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# LETTERS

OF

SIR CHARLES BELL,

K.H., F.R.S.L. & E.

SELECTED FROM HIS CORRESPONDENCE

WITH HIS BROTHER

GEORGE JOSEPH B

LONDON :

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

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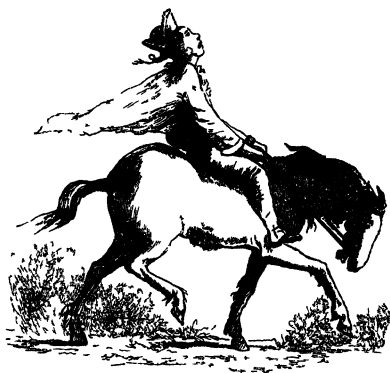
## PREFACE.

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THE discovery of the circulation of the blood by Harvey, and the discoveries of Sir Charles Bell in the nervous system, were pronounced by Müller, the German physiologist, the two grandest discoveries that have ever been made in physiological science. To the genius of a great philosopher Sir Charles Bell united the qualities of a noble-minded man. This selection from his letters has been published that his character may be known to posterity in conjunction with his immortal discovery, that many traits of memorable persons and events may be preserved, and that future members of his profession may have the benefit of his admirable example. His rare originality, his profound knowledge, his varied accomplishments, his unremitting industry did not save him from long and anxious struggles, and he neither abated the cheerfulness which was

habitual to him, nor surrendered one jot of his independence. The many in every generation who are exposed to the same, or similar difficulties, will find comfort and courage in his high aims, inflexible principles, and calm perseverance. There are, indeed, passages in his letters which might lead persons who knew him imperfectly to imagine that he repined at the inadequate appreciation of his labours, and had a consciousness of their value which was not untinged with vanity. Nothing could be further from his disposition. The genius which was capable of making his leading discovery could not be blind to its vast importance, or sometimes avoid feeling that the world was slow to comprehend its reach and beauty. These were simple truths of which he could no more be ignorant than of the fact that he was a rational being; and with the frankness of an honest nature, untainted with affectation, he told his thoughts to the brother whom he regarded as a second self. But he had far too just an estimate of the littleness of man in the midst of the vastness of creation to give way to conceit, and too profound a faith in the Providence who governed the world to be otherwise

than deeply thankful for his lot. Vanity and discontent would have seemed to him falsehood, and none the less because he had extorted a magnificent secret from nature, and given it over to science.



DUMBYDYKES ON THE WILDYARD POWNEY.



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# LETTERS

OF

## CHARLES BELL.

### CHAPTER I.

**Family History—John Bell of Gladsmuir—Sermon on the Death of William III.—William Bell—Episcopacy in Scotland—Penal Laws of 1745—George Bell's Memoranda—Charles Bell's Early Recollections—Charles goes to London.**

THE family from which Charles Bell was descended have, for nearly three centuries, been either merchants or members of the learned professions. Glasgow was their home for most of that period, and they are incidentally mentioned both in Law's Memorials and in Cleland's History of Glasgow; while their genealogical tables show them to have been connected by marriage with the best gentry of the land. But it is not until the end of the 17th century that family papers preserve the more minute records of their history. From that time it seems to have been a habit among them to jot down the most remarkable incidents of their lives and times, thus leaving behind them materials for tracing out the pecu-

liarities of the race, and fostering, by their example, the hereditary talents and industry of their families.

The first autobiography extant is headed—  
“The more memorable passages of the Life and Times of Mr. John Bell, Minister of Gladsmuir, written by himself.” From this manuscript it appears that he was born on the 2nd of February, 1676, and was endowed with the industry, steadiness of purpose, and power of overcoming difficulties, which belonged to the next generations. John Bell was born in Glasgow; but the clerical profession often detaches its members from their birth-places, and removing them to distant homes, gradually slackens the cords of intimacy and of kindred. Such proved to be the case in the present instance. Ordained when only twenty years old, John Bell was at once appointed to the parish of Broughton; but four years later, in 1700, “the Church thought fit to transport” him to the newly erected parish of Gladsmuir, in Haddington, “where,” he writes, “I found myself in hard circumstances, having exchanged two hundred submissive people at Broughton for twelve hundred obstinate people in Gladsmuir, and to be collegiate with a lot of brethren to whom I was entirely a stranger.”

The youth of four-and-twenty, however, soon became a marked man in the land of his adoption, and obtained such fame for impressive eloquence, as to have the duty imposed upon him of preach-

ing the Sermon on the death of William the Third before the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, then sitting at Edinburgh. Before the news of even the King's illness had reached Scotland, John Bell had been asked by the minister of the new church of Edinburgh to take his pulpit on that day; but when the demise of the King was announced, he naturally expected that, on such an occasion, the proposal should fall to the ground. "And," as he says, "I dealt earnestly with Mr. Moncrieff to loose me from my promise, chiefly in regard that the melancholy news made it more proper for him to do it, and made it a bold enterprize in me to undergo so severe a task, I being but a young man, &c. But he would hear no entreaties of mine. . . . When I came there, I found one of the throngest assemblies that I ever preached to. . . . However, it pleased God so to bless that day's work, that the remembrance of it is savoury, and I hope will never be forgotten by some."

That the young Minister of Gladsmuir was a man of vigorous intellect and personal courage is also shown in this manuscript, by the tact, boldness, and presence of mind he unconsciously displays in the account he gives of his adventures when selected to undertake the delicate task of dispossessing the Episcopalians of Haddington from the parish church, on the death of one of the incumbents, according to the law passed on the subject after the Revolution.



He died at the early age of thirty-two, and his parishioners, who deeply regretted his loss, raised an ornate tomb to his memory, near the rural little church of Gladsmuir.\*

He married the daughter of Major Learmonth, of Newholm, and left several children; but circumstances estranged them from each other; and in his son William's "Notes of my life for the perusal of my children," a casual allusion to "my brothers" is almost all that is said of any but Joseph.

Born in 1704, "I was," he says, "left at my parents' death, at four years of age, to the care of good friends whom Providence raised up for our support. . . . While at the University of Edinburgh, and in my sister's house, by reading and conversation, I saw (by good Providence for me) the errors of my first education (my F.† being a Presbyterian minister) . . . in consequence hereof discovered the necessity, and had the comfort of being admitted a member of the Catholic and Apostolic Church in Scotland, and was b—p—d ‡ by Bp. Fullerton (Jan. 8, 1723). By this change, tho' I lost the countenance of my relations (my Br. Joseph excepted), yet was never destitute of friends, but found utter strangers become such."

Having fixed on the Church as his profession,

\* Sir Walter Scott, in his "Treatise on Demonology," refers to John Bell's two discourses on Witchcraft as containing the most explicit directions for the detection of those linked to the service of the enemy of mankind.

† Father.

‡ Baptised.

William Bell—after visiting the Low Countries and Italy—was ordained incumbent of the Episcopal Chapel of Doune, near Stirling. In 1744, he resigned this charge to become colleague of Bishop Keith, in his “Episcopal Meeting-house” in Edinburgh.

His diary at this period gives a curious sketch of the state of the Episcopal Church in Scotland, after Prince Charles Edward’s expedition in 1745.

“The P—e coming into this country, its consequences were a great trial to many, and has proved fatal to our distressed Church, by bringing upon us new and severe penal laws, and abridging our former liberty for worship. But the ways of Providence are unsearchable. Perhaps good in the issue may flow from all this.

“The news of the defeat of Culloden reached Edinburgh with certainty on the 20th of April, 1746. The Episcopal clergy were so much alarmed as to shut their meeting-houses immediately. But I resolved to go out to morning prayers as usual. I thought we ought not in duty and decency to desist from officiating; that it would rather give our enemies a handle against us, that we fancied, since the P—e’s arms had failed, our ministry had ceased. . . . In May, all the meeting-houses in Edinburgh were shut up and padlocked, with an inscription on the several doors—‘Shut up by order of the Sheriff’ . . . and in September an Act passed, that every Episcopal minister officiating to more than four besides the family, shall,

for the first offence suffer six months' imprisonment; for the second, banishment to the plantations for life; and if they shall return, imprisonment for life. Also, every one of the hearers in a meeting exceeding four, a fine of five pounds for the first offence; for the second, two years' imprisonment. A meeting-house is designed to be any house where more than four persons besides the family meet together for Divine service. . . . At this time many persons not of our congregation applied to me for the benefit of my prayers, and Bishop Keith, finding me willing to minister alone, agreed to my doing so. I thus made an increase of our congregation, officiating in the houses of the people, and always adding four more to the family, till another act was passed to forbid any one in holy orders to officiate in a house of which he was not the master. . . . Such of the clergy as did not take the oaths, and register, and receive ordination from English or Irish bishops, their Orders were declared null and void. Yet, blessed be God, we were enabled to stand this trial also with reputation and advantage; for of our whole clergy (amounting to nearly one hundred) only four complied, and they, by the Chaplain Act, were cut off from any indulgence,—as we all would have been."

The persecuted Episcopal Church of Scotland was reduced to this extreme state of depression and poverty, in consequence of the devotion of most of its members to the House of Stuart.

William Bell was attached more to Church principles than to State politics. From the commencement he knew that his conscientious change of religious opinions entailed upon him an entire sacrifice of worldly ambition, and that his career as an Episcopal clergyman in Scotland could lead to nothing but a life of privation. In spite of the distresses and persecutions of the times, however, he obtained what he valued above all earthly gain,—the deep attachment of his little flock.

His first wife, Lillias Grahame, of Bowquapple, died in 1750, having survived all her children. Seven years later, in 1757, he married again,—Margaret Morice, the elder daughter of an Episcopal clergyman. Mrs. Bell and her sister Cecilia\* were early left orphans, and were educated by their grandfather, Bishop White, afterwards Primus of Scotland. To him Mrs. Bell owed the piety and accomplishments which distinguished her; and from him she inherited that remarkable talent for drawing which she transmitted to her children and grandchildren, but especially to her youngest son, Charles. Two beautiful little miniatures of her painting, "Mary Queen of Scots" and "Prince Charlie," are still preserved.

William Bell died on the 20th of September,

\* Afterwards resident with her nephews, and known with them by the loving appellation of "Auntie."

1779, aged 75, leaving his wife and six children very slenderly provided for.

From a manuscript in which George (the fourth son) jotted down some "memoranda of my life, to tell my children somewhat of those who gave them birth, and to furnish them with lessons for the conduct of their lives," some graphic pictures of the family life may be gleaned.

"I was born," he writes, "in 1770, at Fountain Bridge, near Edinburgh. My infancy was passed there. We removed to town in 1778, chiefly on account of my father's age, and inability to travel in to church. He died before I knew the value of a father's guidance. His great delight was to sit surrounded by his books. I remember him so—his elbow chair, with a small table, in a pleasant window looking north over gardens; and, again, I recollect sitting by him on his death-bed. He was asleep, and in a dream called out to catch the man who was running off with his books.

"After his death we resided in the upper part of a house in George Street, the rest of the 'land' belonging to my aunt; and the rent of our houses with considerable aid from her, and a small allowance made by the nonjuring Episcopalians to the widow of their clergyman, enabled us to live.

"My mother was a most excellent woman, well educated, and of sweet disposition. Left

with a large family of children, she struggled with great virtue and fortitude against distresses which I did not at the time understand, but cannot now call to mind without bitter regret and sorrow. In myself and my dear and most beloved brother Charles, she had her greatest comfort in her later days. This is a consolation to me which the wealth of worlds would not induce me to forfeit. Our circumstances were so narrow that my education was much stinted—the rest of the family expenses having gradually increased so that my schooling, which required no more than five-shillings a quarter, could not be continued after I was eleven years old.

"I tried to continue my Latin education at home, but having no master and no one to direct me—to point the path or smooth its ruggedness—I made poor progress. I was left to my own self-culture, and owed all my other acquirements, including a knowledge of French, to my mother's tender care.

"In 1791 I passed Advocate without disgrace, and I entered on my profession devoid of friends or interest.

"My dear brother Charles was born in 1774. His education, like my own, was stinted; and we have both been our own teachers of almost all we know. I always distinguished in Charles a very solid judgment and clear head. He had also a great genius for drawing, and he has found this

talent of great use in life. He was early destined for the profession of a surgeon under John."

\* \* \* \* \*

In 1839 a short sketch of Sir Charles Bell's life was published in Pettigrew's "Medical Portrait Gallery," together with an engraving of his portrait, by Ballantyne. Opposite to Pettigrew's observation, that "he was educated at the High School of Edinburgh," he wrote, "Nonsense! I received no education but from my mother, neither reading, writing, cyphering, nor anything else."

"My education was the example set me by my brothers. There has been, in my day, a good deal said about education, but they appear to me to put out of sight *example*, which is all in all. There was, in all the members of the family, a reliance on self, a true independence, and by imitation I obtained it.

"I scarcely know how it arose, but still it was so, that I had little knowledge of my father's family. His memory I always held in respect, but I knew him not as a man. I had no feature of his character to fix upon, and this I have often regretted. I have but one distinct recollection of him, in his dressing-gown, and that in his last illness my mother took me from betwixt his knees, being too lively, and insensible of his sufferings.

"What a picture the manuscript entries, made by my father, present! I see him struggling with difficulties, and rising superior to them. I see

him supported in all embarrassments by religion. I find him respected and beloved. I am now more grateful to Providence for the example set before me by my parents than if riches and honours had descended from them—honours these certainly were.

“When I look back to those days, my affection centres in my mother, and in my dear brother George. Yet Robert was most kind to me. I was his playfellow and pet.

“My first recollections are as a little boy, by my mother’s side. I recollect the dining-room, the view south, the mild affection with which she would stop her wheel, or point the letters (of my lesson) with her stocking-wire.

“I must have been either wise or cunning in those days, for, having offended her, I did not attempt reconciliation all at once, but I watched her out and presented myself to her whilst picking her way in the crowded street, when her open arms and benevolent smile received me.

“I hope I was a comfort to her. On her death, John said to me, ‘Let it be a pleasure to you to reflect that you were always her comfort.’ She was my only teacher. Notwithstanding our poverty in my childhood, I suspect the connections of the family were then superior to what they have been since. I allude to the fine old ladies who were wont to visit my mother, and with an *empressement* which struck me even then. These were the relics of old Jacobite families,



stately dames, and I think Sir Walter Scott must have seen much of the same class in his boyhood. Many of his stories come on my recollection as familiar things forgotten!

“For twenty years of my life I had but one wish—to gratify my mother, and to do something to alleviate what I saw her suffer.

“I suppose others feel as I did. It belongs to our nature to associate the being whom we love with our aspirations. When anything was proposed to be done, some fancy in my own mind, beyond my powers to attain, the question from childhood took always this fashion, ‘Could I not accomplish it were it to please her or save her?’

“No wonder that in losing her there was a long blank, an indifference to all accustomed objects. I hardly know how ambition was again produced in my mind.

“She must have been well educated for her time. I know no more of the motions of the earth, moon, and stars, than her little contrivance then taught me as a boy. I recollect the room and the spot where she formed a ball, and passed a stocking-wire thro’ it to show me the poles and the revolution of the seasons, and gave me the first idea of a truth which the mere senses could not convey, the motion of all that seemed stationary in the diurnal and annual motions of the earth.

“‘The education at the High School,’ which I

attended for two years, was to me torture and humiliation. Adams, loved by all good scholars, was to me a stupid tyrant. I can remember brightening on the display of Cæsar's Bridges over the Rhine. Anything demonstrative or mechanical, or tending to Natural Philosophy, I comprehended better than my companions; but the memory of verses or Latin rules, without intellectual comprehension of some principles, I was almost incapable of.

"This incapacity depressed me, and it was only when in professional education I found subjects more suited to my capacities that I began to respect myself, and favourably compare myself with my fellow students.

"Memory should be cultivated. It bestows great advantages. Mine was ever deficient. I could not, and cannot, venture on a quotation either in conversation or in public discourse. Quotation, directed with good taste, gives interest and elegance; but memory, without the direction of sound judgment, is a poor substitute for reason.\*

\* In some memoranda furnished by Lady Bell, she says. — "He often regretted that he had not what he called 'an education, that his brothers made a plaything of him, excusing themselves with this expression, even when he was a child, 'Oh, never mind, Charlie will do very well. No fear for Charlie.' And so he had only the common rudiments of the commonest branches given to him. All the rest he acquired for himself, and took great pains, as he advanced in age, to make up for his fancied deficiencies. Being anxious to communicate easily with foreigners, he had French and Italian masters to read with him, even within the last few years of his life, and he gained considerable

"**Allen**, the painter, was a man very dear to me in my early boyhood. There was sunshine the afternoon he came to me. He was quite a man to a boy's humour. He was wont at all times to salute me, 'Ha! brother Brush, let's see what you have been doing!' To him I am very principally indebted for my pleasure in drawing.

"He was a little man, and, I think, not very straight in his legs; they were certainly very small. His nose was ill-shaped, his eye grey, but with a sharpness and liveliness in saying his little nothings. He wore his hair in a long Ramilies queue, and on the temples it had a thatched appearance, which would have been more picturesque on the roof of a cottage. He gave me his very beautiful studies from the Antique, and from Raphael's Cartoons, to copy, and was very good-natured in his praise. I meet with these heads sometimes, and hail them as something very old and very melancholy sweet.

"I remember the old drawing-room window, where I used to sit copying these drawings. The *Lame Beggar*, with the large nether lip, in the Cartoons, is an old acquaintance.

"David Allen was much thought of when a student in Rome, and from the beauty and simplicity of his '*Origin of Painting*' (which was engraved), we may judge that he had taste and knowledge for a Painter of History.

fluency, and a good accent in speaking. Long before leaving Edinburgh, he *read* both languages with facility."

“This was his theme, and he was wont to fill us with a notion of the poverty of our country by describing the riches of Italy in the picturesque; the strong features of the Italian beggars clothed in rags—the marked picturesqueness of the Franciscan friars, and the free limbs of the Lazzaroni.

“He illustrated the ‘Gentle Shepherd.’”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Does not association with evening sounds far distant prove the duty of a parent to attend to ~~this~~ in education? How I connect mine with that summer at Stonebyres.\*

“With what panting expectation I was wont to run to the top of Blackford Hill, to look down upon the house. The ‘ploy’ of taking tea on the green plot in the midst of the wood, and the gathering of nuts there, was pure felicity. How, even in those days, did I love to wander in the wood and visit the herd upon the hill. Then it was *sensation* merely; now, in the recollection and secret combination of these first ideas, there is something more. For long I could not conceive how I had imbibed so strong an idea of desolation occasioned by death in a family—in reading a novel for instance—but in Stonebyres I saw it; the hunters sold, the hounds diminished to an old pointer, the servants take their leave, the old castle

\* While a child, Charles had been sent for a few weeks to the village school of Lesmahago, with permission to visit his kind old friend, Mrs. Vere, of Stonebyres, who had nursed him as a baby, and loved him as if he had been her son.

desolate—even the poultry in the yard moult feathers.

“Yet this desolation was a contrast to that around me when I first came to London. Happily free from the slightest tinge of constitutional melancholy, yet I acutely felt my loneliness, the total blank of affection or anything like reciprocal support. But I sometimes felt a secret satisfaction in the difficulties I encountered.”

\* \* \* \* \*

George's memoranda continue thus :—

“Charles' natural clearness of head and neatness of hand and the vigorous correctness of his conception, with hard labour, made him an admirable surgeon and one of the first anatomists of the day while he was yet a boy not entered upon life.

“In spring, 1797, Charles and I came to the resolution of writing each on his own profession, and I have at last settled on the Bankrupt Law. To study this law thoroughly requires the study of the whole Civil Code. I wrote something on the subject this autumn, and Charles began his ‘System of Dissections.’

\* \* \* \* \*

“It was necessary to go to our sister at Cult, and Charles and I walked out. Charles had his manuscripts in a small roll at his back, I my book for my notes on Mercantile Law; and I remember we stopt to rest ourselves and drink at a stream at the roadside, and amused ourselves

with thinking how pleasant it would be to remember this outset in life when we were advanced somewhat higher.

\* \* \* \* \*

“I strongly urged Charles to go to London to see, at least, what the world at large had to offer. I felt when he went away (23 Nov., 1804) that he had left me never to meet again but for a visit; that our long brotherly life of uninterrupted companionship was at an end. Yet I believed this to be most manifestly for his advantage, and forced my inclination to advise and promote it. My correspondence with Charles I have kept regularly—at least, his to me, and they show his progress.”

## CHAPTER II.

First Letter from London—Baillie, Abernethy, Cooper, &c.—Sir Joseph Banks's Reception—Dinner at the Longmans'—Astley Cooper—Lodgings in Fludyer Street—Dining Out on the Wrong Day.

1804.

ON the fly-leaf of the bound volume of these letters is written, in George's hand, "I seriously advised him to go to London for a winter to look about him, and either return with augmented knowledge of his profession, or remain if he found a reputable opening. He left this on the 23rd of November, 1804, and the correspondence here collected will show the series of our struggles."\*

YORK: YORK TAVERN,  
Friday evening.

DEAR GEORGE,

I had no time last night, before the return of the mail, to make my promise good to you by writing. I kept it in another instance, however,

\* To keep within bounds, it was necessary to make a selection from the mass of correspondence carried on almost daily between the brothers for more than thirty years. But enough is given to show the general course of Charles Bell's life and thoughts. To account for the apparent egotism of some of these letters, it must be remembered that George was his second self, that Charles wrote to him as if thinking aloud, and that he was fully conscious that the surrounding circumstances were interesting to his brother merely as they affected his own failure or success.

by remaining here all night, tho' quite able to have continued my journey.

I really enjoy travelling in the mail. To-day is a fair here, and I have been much gratified in gaping through the streets and visiting the Minster.

Do not let this expedition of mine make you decide upon my total estrangement from Edinburgh, for I repeat to you that it will be signal exaltation which will make so total a revolution in my sentiments and confirmed habits as will allow me to think of an establishment separate from those lesser, quieter felicities which I have enjoyed with you and auntie.

The bustle of preparation for dinner dissipates these recollections, and I only add that the regret of sitting quietly down in domestic ease, and neglecting my fortune (with which I am proud enough to connect the happiness of my friends), I shall not encounter; but this principle I shall not carry too far: I am certain that I shall be able to hit the medium.

Keep my auntie moving, take care of your health, buy a great coat, and do not neglect your annual cough.

Don't you think there is a certain confident air in my letter? That arises from being in a spacious room, well lighted, and a good dinner before me. You must not expect regular letters, and long ones only sometimes.

Your affectionate C. B.



28th November, 1804,

London Coffee House.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I sit down, before going to bed, to give you my feelings of *things in general*.

From Huntingdon to London is sixty miles. These, on Saturday evening and Sunday morning, are walked over, there being no mail carried forward. So I arrived at the Bull and Mouth on Sunday morning at seven o'clock. I dressed. One feels much like a gentleman on being dressed, after a long abstinence from that comfort; then I dashed in good style into the London Coffee House, where I have been since, with no absolute want of conveniences—as of food, drink, and a warm bed—but there is a sad want of comforts and enjoyments. If this be the season that John Bull selects for cutting his throat, Sunday must be the day, for then London is in all its ugliness, all its naked deformity; the houses are like ruins, the streets deserted. . . .

30th.

For these two days I have not been idle. I have called on Baillie, Lynn, Thomas, Wilson, Abernethy, Cooper, Gartshore.\* I believe I shall find every attention from the medical people here.

\* Though Charles Bell had no personal friends in London, his name was already known to the profession by his lectures, his models, and designs. He was associated with John in his works on anatomy. He had himself published two volumes of his "System of Dissection," with plates taken from his own drawings, in 1799 and 1801; and had also, in 1801-2, published engravings of the Arteries, Brain, and Nerves.

Astley Cooper called this evening when I was out. He left a card of appointment to meet him in St. Thomas's, and of invitation to dinner. I do not know what puts it in my head that Wilson\* would like to make a connection with me. I have had some conversation with him to-day. Wilson, you know, is second in descent from Dr. Hunter in the school of Great Windmill Street. . . .

Your character is higher than you are aware of, and I wish you were more sensible of your own importance. My happiness is more founded on the hope of your rapid advancement than of my own fortune. But I must hasten to a conclusion. I hear the increased sound of carriages rolling over the chimney-tops like the sound of many waters. The opera and play are over, and it is near twelve o'clock.

I will take your advice as to consulting some painter on the "Anatomy of Expression," but I will not take the manuscript from Longman until I am settled.

C. B.

*30th November, 1804.*

*22, Fludyer Street, Westminster.*

Now I am comfortably lodged, my dear brother, my mind more at ease, and things about me that look like home.

I breakfasted to-day with Sir Joseph Banks.

\* Curious anticipation! He joined Wilson, in Windmill Street, in 1812.

He is in good style, but has a set of most absurd animals about him—living animals—German and French toad-eaters. There came in presently two old ladies and a respectable, fresh-looking, gouty old gentleman, resembling old Provost Stewart. I took this figure for the knight, and was very angry with myself for coming to put myself in the train of this stupid, unmannerly man—unmannerly, *qua* Sir Joseph, because he did not take any particular observation of me. The old gentleman was a guest like myself, which, when I knew, I saw him through a different medium.

Presently the knight made his appearance—a very kingly figure of an old man with a blazing star upon his breast. He was polite and affable, and received my Infirmary-paper from Dr. G., and sat down and read it before he took his breakfast, and spoke highly of it. I received a general invitation from him.

From Sir Joseph I was carried to Mr. Carlyle, a surgeon of Westminster Hospital. He is a man of some abilities, but having the greatest conceit of himself I ever knew a man to possess. He spoke of “manufacturing their own raw material,” and if I had difficulties in Edinburgh, I would have more here. I put him bye. And now I put you bye, to make some notes on what I have seen in the Westminster Hospital. . . .

I must not omit to tell you that I enjoy excellent health, and live well; by and by, perhaps, too well. By way of termination to

a sauntering walk this forenoon, I called on Lady Headly and Miss Middleton. To the latter I go on Wednesday, to Misses and music. There I may commence many of these female acquaintances which might be agreeable, but I shall have neither money, time, nor mind to bestow upon these parties. Yet when one is weary with other matters, and sickly with the notion of being estranged from the gay world, it may become a relief, you know.

4th December, 1804,  
22, Fludyer Street.

DEAR GEORGE,

I was returning from a long walk to Longman's with some threatenings of discontent, when I found the postman at the door with your letter. Writing to you is not become a task; it is a relief and solace, for I have found nothing yet to interest me, or to produce affection.

I have still of my original deposit 37*l.* in the hands of Longman. I have given myself a new hat, coat, and waistcoat. I believe I look primitive and parson-like. On the score of my expenditure, give yourself no uneasiness, for I will let you know long before I can want.

\* \* \* \* \*

I dined with them (the Longmans) on Saturday. Astley Cooper was there. I dine with him on Thursday. We shall be by ourselves, and after that, I shall speak of him. On Friday I dined with Dr. Baillie and Dr. Adams, who wrote on poisons—we three.

*7th December.*

I am just come from Astley Cooper. I offered to make drawings for him. He seemed, and was, I believe, delighted. I am to do so. He asked me to stay all night; he hoped I would live with him while I was making these drawings for him; but I will not. I told him I was too happily situated in my lodgings.

In St. Thomas's and Guy's, they are made up, I believe. They have great resources, and many lecturers; but in this end of the town there is nothing going forward.

Wilson is the successor to Baillie; Baillie, to Dr. Hunter. There is no John Hunter, nor anything in his place. Dr. Hunter's museum is going to Glasgow, and Thomas is giving up his lectures, and has sold his collection: *viz.*, the famous Cruikshank's, to the Emperor of Russia.

Now, this end of the town has always supported the first lecturer. I shall fairly explain myself to the medical men here, and see what can be done.

I am weary of standing alone; and if this does not do, like the Prodigal Son I must throw myself upon my friends again.

*13th December, 1804.*

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Nothing has occurred since my last, unless that I have assisted Mr. Lynn at an operation. He stopt, which gave me opportunities of sketching; and for these two days I have been engaged

in my drawings. I think they will be very good.

*After Supper.*

You see that I have taken my best, because my largest, sheet of paper, that I may have a long confab. with you; and to deceive myself into the notion of conversing with you, I shall take out your last letter. How comes it that, in your kindness, with the idea of making me feel easy in the disagreeableness of my situation, you have praised and flattered me so much, that did I not take it as the kindest mark of your affection, I should be very apt to make a fool of myself? You inquire of me where and how I am situated. Look to the map, and you will see. Fludyer Street is a narrow one, but very respectable. There is written on the corner of the street, "No old-clothes-men or vagrants allowed to enter here!" It opens into the park, and really that is a delightful lounge.

Yesterday I was tired, and tired of the streets too, so I went into the park. The day was delightful; the verdure, the walks, the people, gave a gaiety to the scene; and the sky was, I think, more majestic in the forms of the fleecy clouds than I ever beheld it. There was a mild radiance over the whole that greatly pleased me.

The walk from St. James's, through the Green Park to Piccadilly, is a favourite with me. There is an elegance, an air of fashion, with comfort in the hanging balconies, and in the shrubberies of

the houses, that is next in its effect upon me to a beautiful landscape.

Thus, my dear George, I can pass from the thoroughfare of London to a fairy scene in a few minutes. Now for *home*. Had I passed from you at once into Fludyer Street, it might, perhaps, have appeared cold and desolate. But you must recollect that I had a seasoning in the London Coffee House. I felt like a man who had played his part before a great audience, and was allowed to retire. There is such an exertion to have things done in a tavern or coffee-house, that when you get into lodgings the interested assiduities of an old wife have some soothing effect with them. Thus it is with me. I feel my little comforts, and I like to see and make use of the same things, books, and papers which lay by me in my room at home.

But I must to bed. I hear the watchman calling "One o'clock, and a starlight morning!" I find I do not sleep when I am later, and I have made a resolution not to sit up past one o'clock. So, for the present, adieu.

15th December.

I have received a note this morning from Astley Cooper, begging of me, as a favour, to meet him at St. Thomas's Hospital. I shall, therefore, be engaged all day; and at present I am much hurried. . . . It seems as if of necessity I will soon become rich in cases of surgery if I have but common industry or

management. I make a practice of noting down my observations as the opportunity occurs.

*22nd December, 1804.*

*Friday morning.*

MY DEAR GEORGE,

You say that you are now satisfied that Edinburgh is no place for me, and that you consider me fixed in London. I cannot, I must confess, settle this point—I will not say so easily, but so entirely. I see nothing in all the success which awaits the most fortunate man here which can compensate for what I have lost in losing your continual counsel, company, and support. I am perpetually thus arguing with myself in whatever way I turn. Should these people now do all I wish, all my little comfort and happiness is wrecked upon this ‘one point of ambition’—as Jeffrey has it.\* Indeed I still, in all my wanderings of imagination, keep my eye fixed on home; and the hope is always prevailing that I shall be able to collect such information as may entitle me to return to you with comfort to us both. Yet you will perceive that I have been anxious to form such arrangements as will enable me to pass with people here as having a great object in view. Therefore I will not return until I have finished my *Anatomy of Painting*, have advanced in my *Surgery*, and have a rich store

\* For Francis Jeffrey's affection to George and Charles Bell, see Cockburn's *Life of Jeffrey*.



in pathology ; and what may offer before that, it is impossible to say.

I am going to dine with Dr. Baillie to-morrow at Sir William Blizzard's. I met him last night at Mr. Cline's, surgeon and lecturer at St. Thomas's. Cline is the first surgeon in town. . . . I am very much afraid that I am losing my time in these visits, and I have therefore begun my notes on painting—and *not till now.*"

*Saturday, After Supper.*

I shall go write on the muscles, my dear George ; but I cannot resist having some conversation with you. I have been with Sir William Blizzard, but, as you say, I wish I could have my mind occupied with that with which I am engaged.

I went to Sir William's in full puff—was shown into the drawing-room—nobody there. He came, drew in his chair, *as if to say*, " Let us be on no ceremony. How are your complaints to-day ? "

" D—— it " (says I, with my very expressive face), " what am I about ? " " Ho ! " says he, " now I see what has happened. You have made a mistake ; but it is a happy one for me. Come, we are just sitting down to dinner ; you have taken one Saturday for another ; but two are better than one. " Says I, " Am I never to come to my senses ?—never out of mistakes ? " But away we went downstairs, I uttering exclamations, and he felicities ; and he introduced me to

his family, Lady Blizzard, and the young ladies. I did not recover directly; I was in a pretty confusion. "Well, Mr. Bell," says he, "are you fond of music?" "Very," says I. "Then we shall presently be made amends for the bad dinner through the favour of the young ladies." You can imagine the rest. I got '*à la Turca*' from one of them. These were the days, thought I, that will never return, thinking of poor Strong and his agreeable parties.

Now this visit, of course, made us ten times more intimate than the formal dinner could have done with eighteen or twenty black-coated fellows of doctors—for such will be the party on Saturday three weeks! Now the fault here was not mine, but Astley Cooper's.

29th December, 1804.

\* \* \* \* \*

I left Sir Joseph Banks, on Thursday, studying my Anatomy of Painting with great spirit. His attention to me is gratifying. I will give it then to Horner, then send it down for your revisal, and then get it up again, and then sell it; and then, I suppose, come down myself!

My dear George, every time I write to you makes me think less and less of this place. Can I forget my friend? Had I been earlier weaned from you, I might have done so. You must now speak freely of my going or staying, *pro* and *con*. Farewell.

CHARLES.

## CHAPTER III.

Letters from Home—Lynn's Kind Feeling—Opera—Athenian Club  
—Benjamin West—Scheme of Lectures—Shakspeare Gallery—  
Anatomy of Expression—Townley Collection—Sir C. Blicke—  
Macartney of St. Bartholomew's—Abernethy—Mrs. Billington—  
Grassini—"Honours for Charlie"—Economy of the Household  
—Visit to Sydney Smith—House of Commons—"Madness"  
—Speaker Onslow's House in Leicester Street.

1805.

FROM C. BELL TO G. J. BELL.

*1st January, 1805.*

MY DEAR GEORGE,

The pleasure I receive from your letters is not like that—I suppose—with which a lover receives his mistress' lines. There is no extravagance, no tremor, no great enthusiasm, but there is a calm felicity. I can lay it down, finish what I am about, stir the fire, draw in my great chair, and sit down to read it with a perfect conviction of receiving a consolation to all my little disappointments, if there should happen to be any that morning. This satisfaction I have uniformly received, whether on a new year's morning or no. But I take this anticipation of the day on which I am to receive the letter as a kind of testimony to your affectionate remembrance.

I went with Lynn to-day; first, I with him

across Westminster Bridge, and then he with me to Somerset House. When we had got into the carriage, "Well," says he, "I wanted to speak and to laugh with you. They have got scent of you : they are looking sharp after you. D— it, sir, they think you're going to knock us all out. I told you your reception would not be very cordial. Your book has been seen on Sir Jos. Banks' table ; and they think your whole scheme is to be made Professor of Anatomy (in the Academy) in the first instance," &c. &c. Would you believe it, my dear George, that somebody, speaking of me to Lynn, said I "was a sharp, insinuating young man ! that he should take care ; —that, before he was aware, I would have him out of his hospital !!" Lynn's answer, he said, was—"Well ! how the —— will he contrive that ? But I tell you, I liked his brother, and I like himself. He is no *humbug*. His conversation is open and free." "Well," says the other, "he'll get to lecture in your hospital, and you will find the consequence." They have here a perfect horror of the shrewdness and perseverance of a Scotchman.

It is now past six o'clock. Five is the post hour. While I am writing, little Sutherland—the go-before of our old corps—has run in and deposited an opera ticket. I'll go. On Saturday, as I told you, Lynn and I went to the opera. I was delighted. The opera was *La Vergine del Sole*. The performers,—Grassini, Rovedino,



