

Alphaeus Mitchell MITCHELMORE: Letters from Australia

*The following letters were written by Alphaeus Mitchell 1228 in Richmond VIC to his father Edward Stone in Stokenham. They were carefully preserved by Edward's descendants and copies kindly supplied to the M*CH*MORE One Name Study by his great great granddaughter Barbara Baker in 2012. In this transcription, the original spelling has been maintained but punctuation has been added to render the letters easier to read.*

Letter 1: dated 15 [Jun] 1858

The date reads only "15th/58" but the context makes it clear it was written between May and July.

Dear Father

I received your letter in may and was glad to hear that you where all well as it leves me and my Family quite well.

You said in your letter that you wished to know what family I have. I have three, two Girls and a boy. The oldest is a girl, she is called Elizabeth for my Mother. She will be four years old in June next. She very often speeks of seeing hir Granfather in Engling and her little cossens. The second is also a girl, she is called Isabella for my mother in law. She was two years old in January last. She to[o] talks about goin home to see hir granfather and hir little cossens. The[y] are very fine girls for their age. The youngest is a boy, he was twelve months old in May last.

You say you wish to know the state of the Colleny and that you have received very bad news from hear. Things cirtenly are rather dull here at present but there is always a demand for some kinds of labor such as good ploughmen, pick and shovel men, generil farm servents, blacksmiths and also for all female servents. Good cooks git 40 pounds per annum, house servants 30 to 35 pounds, nurs maids 20 to 25 pounds, a good plowmen from 25s to 30s per week [all] found, generil servant 20s to 25s per week good, blacksmith 4 pounds per week.

I think my sister Sarah would be a great comfort to me and my wife as we are without friends in this country. We have no one to speak to but strangers. I think she might git very well merid [married] as every girl [h]as a much better chance out here then at home. She would not be like me when I came out here having neither Friend nor Relation. She would have Friends and a home as soon as she landed.

You speak of Edwards coming out. If he is a good plowman, I think he would do very well. And Silvenus, if he is a good shoeing smith, would do very well here as blacksmiths are greatly in demand. Their beast way to come is by Government, not only because its cheaper but for protection because to send them by goverment it is much better then by marchants belles. If the[y] come by government the[y] will be free when the[y] land here to go were the[y] please and not as many think that the[y] have to serve government for so long a time. Its no such thing. The[y] should bring all the clothing they possable could. Boots and shoes are very dear out hear. Bring all the good books the[y] have got.

I wish you to get me a book on gardening which I will give you the name of: it is Loudon's Cyclopedia of Gardening¹, you will get it in Kingsbridge or Dartmouth. It is rather high in price but if you will send it to me I will send you the money. But if any of my brothers or sisters are coming out it would be best for them to purches it and I would pay them when the[y] landed here. It is a very valuable book to me.

¹ John Claudius Loudon, a Scottish botanist, published *The Encyclopedia of Gardening* in 1822. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Claudius_Loudon.

You wish to know to what place of worship I go to. I meet with the Independence as the Plymouth Brethren are but few here and very seldom meet together. I met with the Bretheren when I landed here at first, but the[y] did not agree in their opinions and of corse seperated. I did not go any more for a long time and besides that I soon went to the diggings where their was neither churches or chapples. I was not a member of any church for more than three years. I have gone through many a trial since I left you at Dartmouth. Mrs. Windsor who pretended to be such a friend [h]as turned out very much the conterary, the detales of which I shall give you in my next letter with many other things.

I had forgotten to tell you the boys name. He is called Edward for you.

I am very much obliged to you for the seed which you sent me. I have sowed it and it [h]as come up buitefully.

I must conclude. My wife joins me in kind love to you all from your affectionate son A Mitchel. Please to [w]rite soon.

Remember me to all the married cupples and am glad to hear the the[y] are geting own so well. I am sorry pore Allice is so unwell. Tell them all that I think the[y] could do very well out here but the[y] must use their own minds.

Letter 2: dated 15 July 1858

Dear Father

By this time you will have got my letter in answer to your last, but as I promised in it to let you know more about Mrs. Windsor and my self I now proceed.

When we left England, we boath understood that it was a dairy Farm which we were to keep. I was to have one half of it per force [?] for my labour. But she could not find a place to sute her, although many of them would have answered the purpose very well. Still there was something wrong about it so that we went to many places but never found one to suite; and as a matter of course I was obliged to take a situation, that was at Dr. Howetts.

I remained with him for eight months, then I left to go to the [gold] diggings. Accordingly I got two mates and gathered all our traps together and off we started to Balaratt, our sweages [swags] consisting of beading and provission and of course a brace of pistols. We carried from 40 to 50lbs weight each for eighty miles, pitching our little canvess house every night under a gum tree. In the corse of time we riched our jomeys end safe and sound. We were right glad to bath feet and backs, sore from the sweages and bad roads. The first hole we sunk 63 feet deep. We bottomed on the rock and got nothing. Of course being new chumbs we hardly [k]new gold from dirt, all these things we had to find out. We remeaned about eight weeks and got nothing. Our funds got exhusted and we were obliged to go town.

Of corse I went to see Mrs. Windsor, thinking that she was still my best friend and would help me when I needed it, but I found it very different. I was without money and without friends. I asked Mrs. Windsor to lend me a few pounds for a few weeks. I offered to give any interest she required but she refused to lend any, seaing if I whanted money I should go and work for it. So you may guess what a fixt I was in, in a strange country like this. But although one friend had forsakened me, God give me another. That was a young person which I was keeping company with which is now my wife. She was able to lend me a few pounds and by that means I was able to go back to the diggings and in ten weeks I returned to town with 125 pounds clear money.

I thought it a very good opertunity to get merid. I got marid on the 25th of March. We stoped a little time in town and then prepared for the diggings. We bought a horse and cart for 65

pounds. We also bought 9 months provisions and many other things which we needed. We were six days on the roads but we arrived safe at last. We remained on the diggings that 11 months, getting and losing more or less all the time and at the end of the 11 months we concluded that we were four hundred pounds out of pocket. During that 11 months I was ill with desentry for very nearly four and on that account I was obliged to return to town heaving only fifty pounds to furnish a house.

Rents very high to a pound for one room. We took a two roomed house at two pound per week and in a few days I got work as a carpenter through a friend of mine. The first week I got 25 shillings per day but after that wages began to come down as low to as 10 shillings per day. At this time my wife was confined, bringing more expence to the housekeeping and heaving less to support it. I of course gave up the carpenter work and turned my attention my old trade gardening and removed to where I am now. I have been here between 3 and 4 years and in the gardening season I have generally work enough for two or three men besides myself. This is my busy time, it lasts about 7 months.

I have not [w]ritten as much as I intended but will write more in the next letter. I think you were very unkind in not mentioning my wife in your last letter. She would be very [pleased] to see you all, more especially my sister Sarah. She would like very much to come home to see you all. Her maiden name is Clarke; she is of very respectable parents from the north of Ireland [Ireland?] Her Brothers are butchers and cattle dealers, very excellent to[o].

We thought to have come home for four years ago but we were prevented from doing so by lack of money. Perhaps its for the best. God only knows he doeth all things well. May he ever keep us and guide us while passing through this world. I hope you are still looking unto him as your friend and your guide. May he ever keep and guide you while passing through this world.

I must conclude. My wife joins me in kind love to all. We are all well, I hope you are the same.

Letter 3: dated 20 May 1859

Dear Father

I received the box that you sent me a month since all safe, but its not the book that I sent for. I sent for Loudons Encyclopadia of plants, you have sent me the Encyclopadia of Gardening, but this one that you have sent me is an excellent work. I am very much obliged to you for taking so much trouble in getting it for me. I have not sent you the money for it but will in a few weeks, the reason that I have not sent it is my wife expects to be confined in a very short time. After that if the Lord spares us we will get our likenesses taken and send it to come together.

The children were delighted with their books that you sent them; they are showed to everyone that comes in. Grandfather is spoken of every day. They were delighted to see Aunt Sarah come in the box. I think she is very grown since I left. We would be very glad to have her with us out here. We are obliged to give a girl twenty six pounds per annum with board and lodgings. We have also one man, I give him £1-0-0 per week and his board. My work is generally laying out new gardens, keep them in order by the year, it mostly by the pice [piece]. I earn from 10s to 12s per day during the winter but the summer is very slack not like it is at home; the heat in the summer is now very hot here in the summer.

Very much hurts my constitution. I think in two years to return to England if the Lord wills. Supposing I could come home with two hundred pounds, what could I do with it? You will tell me in your next letter. Please to send me my Brothers and Sisters proper address and also my Aunt Sarahs.

You wish to know what meat is per pound. Mutton is from 4d to 7d per lb and beef is the same; pork and veal from 1s to 1s-2d per pound. Willington boots ready made £1-5-0, half

Willingtons 15s, Bluchers² 10s per pare. To get them made, Blachers £1-5s, Willingtons £2-0. Boots for children of five years old 10s per pare. Bread is 1s the 4 lb loaf, potatoes 7s the hundred pounds. Laboring men are getting from 8s to 10s per day, stone masones 16s per day, bricklayers 15s per day, carpenters 12 per day.

You wish to know if we have any Laws here. We have the same as you have. You wish also to know what old people do when they are unfit for work. There is no help for them here but their own pockets; there is no work house, no Relieving offices like you have at home. There are Benvelent societys but the[y] are few. You wish to know if there are any schools for children, churches or chapels. We have churches and chappels and schools of every Denomination, but schooling is very high—2s per week for a child 5 years old.

Dear Father, I should be very glad to see you all but I cannot come home at present. I am glad to hear that my Brothers are doing so well. I hope they are all of a Christian carictures and I hope that you are walking in the paths of Ritcheousness. It is a blessed thing to hold communion with God. Do you Dear Father feel that God as forgiven all your sins, that he is a present help in every time of need? If so, what a peesful mind you must have; i is a blessed thing to walk with God. But ask if any of my Brothers are still deep in their sins and tell them of Jesus who loves them and [h]as given his life for them. He is waiting to Receive them and forgive all thear sins. Now is the excepted time, now is the day of Salvation. If you will hear his voice harden not your harts. Come as ye are, not waet untill yours are better; if you do, your will not come at all. It was sinners the Christ came into the world to save, not the Richmans. Dear F, avoid Sunday work as much as possible: it is sinful and unprofitable.

I must conclude.

My wife joins me in kind Love to you all, the Children sends a kiss to you for their Books.

I Remain your fectionate son

Alpheaus Mitchell

Gardener Ratherwood St. Richmond Port Pilips Australia

You will kindly thank Mr. Prettyjohn for the tracts he sent me.

Letter 4: dated 24 April 1864

My Dear Father,

I take this oportunity of writing you these few lines to let you know that we are quite well at present, thank God for it. I hope this will find you all in good health and happyness.

I am still living at Richmond where I have been this eight years and expect to be two years more.

Dear Father, I whant you to send me you lickness and all my Brothers and Sisters and my Sister and Brothers together.

I think my Brother might do very well out hear if he is a good gardener. He can get from Twenty to Twentyfive shillings per week with Board and Lodgings, but he must make up his mind to take the rough with smooth for he will meet with boath hear.

You can have the lickeness taken on paper so that you can send them in a letter. I should like as many as you can send of my frauds [friends]. I should also like to know your age. I think you must be near sixty by this time.

² A brogue style of shoe.

I hope as you are growing in age so also in Grace and in the knowlidge of Jesus Christ. It is a blessed thing to be able to say he died for me.

Please give my love to Sarah and her Husband. Tell them shoemaking is a very good bissness out hear, but there are many things to put up with. Leather is cheeper hear then at Home and Boots and Shoes deerer. Some people like this country very much, others not at all. I like it very well myself.

My wife and children joins me in Love to all our Fraunds. Except the same yourself from your afectionate son and daughter.

A C Mitchell