

Copy

Melbourne April 26<sup>th</sup> 1855

My Dear Sisterella.

It is a very long time since I wrote a journal letter & if I defer it much longer, the circumstances will glide so far into the back premises of my head that I shall not be able to call them out - So I commenced this evening tho' more in duty bound than in humour for writing - My last journal letter was to Aunt Hannah, written from Port Arthur V.D.L. somewhere about the middle of March but I have forgotten to enter the date, and do not now remember how much of my visit to Tasmanian Peninsula was described but I think the first week of my stay & first impressions were duly noted - Whether I told of the excursion to Eagle Hawk Neck on 7<sup>th</sup> March, I not not, but at the risk of repetition I shall now try to give some account of it - Eagle Hawk Neck is a narrow strip of sand bank which joins Tasmanian Peninsula to Peninsula & prevents it from being quite an island - This neck may be a mile long & a couple of hundred yards broad - There are some curiosities in the neighborhood and it is therefore one of the places visited by strangers - It is therefore distant fifteen miles from Port Arthur & my friend & host Mr. A. H. Boyd furnished me with a brisk little pony who carried me very pleasantly there & back - For the first 9 miles the road (a bridle track) is carried chiefly through a dense forest of late trees with a thick undergrowth of bushes & rank grass & sedge - one of the sedges was a giant of its kind growing 12 to 14 feet high with late brown panicles of flower seeds of which I have sent to the garden - Here & there at openings I got glimpses of the wooded hills, and at length the road brought me to the shores of Norfolk bay - which is a convict depot - From this spot to the neck, about 6 miles the road is carried along the shores of the narrow inlet, which so nearly forms an island of the peninsula - It is from 2 to 3 miles wide and in some places less - The shores at both sides are hilly & covered with trees & rather picturesque - A large flowered green Correa was the only new plant I observed & afterwards I found it commonly - As I neared the neck, I passed the sentry boxes, which are placed at intervals each guarded by one or two fierce & noisy dogs, chained to their tubs - but when I came very near the passage along the road reminded me of the Pilgrims progress, for every few yards was I saluted by a Bow, woah, woah, & a snarly show of teeth - Dogs were tied in the bushes close to the road ready to bound out at every passenger - These precautions are to prevent the escape of convicts by giving timely warning to the sentries - But lest the unfortunate runaway should elude all these cerberii, a line of dogs each but a few yards apart is drawn the whole way across the neck, and one or two are also placed on stages erected in the water - Moreover a row of safety lamps at night also extend across & close behind them walks the sentry, and thus the runaways are kept from crossing over - I rode on and boldly passing the sentry enquired for the officers quarters & was directed to his cottage where I alighted & presented my letter of introduction to Lieut. Greaves of 49<sup>th</sup> Reg<sup>t</sup> The Officer in command of the party - I was asked in & presented to Mrs G & a large family of children of various ages from "my eldest daughter Miss S" who was just come out to the little waddling folk that peeped round the corner of the door at the stranger and then ran away - Lieut. G. is rather a character - He was promoted from the ranks after many years service as a noncommissioned officer, and he retains much of the soldier's roughness still

One of his passions is looking sticks of which he showed me a huge bundle, which must be  
collected over a 100, all different & all of his own making. He offered me my choice, but I made  
only look at a very plain one - Some of them look very handsome & curious. I don't know how many brought  
from Norfolk Island - & how he has been stationed. I was amused at a remark of Mr S who  
had been once quarantined with his husband in Dublin. It was this, "Dublin is a pretty detestable  
rather dirty place -" "Why, my dear, I collect a very fine city -" "Oh, it is nothing to Sydney." Indeed  
replied, I don't you know there are more people in Dublin than in the whole of Scotland,  
she would not believe it - I let the matter drop. After lunch Lieut S. proposed to walk  
out - I then saw the lions - so arrived with a pair of stout walking sticks we set off for a walk  
along the beach - After walking nearly an hour we came to the fort curiously, which was a  
"spring of water which never runs dry" - a great recommendation in Australia. Now I found  
Mr S had put up a rustic seat for visitors in a sunny corner & had cut steps in the rocks  
leading up to the tent which now trickled down in a fullish stream. We had also "planted" a  
broken cucumber under a bush & now requested me to taste the water & declare it to be  
"excellent" which I did - we then pursued our walk for half an hour, when we struck into  
a bush path, which this man of his had cut for a mile or more through a dense scrub for the  
use of travellers visiting "Tasmania Creek" the night before. Moreover he had put up a paper  
post at the entrance, with an inscription saying by whom it had been placed. We followed  
the track till we came to Tasmania Creek, which is a large square chasm in the middle of  
a field, into which the two rushes grow in a lefty rock - as if there had been a  
cave the roof of which had partly fallen in - the depth appeared to be about 100 feet.  
It is a fine old cleft. Then we walked a little further to a sort of cliff (Amphitheatre)  
like the one at Bellara but not so large & had fine crabs growing in the cliff & putting heads  
resembling one of the foot of Ireland - we returned by the back track to the beach, and  
again walked forward to the last house, which bore a blow hole, a lot of puffing holes  
but not equal to ours at Mullion - Someone the house was in a wrong direction - he said  
that sometimes it was very grand - there are several around this coast - there I found a  
curious little seaweed in salt specimens that it made the sea not only heat but thute, the waves  
coming in like billows of sulphury foam. Such little plants was alone this day's appearance  
of a crushed raspberry - I saw that we had often noticed it - on that night & the knowledge I  
found a seal twice passing, close but not in quantity - Next we retraced our steps through  
the bay & then proceeded a mile along the opposite bank to the same flat rocks which we  
left at a great curiosity - from what I have heard I expected to see a second "Tasmania"  
but it proved to be only an appearance of thick compact sand which rock with a very regular  
depression like a flagstone pavement - so that the stones can be lifted out of their places for  
building purposes & are smooth & squared - This ended the wonder & we returned to his  
quarters, where I had a new refreshment or dinner - & then resumed my way, and  
some in the cool of the evening after a very pleasant day - the day or two  
afterwards I made a boat excursion in a little "dingy" manned by a convict to the  
"Red Island" at the mouth of the little harbor of Port Arthur - This is the general  
meeting of the station - both convicts & residents being buried there but at different  
ends of the little island. There is a walk through it but not very well kept. There are

a great many graves - some with head stones, & others nameless - As in all the  
Australian graveyards there are many children's graves from 1 to 2 or 3 years old. There  
also were many soldiers graves - almost all had hymns, sometimes some of them very quaint.  
I copied the whole of what I saw. This is the record on the grave of John Simpson late barracks  
master died 1844  
I thought of our worthy, decent & virtuous of what  
I dream: the prison of Singapore & of  
with courage to the rescue flag!  
With words of truth & of defence  
The shield of State & of innocence!  
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beneath a sleeping infant lies  
To earth where ashes lie  
More glorious than the life  
But not more innocent  
When the Arch Angels trump shall sound  
And souls & bodies join  
What crowds will with them be  
How soon as short as this  
Some good specimens, even in the evening we had almost an hour spent in catching  
crabs - a large number, even 100 in a hole, but none strong, with smaller claws - we  
noticed the boat to some of the cliffs in a cove near the cliff before the water was  
some 20 to 30 feet deep with a clean bottom - we have not yet found a better spot, which we  
do down to the bottom - a bait was put into the net, the two fish were pulling round, and  
when we got over the hole & into the net the two fish were hauling in the net, & the water was so clear that we could see all that was going below - we caught a good  
many & returned home & had an excellent tray fish to eat, just as it was - I should  
mention that the boat crew consisted of 6 convicts under sentence & that the station  
man & a constable in charge were both armed with loaded pistols, to maintain  
discipline - However, good order was not here, without being told, as the  
crew were very civil & attention & assisted me in fishing, sea-birds, swimming  
anxious to procure me good specimens - They were fishing for fish also and one of  
them hooked a small shark, which he immediately cut open & extracted a pair of eggs  
(Muraena's eggs) which he presented to me & which are now on my way to S. B.  
in hand the Hon. S. M. S. Next day was Sunday & again I went to the cemetery  
church - The discourse in the evening was on the parable of the unjust steward (and)  
I thought rather a queer subject for such a congregation as here so many perfect strangers  
would, if they listened at all, rather shrivel up the skin, than profit by it - Many  
are very hideously ironed, on iron chain fastened round waist & ankles & linked to their  
chain of chains, as they shifted their position during the service, had a strange  
effect, as it had also to hear men thus ironed singing the evening hymn of our prayer  
book - yet you might say are we not all "lost sinners" with the chain of our sins upon

as unfit to utter that hymn as many of those poor creatures -

Next day I paid a visit to the quarters occupied by W. S. O'Brien when a prisoner here. It was a little cottage of two rooms & a closet placed in a small garden on a hill side, with rather a pretty look out & quite a cheerful aspect - He used to cultivate the garden for amusement and was supplied with seeds &c & they told me he had a very fair show of flowers - These are all gone - He was also supplied with books & pen & paper & might have made himself "very comfortable" had he been of your mind - I think he had no fault to find with his quarters & I wish poor O'Brien were half as well off - I also visited the new prison on the silent solitary system, where now but the worst criminals are kept & then only for limited periods - The building is planned like most similar establishments & consists of a large central hall from which radiate 3 wings or corridors along which are the cells & the whole is surrounded by a number of exercise yards - There are 70 cells 50 of which were occupied - each cell which is lofty & fairly lighted from the top contains table, stool, shelf to hold books, bedding, washing materials &c the beds are rolled up by day - all is kept beautifully clean - The men never see each other from the time they enter till they leave, and are never allowed to speak except (in case of urgent necessity) to the attendants & then only in whispers - All ordinary communication is done by signs only as with the deaf & dumb & their food is taken in through apertures in the doors - I heard of two brothers who were confined for over a year in neighbouring cells - only a wall between them - They marched every morning & evening to chapel together & there they sat side by side yet it was so managed that neither knew the other was a prisoner - When they leave the cells for chapel or exercise each man has a cap drawn over his face & the chapel seats so arranged that while all the faces of the men are seen by the minister & by an officer in charge, none of the convicts can see each other or any other than those two faces - the only faces they see during their term. Every day there is an hour exercise to each man, who has his own separate yard where he walks up & down till his time is out - Their fare is a half ration without either tea or tobacco unless the D<sup>r</sup> orders an increase - Perfect silence prevails - The floors are sandstone laid to prevent footsteps being heard as the officer passes to & fro, a carpet is laid down through the center of the hall - Light is kept through the night & up to 9 o'clock in each cell there is a lamp - A spy hole is in each door, so that the officer can at any moment see how a prisoner is occupied without the other knowing anything about it - We were beckoned to one door & looked in - the man was sitting reading at his table - There is a prison library chiefly of religious & moral books - There are no corporal punishments but refractory prisoners are locked up in a dark cell which generally brings them to perfect order in a few hours - Some trades are allowed - as those of cobblers, shoemakers &c but no money trade is permitted - The system is said on the whole to work well -

Next day 14<sup>th</sup> of March I left the settlement on my return to Robert town but we had to go to Norfolk bay to meet the steamer - This journey was performed partly in a boat & partly on a wooden railway on little carriages pushed by convicts, four convicts to each carriage - The railway is about 5 miles long, and alternately up & down hills - The car was slowly pushed up the hills & rattled down them at a brisk pace,

place the convict horses evidently enjoying the free as they were allowed to ride down  
hills in reward for pushing up. - When we reached the bay, no steamer was at hand & we had  
to dandle about till evening before she arrived - so that it was past midnight when we  
arrived at Hobartown. - I staid on board all night & landed at a reasonable hour next morning.  
After breakfasting & making myself decent, I called on the Governor (Sir Henry Young) to whom  
I had letters - I had a polite reception & a chat of some quarter of an hour or 20 minutes which  
ended in a bow & so I took my leave & ended the acquaintance as I had nothing to ask of  
his Excellency & as he did not ask me to dinner. - He however asked me to join him in an  
excursion he was about making to the westward but I declined on the ground of the lateness  
of the season the vegetation being now burned up. - In the afternoon I took a walk with G.W.  
Walker & his wife to visit the Botanic gardens of the Royal Society of V. & L. distant about  
a mile from the town on the shores of the Derwent being part of the old Govt. gardens -  
The Colonial Exchequer gives £500 p. an for the support of the gardens - It is very pretty,  
situated but small piece of ground & not over supplied with water - The garden is laid out  
with broad gravel walks, borders & grass plots, and is a favourite lounge for the citizens -  
Once a week the band plays in the garden & so they did this evening, but the crowd of visitors  
was not large - There are several fine specimens of the Norfolk Island Pine & a young  
plantation of half hardy pines doing well - The Decid. Cedar & the Cryptomeria were  
remarkably well grown - The Moreton Bay Pine sickly, & crippled by frost - In another part  
of the gardens was a very large *Acacia* (Soboles claw) which must have been superb when  
in flower - The collection is not extensive but respectable - Next morning I took a walk  
in the same direction through the Govt. Domain to Newtown a fashionable suburb some 3 miles  
from town to make calls - My first was on the Bishop of Tasmania, but I only saw the  
Bishopess as his Lordship was absent on visitation - He has a pretty, situated cottage  
commanding a beautiful view of wood & water - Thence I passed on a mile further to the  
Orphan school, a large Govt. establishment for the care of the children of convicts and  
foundlings to call on the chaplain, but he also was out - The day was very warm & I felt  
a wish to find some one at home, if it were only to get a rest in a cool room, so as a  
last resource, I went again forward to Major Berthom (an old fellow passenger in the "Madras")  
and was lucky enough to find him, so I staid with him to lunch & walked back to town in  
the afternoon - He told me of a new potato blight, which has been very destructive this season  
round Hobartown, destroying in some places 3/4 of the crop - It is caused by the grub of a small  
moth, not unlike the clothes moth. This little dretch lays 3 or 4 eggs on the skin of the potato -  
these are soon hatched & the grub enters the tuber & lives inside for about 10 days when it  
changes to a chrysalis & in 10 or 12 days more to a moth, which immediately lays eggs & so the  
insects multiply very rapidly - He showed me specimens in all stages and we afterwards  
walked over his potato garden turning up the sods with our feet, when hundreds & thousands  
of these moths were put up - They have been known in the colony about 3 years but never so  
destructive as this season - Since their appearance potatoes have risen from 1/6 to 2/6  
p. lb at Hobartown.

17<sup>th</sup> St. Patrick's day was threatening rain, I visited D. Milligan  
in the forenoon & afterwards read in the public library, a library supported by voluntary  
subscriptions - The nucleus of the collection was the library of the late W. Bickens who was

col. dec. here. All the periodicals are taken in & a few collections of new books, but the suite is by no means so extensive as would be desirable. In the evening it rained heavily, rendering it difficult out to Newton (some) to drive into Melburn a friend of Dr. Fisher. He has a couple of pairs of good looking children & lives in a nice little cottage. I fancy Mr. Fisher has trouble with his stomach as the dinner was not served for some time as he was after the time appointed, however when it appeared it tasted off pretty well. Mr. K. said he would write to Mr. S. - little else to write to him.

Next day was Sunday. I went to break fast with Dr. McMillan & did not get away from him till after tea in the evening, our talk being incessantly, & spent no scientific matters, but so that dinner as the time for them is required.

Next morning 17<sup>th</sup> March. I rose before day light & started at day break with Dr. M. brother, Dr. May (a friend) & Mr. Newman, keeper of Fort. Lindsay & his assistant on a walk to the top of Mt. Wellington, a Mt. which rises 4000 feet, close behind the station. The morning was very threatening with misty clouds flying about frequently making the summit, but as we went forward the weather improved, & though the day was rather cold it was not wet. The ascent began immediately beyond the town & continues steadily to the top, in no place is it very steep or difficult, & there is a well beaten track to the summit - when you are on our heads, we put a man returning from the top for which he had started at 3 in the morning. His object was to procure ice & we had it dropped across his shoulders, strapped in a basket. I thought his gait hardly earned considering the small amount he was able to carry. The ice is left in an icehouse just below the summit. By 8 o'clock we reached the Springs, a famous spring station about 1/2 of the way up. There is a strong perennial stream of excellent water from which Melburn is partly supplied. There is a very extensive & beautiful view of the entire bay, & Cape & particularly the summation of which you may see in the hills. The foreground is richly wooded & Robertson's tree grows in abundance. Now on the bank just in front of us, behind our huts & making our tea - the Alpine vegetation begins about this spot - The Four green Beech (which the colonists call Myrtle) the Paratiti & the flag cluster, among the remarkable plants - a little myrtle Richia Dracophylla & many curious looking shrub with slender bare branches, each with a tuft of grassy leaves on the end - many of them bearing dense clusters of flowers. It belongs to the Ericaceae family. It grows 10 or 12 feet high or more - we got to the summit about 2 past 11, the last a hour traversing what is called the "ploughed ground" being a wide area of high piled rocks & perfectly barren of soil or plant (some bushes & lichens) & with crevices between and which it were useless to step & inconvenient to slip. On the summit is much similar ground with many rocks standing upright like pillars of the most huge architecture. There are some few barometer columns, & cliffs, particularly one facing the town. The view from the summit is very extensive comprising almost the whole of the Southern angle of the island with its multitudinous capes & bays - but the day was very unfavorable as a cold grey light. (What you often hear of the "Eastern Wind") made every object look uncomfortable, & greatly destroyed the beauty of the prospect. The air was hazy & many objects which ought to have been plainly seen looked like misty shadows in the distance. I collected several seeds but very few plants were in flower. We left the summit at 2 past 11 & dined at the Springs

getting home by 5 P.M. without much fatigue. This was my last excursion at Melburn which I left 2 days after by the Morning Coach for Dunedin. I had come up by the night mail & went down by day to see the country. The road is in most excellent condition, the whole way & passes through a very pretty park like country, diversified with hill & dale - there is a good deal of cultivation near the road, and very extensive sheep pastures - all the grass at this season was already white. In spring when it is green it must look charming - we passed some large plains, one of which was called the Carraps but greatly improved. The water here is brackish but is not distilled by the sheep. The commonest trees on the open ground are the wattles (Acacia saligna) which has a light feathery foliage of a bluish green color & the Gonyakia Banksia (a native) a very dense dark tree like a laurel with the stems - this contrast between these is very pleasing. Now on the plain, near Mount, scattered a slender species of gum tree perhaps the one called Populus, many of these with drooping branches & looking as light & airy as birch trees. The travelling was very good & we did not stop quite so long at the Public Houses as in the Night Mail. We had delays however, first a broken bridge, where we had to float the coach in a lighter ferry over the Derwent at Bridgegate & afterwards with a broken wheel - which we had time to get mended. The result was we arrived some 3 hours after our time, but that is nothing in this country. Nothing further has happened for fortnight, as I spent the next 12 days with Mr. Brown looking at the plants & then spent a fortnight again at Georgetown, collecting, & then returned to Dunedin on the 20<sup>th</sup> but & here I have been since. As I formerly wrote of these places, why should I write again since I was here last, many improvements in the city have progressed, particularly a very long line of wharves affording ample accommodation for ships - flagging in the side deep in many streets - dwelling hills in other streets - gas pipes laying down - water works putting up - houses & stores filling up tonight, &c. &c. - when you write to me look day to week. Tell that I have received his kind letter of 14<sup>th</sup> enclosing letter of introduction to Samuel Mearns, & Dr. Pinnace, & that I thank him therefore & desire to be affectionately remembered to examples of Brewster & Brandegee & that I hope to pay them a short visit in my way home, however - write weather has now set in hard rain & clouds frequent - the thermometer down to 60° which makes our fingers feel cold, but when I sleep my quarters to Sydney, as I hope to do next week. I shall be again in comfortable atmosphere - with the salutations of love I remain your affectionate Under

(signed)

W. A. Harvey



Harvey, William H. 1855. "Harvey, William Henry Apr. 26, 1855 [to Hannah Harvey Todhunter]." *William Henry Harvey letters* –.

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