

Letters From An Exile At Botany Bay, To His Aunt In Dumfries

**Giving A Particular Account Of The Settlement Of New South
Wales, With The Customs And Manners Of The Inhabitants.**

Watling, Thomas (b.1762)

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Letters From An Exile At Botany Bay, To His Aunt In Dumfries

Giving A Particular Account Of The Settlement Of New South Wales, With The Customs And Manners Of The Inhabitants

Penrith

Ann Bell

1794

THE PUBLISHER OF THE ENSUING PRODUCTION, SENDS IT INTO THE WORLD FOR THE TWO FOLLOWING REASONS.

FIRST; he hopes it may contribute a little to the relief of an old, infirm, and friendless woman, to whom it is addressed.

And Secondly; he imagines, the account here given of a country so little known, may be interesting to some, and amusing to all. With the original, which is now in his hands, he declines taking any liberty, but leaves the unfortunate exile to tell his story exactly in his own words, and how he acquits himself, the public must determine.

The publisher has several letters from the same author still in his hands; and should these meet with a favourable reception, they are intended to be published, together with a life of the author on some future occasion.

LETTERS, &c.

[May 12 1793]

Sydney-Cove, Port-Jackson,
New-South-Wales, May 12th, 1793.

MY EVER REVERED AUNT,

EMBRACING the opportunity of a returning vessel, I would waft you, from this place, a second testimonial of my insuperable attachment and remembrance. My first letter per the Atlantic, I hope you have received before; but should it be otherwise, after speaking to the present state of my mind, I shall hastily recapitulate its principal contents.

In my saddest hours, and God knows there are many of them, I have observed you are then most busy with my memory. Melancholy's sombre shadow lours over my soul, endears the fleeting moment by impelling me to write to you. Indeed, it is solely owing to this despondent state of mind, that ought I have produced for those last four years proceeds. When this gloom frowns dreadful over the vista of my being, I but too much indulge the dreary prospect — exploring the wide domain of adversity terminated only by the impending darkness;— hence it is, that whatever flows from my pen, or is laboured by my pencil, affects, in some degree, the tone of mind that possess me at the period of its production.

Recurring now to my former letter:— it informed that I had wrote you from *Rio de Janeiro*; that I had escaped at the *Cape of Good-Hope*, where I was betrayed by the mercenary Dutch, and remanded to captivity; whence, after seven months of imprisonment, the Royal Admiral E. Indiaman landed me here; where the pur-blind jurisprudence of a *Scottish* tribunal, doubtless, first intended me.

To lead you through the labyrinth of all my sufferings, from the 28th of December, 1791, down to the present period, is a thing utterly impossible; neither is it my duty to harrow up your feelings by the attempt. — It better becomes me to soothe those sorrows that vague report in the public prints has most likely excited, than to give an additional stab to so valued a life — a life I have already, though innocently, almost extinguished.

Yet not to pass over all too rapid; and to shew how dear you were to me in my most prosperous state, take the subsequent specimen intended for you, when I deemed myself a favored denizen of heaven — breathing a few hours of inestimable liberty.

[December 13 1791]

Dated, Cape of Good Hope,
African-Coast, Tuesday, Dec. 13th, 1791.

MY DEAREST AUNT,

YOUR loved Watling is at liberty! to say ought else is almost unnecessary, as I am conscious your amiable, tender heart, will now hope every thing. Indeed I am very incapable to write more at present; nor will I ever be master of sufficient language to give any semblance to these sensations I just now experience. True, I am in a remote clime, where Slavery wields her iron sceptre, and where slaves are at this moment attending me — yet blessed be Divine Mercy, I enjoy freedom! — I that but yesterday had the ignominious epithet *convict* adhibited to my name, am again myself! to-day all nature seems renovated. The sun that has ben clouded for three years has regained his splendour, and the meads their verdure. 'Tis the jubilee of creation; at least I will believe so. — I tread in air; my spirits are electrified; and my poor heart beats quick with redoubled fervor and emotion towards that peaceful little fire side which it has long sighed after and bled for.

I hold it imprudent to commit to paper how I have obtained emancipation. I will only say, that the ship Pitt lyes opposite my window, and means to sail by Sunday next; after when, should any other vessel here tend to *Europe*, if possible, I will procure a passage — and be happy.

O my poor, dear, dear aunt, rejoice with me! my senses are all absorbed in the most pleasing delirium that ever was poured upon mortal. Most merciful good God, design to pardon all that cavil and innate murmuring I have so frequently emitted against thy wise and just dispensations. Here upon my bended knee, permit me to adore and render Thee the warmest gratulations for those numberless blessings conferred upon an unworthy sinner — particularly this last, most exquisitely felt — this sum-total of terrene felicity.

Come then my long drooping and forlorn Hope, and once more extend thy fairy landscapes, and display thy tinselled forms. My glowing bosom can cheerfully heighten even thy most vivid colouring, and indulge thy most flattering phantoms. Best boon of indulgent heaven, never, never, never again fly thy suppliant votary, but henceforth dwell unmolested in this unambitious, thrice happy breast.

So soon as I have discharged this letter, I shall fabricate schemes for a

continuation of humble happiness. It is my wish, that we would together, with my dear and faithful C----, lead the residue of our days in obscurity, from the vices and follies of this transitory faithless world;— and every dawning day, and setting sun, offer up to the Father of Mercies, a sincere prayer for the most distinguished of benefactions toward us his most favoured of creatures.

May that gracious Almighty, and every good angel protect you, and haste that happy moment that restores us together — when the returning prodigal shall throw himself at your feet — recount all his sorrows — and ever remain under the influence of your indulgent eye, and tender monition.

I am

Dear Aunt, &c.

It is needless to tell how soon the preceding became a most bitter contrast; but the nauseous cup was poured out for me, and I was born to drink it to the very dregs. — O dread Jehovah! wherefore didst thou so tenderly affix the giddy height of fragile human felicity so directly over the tremendous abyss of blackest and deepest of misery? — surely but to render me the most wretched and unhappy of all mankind!

Drop but one single tear over this rueful feature of my existence, and if possible, — forget it.

I may now say, that my constitution has after all this, had sufficient strength to combat the repeated attacks of a smart fever; and I could also say much more, but it being only of the same melancholy tenor, I shall for the time wave egotism, and commence a slight, contour of this novel country:— not however expecting connection, you must just accept of each wild idea as it presents itself.

[December 13 1791 Continued: Account of the Colony]

BRITAIN, I believe, still entertains, and very justly, an idea of the sterility and miserable state of *N. S. Wales*. It will be long before ever it can even support itself. — Still that country so famed for charity and liberality of sentiment I doubt not will persevere to continue it. — When I have seen so much wanton cruelty practised on board the *English* hulks, on poor wretches, without the least colour of justice, what may I not reasonably infer? — *French Bastile*, nor *Spanish Inquisition*, could not centre more of horrors.

Our longest day coincides exactly with your shortest; and *vice versa*. The climate is an extremely sultry one, especially in summer; and yet paradoxical as it may appear, it is in, no wise propitious for tropical vegetation. A few European culinary vegetables grow, but never arrive to their pristine maturity, and when re-transplanted dwindle unto nothing. — The face of the country is deceitful; having every appearance of fertility; and yet productive of no one article in itself fit for the support of mankind.

The flattering appearance of nature may be offered as the best apology for those mistaken eulogisms lavished by a late eminent circumnavigator upon this place. Perhaps nothing can surpass the circumambient windings, and romantic banks of a narrow arm of the sea, that leads from this to *Parramatta*, another settlement about fourteen miles off. The Poet may there descry numberless beauties; nor can there be fitter haunts for his imagination. The elysian scenery of a *Telemachus*;— the secret recesses for a *Thomson's musidora*;— arcadian shades, or classic bowers, present themselves at every winding to the ravished eye. — Overhead the most grotesque foliage yields a shade, where cooling zephyrs breathe every perfume. Mangrove avenues, and picturesque rocks, entwined with non-descript flowers:— In short, were the benefits in the least equal to the specious external, this country need hardly give place to any other on earth.

Often amid these coveted solitudes do I wander by the silent moon, along the margin of some nameless stream, and pray for the most loved of aunts, and for my dearest C----. The willing tear will often fall when I reflect upon your widowed and impotent condition. — “If in existence,” I exclaim, “alas! indigence and pallid hunger most likely guards her humble door, whilst her modest heart pines in silence, unknown to, and unacquainted with philanthropy. God of the widow & the orphan, shield her helpless head, and shed abroad comfort and pious resignation in her agonized and solitary heart.”

My worthy friend, Mr. H----, may reasonably conclude, that these

romantic scenes will much amuse my pencil; though therein he is mistaken. The landscape painter may in vain seek here for that beauty which arises from happy-opposed off-scapes. Bold rising hills, of azure distances would be a kind of phaenomena. The principal traits of the country are extensive woods, spread over a little-varied plain. I however confess, that were I to select and combine, I might avoid that sameness, and find engaging employment. Trees wreathing their old fantastic roots on high; dissimilar in tint and foliage; cumbent, upright, fallen, or shattered by lightning, may be found at every step; whilst sympathetic glooms of twilight glimmering groves, and wildest nature lulled in sound repose, might much inspire the soul — all this I confess; but all this, if I possibly can, shall be considered of hereafter.

In the warmer season, the thunder very frequently rolls tremendous, accompanied by a scorching wind, so intolerable as almost to obstruct respiration;— whilst the surrounding horizon looks one entire sheet of uninterrupted flame. The air, notwithstanding, is in general dry. Fifteen months have been known to elapse without a single shower; but though thus dry, the transitions of hot and cold are often surprisingly quick and contrasted without any discernable injury to the human system. I have felt one hour as intensely warm as if immediately under the line, when the next has made me shiver with cold, yet have I not experienced any harm therefrom; owing, without a doubt, to the dryness and salubrity, of the atmosphere.

The vast number of green frogs, reptiles, and large insects, among the grass and on the trees, during the spring, summer, and fall, make an incessant noise and clamour. They cannot fail to surprise the stranger exceedingly, as he will hear their discordant croaking just by, and sometimes all around him, though he is unable to discover whence it proceeds:— nor can he perceive the animals from whence the sounds in the trees issue, they being most effectually hid among the leaves and branches.

Should the curious Ornothologist, or the prying Botanist, emigrate here, they could not fail of deriving ample gratification in their favorite pursuits in this, luxuriant museum. Birds, flowers, shrubs, and plants; of these, many are tinged with hues that must baffle the happiest efforts of the pencil. — Quadrupeds are by no means various; but we have a variety of fishes, the greater part of which, are dropped and spangled with gold and silver, and stained with dyes transparent and brilliant as the arch of heaven.

One great error in many of our voyagers, is the giving pre-maturely a decided opinion of what falls within the circle of their observation. That the inhabitants of N. S. Wales, are centuries behind some other savage

nations, in point of useful knowledge, may be fact; but in this there is no criterion of judging mental ability. Their huts and canoes, it is true, are extremely rude and ill formed; but when we consider their non-acquaintance with iron tools, and the hardness of their wood, it is more surprising that they can use it at all. — It being so ponderous as to sink immediately in water, renders it entirely useless that way:— consequently no succedaneum here can be so easily moulded, or so fit for the purposes of forming their little vessels as the bark — and this, both as builders and sailors they manage with singular dexterity.

The people are in general very straight and firm, but extremely ill featured; and in my opinion the women more so than the men. Irascibility, ferocity, cunning, treachery, revenge, filth, and immodesty, are strikingly their dark characteristics — their virtues are so far from conspicuous, that I have not, as yet, been able to discern them.

One thing I may adduce to their credit, that they are not cannibals. They burn and bury their dead, but from what motive it is hard to conceive; immolation it cannot be; as they have not apparently the smallest idea of a Deity, much less of religion.

In imitation they are extremely apt, particularly in mimicry; and they seem also in, many other respects to be capable of much improvement; but they are so very unsteady and indolent, that it would be almost next to a miracle to bring them to any degree of assiduity or perseverance.

Here I cannot help making what may appear rather an ill-natured remark; our governors, for they are all such, have carried philosophy, I do not say religion, to such a pitch of refinement as is surprising. Many of these savages are allowed, what is termed, a freeman's ratio of provision for their idleness. They are bedecked at times, with dress which they make away with the first opportunity, preferring the originality of naked nature; and they are treated with the most singular tenderness. This you will suppose not more than laudable; but is there one spark of charity exhibited to poor wretches, who are at least denominated christians? No, they are frequently denied the common necessities of life! wrought to death under the oppressive heat of a burning sun; or barbarously afflicted with often little merited arbitrary punishment — this may be philosophy, according to the calculation of our rigid dictators; but I think it is the falsest species of it I have ever known or heard of.

The men and women, at an early age, devote to their chieftain, the former, one of the upper fore-teeth; and the latter, the first joint of the little finger of the left hand, as a token of their fidelity. — This is one of their public ceremonies, and is performed in the most bungling manner: but it is impossible to descend to particulars in the limits of a narrow letter.

A canoe, spear, wooden sword, and shield, short buldgeon, stone hatchet, fishing tackle, and a rude basket formed of bark, comprise the whole of their domestic or offensive implements. Their substitute for knives is ever at hand; the first shell that occurs fully answering that purpose.

They are very quick eyed, and dexterous in the striking of fish, or aiming of the spear; but they are neither so athletic or nimble as might reasonably be expected in a savage race.

Bedaubing, or streaking themselves in various forms with red or white earth, they would prefer to the most tawdry birth-day suit whatever. The same want of taste keeps them honest this way — but victuals, knives, or hatchets, vanish with them in a twinkling.

It pays no small compliment to poesy and painting, that they are affected by the most unenlightened as well as the most refined countries. The natives are extremely fond of painting, and often sit hours by me when at work. Several rocks round us have outre figures engraven in them; and some of their utensils and weapons are curiously carved, considering the materials they have to work with.

Their Poets neither having the advantage of writing or printing, are necessitated to travel as the hedge-preachers in *Britain*, to extend their reputation. It is but lately that an itinerant sable *Ossian* called this way, and held forth to some hundreds of his countrymen, who after kindly entreating, escorted him to some other bourne, to further promulgate his composition.

Whatever may be their merits in this department, I confess that I am not connoisseur enough to guess at them. Of their music, however, I may aver that nothing can be more disagreeable, unless it be their other favorite amusement, dancing; for if harmony be the foundation of the one, and grace of the other, these aborigines have not, as yet, the smallest idea of either.

The hair smeared with gum, and forked as the porcupine; a bone or straw stuck horizontally through the middle cartilage of the nose; and the body streaked over with red or white earth, completes the *ton* of dress of the inhabitants of *N. S. Wales*, either for war, love, or festivity.

Many of them are tatowed over the arms, back, and breast, in a very irregular manner, which seems to have been done at an early period of life, for which they can assign no other reason than that of ornament.

It were presumption in me to speak of their language, with which I am but little acquainted. Glossaries have been attempted by some of our pretending and aspiring gentry, who, I am conscious, are as much ignorant of it as myself. I think it is by no means copious, but rather confined to a few simple sounds; but whether this is, or is not a beauty, I leave to the

learned to determine. To an *European* ear the articulation seems uncommonly wild and barbarous; owing, very likely, to those national prejudices every man imbibes, and perhaps cannot entirely divest himself of. One thing they have in common with more refined communities, that marks a clannish propinquity of kindred; which is a similarity in the termination of their surnames: Terribi-long, Benna-long, Bye-gong, Wye-gong, Cole-bree, Nan-bree, &c., &c., are full as striking as Thomson, Johnson, and Robson.

As it is impossible for me to be so particular as I could with the barbarian *New Hollander* must give place to a few other remarks, I would inform you of ere I finish my letter.

Returning then back to general observations; and supposing you to have heard something of the swiftness, meekness, and singular formation of the Kangaroo, of the Opposum, Guanoe, Lizards, &c., I may say, that not only these, but the whole appearance of nature must be striking in the extreme to the adventurer, and at first this will seem to him to be a country of enchantments. The generality of the birds and the beasts sleeping by day, and singing or catering in the night, is such an inversion in nature as is hitherto unknown.

The air, the sky, the land, are objects entirely different from all that a *Briton* has been accustomed to see before. The sky clear and warm; in the summer very seldom overcast, or any haze discernable in the azure; the rains, when we have them, falling in torrents, & the clouds immediately dispersing. Thunder, as said, in loud contending peals, happening often daily, & always within every two or three days, at this season of the year. Eruscations and flashes of lightning, constantly succeeding each other in quick and rapid succession. The land, an immense forest, extended over a plain country, the maritime parts of which, are interspersed with rocks, yet covered with venerable majestic trees, hoary with age, or torn with tempests. — In a word, the easy, liberal mind, will be here filled with astonishment, and find much entertainment from the various novel objects that every where present themselves.

To sum up natural reflection for the present:— though there are a variety of objects to exercise the imagination, yet such a sameness runs through the whole of the animal and vegetable creation of New South Wales, that I think it would be no hard matter for the discerning naturalist to at once distinguish them from those of every other country, by their peculiarity. The various Banksias do not more appear to belong to one common family, than the Kangaroo, Opposum, and Kangaroo-rat, to that of the Kangaroo. The fruit and seed of the trees, and most of the underwood, ligneous and scarce penetrable to the hardest instrument, have all of them something of

resemblance to each other. In short, from the savage native in the animal, and the towering red gum in the vegetable, everything indigenous to this colony, approaches or recedes by a very striking and singular gradation of proximity.

Sydney-Cove, from whence I write this letter, is the principal settlement, and is about 1/3 part as large as *Dumfries. Parramatta*, or *Rose-Hill*, that I have spoke of, is somewhat less; and the latest settlement, called *Toongabbe*, about four miles farther inland, is the least of all. Many houses of the two former settlements, are built with brick, and covered with tiles; but none of them, the governor's excepted, exceed the height of one story. His Excellency's, indeed, is composed of the common and attic orders, with a pediment in front, and commands the most exalted station, but as neither the wood, brick, nor stone (lime there is none) are good for much, it is simple and without any other embellishment whatever.

It is impossible for a well-wisher to his country, not to breath a sigh, should he visit us, nay, the genuine *British* patriot could scarce refrain from dropping a tear upon a survey of such mistaken policy. To see what has been done in the space of five or six years, of clearing, building, and planting, is astonishing. To behold hundreds of hands laboriously mis-employed, that might be of service, and not burthensome to their country, assuredly deserves attention and reformation; for whatsoever interested men may advance to the contrary, I humbly declare, that it is my opinion, that all that has been done is of little service to our support, and of none at all to government; and that neither this, nor the ensuing century will see us able to subsist ourselves, much less to retaliate what has been lavished upon so very wild an adventure.

Norfolk, is a small rocky island in the sea, and is governed by a deputy, named King. It lyes in latitude 29° . 3. south, longitude 168° . 10. east. Its length does not exceed seven, nor its breadth four miles; and it is about eight or ten days sail from *Sydney*. Capital offences done in this island, are reserved to the decision of this tribunal; where the culprits are brought to undergo a form of trial. I will not say but justice in a criminal court may be administered impartially; but instances of oppression, and mean souled despotism, are so glaring and frequent, as to banish every hope of generosity and urbanity from such as I am:— for unless we can flatter and cajole the vices and follies of superiors, with the most abominable servility, nothing is to be expected — and even this conduct, very often after all, meets with its just reward:— neglect and contempt.

As a late journalist is much anxious to insinuate the assiduity and virtue of governor P----, in urging matrimonial connections, and forbidding illicit ones, I think I may here remark the efficacy of his endeavours. Had such a

scheme taken place, possibly something good might have accrued, though little I think could reasonably have been expected from the coupling of *whore* and *rogue* together. Be this as it may, I think that it would have been equally praise-worthy in his Excellency, to have recommended to our betters, the setting us a continent example; in lieu of which, there is scarce a man without his mistress. The high class first exhibit it; and the low, to do them justice, faithfully copy it.

I have observed instances in the papers, of ladies of easy virtue, stoutly withstanding the royal mercy, and bravely preferring death to *Botany-Bay*; but I would beg them to permit me, who am also a prisoner, to encourage and advise them to behave more pliant in future, and by so doing obtain their best wishes. Henceforth, be they most forward in embracing every opportunity that occurs for transportation. They may rest assured, that they will meet with every indulgence from the humane officers and sailors in the passage; and after running the gauntlet there, will, notwithstanding, be certain of coming upon immediate keeping at their arrival. Nay more, if any girl of uncommon spirit, with a happy talent for dissention, and no doubt but such there are, should attract the affection of one in office, she may console herself with the comfortable prospect of rendering every one unhappy around her; for by her duplicity and simulation, she may so far agitate her cully, supposing him one of the springs of our government, as to make our infant colony quake to the very centre.

But be she ever so dispicable in person or in manners, here she may depend that she will dress and live better and easier than ever she did in the prior part of her prostitution.

Now for a contrast. — If a man's abilities are good, they are his bane, and impede his emancipation. He must abide upon the colony and become the property of some haughty despot; or be lent about as an household utensil to his neighbours — there to exert these abilities, without any other emoluments than illiberal reflection; for the least apparent murmuring would instantaneously be construed insolence, and could not fail, though he had faithfully served years, to immediately damn him for ever in this life — for it would be burthened by cruelty, hunger, and the most laborious of employment.

Be my merits what they may, I am sorry to say, that they have been pursued by a good deal of this malign fortune I now mention; and for which I quote myself, as one instance, to ascertain the truth of. My employment is painting for J. W----, esq., the non-descript productions of the country; and for which, I have the rewards hinted at in the preceding sentence. The performances are, in consequence, such as may be expected from genius in bondage, to a very mercenary sordid person. There are,

thank God, no fetters for the soul: collected in herself, she scorns ungenerous treatment, or a prostitution of her perfections; nor will she meanly pluck the laurel from her own brow, to deck that of her unworthy governor. Let it suffice to *Britain*, that my youthful hopes and reputation are levelled in the dust, and that my old age will be unhoused and indigent; but never let her presume to barter to interested men, the efforts of the artist, or lowers of the mind; for those are placed infinitely above her reach.

I could, along with this, point out many practices equally obnoxious to honor or justice; but coming from my pen, they might savour so much of virulence, and so little of candour, that I shall wave them. Though I have nothing to expect from, or thank my natal abode for, still, fallen as I am, it would pain me to have my veracity even doubted of by those I am unknown to.

Should all, or any of these observations, seem not quite original, they may still prove entertaining from their simplicity and truth. If, therefore, the publication of such a letter, after the revisal by an abler hand, can be in the least conducive to the interest of my dear aunt, I shall yet account myself not altogether cast away; and shall take care to furnish her with materials by every opportunity. There however are reflections, which I need not point out, that I could wish either entirely suppressed, or moulded into such a form, that should they recoil here, they may not create me cruel and invincible enemies. And if any person can be found, whose influence is so powerful as to extend here, and soften my ill-fated condition, one or two years would return me back with as correct an history, and as faithful and finished a set of drawings of the picturesque, botanic, or animate curiosities of N. S. Wales, as has ever yet been received in England.

Possibly, E. M----, esq. No.----, Ely, Place, *London*; J. M----, esq.; J. B---, esq. at the India-Board, Whitehall; J. St. B----, esq., *London*; or Sir J. J---, any of these, either jointly or severally, might accomplish it. — I but submit this hint, without the smallest expectation of ever profiting by it.

To make a proud comparison with a most celebrated literary character, in order to soften the demerits of this heterogeneous and deranged performance, I may truly say, that it was neither executed under the shelter of acadmic bowers, nor the patronage of the great; but in much indigence, sickness, and indescribable sorrow. That it was stolen from the nightly repose of a poor being, who could but ill spare it, and who had to toil as a slave by day, and prohibited from such an attempt under the terror of rigid punishment — and yet, who maugre every barrier, accomplished the present, from no other motive than to inform his abilities subservient to her necessities.

Having occupied so much of my paper, and perhaps to little purpose, it is

high time to turn to my aunt, and speak of my affection. Never did I find language so imperfect as at present, nor letters to give so little satisfaction; for the former cannot shadow my feelings, nor the latter yield me more than pensive melancholy reflection. Yet blessed be my God, and you my dear, dear parent, even for the power of writing. It can soothe, in some measure, the black desponding hour, and escape me to hold an imaginary correspondence with you. — If my present should reach *Dumfries*, and find you in existence, I can figure to myself the little assembled groupe, anxious for its perusal; and my dear aunt as principal, with the tear of unceasing sorrow stealing down her pallid cheek. O God, here I would implore thee to speedily terminate to us both, the bitter tempest of time; and grant to two afflicted and weary wanderers, a happy meeting in the profound repose of thy beatific eternity!

I find also, for every one of my friends, a regard strengthened in proportion to my long, long absence. Heaven knows whether my weak heart could have stood equally faithful in prosperity; but certain it is, the annals of adversity does not inroll a name superior to that of poor Watling, for grateful fidelity to generous well-wishers.

To two young women, who I doubt not will remember me, I would present both my love and respect. I think Miss K. M----, will not forget one who wishes her but barely as fortunate as he is unhappy. Neither should Miss A. B----, disfavor the recollection of me, for a similar reason. Tender motives I will not urge, as they might possibly offend; but a letter from either, especially Miss M----, would be an acquisition superior to worldly fortune. For these two young people, my regard must be very superior to impure desire; as at this remote distance, and with so little hope of future comfort, I nevertheless treasure for them both the most tender, but most pure and virtuous of sentiments.

My old favourite Miss J. S----, is also still a great one. Tell me whether or not she is single: she used ever to be a kind neighbour; and one I could cheerfully at any time in my better days, have taken as a lovely and agreeable partner through life.

I begged hard for a letter from Mr. H----, in my last one to you. I hope he will indulge me with the state of himself, and amiable spouse, and family. Tell him, it will be extremely painful, should I return without having where to lay my head, if he should forget me.

I shall not enumerate all my friends; flattering myself they will not deem it disrespectful. Woe-worn as I am, my memory is not that treacherous as to forget favours though long since conferred; but having crowded myself to this last page, I cannot do more than just repeat their revered names. Mr. and Mrs. M----, B----, D----, and the pious Mrs. M. K----; these are

foremost in my memory; yet thank God, I have still more that I do not specify, who occupy a warm corner in this unfortunate heart.

When you write to me, be so kind as inform me of every little incident in the place; for the most trivial will be entertaining and dear to me. I have seen almost the whole of the *London* newspapers down to the last six months; but as they do not descend to occurrences done in that neighbourhood where my infant and happier years were passed, their intelligence is flat and insipid. Your new bridge and theatre I have already heard of, from a soldier who had wrought as a gardener with the M----, and P. M----, of D----; and who called upon me to see whether I could promote a little cause for him with his commanding officer.

Possibly, if you can insert an advertisement in any public print, something to the following purport, it may one day turn to advantage: as my sole motive is your interest, and my happiness your well-being. I leave the scheme for you to decide upon, and to act as the better judgment of yourself and friends shall determine.

Address

Sydney-Cove, Port Jackson,
New South Wales, May 20th, 1793.

THOMAS WATLING
PRINCIPAL LIMNER IN NEW SOUTH WALES,

Extremely anxious to deserve better of his Country, proposes, with due Deference, under the Patronage of an impartial Public,

The Execution of a

PICTURESQUE DESCRIPTION of that COLONY

In an highly-finished Set of Drawings, done faithfully upon the Spott, from Nature, in Mezzo, Aqua-tinta, or Water Colours.

THAT the subjects attempted, shall be partial and general views of *Sydney, Parramatta, and Toongabbe*; romantic groves, or native groupes, and that, if possible, in the course of the work, curiosities in ornothology and botany shall be interwoven.

Though the fabricator, with deep confusion, confesses himself a prisoner, he would, nevertheless flatter himself, that a philanthropic and liberal minded nation, would not render that an insuperable barrier; nor from so melancholy a circumstance, deny him any claim to merit. He would modestly insinuate, that he rates his abilities equal to the task proposed; and flatters himself, that his performances shall be the most accurate and elegant that have, as yet, been received in *Britain*, from the new world.

Those gentlemen inclined to encourage a work attempted by an unfortunate being, that possibly may not be utterly destitute of genius, — are humbly requested to transmit their names (post paying) to Mrs. M. K---, nigh &c.

*** No emolument is expected until the paintings or drawings shall arrive in *Britain*, and be submitted to the subscribers for engraving; when, should they be found worthy the indulgence and protection of the really unbiassed friends of lowly distressed merit — The author, shall gratefully thank his patrons for what they may think him deserving for his labours.

Try to prevail with Mr. H----, to write a good letter, in my name, to capt. M----, at E---- P----; stating, that my present condition is chiefly owing to the low revenge of a certain military character, now high in office. I would also beg the permission of dedicating this intended work to him, which I have already privately commenced, and which I have every reason to hope

will not be a despicable one. Could he prevail with alderman M'C----, to intercede for me, if not to be emancipated, at least to procure for me the indulgence of prosecuting my plan, it would probably revive my almost extinguished emulation. Here again I refer you to your better judgment.

And now being upon the close of my letter — a letter that I am much anxious for its conveyance; I would earnestly implore, that should it fall into the hands of strangers, they would generously forward it to the person for whom it is addressed:— and that should it arrive in *Dumfries*, and that tender being happily stolen from existence, that they would add to this obligation a single line of information to the writer, his most fervent prayers should be the retaliation.

O! my dear aunt, at the moment I write hastily these last lines, my poor heart undergoes the most ominous pangs — Yet alas! why should it? since only in immortality I now fix my anchor for peace and rest. The sooner we meet in that state, the sooner it is to be hoped will these painful perturbations cease, and retrospection and sorrow be wiped forever from your eyes.

Pardon me, best of parents, that this *il-pensoroso* gloom urges me to affect you. — What would I not give to stretch me but one half hour upon my aged grandmother's grave? or what, to throw me at your revered feet, or mingle with your dust? Pardon such ideas! Oh me! aunt, I am weak! hide this paragraph, and impute it solely to the softening hand of ever dropping sorrow.

If there be a friend of mine that can yet recollect me, I would thank him or her for a letter. No one commander of a vessel will refuse its carriage, paying the inland postage, and directing it to the care of E. L----, esq., surgeon, at *Sydney*, N. S. Wales I need not say that I bless you; and that I am sure of your blessing in return; for if possible we are both of us more than sure of either. Remember we will meet, if not in time, in eternity. Meanwhile accept this tear, and heart-felt adieu, which is all at present that is in the power of your unhappy but most affectionate nephew,
T. WATLING.
