. I mention this because I allude to it in my instructions. I think the 4 half volumes are together at Mt Barker.

Your mother is very indignant that you advise receipt of a 5/- dividend from the Ivanhoe and do not remit it. "See", she says " how handy it would come in just now". As she has about £50 in gold and another £100 coming to her on Saturday in Bank of England notes one does not see exactly where the "handiness" comes in. Still I sympathize with her. There is no feeling of possession unless you get these dividends. You would not value your Board fees if they were put to your credit somewhere and you never saw it.

I instruct you at her request that all her mines dividends as they are received are to be punctually remitted to her in special drafts less the exchange of the day. She is still harping about returning in March next. Her idea is to leave England in October and not to return again but to go from the "Continong" direct. At present we have made up our minds to visit Ireland when we leave Scotland.

I think it would be well to set old Barlow *[of Thomas Barlow & Sons, carriage builders in Adelaide]* to work to build a Brougham for me. I would not have sold the last but it was much too small. The conditions are —

No 1. The Brougham must be ample to take comfortably two of the largest people.

No. 2. The front should be round so as to take the glass well away from the face.

No. 3. The roof should be high enough to clear the feather on the bonnet *[Robert has drawn a profile of someone with a feathered hat like a Valkyrie].*

No. 4. Possibly a little seat to slip up for a child may be an advantage — and of course a basket for parcels is a necessity.

No. 5. The lowness of the step and the height of the seat must be studied. Last seat was not broad enough and the back not straight enough.

No. 6. The pole should be long enough for the big horses.

I hardly like to trust Barlow as to size. I was most emphatic about this last time and yet he failed me grievously.

No. 7. Your mother intends to have 2 men on the box so that must be amply large for 2 men. I cannot go on building carriages that dont suit me so you will give Barlow notice

that if the Brougham he builds does not please me I wont take it off his hands. He is accustomed you see to build Broughams where weight is a great factor as only one horse and one man are used. The back of the inside of the Brougham should be quite straight to catch you without leaning back.

I have read this to your mother, who says:

"Tom is the one to arrange all this, he is so good at that kind of thing." However you will warn Barlow that I will decline anything which I dont like. Barlow has got into the making of a stereotyped Doctors Brougham and he cannot lift himself out of the groove without a very violent effort. Let the Brougham be started shortly as the Victoria will want doing up. Give this to Barlow or the Mitcham man as you please.

We will have now the Victoria and the Brougham for the mother, the two buggies for me and a vehicle of some sort to be sent to the train must be got. I am sorry I missed Joe's 4 wheeler but we can easily get one second-hand.

I think I shall want a riding horse — walking to a slow canter — his points not too slung back and with a good mouth — sure-footed and one you can get on without a ladder. I can get on with *[Tim?]* for a time tho' his mouth is a little screwy and I want him for business.

We were yesterday at St Margaret visiting Aunt Anne *[the widow of Captain William Elder]*.

I am no longer a "belonging" I am a "hubbie". She was very kind and kissed me.

The mother insisted we were to come off at North Queensferry — I suggested Inverkeithing. But the mother was sure of N.Q. We did come off at North Queensferry and found no carriage — so we had to walk. It is not the distance altogether but the road is steep and very unsuitable for the mother. Her legs ached a little but she is none the worse today.

I am glad to see Molly and the children were well and happy. I send them all my love. I remember nothing more to tell you. Your affte. Pater.

From RBS
Edinburgh
5 July:

Dear Tomasso

I have this morning only your letter of 30th May — the mail being a little behind time.

Newspapers. The best way to send me any special news is by clipping the thing out of the paper and sending it in your letter. You are quite right in saying many newspapers are a bore. Unless marked they are absolutely useless, and in my experience are not quite valuable even then, for they generally get thrown into the waste basket without being opened at all. In fact your mother wages war with them & chucks them out of the waste basket by the time they have been half an hour in the house. If you suspect there may be something in them, the only way to save them from the mother is to sit upon them when they first come and at an early opportunity when she is not there, you can hide them cunningly.

The Gwynne case you seem to have made the piece of news for the week. I shall look out for it. I suppose I did not know the Gwynne brother who is *[dead]* as I only know Dick (our one) and the lawyer one who is *[Kudy's?]* partner.

I will also look out for the accident at Bundaberg. I did not know the Williams men tho' I lent them the money to get their contract. Thomas Grainger who spoke for them to me said they were decent fellows and old Wallaroo Moonta men I think.

I see you had a good papering in the old course. I shall know nothing about it till the newspapers come. I suppose Silverthorn did not run or Bertie would have told me.

I am glad to see "Artillery" speaks so well for his sire. Light Artillery has sired several winners but he has not enough of mares to give him a chance. I would be inclined to give his services at a reasonable rate to any really well-bred mare with a good history — especially to Dams of winners. When you get his name up it is easy to put his price up.

The sires of ten years ago seem to have disappeared from the front ranks. Of St Simeo when one of his got scored, "This is the first important race won this season of his stock." I have only noticed one win of a "Carbine" and 2 I think by "Trentons" and I have not been seeing the Sportsman since I came to this side.

The firms letter spoke by last mail as if the Casuarina sale had been completed — I see now that this was premature. However I have no doubt it will go through allright. How anxious Niall was to get it. What glorious prospects he held out! I do not blame him, but as I said before Niall is more clever than wise, and with my perfect confidence in him and indefinite money behind him he should have made much more of his opportunities than he has done. I quite agree with you Mabel should sell the Pinnacles, the difficulty is to find a buyer. I still think Archbishop Riley (or O'Reilly I forget which) could be induced to buy the place as a monastery. You would have to give him time, and a low rate of interest and if he agrees to pay £5000 hint that Mabel will subscribe £500 to pay off the general Catholic debt. Why the moral effect of that subscription is worth a Jews eye to the archbishop. *[The Pinnacles was eventually sold to the newspaper proprietor Sir Langdon Bonython and renamed Carminow. A monastery was in fact later established across the road, but an Anglican one, St Michael's House.]*

This place is today in a high state of glorification and bunting. The Prince of Wales is here, getting the freedom of the city, and attending the agricultural show. To show my contempt for Royalty I am sitting writing in a back bedroom, and shall not go out until I am sure he is out of the way. I went to the Show yesterday partly to avoid him: not that I suppose he would have forced himself upon me (for they say he has his tact and would no doubt have realized how objectionable I would find it) — but chiefly because I knew the crowds would be small yesterday at 5/- entrance and no prince — and large today at 1/- entrance and a prince. The show of hunters was very fine. I spotted the 1st and 2nd well but I came badly to grief trying to judge the Clydesdales. By the way there are more fine Clydesdale horses on the streets here in lorries and wagons than I remember to have seen anywhere in previous years. Grand horses — short-legged and active — very.

Now then before I forget two little things.

A. Unless it is in some of my packages in London which I think I did not bring on here (and this is unlikely because I have brought all the other bank books) I seem to have left my last Bank of Australasia Bank Book behind me in Adelaide at Mt Barker. Possibly I left it with you. It would have been wise to do so, as affording you an easy reference to late payments by me. However I have no memory of having done so. If you have it not — and if I did not bring it away and if it is not in Adelaide pigeon holes then it must be in Mt Barker if it is not in the Bank. The last Bank book I have here ends thus . . . Sept. 14. I have nothing after that. Tell me when you write if you have traced my Bank Book following on from 14 Sept. 1898 to 220 £10 entry.

I dont think I need this Bank Book I was only looking for it to get the dated repayments to Milo. By the way Mr Hele checked it and balanced it for me at the end just before I left.

B. Tom Williams History of Plants. Tell me if you have 4 volumes of this work i.e. 4 different bound books — for the 4 volumes are 2 volumes split into 4 halves.

We are all well here, and make a start for Pitlochrie on the 10th instant. Joe follows us to Pitlochrie I think on the 1st August. Bob is getting on splendidly at school and Betty is quite happy at the thought of going to India and I am glad to say neither of the children dislike the idea of a new papa.

Jeannie Alison called yesterday on her way to Prestonpans. The mother goes there tomorrow to call for the McEwans. I go to North Berwick to see a golf match between "Willie" Park and Vardon, the amateur champion. You will be pleased to know that the Champion is in great form going out in 38 and coming home in 40 being 78 for the round — including a couple of 3s.

With love to Molly and the children, Your affte Pater.

Robert to Tom
6 July:

Dear Tomasso

You would not have had this 2nd note from me were it not that I had cold in my head last night, with the result that I could not sleep because I could not get my nose to work properly and was compelled to blow it every 3 minutes for several hours.

It was an "awful" disappointment for me as I had arranged to go to North Berwick to see a match today (for £100 a side) between the Champion Vardon against the champion "Willie" Park. However I was so pounded this morning I had no desire to go — and if I had had a desire your mother would not have let me.

Besides I have an appointment to meet Willie Clazy in Glasgow tomorrow to go to Kilmarnoch then on to Lochwinnoch — then Johnstone Castle and I go home to Edinburgh at *[6 ish?]*.

I am therefore nursing myself today for that effort for we leave for Pitlochry on Monday, and Minnie and Ralston *[Joanna's niece Jemima and her husband Ralston Patrick from Trearne]* are coming on Saturday and there is no other day. Therefore if I cant make my going tomorrow I must return from Pitlochry and be away a night.

I hope I have made the situation quite plain to you — my motives, my hopes and my fears.

I have posted to you todays paper with the Highland Agricultural Show results — account of HRH's visit — Life of Willie Park and thrice champion Vardon, and tomorrow I will probably post you a Scotsman with the result of the Parks-Vardon match.

Our cricketers still do well I think altho' it was a draw. They had if anything the worst of it when it was drawn. That however is not quite certain. It depends a little on what the condition of the pitch was. I hardly think Darling or Gregory is making the usual score. They have not got into the habit of declaring innings closed before all their men have played. This is sure to offer the chance of a win instead of a draw. It may be good policy, but it doesn't always give a true result — and may even turn a winning game into a losing. It seemed to me nearly so at Notts who are a weak lot. But I dont know much about it I confess.

Now that we are certain to go back to Adelaide *[so they have made up their minds finally about where to live]*, I am sorry I missed Joe's 4 wheeler. I had the shaft altered after a plan of my own. That is the kind of trap useful to send to the station when you have 2 or 3 people to bring up.

I am also thinking that I wish I had kept the wagonette and got a set of new wheels for it — it was so good for a number on the hill and for 4 in hand. Probably, but not certainly, I may get a new one when I get back. The 4-wheeler Bertie has chosen is good for young people but will not do for me. However I have plenty to go on with.

Mrs Marryat *[wife of the Archdeacon]* has written to the mother and has some window scheme on. However you need not go into that question. The mother has written to Mrs Marryat & all you have to do is send a cheque to Mrs Marryat for 10/- and send your mother £5 and me £5 in my books that is ten guineas in all.

I promised a subscription or subscriptions to something of the Y.W.C.A nature. Women wrote to me — I forget their names: Mrs Paton was one of them. Whether I paid my £100 subscription of this kind before leaving I cannot tell without my Bank Book. You may look it up. There was a secretary woman who used to write me long letters, which I dont think I always read on the subject. She was said to be very superior & worthy and all that sort of thing. I think they said she was an "enthusiast"; and I saw no reason to doubt it from her letters. However — I am under a promise either of £100 to somebody or £100 each to two ladies. It dawned upon me once that several of them were writing about the same thing.

I enclose a clipping from the Field on cricket which please enclose to Mr John Creswell. I also send you another note from our old friend Dr Kingsland. I have no doubt Kingsland has done very well — "my place in Lincolnshire" sounds healthy. Perhaps he is very satisfied with life and all things in it — long may he remain so.

I have read the Rowland Gwynne trial. It is strange they have disputed the will — things being as they were. People on these occasions seem through greed to lose their heads.

That little sneak (I forget his name) now Parson at Modbury *[probably Revd John Benbow]* — with whose brother *[William]* your Uncle Tom lost money — he was [last?] at Norwood and had a house there came with the famous Dr Morison, Glenelg, to see if I could or would give evidence that old Toyshop Cunningham was a lunatic and had been under "undue influence" in leaving the small remnant of his fortune to his wife & young child. He never showed signs of sanity more convincing than in this act. As I read the Gwynne case it struck me it might not be a bad plan to apply for protection from the court for your mother, and a declaration that anybody applying to her for money is using undue influence. I think however — that Nat Knox was wrong to interfere, or to make the will. His motives no doubt were allright, but there was I think an indelicacy in his interfering in the case. I wonder if Nat knew Mrs Griffiths personally, why shd he interfere?

Alexander Cunningham (d. 1898) was for forty years an importer of "fancy goods". He married twice and Mrs Morison, wife of the doctor, was Cunningham's daughter by his first marriage. The Gwynne case, or Knox v. Gwynne and others, was "a probate action in which the validity of the will Rowland Gwynne was in issue, pleading that testator did not know and approve contents of his alleged will" (*Register*, 21 April 1899). Charlotte Griffiths was named as intervener. Nathaniel Knox was a solicitor who married Gwynne's sisters, Marion and then Edith; Queenie was probably their younger sister.

I knew a Mr Robinson once who got on splendidly by always attending to his own business. Queenie Gwynne cuts a poor figure and I fancy has not advanced her matrimonial prospects — if she has any.

Allerdale Grainger mentioned to your mother that Town Clerk had won the Cup so I got the news same day as the letters.

I see our friend Dr Stewart is 2nd twice, I wish he had won both times for his own and for his stables' sake. Next mail will bring us news of Silverthorn. I dont expect him to win for it would be too much luck. Still the weight wont stop him, and if he is a little "come on" he ought to have a first rate chance. I wonder if Tarsus would have won the Cup if he had not been started in the city handicap?

Robert to Tom
Pitlochrie [sic]
12 July 1899:

Dear Tomasso,

I have your letter of 12 June, when you were on the wing for the north.

. . . I am glad to see you have got £40 for Mabel — she will be pleased. The sooner it is sold however the more profitable it will be for her. My plan originally was to sell with Sir Thomas's properties and shares but Mab did not then encourage me at that time.

If Tom Yates was willing to give £60 for Sligo it was a pity he did not have him, for Sligo is the horse which, from his colour & size suits me worst. If Yates will give £45 now let him go, he is of course up to Yates' weight. There seems no chance of selling the pair.

I am glad to see Calder is doing so well at Milo. He is a man I have a high opinion of, not only as a manager, but also as a man. [4]

This place, pretty as it is, is deplorably dull — it rains incessantly and we have engaged our rooms to the 21st of August! At the moment we are both as miserable as two old people well can be.

Joanna to Tom
Pitlochrie
July 12th:

My dearest Tom,

Will you kindly send £50 for me to the Rev. L.P. Crawford. I have not given him anything this year for his special church work & it is on my conscience. I seem to be pretty well off just now! So must not forget my church. You could not believe the delight I experienced on receiving a cheque this mail for £49. Te he! My first remittance since I left! I hope you will always send my dividends. They make delightful pocket money. I am like Bertie with his monthly "screw" as he calls it. £8. We used to joke over it and we played euchre always with greater intensity the evening he brought it home.

You were just on the brink of your first big entertainment when the mail left. I am sure that it wd go off so well you & Molly will be fired with the desire of giving more. Yr next will probably be a dance. That is the most difficult of all entertainments to give successfully. We never managed a down-right good one at Torrens Park. The Waites have an excellent house for entertaining *[Urrbrae, which the Waites had completely remodelled and enlarged from when it was owned by the Macgeorges. Waite bequeathed it to the University as an Agricultural College]*. I always spotted Urrbrae's advantages in that way but I think both Birksgate & Torrens Park are more attractive houses for daily life.

I do hope my dear boy you got no cold when you were out on your bush journey. June is the dead of winter with you. Your father has got a bronchial cold again and his cough is most distressing. What would I not give Tom to have him safely back in S.A. You were right my boy — you shd have held out and opposed my coming away tooth & nail. I might have

been a bit crabby & maybe might have given you a little cheek, but in my heart I would have acknowledged you were right. But its no use going on like that. The sanguinary deed is done — I must just hope that we'll live to get back to you again.

I am pleased with Robin Patrick *[Joanna's great nephew, grandson of her sister Jemima Alison née Elder. He worked on Beltana and later gave lectures on his Bush Experiences to a literary society in Beith].* He is a nice, unaffected, likeable young fellow, but has a very delicate appearance. Strathpeffer has however cured his rheumatism which was of a strange & most painful kind.

I have written dear Molly before I got the mail. Tell her I am very glad she has got a Bible class for the children because it is good for them to realize they have a spiritual nature as well as a body but as a rule Bible classes dont do much. I believe rather more in Sunday schools & most of all in parental influence & example.!! One for your knob my Tomasso. But your mother has always believed in you my dear boy & in your wife too.

Your devoted Mother.

Joanna to Tom
Pitlochry
July 20:
PRIVATE

We are going to Aberfeldy & I will probably be buying some rugs from my old friend Hagart who has a manufactury of Tartans & Tweeds there. I am going to have them all sent out & addressed to you, so that you may pay for me the duty on them & send them to various friends.

I fear I worry you dear Tom with all my little diltys *[sic]* but this will not give you much personal trouble. There will be a regular duty on those things — I hope not much — but whatever it is I have got to pay it.

We hope you got home safely from your country trip. Poor Molly didn't like your going away at all for she said you had a cough. Alas! I am only finding out there is a Barr Smith cough as well as a sneeze. The Clazy's say there is no doubt of it. The noble Caldwell *[Robert's brother, William Smith Caldwell]* suffers from both sneeze and cough & does not like it at all I was glad to hear. Your father has the cough very badly at present. But of course if it is constitutional I do not see why I need to worry over it so much. But he is getting old Tom in many, many ways. So am I but of course I have a few years' advantage. Ah my dear boy I keep always saying how wise you were to advize us to stay in Adelaide.

They laugh at me here because I am so taken up with a man who reminds me of you. Yr father and Miss F. do see a slight resemblance but I see it in lots of little ways — gestures & the poise of his head & neck. And I am so very anxious to speak to him but I never get the chance — the dining saloon is an immense room. This is a very up-to-date hotel but we dont get any fonder of Pitlochrie. The man we call Tom has a wife, very like Mrs Joker Barker. He is a little older & fatter than you. Well I have got a great deal of pleasure just in looking at him. Anything that reminds me of you my dearest boy, is delightful.

This is the private bit.

I find that the Braunds had the same idea as you that it was some drug poor Bertie took but they both say they had ample opportunities of finding a thing of that kind out — and they are both perfectly sure it was spirits alone, which was his undoing. Oh I do earnestly hope that he has pulled himself up. It will be wonderful if he does but

"wonders never cease." I hear the Hunt Meet only had one drawback — the weather. All your arrangements friends wrote were perfect & you were such a good host & Molly the sweetest hostess. Its marrow to my bones to hear all that.

My dear Son,

Yr devoted Mother.

Robert to Tom
Pitlochry
Aug 2nd:

Dear Tomasso,

I was glad to see from the letters last week that you were getting on well at Beltana and I hope long ago you have returned safely to the bosom of your family. *[Beltana was Sir Tom Elder's station, where the camels were bred. He left it in his will to his nieces and nephews — Alexander's, Robert's and Jemima Alison's children.]*

Joe is here with her two sheepymates and they all seem bright and well. The mother & I had a pleasant trip to the far north and the old lady really enjoyed it. At her age I was afraid the journey would be too much for her — hence I spared her the road part of it and did that myself. An American horse I had did 40 miles one day after 2.30 p.m. and in the evening looked as if he could have gone on another 40. The driver told me he suffered from "Staggers" when he had too little to do — so it seemed a humane thing to keep him going.

A large number of American and Canadian horses are now imported into England & also Glasgow — and are well liked but want acclimatization, I was told, to be at their best.

I was glad to see "Artillery" won so handsomely giving Gungadin 5 lbs and a licking. It shows your horse can beget a galloper when properly "mated" (that I think is the legitimate jargon of you racing men but I am beginning to lose touch.)

Please advise me what I should do about harness. Shall I order here & where. You went to Dublin didn't you — with what result? Have I harness with which I can go on — if not and if I am not to order here — you will have to get it under way. Dont forget your mother's Brougham — which I will not take delivery of after it is made unless it is large enough.

I got a card of my cricket subscription from Mr Creswell. I took it for a hint that you had not paid it. Please pay it.

Say to Mr Martin that I have posted to him a 2nd list of wool sales in London viz the wools resold in the London May Sales.... *[more about this which is illegible].*

I enclose Mabel's bill for her visit to the Norfolk Broads with Miss Maitland — it comes out at 3/10 per day.

I had my John o'Groats bill to send you but have misplaced it. It was built on similar lines. e.g. stabled my horse 2 hours and they charged me 6d. A lesson to Barker Brothers I think.... Glad to see things working smoothly with Mutooroo & Beltana Companies & Stirling a director of both.

Your affte Pater.

Robert to Tom
Pitlochrie
9 August:

Dear Tomasso,

I was very pleased to get your interesting letter of 5 July and to note that you were safely back and on the whole could favourably report on the condition of the country.

What with *[illegible: perhaps Tellaride dross]* in abundance, and copper of a high percentage — you will be reaping a golden harvest by the sale of beef & mutton on the runs. This perhaps may make up to you for your disappointment with Casuarina — that Birkenhead of the Southern Hemisphere which didn't come off as intended.

Erlistoun writes to me on Wednesday 5th July little Molly's birthday as Monday last on 3rd July. *[Molly Barr Smith, later Legoe, was one year old.]* I am ashamed to say I had forgotten it — and have besides for the moment mysteriously lost my calendar, in which I had all the birthdays for which I care much noted. The mother too I find has in a sneaky way sent her a frock and said nothing to me about it tho' she knows I trust to her reminding me. However better late than never — I send little Molly her £10 in this and I daresay she will forget all about my blunder.

I have told the others about our plans. Unless Bob Hawker's scarlatina has a bad turn, which is now very unlikely, we will leave on the 20th August. Be in Aberdeen or Huntley stay a week — and then move slowly towards London — going through Glasgow to visit Largs to see George & Jean Elder's graves, and make some arrangements for its being kept — I suppose we may get to London middle of Sept. but the mother has written to Sallie Way that she will go up next week to see her if she likes. *[Sallie, née Hill (1856-1906), was the third wife of Dr Edward Way, an Adelaide surgeon for whose health they were in England. Married in 1880 Sallie became instant stepmother to four daughters and two sons, the eldest only ten. She lost her own baby Lina in 1881.]* I fancy the mother wants an outing — and in any case we are very grateful to her (Sallie) for going down to see George, the last thing, when she was naturally so busy with her own affairs.

Mr & Mrs Well of the PO are here just now and Joyce & Lucy Powell. We see a good deal of them and I think on the whole the mother has been pleased to have Miss P. here. She is an intelligent companionable woman, and has some gifts and graces. "Airs & graces" has done nothing since she won the Oaks. I see in today's paper Jones has another horse running which has been badly beaten — in fact I have seen "Billy Jones" name racing more than once lately. It seems to me the sires we used to look for are out of it now *[more of racing to finish the letter]*.

Robert to Tom
Pitlochry
15 August:

Dear Tomasso,

I have today yours of the 1st July — I have written to Jeannie Alison quoting what you say about Wallaroo Moonta shares and I leave her to judge for herself. I do not name you because you are a director of the mines — I say only my correspondent advises me.

Bob Hawker is getting on allright — better today than any other day — so I suppose we will get away on Monday and we shall not be loathe to go. Sister Joe has had a trying time with Bob but she is patient and in love and can sit and dream by hours. Betty has been very nice and quite happy with us — she cannot yet go to be with her mother, the idea is a lodging near handy — she has a maid called Hodge who seems fairly trustworthy.

Glad you find the Tennysons so agreeable. I have made up my mind not to like them so well as I did the Buxtons.

There are one or two little matters I am trusting to you for.

A Your mother's Brougham.

B A reply as to the painting of T.P. It was not to be done until nearer our arrival, but it is

no use employing Bradley for painting. Williams is the man and you can choose the colours — it takes a good while to do it.

C There is the sale of Sligo to Yates.

D I think I asked you about harness for the Brougham. Am I to get it here or in Adelaide. What harness have I?

E About March or April I will want 2 cows in full milk or 1 cow if Bertie has something. The mother seems determined to go to Torrens Park — if we come out in April or May which seems probable. I shall not be able to write very fully I fear whilst I am on the move as I shall be for some time.

I see bags were fairly good on the 12th *[August: opening of the shooting season]* tho Kil Shassie only did 24. We had I think 32 brace. We have been twice over at Aberfeldy & we have gone over all the old spots for the last time. We called for Mrs Douglas our landlady and found her on the spot. What did Allan Baker do with his deers horns & heads — they were worth having. The Landlord here has a fancy for collecting and must have I imagine over 20 heads of red deer in the Dining Room and Lobby. He got one with 16 or 19 tines last week — hardly anyone is less than "royal" — i.e. 12 tines.

We are much interested in the Dreyfus case and in today's account of the attempted assassination of his counsel "Laborie". Delour and his associates are arrested on a charge of high treason — and a man or two have entrenched themselves in their office and defy the republic. If I had the business in hand I would blow the house about their ears around them. The French seem to me a wretched lot of hysterical decadents — mouthing and posturing & shrieking like a parcel of old women.

With love to all, dear Tommaso, Your affcte Pater"

[Then he adds:] I have received a very sensible letter from Waite. I quite approve of the appointment of *[Ives?]* (only from the description of him given me — I do not know him) but you will ruin him for everything if you give him an extravagant salary — he shd be brought on slowly not by leaps and bounds. Bakewell for instance was made perfectly worthless by this means — and Jamie Cudmore, by supposing himself rich, became a fool and was besides ruined. A man ought to be old before prosperity comes to him.

Doesn't Jo Jo collect stamps? Somebody does.

(Jo Jo Barr Smith, later Jo Gosse, did collect stamps all her life and had eventually a valuable collection.)

Joanna to Tom
Pitlochrie
15 August:

My dearest Tom,

I have your kind letter today enclosing draft for £300. I really have plenty of money to go on with but I have a mania for being quite sure that I wont run short! England is a terrible place for money running away like "snaw off a dyke" — I spend a great deal just in trifles & a good deal has to go in tips as we live at present. These big hotels are just hatching with servants, male & female & it seems always a case for putting your hand in your pocket.

I am so glad you did not take cold when you were on yr travels. I see Bertie is thinking of taking the road now with Mr Pee Waite.

You & Molly wd be sorry for Joe & for us too when you heard of Bob's scarlatina. It has been a cruel spite. The boy too has been pretty ill. It is a fortnight today but his temper-

ature has not yet been under 100. But he is mending only it will be a slow recovery. Yr father & I intend to carry out our original intention of leaving here on the 21st. We can do Joe no good for on account of Betty we can only meet occasionally in the open air. Pitlochrie does not suit me personally at all & we have only staid on on Joe's account. It is a bad place for rheumatism & for the throat — my only two weak spots. Joe wished Betty to remain at Pitlochrie with her nurse until they can all leave in the end of September. We are going first to Aberdeen for a few days. We will there see Professor Mitchell's family & we go to Huntley to see the Revd. A. Lawson's family and of course Mrs Kinloch *[once their cook]* who has a house of her own in Aberdeen — as we have given up Ireland, we are just going where the spirit moves us! Turning up in London about the 20th of September — & turning out of London about the 12th October for the south of France. I daresay we'll go to the Lakes as we have got to go for a night to Liverpool. You wd have been sorry for yr father on the 12th Tom. He wd gaze wistfully up at the moors right and left of our hotel windows & speculate on how they were getting on. I imagine he heard the ping of a shot every now & then — heaving a sigh occasionally — & recalling other twelfths when he was able to tread the heather without an ache or a pain in his limbs. I think it has made him feel his age more than anything & I was wishing we were not in the Highlands. He & I went for a drive in the moorland in this neighbourhood yesterday & we got out & just sat down and wallowed in the heather — ah Tom, growing old is sad — but growing very old is sadder still.

I am glad you like the Tennysons. I am sure Molly wd look the best at the Ball & I have no doubt you were very proud of her. I hope to hear all about it next mail. You & Molly are quite leaders of society now, Tom — and quite right too — none more fit.

I fear Jean has waited too long for her tooth being done but the trip to Melbourne will do her good even if she has to fall back on the old-fashioned mode. Joe had a tooth done in this way in Edinburgh just now. Very successfully. I hope you can take care of your nice teeth — the only good ones in the family.

Poor Kelly! *[the coachman, now employed by the Duttons.]* Miss Dutton writes me she has been to see him. He was quite cheerful but getting the thing cut out of his lip must have been very painful as he had no anaesthetic. Well that is three times for him — and twice for your father — & Dr Jonathon Hutchison may pooh pooh the idea, & say its much more likely to be tobacco, but I say its the result of driving with a eucalyptus between the lips on which was a parasitical deposit. I'm thinking of writing a letter to the "Lancet" but your father says they will laugh at me.

This is a meagre scrap dearest Tom but I wrote Molly all the news last week & there is very little of interest to narrate here. The Dreyfus case is interesting us all. Labori being shot in the back as this morning's paper describes has filled your father with the deepest rage.

Joanna to Tom
Aberdeen
22 August:

My dearest Tom,

I beg to acknowledge with thankfulness the Second of Exchange for the £300 you sent by previous mail — & also for the cheque for £27. 5/- being my Gt. Boulder dividend. You have a lot of trouble with my affairs dear Tom. I am very much obliged to you.

Yr father is writing to you as usual & I am very pinched for time this mail — We are

constantly knocking about. I am therefore just sending you this acknowledgement. I have written to Molly. Yr father says he is going to tell you all about the Mitchell family whose acquaintance we have made here. We had tea with our old cook Mrs Kinloch today! She is very comfortably settled in a nice little house & our tea & cakes were perfect.

Robert to Tom
Aberdeen
24 August.

Dear Tomasso,

I have a long letter from you of 18 July to which I can only give a short reply.

The Stock business has now adjusted itself and I sent in my business letter the Limited Company's acknowledgement that they have everything they require to enable them to collect dividends on.

I also wrote to RM and TEBS to discontinue sending these £300 quarterly payments to the mother.

I note that Miss Goyder has started for England. She behaved so dishonestly to me I have no interest in her. Unless she has someone here to whom she can go I shall not be astonished if she finds herself in a fix. *[Since 1898 the eldest daughter of the Barr Smiths' friend George Goyder had been helping George's household at Victor Harbour; her stepmother had recently died in Adelaide. Exactly how she offended Robert is not known.]*

Yes. You cannot send <u>secrets</u> by the wireless telegraph, but it has its uses tho' it cant do everything. Marconi has gone over 30 miles and hopes to reach America. "I hae me doots."

The newcomer mare you would have been better to buy at what she would fetch under £20 — if she is as good-looking as you say, and is ever to be tried for anything. You can buy her for me if you like. *[There follows a long discussion of station horses and race horses.]*

We left Pitlochry last week very pleased to get away. We could not leave Joe whilst she had not a fair way out of her troubles — Joe is not so resourceful as I used to think she was. However Bob is almost well, and Betty has a nice nurse who can ride on a Bike and is enjoying herself down to the ground. Such is life.

We have had very much pleasure in making the acquaintance of Professor Mitchell's people — they are all of the best Stamp Scotch Character. The brother Alexander we have not seen, but from the way the rest speak of him he is I imagine cock of the walk. *[The eldest brother, Alexander, worked as a book binder to put his younger brothers through medicine at University. When he turned forty he asked them to pay for him to study medicine, and proceeded to his own degree.]*

I was sorry to see that my young friend Bob had hurt his knee and Molly writes that Chris is not so strong as she would like. T. O'H writes that he had met your girls at Birksgate and adds "They are going to be very pretty women". I wrote a cheque for Bob on the Bank of Australasia. It was dated 17 August £10. I have no record of sending it but there is the heel of the cheque so I am certain it is all right. . . .

I passed Keith Hall on my way to Huntly yesterday. I saw the River Don but was not near Brux *[?]*. We like Aberdeenshire — it is more bracing than Pitlochry.

We found Lawson people very nice and naturally they made much of your mother treating me as a negligible quantity by comparison. The Rev. Alexander *[Lawson]* was very attentive to me however, he was always asking me every half hour or so "Would you like

to wash your hands?" I think he is under the impression that I suffer from diabetes or the Everlasting Pea. *[?Diabetes insipidus, a disorder in which the sufferer produces large quantities of urine.]* (TEBS)

Joanna to Tom
St Helens Edinr.
30 August:

My dearest Tom,

Thank you for sending the Ivanhoe dividend. You will indeed be surprised at the news of our return — I will not deny that it is a bitter disappointment to me — because another voyage so soon after my last is an awesome thing to look forward to. I was priming myself for either April or October [next] year, but this has completely taken the wind out of my sails Tom. But your poor father said to me two days ago that he felt our present mode of life telling on him tremendously & you know its all very well for people to say how well he looks & how young he looks — I know better & the Ways see the change in him. So when he said this I suggested to him going back instead of going to the South of France and he gladly accepted the suggestion. It was the most selfish stupidity on my part to bring him to England. You, my dear boy, always disapproved of it — and you were right — I shall never rest now till I get him back. He has very little pleasure now in travelling. He is very deaf & there is not much comfort even in the best hotel life. Of course there will be the great happiness of seeing you all again — that will be my compensation for everything dearest Tom.

We came here to meet the Ways. It has been a great pleasure. We have grown to like the doctor very much too *[Dr Edward Way, brother of the chief Justice Sir Samuel Way]*. And we are off to Glasgow this afternoon for a few days.

This is only a short note for writing is impossible this week. We have been in a boarding house here for the first time. We came out of sympathy for the people but it has been a most trying experience & not to be repeated. We have never had an hours quiet except in our bedrooms.

I am a good deal upset by this sudden move. I do not know what to do first for the time is so short. Yr father has written to the P&O. Poor old chap — He is so glad to go & has worked himself into the belief that I am equally so! Of course to see my children will be heaven but to recommence the old life out there makes me rather down-hearted. You & Molly will have to arrange for your trip in 1900 — March is I am sure the best time to start. I dreamt last night I was on our voyage & suddenly the steamer capsized — and I found myself descending into the depths of the sea quite conscious — & realizing it was the passage from the body to the spiritual life — & I did not feel at all so terrified as I expected.

Love to you all my dearest Tom.

Robert to Tom
Liverpool
5 September:

Dear Tomasso

I got your letter of 2 August today. I am sorry you did not understand that I wanted the Brougham begun at once. I know Barlow's dilatory habits of old. I think he took a year to building the last and it was wrong when it was finished. *[There follow many lines of specific instruction about how it is to be made.]*

I am glad to see you are commencing the subdivision of Hummocks — it is years since I lectured Murray on the subject *[more discussion on this]*. I am sorry to hear the Goldfield was an absolute failure. I have not yet heard anything on the subject. I was in bed until 10 and we have had Mr J.P. Short & his wife here most of the day so I have not done more than scan my letters. I have a letter from Jean — everybody says her tooth is splendid. She had a jolly time in Melbourne & likes it. I have a nice letter from Tom O'H G. He seems also to have enjoyed himself and who mentions incidentally that they have got a French cook at Menzies who sent in dishes very much to his taste.

I think you will have to buy ready made a second-hand wagonette — as nearly as possible the stamp of our old one. Seems to me we cannot get on well without it & you have a month to look about you.

Last night I developed a slight tendency to my old complaints — so we abandon Liverpool & go up to London today at 2 o'clock. The mother is a little alarmed and is for being away as soon as possible on the India. She sails on the 8th Oct. I am also beginning to believe that I cannot live in England even if I liked and on the system of having no home and knocking about Hotels I certainly do not. I am very sorry for the mother who prefers this side and this climate. What can I do — I have had two colds and this is only the 6th September?

I will telegraph to you about leaving and you will meet me with letters & newspapers to suit the progress of the Steamer I name.

Love to all.

Robert to Tom
London
12 September:

Dear Tomasso,

I have the pleasure of your letter of 8th August which reached me today. I yesterday telegraphed to you that we are returning on the India which leaves Southampton on the 6th October — we join her at Marseilles to save the Bay of Biscay.

I am much obliged to you, and to Molly, for your attention to Mr Rutherford *[Robert's New Zealand acquaintance]*. It is a singular fact that the amount of my personal acquaintance with him limits itself to spending one night with him in the train from Melbourne, when both being sleepless we passed the time in friendly chat. It was on that occasion he told me to look out for an extra good young 3 year old horse when he came up from New Zealand. His name he said was "Carbine". However he has corresponded with me ever since — He helped us much in guidance as to the Ellis affairs and the possibilities — and is as sound and good a judge of country matters especially New Zealand as any man I know. I feel myself under obligation to him and I am glad you worthily represented me.

I am sorry you give such an unsavoury report of Mr Kingsland's experiences at one time of his life, he has changed all that. Personally the worst I ever knew of him was a tendency to overcharge me for ducks and turkeys.

If old Sells were richer you would be able to deal with him. The difficulty I fancy will be that he cannot buy the one without selling the other. Your mother says his house is one of the nicest at Glenelg — I do not know it. In any case Mabel will be glad to sell as she sees the folly of holding on. I will speak to her again.

I see I am the possessor of 10 cows and Crispe promises to make money — You were

right to refuse bullocks for they did more mischief to the young trees and grounds than they were all worth. Bertie gives a poor account of the cows — but he doesn't understand the breed. Let him keep an eye upon these — see how their coats begin to shine — and the beef upon them to wobble about as they walk. Let him follow them into the sale ring and when he sees the butchers tumbling over one another in their anxiety to buy them at from 8 to 10 pounds a head — he will begin to know something about it.

By the way I see that vulgar corruption of a good word has reappeared in the naming of a horse by Bertie. Nullabor should be Nullarbor — never let me see the name again in print in its corrupted form.

I do not consent to the cutting down of the mulberry trees until I see them — and I am annoyed at any trimming of the Bidwellia at the Billiard Room window because Evans spoke to me about it — and I refused to allow it to be done — saying the character of the tree and the beauty of it was that it should sweep the ground. Evans will have to pay more attention to what I say — and act less upon his own judgement in opposition to me or he and I will not be long together. I have been very near suggesting separation several times. I see all his merits but hang me if he doesn't often seem determined to do exactly the opposite of what he knows I want. He has propounded to me the theory that "a gardener ought to have a very free hand and be allowed to work on his own system". If he carries this theory too much into practise — I shall have to ask him to extend his theory and pay himself his own wages.

As to the Brougham it may be well to get the India rubber tyres for it — if these are so much more comfortable — but they wont do on my buggy for they wont stand the brake and I wont drive on the Mount Barker Road without a brake. Stephen Ralli had India rubber tyres at Werracatta — very nice smooth silent things they were but I think he said they would not do on metalled roads. Do not sharp stones cut them? Do not forget the size of the Brougham. I told you we sat in Aunt Jean's — it did not look large for one horse and was amply roomy.

As to Wheaton's land it is a little dear but not absurdly so. I should not wonder if Cummins had offered you 47/6. I sold it all to him — you say I got 50/- for the 1872 acres and 30/- for the balance of the 3000 acres so he is asking a profit of about £1200. It is many years since he bought the 30/- land — Probably 20 years. The charge to you for Government water is not all loss for if you pay you will use — and in any case you will no doubt be able to subdivide. It is a matter wholly for your own judgement. I shall not be surprised if some day you get the Bundaleer water pipes down to Snowtown *[near The Hummocks]*. There will be local agitation for it no doubt. We stopped it once but these things have a habit of repeating themselves in S. Australia and have to be faced . . .

We are going down next week to see Mabel's new "property" *[Stag's End]*. She has a Baronet on one side and the M.P. for the County on the other — as Miss Doolette said when asked if she knew me — Oh yes Papa's property and Mr Barr Smith's adjoin. Three packs of hounds are accessible so Fred Braund took very kindly to the suggestion when I said "You must buy a hunting". I fancy old Wills *[Braund's employer]* will make him sit up if he hears he is hunting — With love to all.

[There is a post script:] I told you Fred Elder had addressed circulars to the George Elder heirs about the Cross to cost £404 about. Jean Elders relatives McKechnies gave £20 Minny *[Jemima Patrick]* gave £20. The A.W. Elder family £125 and your mother £239. Your mother will not allow me or my or her family to join in the expense.

Robert to Tom
London
28 September:

Dear Tomasso,

I have to owe your letter of 24 August with thanks.

You seem to have done all with Barlow that was possible. It is not necessary to also be punctual for there is no telling when we may leave Mt Barker — however it is as well to keep him "up to his bits?" The Brougham should be painted the old colour — as we always have the same livery.

Dr Way, who dined with us this week, says he has an excellent man Morris — his address is Way's old house in North Terrace — but the man is employed in Halls Yard just now. Dr Way says I can have him and that he will never seek to reclaim him — but I said no. If however Kelly does not ask to come back — or if Kelly's delayed then there is no reason why we do not take Morris for a month or so — giving us time to look about, and allowing him to go when they — the Ways — get out. This may be a way out of a difficulty. Morris could be made to understand the arrangement, and that I cannot keep him if Dr Way wants him back and he wants to go. The better arrangement however is that Kelly shd come to me at once if he wants to come — and it does not place Dutton in a hole. These things have to be done with some consideration of others.

You know the letter from Canada is from Clarke. He seems to be on his beam ends and naturally blames the climate & the Canadian Government. He has lost all the cattle he took into the country and has only food until the end of August — so I am too late to help him. I enclose his letter but as he asks me to treat it as "confidential" you will not let it go beyond yourself.

Even your mother admits that Lady Baker has proved herself a humbug over the Miss Forsyth business. I forget the facts but Lady B. has not been very straight. You can, I think, ignore her patter as to not wishing to tell Miss F. and so forth — its mere jabbery rather.

I am glad to see Crispe's cows are getting fat — I hope they are not destroying the fences. — The estimate of oranges, 800 cases, shows what a poor crop we have had — the increase of price will not balance the shortage of quantity — however it cannot be helped — the rise in the price of wool will help to balance the deficiency of oranges. Here I see Australian oranges pretty freely on sale everywhere, but I have not enquired the price. Pears from California in the most wonderful condition, as good as plucked from the tree, are everywhere.

Lame. I am not improving at all in my walking, and a riding horse will be one of my first cares — but I think I ought to have one which will go in harness — if we want him to. You can keep your eye open.

I am writing to Molly this mail so will stop.

Joanna to Tom
Savoy Hotel
4 Oct.:

My dearest Tom,

I am just writing you all a few loving words this mail — as it is my last chance I suppose from England. We are all packed up & we start out on Monday for Paris — On Wednesday for Marseilles — & on Friday we get the India & sail off into space. Oh, I do dread the voyage — but if I get to Adelaide safely it will certainly be my last. Yr father is much better

but I live in constant fear of his catching another cold. Surely he will keep right till Monday but the weather is fiendish. Storms have been raging for more than a week. This is a miserable climate. But then if we live to get back we'll be groaning over too much sun — and too much heat. What is wrong is that we get extremes. If one could only have it moderately cold — But in this life everything goes into extremes.

We have been rushing about every day trying to finish our little shoppings. But everything has to stop today as the baggage has to go — Tomorrow and Friday I am to be at home to visitors. Col. Fergusson has written to say he wants to see us — so he comes tomorrow. Also Mrs Severn — Some of the Acres family — Some friends of Mabs. My godson Ben Boothby & his wife — and a few waifs & strays. Our sitting room is very small. I hope there wont be many at a time. It is my first attempt at a reception! When I recall my nice big drawing room at Torrens Pk I feel the painful difference. These Savoy suites have too small rooms. Thats whats wrong — & those newer hotels I expect are improving on this — and may soon run the poor Savoy to a back place. The 'Carlton' is a very fine one on the corner of the Haymarket & Pall Mall — a capital site. But there's something quite uniquely comfortable about the 'Savoy'. There are a great many old servants for one thing who take an interest in everything & help to make things go.

You have been very gay in Adelaide. You & Molly. It wd do you both good. What is this we hear about Erlistoun? Very good news indeed. *[Erlistoun's first baby was born the following January, 1900.]* Molly, who scents out things pretty well must have known all about it — yet never made a sign! Nor Jeanie either. I am very glad & hope all will go smoothly & well.

Wont I rejoice to see you again my well-beloved Tomaso,

Ever your devoted Mother

Robert to Tom
London
4 October 1899:

Dear Tomasso

I got a few days ago your letter of 30 August and was glad to see all was going well in Adelaide. The Hunt Club Ball a success — Molly & you doing the bossing with the "Toffs" and moving in the uppermost "suckles" — enjoying yourselves down to the ground — of course you quoted "In Memoriam" to the Governor and convinced him you were an ardent student of his late lamented papa. Everybody speaks well of the Governor and Lady Tennyson so I am prepared to like them should they give me the chance — which according to present accounts seems highly improbable.

Sheep — There is no harm of course in testing the market with your 216 lambs. The thing to strive for however is to get rid of the lot early. I see Murray doubts about the condition of the balance — my notion is, that an attempt shd be made so to keep them as to leave them all fat, and for this purpose you might give them a little more than their own share of the grass on the plains which is the place that fattens best.

5th October:

At this point I was disturbed by somebody or something and had to stop. People are always coming in abruptly.

We have got our luggage away to the ship — which sails one of these days, I half think tomorrow. We at all events go on the 9th Oct. — 1 day in Paris and sail from Marseilles on

the 13th — I shall be very glad when I am on the ocean I have not enjoyed myself the smallest bit in England or Scotland. I fancy its partly age and that I am breaking up.

The Bishop and Mrs Kennion came to London "a purpus" to see us — awfully kind they have been in the way of urging invitations — The Bishop has presented me with a Glastonbury Thorn, the parent of which, as you know, was brought over to Bath by Joseph of Aramathea when he left Palestine immediately upon the crucifixion of our Saviour.

Mrs Severn, the artist's wife, called this afternoon — So too did her brother Colonel John Adam Fergusson. *[Mary Severn, wife of the water colourist Walter Severn, and Col. Fergusson were brother and sister of Sir James Fergusson, a former Governor of South Australia (1869-73).]* Really the Fergussons are very faithful to us. Just fancy how time flies. John, Adam Fergusson's son is now on his way to Africa to fight the Boers i.e. if there is to be any fighting — but up to date it has been mere bluster & bluff — tho' of course the fighting may begin tomorrow, that is the tip . . . I do not see how it can be avoided when things have gone so far.

Your mother insists that we are to live in winter at Torrens Park. I dont know about this as she always says she hates the place. However the Greenhouses will be very bare without anything in them, and if Graus can grow any beginning of big things in pots it might be well. However I can discuss this when I get out. The mischief is that Evans obstinately goes in for things which require labour — whereas it is possible to have things which are green & which can be kept alive & healthy by watering them once a week.

I don't quite understand why you did not tell Kelly we were coming back — my only difficulty was, interference of any kind with Dutton, but as Dutton says he cannot afford to take Kelly to Anlaby — the coast is clear, and I am glad to get Kelly back.

I think you were quite right not to become sponsored by Patterson — if he is the man I think I have a very poor opinion of him. I admit I have no intimate knowledge. Is he the man who was over those wretched places the poor Commercial Bank got from Mrs Dean Grant and that lot?

I have already given you instructions as to rubbery tyres for the Mother's Brougham. They are silent but I cant believe they will last on metal roads.

Peggy Swan is engaged and no doubt will shortly be married to a youth King who was a junior officer in the Arcadia by which the Swans travelled. *[Elizabeth Swan was the only child of Robert's late friend and partner William Swan.]* Mrs Swan was here today and professes entire satisfaction on the engagement — She thinks he is "quite a gentleman" and "well connected". Judging from his name he must be of Royal descent. However he is getting, I think, a nice young girl, and if Milo wool continues to fetch 1/- they will have a large income provided "Uncle George" will let them have it. Mrs Swan informs me that Mr King, who is only 23 has made up his mind to go in for "agricultural pursuits" — like Fred Elder's. The marriage would seem to indicate that the old lady is not so mercenary as people said she was. I have heard a guess made as to why she assents so readily to this marriage — but wild horses could not tear it out of me — what that guess is — never — no —

Joe Hawker was here today with Betty & Bob — she lives near Holmwood in "Cypress Cottage." I suggest she should rename it, say, "Cemetery Villa" or "Coffin Castle" or "Gravesend", "Tomb Lodge" or some well-sounding combination. It is getting on for 11 — and I must away to bed — I love my bed.

I think Wheaton's place would be a wonderfully good addition to Hummocks. I suppose he would take 45/- 47/6 cash.

> The Horns are going out to settle finally in So Australia. He is to build near their old place. Now is your chance to sell at a big price the land your other side of the road.

The "old place" was Wairoa in Aldgate, built by William Austin Horn, the mining magnate and politician, which Robert had given Tom and Molly as a hills house in 1896. (It featured in the film *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.) An amateur sculptor, Horn carved faces in rocks in the garden at Wairoa (now Marbury School) when he lived there. The faces remain, though some of their noses were mischievously hammered off by Christine Barr Smith as a child.

So Robert and Joanna returned home to Adelaide — never to leave again. They were back in South Australia for the beginning of the next century, 1900.

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1 The 11th Earl of Seafield (1876-1915) was a Scottish peer who lived, as did his father the 10th Earl, in Oamaru, New Zealand; he married in 1898 Nina, daughter of Joseph Townend, MD, JP, of Christchurch, New Zealand. Their only child, born 1906, later inherited the title.

2 Mrs Alexander Hay had unnaturally black hair. Her niece Nancy Gosse declared to the author that she applied black boot polish to it.

3 Bessie Kerr (née Mitchell) was a sister of Mary Isobel Barr Smith. She and her husband Dick lived in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, and had three daughters, two of whom, Jennie and Christie, lived on in the old house until the 'forties. They wrote to say they had willed their house to their niece Joe (then Lady Gosse), but after she visited them to view the property they cantankerously changed their minds and left it to other relatives. (Letter from Molly Legoe to the author, 1980.)

4 William Hood Calder succeeded Pegler as Manager of Milo and Welford Downs in 1897. "He helped carry the runs through some of their most difficult periods" (Sharp and Crump, *History of Milo*).

CHAPTER 15

1900 AND AFTER

The day after the travel-weary Barr Smiths embarked for their return journey, war was declared by Britain on the Boers of South Africa. Australia was at once involved and eager would-be soldiers surged to the recruiting offices in Adelaide to join the first South Australian contingent. Such was the excitement that there were almost immediately enough applications to fill six squadrons instead of the one to be sent. But it was a bitter disappointment for the young men to learn that they were expected to walk through Africa, not ride, as the War Office decided to send infantry rather than shoulder the expense of a cavalry. The Commandant in South Australia was then Colonel Gordon, he who long ago had acted in the Torrens Park theatricals and gossiped with Joanna during her Largs Bay Hotel holiday, and who now hurried round to greet Robert when he arrived home to suggest to him that he might feel patriotic enough to bear the expense of supplying some of the horses. "Most certainly", he answered. "You can tell the Government that they can draw on me for the amount required for the purchase of the whole of the horses."

The Premier of the day, Kingston, was only too pleased to agree and announced it in Parliament House the next afternoon.

> The House cheered and cheered as Mr Barr Smith's offer — following on the notification to members that it was the decision of the Government to send the *mounted* contingent — was announced. (Gordon, *Chronicles of a Gay Gordon*)

Robert, thankfully back on Adelaide soil, also sent a letter to the Anglican Bishop of Adelaide offering to finish the building of the Cathedral, which had lapsed in 1890 as Church funds raised for it had all been spent. St Peters, today so exquisite, had then only an incomplete nave, no towers and no spires. Robert completed it with his £10,000. Typically he wanted no recognition for this and politely rejected the Bishop's request to set up a plaque on the finished building to commemorate his gift. And when later he donated three stained glass windows designed by Morris & Co. he respectfully excused himself and Joanna from attending the unveiling ceremony, which would have drawn public attention to them.

Returning from the exhaustion of travel Robert wanted nothing so much as a peaceful and private life. Their return was accompanied by both glad tidings and sad. The glad news was the birth in January of Erlistoun's first child — a daughter called Joanna. (This was the third grandchild named for Joanna — there was now a Joanna Barr Smith, later Gosse, a Joanna Giles and a Joanna Mitchell, later Thomson.) The sad news was that George's household was in turmoil.

His companion of many years, John Thorley, had had some kind of seizure, perhaps a stroke. Miss Bidmead, the housekeeper, had sent to town for a nurse to assist her and informed Robert that although "Thorley's condition has improved somewhat he is by no means out of danger from this attack even and Dr O'Leary says that at any time we must expect a return."[1] A few days later (7 December 1899) Dr O'Leary wrote to Robert, "I also pointed out that

complete rest at night was most essential and consequently that he should not have charge of Mr Smith at night or assist at the dressing in the morning." What to do? The parents must have decided to dispense with the ageing Thorley's services. Another letter from Miss Bidmead stated (15 December 1899):

> John . . . I think is quite expecting to hear from you but I am sure the most he expects is that he is to give up having charge of George. If it is conveyed to him *[George]* by letter I am afraid his rage will be ungovernable. Would it be possible for Mr Martin for whom he has a wholesome awe, to come down for a day and arrange the matter in all its details with him — He could also make it sound plainer to George than a letter would do . . . I am much more afraid of the effect of the excitement on George than on John . . . In explaining the matter to George it will be well to emphasize the fact that the poor old man is likely to be ill at any time and therefore it is better for him to be away, because the boy *[George was past forty]* has a perfect dread of seeing him ill again as he was for of course he looked very dreadful.

The result of this was that the once cheerful establishment at Victor was broken up — the house was sold, furniture auctioned and accounts paid. John Thorley retired and a house was bought at Somerton and new staff engaged to supervise George. The new Somerton house was called "Seaforth" after the old.

For some time, now that the children were all independent, Joanna and Robert had been thinking of closing up their large house and building something smaller and more "modern". Sir Samuel Way had mentioned this in a letter to Lady Kintore in 1898: "The Barr-Smiths entertain in the same princely way as ever. I hear they intend to build a house in town and not put Torrens Park into commission again."[2] Now Joanna declared she could not bear to live at Torrens Park any more. They continued to spend summers at Mt Barker but in 1901 rented a house in the city, Eothen, on East Terrace, for the winter. Then in September 1902 there were two earthquakes on consecutive days, which settled any lingering doubt. Joanna, with her fear of earthquakes, and wakened by the tremor, was terrified as walls at Torrens Park cracked. By the summer of 1905, after a wintering at St Olives, Glenelg, rather than the out-of-favour Torrens Park, they settled into what Joanna referred to as her "cottage" in Angas Street — a cottage which contained sixteen rooms, plus cellar and stables.

By that time there were three more grandchildren — Erlistoun had produced her son Mark, destined like his father to be a University professor and Vice-Chancellor; Mary Isobel had a second son, christened, like his father, Tom (later Sir Tom) Elder Barr Smith; and Jean Giles's fourth and last child was born, a son William.

Although few letters survive from this period, an outline of Robert's correspondence is given in a leather-covered notebook (Booklet E, TEBS) in which his spidery handwriting recorded week by week from 1906 every letter he sent to England. (If there were earlier notebooks they are lost.) It seems typical of Robert 's orderliness to keep such a record. There is another book (Booklet C, TEBS) in which in 1906 he listed systematically all the books he possessed, in both houses — thousands of titles. Also in that book are earlier records dating from 1880 of pictures bought overseas and details of how they were to be sent to Adelaide.

His Mail Book continues regularly without falter from 1906 to 1912, when it suddenly stops. The entries are terse — just the names of correspondents and brief notes of subjects discussed in the letters — and though the writing over the years becomes increasingly illegible and less illuminating, the book provides some information about what the family was doing.

Mail 4th Jany. 1906 *[reads the first entry].*
Betty Hawker
W. Beard of W. Beard & Co. about Fleming
Chippendale — *[illegible]* — Bob Hawker — colour blue & *[illegible]*
Joe Acres
ES & Co London copied Mt Barker
Chronicle with Bishop's portrait to Joe. Have written to Betty.

Mail 11th Jany.
Newspapers "Observer" 6th Jan. Bishops portrait to Mabel
Mabel
Alexr. Fleming copied Mt Barker
Millie Clazy Acres Pedigree.

Mail 18th Jany.
Newspapers Outer Harbour H. Anders, — Chippendale — Fred Braund —
W. Reeve on Irving — Joe Acres — Mabel — Chippendale.
A.W. Chippendale a letter —
Joe Acres Her mother's Monday — Mrs Macgeorge — Ethel — the Macgeorges — Boothby — Life of Wallace — Brookfield's Circle *[These may be titles of books? for Robert and Joe shared a passion for reading. After "Circle" follows another illegible name — then :]* Yellow Arum Lily — Really gold & strong — Free Trade with any Nations — Milnes £20,000 Cup — Martin & Cooper's illness.
Erlistoun goes to London — Bob's birthday

Mail 25 January 1906
Newspapers Chippendale, Waring, on Outer Harbour
Betty Critic
Mabel: Story of birthday telegram — Why did she not send name of hotel to which Josephine was shifting — Martins illness — Cooper also ill and probably dying — Fruit poor everywhere — Orange crop half gone — Mrs Way with us — Erlistoun's State & going to London to learn lip reading — Willie only *[smudged, unreadable]*

This is the way Robert compiled it and it is difficult to unravel, but from his Mail Book it is evident that letters went off to Joe and to Mabel week and week about, and more to any of the family travelling abroad; every week or so a letter goes to Fred Braund, his son-in-law; to his great friend Arthur Chippendale, to Elder Smith & Co. in London and to H. Anders who managed Robert's own London office. At least once a month he wrote to James Bain, Bookseller of Haymarket, ordering books, about twenty a month, names of which are hard now to read and identify. Every close relation in England is sent a letter and cheque on his or her birthday — £50 for the daughters, £100 for sons or sons-in-law, £20 to grandchildren — and similarly graded amounts are noted as sent at Christmas. Occasionally a cheque is sent to the girls to buy a frock. Itemised are the postcards and letters to grandchildren. Sheaves of newspapers are sent to seven or so people and Father Lionel Crawford, by then the Bishop of Stafford, has about a letter a month as does Captain Hector, the P&O commander.

Joanna was also writing regularly, as Robert often comments, to her family and to friends, but only a few of her letters, which include a batch to Lady Tennyson, seem to have survived. Robert and Joanna had not expected at that stage of their lives to befriend the new youngish Governor Lord Tennyson who had been appointed while they were away. But they found the Vice-Regal

couple delightful and Joanna and Lady Tennyson found an instant rapport despite the difference in ages, so that Joanna bequeathed her diamond earrings ("which my husband gave me in the year one thousand nine hundred and eight" reads the will) to her new friend. Again Joanna's forecasting was at fault, however, for she outlived the younger lady by three years.

Joanna's writing is firm and readable — a contrast to Robert's. The first letter to Lady Tennyson (directed to Melbourne, for Lord Tennyson had been appointed Governor-General and they now lived there) has an unexpected letterhead which she does little to account for:[3]

Woodside Hotel
November 11th [1902]:

> I have been thinking about you a great deal. I have plenty of time to think now for I have left home & am living at a little country hostelry, trying to call my solitude — 'peace,' but not always succeeding.... Melba arrives today. It is a fierce hot wind day & with the brazen sun & the burning, dusty air I fear the poor lady will be wishing she had left Adelaide out of her programme.... I have just finished Robt Hitchens' new novel "Felix." I think it wd interest you. A few years ago I became through adverse circumstances mixed up with morphia maniacs and I believe this book is a perfectly truthful description of the terrible degradation that follows the indulgence in this awesome drug.... I never allow myself to think you will be in Melbourne when we go over. Indeed I shd be glad to think of Lord Tennyson & you & the children coolly & comfortably lodged at Marble Hill for these hot months ahead ... Pray do not think of answering this letter. Believe me, dear Lady, your sympathising & affectionate friend,
>
> Joanna Barr Smith.

When the Tennysons left Australia the correspondence continued for some years. Joanna's letters show the other side of her strong character — insecure, somewhat too servile and effusive.

May 19th [1904]:

> Ever dear Lady Tennyson,
>
> I have just got your kind, charming letter which made me feel ashamed — I should have written to you long before I did. I sometimes think one of my blunders in life has been to think too little of myself! I mean by that I ought to be more ready to believe that it is possible for people to like me — and remember me — & wish to be kind to me — but I truly never feel I can inspire that so I miss something sometimes. If it were only myself who suffered, it would be all right — but I much fear I occasionally leave the impression that I am unappreciative & ungrateful ...
>
> *[The Tennysons now lived in the poet's old house, Farringford, on the Isle of Wight.]* But what a delightful house to live in — books everywhere, and as I always feel convinced that walls retain impressions I shd feel at Farringford that the Divine Spirit of Poetry pervaded everything I shd feel inclined to sit down and wait for IT, hoping that the Divine Spark might be quickened into life & flow through my being.

In August Joanna wrote more robustly to her friend:

40 Angas St.
August 31st [1904]:

> Dear Lady of my Heart;
>
> I dont seem to have written you for a long time, but we thought and spoke much of you on your birthday.
>
> On that day I had a grandmother's luncheon. Eighteen grandmothers. Mrs Monteith,

the mother of Mrs Marten, was our oldest grandmother and Mrs Bakewell our youngest. *[Her friendship with Mrs Monteith dates back to her first letter from Glenelg in 1853.]* We all enthusiastically drank your health & wished you every good and perfect gift. I think if you had been present you would have been both gratified and amused. I had a big wedding cake in the middle of the table & standing on it a doll dressed as a modern grandmother for which my old ladies were expected to toss! Tell Harold *[the Tennysons' youngest son, aged twelve]* this — then they were all weighed before they left and I am really afraid to tell you how many stones of grandmothers there were!

Sir Geo. and Lady Le Hunte *[Sir George Ruthven Le Hunte was the newly-appointed Governor]* seem pleasing people here greatly. Personally I find him a very stodgy man, he has no sense of humour at all. Ah. When I remember the twinkle in Lord Tennyson's eyes I heave a sigh. I was just going on with something ill-natured — but I stop in time. For you dont like me to say sharp things — even if they are clever.

Molly and her new baby *[Tom]* are very well. He is a very creditable baby ...

October 3 [1904]:

Ever dear Lady Tennyson,

I want to thank you for your kind letter — but you must not think it necessary to write to me for you know how all my life long I have tried not to be a bore. It has been a sort of mania and has often stood in my way.

We are rather gay here at the moment. The G.G. and Lady Northcote are paying our State a visit and Sir George and Lady Le Hunte are interesting themselves very much in the entertaining of their visitors. Already to my quiet corner here come echoes from the outer world. Some latent jealousies & heart-burnings of course. Nothing of this kind could pass off without these. If ever people are practical illustrations of the old story of the man with his ass who in trying to please everybody pleases nobody — A Colonial Governor & his wife are — But as they rarely realize it it does not much matter. There comes a time in all our lives when we realize how little anything matters — as long as our domestic relations are intact.

I have been rather sorry for Joanna. She and her daughter Betty Hawker were staying for a week at Freshwater Bay *[Isle of Wight]*. Poor Joe was simply dying to see the rooms your father-in-law lived in. My girls were fed on his poetry for years of their lives and to be near the house where he lived & wrote filled her heart with enthusiasm. I almost wish she had had the cheek to write and tell you who she was & ask to be admitted for half an hour. But her principle was right. She inherits her mother's desire not to be a bore.

Angas Street,
Oct. 4. [1904]:

I have just got your second kind letter this morning & as Bob & I are entirely with you in the matter of the Home *[Queen's Home Hospital]* being kept for Maternity cases only we shall I hope be able to circumvent the doctors.

The one thing that has always vexed and disappointed me was that it shd be called the Queens Home. The Queen had nothing to do with it. It was your brain and your heart that was at the back of it all & it should have borne your name, and with my socialistic leanings I shd like it to have been called the "Audrey Tennyson Home." The old & beautiful word 'Lady' no longer at this stage of the world's history bears the same signification.

I have already written you this mail. The G.G. & Lady Northcote are here & she is delighting every body by her pleasant, kindly manners & ways.

I hear she is coming to tea with us in this cottage. I tried to spare her, but I have to deal with a very strong will where I come into collision with Lady Le Hunte. She is only half my size in height and breadth & I have always noticed little people have fierce wills & will brook no opposition.

Joanna's references to her "socialistic leanings" are interesting, and she appears to have been regarded as unconventional by some members of the Adelaide Establishment. In a letter to a former lecturer in Law at the University of Adelaide, Dr Pennefeather (whose own letter unfortunately has not survived), Sir Samuel Way had gossiped in 1899:

I am sorry to hear what you say about Mrs Braund. . . . The women of that family are all somewhat whimsical. You know Mrs Barr-Smith was confirmed at Bishops Court before they went to England — Mrs Hawker that was, is a confirmed Socialist and I fancy that her mother is infected with the same fad — the Alexander Lang Elder women are Spiritualists and possibly your informant may have mistaken Mrs Braund for one of them.[4]

Joanna's letters continue:

40 Angas Street,
April 26th [1908]:

. . . Joanna Barr Smith is to be married in three days. She told me you had written her so kind a letter and you were sending her — oh lucky girl, a Tennyson book, which I would much rather have in my trousseau than a silver tea-set. How proud I am of those two annotated volumes sent by kind Lord Tennyson. It takes me aback to realize these dear boys at the present time. Lionel probably going to Cambridge in October and dear Aubrey following. I hope they have passed the final last month. Aubrey is ahead of his brother in taking a 1st class but it does not follow that he keeps ahead in everything. And Harold is going to school now & Osborne *[Naval college]* in January. Dear, dear they will be men before we know where we are.

. . . I wish I could show you Molly's little Ursula *[later Ursula Hayward, who built and lived in Carrick Hill]*. She is a plain child but a face full of wit and wickedness. She will be something in the world I am sure. I do wish I were not so old. To live again in these young lives would be so delightful . . . I came back from Melbourne much better. I liked being there. The Toorak ladies were very kind to me — and did not try to patronise me . . .

I hope the appointment of Sir Thos Gibson Carmichael to Victoria will make it possible to get an English successor to Sir Geo. Le Hunte. The abolition of State Governors is very much in the air, especially in this state which provides the next vacancy. I was hoping our very good friends Mr Victor Nelson Hood would get on the Governor General's staff but Lord Dudley is bringing out his own clientele. I dont fancy the Melbourne folks will take kindly to a Scotch Governor but we know nothing of him . . .

Have you a motor? or do you keep to that good old animal the horse which has stood us in good stead & which I hate to see discarded for these noisy, smelly motors. But speed in everything is the keynote of our age . . .

I have been reading the last book of that man Upton Sinclair who wrote "The Jungle" exposing all the horrors of canning meat etc. He has now written a book showing up the New York wealthy class [The Metropolis, *1908]*. I think it must be grossly exaggerated — but no doubt there are frightful instances to be found of extravagance and immorality.

Jan 11th [1909]:

[She discusses the just-departed vice-regal couple:] The LeHuntes left, with universal expressions of goodwill. Lady LeHunte wrote me Trinidad *[his next appointment]* was promotion — and they were very pleased with the appointment. I had been thinking it to be just the opposite. But I suppose a better income & being nearer England tells as an advantage.

I have been losing so many of my friends this year. I suppose it is so with all old people — the passing of the contemporaries. That suggests to me a play called "The Passing of the Third Floor Back". No doubt you have heard of it. My daughter Mabel was quite carried away by it but I fancy there were some who took exception to the plot. *[Jerome K. Jerome's play of 1908 ran for seven years.]*

I have not been in a theatre for six years. How one has to set loose from all that one prized and loved when the cruel grip of Eld lays hold of one. This is a sort of grandiloquent sentence — very silly it reads now that I have written it — but alas! there is no time to re-write. Smile and say "Poor Dear."

I hope those precious lads of yours are well in health. And Lord Tennyson. Will you take his hand in yours and clasp it for me? I can see him — and feel refreshed by his smile, with my mental eyes. I have developed an extraordinary faculty for seeing the absent. I close my eyes and empty my mind & by and bye they come. And with the varying expressions that used to leave an impression on my mind — comical — pathetic — genial. Its really very interesting. Try it.

Molly was here yesterday & her brood. Her little daughter Ursula is very clever & can talk & sing altho she is not much over a year and a half. Molly is the same sweet kindly woman and her married daughter looks nearly as old as herself.

Have you come across a book called "The Miracle"? Sir T. Fowell Buxton *[the previous Governor]* has sent it to me this mail — because one of the prominent characters in it is supposed to be his son, Noel — I am just reading it — and it is, as you may suppose, an idealised Noel — but he is really a fine man, when he lets Macedonia alone. He was always my favourite of the family but his constant struggle between his fidelity to his own Order and his sympathy with the man in the street was almost comical, and used to put him in awkward corners sometimes. *[Noel served in South Australia as his father's ADC.]* He promised to let me know when he lost his heart — but each letter informs me that he is still unattached.

The Dudleys *[the 2nd Earl of Dudley succeeded Lord Tennyson as Governor General]* are coming over to Marble Hill. I believe it is partly Lord Richard Nevill's doing *[Nevill was Tennyson's Private Secretary and stayed on with Lord Dudley]* . . . I hope they will like it but I am doubtful.

Mt Barker

April 7th. [1909]:

. . . We have got a new State Governor now and his family. I dont know if I shall see them at all for I wont be out at all this winter. I have been sadly crippled with rheumatism and am almost a complete recluse.

If Lord Tennyson were to see how I prize and love the books he so kindly sent me I know he would feel pleased and rewarded for his goodness. I always carry them about me. We are now packing up to go down to the little town box for the winter. The summer has not been a cruel one. Only a few frizzling days and nights but everyone is sighing for rain to freshen us up. Oh for a sight of England in April.

November 11th [1909]:

> . . . I see you are missing your first born — When our sons go out in life they come not back again. At least not in the old way. But we must accept the inevitable & try to make them feel that the old home is for them just the same. Aubrey is still at Eton & Harold at Osborne. I like to know all about them — so that I can follow their careers. *[Both these boys, Aubrey and Harold, were killed at war within a few years.]*
>
> I see you are very concerned over the Budget. Noel Buxton is going to try to be elected for Norfolk & against him there is standing a young man in whom we are interested. He began life as a 4th officer in a P&O ship — captivated one of our Adelaide belles — the daughter of a rich squatter, during one of his voyages. *[The rich squatter was Robert's old partner William Swan and the belle his only daughter Peggy; cf. Robert to Tom, 5 October 1899, Chapter 14.]* They were married & afterwards the man studied for the Law and passed as a barrister. The lady's heart is set on her husband's getting into parliament & he and Noel Buxton are representing their different parties. Mrs King, née Peggy Swan is a very favourable specimen of a Colonial girl, & she has three beautiful children. Of course I must want Mr Buxton to get in. He is a dear old friend, but I have a good deal of sympathy with those two ambitious young things.

Adelaide,
July 24th [1911]:

> . . . I hope the exams were all satisfactorily got over. They are trying times for mothers. And I am always hoping that there may be a change in these educational arrangements. It is not only ignorance that makes a fellow fail. He is often full of knowledge — but nerves or something come in the way & he fails — while a duffer gets through . . . And now the Coronation *[of King George V]* is a thing of the past. But what a wonderful spectacle! I dont like to hear you say that there may never be another. Oh no — it cannot come to that. But these are sad times & fill us with anxiety. All we people out here hear of our King and Queen fills us with hope that it will be a reign of wisdom & peace.
>
> I am glad you thought my children looking well. Molly is wonderful. I am so glad she is having this little change . . . My old man is very well but ageing somewhat. Memory, sight & hearing all leave us stranded. But the kindly sympathy of friends & the companionship of books makes life still very attractive. This place is pretty much the same as when you left it — save for electric trams which have made a considerable change, and almost everybody drives a motor car — comfortable carriages — fat horses driven by fat coachmen have disappeared. It is a pity. The motor car is an ugly object . . .
>
> My contemporaries are dying out. I shall soon be the last rose of summer. Lady Milne is still alive, 93. But she is almost a previous generation. Does Lord Tennyson do anything in hexameters now? Molly says Aldworth *[the Tennyson's other house, in Surrey]* is such a beautiful home. Oh these English homes! To hear of them makes my teeth water.
>
> My daughter Mabel has a very sweet little place in Herts — and although she is fifty-odd of this year, she has begun hunting again and has such a happy life. You liked Chrissie's husband — we scarcely knew him but Molly is very pleased with him. *[In 1910 Christine Barr Smith had married Jos — Captain Edwin Wright of the Dragoon Guards — and gone with him to a posting in Cairo.]*

Meanwhile the sparse jottings, even the addresses, in Robert's Mail Book help to fill out the movements of the family. Joe Acres went backwards and forwards to India; Mabel stayed put — beautifying Stag's End and taking little nearby holidays with old girl friends; the Mitchell family

were travelling in England in 1906, and Erlistoun seized the opportunity to take lessons in lip-reading. Shortly afterwards the O'Halloran Giles family moved to England for over a year (1907-08) at the time their son Hew was enrolling for Cambridge.

In June 1907 Mary Isobel produced (though unremarked in the Mail Book) the last of the grandchildren, the admired and clever Ursula — and some months after that event, in April 1908, the eldest grandchild Joe-Joe was allowed to marry, as she had been pleading to do for some time, her beloved Jimmy Gosse, grandson of the Dr Gosse who had attended Joanna and her children long ago. Joe-Joe's parents would not allow an earlier marriage and in any case Molly told her daughter she would never permit one of her children to marry while she herself was in the family way. A year later, 1909, Joanna and Robert became great-grandparents when a Gosse son was born and called, predictably, Robert.

Miss Fickert had died in 1906 and the family erected a stained glass window — again to a Morris & Co design — at St Andrews Church, Walkerville, in her memory. Joe Hawker and Mabel Braund helped to organise the window in England, and one of Joe's letters about it to her brother Tom (9 February 1907) came from Nice, where she was spending a few months and had taken her daughter Betty for singing lessons.

> You may expect another Melba when you see her next. The man says she has a good voice, but to the uninitiated the sounds she brings out at her lesson, are somewhat weird. (TEBS)

No career came of the singing. Betty went on to marry a soldier eight years later and bring up her own children in Sussex far from Concert Halls. Joe goes on with family news; her son Bob was having his last year at Bradfield College. He was eighteen:

> ... and getting quite a big chap, not as tall as Hew Giles, but quite a fair size — somewhat plain, people unkindly say — like me — but that you will find it hard to believe! ... We have taken a shooting in Ireland for the summer, Bob and George *[Acres]* are very keen to shoot. They say this is quite a good one. The man who owns it ... has been working up his shootings for some years — There is good fishing too. No doubt we shall land the salmon of the year. You had better watch for a description of catches in The Field.

The happy description of a future family holiday sounds like a repetition of Joanna and Robert with their shooting summers in the Highlands. But it was not so. Soon after this Joe's marriage to George Acres disintegrated and they separated. When they divorced in 1915 Joe renamed herself Joanna Hawker by deed poll but continued to live in England, where both her children were settled. But all that was in the future.

Miss Fickert's death was not noted as a subject in Robert's Mail Book, but various other deaths were — Cav. Colley, Mrs Ayers, Dean Marryat, Sallie Way, Joseph Fisher — and it must have seemed as if the landmarks were all disappearing. One subject he constantly commented on, in letters to Mabel, was Bertie, who, after a holiday in Britain in 1903, was apparently not enjoying the life on the land to which Robert had sent him for training following his failure at Oxford. "Bertie starts for Milo", Robert noted, 26 July 1906. "Does not commit himself to a country life" (Booklet E, TEBS).

Several times he noted that Bertie had gone to Sydney or Melbourne or Brisbane and especially now and then that he had written an affectionate letter to his mother. By late 1907 Bertie had again managed to escape the boredom of station life to go on safari in East Africa. Four letters of his have been preserved.[5]

Bertie to his sister Joe
Sirgoei Lake [Africa]
23 Feb. [No year date on letter but it would be 1908.]:

I got a letter from you 2 days ago at this out-of-the-way corner of the earth by a native runner. As it had been out to Adelaide and then forwarded to Nairobi, it must have seen a good deal of the inside of different mail bags on its course before it arrived here, secured in a cleft stick borne by a coloured gentleman attired in the garb of Old Gaul.

We *[he is with a guide, Tarlton]* are camped here for a week trying to get lion. They are awfully troublesome & difficult brutes to get a shot at & rather hot stuff when you do get a chance as they charge when wounded almost always. I got a nice lioness yesterday . . . I shot two rhino — they are a fraud being as blind as bats if you are very careful not to let them get wind of you.

Got an elephant, buck etc. . . . no use telling you the names of any of the places as this is very out of the way. In fact few white people ever come here.

Give my love to Mab & Fred. I think the idea of a covered-in driver's seat is a good one for such a beastly climate as the English winter though personally I hate having anything about me when I am driving & these things are apt to be dangerous — How lucky that you discovered Stephen Ralli stuck up across the street. You wd never have heard anything about it if you had not caught him in the act *[the old chum Stephen Ralli was now married, had a son and was living in England]* — the misfortunes of a small kind which happen to others are exceedingly sweet when they are the very ones that might happen to us.

The alterations to Stag's End sound very magnificent though if Fred & Mab go on they will find when they have made it one of the show places of England, that their privacy is interfered with by hordes of American visitors and others . . .

The second letter is to his father, and it appears that relations between Bertie and his parents are still affectionate, despite all disappointments:

Bertie to Robert:
Elgerine River,
15th March. [1908]:

My dearest father,

I got a letter from you today by a native runner dated 19th January, and also one from the mother. I was very glad to get them and hear that you were both well and had found Melbourne not a bad place, especially towards the finish — the Melbourne people always seem very attentive to the Mother when she is over there. But I expect you were both glad to get home again and it will mean a shorter summer at Mt. Barker than usual. I must apologise for the stuff this is written with. We smashed our ink bottle some time ago and I have had to fall back on what they call a "manifest book", one of those things which you interleave with carbon paper, and scratch on with a hard pointed stick shaped like a pen and I hope you will be able to read it. *[Luckily this difficult-to-read letter has a typed copy, presumably made back in Robert's Adelaide office.]* I hate the things but they are better than nothing, and it will at any rate show that I am not yet dead.

We have had a very nice trip so far and have been getting very good shooting. We started up the Uganda Railway to a station called Londrian, and leaving the Railway there travelled north slightly west through Eldama Ravine (or Shimon as it is generally called) up to this place which is the Usin Gishu Plateau, about 120 miles roughly from Lake Nyanza. The scenery for the first part of the journey is very beautiful — there is only a

bridle path to travel by wide enough for the porters and donkeys to walk along in Indian file, and it leads through big and beautifully timbered forests and open grassy highlands, the climate is perfect, hot during the day and cold at nights, it is pretty nearly the same all the year, the only alteration is the rains which last about two months — they are something like the Indian monsoons, but we have missed them.

After travelling about ten days we got into a different class of country at this place, wide bare plains with rugged mountains fringing them covered with large herds of game — buck of all kinds and zebra in great quantities — sometimes hundreds together, also there are herds of Eland-Giraffe, and you often come across rhinoceros.

The mountains are inhabited by hostile natives, who will not have the white people in their country for which I don't blame them, so we have had to keep clear of those parts, much to our disappointment, as owing to the dryness, the Elephant have gone up there. However whenever we got near the borders of the wild tribes they started lighting signalling fires to each other all round our camp at night to let each other know where we were, and that it would be advisable to sharpen the family axe in case we intended to come in. They are armed with poisoned arrows, spears and assagais, so we have always had to pull out from them. There are other natives here in the Wanderoba tribe, a tribe which has no home, but lives in the bush upon what it can kill, and they are quite friendly though rather a poor lot — and the Anderoba, who belong to one of the big tribes. The ones here belong to the Nandi, they are rather well made and intelligent, being wonderful hunters they are useful sometimes, but they are a most inconsistent lot, who cannot be depended upon for anything. I have seen them kill big buck with their bows and poisoned arrows, though they look very primitive affairs — not at all like the ones that you imagine Robin Hood and all those kind of heroes using.

The porters I have are a curious lot, and not much to look at being all shapes and sizes, they do a fair amount of work carrying 60 lbs loads on an average of ten to twenty miles a day without showing any signs of distress, at a pinch they will do twenty five miles, or carry an extra 10 lbs. When they get to the camping ground, they collect wood for the fires which they have to burn all night, they sometimes put up lions when getting fuel, but neither the lion nor the natives seem to mind each other, the latter run away, but go back again as soon as they think the coast is clear. Their food is 2lbs of rice a day, nothing else, but they are fond of meat. I shoot them as much buck as they want and they gorge themselves like boa-constrictors on it, when the camp is fixed for a few days they get wood in the morning, and they sleep in the sun all day, at night they laugh and talk over the fires. Their pay is 10 rupees a month (fifteen rupees go to the £1) and they are a contented lot who give very little trouble. I have 60 of them all told.

As far as the shooting goes we have done very well, I have shot two lions and four lioness, and Tarlton who is with me has got seven, two lions and five lioness, thirteen between us which is very good as we have only been a month in the lion country.

[He continues with three more pages about the shooting and the travelling, adding:] There are only two farms in this part of the country, both belonging to a Dutchman named Brada — rather dirty, sulky brutes to meet — probably they hate the English. They seem to own a very few inferior cattle and cultivate a small patch of mealies. I suspect they do a bit of ivory poaching as well. Their farms are good sized tracts, several miles long and wide, but teeming with game. It looks very good grazing country free from tsetse fly and horse sickness, but tick is very bad and there are lots of different kinds of sickness among the cattle. I don't fancy this country much from a settler's point of view as this part is held as some-

thing quite exceptional in the way of healthiness — even the lions and rhinoceros are infected with tick, a different kind on each.

I am glad to hear that things are well at Milo and that Ladbury was getting a good start, if you remember you might tell Hele *[Joseph Hele, clerk in Robert's office]* that it is a good thing Milo declared a dividend, as getting the notice he so kindly sent me cost five rupees.

I am writing to the Mother. I hope the summer has been decently cool,

Ever your affectionate son,

Bertie.

To his sister he wrote once more:

Elgerine River
20 March [1908]:

My dearest Joe

I got another letter from you yesterday. You really are a most delightful correspondent for anyone to have who is in the wilds. Whenever I see a nude savage now with a letter stuck on the end of a stick I have visions of you.

[He goes on to tell her how many lions they have between them but then the letter abruptly stops — the later pages are missing.]

And the fourth letter is to his mother:

Bertie to Joanna
Shimoni
10 April:

My dearest Mother,

I wrote to you from the Elgerine River but after our last lot of supplies came in we didn't send back again for supplies except once when I was out and missed the runner.

This is the first place to stop at on the way home & it consists of an Indian bazaar & a British Residence — rather a pleasant official about 30 years. Very English in his dress & manners. I was rather glad to get back again to the confines of civilization as my inside has been troubling me a good deal for the past week.

No letter of course.

Newland *[his friend V.R. Newland, from Adelaide, who had arranged the safari for him]* has got hold of a Rubber Concession. I am rather suspicious of it & also of the enthusiastic Vic himself, though an excellent person in most ways I dont fancy him . . . as a business man. But would like him to succeed as it would assist him to secure Miss Porter *[whom Newland wanted to — and did — marry]* & I hear her people are raising objections to her coming out to Africa next year. I rather think they dont consider Vic anything great as a catch & are probably very sick of the way old Mrs Newland snorted at the connection. Going to Londrian only a day by rail from Nairobi you can get a boat that goes to Australia either by Aden or Durban. I will have to fix that up when I get there. I suppose I will get back again shortly after this arrives — I shall be very glad to get home again but I have liked this trip very much all through.

A yellow dog has attached himself to me. He turned up one day, Heaven only knows from whence as we were camped 50 miles from any other person we knew of, and installed himself as my personal belonging. I think he must be a reincarnation of old Schatz. He has a good many of the same ways, only bigger and smoother hair. I dont know what I am to do with him at the end of this trip.

There is also in this little collection a letter to Bertie from Newland, the heading on the paper announcing:

Newland, Tarlton & Co.
Transport Contractors, Official Brokers, Auctioneers & Estate Agents, Shooting Parties Equipped.
NAIROBI 20 Aug. '08:

> . . . your trophies are receiving attention & it shd not be long before some are mounted in ancestral halls. When you are bored with luxury & motors just take a run over here to bowl over a few more lions & revel in a commissariat supervised by Tarlton.

Another letter lists the 'trophies' to be despatched:

> Case 1. 5 lionesses w. skins 1 lion half skin (forepart) 1 lion w. skin. 2 Uganda Kob w. skins 2 Waterbuck (H/skins) 2 kopi (H/Skins) 1 roan (H/skin) 2 reedbuck (H/skins) 1 Rhino (H/skin)
> Case 2, 5 lionesses skull ; 2 lion skull., 2 waterbuck, 1 roan, 2 Kopi, 2 reedbuck, 2 Uganda Kob, 2 Rhino horns.

The 1 lion half skin (forepart) is still behind glass and looking brisk and noble in the Adelaide Club.

As soon as Bertie returned to the tameness of life in Adelaide and outback stations, he began to prepare himself for another adventure, and to overhaul his Napier motor car, with which he hoped to break a speed record from Melbourne to Adelaide. And this he did. There is a long and enthusiastic account of this feat of Bertie's (accompanied by Murray Aunger) in *The Observer* of 13 February 1909; it was one of several newspapers which carried the story:

> . . . "Here they come! Here they come!" and before the majority of the watchers could realize whence the cry arose the car whizzed around the eastern corner of Victoria Square with a fine swing and brought up to a dead stop at the Post Office after 22 hours and 24 minutes of travelling, at six minutes before 7 o'clock. Bronzed and dusty the motorists looked but there hardly appeared to be a sign of weariness upon them notwithstanding the arduous nature of the trip they had just finished and the fact that it was more than 24 hours since they had had any rest beyond the uncertain snatches of slumber that could be got on an automobile bumping over all sorts of tracks at any speed between 20 and 65 miles an hour . . . The timekeepers had barely opportunity to secure the necessary sheets from the drivers before the crowd pressed in upon the motorists, a hundred hands at once were put out in welcome, and cheer upon cheer were given for the record and the record breakers . . . *[several more columns about the journey]*

The fastest time recorded, five years before, was sixty-nine hours and nineteen minutes; keen interest was taken in this trip throughout Australia and sheaves of telegrams arrived. Bertie, who had waved to his mother at Mt Barker where she had waited at the roadside in her carriage to see him pass by, went up to Auchendarroch that night in high spirits. Molly Bowen, invited as a little girl to stay at the house with her father Archdeacon Clampett and her mother remembered him there that night, laughing and larking and romping with her. That was February. In December, again at Auchendarroch for Christmas, Bertie fell down the stairs and died several days later. He was thirty-six.

It was discovered after his death that he had ordered a Bleriot monoplane to be sent him from England. Bleriot was the first person to cross the English Channel by air in 1909. So something similar was to be his next adventure? The aeroplane was cancelled and the Napier sold, and

Robert, with his years of disciplined behaviour behind him, scarcely missed a beat in his letter writing to England:

> *Mail 6 January 1910.* Mabel — Joe: Bertie's death Dec 31 1909
> *Mail 13 January 1910.* Joe Acres, Chippendale, Lionel Crawford, Hector — of Bertie's death.

And by the next week's mail Robert was sending Joe some shoots of a pear tree, writing to Anders and Chippendale (for himself and Joanna) and sending Bob Hawker birthday greetings and his birthday cheque.

The O'Halloran Gileses were back at the Bakery, their house in North Adelaide, after their long sojourn away.

The Mitchells were also back from two trips abroad. Willie had produced a learned book, *Structure and Growth of the Mind*, which was a text book for students for a quarter of a century. He had become a power in the University and had lectured overseas, restructured the curriculum for an Arts degree, and instituted, with Professor (later Sir) William Bragg, a more professional education for teachers, so that trainees, even those studying to teach infants, were required to attend University lectures for two years (without fees); within a few years, secondary school teachers were required to gain a Bachelors degree, followed by a further year's study of education and the craft of teaching.

In 1911 the Mitchell family took a trip up the east coast of Australia and spent a short holiday on Thursday Island. As they left Brisbane on the way back to Sydney, a catastrophe occurred — best told in Erlistoun's own description of it to her mother.

Erlistoun to Joanna
Gresham Hotel
Brisbane 27 January 1911:

> My dearest Mother
> You will be surprised to see by the above address that we are in Brisbane instead of Sydney. Very sad things have been happening to us and we have been through a painful experience. We left Brisbane in the Eastern 3 days ago and when we had been a few hours out and while the pilot was on board, we ran ashore. It was about three in the afternoon. I was doing my hair in the cabin when we crashed into something with such force I was thrown on to my face. I dashed upstairs without waiting to do my hair and found everything in confusion. Fortunately we had gone ashore on a sand bank, not a rock, and at first they had some hope of getting us off but the weather turned stormy and they were afraid the steamer would fall over on her side. She was lying in only about 12 feet of water but a long way from land and she lay all on one side so it was difficult to walk about. The passengers were very excited and some of the women would not lie down all night for fear the ship would go over. At 4 o'clock in the morning when the tide was highest they tried to get it off by the pilots pulling her. It was rough and the motion was so horrible that it made everyone sick. They kept this up for hours but the Eastern stuck in the same place and when the tide went out they gave it up. Some of the passengers asked to be put ashore — they were afraid — and the Captain said he would send us all off at 5 in the evening probably. But it got so rough again that we could not get off. I was rather nervous that night as the steamer was lying right over and they said if it blew hard she would go over altogether. She was also gaining an inch of water in her hold every two hours. The Captain decided to throw the cargo overboard to make the ship lighter — it was awful to see the bales of rice being

heaved over into the sea — 75 ton of rice alone were sacrificed in this way on Thursday afternoon, the poor Captain looking on sometimes as if his heart were broken. Sharks came round the steamer all that day and we counted 6 at one time, dreadful monsters. Some of the Chinese third-class passengers amused themselves by fishing for sharks with a rope and meat hook. Several times they caught one and pulled the huge monster half-way up the side of the ship, dozens of them hauling at the rope, but it always broke away again. It was awful to see the huge beasts with their great fangs suspended right out of the water, it was terrifying.

This morning at 4 a.m., the two tugs started pulling at the steamer again, the motion was fearful and I was so sick I had to go on deck, they poured oil on the sea to make it smoother. However the steamer remained in the same place. I did not think they had much hope. The engineer said they would be lucky if they ever got her off. At 7 o'clock they said bad weather was coming and we must all go ashore. A tug waited at some distance off and we were rowed to it in the ship's boats. It was an awful business getting off the Eastern into the small boats; the gangway was lowered as far as possible, and we had simply to hurl ourselves in when we got a chance — most of us alighted on our faces as the boat was tossing so that the boatmen couldn't possibly catch us and when we got to the tug we had to get into it by a rope ladder while men leaned over and hauled us up by our hands. I had a very big lump in my throat when I left the Eastern. The Captain and the Pilot wore about the most tragic faces I have ever seen, it was pitiful. The Captain used to be the First Officer of the Eastern and this was his first command and he is heartbroken. I couldn't bear to look at his face. He and the officers had worked day and night the whole time and they were like ghosts with livid faces and hollow glazed eyes, unshaven and unwashed. Just before we left Willie said something to the Captain about hoping he would get off tonight and the Captain said — "No, its probably the wreck of a ship, and certainly the wreck of a career," and he smiled such a dreadful heartbroken smile. It made one weep. Its a cruel business for him for it seems to have been the pilot's mistake. They say we were a mile and a half out of our course and that the pilot had mistaken the 3rd buoy for the 4th but I don't know if this is true. The pilot was walking about with a perfectly dreadful face this morning and Willie says that last night he (Willie) was sitting in the smoke room when the pilot came in and sat down and fell asleep sitting and began to swear hard in his sleep. I suppose he was utterly worn out.

We had a dreadful journey to Brisbane in a small tug with the sea washing over the decks. We were obliged to go down into an underground place where we suffered dreadful things, one woman was being sick into the lid of a biscuit tin most of the time. I had to look after 4 tiny children whose mothers had infants in arms. It was a fearsome journey and lasted about 7 hours. Once I felt so ill that I had to climb up to the outer air and I had just got my head and shoulders out when a monster wave broke over the deck and soaked me to the skin. I had on a red gossamer veil and the dye streamed all over my face and clothes so that I looked as if I were covered in blood and the passengers got an awful shock when I went back. They thought some dreadful accident had befallen me. Some of the 2nd class passengers cleaned me and were very kind. We were a weird looking crew when we landed at Brisbane — one of the ladies was in black satin! She had dressed for dinner early that day we ran ashore, from Wednesday till Friday! Another of the ladies was in a white cotton dress when we ran ashore and she also was too nervous to undress so kept on her white cotton day and night and you can imagine what she looked like by Friday afternoon — her dress was simply a filthy rag. We have come to a small private hotel which seems an abode of luxury after all our troubles and discomforts, just to stand on a level floor is a joy after

crawling about on the slant for so long. Most of the passengers are going to Sydney by rail tomorrow but we are going to wait until Monday. I was not very well when all this happened and I feel awfully knocked about and fagged. I want just to rest and do nothing for a day or two, and the journey by mail from here to Sydney is so long — 26 hours.

One of the passengers came here to dinner tonight and said the Agents had heard that the Eastern was filling with water and would break up, but I do not know if this was true. They expect her to break up if the weather gets bad but if it improves they still have hopes of floating her. They have sent out lighters and are going to take out all her cargo that is left. It will be such a pity if she goes to pieces for she is such a nice boat, and the Chinese service is simply splendid. Only the Captain and Officers are English — all the crew and the stewards are Chinamen with long pigtails to their knees, they look very picturesque.

We had a very pleasant passage until the wreck. The passengers were a much nicer lot than those of the Van Linschoten. I was glad to leave Thursday Island, not because I did not like it but because I felt that if I did not go soon I would stay for ever. The climate is so enervating that everything seems an effort and I believe in time one would actually lack energy to make a move. Then too the man with the sun-stroke had begun to haunt me like a spectre. I wanted to get away from him because I was so sorry for him. The heat brought on his head trouble and he prowled up and down outside my bedroom door all day in white trousers and a very thin jersey, nothing else, or else he sat outside my window with his head in his hands, a picture of despair. In the house we were in all the doors and windows had to be kept open and wouldn't shut, so everyone seemed almost to live in everyone else's room.

I expect you will be sick of this long description of our shipwreck, but of course it has upset us very much. We shall be in Sydney I hope on Tuesday the 31st. and shall stay a week at the Australia Hotel. I hope I shall hear from you there as it seems so long since I had any news of you.

The children are quite well and have been fearfully excited over this adventure. Mark is ever so much improved in health and looks like himself again.

With much love to you and the dear father

Ever your loving daughter

Erlistoun.

Erlistoun to Robert
Sydney,
The Australia,
1st February, 1911:

My dearest Father,

I wrote to Mother last night to tell her of our arrival in Sydney, but this is a birthday letter *[Robert was eighty-seven]* and is meant to take you my warm love & the very best of good wishes for the 4th.

I am sorry that I cannot go to you to give you one of the pecks which you so much despise, but which nevertheless are one of my signs of love — for you know I do not give my pecks to many!

I hope you will have a very happy day dearest Father — we shall be thinking of you with love and wishing you all the good things we can think of.

Last time we were in Sydney I searched far & wide to find you some little offering for the 4th & I could find nothing that I thought you would like. In the end I sent a thing for

holding newspapers which I hope may be some use to you in your writing room. I sent it to Jean & she promised to give it to you on your birthday. I brought from Thursday Island for you a little paper knife made on the island from the mother of pearl oysters brought in by the fishing boats. I wanted to send it to you but Willie wont let me — he says it is such a scrubby little thing. He says it will be all right if I take it to you but that it is an absurd thing for a birthday present! So I have put my measly little paper knife away until I see you again.

I was glad to get to Sydney yesterday after 27 hours in the train. It was disappointing too that it rained nearly all the way, because we were told that we should see some of the splendid scenery in the Queensland highlands, about Toowoomba. But alas the hills were all hidden in mist and heavy rain, so we saw nothing at all.

This is the rainy season in Queensland & it was wet the 3 days we stayed there. I think you would have liked the Brisbane Botanic Gardens — I was very much taken up with them. I saw so many interesting and curious tropical flowers & shrubs which I had never seen before. I have always wished to see Brisbane, but I do not think I should care to live there. The frangipanni trees were in full flower & so beautiful — they are everywhere in Brisbane, even in little cottage gardens & wherever one goes the scent of them is in the air. I admired them so much. But I suppose we could not grow them in South Australia. I saw them in Papua, & they grow well at Colombo — so I suppose they need a tropical climate.

The Eastern is still on Salamander Ridge — they were very despondent about her yesterday, but this morning it was thought she had moved a little. I met one of the passengers today in a shop — she told me they had lost all hope of getting their luggage from the hold as the water is filling so rapidly. The steamer has been a week on shore today. It is hard & disappointing for them isn't it? Willie says now that it is over, it is quite a pleasure to have had the experience — but I dont feel like that at all. It was painful to me — I hated it. I couldn't bear to see the Captain's face — it was like the face of a woman who keeps on smiling because if she didn't she would weep in despair — I hated to see the pilot with his blood shot eyes muttering to himself, & the frightful angle of the ship & the hovering sharks terrified me. I am not a brave woman, & I admit I was nervous, — I had to pretend not because of the children, but I was frightened. The last day we were on board, the ship was lying so much on one side we had to have the fiddles on the dining table — although the ship was motionless the angle was so great that all the things slipped off the table — All the women & some of the men were very frightened — they could not keep still for more than a few minutes & kept crawling about the sloping decks day & night, they got on my nerves, & I wanted to do it too. No, I dont like to look back upon it — I would like to forget it — but at night I always remember those sharks — so many of them, & the Chinese passengers pulling them out of the water with a meat hook & screaming with excitement. I hated it — & I had to look because I couldn't keep myself from looking —

We shall be here certainly a week — and we will let you know as soon as we decide where we are going to in the Blue Mountains — Medlow seems the likeliest place. We hear it has been very wet in the Blue Mountains for a whole month & we dont want to go into the country until fine weather has set it. We all like Sydney very much.

The children are quite well, & I think Nan has made good the 5 holes in her belt! Mark is as thin as a nail but in quite good spirits. He says the sea is no place for him, & he means to stick to the solid earth in future.

With much love dear father & my warmest wishes for your happiness

Your loving daughter

Erlistoun.

From Joanna Mitchell (later Thomson) to Robert. [She was eleven.]
The Australia [Hotel]
1st February 1911:

Dearest Grandfather,

I am writing to wish you a very happy birthday. I am sorry I am too far away to go and see you; but I shall think of you on Saturday, and I hope you and Grandmother will have a happy day.

We got here safely yesterday. After our long journey from Brisbane I was so tired that I slept twelve hours without stopping last night, and I was so hungry that I eat too much dinner. When I see you again I shall have a lot of adventures to tell you. I have enjoyed our travels so much, especially when we were on Thursday Island. We got to know a missionary who told us some very funny stories, about the natives. I will tell you some of them when I come home. This missionary, Mr Williams lived all alone amongst the natives of an Island for a long time, and he had never heard of Queen Victoria's death till twelve months after she had died. That was because ships hardly ever go to this island.

With much love dear Grandfather
And wishing you a very happy birthday
Your loving grandchild
Nan

Robert composed a piece of verse and typed it out in his newly acquired typewriter. His typewriting is almost as eccentric as his hand-writing with many scratchings-out and mis-spellings but it is lucid and it is an achievement for an octogenarian to teach himself to type, particularly on one of those early clumsy machines. Robert preserved a little interchange of verses between his grandson and himself, as well as two plays, the characters in one of which include Baron Smithereens (of ancient lineage); Thybellt (a follower) and the Lady Grandmere. The other features Matitchell (a young Pessimist and Cynic); Nanina (a Gushing girl, his sister); Erlistouna (his mother); Professorius (his father) and Fleabite (A Pedant). The verses and plays are childish trifles but it is an endearing interchange between the old man and the little nine-year-old boy. In his old age, Robert had leisure to indulge himself with a child and enjoy a lightness and give the attention for which he had not had time when his own sons were young. The following rollicking verses are typed out and attributed to Mark Mitchell — but presumably came from his grandfather, as the vile typing is scratched all over with corrections in Robert's handwriting:

The Loathsome Sea
A Song.

The Sea, the Sea, the Loathsome Sea
Upon it again may I never be
With Smells above and Stinks below
And signs of sickness wherever I go.

In the fearfully foul and fetid air
Sick people are sprawling everywhere.
Quite dreadful odours salute my nose.
Ugh, ugh, ugh, — "There my breakfast goes."

The Sea, the Sea, the Loathsome Sea
Is certainly not the place for me

Lord! I am sick again oh — oh — oh
Spencer! Spencer! quick, the Po! the Po!

Whales whistled, porpoises rolled
Dolphins bared their backs of gold
But nothing really matters to me
When I am sick of the Loathsome sea.

I could live on land amidst storm and strife
On crusts of bread for the rest of my life
Hunger and cold are nothing to me
But keep me away from the Loathsome Sea.

The response to this came from the Blue Mountains where the Mitchells had gone to stay after their shipwreck.

Mark Mitchell to his brother poet R.B.S. on receipt of a lyric beginning "The Sea, the Sea the Loathsome Sea."

The hills, the hills, the beautiful hills
Their loveliness my bosom thrills
Away, away with your loathsome sea
And bounding ships and fiddle-dee-dee

You may boast your ocean's changing hue
From blue to green, from green to blue,
But never a blue and never a green
Like the green and blue of my hills I ween.

What can the roaring of the sea
But senseless babble seem to be
To you who high on Kosciusko's Peak
Have heard the eternal silence speak?

Changing, changing, never at rest
Now to the east, now to the west
To the north, to the south to them altogether
Waving to every whim of the weather.

Give me the everlasting hills
Tis constancy my bosom thrills;
Your sea too fickle for a heart
But agitates a lower part.

And when my stomach it uproots
And drives my heart into my boots
Ah, Brother Poet, poetic licence
Forbids the tale — the rest is silence.

Then hurrah for the hills and the blue Blue Mountains
The vales, the ferns, the caves and the fountains,
Four thousand feet above the sea,
But never, no never, enough for me.

A note in Robert's Mail Book against 14 June 1912 has "Joe Acres — mainly about Ladbury *[Manager of Milo]*. Could make an offer to Bob to go into northern stations." And 11 July — "Joe — about coming out — proposing Chateau Stephenson . . . Bob's telegram from Fremantle."

So Bob Hawker, twenty-three, came out and was given a trial at Milo and the following year his mother Joe came out for a visit. It was a happy time for her — marred only by anxiety about Erlistoun who was not well. When Joe left to return to England she wrote sadly to her mother from the hotel in Adelaide from which she was to embark the next day:

Grand Central Hotel,
Adelaide,
Friday [April 1913]:

> Mother darling — I can't turn in without writing to you but there is nothing which will tell you how hard it is to leave you & how happy I have been with you & Father. And yet you will say I am leaving you & though I think you understand I don't think Father can. But if Betty marries & you would like to have me near I will come at once . . . my heart is aching very much at leaving you & I have been happier these last three months than I have ever been before. All my cares & worries left me & I have only lived in the warmth of your love and kindness — & then I look ahead & say to myself that the parting is only for a time, and we shall come back again to you & Father & Bob. It isn't easy leaving him either but he must make his way now & I can only be in the background. (TEBS)

As it happened Joe never saw her parents again, nor did she return to Australia. Other events disrupted her plans. Six months after this Robert wrote on his typewriter to Bob Hawker in the country:

21st October 1913 Adelaide:

> Dear Bob,
>
> I have not been corresponding lately for I see your letters to your Granny, and I have never anything to say to you that she does not say better than I could.
>
> Your dear mother was admittedly not well, but she writes by last mail — Do not imagine that there is anything wrong with me for I am quite well.
>
> However she is not quite well and is nervous and lonely.
>
> Betty is naturally much with her young friends and then your mother is much alone, and let them say what they will there is always a chance of Betty getting married *[as she did]* and your poor mother being left alone which after her painful experience is not good for her.
>
> You know from your mother's extreme unselfishness she will grin and bear anything rather than indicate any want if she thinks it will interfere with another's leisure. Everybody who knows your mother knows how constantly she would put Father, Husband and especially a Child before herself.
>
> Now I am going to make you a proposal off my own bat which I hope will give you much pleasure.
>
> Nothing would rouse and delight your mother more than having you beside her. She is morbid and out of spirits. You would at once cheer her up and make her happy.
>
> Everybody says how well you have thrown yourself into the station work but you now know all that part of the business after a fashion and pretty well know what a station life is like.
>
> You were going to take a holiday soon I am told. Instead of spending your holiday vapouring in Sydney and Melbourne I suggest you make a run home to London and

cheer up your mother and let her feel she has you near for protection and companionship.

When I hear from you I will write to Mr Ladbury to let you go when you can conveniently leave, and if you make up your mind to adopt Station life, I cannot promise but I feel sure Mr Ladbury will let you go back to Milo to learn more from him of the mysteries of Management.

I am thinking of you Bob as well as your mother tho' mainly of her. I fancy it will be a great treat to you to see London again and of course I will pay your travelling expenses. (TEBS)

Another letter followed a week later:

ADELAIDE
27th October 1913:

Dear Bob,

Later advices from Betty and your Aunt Mabel inform us that your dear mother, as soon as she leaves the Rest Home, has planned to visit Egypt and be with the Wrights *[Christine and Jos].*

Your Granny and your Aunt Jean have been laying their heads together and are not quite sure that this Egyptian visit may not make your proposed visit to England at this time certainly less necessary and rather less convenient to them or to you.

Be that as it may, as the proposal came from me I want now to say you must not be guided by my suggestion and must judge entirely for yourself... (TEBS)

What a kind grandfather! There is no suggestion of how melancholy he and Joanna were themselves, for poor Erlistoun had fallen victim to tuberculosis, or "galloping consumption" as it was then called, and had died only weeks before in Adelaide on 3 August. Ironically it had been threat of consumption which had persuaded Willie Mitchell to leave England and seek a warmer clime, but it was Erlistoun who died, while Willie lived to be 101. The children Joanna and Mark were left motherless at thirteen and eleven and were brought up from then on by their father. The Professor never married again.

Willie Mitchell to Tom Barr Smith [black edged notepaper:]
Nov. 23, 1913
Fitzroy:

Dear Tom,

I think this is a fair opportunity to write and thank you for all the work you have done for my family and for relieving me of so much financial care. It rather staggers me to think that in a few years the children will come into so much money. Mark will be no difficulty. His road will be through Cambridge or Oxford, according to his bent — I hope it will be research — and I have only to see that he isn't a slacker which he would be like myself. But I haven't at all the confidence in my own judgement for Nan and I want to say that any occasional advice from Molly or you would always be very welcome. Probably I dont need to say this to Molly, but I have qualms tonight, thinking about it.

Ever yours
W. Mitchell. (TEBS)

Not long after Erlistoun's death, on New Year's Day 1914, poor epileptic George died. So Joanna and Robert, anticipating for years their own deaths, had to experience the pain of losing three more of their grown-up children. In August that same year war was declared and the anguish of that lay ahead.

The three grandsons named for old Robert — Bob Hawker, Bob Barr Smith and Bob Giles — all went to the War. One of the first casualties of the War was Chrissie's soldier husband, Jos Wright, killed in 1914; and one of the last was Bob O'Halloran Giles, who had joined up straight from Geelong Grammar School as soon as he was old enough, and was killed in 1918. His elder brother Hew, who had enlisted from Cambridge five days after war was declared, was commissioned in the Royal Field Artillery and fought four years in France and Greece but emerged safely; so too did his cousin Bob Barr Smith, who left Milo where he had been working and whose letters were sent regularly, in the family tradition, fortnight after fortnight from the trenches.[6] Bob Hawker, the grandson who had spent a year or more at Milo, served in the Army for the next four years but after Armistice chose to settle in England. He, like Bertie before him, did not apparently respond well to a country life. It was Bob Barr Smith who did; he returned shocked by the War, settled gratefully into a sheep station in Victoria and loved the life. His station, Mt William, was inherited later by his own son (another Bob) and is now worked by his granddaughters.

Robert and Joanna offered Torrens Park to the war effort and it was turned into a military hospital. Betty Hawker, in England, married Brigadier Cecil Drew, and her mother Joe Acres (now renamed Hawker) bought Gate House in Sussex where she lived for the rest of her life, developing over the years a beautiful garden and providing a hospitable haven for swarms of Australian relatives — as did Mabel and Fred Braund at their palatial Stag's End. Like Joe, Mabel cultivated a lovely garden, but the Braunds' was the centre of a hunting community, and a great-niece who stayed there as a child recalled simply an overwhelming mass of hounds crowding round.

In 1913, when he was only a year short of ninety, Robert composed a letter offering £10,000 to be presented anonymously if the Government would subsidise it pound for pound, to build a Common Hall at the University of Adelaide. In the rough draft he made on his typewriter, with all its errors in glittering violet ink criss-crossed by scratched alterations in his own mostly indecipherable hand, he wrote of the pride the University must take in its professors and students:

> But alas our University, tho' in its vigorous and lusty youth, is without the resources of older institutions with long accumulations of wealth in the Mother Land or the millionaire-endowed universities of America. Our Adelaide University is undeniably poor ...

He was troubled that the University was built on too small a site:

> Without a site there can be no expansion. We have no doubt that the present Premier and Mr Butler and their colleagues are anxious that the door should not be finally closed on expansion and progress — for that is what it really means if you limit the University to its present site. Within the University a movement is already on foot to add to the present buildings a Common Hall where Professors and Students may meet and dine together in friendly social intercourse, more as comrades than as Master and Pupil.

He sets out in this draft other ideas, inspired no doubt by his own impoverished years of study at Glasgow. He thought Residential Colleges should be established,

> ... to meet the cases of those students in all districts whose parents are unable to pay for lodgings. Youths who are willing to ease the load on their fathers by long hours and hard work, earning something by work of some kind at times which does not interfere with attendance at lectures or classes. A kind of employment which can only be found in the city. ... These Students are probably the best as they display courage and ability to face difficulties and know independence of spirit which is truly admirable.
>
> *[Elsewhere he remarks:]* The idea is that no Student should be barred of results by want of funds.

> *[And again:]* Every Student in Adelaide shall ultimately have as good a means of pursuing knowledge here as he could have in any part of the world. (TEBS)

These were his idealistic plans. Then came the War. No site was found and the government was no doubt too preoccupied with War affairs to pursue the matter. Robert died quite suddenly in 1915 and no progress had been made. The offer of £10,000 lapsed. Moreover, a sum of £50,000 bequeathed in his will of 1912 to the University was revoked in a codicil of 1915 just two months before he died.

Even so his gifts to the University over the years amounted to £11,000; in 1920 his family gave £11,000 as an endowment to buy books for the University Library and a further £20,000 in 1927 for a handsome building to hold the books. When the Barr Smith Library (as it was called) was finished and opened in 1932 Tom Barr Smith gave another £10,000 which he repeated in 1940. Thus he equalled Robert's original intention and there could have been no better memorial to the old man who cherished books, venerated education and came to love Adelaide as his home.

Robert died aged ninety-one on Saturday 20 November 1915. *The Advertiser* reported:

> Mr Barr Smith's remains were removed from the residence at Angas Street about 8 o'clock on Saturday evening for cremation at West Terrace. The obsequies were of a private nature and the mourners were confined to the relations as no public intimation of the funeral had been given. The cortege consequently was not a long one, but because of the unusual hour it created considerable interest. . . . On Sunday the ashes were conveyed to Birksgate . . . from there the cortege set out for the Mitcham Cemetery at 5.30 p.m. The ceremony was a private one but a large number of representative citizens attended. The solemn procession headed by Archdeacon Clampett, who conducted the service, made its way to the little burial ground on the foothills . . .
>
> (22 November 1915)

The burial ground in the foothills was the one at Mitcham to which he and Joanna had climbed, Sunday after Sunday, to lay flowers on the graves of their lost children.

The Scotsman, so poor in his childhood, so determined to prove no burden to his parents, who had gone out to Australia to try and recover the £1000 borrowed from his mother which he believed might have been squandered by his partner Hamilton in Melbourne, left £1,799,500 — a larger fortune than any proved to that date in South Australia. Tributes flowed from all the public men — the Chief Justice, the Premier and Chairmen of this and that institution which he had helped through his lifetime and in his last bequests. The *Adelaide Chronicle*'s obituary read in part (27 November 1915):

> He came to South Australia only 18 years after Sir John Hindmarsh had planted the British flag on the shores of Holdfast Bay and proclaimed the rule of King William IV. He had lived through almost the entire reigns of four sovereigns . . . There is not an industry in the State that does not owe much to him either directly or indirectly. He was a clear-sighted pioneer both of the agricultural and pastoral prosperity of South Australia. He did more than anyone else to build up the mining interest. In commerce he was a veritable king, and the shipping community owes more to him than it can ever fully appreciate. He was a shrewd and an enterprising man of affairs, and his guidance was always a guarantee of success . . . He always had a high sense of duty and his responsibilities and he bore without abuse the grand old name of gentleman. No whisper of a dishonourable transaction was ever associated with his name . . . Little went on in the city or the State of an important character with which he was not acquainted and his benefactions were the

> response to the results of his judgement. His munificence was as well directed as his other acts, and he was never too busy to make enquiries concerning the recipients of his bounty. Every moment of his time was put to good account but he was never too busy to be courteous, never too absorbed in his work to be kind.

Joanna was left grieving and lonely. She had not seen her cheerful and possibly favourite daughter Mabel for sixteen years — not since their last voyage of 1899. The War made travelling now almost impossible, but Joe Hawker in Sussex vowed she would go out to Adelaide to see her mother as soon as the War was over and she could get transport.

It was now Jean O'Halloran Giles, who had puzzled and frustrated her mother at times by her silences and moods, who became Joanna's greatest companion. In 1918 Jean was devastated by a series of cables from the War Office; the first, in April, announced that her beloved son Bob had been killed in France, then another the following month apologised for the earlier news, saying it had been a mistake and that Bob was a prisoner in Germany and wounded. Anxious weeks followed and in September, only two months before the War ended, a further cable told her Bob had died in a German hospital. Jean went into life-long mourning for him and from that period on dissociated herself from ordinary social life and became predominantly house-bound. Outwardly (as I knew her in her old age) she was an engaging woman, tall, plain and straight-backed — wrapped always in folds of black like a furled umbrella, but with a twinkle in her eye and a lively, incisive wit. But in 1918, grief-stricken, she moved her desk into her dead son's bedroom and there wrote her diary and her letters. She chose to stay at home to read or knit or write while her husband Tom played golf, tennis and bridge, attended test matches and dinners and theatres. Her only daughter, Joanna Giles, left to live by herself in England — a thoroughly modern spinster, who liked her independence, wrote two detective novels and learned to pilot a plane —though a cousin described her as "highly dangerous as she had no navigation." She prided herself on her likeness to Savonarola. Hew married Nellie Verco, the daughter of Dr W.A. Verco, the year following Bob's death, and the fourth and youngest child William was at boarding school at Geelong. One task Jean set herself was to make anniversary visits to the graves of her father, her siblings, and Miss Fickert to leave flowers. Spending most of her time at home she had so many calls from family and close friends to her dim, still house (furnished throughout in William Morris style) that for a recluse she was well informed of the gossip of the day and of the family. One of her regular outings was to walk from North Adelaide to Angas Street, often with a new book for her mother or a letter from Joe or Mabel to read to her. They both looked forward to seeing Joe again; she had secured a passage out, leaving 18 October.

But on 20 October 1919 Joanna's maid telephoned Jean in the morning,

> . . . to say dear Mother had been taken suddenly ill. That was just before 10 o'clock in the morning and I got the motor and was with her within ten minutes. I found her lying back in her arm chair in the dining room, unconscious and looking like death. We had great difficulty in finding a doctor, it being the hour they are all out on their rounds or operating in the hospitals. However we got her down on the floor and in a position to breathe better and in a little while Emmy succeeded in finding Dr W.A Verco who was just leaving Miss Lawrence's Hospital. He came and made some injections in her arm, hoping to stimulate the action of her heart, but there was no response and she just gradually sank and passed peacefully away in about half an hour's time, not having recovered consciousness. The end was so peaceful that we never actually knew the exact minute that her dear spirit left. (JGD)

Joe Hawker, cabled at Marseilles, decided to leave the ship and go back to her home in England. She never returned to Australia. Cables went to Mabel Braund in Hertfordshire and Willie Mitchell, who was in Aberdeen, where he was preparing to give the prestigious Gifford lectures.

Joanna was eighty-four when she died. There was sorrow among her family and friends and most keenly was she mourned at Mt Barker, where the people of the village became aware of her death when they saw the flag at Auchendarroch hoisted at half mast. One obituary writer put it:

> Mr Barr Smith once said to me, "You would hardly believe the number of begging letters I receive every day, but my wife receives more than I do, because she has the reputation of being more generous." In the long ago days when the sons and daughters were young, Torrens Park was a centre of splendid hospitality. Mrs Barr Smith was an ideal hostess — thoughtful and considerate. Her chief desire was to make all about her happy, and she spared neither time, trouble, nor money in that endeavour. Auchendarroch was also the scene of many pleasant gatherings and everyone in Mt Barker had learned to look upon Mr and Mrs Barr Smith as their friends. . . . Both Mr and Mrs Barr Smith dispensed their philanthropy with care. There was no reckless giving but they covered an immense area which included all manner of institutions and people. The gifts of the family, Sir Thomas Elder, his sister and her husband would be many hundreds of thousands of pounds. Yet there was never any ostentation in their munificence. Many of the donations were quite anonymous. . . . Mrs Barr Smith was a woman of keen intellect and she took a deep interest in the course of political, social and industrial events. She kept herself well acquainted with everything which was in progress round about her, and her judgement was relied upon in respect to very important matters. She and her husband lived in an ideal union and the severance of their companionship by death must have been very keenly felt. . . .

Another writer in the same paper declared:

> Like all strong natures she was emphatic in her views, showing an unequivocal attitude towards those who opposed. Sometimes as she herself acknowledged, going too far but there was never a shadow of anything approaching rancour or smallness cherished by her towards her opponents. Her social gifts were marvellous. A brilliant conversationalist, a tact that never failed, an intensely sympathetic nature gave those who were privileged to meet her a pleasure rarely equalled, for, beside her, a moment of dullness was impossible . . .
>
> (*The Courier and River Murray Advocate*, 31 October 1919)

The ever-reliable son Tom then took over. The long list of bequests to her relations, charities, servants, god-children and friends was organised, the houses were sold and what they contained, the collections of years, passed to family members. Jean, as mentioned, burned all the letters written to her mother, so that only those Joanna wrote to her husband were kept. Her son Tom secured them in a box along with a heap of his father's private papers. In 1941 the box went to his son, Sir Tom, the inheritor of Birksgate. From Sir Tom the boxes went to his son Tom when he moved into Birksgate. When the third Tom Elder Barr Smith sold Birksgate in 1972 and moved to a smaller house and afterwards interstate, he gave his great-grandmother's letters to the Mortlock Library for safe keeping.

There they remain. A cardboard box contains the expression of all that love and loyalty and abiding friendship which cemented a remarkably long and devoted marriage. Joanna and Robert had surely not, when they married so far from their birthplaces and had to endure the roughness of the raw, new province of South Australia as it was in 1856, anticipated that they would live there together, not counting their inveterate travelling, for the next fifty-nine years. But so they did; and

they loved it and became part of it — true Australians. The Colony grew as they did in stature and fortune, and the names of Elder and Barr Smith are part of the fabric of South Australia's history. Yet Joanna and Robert sought always a private and unpretentious style, and such revelation as this would doubtless not have pleased them. For excuse, we may perhaps consider their story too particular, too historical and too significant to be locked away in a box.

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1 Kate Bidmead to Robert, 24 November 1899. Her letters and Dr O'Leary's: PRG 354 /44-49 ML.
2 Sir Samuel Way, 3 August 1898. PRG 30/5/4/1898 ML. Thanks to Anthony Laube for this letter.
3 This and the following extracts are a selection from fourteen Letters from Joanna Barr Smith to Lady Tennyson. 479/36 NLA.
4 Sir Samuel Way, 26 Dec. 1899. PRG 30/5/5/1899 ML. Thanks to Anthony Laube.
5 Bertie Barr Smith papers. PRG 354/37 ML and TEBS.
6 Lieut. Robert Barr Smith to his father Tom Barr Smith from France and England 1917, 1918, 1919. TEBS.

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BIOGRAPHICAL LISTS

FAMILY OF ELDER

ALISON, JEMIMA (1821-1846). Fifth child of George Elder and Joanna (Haddo Lang) Elder. Married James Alison. Died young leaving two daughters: Jemima (1842-1929), who married W. Ralston Patrick, and Isobel, who also died young in 1867. Jemima Patrick was a favourite niece of Joanna's and lived at Trearne, Scotland. Her son Robin Ralston Patrick (1876-1925) visited Australia and worked at Beltana as a young man.

ELDER, ALEXANDER LANG (1815-1885). Born Kirkaldy, second son of George and Joanna Elder. Landed South Australia 1840. Founded A.L. Elder & Co. Married Mary Eliza Austin in Adelaide 1847. Returned to settle in London 1853. Merchant banker and agent for many large companies including Elder Smith & Co. Bought Langdale, property in New Zealand, to where four of his seven sons migrated. Died 1885. Mary Eliza died 1915.

ELDER, FREDERICK (1856-1945), seventh son of Alexander Elder. Journeyed to Australia and New Zealand but returned to live in Cleveland Gardens, London.

ELDER, GEORGE (1817-97). Born Kirkaldy, third son of George and Joanna Elder. Married Jane Balfour. Went to Adelaide 1849 to join his elder brothers, prospered, returned to Scotland 1856, and bought Knock Castle, Largs. Jane Elder died suddenly 5 October 1896, and George a few months later. No children.

ELDER, MARGARETT JOANNA (1860-1944), Alexander and Mary's tenth child. Educated at the University of London and finished her studies in Germany. Never married.

ELDER, MARY, née AUSTIN (1830-1915), wife of Alexander.

ELDER, SIR THOMAS, KCMG, GCMG (1818-97). Born Kirkaldy, fourth son of George and Joanna Elder. Travelled to Australia 1854. Houses Birksgate at Glen Osmond, Seaforth Tower at Glenelg and The Pinnacles at Mt Lofty, which he built. Owned vast stations, mostly in the outback. Financed explorations. Imported and bred camels at Beltana. Owned stud and racing Stables at Morphettville; raced two yachts; loved to travel. Books: *A Trip up the River Murray in 1856, A Tour in Palestine 1857* and *Travels in Algeria 1860* (all published 1894 by W.K. Thomas, Adelaide). A great philanthropist. Founded, with W.W. Hughes, the University of Adelaide. Never married. No children.

ELDER, WILLIAM (1813-82). Born Kirkaldy, eldest child of George and Joanna Elder. An officer on the whaling vessel *Viewforth* 1835-36, he was ice-bound for the winter with nine other whaling ships in the Arctic Sea. His account reprinted in *The Polar Record,* 14, No. 92 (1962). Promoted Captain. Married Ann Malcolm, also from Kirkaldy, sister of another sea captain. Joined his brothers in business in Adelaide 1844 but returned to Scotland 1854 and resided St Margaret's Hope, Fife, until his death in Cannes, where he had gone for his health. No children.

FAMILY OF SMITH

ALISON, JANE SKEOCH, née Smith (1825-97), seventh child of Dr Robert Smith and Marjorie (Barr) Smith. Married James Alison after his first wife Jemima (Elder) died. Their son John visited South Australia in 1875. Lived at Stranraer, near Largs, Scotland.

BRAUND, MABEL FAIRFAX, née Smith (1861 - 1946), fourth child of Robert and Joanna Barr Smith. Amateur actress and horsewoman. Married 1896 FREDERICK BRAUND (1863-1931) and lived from then on in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, and Stag's End , Hertfordshire. No children.

CLAZY, JESSIE (1831-97), tenth child of Dr Robert Smith and Marjorie (Barr) Married Rev. George Clazy of Paisley, Scotland They had four children, Robina Bell, Marjorie Barr, William Oliver, and Robert Smith.

GILES, JEAN BALFOUR ST CLAIR O'HALLORAN, née Smith (1864-1961), sixth child of Robert and Joanna. Married, 1888, THOMAS O'HALLORAN GILES (1863-1958), grandson of the pioneer WILLIAM GILES, a first colonist and Manager of the South Australian Land Company.

Jean and Tom lived first at Mitcham, then in Brougham Place, North Adelaide (their house is now Lincoln College), and in summer at Hillcrest, Bridgewater. Their four children were HEW O'H., JOANNA ELDER O'H., ROBERT O'H. and WILLIAM O'H. GILES. HEW'S claim to fame was winning the Cresta Run at St Moritz 1921. JOANNA chose to live alone either in England or Adelaide, wrote two detective stories and learned to fly.

HAWKER, JOANNA FITZGERALD, née Smith (1866-1947), seventh child of Robert and Joanna. Married (1) 1886, GEORGE CHARLES HAWKER (1851-89) and lived on Bungaree Station, Clare, which George managed for his father.

They had two children, ELIZABETH SEYMOUR (Betty) and ROBERT BARR. George Hawker died in a yachting accident 1889. Joe married (2) 1899, THOMAS GEORGE ACRES, but divorced him in 1915 and changed her name back to Hawker. She lived at The Gate House, Framfield, Sussex, which was inherited by her daughter Betty Drew and then by Betty's son Nigel, who has donated it to the Council for flats.

MITCHELL, MARJORIE ERLISTOUN, née Smith (1868-1913), eighth child of Robert and Joanna. Married 1898 WILLIAM MITCHELL, from Aberdeenshire (1861-1962). Their two children were Joanna (Nan) Roberta Thomson and Mark Ledingham Mitchell, Kt. Resided Fitzroy Terrace, Adelaide.

SMITH, GEORGE ELDER (1858-1914). Second child of Robert and Joanna. Epileptic and retarded. Lived from the age of nineteen with Revd and Mrs John Gardner, Victoria, and then with John Thorley and his own household at Seaforth, Victor Harbour, until 1900. Afterwards cared for at Seaforth, Somerton, until his death. Not married.

SMITH, MARY BARR (b.1821), Robert's eldest sister, who lived at the Manse, Lochwinnoch, with her parents. Unmarried and rather cranky.

SMITH, MARY ISOBEL (Molly), née Mitchell (1863-1941), from Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, eleventh of twelve children. Married Tom Barr Smith 1886. Her mother died when Molly was two and the children were brought up by the eldest sister Nina (later Patterson, mother of Louie Garnier). Next eldest sister, Christine, married General Ralston; their son Rufus Ralston spent all his leaves from the Army in India at Birksgate up to 1920 and was Molly's favourite nephew. The next eldest sister, Bessie, married Richard Kerr when she was 16 and lived at Kilmarnock. The Kilmarnock house was taken over during the second World War as a hospital for Polish airmen and soldiers who painted a huge blood-thirsty fresco on the dining room wall.

SMITH, ROBERT BARR (1872-1909). Eleventh child of Joanna and Robert; also called Barr, Bertie and Wee Chappie. Educated Glenalmond (Scotland) and Magdalen, Oxford. Established motor speed record Melbourne-Adelaide in 1909. Died from accident. Unmarried.

SMITH, TOM ELDER BARR (1863-1941), fifth child of Robert and Joanna. Educated St Peters, Adelaide, Trinity Hall, Cambridge. Resided (after Sir Tom Elder's death) at Birksgate, Mitcham, and at Wairoa, Aldgate. Became Chairman of Elder Smith & Co. Ltd., 1921, and director of many pastoral companies. Fine polo player. Raced horses. Philanthropist. Endowed

the Barr Smith Library. Married, 1886 at St Andrews Church Walkerville, Mary Isobel Mitchell. Their six children were Joanna Lang Gosse, Christine Wright (1) Buckland (2) Macgregor (3), Robert Barr Smith, Mary Isobel Legoe (Mollie), Tom Elder Barr Smith Kt., and Ursula Hayward.

SMITH, DR WILLIAM CALDWELL (1833-1913), eleventh child of Dr Robert Smith and Marjorie Barr. Spent some time in India. Retired to Lochwinnoch. Not married.

OTHER PERSONS MENTIONED IN LETTERS AND TEXT

ALEXANDER, Elizabeth, née Elder (1825-58), Joanna Barr Smith's sister. Married the Revd John Alexander (1803-96), minister of Kirkaldy Parish 1838-63.

AUSTIN, John Baptist (1799-1882). A popular preacher who arrived in South Australia from England in 1843.

AYERS, Sir Henry (1821-97), business man and politician. Several times premier of South Australia. Lived at Ayers House which is now a National Trust building.

BAGOT, Christopher (1852-1899), surveyor, pastoralist. Married Eleanor Mary Hawker.

BAGOT, Eleanor, née Hawker (1855-1939), daughter of George Hawker sen., sister-in-law to Joe Hawker.

BLYTH, Sir Arthur (1823-91), ironmonger, businessman, politician. Once premier. From 1877-1891 Agent General for South Australia in London.

BRAUND, Frederick William (1863-1931), married Mabel Barr Smith. Moved from Adelaide to work at the London office of George Wills & Co.

BRAY, Sir John Cox (1842-94), lawyer, politician. Once Premier, he later served as chief secretary under Playford but in 1892 resigned to become Agent General in London

BUXTON, Sir T. Fowell (1837-1915), philanthropist, Governor of South Australia 1895-98; married Victoria, daughter of the Earl of Gainsborough.

CAMERON, Hugh (1796-1884), pastoralist pioneer, arrived in Adelaide in 1838. "The Hundred of Cameron" was proclaimed in 1869, and just north of this lay The Hummocks, RBS's run, of which Cameron was a previous manager. He became a valued friend of the Barr Smiths.

COCKBURN, John (later Sir John) (1850-1929), country doctor and politician. Ardent Federationist and advanced liberal; active in securing payments to members and progressive land tax.

COHEN, Sir Lewis (1849-1933), merchant and politician. Elected in 1887, he stayed in parliament until 1906 and was seven times Mayor of Adelaide.

COLES, Sir Jenkin (1843-1911), auctioneer, politician (free trader and reformer); House of Assembly 1875. Stood down in 1877 to wind up his business, returned to the House in 1881, where he remained as Speaker until his death.

COLLEY, Cavendish (1851-1906), friend of the Barr Smiths. His father Richard was Mayor of Glenelg. Married Louisa Simms.

CRAWFORD, Revd Lionel Payne (1868-1934), a friend of the Barr Smiths. Became Domestic Chaplain to the Bishop of Adelaide 1896. Later appointed Suffragan Bishop of Stafford, England. Married daughter of Dr T. K. Hamilton of Adelaide.

DALY, Sir Dominick (1798-1868), Governor of South Australia 1861-68.

DOWNER, A.G. (1839-1916), barrister, director, member of board of Elder Smith & Co. Ltd 1893-1914.

DOWNER, Sir John (1843-1915), lawyer, politician, was personally knighted by Queen Victoria in 1887 while at the Imperial Conference in London of leading legal and political figures. His absence from South Australia to attend this during an election cost him the premiership. Later he was an advocate for Federation of States and helped draft the Constitution. From a late marriage to a second wife Downer had a son, Alexander, when he was sixty-five, who was destined also to become a Federal politician and Minister and to marry Joanna's own great grand-daughter, Mary Isobel Gosse.

DREW, Elizabeth (Betty), née Hawker (1887-1983), daughter of Joanna Barr Smith and George Hawker.

DUTTON, Frederick Hansborough (1812-90), pioneer pastoralist. His station Anlaby, for which he bought the special survey land with Alexander Elder, was the oldest stud sheep station in South Australia.

DUTTON, Henry (1844-1914), pastoralist. Son of William Hampden Dutton (1805-49), elder brother of Frederick H. Dutton. Inherited Anlaby 1890 from his unmarried and childless uncle Frederick.

DUTTON, Mary (1836-96), daughter of William Hampden Dutton. Did not marry.

FISHER, Francis (1859-1927), son of Robert's friend Joseph Fisher.

FISHER, Joseph (1834-1907), accountant, parliamentarian, good friend to Robert and Joanna. In 1857 married Ann Wood, née Farrar.

FORSTER, Anthony (1813-97). Went to South Australia in 1841 as assistant to George Angas. He took up sheep-farming and later bought, with Joseph Fisher and others, the *South Australian Register* and *Adelaide Observer*. In 1855 he won a seat in the Legislative Council. He remained a great friend of the Barr Smiths. In 1864 he returned to England. His wife died and he later married an Adelaide widow, Eliza Faulding, née Macgeorge. He lived subsequently at St Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex, corresponded regularly with RBS and was both his host and guest many times.

FRANKLIN, Sir John (1786-1847), Arctic explorer and Governor of Van Diemens Land.

GARDNER, John (1809-99), Presbyterian clergyman born Glasgow. 1835 assistant to the Revd Smith at Lochwinnoch. Went to Adelaide as member of the Free Church and was assisted by Tom Elder to build up a Free Church. 1851, Chalmers Church opened. 1874, moved to Queenscliff. Elected Moderator 1883. Retired 1888. Died Toorak. Guardian of George Barr Smith.

GILES, Thomas O'Halloran (1863-1958), son of Thomas Giles (1820-99), who married a daughter of Major O'Halloran, first Commissioner of Police, and grandson of William Giles (1791-1862), pioneer and third manager of the South Australia Company. Married Jean Barr Smith.

GILES, Dr William Anstey (1860-1944), brother of Tom O'Halloran Giles, distinguished surgeon in Adelaide and a great friend of Robert and Joanna.

GORDON, Jose Maria (1867-1921). Brigadier-General, son of Scottish Laird but born and spent early life in Spain. Resigned his commission from Royal Artillery at twenty when seriously ill and went to New Zealand for his health. Moved to South Australia. Joined first the Constabulary then the Army and ended by commanding in turn South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and finally, in 1912 was Chief of General Staff for the Commonwealth. Married 1892 Elinor Fitzgerald of Victoria who died 1910 leaving him with two children.

GOSSE, Dr William (1812-83). Migrated from his practice near London to Adelaide in 1850; became the family doctor of the Barr Smiths; grandfather of James Hay Gosse who, in 1908, married Joanna's granddaughter, another Joanna Lang Barr Smith.

GOYDER, George Arthur (1855-1940), son of G.W. Goyder, married Francis Mather. Assayer and analyst.

GOYDER, George Woodroofe (1826-98), originally from Glasgow. South Australian Surveyor-General. Creator of the disputed "Goyder Line" separating drought from rainfall areas. He and his wife had a house at Aldgate. Friends of the Barr Smiths.

GRAINGER, Henry Allerdale (1848-1923), politician and journalist, later Agent-General.

GRAINGER, John (1855-1917), architect of distinction, remodelled Auchendarroch. Father of the composer and pianist Percy Grainger.

HARDY, Arthur (1817-1909), pastoralist, barrister. Extremely rich but bankrupt in 1886. Built Birksgate and Mt Lofty House.

HAWKER, Edward (1850-1940), eldest son of George C. Hawker. Studied law at Cambridge and mining in Germany. Became a metallurgist and later a renowned politician.

HAWKER, George Charles (1818-95), of Bungaree, politician and pastoralist, whose house The Briers had once been rented and even briefly owned by the Barr Smiths.

HAWKER, George Charles (1851-89), second son of George C. Hawker sen. Married Joanna Fitzgerald Smith.

HAY, Agnes, née Gosse (1838-1909), daughter of the Barr Smiths' old practitioner Dr William Gosse. Married Alexander Hay. Mother of the novelist William Gosse Hay. She died on S. S. *Waratah*, which vanished without a trace off the west coast of Africa.

HORN, William Austin (1841-1922), mining magnate, pastoralist and politician. Built Wairoa, in Aldgate, Tom and Molly Barr Smith's hills house.

HUGHES, J.B. (1817-81), had huge pastoral holdings on the Darling River. He accompanied Tom Elder on his trip up the Murray, which inspired Tom (unwisely) to invest in the River area.

HUGHES, Walter Watson (1803-87), the original owner of the Wallaroo copper mine. Endowed the University of Adelaide.

JERVOIS, Sir William (1821-97), Governor of South Australia 1877-1883.

KENNION, Dr George (1845-1922), Bishop of Adelaide, enthroned 1883.

KINGSTON, Charles Cameron (1850-1908). Turbulent Premier of South Australia, defeated by one vote April 1899. Resigned State politics to enter Federal Parliament. Described by senior official in Colonial Office 1896 as "the most quarrelsome man alive."

LAMPSON, Sir Curtis (1806-85), an American merchant who became a naturalised British citizen in 1849. He was the promoter and vice-chairman of the company which laid the Atlantic telegraph in 1857. Created baronet.

LEGOE, Mary Isobel (Molly) (1898-1990), daughter of Tom and Molly Barr Smith. Three sons.

LUXMOORE, John Henry (1842-1916), younger brother to William and Rachel Luxmoore. All three were children of a John Luxmoore of Plymouth. John Henry was the only one who remained in Adelaide; he married 1870 Margaret, daughter of Alexander and Agnes Hay, and had several children.

LUXMOORE, Rachel (1831-1915), daughter of John Luxmoore of Plymouth. Joanna's mother had known Rachel's mother in Britain and was her second cousin. In 1866 Rachel married, as his second wife, Alexander Macgeorge, and had three children by him (the youngest, Norman Macgeorge, became a renowned artist and teacher in Melbourne). They lived first at Ballengeich, a fine house commissioned by them from Alexander Macgeorge's brother James, a well-known architect. They later moved to Melbourne. Ballengeich was rented, years later, by Tom Elder Barr Smith when he married.

LUXMOORE, William George (1830-1895), Adelaide auctioneer who later lived in Melbourne. Brother of Rachel Luxmoore.

MCILWRAITH, Sir Thomas (1835-1900), politician, capitalist. Born in Ayr. Premier of Queensland in 1893 for seven months. Returned to England 1895 under a cloud of financial debts.

MACKILLOP, Mary (1842-1909), likely to be the first Australian Saint. Born Fitzroy, Melbourne. Moved to South Australia to be governess, then teacher at Penola. Assisted and inspired by Father Tennison Woods, founded (1866) an order of teaching nuns, sworn to utter poverty, which became the Order of St Joseph. Moved to Adelaide 1867 where she first met the Barr Smiths, becoming Joanna's friend and correspondent. Her determination for poverty and simplicity, and to teach Catholic children who could not afford schooling, led to many struggles with the Establishment Roman Catholic Church. 1873-74 went to Scotland to raise support and to Rome to meet Cardinals. In 1875 the Rules of the Institute were approved by Rome and Sister Mary elected Mother General. 1883 deposed by Bishop Reynolds in Adelaide and went to Sydney. 1888 Decree from Rome approved the order, the Sisters of St Joseph. Mother Mary based in Sydney until her death.

MAURICE, Price (1818-94), pastoralist. Owned stations in the north and lived afterwards at Morialta. A great friend of Robert Barr Smith.

MITCHELL, Sir William (1861-1962), b. Aberdeenshire. Professor of Philosophy and English Language and Literature at the newly-founded University of Adelaide (1895); appointed Vice-Chancellor and later Chancellor. Married Erlistoun Barr Smith. He died aged 101.

MORPHETT, Sir John (1809-1892), a leading founder and pioneer of South Australia.

OWEN, Revd John (1846-1905). From Oxford, he went first to Mt Barker, then St Pauls, Port Adelaide, later to Prospect and Semaphore. Author of *The Larger Hope, Some Australian Sermons, The Common Salvation.*

PATRICK, Jemima, née Alison (1842-1929), daughter of Joanna's sister Jemima Alison née Elder.

PATRICK, Robin (1876-1925), Joanna's great nephew, son of Jemima Patrick.

PLAYFORD, Thomas (1837-1915), orchardist and politician. Losing his seat in 1887 he returned to the House of Assembly by another seat the same year and became premier. He was premier twice more.

PLEYDELL, Thomas George, bank manager at Moonta and later a banker in England; a friend who kept up a correspondence with Robert.

POOLE, Revd Frederick Slaney (1845-1936), Anglican clergyman, popular preacher, Classics lecturer at Adelaide University.

REYNELL, Walter (1846-1919), director of Elders Wool & Produce Company. Later a winemaker of renown.

ROBINSON, Sir William (1834-97), governor of South Australia 1883-87, and brother of Sir Hercules Robinson, governor of NSW.

SMITH, Sir E.T. (1830-1919), a rich brewer, philanthropist and politician. A very active mayor.

SPENCE, Catherine Helen (1852-1910), writer, lecturer, feminist, political activist. Author of several novels, including *Clara Morrison* (1854).

STALKER, Joanna Haddo Lang, née Alexander (1856-80), daughter of Elizabeth Alexander, née Elder, married James Stalker DD of Crieff, later minister at Kirkaldy. No children.

STIRLING, Sir Edward (1804-73). Arrived South Australia 1839. Pastoralist, politician, early partner of RBS and Tom Elder. Married Harriet Taylor, sister of the other partner, John Taylor.

STIRLING, Sir Edward Charles (1848-1919), politician, professor of physiology, museum collector. Son of Sir Edward Stirling.

STIRLING, Sir Lancelot (1849-1932), politician, son of Sir Edward Stirling. Defeated in 1887 elections, rejoined the Assembly the following year and was a member of the Legislative Council 1891-1932. Introduced polo to South Australia.

STOW, Catherine (1856-1940), writer and collector of Aboriginal legends; a particular friend of the Barr Smiths.

SWAN, Patrick (1808-89), Provost of Kirkaldy for thirty years; a friend of the Elders.

SWAN, William R. (1821-92), pastoralist and company director. Joined RBS 1858 to take up the Fowlers Bay run. Also partner in Pekina with Elder and Waite.

SYMON, Sir Josiah (1846-1934), brilliant lawyer and politician, was defeated at the 1887 election when he opposed Protection and payment of members. He had already, in 1886, declined a safe Conservative seat for the House of Commons. After his defeat he left politics, but worked to sponsor Federation. KCMG 1901. Became Senator in 1901 but resigned in 1913 on a matter of principle. Sidney Webb called him "the most considerable person in Adelaide from an intellectual standpoint." His 110,000 volume library was given to the State.

TAYLOR, John Charles Marshall (1823-65). Brother-in-law to Edward Stirling. Partner of RBS. Retired to England. His first wife was Mary Ann Dutton. Widowed, he married again a Miss Harriet McDermott, but died in 1864 of smallpox, having innocently nursed a child with smallpox on his way back to England.

TENNYSON, Audrey, Lady (1854-1916), wife of Hallam Lord Tennyson, Governor of South Australia 1899-1902 and Governor General 1903-1904. A good friend of Joanna's.

TODD, Sir Charles (1826-1910), astronomer and Postmaster General; superintendent of the building of the Overland Telegraph cable between Adelaide and Darwin.

TODD, Dr Charles Edward, (1858-1917), elder son of Sir Charles and Jean's "lover" in 1887.

TODD, Hedley (1860-1907), son of Sir Charles.

TOMKINSON, Samuel (1816-1900), banker, politician, director of several companies; a friend of Robert's.

TORRENS, Sir Robert (1814-84), public servant, politician of dubious reputation. The Torrens Title, a world-wide land reform named for him, was drawn up into a Parliamentary Bill in a front room of Torrens Park, now the headmaster's study.

VERCO, Dr W.A. (1867-1942). His daughter Nell married Hew O'Halloran Giles, Jean's son.

VON MUELLER, Baron Sir Ferdinand (1825-96), scientist, botanist. Involved in many plant-gathering expeditions, and for sixteen years director of the Botanical Gardens in Melbourne.

VON TREUER, Adolph (d. 1894), Robert's private secretary. He had abandoned university studies in Bavaria to join the Victorian Gold Rush. Became consul for Germany, Austria and Hungary, and was a patron of the arts.

PETER, W. S. (1818-91), politician, pastoralist. Born in Dundee, Scotland, migrated to Adelaide aged nineteen, then moved to Anama in Canterbury, New Zealand. Married the daughter of H. C. Seymour, of Adelaide.

WAITE, Peter (1834-1922), b. Pitcairn near Kirkaldy, trained as ironmonger. Friend of the Elder family. Migrated to South Australia 1859 to assist his brother at Pandappa station. When his brother died in 1863 he joined Tom Elder to buy the adjoining Paratoo, and later accumulated runs with Elder, becoming Chairman of Elder Smith & Co. Ltd in 1888. Married his cousin Matilda Methuen in 1862. Bequeathed Urrbrae Estate to the University of Adelaide for an agricultural college (now the Waite Institute).

WAY, Sallie, née Hill (1856-1906), the third wife of Dr Edward Way, an Adelaide surgeon and brother of Sir Samuel Way.

WAY, Sir Samuel (1839-1916), Chief Justice of South Australia for forty years. Lieut. Governor. In 1899 became the first Methodist baronet in the Empire. Bequeathed his library of 15,000 volumes to the State.

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