

Extracts from the letters of Mrs Hanson, The Gables, Wheatley to her daughter in Australia 1904-1906

17. 11. 04.

The dear children are able to come here, Betty walking the others in the pram and hoy walks up the hill. The upper road is much the prettier, but goes through the F.H. village the children do not go that way for fear that any catchable complaint should meet them. The lower Oxford road passes no .houses but skirts Shotover Park and scarcely any house only two lodges.

Herbert chose me some very good sorts of lamps all German "The Wonder" and some that put themselves out if they are upset, but three out of five were defective and have had to go back to Eagleston's. 30.11.04.

We have good village shops here - but we get most of our supplies from Oxford by carrier. I hope to go there myself next market day —
(mentions that 3rd class return is 10d then)

15.12.04

Croquet is played a great deal here in the country and strict players require a very large lawn for it - much larger than for tennis, I think.

M. sent me by Bice a showy velveteen tea gown coloured like port wine- it has a train and is lined with pink silk. It has open sleeves and a rather low neck in front so it was suggested that I should have a woollen blouse of light colour under it but I expect that the velvet bodice you got made for me before you left will be a very suitable undergarment and will make the dress warm and comfortable. It was just what I was wanting as I did away with my old teagown last winter. It made two petticoats and its lining made a linen bag and many dusters.

We get fish here at the door 4 times a week either from Oxford or from equidistant Thame. Danish butter comes round once a week from Oxford. Poultry and meat we get here and can get good butter too. We have groceries now and then from Radbone but there are very tolerable shops here.

Last night the Misses Barns had engaged us all to dine with them and their brother the doctor "in a friendly way". J and O and I went and found a well-served dinner and 3 other guests but O and Mr Tyndale neither of them had their dress clothes. We had as large a turkey as I have ever seen preceded by soup and fish - the bird must have weighed 25 lb - with plum pudding and trifle and a cheese pudding— also variety of wines including champagne. At dessert there were Japanese crackers with fireworks inside. They were burnt at table and did not set fire to anything else but made many pretty bars and sparkles of fire. We had a very friendly and pleasant evening.

Oswald gave lessons in knots and Dr B. had some puzzles.

The gentlemen had been shooting rabbits in the day.

Julius straightened our hall linoleum this morning - it shrinks one way and stretches the other - oilcloth of long ago had not such bad habits.

J. has been into Oxford and had tea at Lloyd's cafe where the Dandos and a friend perform music 3 afternoons each week.

I went to Forest Hill by the return cart of B's neighbour who sends his milk to town every evening via Wheatley Stn.

She and Bertie invited me to stay the night but I was glad to walk home after the concert—by moon and starlight with some Wheatley ladies who had an electric lantern which on a dark night must be valuable. Tramps are numerous on the Oxford road. One of our companions last night said a poor woman with vegets in a donkey cart had been stopped at 9 a.m. by 2 tramps and her fortune (2/6) taken from her lately.

21.12.04.

There was a concert at the schoolroom here last night. I took 2 tickets. Mary and maid Minnie used them. Bice read Tennyson's 'Sweethearts'. The comic singer (son of the important Mr Moon who always precedes the Vice-Chancellor in processions holding a formidable looking poker) was so delightful in the manner of Chevalier at F. H. concert last week that Mr Sturges engaged him for last night and he delighted the audience.

The frost on the hedges is beautiful and the roads dry for cycling but we have a good deal of mist and yesterday London had its worst fog.

Mary bought me a teagown at Bradley's in Westbourne Grove last week. It is just what I wanted. I would have chosen one less be-laced and warmer but this is very nice maroon velveteen and the silk velvet bodice you had made for me does beautifully underneath. It was very nice of Mary to think of decking me out. I shall repay her the £3.13.6 it has cost. I meant to get one at Elliston's sale next month and might have had to give more for it.

I am going to tea at Dr Barns . The glee club practises here today.

21.2104.

Quite a visitation of it.

4.1. 05.

Our post goes out at 7.30.p.m.

Julius is fond of getting his tea at Lloyd's cafe. In term time lots of undergraduates flock there, partly on account of the music which the Dandos perform there 3 times a week on alternate days they play there at lunchtime. Olive makes a pretty good living - she told Minnie Bue as much as £130 a year - perhaps since then she has made more.

M. and I were going to return Mrs Biscoe's call at Holton Park, just opposite, but I went to have my nap and should be late for a 1st call, so wished her and Cyril to take my card.

My freely spending daughter ordered me a fly for me to go too.

There was a thin coat of snow on the ground and it was slippery. We had a longer drive inside than outside the Park, and afterwards M. suggested going to F.H.V. before returning home.

17. 1. 05.

Fish is dear as the weather has been windy and stormy. I have just given 2/6 for a large plaice.

There is a dance at Dr Barns to which we are all going. after our meal.

Betty was invited to a party at Headington at Mrs Sturges, widow of a brother of our Vicar's. She has 9 children.

We want rain here to fill our well.

Elliston's sale ends this week.

Trains go frequently from there (Aylesbury to London) and but rarely from here.

25.1.05.

Mary has gone this morning carrying a lacemaker's cushion to join a class at the 'Merrie Bells' for learning Buckinghamshire lacemaking.

The news from Russia is very bad. I do not expect that the poor downtrodden peasants are as yet informed enough to be able to overthrow the bureaucracy but the crisis is not over yet.

The Sturges have a sister married to the largest cloth manufacturer in the world at St Petersburg!!, they are naturally anxious for her safety.

1. 2. 05.

I have a nice new rough sort of green and black tweed suit from Elliston's sale - very comfortable and not trailing for 69/- with what they call a Russian jacket.

The Russians seem to be in a bad state at home and abroad - they get shot at both.

8.2.05

The doctor here has a car; he has just had to have a man from Birmingham for a week to put it in order. The cars are costly cattle. I think in England a carriage and pair a more enjoyable luxury than a car.

You would like the view from my room and from Mary's - broken ground in front and sloping fields beyond and a windmill on the top and trains now and then thro the middle distance.

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28.2.06

Julius has cycled, to Oxford - he likes steward's work and will bring (Ash Wednesday) fish home for supper. Miss Jenny Barns will join us and have a game of Bridge with us and F. H.J. The latter is faithful to whist and does not profess to play well the perhaps more difficult 'Bridge'.

We do not like the new redbrick housed being built in the field below us - it is on the right hand side - not at all an improvement in our view.

Minnie has Julia Putt in to help her and they are cleaning the dining room.

Mr and Miss Sturges supped here on Monday and played whist and I a sonata and later Mr S. played some Mendelssohn.

Fanny and I went to see 'Measure for Measure' acted by the O.U.D.S. There has been a great outcry against the performance of a play so gross for though much coarseness was cut out the plot itself is not in the taste of this century.

8.3.06

Wwent together to call at the Home of Fest, close by; the lady in charge is very sympathetic and a good manager - she takes 9 guests who pay 7/6 each per week. Thought Sister would be pretty comfortable there with this as a frequent house of call - but it is a cold and rather stuffy place.

15.3.06

We had a very nice Confirmation Service on Tuesday afternoon here. Minnie was one of the (nearly 80) confirmed then. The Bishop gave 2 excellent addresses and it was all very solemn and impressive. I had tea at the Vicarage with several neighbours and clergy folk and the Bp and his sister-in-law Miss Church were there.

22.3.06

Mrs Burton's twins are due here this afternoon . J. engaged Spearing's fly to take them from the train at 4.28 to Mrs Alien's lodgings at Forest Hill.

M. chose me a nice velveteen (mauve silk) which I had fitted at Elliston's yesterday and I ordered a mushroom shaped hat which I hope will not make me look so like an old witch as the felt one does.

Mrs Gott and her brother are coming to luncheon today also Bertie(Mr Negus) who has a conductor's engagement at Miss Barns' glee practice this afternoon.

I have a nice new mauve blouse from Elliston's which is warm and comfortable.

Our hyacinths in the garden are pretty now, but we want some warmer weather very much.

I think of going into Oxford early tomorrow - to have my bonnet done up and get a hat at C.D. Stores. (?City Drapery)

5.4.06

U. has trailed me to Holton Mill and we must go again to mend up the canoe.

I was in Oxford and took tea at Cooper's by Elliston's.

B. still has the expense of an extra nurse at £1 per week. My dear Minnie has gone home this morning to rest her leg. I must find a helper till she is well. I certainly shall not get so good a one. (

Aunt Goodin helped.)

26. 4. 06.

from Bournemouth.-The company here is as usual chiefly of mediaeval tabby order.

Undated.

Ed. means to continue his mourning for Uncle Regi 6 months. 3 is generally thought enough- and Ed. does not dine out. He has to choose a book as a memorial. Aunt Connie wishes him to have one that will not disturb the front of the bookcases and it has been thought she might have a set of backs only - to look handsome as she does not need the insides so much.

The new roads by Buckingham Palace are a great improvement

Ed is still bronzed by the sun of Normandy where he spent a fortnight lately with Blanche - trailing her and fishing . He has got the F. R. C. S. at Edinburgh.

9.4.06

(from Paddington) we had a pleasant drive across London in a hansom - motor cars and buses abound now.

17.5.06.

If fine I hope to meet Mrs Gott at Lloyd's tea rooms this afternoon and go with her on a barge to see the first eights race. There is also the Arts and Crafts and prize needlework show today at the Town Hall.

It takes such a dreadfully long time to get our news of each other - how much may happen in 5 weeks — and then 5 more weeks before we get an answer.

B. is unfortunate again for the children have whooping cough. The doctor gives her directions for their treatment and she hopes he may not have to visit them (which is expensive)

I am expecting visitors to tea this afternoon - Mrs Rolfe and-a newcomer from Oxford - her husband is very deaf and lame he gets about in a wheel chair.

Our well still has water the occasional downpours we have had have so far served us but the water is low.

13.6. 06.

Julius and I took the canoe down the Thame last Friday the weather was lovely and we had a delightful time with many adventures from the difficulties of the passage.

The canoe leaked to begin with so J. soaked it half an hour at Holton Mill which made it much better.

The cows in many parts were standing in the river and farmers had put barbed wire across the stream to keep them from straying into fields put up for hay.

The banks are beautifully varied - often hilly with fine timber and the fields are full of flowers - red with campion and ragged robin,;ox-eyed daisies, forget-me-not,s and roses and many other beauties are out.

J. had to wade in his boots to push over shallows and to help the boat down weirs. We only got as far as Dorchester in 9 hours and as it was 9 o'clock we stayed at the White Hart there for the night and next day continued our journey to Folly Bridge reaching Salter's in time for our last train home - he is going to put the boat into good condition again. Julius is wishing to buy a second-hand punt: it would be convenient to take friends up the river for tea in addition to the canoe. Yesterday we met Mrs Gott at Folly Bridge at 2 and went as her guests by steamer to Newnham.

We had not much time there , the steering gear was broken and it took an hour nearly to mend it before we left.

There was a Diocesan Missionary Festival at High Wycombe today which I rather wished to attend.

J. and I have had a friendly call from Dr Barns this evening - he has been telling of the building of our house and the rest of the row of houses by the Cooper Family they are all very badly built - will seem old in 30 years he says. Mr Tindall (Tyndale) spent money on the one Mrs Turner lives in but not to much purpose and now he has built a sort of bungalow in a lovely position at Forest Hill and finds it doesn't suit him very, to live in it.

25. 6. 06

Tomorrow Mrs Creed is coming to Wheatley she has another friend here Mrs Rolfe who came and took a house (with her lame and deaf husband) near Dr Barns a year ago.

Julius cycled to Salter's this morning and returned walking with the canoe perched upon the trailer also conducting his cycle back. He left the river at the free ferry at Iffley Road and the ferryman helped him arrange his load, then he went up Divinity Road which is less steep than Headington Hill; he got back to our early dinner (not quite) (c) 4 p.m. and we had tea at the same time, then he walked on to Holton Mill and I too but I took the field way and we had a pleasant hour or more on the water: the briar roses and yellow flags are beautiful and forget-me nots are coming out

Dentist Ryle's accounts £8. 8s and 17/6.

4. 7. 06.

We are having that charming weather an English summer. Julius wants rain for the garden as usual.

I made many purchases at Elliston's on Monday.

They (Elliston's) had an immense number of things on sale. Miss Bell's young sister is there and she earned 7/- the first day of the sale.

We get plenty of beautiful strawberries fresh gathered here at 5d a pound, a dish of peas or broad beans costs the same, f foreign new potatoes are rather good at 1d a lb in Oxford.

The present Vicar at Headington has driven away most of his people from his services by his High Church practices. Bice made acquaintance yesterday with Ulf's friend (Mr Perrin) who takes a lectureship in the parish and who speaks of Vicar Townsend and says he is a good fellow. It is a pity he seems to have no tact in his dealings with people.

12. 7. 06.

We have had scarcely any rain for the past two months.

19. 7 06.

We have had 2 pleasant At Homes in the Sturges' garden and 2 ditto ditto at Dr Barns

My neighbour Mrs Turner wants to let her house for a year to visit relatives in S. Africa and in India.

25. 7 06.

This evening he (J.) is going to take me to Headington to call on Mrs Sturges.

Mary and I walked home in time to receive Mr and Mis: Sturges to supper.

6.11. 06.

B. has two pleasant village girls and they work well under her the elder the other is only thirteen and not much bigger than Betty but is a willing little girl wearing a sort of cap with her hair done up.

J. trailed me to Shotover on Tues, to call after the G. P. we went to there. The Col. was very agreeable also Mr and Mrs Tanner of Horspath there calling too, We admired a 6 ft Russian bear that was shot by an officer and well stuffed at St Petersburg. It is put out in the sun and also brushed to keep moth from it.

19. 11. 06.

We have enjoyed Jessie Bailey's visit - the butler she so much liked at the Hudson's is now at Col. Miller's at Shotover and has the dachshund that was given to Jessie

Amongst her letters were also found:

1. There was a maid in every middle-class house wearing print dresses apron and cap who changed for the afternoon to a black dress, white apron and cap.
2. One of my earliest and most sensuous recollections is of being in the garden at Cromwell House (where Charles Sheldon and his daughters Lizzie and Madge lived) and eating one apricot hot from the sun and fresh from the tree growing against the south wall.
3. I also remember the great pleasure in getting pats of butter made up for me by Mrs Robbins at College Farm, with a swan imprinted on the top.
4. The vicar and Mrs Sturges did a great deal of entertaining.
5. In 1906, Mr Sturges's health was beginning to fail and Dr Knapp came to help him. In 1907, the vicar

was offered and accepted the living of Sonning, but he was not well enough to take up this work and, instead, he lived in retirement with his niece at Warnborough until his death in 1909.