

Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe to his daughter Agnes, 1845-1854

Excerpts transcribed by Helen Botham and others.

Source: La Trobe Neuchâtel Archive, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, MS 13354/folders 27, 28 and 25; and also MS 14152/3. (Original archive is held in the Fonds Petitpierre, Archives de l'Etat Neuchâtel, Switzerland.)

Index <http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/documents/LettersToAgnesIndex.pdf>

No.1.

Jolimont May 25th 1845

We cannot let a ship sail for Europe without sending a note to our dear little Girl, to tell her how much we love her – how often we talk & think of her and how fervently we pray God to bless her & be her guide by night and by day wherever she is. That will be a happy day when we hear of Agnes's safe arrival in Europe, towards which we hope you are now hastening. Nobody forgets you. Nelly speaks often of Agnes, and Baby [Cecile] says 'Sissy gone London'. You must often think of us & all you have left behind and always remember to pray our Saviour to bless your dear Parents, and if such be His will to reunite us again....If this finds you in London, kiss dear little [cousin] Louisa from us and God bless you dear child.

Jolimont 15 August 1845

Well my dearest Agnes, it is now my turn to tell you in a few words how much we love you & how fervently we pray the Lord to bless you and keep you safe in soul and body till we meet again. What pleasure it will be for us to receive a letter from you and news of your voyage and your safe arrival in England first and Switzerland afterwards. As Mamma has told you about the inside of the house I must tell you about the outside. Pepper & Marquis are just as you left them, and the cats also as far as I know. Since you sailed Blackey & Bluebeard have been a long journey with me to the Glenelg where I saw Mrs and Mr Bell who talked much of you & Mr Fenwick. After my return I sent them both out to rest at Dandenong & now have only Noggrogger and Marie in the new stables which have been built against the great brick wall. They are very good & strong, and in the front of them stands an octagonal shed for hay. Here you have a picture of them all. [sketch of the stable buildings]

You will understand that this stable stands on the site of the old stables, with the intervening hen yard; and that the hay shed stands opposite the central stall. At the end of the stabling marked (a) just opposite Marquis's kennel I have put up a tool house and taken away all the paling about the great tree – so that a person entering into the yard by the kitchen gate sees at once onto the kitchen garden in the distance. Then at the dining room end of the house I have made a very pretty raised garden enclosed by trellis work which we call 'Agnes Garden' and there your dear little sisters will often walk & play, as it will be pretty well sheltered. Leahy is still our gardener & O'Brien helps him as he did when you were here. Short & Fox and Maryanne & Phoebe, whom I saw at Geelong, and poor Maria, are all well. Mamma will tell you about Charlotte [Swiss-born housekeeper and her daughter] Rose and Joanna – Of Isabella we hear nothing. I must now leave a little more room for dear Mama but embrace you. With much affection my dearest child... God bless you, we shall write to you often.

Jolimont, Christmas Day, 1845

My dearest Child

...on this blessed day I add a few lines to tell you first of all, though you are not to keep it as a secret, that about an hour ago God gave your papa & Mamma a little son and our dear Agnes, Eleanora & Cecile a little Brother, and a fine strong healthy little fellow he looks in the hands

of Mrs Haywood [the nurse]. You will tell Grandmaman this with our love; & say that your Mamma is quite as well as we could hope and that Dr Howitt is quite pleased & satisfied that I will write again by the first opportunity. I am sure that you will be pleased as Nelly & Cecile are. You would laugh to see Cecile on the floor with the new baby on her knees like a monkey nursing a cat! Mamma kisses you a thousand times & Papa too. We have talked much of you these days & your sisters last night had a Christmas Tree with Edith & Sam & Sally & Teddy Lonsdale, just as you had two years ago. Charlotte & Rose send love to you also.

I write this in a pretty verandah that I have made for Mamma since you left us – which opens into our bedroom by the window in the corner, and which is very cool and pleasant. I will scratch you a plan on the other side which will explain it to you. God bless you my dear Child. *Mille baisers* [a thousand kisses]. Your affectionate Father, C J La Trobe

Jolimont 23 June 1846

My dearest little Girl, Mamma has left me so little paper that I think next time I must take a sheet for myself. I can now only add my word, to tell you that no one in the world loves you better than Papa or prays more earnestly that you may grow up a real child of God. We all miss your bright eyes & speak of you continuously. Whenever Nelly or Cecile can slyly get hold of papa's or mamma's wine glass after dinner, with a chance of finding one tiny drop at the bottom, it is always to drink 'Agnes's Health'. Poor little sisters, pray do not forget them. And what will you say to your little brother. He is as full of life as a kitten, &... no doubt if God spares him, will grow up to be a comfort to his sisters. Next Christmas Day, you must recollect that it is his birthday. God bless you, dear Child, embrace Grandmamma & Tante Rose, & *tout le monde* from us. Your affectionate Papa – C J La Trobe

Jolimont 3 August 1846

If you were to pop into Jolimont you would find that we have not a single servant that we had when you left us except Charlotte and no doubt notice many changes particularly about the farther end of the house where you know there is a new verandah. The carriage road, which used to turn there, now runs away three times as far down toward the tank and makes a turn round a big black tree which you may remember – and the old road has been formed into pretty beds full of shrubs. What we call 'Agnes Garden' is now very pretty, but it would be difficult to explain to you where it is, without a drawing. [A3 sketch of garden]

... You remember the punts over the River Yarra – We are now building a fine large stone bridge which will add much to the public convenience & be very ornamental. It is called the Princes Bridge after the Prince of Wales.

[sketch of the bridge] 'road 30 feet broad, span of arch 150 feet, 25 feet over the water'.

Government House, Sydney, 30th Sept. 1846

My dearest little girl,

Dear Mamma has left so little room in her letter which she has sent me for Grandmamma, that I must add a few lines for you. You will have heard that I left mamma & your little sisters and brother a month ago to come & see the new Governor [FitzRoy]. I have been here a whole month very busy & very much gratified with every thing, but nothing has given more pleasure than to see the good old *Rajah* and dear Mrs and Capt. Fergusson [i.e. Ferguson] who are preparing to go again to Europe. We have talked a great deal about you and I never cease to bless God that He enabled us to place you in such good kind careful hands [for her journey in April 1845].

Govt House Hobart Town - 3 Jan'y 1847

You will have heard all about our visit to V. Diemen's Land. I think upon the whole that Mama likes the change. Tho' she has all the discomforts of a large, bustling, half-formed establishment ... and although Cecile & Nelly talk a great deal about Jolimont & their return to it, I think they enjoy the nice garden & the gay view of one Bay & Shipping & the fine large spacious verandahs very much. They are very fond of going to hear the Military band play in the public gardens also, and in walking about and making acquaintance with other little girls, and you know that Cary and Minna Meyer [children of his friend Dr John Meyer] have been staying with us, so that they have not been wanting in amusement... Then there is little Charlie, full of life & spirits when he is not suffering from his teeth. I am sure that you would be very much amused with him. You will I hope have remembered him on Christmas Day when he was just one year old. You are not too young to pray God to bless your little Brother – if you all live, he will have to be your councillor and stay when we are no longer in the world... This is a very different land from Port Phillip and Mama has been delighted to see the mountains... Tell uncle Louis [Coulon, Musée d'histoire naturelle Neuchâtel] that I have no time to catch beetles for him... and tell Mr Studer when you see him that I see many beautiful plants but cannot under present circumstances collect them.

Jolimont Melbourne 4th April 1847

...Of all your doings & adventures & travels we read with great pleasure... Mama has not told you much about your little brother, who begins to be very intelligent and runs about like a humming top – looking a little like one also, but he has a great many tumbles and great trouble to get up again because he places his little feet upon the edge of his frock. Now, this is very much like him [three small sketches of Charlie in different poses]. But he is a fine handsome little fellow for all that with dark eyes & eyelashes, and curly light hair. Where he got that from I do not know. He says a great many words, and has I am sorry to say a great dislike to be contradicted. He certainly loves his sisters – but makes very little scruple of pulling their long hair or pinching their arms or giving a good scratch of their faces, or even biting them between play & earnest [sketch of a fight]. Fortunately his teeth are not yet very strong. But I have little doubt that in time when he has more sense he will give up all these pretty little ways and become steady & serious like you! Nelly though to all appears not so strong as either Agnes or Cecile or 'the Boy' as his mamma calls him...& think will gradually show a love for the book. She has got a wonderful desire to learn the pianoforte, & a great idea of her skill in holding her hands properly and strumming tunes on the table. Cecile is very lively & a warm hearted little girl – but all of them get into a tantrum occasionally & will require God's grace to make them thoroughly good & religious beings. About Charlotte and Rose you will hear from others. The latter is getting quite square like the Guggisbergers [mountains]. [small sketch of Rose looking plump]

Jolimont - Melbourne - Port Phillip - 5th July 1847

Dearest Agnes

Who is to finish this letter I do not know, but at any rate it is my duty to begin it to set a good example... Dear child, I hope you love to think of us & your little sisters and brother, who all, even the latter, often pronounce your name, and connect it with ideas more or less pleasant. I dare say you think that it is not very easy to read my handwriting although I take great pains to make it legible– However, your dear Aunt Rose is at your side to help you... Mamma will have told you probably that your sisters and Charlie have now taken possession of my first dressing room beyond the little nursery - and that instead of a door into the little green yard there is a fireplace. I think they are very comfortable. My dressing room as it is now I think I have already described to you. It fills up the angle between our bed room & the old nursery so that instead of that end of the house appearing as it does, I think, in Mr

Gilbert's picture - in this way... That end of the house is now so. [sketches of Gilbert's painting and the house]

Don't you think it much prettier. The opening marked (a) is the termination of the nice broad verandah which now extends the whole length of the cottage - and altho' now only filled with cacti & shrubs out of flower, is already very pretty. It is 20 paces long. Two steps ascend into it from the carriage road in front and 2 steps more into the Hall - at the far end, where the little open verandah before the dining room was as you will remember, it opens into the new room which however small, we may call the library, and a very comfortable & pretty room it is.

Jolimont - Melbourne - Port Phillip - 29th Jany 1848

My dearest Agnes, It is now a very long time since you received a letter from me, and yet I am constantly tempted to sit down & write to you - for we never forget you, & continually have your name on our lips... Nelly often scrawls a letter to you, but I am afraid that you would scarcely be able to decipher them, if they were sent to you, even with the assistance of Tante Rose. However, if we send any box to Neuchatel as we may possibly do before the end of the season - we will put one or other up for you... What would you say if you saw your little brother... He is full of life & spirits like his sisters and is thank God strong & healthy, talks very amusingly & sings many of the nursery songs. I am sorry to say however what between love & teasing he & his sisters often quarrel & scratch & pull hair & fight like little weasels. And now what am I to tell you about myself & Jolimont. I have not made any very long journey this summer, though several short ones - one to Gipps Land, whither you may remember I went while you & Mamma & sisters were at the Heads just before you went away from us. This time instead of going by the coast, round by Western Port and Cape Liptrap & Wilson's Promontory, I went along the foot of the mountains & through the forests. The latter are very thick, sometimes you are buried in a scrub of mimosas and Fern tree for miles - while high over your head the huge forest trees rise 150 feet into the air - I only had to sleep out in the scrub two nights - but one was rather disagreeable, as a sudden thunderstorm broke on us and prevented our reaching the station where we had intended to pass the night - and the ground being flooded I had to sit up in a tree in the forest all night like an opossum or cockatoo, without anything to eat. However it did us no harm...

[sketch of La Trobe up a tree in heavy rain].

Jolimont has not had any alterations made to it since I wrote to you last and told you about our new room and verandah. This spring the garden was most beautiful - full of flowers, & the verandah so full of fine geraniums & cactus of various kinds in full flower that everybody said it worth coming to see. But since the hot weather set in all has disappeared. I think the only important addition I have made to my garden is a pretty rockery - for the sake of various rock plants which I got from Sydney & cacti. This has succeeded very well & is ornamental. I can hardly describe to you where it is exactly - but it is not far from your first little garden, do you remember when you were a very little girl you planted it with pea - there are a few shady trees & bushes & I have put a seat under them... There you have a picture of it and too Charlie coming to frighten Nelly and Cecile with a big stick. [sketch of the rockery with children].

I think I wrote to you word that I lost poor Blackey and had bought two other horses 'Tasman' and 'Billy'. Else, I do not know that there are any other changes- You will tell uncle Louis Coulon from me that I have now so little time or opportunity for collecting that I fear I shall have but little worth sending this year. Uncle Auguste will however receive probably some Van Diemen's Land fossils, which I collected for him... God bless you my Darling...

Jolimont Melbourne 1st January 1849

Dearest Agnes – If you are to measure my love for you by the number of letters I write to you I am sure you will think that I do not feel much – But you would do me great injustice for it is not only the first day of the year that I think of you and pray the Lord to bless you & have you in his holy keeping, but there are very few days in which you do not come somehow or other into our thoughts and on which your name is not pronounced, but every day brings so much ordinary or extraordinary occupation that I find the opportunity, time and temper suiting, when I can catch a minute by the tail & use it to write to one so distant tho' so dear, much rarer than I could wish: Many are the good wishes and prayers that rise to our lips thinking of you dear child at the beginning of a new year that God in his good providence - if such be his will might restore you to our arms is not the last I can assure you – but I have learned this lesson in life if no other, that not only that God rules all and disposes of all but that the more simply & unreservedly we leave ourselves in His hands for good or ill, the easier it is for us and the better prepared we are to find our paths well chosen if not exactly smoothed to our mind. ...

Since I last wrote to you we have made new changes at Jolimont, & the pretty cottage which you remember at the Heads is now in the garden. It occupies the corner where I used to have a frame with some seeds and plants – but the whole locality is so much changed that you would scarcely know it. I will scratch you an outline. [La Trobe's detailed plan of the house.] There, there is a puzzle for you – Tell me when you write if you can make it out. Shall we ever see you again here is the question we often ask...

Jolimont –7th May 1849

...and if you could see Jolimont, so green, & with all the splendid chrysanthemums in flower you would say it was a pity to leave home. These flowers grow magnificently in this climate and we have so many varieties, 3 white, 3 yellow, 3 pink, 2 buff and 2 deep red that the garden looks as gay as in summer. While speaking of the garden, I may tell you that your willow which you planted with me at the back near the water casks has grown a fine tree – and this year has retained its leaves the whole summer which it never did before, on account of the hot winds. Your rose tree is also alive. But if you came here I am sure you would have some difficulty in knowing the place – it is so changed by the additions made since you went, and the growth of the shrubberies. Your dear Mamma has got very well over her Hooping [sic] cough – and is upon the whole much better than she was some months ago. Nelly & Cecile are also now quite well – Charlie had it very slightly, indeed after the first week we heard very little of it, except when he wanted to get a bonbon and then he managed to make a great noise. I am afraid that you have already difficulty in recalling to mind your sisters – and little Charlie can only present himself to you as you think proper to imagine him. He is a very fine little boy – as full of life and motion as an eel... Tell dear Madam Godet with *mille choses affectueuses* from us that we have a dog called Castor, in remembrance of an old friend of mine.

Jolimont 10th Sept 1850

We are very glad to hear from you, but I want to see you write more carefully, & better English. However, I would rather see mistakes than not see your handwriting. You should always try to do that which you do well. We are looking out anxiously for your portrait – and are exceedingly obliged to our dear friends for taking that method of giving us pleasure. I wish we had such a fine stony tower as that of Oberhofen [castle]...in the hot weather. You have no idea how we get baked in the hot winds of summer, for want of good stony walls impervious to heat. In the meantime before the hot weather comes our little Jolimont is beautiful enough in its way, and the garden would be thought pretty anywhere. Your sisters

you know take their lessons in the new cottage which was brought from the Heads. That reminds me that if I have not done so I ought to send you a plan or a picture or something to make you more au fait as to our arrangements.

Jolimont 15th December 1850

Jolimont has not undergone any change since last autumn – when mama may have told you we altered & raised the corridor at the back – but still the gradual growth of the shrubberies from season to season always operates some changes in its general aspect and I am sure you would not know it again. Your rose tree is still where you planted it – and your willow also, tho' it has suffered considerably from the water cask into which we found that it had cunningly contrived to introduce its fibrous roots, had to be removed last winter. This is the dead season for the gardens the heat having turned every thing brown, and in fact – with exception of the pinks, of which we have a large & beautiful variety, jessamine & a very few roses – we have now no flowers in the garden. All the fine cactus tribe of which I have a great variety are going out of flower on the rockeries. These ornamental parts of the garden have all been made since you left us. That at the entrance as you drive up to the house is very pretty & covers a considerable space, the highest rocks being 12 or 14 feet above the ground and covered with shrubs & strange plants... The house is so changed that you would be surprised, there is a verandah and where the little verandah used to be there is a room and we have got two nurserys and two rockerys in the garden and every thing [is] changed... You will be pleased to receive in due time the sketches which your kind old friend Mrs Andrew McCrae, whom you surely remember, has made of him [Charlie] & his sisters.

Government House Sydney 8 March 1851

I dare say that before this letter comes into your hand you will have heard from mama that I have been obliged to leave her for a while to attend to business with the governor Sir Charles FitzRoy, prior to the final separation of the Port Phillip District from the older Colony of New South Wales... I will not deny that I am otherwise than gratified with the mark of confidence & favour shewn me. I have had a very difficult task to perform at times – and may well bless God that he has helped me through... When you were with us in Sydney in 1839 the present Government House was not built – it is a beautiful gothic structure, quite like a palace, and charmingly situated near the shore of this most beautiful estuary, the shores of which are sprinkled on every side with fine villas & gardens.

Jolimont 28th February 1852

...Jolimont is looking very dry & burned up, but still pretty, from the number of trees – but we live in different times, and we are still but indifferently supplied with servants. We have no butler – and only a makeshift gardener – but I hope George may come back to me for some months... George Waghorn the gardener you ought to remember – he was with us before O'Keefe. Let me see, I think that Noggrogery is the only one of the horses which you know. He is at grass for the rest of his life. Poor Blackey & Marie are both dead, and Bluebeard I have sold and several others which you never knew & which I did not keep long enough to get attached to. Besides Noggrogery there is Tasman which I have had some years, and Vic, mamma's pony & Roger – a great favourite – and Prince a fine strong grey, - and Caverley, a very good horse but which had the accident the other day [at Yering]. Cousin Adolph [de Meuron] can tell you all about them – Old Marquis the watch dog is still living, and little Pepper which always bit Adolph's leg and a very noble kangaroo dog, Keera. We have still an old cat Minnie which perhaps you patted as a kitten, and a number of cows, one of which has given you milk – dear child – Else we have no birds or beasts to pat, but plenty of opossums

& native cats about or under the house. It is now a long time since you left us, that you know none of the servants but Charlotte & Rose. By the bye, has Mamma told you that Capt and Mrs Fergusson [i.e. Ferguson] have come to live at Williamstown. He is now the Harbour Master. We are very glad and hope to see them now & then...Now what am I to tell you of your dear sisters, Nelly & Cecile. Both grow tall & I wish heartily that I could send them to Europe as we did you, and poor Charley, he will turn out a perfectly wild kangaroo if he remains here long. Perhaps God may open the door for all of us to come home together. You may imagine that I am still very much occupied in every way, this gold business has thrown a great deal of most difficult duty upon me – and I sometimes hardly see my way clear...

Jolimont 12 June 1852

...what pleasure we have had, young and old, in opening the box from Switzerland, which we have within these few days obtained possession of, after 8 weeks delay since the ship arrived in the Port... As for myself not to be forgotten I first thank my little great girl for the pretty slippers which she has worked for me, which everybody thinks very handsome & tasteful... Uncle Louis I thank for the painting [of Neuchatel] which I admire very much & not only find very faithful, but well painted. I am glad to see that Neuchatel will not, even in the present generation, be without a good landscape painter. It hangs in the little verandah drawing room over your picture, which is immediately above Mamma's writing table... Charlie has been in a great bustle ever since the case arrived, and can seldom be parted from the gun. I gave him a great treat a few weeks ago by taking him on board the *Calliope*, a 26 gun frigate and showing him all the arrangements of a man of war. You should have seen how affectionately he patted the great guns upon their backs, & shut one eye to peep into the touch holes, and how proud he looked when they saluted the Governor with the canon as we left the ship. He thought the whole was for his particular amusement. Poor little wild boy – when will you kiss him I wonder.

Government Offices, Melbourne, 12th November 1852

...I should like to exchange a note with you every week, & read your thoughts since I cannot hear your voice. When shall we have the delight of seeing your face again. It is long since you heard from us – for it is not only the worse season of the year for opportunity but this extraordinary discovery of gold in abundance in Victoria has made the crews of vessels in harbour run off to the mines, - and there are many now lying in Williamstown, which do not know when they can get away. However, a small vessel is going to sail for Singapore so we will take our chance of letting you hear of us by that seemingly round about way.

... I write this early before breakfast, I hear Nelly at her music lesson in the little drawing room, I hear Cecile who has a little sore throat making an odd noise, which she calls gargling – and here is Charlie who generally pays me a visit in my dressing room to plague me with questions when I am busy to get at my tool drawer... Jolimont is very beautiful just at present, so green & full of roses & other flowers... My dressing room window where I write opens onto a little green house at the end of the front verandah – and I have quite a wall of beautiful geraniums before me.

Melbourne, Dec 31st 1852

My dear Agnes,

I cannot let the old year expire & a new one begin without giving you, our dear absent child, some token of remembrance and deep affection. It is an affection which I assure you grows year by year in spite of our separation... I have the further purpose of telling you a piece of good news, which will I am sure take our dear Grandmamma and Tante Rose a little by surprise – that after full consideration it is determined that in a few weeks time dear

Mamman and Nelly & Cecile and Charlie and Mlle Beguin - in fact all with the exception of Papa - sail for Europe... I am sure that the step is the best & proper one for the sake of your dear Maman & for your little sisters & brother under every point of view, and for their kind and faithful teacher, & I may add for you also – for it is not right that you should grow up to womanhood without personal knowledge of those most nearly allied to you by blood and affection – and the cultivation of those relations which cannot be abandoned or neglected without loss... As to my own plans...as far as my wishes are consulted my separation from my dear wife & children will not be longer than absolutely necessary. Meanwhile I have plenty to do but shall lead a sad *vie de garcon*. Now remember that the moment you receive this you write to Papa, for that he will be alone and anxious to hear from you.

God bless you & many kisses from your affectionate & loving father, C.J.L.

Jolimont 10 March 1853

My darling Child

I do not know whether the *Melbourne* steamship, by which I send this to England will reach its destination before the *Blackwall*, but I promised dear Mama that I would write a few lines at least to you to tell you that I am now alone & so quiet & lonely, you cannot think, and that all are now upon their passage homeward. Mamma & Nelly, Cecile, Charly, Mlle Beguin & a maidservant went on board the *Blackwall* in Hobson's Bay on the afternoon of 18th ultimo – leaving dear Jolimont, where we have passed so many happy years together, not without many tears – I of course accompanied them. The ship did not sail however till Tuesday the 22nd, when we began our passage to the Heads in beautiful weather but with little wind and that contrary. In fact it was not till Friday the 25th about 6am that she...began the voyage. However the time was well spent in getting into good order, & every thing comfortable – and you will understand that is a comfort to us all that I could be with them so long. It was very satisfactory to me to see that every thing was as I could wish... There must have been a dozen children in all, so that the ship will be lively enough. Mamma has three starboard stern cabins & the two adjoining, with doors connecting all three – & everything very nicely arranged. The ship is a beautiful one, larger than the *Fergusson* which brought us out. When we got to the Heads I had to say a hurried good-bye & committed my treasures to the hands of our Merciful Father, with full confidence that He will be with them, & watch over them by day & night; & in His own good time bring them to their desired Haven. I am sure that the time had come when one and all should go to Europe – but I need not tell you what a grief it is to me, to separate myself from those who are so dear to me. I landed at Shortland's Bluff [Queenscliff] & from the light-house, watched the ship safe over the ripple [Rip], & quite out to sea, – and it was more than hour before I quite lost sight of her. I then got into a small vessel belonging to Govt which had followed me, & returned to Melbourne, where I arrived early in the afternoon. Poor deserted Jolimont! and all there so reminds me at each step of Mamma & the children – that I could almost begin to avoid the sight of it. However, I have so much to do, & such weighty duties on my hands, – that I have no time to sit and mope & grieve. Dear Mamma has left many friends who are very sorry she is gone & who feel the value which her example as a good Christian wife & mother has been in the community. All were pretty well & none sea-sick up to the time of my saying good-bye. –

...Charlotte you know stays with me to keep house & Rose is very useful – In fact I have very good servants both male & female at present. Martha who you know has been seven years in the house – and loves Charlie very much, is still here but will go when she has made up her mind what she means to do. I am writing at Mamma's table in the little verandah salon with your bright eyes looking down at me from your portrait which hangs just before me – dear child! What will Mamma say when she sees them in reality and when shall I see them? That must be as God will – but you will understand that I have no wish to be separated from my treasures *for a very long time*...

I embrace you with all of my heart – Your affectionate father, C J La Trobe

The cats & dogs cannot understand why it is so quiet! —

Bradley's Hotel, Southampton
July 17th 1854

My dearest Agnes,

It is not two hours since I set foot on the soil of Old England again, and I feel that I must for my own sake if not for that of my dear children employ some of the first moments of my return from my long exile, in calling upon you to bless God with me that I have been thus greatly favoured...

I not only felt myself at liberty to anticipate the arrival of my successor, Sir Charles Hotham by a few weeks, but having changed my intention of returning by the Horn, and resolved to return by the Isthmus of Panama and the West Indies, I have been favoured with a very prompt and fortunate return... I propose to go to London tomorrow & hope to find all our dear relatives well, & good news of my darling children, Agnes, Nelly, Cecile and Charley. Alas, alas, that I am no longer to be welcomed by their dear Mother. I received the intelligence of my irreparable loss, first by newspaper report, on the 27 April – and a few days later (1st May) by the arrival of the mail by the *Bosphorus* with your letters and those of my kind relatives, Swiss and English... How I have mourned her I cannot tell... But the wound is yet green, and I dare not indulge in brooding upon it. May this great trial be sanctified both to me and my dear Children... I may be detained by one thing or other...in London – but I promise to come & see you & dear Grandmama & all my dear relations, to whom I owe so much for your sake and for all the love they have shown to me & mine, without unnecessary delay... Kiss your dear sisters & little Charley from Papa – and tell them that I hope they will one & all write me a letter to London to bid me welcome – Charley and all – You cannot tell how impatient I am to see your faces – and yours, my darling girl, not the less [?] after our nine years absence from each other. What can I say to your dear Grandmama, more than that I love her like one of her own children...

London 18th July

My dear Child, I came up by railroad this morning & now finish this note at your dear uncle's. I find him [brother, Peter] & Charlotte your aunt whom I am delighted to see again, in great trouble about my dear sister [in-law] Janetta. You shall hear from me in a day or two. I have I see some little notes from you awaiting my arrival, but have no time to read them before I must send this to the post. Aunt Charlotte is writing to dear Tante Rose so I do not pretend to do so but all shall have a line from me sooner or later. Once more God bless you my dear Children.

Your most affectionate father Charles Jos. La Trobe

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