

Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe from Australia, 1839 to 1854

A selection of personal letters based on *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, edited by L. J. Blake, Melbourne: Government Printer, 1975. († denotes an additional letter)

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To Sir George Gipps †

19 October 1839

My Dear Sir George,

The first scene of the first act of the drama is over. The welcome which the good people of this portion of your territories gave me, was as the papers would say *enthusiastic*: that is to say, the grave amongst them got up grave addresses & received grave answers—the gay made bonfires, put lights in their casements & fired off fowling pieces: -& the lower class got jovially drunk & were fined—all in my honor.

The second scene has now commenced. The newspapers (I understand for I have not had time to read them) begin to give me a great deal of very excellent advice—every man in the street thinks (as I must now have rested sufficiently from the fatigues of the voyage) that it would be both improper & impolitic to pass the door of my temporary office without stopping to do business with 'His Honor'. One steps in to ask after my health & how I like Australia Felix—another to request I would give him a government appointment: a third to inoculate me with his opinion on some subject of public interest. Official men have all some arrears of one kind or another to fetch up: having modestly kept them in the back ground till '*His Honor should arrive*: so that I am led to suppose that every body within the District (the Hentys from Portland Bay even have been at me) thinks that he does the state good service in assailing me: & all this at a time when I have neither a roof over my head, nor a single shelf upon which I may arrange my papers. However, I do not complain, on the contrary I take it as a matter of course that I must pass through this ordeal in common with other honorable men. They will soon find that the lemon has been squeezed so often that there is no longer any juice in it, & then I hope to have a quiet life. A quiet life it may be, but I have no idea that it will be an idle one. I am sure you will give me time to recollect myself & to get to understand my business, & then I will send you a full report of what is doing & what is to be done in this part of the Colony. I have found Capt. Lonsdale a truly excellent, worthy, intelligent man & one to whose opinion I am bound to listen with respect & deference. From no other official here, were I so necessitated, dare I seek for perfectly unbiassed opinions as to many matters connected with this District; for all, as might be expected, have entered more or less into the speculations of the time, with the exception of Lonsdale, whose self denial, & regard to the moral ascendancy which one, filling his station in the community ought to be possessed of, rather than to his worldly advantage I consider worthy of the highest respect & praise: I am sure you will appreciate it.

As to my own private arrangements —they are soon stated. Upon my arrival here, I fixed upon a suitable spot in the Government paddock, next to that in which Capn L[onsdale] resides & took measures to put up my portable cottage & whatever offices were indispensably necessary. I know that I am there on sufferance & not of right, & that whenever circumstances may oblige you to tell me to remove I must do so at all risks. Nevertheless I have been obliged to spend so much even in putting up these temporary erections (for such they must be called) from the exorbitant price of labour (10/- to 14/- per diem) & materials, that this alone would make me unwilling to move for some time unless it were necessary. But, other considerations impel me to ask you to sanction my remaining where I am proposing to live, till the public good or other circumstances require my removal, & that is my utter inability to cope with the speculators of this town in buying land within

any reasonable distance, and my determination to seek from you no advantage or indulgence in selecting & purchasing what might suit me, beyond what you might accord to any other. Were there no land fever in the District, & were land selling in a natural way: plentiful as it is, there might have been no impropriety in my asking you to sanction my purchasing a given plot of ground conveniently situated at an evaluation: or to allow it to be put up to auction at one of the land sales that I might become the purchaser—& none in your [yielding ?] to my request. But as matters are, I can do neither with propriety and so little hope have I of procuring land at present within a few miles of the town at any reasonable rate, that I have taken measures to dispose of my permanent House which I expect daily from England, even before it arrives, as, to keep it warehoused here is out of the question—I believe the position I have chosen is not likely to interfere with anyone. The paddock is railed in, & is part of that reserve which was set apart by Sir Richard Bourke's orders for the use of Govt cattle & horses. The mounted police have their barrack in one corner of it & I have modestly placed my cottage &c near another.

Mrs. La Trobe is well, thank God, in the midst of all our discomfort & confusion for we have not yet been able to get in to our quarters. She requests me to present her kind regards to Lady Gipps to whom I beg to offer my respects.

I have written to you, my dear Sir George, sans façon, as I believe I have your permission, & as your uniform friendly & open intercourse with me in Sydney encourages me to do—I do not wish to inflict a correspondence à la Robinson upon you (he has opened a terrible file fire upon me, of which more another opportunity) but shall have great pleasure in writing to you occasionally

& am ever

My dear Sir George

Yours very faithfully

Charles Jos. La Trobe

To Charlotte La Trobe †

Melbourne P.P. 2nd March [1840]

The departure of the *Magnet* comes upon me at a very busy time. The James after all has got away the first. We have two other vessels, the *Alice Brooks* & the *Hindustan* loading for England so that you may well expect to hear from us shortly again. I send you a blurred sketch of a ground plan of our cottage as promised — but promise you a better one when the land is mine & all finally arranged. By degrees you will get an idea of our position. Sophie will have told you all about herself & our little girl, who certainly all things considered and more especially that she is an *only child*, is growing up by God's mercy a very engaging pretty little baby. Small as our establishment is I assure you that there is not a more comfortable, well regulated and more tasty one in this part of the world both without and within. I shall wait a few months to see how matters turn out with reference to my proposed purchase of land on which it lies before I make a few further arrangements that may add to our comfort and *respectability*, but at present necessity obliges one to be as prudent as it is possible for a La Trobe to be. I have sent you a file or two of newspapers, which may give you some idea of what is going on in a colony, of 3 years growth certainly, literature apart, the advance is astonishing. I am just at this time suffering from an attack of rheumatic pain in the limbs which I foolishly invited from unnecessary exposure to a heavy morning mist. Otherwise, in spite of the great sudden changes of temperature of our climate, I must praise its salubrity. We have in fact a charming summer now on towards autumn.

If we could but meet for one or two or three days to exchange thoughts & words! I never felt the vanity & unsatisfactory nature of correspondence as at this distance — an hour's conversation with dear Peter or yourself is worth a dozen sheets! My mind is greatly

disturbed about him & I hardly know what to wish. God bless him and give him that consolation which alone can make life bearable to him. Kiss the two dear children for us. All your kind details with regard to them are exceedingly interesting to us. I wish my brother could have effected a change of dwelling in London. Love to all friends MacPhersons, Seeleys, McDowells & the true & faithful in the Congregation. I wrote to Mrs Mallalieu by the James. Of John's probable change of place I regret to hear. If I am not able to write to him by this vessel, I will not fail to do so by one of the others. To Frederic I think I shall get off a letter. I should not wonder if F. gets richer in the way of children than any other of us. Poor Kate she is then at last gone to her rest. Her child is living if I recollect right. Our news from England reaches (politically) to the middle of November. Is the Queen really going to marry a Cobourg in spite of all my wishes to the contrary?

Rumours are flying about here that Sir George is to be recalled, & Sir William Molesworth! coming out in his place! That would indeed be out of the frying pan into the fire! I have very little intercourse with Sydney except in an official way. I have recently been absent a whole one week from home on a visit to the Geelong District — a beautiful part of my province. Had I means I think I could be of use to the good people among whom I am thrown, but I am so crippled & tied down that I can do little but keep the wheel just moving round. I have been enabled thus far to steer pretty clear of shoals & quicksands & have conciliated most parties not by bowing and scraping but by going straight forward & showing that I had neither prejudice nor self-interest to serve. As you will gather we live very retired neither receiving nor giving general invitations & keeping as much in the background as possible. By degrees we shall get a choice of society about us. As long as my salary & appoints. are what they are, I can never pretend to act the Governor & see company in Gov. style, so the more quiet I keep the better.

God bless you my dear Charlotte, believe me ever.
Your most affectionate brother and friend,
C. J. La Trobe
P.S. 6 March. I close this today
—a day of sorrow for your Poor Brother.

[Annotated version of letter, see Publications – Transcripts]

To John Murray

15 December 1840

You, my dear Sir, 16,000 miles from civilization, and cannot imagine what it is to be cast so far beyond the reach of the thousand daily means of improvement and enjoyment which they possess who breathe the air of Europe; you therefore cannot know the pleasure we experience when we feel that, so far removed, there is still a chain connecting us with the old country which vibrates occasionally, and proves to us that we are at least upon the surface of the same planet with our kind and kindred. I have called our present position Exile, and so it is, to all intents and purposes. We may be content with it, but still we look forward steadily to its termination some bright day. I hope you have never done us the despite to count us as Emigrants. No, no; I do not exactly say that I would rather be hung in England than die in Australia; but still, I deprecate the latter event, if so please God ... Society here is, of course as you may suppose, in its infancy. The arts and sciences are unborn. Nature itself seems to be only in her swaddling clothes. The natives, for their part, look like a race of beings that were never discovering that he or she is not marsupial, like the other wild animals upon the same uncouth continent. The main interest here in everything consists in the oddity, and odd enough everything is, if that be to your taste; but there is but little variety, and one soon tires of any monstrosity. Meanwhile English, and I should say British, perseverance and industry are effecting their usual marvels; and, in spite of many disadvantages, the Colony of Port Phillip is advancing physically with extraordinary rapidity. This may be gathered from the

public prints, *maugré* their lies and their fustian. My position thus far has been a singular one, and not without its difficulties; but I have scrambled forward with as good courage as I could muster, not troubling myself much about difficulties that might be in advance, but just grappling with that of today, sometimes removing it according to rule and square, and sometimes jumping over it. My people are rapidly increasing in number, a good-natured, busy, speculative, impatient set, giving me three cheers one day and abusing me like a pickpocket the next, with equally poor reasons for their praise or their blame. Recent intelligence from home seems to point to the probability of this Colony being separated from New South Wales before long.

Mrs La Trobe has not been over strong since her arrival in these regions of the globe, though enjoying good general health. I am not quite sure that standing with the head downwards (as you know we are all obliged to do here) suits the female constitution though one gets wonderfully used to it after the first month's trial. We live in tolerable tranquillity, despite our pre-eminence, in a pretty cottage about a mile out of Melbourne, which is really becoming a town ... I had the common sense to start at once with the determination that whatever my supposed position and liabilities might be, so long as Her Majesty's Government neither gave me a house nor the means of keeping an open one, I would not pretend to do so to please the little world around me. A man with a fortune may spend it, and ruin himself to please people, if he thinks proper; but, having no fortune, I could not even do that. Consequently, I drew my line at once. Persons arriving in the Colony with letters from any dear friend, I welcome with all my heart, and show them every attention in my power; while to gentlemen who arrive with lithographed letters of recommendation from the Colonial Office, pronouncing their eulogy in set phrase and form, I show them the door. *Que faire?* I want to get back in due time to see you again in Albemarle Street, and to see something that dates further back than the year 1834. What you wrote to me of Fellows' doings in Asia Minor quite made my heart ache. When shall I discover an ancient city, or see one? ...

And now, my dear Mr Murray, believe that on this side of the world people have warm hearts as well as in your own, and that we are not tempted to forget those who, like yourself, have always treated us with kindness and great indulgence. Your worthy friend, Sir John Franklin, now and then writes me a friendly line. He is quite well. Lady F. is off to Adelaide. Ross is 'off to the South Pole; we have not seen him.

Ever, my dear Sir,
Your faithful Friend and Servant,
C. J. La Trobe.

[Full version of letter, see Publications – Transcripts]

To William Brockedon

Melbourne Port Phillip 12 May 1842

My Dear Brockedon

I wrote to you a long letter many months ago & have never had *no* word from you—I have just time before this mail goes out to tell you so (very unnecessarily I dare say!) & more over to add, that I do not mean to write to you any more until you do me justice—for now that I am a potentate, I am not to be trifled with as when I was a pedestrian, Pray let me know how you are faring, & that Mrs Brockedon enjoys better health, but I do not mean to write to you until you write to me.

Mrs La Trobe is pretty well & gave me another little girl about 6 weeks ago. She is a fine little soul & sings like a (Dutch) nightingale already.

God bless you
Your faithful friend

To Julia Latrobe †

Melbourne, Port Phillip —
6 June, 1842.

My very dear Julia

Ten years! Ten whole years – full measure have elapsed since you & I first met & began an acquaintance – which very soon ripened into a friendship, which however separated we have been, & however great my seeming neglect has (I can truly say) never been shaken. I have never thought of the happy days spent in the society of your dear family & became a sharer in its joys, anxieties & sorrows without a warm heart & stirred affections, & more, a gush of hope that *one day* I might in God's good time be permitted to see you all again & renew that intercourse which distance and indolence has rendered so uncertain. Nothing however could make me feel that I have not done my duty towards you as faithfully as I ought to have done as the feeling of self-reproach that mingles with my sincere sorrow in learning that this hope is vain, as far as this poor world is concerned with respect to one of your dear circle & that your dear Mother.

I have before me an extract from your letter to Charlotte of the 16th Nov. containing your announcement of this severe loss in your family & an affecting account of the circumstances under which it took place. How sad! & yet how encouraging surely amidst all your sorrow, you have, one & all felt that your dear mother's happy death in the full & simple confidence of her Christian faith – blessing & blessed, to have been a token of God's great goodness & mercy towards you as a family. I have had both difficulty in placing myself amongst you & realizing the scenes which you so touchingly describe. Dear aunt, she has left you a better inheritance, my dear Julia, than silver or gold, a bright example how to live & how to die & a full share of those promises which the Lord pronounces to be lot of the children of those who love & fear him. That her memory will live in all your hearts & for reasons easily understood most in yours, none can doubt – and be assured that I never forget her kind affectionate bearing towards me, & the real love which I am sure she bore to me. In many respects she may be said to have passed through much tribulation. Her youth was passed in the midst of change & trouble, & though the evening of her days saw her attain apparent tranquillity & ease I know perhaps as well any out of your immediate circle that trials of no common character accompanied her. But God hath done all things well. Cannot you say so, my dear Julia.

And now what am I to say to excuse myself in your eyes for my long silence. It is almost inexplicable to myself – for as I have said before I have never ceased to love you all & feel pride and pleasure in my having had the strange good fortune to know you all & to have been a member of your circle. The truth is that from one of the most exemplary correspondents in early life, I have insensibly turned out a most indifferent one in almost every instance & here at the extremity of the world I feel there is something in the immense distance that separates me from all my dear connections & the length of time that elapses before a letter can produce its response, & more than all the uncertainty of correspondence that almost strangles the desire to correspond in the abstract. Should I say that my new family ties have made me a worse correspondent with old loves & friends? I should scarcely say truly, for I have no present affections & enjoyments to which the maintenance of old friendships & the recollections of old enjoyments would not minister. Perhaps a growing indolence where there is not immediate cause of exertion & excitement may go for something; but I lay the chief blame of that every varying but every pressing round of official thought & official care & business, which is now my lot.

But before I say more about myself & my concerns I must transport myself again into your circle. Your own plans were scarcely fixed at the time your letter was dated - how could they? To think that God's good providence has furnished you with what is necessary for your future ease & modest wishes would be a great pleasure to me. I hope it is so. Pray write to me & tell me all about yourself as you would to a third brother & more, tell me that

you bind yourself whenever we return to Europe if such be God's will, to do all in your power to bring about a meeting whether in Europe or America we will not say. But surely we ought to contrive to see each other again: & you who showed so much affection to your cousin Charles will not show less to his wife & little girls. Pray write to me once again & I will really be more what I ought to be. Sophie says will not Julia come out to us?? I need not tell you that you would be welcome & have a home with us. But I know who you have those about you who love you too well to let you commit any extravagance.

I have heard so little of your brothers of late years so that I scarcely know how they are engaged & how far advanced in their strivings after independence. With what pleasure should I greet them! To John & Charlotte say many kind things – and dear Henry I suppose that he would be above laughing & wondering at my caricatures now. I do not know even how many children they have now. And Ben & Ellen, whose marriage I had such an interest in – God bless them! Kiss my godchild for me – if all goes well I'll do it for myself some day, & Ben & I will sing O dunga, dunga! I am afraid if we were to meet, grave careworn potentate that I am, we should be inclined to live a few of the old days over again. That your brothers should write to me is too much to expect. Pray do not let any of the more remote members of your family circle forget me quite – your excellent uncle, aunt & cousins. Your uncle must be now advancing to a good old age. Where is M'Euen [companion on the journey to Mexico] ? The last I heard of him was that he had married. Pray if you have the opportunity convey a greeting from me to him & tell him that I always think of him with pleasure. I wonder if he ever sings 'Laridondé'! Of our Baltimore acquaintances, I hear nothing of course but there are those whom I remember with pleasure. And now pray write to me, my dear Julia – & do not upbraid me as much as I deserve. Tell me most about yourself & what concerns you.

Now what shall I tell you about your antipodal cousins. I suppose that Charlotte's occasional letters have kept you a little au fait as to the movements of our family & my own [account ?] the rest. Alas, that one of *us is not*, & that about the time you lost your dear mother, my poor generous tempered brother Frederick was called away from the world. Of this we have but recently heard, & I do not like to think of it. Why has so much mercy been shown to me. It is now three years since I assumed the govt of this extensive province, and I have great reason to bless the Lord for all his merciful support & protection during the interval amidst much physical and mental exertion. I will not now however give you further details of official duty & position among my 20,000 restless colonists – but will invite you to take your seat under the broad verandah of our pretty cottage, which is situated in the midst of green fields, gardens & park like wood about a mile from Melbourne.

My dear faithful Swiss wife you do not, but you ought to know & if God so pleases shall know one day. I have to bless God for having led me to stop short in my wandering life for a short interval to form that connection which has been and is the source of so much joy to me under all times & circumstances. Of my little first born's birth during my absence in the W. Indies in 1837 you will have heard. She, Agnes, is a noble little girl now five years old, they say a pretty lassie – tho' how that happens I do not know, & full of talent, but as wild as a march hare & giddy beyond all endurance. For her sake as well as her mother's I could wish to see my way of return to Europe in a year or two clear before me. Next comes my little Eleanora Sophia, born in March last, a dear little soul – full of smiles & good humour & quite handsome enough for me. May God give her long life. I have just cause for thankfulness.

(not signed – page may be missing)

To Sophie La Trobe

'The Parsonage', S. Corio,
Friday 30 April 1844

Dearest Wife,

Here I am, but not without trouble. I could not get out of town before 2 pm or thereabout—finding just as I was going to mount her that the Mare was lame & then having to beat about for a horse to carry me to Greeves, whither I had sent Hassan 3 or 4 hours before. Bell lent me Hottentot, & the upshot was that I was three hours getting there & had absolutely to go on foot for several miles. He is not worth his corn. Well it was of course sundown before I made Little River & tho I contrived to reach Cowes Creek, afterwards it was so dark, & the ground so cut up with fences that I had a good deal of trouble to get in which however I did at 9.

Tomorrow I'm off at sunrise & hope to come & give you a good account of myself before long. God bless you dearest. I have no news but enclose you a letter from Therry. Mr Bell told me that he would return to S[hortland's] Bluff on Tuesday. If he does not make haste I may be there before him. Kiss the dear Children from me & dear Elly an extra kiss on her birthday—poor child—I am sorry not to be with you.

Yours . . .

C. J. La Trobe

[Letter was addressed to Mrs La Trobe, Shortlands Bluff care of Mr Mullen The Hermitage]

[To Rev. Peter La Trobe]
– copy of part of a letter

Melbourne
December 1844

I have still to tell you, that besides 'One or two Trips to Geelong—I have since I last wrote made a fortnight's excursion moi-même au grand galop, visiting the upper part of the Goulburn River, and the Aborigines Station, the Loddon district, the Pyrenees, & then in spite of threatening & even very wet weather at times, made a dash at the Upper Extremity of the Grampians, with a view to ascend Mount William, the highest mountain mass of the group (4500 ft). I was certainly wonderfully fortunate to command a really fine & cloudless day for this purpose—the only one all the time I was out, & I felt almost boyish delight in finding I could achieve a downright Alpine scramble, up the steep face of that singular pile, with as much spirit as ever. Even where the mountain appears most accessible from the Eastward, it terminates in a huge wall of precipitous rock of about 150 ft. in height, & to the very last it was quite a matter of doubt, whether—all other difficulties surmounted, this could be overcome. However, by the time we reached the foot of the last step, my friend Bunbury & I were not in a humour to be stopped by trifles—and taking advantage of a furrow down the face of the precipice, we scrambled up, step by step, till we found ourselves on the summit, & in clear sunshine at one & the same time. I really do not know what to admire most, the extraordinary view, which comprises the whole of the Grampians & Victoria chains in the Vicinity, as broken & picturesque in the details as any chain of the class I ever saw—the adjacent chain of the Pyrenees—& the whole of the vast area of plain, broken by occasional Volcanic groups which form the central plateau of this portion of my district. In most directions, you command a Circle, the radius of which is from 70 to 80 miles—and recognize many points at a far greater distance.

The structure of the mountain is very extraordinary—tho' not volcanic perhaps, properly speaking, it shows every sign of having been *shoved* up to its present height & position by volcanic agency, & the forms taken by the sandstone grit, which as it appeared to me formed the head of the mountain, are more bizarre than even those in Saxon Switzerland, which however, I think they must resemble. The Botany was, of course in a great measure new to

me, & exceedingly beautiful, but I had at command no means of bringing away my spoils. From the foot of the mountain, I was 3 days on my return to town leaving the Pyrenees to the North, & taking across the plains & the Bush with or without road, as best suited my convenience, & my wish to lose no time. I found of course, on my return, an office full of work, etc, etc.

Pray send us occasionally a few of the rarer seeds; I particularly wish you would slip into your letters a *pinch* of pelargonium seed, of the finer varieties, which grow marvellously well here—Tell some of our friends to send us English field flowers seed & you may send us a box of Bulbs. Cape bulbs we have in abundance.

To Rev Peter La Trobe †
per 'Rajah'

6 April 1845

My dearest Brother,

I foresee so much business of one kind or another for the week that I must snatch a moment when I can to begin a letter to you. I have written you divers short missives lately since the 'Royal George', by the 'Thomas Hughes', 'M. Whyte' & 'Vixen', in all mentioning the subject which is of course upper most in our mind at present, that of dear Agnes' return to Europe. Praying God that the same hour that may bring you this, may see her under your roof.

I will begin my letter by letting you know how I sped in a rapidly executed visit to Gipps Land which I undertook on the spur of the moment, foreseeing that if I did not make it in the interval between the close of February & the Passion week, neither my official nor my domestic engagement, nor indeed the season would allow me to think of it for 10 or 12 months to come.

I left Sophie & the children at the Heads before day break on the 28th February & reaching Geelong in time for the Melbourne steamer was at my office soon after 12. I was retained in town till after noon on the 28th, but had meantime made some preparation towards my journey by sending horses on to Bass River (70 miles) on the eastern side of Western Port. I started alone but at Dandenong 21 miles to the SE from Melbourne joined the gentleman whom I had fixed upon for my travelling companion & with him pushed on still to our first camping place on the shore of Western Port about 42 miles from town. My intention was to cross Western Port to Bass River by boat as I thereby should avoid the detention generally experienced in getting over 4 muddy inlets at the head of the Port, and fortunately the weather favoured us & we had no difficulty in reaching Bass River on the 29th.

You will recollect that I visited this part of the country in 1840. The barren, scrubby and marshy character of the country adjoining this port, & of the large islands in it, render their occupation for the purpose of grazing scarcely worth while. The whole circuit of the Bay from Cape Schank [*sic*] to Cape Grant [i.e. Point Grant] does not show more than half a dozen stations with exception of the vicinity of Bass River, where there is a confined patch of very rich productive land. I here found my horses ready for the journey & laying in our small stock of provisions for men & horses we made an early start the next morning. I had resolved to take to the coast line of country as affording the surest prospect of getting thro' to the Albert in a reasonable time – the track being according to report now pretty well marked & but few real difficulties in the way beyond the passage of two or three deep rivers. The distance was variously stated from 100 to 150 miles from Basses river to the Albert. None of our party (Mr Dana, a servant & black-boy) had been in Gipps Land as it happened, so we had to pick up information as we could. Our intention this day was to try to reach the Tarwan at the head of Anderson's Inlet, effect this passage, & if possible reach a swamp described as lying 3 or 4 miles beyond where we should find water, the river itself being within the

influence of the tide. Nine miles over the coast ranges to the S. brought us from Basses river to the last station on this side, the country close down upon the shore of the Straits, near the place where coal was found 4 years ago. Shortly after we crossed the mouth of a small stream and then held an easterly course for about 15 miles over a very barren scrubby country lying at the back of Cape Patterson till being debouched down a deep gully in which we were fortunate enough to find some water upon the shore a few miles to the E. of that promontory. This tract of country lying between the coast range & the shore forms the 'run' of a herd of about 500 wild cattle, the offspring of a few head turned adrift on the E shore of Western Port in 1823 when the small Govt. settlement there was abandoned. These cattle are wild enough, they were purchased a few years ago by a settler for £80, but the buyer has never reaped any advantage of his bargain. They feed upon the scrub having nothing else to eat & the very beef is flavoured by it.

But to my journey. We were very much favoured by weather which was only bearably warm. We kept the coast for 4 or 5 miles, that is till we [were] well advanced upon the northern shore of the inlet – & till we were brought up by a deep muddy creek, which turned us inland again & kept us beating about for an hour till we found means of crossing it & one or two of its tributaries higher up. The track then led us over a rocky wooded point – & then scrub for the next 10 miles, an occasional glimpse of the shallow inlet being afforded us till we gradually ascended a bald heathy ridge near the upper extremity & saw the open tract extending to the north of Cape Liptrap to the hills in the vicinity of Corner Inlet & many tiers of the great coast ranges which terminate near the Gipps Land Lakes. These have no very marked character as to outline. They are invariably covered to the summit with almost impervious scrub. It was by following a section to the westward from the La Trobe - which led him across these on this way to Western Port - that Strelecki [Strzelecki] met with such difficulty.

The Tarwan flowed thro' a wide extent of marsh land immediately below the hill of which I have made mention & we hastened to its banks with a degree of impatience which you will understand when I say that as it can only be crossed with the chance of safety to the horses at high water – the banks being exceedingly boggy. We were fortunate in finding the tide advancing towards its height, as to give us hopes of being able to cross in good time as it was only yet about 2 PM – but were unable to find any vestige of a miserable little punt or canoe which we had been led to expect had been left here by preceding parties. As it was quite impossible to cross our saddles & supplies of forage in any other way, however our persons & horses might have got across, we saw no way of getting over the difficulty than by submitting to the labour & delay by cutting a bark canoe in the adjoining scrubby forest, which afforded a very bad chance of making anything of the kind – the reason being moreover the very worst for bark stripping & our implements almost as bad. However, an hour's dilemma, we were relieved by discovering about a mile further down, the two men whom we had trailed part of the day, & on joining them by finding that they had got hold of the punt in question and were trying to cross their horses. Our joining them was an advantage to both parties for they were sadly too weak handed to make the attempt, but by joining strength & tether ropes we contrived after about three hours hard work to achieve the passage & before the tide turned to get our horses over in safety, the breadth of the stream here being about 100 yards. By the time we were in a position to start forward it was dusk and dark very soon after. The uncertainty as to the proper direction, for here the track bends down toward the sand hills to the south – & numerous tracks of cattle.

After persevering for an hour in attempting to strike the marsh, & find fresh water obliged us however unwillingly to halt at the edge of a dense strip of scrub which hardly afforded us wood for our fires & tethering our poor thirsty horses close to us we rolled ourselves up in our blankets & tried to forget our thirst as well as we could. You will understand that eating salt meat and dry bread is out of the question when you cannot

secure water. The coarse grass on these flats by the Tarwan affords the only possible chance of a meal to the herds passing from the vicinity of Western Port to Gipps Land, and it is therefore usual for parties bringing their stock over to leave them for a time here to feed before proceeding. We knew that we must be close to water from the number of cattle about us all night, & at the earliest dawn we were in the saddle & in search of it. We returned on our track to Tarwan – & struck another trail – found that it doubled back to the river again – returned again & at length found that the direction followed the past night was the right one in the main & that the water was within half a mile of our thirsty camping ground. A couple of hours had been lost in the search, but we of course proclaimed a halt, & both horses & men got the refreshment which was the more wisely taken as we did not expect to find water again till night, if then. The weather was warm but otherwise very favourable. Starting again we rounded the marshes, which here approach very near the coast near Cape Liptrap – and then to the eastward towards a bald range of hills in the first place over a dreadfully scrubby plain which would hardly allow of our advancing at the most cautious footpace, & then towards a range of wooded hills of greater elevation which rose to the NW of Corner Inlet (Hoddles range). It was 8 PM before we reached the shoulder of the latter. In the interval both men and horses had suffered a good deal from want of water & difficulty in finding or keeping the trails over a very broken country.

I had moreover to thank God for escaping with impunity from what appeared to be a very perilous position at one point. My horse having fallen & turned completely over upon me in attempting to scramble over a deep narrow water course completely hidden in the scrub, keeping me pinned down under him, half in and half out of the rut for three or four minutes while he was struggling & kicking over me. Fortunately, I kept my head out to the way of his heels, and was able to take advantage of his becoming quiet thro' exhaustion to worm myself quietly from under him with only a few bruises.

About half an hour before we got upon the ridge before we were fortunate to find water in the bed of one of the water courses which now occasionally traversed the country towards the shallow inlets which lie to the W. of Wilsons Promontory. Some of them are very picturesque from the quantity of large tree ferns with which they are filled. From the ridge a very wide extent of view opened upon the whole of the coast from Cape Liptrap (east) to the Promontory of which the outline is very bold - Corner Inlet & the coast ranges extending to the vicinity of Port Albert. The weather was however very hazy. We pushed eagerly over the ridge & down into the more level country, over grass tree scrub, trusting that we should be able [to cross] the so-called First River flowing into Corner Inlet before night – that is to say, if the tide served.

[This letter was unfinished and presumably was never sent.

Endorsed in La Trobe's hand: 'Notes of journey to Gipps Land along the coast — in part'.]

To Ronald Campbell Gunn

Govt House 23 January 1847

My dear Mr Gunn,

I was glad to get your letter & have no quarrel with you except that I grumbled a little when Mr Lilly told me that you had passed thro' town & had not given us even a flying visit.

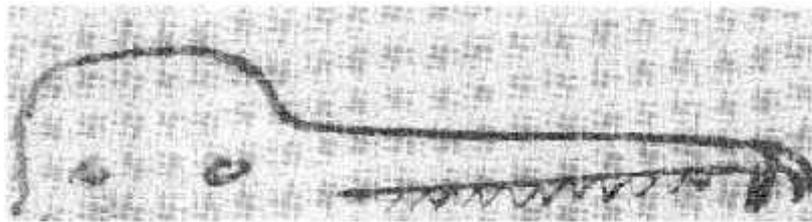
I am far from taking the view of the proposed change in your brother's position that you appear to do, & I think were we [indecipherable] I could place it before you in a very different light: as would show you that as far as I allow personal feelings to enter into the matter I believe I am acting with consideration, foresight & kindness towards him. But this may become more clear hereafter.

Pecuniarily according to my estimate, he would be rather better off, as I have directed that he should have 350£ per an. salary *all* the allowances whatever they may be which he

has had here besides forage which he has not drawn, because his duties were of a less general nature. However if there is anything wrong or obscure in that part of the arragt it will be my duty to see it set right—I should like to have seen Lake St Clair with you but could not have commanded the holiday. I have little to report but that I & Courteny scrambled one Saturday afternoon up to the top of Mt Wellington & after a very hard tussel in the dense forest in descending got back safe & sound about 9 P.M. It is well worth a visit. I have also, in visiting Terry's Huts, made a dash at the ' fossil tree ' & was exceedingly gratified with it.

I have been however taken to task by Mr Bouker of Rosegarland since for presuming to visit private property, & chip his 'petrification' as he calls it. I really never dreamed of it belonging to anybody!

You have heard probably the constant rumours of the existence of some unknown beast in the rivers & lakes of P. Phillip—under the native name 'Bunyep' or 'Bunyip'. That there is such a one whether round or square, fat or lean—& that of tolerable size—I have been long convinced. At last, Lonsdale writes me word that they have found the head of one in some stream near Murrumbidgee & that it has been brought down to Melbourne. According to description it must be a long snouted animal something of this shape:



a long bill-like snout the forehead rising abruptly the eye placed very low—strong grinders, cavity for brain very large. The end of the snout is broken off but the blacks who have seen it say it ought to have two long tusks projecting downward at the termination.

It appears to be a recent skull as some of the flesh was on it when found—and search is going to be made for the bones. Now what can this be? They do not give me any dimensions—but state it must be a very large animal.

To Ronald Campbell Gunn

Hobart Town 29th January [1847]

My Dear Mr Gunn,

Here is Sir Wm Dennison & my fate is decided—that fate being that I must get back to Port Phillip as quickly & as best I may. The size of my family & impedimenta, baggage & servants that accompany it have obliged me after weighing one plan after another, however unwillingly & reject as impractical, all & each, except one, that one being that as soon as I can wind up public & private affairs here, which may be in 8 or 10 days time, I must get on board some craft *here* & go about my business—

So adieu St Clair & the Western Tier! This is a disappointment to Mrs La Trobe as well as to myself—but such is one of the penalties, admitting the pleasures, of having two or three little ones. I am particularly sorry to think that I may not see you again at this time. But if you should come up to town before we sail by any chance, do not cut me, that's all. I forgot in writing to you a few years ago, not having your note by me, to reply to your inquiry about Dr Valentine's microscope. I regret that he must sell it, in the first place, & that I cannot be the purchaser in the second. I have not made my fortune in V.D. Land I believe—I mentioned the subject of Mr Bicheno with whom I am staying (my family being at the Bush Inn at N. Norfolk) he wagged his head & looked contemplative, adding that he never passed thro' Campbell without having a peep through it, but I think he does [. . . ?]

Mr. Lilly tells me he still hopes to see the two souls [?]united. Have you thought any more upon this subject?

I may write again before I leave V.D.L. but must now say goodbye. Lady Franklin has returned to England.

believe me Yours very truly

C. J. La Trobe

To Ronald Campbell Gunn

Melbourne 8 March 1847

My dear Mr Gunn,

I write to you from the *wrong side* of the straits to tell you that we are safe, after an amusing excursion from Hobart Town, Port Arthur, Eagle Hawk Neck, Maria Island, etc. etc., the only check being on account of my little Nelly who broke her collar bone in a tumble down the skylight of the 'Mary'.

I find things pretty much as I left them. This is no season to send you plants but I have already marked a number for the garden at Launceston & may send you a box or two by the next 'Shamrock'.

The Bunyep's head you will have had in your hands—what do you make of it? I am convinced that we shall get more than one strange animal before we have finished.

I have stirred up the friends of the Tasmanian Society and I hope you will find that we are capable of acting more to the purpose than formerly, & add something to your means of carrying on the work. Your last number is very interesting.

I picked up a considerable number of fossils as I came round your coast and find the greater part figured in Strezlecki [*sic*].

Any 'rubbish' that you may be inclined to send me will always be safe in the hands of Capt Gilmore or anyone of our traders.

My visit to V.D. Land has quite freshened my spirit & my love for the fine scenery & natural science. It is a pity that I am not a more diligent observer—as to collecting, that's easy enough.

Is there no chance of your visiting us this autumn?

Mrs La Trobe sends kind regards & hopes with me that Mrs Gunn & the family are well.

I always regret 'The Lake Country' but who knows, I may some day visit V.D.L. with more leisure.

believe me Yours truly

C. J. La Trobe.

To Ronald Campbell Gunn

26th April 1847

My dear Mr Gunn,

Many thanks for your obliging note—and the brief but clear reply you give in haste to my queries. I am glad to hear them even in that shape as they have to confirm my own impressions & I am quite ready to own that some might be questioned unless backed by the experience of those who are in the way to know & feel what the real state of things was & may now be.

Mrs La Trobe begs me to add her acknowledgement for the apples & quinces which appear to us worthy of the Garden of the Hesperides! I saw the drawings of the Bunyep

yesterday at Hobson's. He begins to have some strange misgivings—and really I have the reputation of the 'Tasmanian' so much at heart, that I think I should let the forthcoming number come out without 'the article'—& trust that before another emerges from the Press we may be able to lett[?] you more. There is some jealousy about the skull itself of which neither I nor Hobson have as yet caught a glimpse. I promise you that I will do my best endeavour to catch a whole one. It would not do to be caught describing & drawing an abortion. I send you our wise man of the gardens list of plants. Those marked S can be furnished to your garden if you will get your gardener's 'tick' of what you want.

I was sorry to hear that Mrs Gunn had been indisposed during your absence. There's nothing like Port Phillip for change of air. Allow me to present my respects & assure you however in haste that

I am yours very truly
C. J. La Trobe.

To Ronald Campbell Gunn

Melbourne
14 May 1847

My dear Gunn,

The bearer Mr Dardell is one of our worthy Swiss wine growers. He visits V.D. Land with the wish to procure a quantity of good grafts etc. for a large garden which he is engaged in forming at S. Kilda & has applied to me to tell him who are your best nursery men etc. —I am unable to tell him, but I am sure you will kindly give him any advice & information in your power.

He is a very steady hard working man & as a native of Mrs La Trobe's canton we feel an interest in him.

In great haste
Yours very truly
C. J. La Trobe.

To Ronald Campbell Gunn

Melbourne
23rd September 1847

My dear Mr Gunn

The arrival of one of your numbers of the Tas' Journal stirs up my memory & to a certain extent my conscience for I am not sure but I owe you & have owed you a note for some time past. I take advantage however of the esteem of my [. . ?] friend of Launceston to say that I look forward to your projected vernal visit to P.P. with much pleasure & hope that we may see a little more of you than we did on your last. There are many points of mutual interest I could wish to chat over with you—& some things I could wish to shew you if time & opportunity offered. The enclosed meteorological record has been long upon the table waiting an occasion for transmission. Tell me if such have any value & you shall have them always laid aside for you.

'I can say little about the Bunyep!'—beyond this, that I am more & more convinced that there are two large nondescript animals to be found in our waters—that of which our blacks give a description being quite distinct from that which appears to frequent the waters & lakes more to the north. A third animal of which glimpses have been seen occasionally in the waters directly communicating with the sea is I have no doubt a seal. I send you two sketches of the animal described by our blacks & these coincide in the main with those which I have

seen delineated by the tribes N of Mt Macedon. No. 1 was sketched upon the sand in front of Capn Coverdale's cottage & tho' 10 or 12 ft. long was still said by the *artist* not to be quite as large as life. A few days after being at the Native Police Station, Dandenong, I made some enquiries amongst the older natives— and No. 2 is the animal drawn by one of them. I send you the 'original'. The two sketches certainly are intended to portray the same animal. It is pretended that before the Europeans arrived the Yarra near Melbourne possessed many of them. We will catch him yet if he does exist.

You have often heard me state my belief. I believe that the portion of the Australian continent which we inhabit is of very recent formation, or, at least, that its assumption of its present position above the sea is of recent date. All I have seen of the coast from Portland to Gippsland impresses this fact upon me. But I have accidentally attained an undoubted proof of the extraordinary changes that the coastline of our Bay must have undergone within the last half century even, it might be conjectured, for which I was quite unprepared.

Happening to be at Geelong a month or so ago, I went as I usually do to see the progress of the lime works near the point about a mile below the town—and hearing that they were excavating the slope of the hill at a point where it approached the shore for the formation of a larger kiln than ordinary I took occasion to go to this spot, & get down into the excavation to see the character of the formation at this point. My attention was immediately caught by a thin layer of shells in the position I have marked in the accompanying scratch, & a little examination shewed me that this inclined stratum of shells had at no very great distance of time formed the shore. The very shells of which it was mainly composed was the same as those actually edging the water below. The loam below this stratum shewed a greater admixture of calcareous matter & iron but I should think that . . . no rock would have been uncovered had the pit been some feet deeper down. I was examining the shells & detaching some of them & a cluster of wombat teeth from the seam, when the 'excavator' followed me & on my saying to him that this seam marked the position of the shore at a very ancient period—said 'Why sir I picked out a bunch of five keys from that very spot yesterday'—and so he had. Strange as it may seem I satisfied myself beyond a doubt but he spoke the truth. His children had been playing with & lost one of the keys, he had given away another—someone who was passing at the time he took them out—but I saw the other three—still showing marks of the soil out of which they had been taken—& satisfied myself on . . . a material point of interest connected with the fact.

. . . points (a) at which they were found is between 40 & 50 feet from recent high watermark—10 feet or thereabout above it and buried beneath 15 feet of solid undisturbed soil forming the slope of the open & elevated downs behind. The keys were corroded—but the precise form & character of the wards even were distinguishable. I cannot suppose that 50 years had elapsed since they were dropped or washed upon that beach. I send you a few of the shells from both the buried shore & the existing one.

Is not this very extraordinary.

I can only add my best respects to Mrs Gunn & kind regards from Mrs L. We shall be very glad to see or hear from you.

In returning over the plains the other day I stretched my legs by going up Station Peak—and was delighted by a beautiful species of *Prostanthera* which is now in full bloom among the masses of granitic rock. I have succeeded in bringing away none of your fine V.D. Land species.

believe me

Yours very truly

C. J. La Trobe.

To Sophie La Trobe

Buninyong
Saturday Morning [11 March 1848]

Dearest,

We made over 74 miles ride to this place yesterday with great ease—reaching the Marsh to breakfast at ¼ p 10—and our night quarters 40 miles further before sundown. The weather then was very favourable. Things look a *little* greener here amongst the hills but every thing very dry. This Inn painted, papered & cleaned since I was here in Decr proves to be very comfortable—& being *alone* we have nothing to complain of. I am not yet internally all I could wish but believe that a day or two will set me all right. It has *rained*, positively rained all night & does so yet—for this so much to be thankful tho' it may wet our coats. We shall get on all the same—25 to Goldsmith who is not at home, 12 to Campbell's—& then if we can see how far it is to Mr Wright's station on the Wimmera—some 16 or 18, I suspect. Wednesday perhaps I may reach Portland—but I cannot expect much before. I shall look out for a letter from you then & I hope good news perhaps of the little mischiefs to each of whom I send a kiss. I hope the little girls will be good and not make brother disobedient. I suppose you will feel as busy & important in the midst of your designs & directions to Thomas the carpenter as Thorogrophorisportonvusphores did in constructing the Tower of Babel. *Mille baisers*. God bless you dear wife.

Yours C. J. L.

To Sophie La Trobe

Decameron
Pyrenees 12 March [1848]

Dear Wife,

I wrote to you from Buninyong yesterday morning. The rain was light & more agreeable than otherwise—we started about 7 & I rode on to Burrumbeet Lake—& then made for Goldsmith's—who however we know would not be at home—but made his creek a mile and a half above his station & so determined to go on our road to Donald & Hamiltons—30 miles from Buninyong. Here we got our horses well fed & something to eat & then Mr Donald civilly rode 12 miles with us to show us a short cut off over the Pyrenees which brought us by way of Irvine's station in 24 miles to Decameron where we found Mr Wright—so you see how we have lost no time so far. My plan is to go on quietly this afternoon to Green's station—& then by Boyd & Rose's round the Grampians & Victoria Ranges to the Glenelg—so down—I dare say I may find an opportunity of writing to you before I get to Portland but at all events from there. There was a sharp thunderstorm & some rain last night, but now the weather looks brightening again. I take it for granted that Grimes goes on with me tho we have said nothing definite. Mr W[right] goes a days journey. I am getting on better now—but feel as I sometimes do that poke in my side 3½ years ago. Kiss the dear Children. I hope you will get to Church this morning. God bless you my own Cherie, Think of me sometimes. I do not think that I shall be longer abroad than I said. This goes by private hand into town.

Yours C. J. La Trobe.

To Sophie La Trobe

Rose's Station, Grampians,
Tuesday Morning [14 March 1848]

Dearest Wife,

I wrote to you from Buninyong on Saturday morning and from Decameron Sunday & hope you will have got my notes. On the afternoon of the latter day we . . . Grimes & Wright & self—rode quietly down the valley of the Wimmera 28 miles to Mrs Green's station—having

one or two sharp thunder showers by the way—found poor & crowded & dirty quarters under favor of Mr Daly who acts as overseer—and were very glad to get off yesterday morning. The thunder storm had cleared the air & we had beautiful views of the Grampians towards which we directed our steps. Reaching Boyd's station—20 m. by road & then proceeding through the Gap 20 miles more to this station where we have been hospitably housed & our horses taken care of. The scenery of the Gap or opening in this part of the Grampians range is really very fine. The precipices of naked & broken rock rising 1,000 feet over the wooded parks. This station which is situated at the head of the MacKenzie a tributary of the Wimmera is really beautifully situated with a noble mountain on front. The Gap cuts off the upper extremity of the chain. The rain [. . . ?] but we propose i.e. Grimes does, for Wright returns, to go 25 miles to Airey's old station (Mt. Talbot) & then try to make Blair's 30 miles & upwards—but we shall see. I cannot hope to be in Portland before Monday night or Tuesday morning and then hope to receive your promised letter. I hope that you will have written by the Thursday's [?] mail also for if no longer there the letter will follow me back. I am more & more charmed with the scenery of these mountains. There is no difficulty in getting here in a carriage so you have only some day to make up your mind Cherie—Kiss the dear Children—I suppose they will add greatly to their Australian geography by hearing of my journey. Of course I hear nothing of town having . . . faster than the mails.

I see a great many new flowers. I am convinced that a host of perfectly new things would be found here in the spring. If you see Dr Howitt tell him so—My kind regards to the good *Bishops*—if you see them. I hope I shall find you well with good letters perhaps from home. You have had your share of rain at [?] & that the garden & paddock will be beginning to get green—What will you prepare for my birthday present? What a pity that you cannot without inconvenience anticipate next August. God bless you my dear Cherie. *Mille baisers*.

I wonder when this will reach you.

Kiss Nelly—Cecile and Charlie.

To Sophie La Trobe

Mr Blair's Portland Bay
Thursday night. 9 pm. 16 March [1848]

Dearest Wife,

I just catch the mail & write to you a line tho but one to say that I have just arrived *sain & sauf*. I wrote to you from Rose's on Tuesday morning. That night we reached the Glenelg near Mr Blair's station last night. The junction of the Wando & Glenelg. I came in 70 miles today. I have as yet had no letter from you but hope to find one at the Port. God bless you. I shall see you I hope some time next week & in the meantime will write—Kiss the Children.

Yours C. J. La Trobe.

To Sophie La Trobe

Portland
19th March 1848

I have scrawled a line to Mr Graham.

My Dear wife,

You will have seen from my notes written en route that it would be quite impossible for me to be back with you quite as early as you were led to hope. For I could not stop less than two days in Portland, and then Sunday today intervening I could of course not get off before tomorrow morning.

So I am very glad to get your brief note of this day's mail—and to see that you are all well.

Tomorrow I start early for Port Fairy 50 miles—& the next day get on to Warrnambool & a little fwd then perhaps on my road home. I am pretty well supplied with horses & shall do what I can to be with you to dinner on Thursday—but that can only be the case if I meet with no check to . . . —so don't be astonished if I do not see you till Friday. People are kind & complimentary here—& I wish you were with me. I send a note to each of the little girls & five kisses to Charley.

You will I am sure think of your old husband tomorrow . . . [his birthday].

Goodbye dearest

C. J. La Trobe.

To Ronald Campbell Gunn

Melbourne

7 April 1848

My dear Mr Gunn

Your kind lines of last month came into my hands on my return from a rapid journey to the westward—and I must not let the Shamrock slip through my fingers without thanking you for it & for your addition to Mrs La Trobe's organisation. You would I find have heard direct from poor Hobson's friends on the subject you wrote to me about. He was very collected up to the last & left every thing in good order, being I am glad to say able to leave certain provision for Mrs H. & his children which however moderate may make their future comfortable in Germany where it is his wish that Mrs H. would return. She does not go to Europe this season. However I saw her the other day—and she acknowledged your kindness & readiness to come to her aid. I still grieve over her husband's loss. I had always at hand as long as he was alive in my vicinity, an intelligent mind to which I could communicate any matter of interest that came under my notice in my various journeys & was sure to draw out valuable opinions & information. We have a noble & a new held opinion in this country & really now no one who has either time taste or talent to turn it to account.

When do you visit us again? I have secured one of '*the Keys*' for you. I have repeatedly visited the locality again and am unshaken & unshakable in my story. I still hope to see your foot upon it—I therefore do not write more about it at present. A long period of dry weather with very little break latterly in spite of the Equinox has come to its close today for we have showers in good earnest. A singular fact which has presented itself to me in my recent journey (thro' the Pyrenees, Grampians, the upper Wimmera & Glenelg districts, Portland, Port Fairy, Warrnambool & so home) is the breaking out in the course of this summer. Tho' . . . that has been known of the streams of the plains & upper country without any assignable cause. Colac has risen some feet after losing its water gradually year after year—marshes pastured on for years are now pools, and springs have broken out where none have been observed heretofore. How do you account for this? If these phenomena were observed over a tract of country, which, however arid & rainless, itself was still commanded by higher ranges, & plateaux—ever far removed, but still possibly the theatre of rain at a certain period prior to the rise of these waters, one might, if the geological structure of the continent admitted, find some reason for the facts I have stated. But what we do know of the country more in the interior of Australia is not favourable to such a mode of explanation—and more over, many of these outbreaks of water have occurred at a very comparable elevation & close to the dividing ranges between the waters of the coast & tributaries of the Murray—upon which it is well known that there have been no rains for months previous . . .

C. J. La Trobe.

To Ronald Campbell Gunn

Melbourne
17th August 1848

My dear Mr Gunn

I must not let the 'Raven' spread her wings again & fly aver to Launceston—without thanking you (first for your kind lines of the 20th ult. accompanying the box of roses etc which came in pretty fair order) & secondly, acknowledge receipt today, of your No 5 of the 'Tasmanian Journal' and the note which lay *perdu* under the leaves. I assure you I am always delighted to see your handwriting, & were I an idle man, or even one of leisure should give you more frequent provocation to write than I do. The fact is not only that I have got here into such a regular round & routine of official business that, like an old horse in a mill, however steadily I may contrive to do my set work, I am gradually getting blind to more things beyond the reach of my nose, but that I have been very busy. However, I can still squint over the straits occasionally & most heartily wish I could take another ride with you, & another pleasant chat about the 1,000 & one things, that are so much more agreeable to talk about than read about. What between Mrs La Trobe's illness about 3 months ago & lingering convalescence, at Jolimont, and a more than ordinary share of disagreeable or agreeable officials corrupt—I have been very much occupied lately, & never 10 miles from Melbourne. At present the season is far from inviting—but I mean as soon as the Spring sets in & the rivers fall, to scramble thro' the forest to Cape Otway to see how my new light house does its duty:—& would gladly make other excursions if they would give me time. You will have seen that political agitation, is not confined to the other end of the world: but that the Port Phillip people have been trying their hand at something extraordinary. The Town Council votes the Superintendent a bore, the cause of all the mischief that has taken place in the world to the S. of the Tropic of Capricorn for the last 9 years, or something like it—and request Her Majesty to turn him out neck & crop. The District Electors—on their representations, act magnanimously, resolve to disenfranchise themselves: —& refuse to return any member, whatsoever; and the Electors of Melbourne to cap the absurdities of the time, soberly set to work—nominate, poll & elect *Earl Grey* to sit as their representative & battle the watch with the Sydney folk for Port Phillip. Don't laugh.

One gets a little tired of all this—but after all must stick to it, & do one's duty as well as may be.

Now when are you coming to see us? When you do you will find Jolimont I think improved, & the owners very glad to see you. Mrs La Trobe is, thank God, now well again—& the little ones noisy & strong. The plants (cacti etc.) on my Rockery do exceedingly well despite the heat of summer. I have not laid my hand on any subject of natural history for a long time new or old—if I except a 'groveller'—which I found in some numbers on the St Kilda beach after a storm when I always take a stroll. He was new to me & to poor Hobson. Their power of existing so long out of water in a perfectly dry position 48 hours at least, took me by surprise. I could not help smiling at your information about the German celebrity, I had unconsciously required. I believe the fact is, that in matters where I really & honestly deserve credit—I get none: and therefore it is only fair that I should now & then come in for a little which I have no more claim to than the man in the moon. What my plans may be I cannot say—I think it very unlikely that Separation will take place in a hurry & when it does, I will adhere to my old idea—that a change would do no harm. I know that Sturt is nibbling at a Colonial Govt. Good luck to him.

I am quite sure that if he gets the frying, & boiling, & basting, some of us get from years end to years end, he will begin to look back upon the honest roasting he got in 'the Desert' as not such an out o' the way thing after all.

Pray say some thing kind to Mrs Gunn from Mrs La Trobe & myself.
& believe me

Yours very truly
C. J. La Trobe.

To Sophie La Trobe

Carlsruhe Inn
4 pm Tuesday [26 September 1848]

Dearest,

We got to Grimes in exactly 4 hours 34 m. beautiful weather & very fair road. Since, we leave with Grimes, came over the mountains 20 m.—he is finding Wm Mitchell to go on 15 m.—four to his station. Here on this spur of the mountain there has been a great deal of rain, & I hear bad accounts of the softness of the road—so much so that all I can say is Cherie if I am not back on Sat. night you need not be anxious for I may not find it possible. I had better not have undone what I have to do. Many . . . after. I trust I shall not be. I only say this that you may not imagine 1,000,000 horrors. Keep steady to your medicine & let me hear the good news that you really have got rid of [letters illegible 'and crossed out]. Kiss the dear children—Nelly, Cecile & Charley. My kind regards to the Bissop & Mrs. Bissop.

I write this to you by the mail tomorrow. If I get within
[remainder of letter is missing.]

To Sophie La Trobe

Mitchell's
Thursday Morn. 28th [Sept 1848]

Dear Wife,

The bad weather made me recast my plan & to give up the Goulburn part of my excursion for a short time. So I shall D.V. be with you in good time on Saturday.

Dr Baynton takes this in tomorrow.

Yours
C. J. La Trobe

To Sophie La Trobe

The Victoria Inn
December 1 [1848]

Dear Wife,

I had a delightfully cool ride across the plains—tolerable road—a good deal of wind—but hardly any rain tho' black looking showers went E west. I was very glad not to be on board the 'Vesta'. I gave Bluebeard an hour's feed at Connor's [Little River] & after all got to Geelong as soon as the boat or a quarter of an hour after. Stumbled upon Addis—took an hour's walk with him—had his company to tea (having no fancy for dinner) & he has just left me.

Now I shall have plenty to do tomorrow—Sunday I stay quiet, & wish you were with me—but Monday A.M. intend to return—probably overland as I want to see Bates' ford Bridge. Thomas will however meet the steamer for my 'traps' & I hope to be with you at dinner-time. I wish William to go with the cart to Coles Wharf to fetch a big cask which Captain Cole will give him for me. He can do that Monday. I hope you have thro' your day's work, have not been too hot & not bothered your dear self about Charlie—that's me. I hope also that the other Charlie is better & the two little girls good. Kiss them all for me. I should like to get to see Mrs Norton—but fear I shall not have time. God bless you my S. Do be good & reasonable on Sunday & go to Church if only to pray for yourself & me. William the Steward of the 'Mary' is still here & very civil—he wants me badly to get him a plan of

Melbourne. I have had headache all day—& the high wind did not mend it but I think I shall sleep in after, Good night. God bless you—with . . .

[signature appears to be] Charles

To Sophie La Trobe

Portland

Thursday 1 February 1849

Dearest Wife,

Tomorrow morning I set off home—having only reached Portland yesterday about 11 am. My note from Warrnambool which I fear will only reach you by this mail will in part explain the causes of my long silence and the reason why I cannot be with you quite as soon as I intended or hoped at starting.

Since I extricated myself from the Scrub you will know that I have lost no time—the way I rode from Warrnambool & Part Fairy, spent a few hours there, & then leaving Dana who really wanted rest, pushed on to Mr Richie's. Yesterday I had ridden the remaining 38 miles to Portland before 11 am, & was on horseback looking at one thing or another much of the rest of the day. Today is therefore the only day's rest so-called I pretend to secure. I sent my horse forward today & will make my best way to Bett's—Goldsmith's & home. I cannot say precisely the day when, God so wills, we may meet but live [?] worthily at present in being with you . . . Meanwhile I have been . . . [?] by your two letters & all the general news they contain. Today's mail I fear will not bring me anything & doubtless you won't thank me on my return. I hope that you dear foolish wife will not have given me up for lost because you were so long hearing from me. I thank God for preservation of limb & sound mind. I feel with all the bodily exertion & privation that I am little the worse for it now—& shall be better for it when I get back. Here people are very civil & the Blairs very kind. I have told him that we have a bed for them if they come to town. I wish you could persuade Mrs Stevens to return with you. I think you may have done well about Hannah— Dear Cherie—Kiss the dear Children. Shall tell them a long story about the Bush. Thank Nelly for her letter. I fear I cannot answer it now. I need not tell you I shall be glad to get back to you—in the meantime *mille blaisers* . . .

God bless you darling
C. J. La Trobe.

To Ronald Campbell Gunn

Melbourne, 2nd March, 1849.

My Dear Mr. Gunn,

I cannot tell you how often my conscience prompts me and my inclination tempts me to write to you—but, all I can say is that it is very long since I did so, and that now I do so, *more meo*, in a great hurry. I have to thank you for a very kind note by the 'Shamrock,' and Mrs La Trobe, for the fruit which this time we secured in good order. Of the unfortunate plums previously sent we heard nothing, but are not the less sensible of your kind remembrance. What a pity you and I are not idle men with plenty of loose time and spare cash. We should not have been catching sea serpents, or bunyips to other people, or even gold finding. You ask me what is the truth about the Port Phillip gold. Simply this—that specimens of gold ore, nearly in a pure state—overlaying or mixed with fragments of quartz, of great beauty, have been brought into Melbourne and disposed of to one or two individuals by a shepherd, and I think there can be no doubt whereon the precise locality may be, that they were picked up on or near the surface, in one of the town ranges between the Maiden Hills and the Pyrenees, which in common with a large portion of the interior of the district are composed of

sandstone and quartz. The principal specimen I have examined about 14 oz in weight, gave me the impression of the ore in a fixed state having carried the quartz fragments along with it, or, having been dropped upon them. For anything we know there may be abundance of it in our ranges—and for anything we know, it may be the produce of a volcanic squirt or erection from some hoard ten thousand fathoms deep, which may be safe enough beyond all our prying and poking. The singular thing is I can't get hold of the shepherd. All the specimens I have seen or heard of I make no doubt are portions of one mass, which may have weighed when unbroken 36 or 38 ozs. People speak of other pieces—but I have seen no reason to conclude that there are any in Melbourne. The truth is the discovery of a good vein of coal would give me more satisfaction.

At the beginning of last month I made a very amusing excursion to Cape Otway, where our first class light is now fully in operation, and thence in the line of my old track of 3 years ago, though not on it, along the coast to the Hopkins and Portland. I went in from the North from the Barwon river, on foot of course, sending the horses round. The track made in that direction to communicate with the Cape runs nearly in a S.E. direction through the forest ranges and strikes the coast about N.E. of the Cape, or some distance to the W. of Cape Patton. It is a rough track, but still it is one, —50 miles wholly in the forest, a basin in the higher portion of the range 12m. through, —is entirely filled with Fern Trees of great beauty. The 20 or 25 miles of coast to the Cape presents no extraordinary features but some awkward gulfways. The formation is sandstone throughout. The 40 or 50 m. from the Cape to the Gellibrand was not achieved without a good deal of exertion, a great deal more indeed than on my first excursion, for it was found quite impossible to follow my old track, and it was not until the fifth day that we managed to fight our way through that terrible scrub, and across the precipices of Moonlight Head to the camp where the horses were awaiting us. However, all this was what I wanted—the roughing and exercise, and half starvation and freedom from official turmoil did me a great deal of good. I wish you had been with me. It was not the season for flowers, indeed the forests are not the best adapted for them: and with exception of two species of prostanthera which are new to me I saw nothing possessing beauty. I noticed many indications, and the great changes which a few years even operate in the configuration of our coast lines.

Now when shall we have a chance of seeing you, I have been twice cheered with the rumour that 'next Shamrock' you meant to come, but have looked in vain for you. I sometimes hear from one or other of my V.D. Land acquaintances and always recollect my visit to your fine island with great pleasure.

I hope you are all well at Penquite, pray write to me when you can spare time. When do you bring forth another number? I am afraid your agent here is but a lazy one, for I am never asked for a subscription.

Mrs La Trobe says kind regards to Mrs Gunn and yourself. Pray bear her in mind when you distribute your quinces,

and believe me,

Yours very truly,

C. J. La Trobe.

To Sophie La Trobe

Aboriginal Station/Parker
Friday Noon [18th January 1850]

Dearest

One line with an abominable steel pen to say that we are so far all well. We reached Powlett's at ½ p 10—& starting at 4 pm got to Jeffreys at 6 —Saw Meuron & . . . & left this

morning at 6. We go on about 40 miles to Hales & tomorrow to Wright's. I wish you were with me, that's all, kisses to the children & *mille blaisers* to you.

C. J. L.

In great haste by a man going back to Mt Macedon.

To Sophie La Trobe

Wright's—Decameron Pyrenees
20 January [1850]

Dearest W[ife]

I wrote to you a few lines from Jeffreys—& now leave this to go by the post on Tuesday that you may know how we have sped. Friday we made a very good day's run—first early to Mr Parker's the aboriginal station before breakfast 27 miles—then Captain McLauchlan's—then Benford's and then 18 further through the *gold region* to Hall's where we found comfortable & clean quarters—Yesterday—we arrived here, about 32 miles, early—& found accordingly pleasant [?] quarters—with Wright who has for the present Mr & Mrs Allen Cameron for his guests. We decided to give the horses a full day's rest as they will have a very heavy day's work tomorrow that is meaning to reach Cay & Kay's—80 miles—We have been favored hitherto with most beautiful weather bright but cool—and nothing is in my enjoyment of the fine scenery in the midst of these picturesque hills but that only of my wife & children. Really you ought to come here—there is no difficulty for a carriage coming all the way from Melbourne & much of the road latterly especially is good in every sense of the word—I do not know what opportunities I may have of writing to you as I go forward, but promise that I will take advantage of all that occur. Meantime I have written to Bell to write to me to *Maiden's Punt* by next Friday's mail. I think it doubtful if we shall not have penned him the letters—but never mind—write a few lines & let me know how you are & the dear children to whom my many kisses from Papa. I hope they are good children & obedient to Mlle Beguine to whom kind regards. I hope you kept your intention & relied upon the *Fyans* & upon the Jeffreys at the Southern Cross.

Now what have I to say to you—ma Cherie. Pray, if it can be managed make up your mind to go to the Heads. I am sure it will do you all good—& you have only to say the truth that you cannot still go with Mlle & the children if it is so, to have it arranged. I hope Blazes has gone for I should not like Charlie to play about the stable while he is there. I have just missed Goldsmith, Howitt & Barry they were here on Friday but I have written to him. I trust that you will not coop yourself up like a prisoner all the time I am away but will move about when you can. Mrs Simpson will be glad to ride Vic you know at any time. If by any chance Mr Dana lets you know that he is sending horses to meet us at the Goulburn Protectorate station—you may always send me another shirt and a pair of white trousers. I shall want them for I shall be sure to come back in tatters. At all events I shall hear from you at Seymour . . . where I hope to be Monday or Tuesday week at latest. If you can write to Janetta in the meantime do—you foolish wife, why will you always raise difficulties when there need be none & let them know that I am from home. *Mille blaisers* Cherie to you & the children. I hope that the men go steadily on with their work and that the fencing will have begun. If the horses are come from Mr Dana James will have more to do.

God bless you in . . .

Yours

C. J. L.

To Sophie La Trobe

Muston's Creek, Monday Morning
11 February [i.e. March, 1850]

Dearest Wife,

I have the first opportunity of letting you know my adventures this far—unfortunately after leaving Geelong on Friday afternoon I got at once out of a line of early post beyond, & find that even that by which I send this will not reach you before Thursday at soonest so that you will have been nearly a week without hearing from me. Meanwhile I pray God that you may have been recovering from the effects of your tumble. Dana who you will hear took his passage by the boat brought me word that the Doctor had told you that you should not keep your bed but move about, & this I take as a good omen that you had received no injury but the Bruise itself which certainly was an uncommon one. Poor Cherie—take care of yourself & don't take a spite against Vic & riding. I shall look out for some news from you at Mr Wright's. My adventures have been but few this far. I went on as I sent word to Mr Bch [?] that I should be having a policeman to await Dana's arrival by the afternoon boat—& with some difficulty found my way over the first 12 miles towards Mt Moriac from the multitude of roads & quantity of fencing which disturbed the old line. However I got in very well before dark. I fully counted upon Dana's coming in about 11—but did not wait for him of course. (Mr Therry was my guest at my evening meal). However on rising early I found he had not come & it was only after breakfasting I was on the point of starting for Colac that he arrived with his blackfellow—having got *bushed* & We started after he had a little refreshed himself, and rode over the plains to Colac—heavy showers passing over them—& we got a little wet. At Colac—which has sprung up wonderfully since I last saw it I did some little business—saw the Murrays—Mr & Mrs Muspratt—& then set forward—the weather continued stormy, but less rain. In the stones [Stony Rises] & terribly rocky tract of country between Corangamite & Manifolds we separated company somehow, & I had a good hour's wandering in them—more than I had counted upon—but extricated myself and pushed on after Dana who I found before me—to Manifolds' Lake & then out miles to Timboon which I reached just after dark. Here we managed to be really comfortable & slept like tops. Yesterday I intended only to make an easy days journey—walked the horses 9 miles to Mr Niel Black's—with whom we spent 2-3 hours. He has built a very pretty cottage near the Volcanic hill. He knew nothing of the movements of the Bishop. I would have gone to Mr Hamilton's Chapel 4 miles off if I had had an opportunity—but it was too late. P.M. we came on slowly by Mt Shadwell & the Hopkins thus far reaching Muston's Creek at dusk.

Here Mr Andrew McCrae has his headquarters in the Palmers house and find the inn a dirty filthy place full of local [?] people & drunken workmen. We are too happy to have made shift here. After breakfast we get on to Mt Rouse & towards Mt Abrupt. From this I cannot say exactly what our route is but you will hear in due time by any opportunity that offers. I hear nothing from [?] Meuron in Geelong but very sorry to know that Mr Dunlop who went with his party en route at Dr Learmonth's had met with an accident, the extent of which no one seemed to know. Now love to all—kiss the dear children from me—I hope they are really good, good, good! 'Elatte pauvre Madlle Beguine que Meuron a compliment negligé'. Give my kind regards to her. God bless you my darling. I wish you could join me in the mountain without trouble to [?] . . .

Yours affectionately
C. J. La Trobe.

To Sophie La Trobe

The Inn, Mount Sturgeon
Tuesday morning, 12 March [1850]

*Note from my dear husband
during his excursions to the
West and Grampians and
Pyrennees in March 1850*

Dearest Wife,

I drop a line here to tell you that yesterday having written to you from Muston's Creek passed without adventure I staid 2 or 3 hours at Mt. Rouse then came on 15 m. here to the foot of the Grampians Mountains the two last of which are immediately over the vale of the Wimmera & are good objects. [Here he drew a sketch of Mt Sturgeon and Mt Abrupt and the inn in the valley between.] The weather beautiful—tho' a little warm for an hour or two. We now propose going up the Victoria and Grampian ranges & crossing over by one of the Gaps—Hall's or Rose's—to the east side of the former & then to the Pyrenees. All I can say is that I wish you were with me. I hope you are feeling less sore day by day—& will be ready for a ride when I come back. Kiss the dear Children—Charley—Nelly & Cecile. Tell the little girls that I am very anxious about them that they should really take advantage of Miss Beguine's kindness & improve. Nelly Nelly how can you be so selfwilled & careless—Cecile Cecile how can you forget how pleasant it is to be good always & put yourself in such a tantrum sometimes—Charlie Charlie will you always remain a little dunce & never learn to read. Take your little book & sit down & begin in good earnest. I write again whenever I have a chance—
... [?]

Yours Charles

To Ronald Campbell Gunn

Melbourne
10 December 1850

My dear Gunn,

I will not let the 'Shamrock' go without first thanking you for your kind note, & Mrs La Trobe for the fruit & further assuring you of our sympathy in your recent loss—of which we had recd no intimation till you wrote to us— These are indeed sad trials—the weight of which none can know but those who have experienced them. I hope Mrs Gunn's health has not suffered— I sent your medical son a message by some one assuring him that I should be glad to have a call from him in . . . but fear it was never delivered as I never saw him. I should have been glad to make his acquaintance. Is he settling in the Colony? I have little news to tell you—the people have been and are half mad—& for my part I shall be glad when one way or other matters subside into some quiet form— But I sometimes fear that we shall find agitation of one kind or another as necessary to existence as our American cousins. I had a letter from Sir Geo Back the other day— He spoke in a more disponding tone about the chances of finding poor Sir John [Franklin] than I was prepared for. In fact he feared that some of the expeditions sent in search might have in turn to be searched for.

I shall probably have to go up to Sydney for a few weeks shortly to assist in cooking the new dish for the Victorians—further I know & ask nothing about future arrangements. Sometimes I think I am a little jaded—but a rough ride & a scramble in the scrub bring me round most wonderfully. When do you visit Port Phillip again? We have had a beautiful but very dry Winter & Spring & the crops will be scant in consequence. Mrs La Trobe joins me in kind regards to you & yours

Yours truly

C. J. La Trobe.

To Ronald Campbell Gunn

Melbourne 6 February 1852

My dear Mr Gunn,

I have been very neglectful of your kindness to all . . . for I am conscious that I have left one or two notes & equally kind missions in another shape from your garden to remain long unanswered, but assure you that this has been neither want of gratitude on the part of Mrs L & myself or from indifference. I have taken it into your head that you might be expected to visit us from day to day for really there is much in Victoria now to interest one of your predilection whatever may have been the case formerly. Our gold fields remain in *Plat us quo* i.e. astonishingly productive as I dare say certain of your folk may testify from personal experience—and population continues to flow in upon us at the rate of a couple of thousand every three or four days. What we are to do with you all I cannot tell. You may imagine that never had young governor a stranger role to play or a more extraordinary crisis to meet as best he may. I assure you that I have my hands full & dare not ask a holiday—much as I feel a good gallop would do me good. Pray do not give me up, but write a line to say what your plans are. Mrs La Trobe knows that you will not forget her necessities. By the bye I have some strange looking teeth for you picked up in the same country where the bones were found. At least they are strange to me & I cannot imagine what kind of food such a beast would eat. Probably however they may be no puzzle to you. I will send them if you do not come soon.

Yours very truly
C. J. La Trobe.

To Ronald Campbell Gunn

8 October 1852

My dear Mr Gunn

Our correspondence is an intermittent one—but I trust that it will never altogether cease. So you hear nothing about the skull. Perhaps he is as busy as I am—& in that case be [hardly?] an excuse for procrastination, tho' it were the skull of Tobit's fish. I never supposed the 'teeth' would have any great interest for you as they were evidently comparatively fresh. You judge rightly that I have not much time for natural history—however my interest in it is unabated & I am always glad to get hold of anyone who knows anything about it & is observant. Such 'ingenious Birds' are very rare here however. Swainson who has been exploring the Illawarra dist. wrote to me sometime hence, stating that he had made an offer to the Gov. Genl to examine & describe the timber trees of the Colony,—*gums* more especially, and that if not accepted, he should be glad to be employed in a similar way in Victoria. I lost no time in trying to secure him, as I am sure he will add to our knowledge of what we are & what we have in many ways & N.S.W. having rejected his offer, he comes here. There is an honest looking German here, Dr Muëller, who as far as I can judge seems to be more of a botanist than any man I have hitherto met with in the Colony; and I shall give him every encouragement. He has furnished me with the description of the genus *Latrobe* of Meisner. Both the species . . . were formerly ranked as *Pultenay* it appears. I have no specimen but if I can procure any from any quarter, will take care that you get it. He tells me that an exceedingly pretty dwarf acacia flowering most abundantly in its native soil at Jolimont has been distinguished by my name also, so you see I am likely to go down to posterity, in another form besides that of the '*withering curse*' which the Democrats of P.P. one time gave me—or that of the '*Flying Pieman*' which was bestowed by your choice Colonists of Tasmania! Goodbye. Let me hear from you again. Mrs La Trobe adds my kind regards to you & yours.

Very truly
C. J. La Trobe.

To Ronald Campbell Gunn †

30 June 1853

My dear Mr Gunn

Many thanks for your last note of the 16 inst. – My clever little Botanist has returned having done quite as much as I expected & more than any but a German, drunk with the love of his Science, – & careless of ease – & regardless of difficulty in whatever form it might present itself – could have effected in the time & under the circumstances. He started along the Sydney road to the May Day Hills in the Ovens District whence I wished him to again access to the higher group of Australian alps. He was however from the advance of the season in Feby unable to effect this ☐ but made for Buffalo ranges – & ascended Mt Aberdeen - then alone & unaided went up the Delatite river, & got to the top of the Mount Buller range 5,000 [plus] or [minus], & within reach of the subalpine flora, then crossed the dividing ranges to the Yarra & turning under their SW flank to the E. went in to Gipps Land – & explored Wilsons Promontory returning by the coast to Western Port. In the ravines of Wilsons Promy he found your Fagus, as I hoped he would – none of your pines however. The results of his tour shall be printed in due course – in the mean time I may state that they are exceedingly interesting.

You will soon have Mr Swainson with you. All I can say is that with all his undeniable talent – I have found him a very hard bargain – as helpless as a child, & a grumbler of the first water – I am prepared to see his statement of his labours in Victoria most plentifully interlarded with complaints of hardship & want of cordial cooperation. But n'importe –

When Dr Müller's report is printed, I shall of course send it to you ☐

Kind regards to Mrs Gunn & to your brother -

Very truly

C. J. La Trobe

To Ronald Campbell Gunn

Melbourne

13 August 1853

Dear friend

I thank you for your very kind lines of the 22 July, written upon hearing that I had at length made a move towards getting home. I reciprocate, I assure you, all your friendly expressions of regard, and you may believe that nothing had been more cheering to my spirit during my long exile, and under the weight of official turmoil than my personal or epistolary intercourse with you, which always brought with it the freshness of nature's works & doings. I have laughed heartily at your apologetic misgivings lest you may occasionally have forgotten in the lighthearted harum scarum individual trotting by your side the representation of Royalty under sign manual. I am sure you have no sin to repent of; on the contrary, owe you thanks that your character & humour was such as to encourage me to unbutton & unlace without restraint, whenever my humour prompted—and allow me to act up to my own belief that even the wise man who dare not & cannot play the fool sometimes is a great ass—and now *How's your leg?*—that reminds me of our companions in travel. Meyer & Courtenay—the one grieving over the loss of a favorite child—the other rejoicing over the birth of one—(an odd one I am sure). We live in a changeful world—I do not know when or how exactly I may be relieved—but suppose that two or three months at furthest may see me a gentleman at large and free to take my departure. I have not yet settled in my own mind by what route to return to Europe—if so please God—but have a fancy for the 'Overland'. What a pity we can not go together. I have heard nothing yet of my wife & little ones but hope to do so shortly. I wish your business would force you over to Victoria before I go—but even if not, I do not despair. I think you must visit Europe sooner or later, & surely then we may find each other out. Our gold goes its march. New finds succeed to the old ones, & yet these are

but half or quarter worked. With many kind regards to Mrs Gunn & yr brother—& in expectation to hear again from you before I clear off, believe me. Yours truly

C. J. La Trobe.

To Rev. Peter La Trobe
By overland mail

Jolimont
24th September 1853

My very dear Brother,

By the 'Victoria' mail which has just started and will run a race with this, I have written a few lines to Charlotte which I dare say she will shew and now, tho' I have no leisure, to sit down & scrawl a decent epistle I give you a note to say that I am anxiously waiting the arrival of the June mail, still out, which will I suppose bring me something from you and my dear absent family & how matters have been managed amongst you. On the 'Victoria' which came in nearly five weeks ago with news of the 8 June & consequently notice of the safe arrival of the 'Blackwall'—at the close of mail—did not bring me a line good or bad from anyone. The overland mail since arrived with dates to 8 July—contained nothing from either Sophie or yourself or McMahan [London agent]—& had not Charlotte not thoughtfully written giving me a summary of the procedure of the events while in London & until departure for Switzerland I should have had no intelligence whatever beyond what I could glean right & left from the relation of fellow passengers, or of those who had seen them. However I bless God for fine & speedy voyage & for the kindness & affection which met them at its close, and trust that quiet & rest & native air may do for my dear wife what the voyage seemingly failed to do. The June mail to which it would appear all letters were most provokingly entrusted has not yet been heard of ! & goes to Sydney first into the bargain! I need not say that when I get letters I will not fail to answer. The 'Victoria' made her passage in 63 days. Meantime a thousand thanks to dear Janetta and yourself for all your love & care of wife & children. I gather that the latter must have enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

Now, as to myself. I hear nothing whatever of my successor and till I do am in a position of complete doubt as to my own measures & movements. Meanwhile I have since the 'Argo' sailed had a very anxious time of it with my goldfield population, have had to get over from V.D.L. more military strength—and tho' present difficulties have by God's providence been obviated without having recourse to extreme measures—and all is going on apparently satisfactorily—yet I cannot but know that our apparent or real prosperity & the causes which have provided it must be attended by great evils & imminent peril. Let me work as I will, my successor will have plenty to do. I have been fully up to my work so far but not without the feeling that under the strain I could not keep it up long without giving in. My Leg[islative] Council is sitting into the bargain but does not promise to give me much trouble save on one or two questions. On all general points the govt is strong enough. Tho' Transportation is proclaimed at an end the proposed removal of the Norfolk Island prisoners to V.D.L. will raise a storm in both Colonies—and viewing the evils which we have to encounter from the presence of the prisoner class amongst us, I do not wonder that the people here have their backs up. My last news of you was through Charlotte's of the 1st July, by which you were off to the north to your Provincial Conference. May God have guided your deliberations. There are ten thousand subjects of interest which I could talk with you about by pen or mouth but must leave all.

My best love to dear Janetta & Lulu, & many thanks for all your affectionate care of my treasures. I am sure Charlie will have kept you all alive. I may tell you that I have at length by the payment of my *back pay*—been able to get square with the world for the first time since I left Europe. I have sent friend McMahan the cheques to meet habitation [costs] but I must close—God bless you & give you strength for your work . . .

C. J. La Trobe.

To Sophie La Trobe

October 28th 1853 4 pm.

I begin this letter to you on board one of our pretty Pilot cutters, 'the Corsair', in the middle of the Port—having taken advantage of the closing of my mail by 'the Hurricane' (which is crawling down to the Heads as I write about 3 miles astern of us) and of a slight lull to take a little recreation. My companions are old friend Fergusson & Capn Carey. I closed my letter to you on Monday, I think, my dear absent wife. Tuesday the Palmers came to me & staid . . . Wednesday 25th on that evening the Mayor's grand fancy Ball took place, at the Theatre, & really went surprizingly well—it was crowded, but I must leave the newspapers to tell you all about it. The cost is acknowledged at £8,000! What was that to you many will say! The Palmers returned home yesterday morning & I dined with Powlett & Grimes at the Riddells in Collingwood, having made all my plans to steal this morning very easily, when I found all seemingly dismayed by a note which I found on returning from Foster telling me of some Executive Council business which ought to have been done before I left town. This, to all appearances, would have spoiled my whole plan. However when I awoke about 3 this morning & was scheming how I could continue to get Ex. C. loyalties at a comparatively early hour, which was not easy, as Foster lives where Mrs Hobson is on the Yarra & Rusden the Clerk of the C. at Pentridge, my ear was struck by St James bell beginning to toll. Judging it was for a fire. I got up, went into the verandah & saw a great flame over the trees. Then on to the roof—then hearing Lough stirring with the horses, got Prince & rode in at once. The fire was in Collins Street, near Harris & Marks back premises & was very fierce, but fortunately there was little wind. A large body of military constabulary came soon on the ground & two engines, and soon after daybreak it was got under fortunately. Being up I determined to make an effort, sent off messengers right and left, returned home at 5, dressed, & at 7 took Lonsdale with me to the offices, where the Council met, did the business what a mere form, tho' one not to be dispensed with, & I then drove to the beach & soon after 8 was on the 'Corsair'. We have had light wind, but beautiful weather & have slipped down to within a few miles of the first buoy where we have now a lightship. I fear however that we shall get no further tonight. However as I have arranged not to be back before Tuesday, we have plenty of time.

I cannot forget that the last time I was here, it was with you my darling, & my dear children, & my heart is *un peu gris*—but I feel that I have so much to be thankful for on your account with respect to the voyage which you were then entering upon and I feel that no other feeling ought to be uppermost. I have never been at the Heads since we parted. I heard today that the ship in which the Pinnocks went had a very bad & disagreeable voyage. Indeed the 'Blackwall' seems to have made in every respect the most pleasant voyage of the season. God bless us in spite of our unworthiness. I must tell you while I think of it that Mr Fergusson is in excellent health again—and all the children. They stayed a month at Geelong and that seems to have set them all up, baby & all. There has been much sickness at Geelong however & deaths by scarlet fever. Some also at Melbourne, poor Mrs Hutton has lost one & I believe has scarcely had her mind since. Mr Belcher Clerk of the Bench I believe more than one.

30th The 'Corsair' off Shortlands Bluff, 8 p.m. You cannot imagine how fully my mind has been occupied with you & my dear children. My dear wife yesterday & today I see you at every turn—on the beach, on the hill, at the Lighthouse, on the set of our pretty cottage—the children run way down the steep pathway to their sand & calling out Papa! Papa! as in times past at Point Lonsdale, at Chevy where I have been today. In fact the *mont* itself is not more full of recollections—& perhaps these are the more vivid because I have had some of my pleasantest days in Victoria with you. May God bless you wherever you are. Our brave little cutter crawled on in spite of the light wind to within a mile of the Shortland Bluff anchored on Friday night (leaving the 'Hurricane' anchored many miles behind in the channels) and yesterday morning early we ran up. I passed the whole day more or less on shore, walking about without cares & recalling old recollection but how changed many things are—we have

now Govt Estabts here and some hundreds of people. The township which I have called Queenscliff has been partially sold—buildings are springing up & a second lighthouse of wood has been built on the cliff below the first in a line with the entrance to the Port to furnish a leading light so that when a ship gets the two lights by day or night in one, she may know that she is in the proper course—and Pilots' houses have been built—the Stevens house is occupied by officials, it is dirty but surrounded by its garden hedges—the old hut (Fenwick's) still stands—the site of our pretty cottage is still marked by the line of the verandah & the ruins of the chimney tho' the whole of that part of the Bluff is quite overgrown again. There is hardly a person on the Bluff who was there when we inhabited it. I went a-fishing according to custom—but the snapper are not yet in, & we caught nothing but blueheads or parrot fish. The new appearance of the entrance to the Port & roadstead is wonderful. Only yesterday some 12 or 14 large ships came in—and 5 great steamers came and went out and this morning no less than 31 vessels were in sight. It is truly wonderful—the no.—the 'Hurricane' is anchored near, is waiting for a fair wind, & it is my plan to put these lines on board of her tomorrow morning to give you the very latest news from Victoria that I am now scribbling.

Tho' Sunday, it has been a very busy day. At 2 in the morning, word was brought to me that a large ship, an American, was on shore on the outside of Point Lonsdale. Capt. Fergusson with Carey and myself immediately set off, got on shore at the Bluff and then walked in the dark to the Point, leaving the schooner 'Bommerang' & the Life Boat to follow as soon as they could see for the night was very dark. We got there about an hour before daybreak—found that the vessel was not on the reef but anchored about a cable length from it in a position of great danger as the wind was at times on shore. A ship from New York with cargo & 50 passengers. We could not communicate until the lifeboat arrived just at day break—a pilot was got on board & then all lay with good providence and good seamanship. The people were quite unaware of their imminent danger & the whole management of the ship was found to be in the greatest confusion. Only two real sailors on board & all the rest Yankee makeshifts. However no time was to be lost & we watched them set their sails & cut their chains & then by God's providence move slowly out of peril and get beyond the reef to the proper entrances. When we set to work & walked back to the Bluff—10 miles before 6am—Capt. Fergusson as well as myself was very thankful— Geelong—Mrs Fenwick & Anne were to have come with Nick and George but we found on going there by the lakes that they had been prevented by the threatening weather yesterday. Fairfax rode part of the way back with us. I cannot learn what he grew in his woods [?] My plan is to go to the Quarantine ground tomorrow (shall I not think of you at the landing place where your foot & that of Charley last touched the strand of the land of his birth) & then by the East Channel & thus sail home—which I hope we shall reach on Tuesday & I expect to find Powlett & his little one there that evening. And now I must say goodbye and God bless you. My heart is full of longing & affection towards you & I could be foolish if I were not ashamed to be so. Capt. Fergusson is just the same honest hearty man as ever—and of course I have more pleasure as his society, here (as far as recollections are concerned) than my light headed *aid de camp* [Edward Bell]—who however is good in his way. I think there is every chance of the 'Hurricane' having a good passage when she does get out. May the Lord bless & keep you. The 'Vimiera' is not yet in and I do not know when to look for the letters either by her or the 'Blackwall'. There came in yesterday a vessel so like the latter that everybody believed it was her . . .

Kiss me our children—Agnes included.

C. J. La Trobe.

To James Graham

21 April 1854

Confidential

My dear Graham

I have no idea of our fat friend & tenant [Hugh Childers] leaving the entrance gate broken under my eyes so to say by his careless people, in the state it is: pray give him a broad hint. I pointed it out to him months ago—& he blowed & looked as if he would do the handsome. I am reminded of it by seeing that it was fairly in pieces this morning.

Yours

C. J. La Trobe.

To Charlotte Pellet †

Bishopscourt

29 April 1854

Dear Charlotte,

Though at your own express desire, I leave you, with Rose, in Victoria, and pray earnestly that God may bless you with health & happiness & contentment as long as you remain there. I wish you to feel assured that your connection with me & my children is by no means broken.

I shall always count you as one of my family – and one object which I have in view in leaving you this memorandum is to state that if at any further time circumstances might make you desirous of returning to Europe, you have only to state your wish to either my friend Mr Powlett, or Mr D.C. Macarthur of the Bank of Australasia and they will readily furnish you with the means of rejoining me, & wherever I am, you will be sure to find a home, both for my children's sake, & for the sake of her whom the Lord has seen good to take from me. His will be done.

May God bless & keep you in time & eternity.

C. J. La Trobe.

LINKS

Overview by date

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Overview by recipient

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Notes on the letters

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Index to the letters

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