

Transcription of Rebecca Greaves' Letter to her Uncle William Holt
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[SHEET 1]

If you write direct to the left at the post office called for.

November 25th 1851
Plenty River, Victoria

My dear Uncle,

Although you have never answered my last troublesome scribble to you I have determined not to wait any longer, but to write to you for I certainly may say now that "absence makes the heart grow fonder" for every night I think of you all I long more to see you all again, although I do not for a moment wish to return to England to stay for any length of time although I certainly shall (please God) return in a visit to see friends in England before long as I have already had two offers to return as maid to two ladies that are about to return on a visit to their friends in England, but they will only give me £16 and that I do not think is quite enough as I do not suppose my passage money would be much for them so I shall not think of returning unless I can 18 or 20£ and my passage paid, but perhaps I may be some time before I return as my Mother does not seem to wish me to return at all and although I have such a very great wish to visit England once again I sometimes almost give up thought for as it would be against my dear Mother's wish I feel that I should not be happy.

I sincerely wish you could see us as I am certain my dear Uncle you would say we are all very good boys and girls. Girls in particular I say girls because you know I always used to be good and now you know I much praise myself for I am certain if I did not no one else would frankly and with the exception of a few flatteries and those I do not wish to receive praise from for I know they would soon cease so there my dear Uncle I do not intend to listen to them for I can do as I please now and were I to change my state I suppose I should have to change my mind also and that I never could do as I must

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have my own way a little longer.

I appear to have so much to tell you that I really do not know what to tell you first. You would scarcely know our dear Mother now if you were to see her she and my Father both begin to look very old now Mother is getting quite thin I think I may say she is quite as happy as she used to be in England she does not appear to have the least wish to return she should like this much better than England if all her friends were out now she appears to grieve very much about dear Grandma and Grandpapa's death if I forget and begin to talk about you of any of Aunts it often causes her much trouble, when she thinks that since she saw you she has been deprived of a dear Father and Mother. Oh my I never experience that loss for I certainly thought I should never bare to part with my kind Mother but I trust as God is always so kind and merciful to us that He will not deprive us of our only earthy protectors I really do not

know what would have become of us all had it not been for dear Mother and Father he certainly has been a Father to us all and may God reward him for his friendship and as he has cared for us I pray God will in like manner care for him for while he trusts in God I do not fear that all will be well we certainly have many things to be thankful for in particular our safe



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arrival in Victoria after crossing so many troubled seas and above all His merciful protection over us since we have been landed.

I will now begin to tell you where we all are as I flatter myself you would like to hear although you have never answered my last letter to you but I conclude it is because you have so much business to attend to. I wish often I could repay you a little for the trouble we have given you but I am certain I shall never be able to do but oh my dear Uncle I do sincerely hope you will be rewarded with a greater reward than earth can ever afford one that will never cease I can assure you my dear kind Uncle that it is the wish of us all that as we

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can never repay you that God will bless you and may you never have the trouble with others as you have had with our family but may God bless you all is our daily prayers.

Now in the first place I will tell you My Mother has bought a hundred and sixty acres of land at a pound an acre, it is not cleared it is all trees like a wood only the trees are not quite so close together it is beautiful land a beautiful black soil and some of it is sharp gravel soil the black soil is like an onion bed it is beautiful the stones found above the land are exactly like red and white marble for fireplaces only small about the size of the flutes up Sharps Hill it is not all fenced in yet as John has been busy building the cottage and clearing a piece about 6 acres for them to grow some wheat for the house so as not to have to buy all while they are clearing some more of the ground and fencing the remainder in. The three younger children are such good children to work Clement and Edwin keep the cows and mind the cockatoos and parrots do not come on the wheat, the cockatoos are very destructive to the crops here they are as bad as the crows in England. They have 20 cows and calves and three horses, one pig and four goats that is all the stock at present, you know my Mother is obliged to "cut her coat according to her cloth" they will I hope be able to get more by and by John has had to work very hard since they have bought the land he has built the cottage himself he had no one at all to help him excepting James, Thomas and a young lad to help to do the ploughing but now the crop is in they have no one at all excepting Susan, Clement and Edwin, the cottage is small but beautifully

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made one would scarcely believe that John could have been so clever he has done a good part of the fencing and the stock yards too, there is only the house, the kitchen the dairy and 1 bed room at present.

They are so anxious to get it cleared a little round the house for fear of the bush fires as the heat here is so great in summer that the grass takes fire and it sometimes was for forty or fifty miles becoming trees horses and cattle as when it once begins all attempts to escape are in vain the fire last summer buried many Mothers and children and all the cattle on the stations where the fires raged. I myself saw to gentlemen that the heat of the sun as they were coming down the bush set fire to their coats they had on their backs so from that I leave you to guess how powerful the sun is here, the fire last summer got over the rivers so you see even water will not stay its rage it is only she whose voice the wind and seas obey that can still its rage.

Our cottage is on the top of a beautiful hill in fact they are all hills in the bush and some so tremendous steep we have five or six hills on our land all of them steeper than Bull Hill I expect you will scarcely believe it when I tell you the horses do not appear to take the least notice of the steep hills at the bottom of our hill was the river. Truly I wish I could describe it



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to you but I intend to write to dear Lizzy and I will tell her how splendid the bush is as well as I can and then if you wish I am certain she will tell you see it and will you dear Uncle please oblige me by letting her see this as my time is so very precious that I could spare time to tell her anything that I tell

[SHEET 5]

you.

I forgot to tell you my Mother has 4 turkeys, 3 geese, 20 hens. I have now told you all the stock she is possessed of I think they chiefly work bullocks here but Mother cannot agree to them being to the best so she works horses I myself think bullocks are stupid things, cows are very cheap here Mother gave only 10 shillings for one it is a pretty good cow too, the general price I think does not exceed 2£ we have not any sheep at present they are waiting until they have fenced the land all in as sheep would be such troublesome things to loose in the ranges. Wheat is 10 per bushel and potatoes are this is indeed a fine country for a large family like ours any one may do well if they try at all. Hay is £3 per ton. John has been home with Mother since my Father has been out here he left his place at service to get some land for Mother and he does not intend going out to service again as Mother could not afford to pay a man and they could not do all themselves in fact John and Mother claim the land they do not intend to give it up to Father for he appears as thoughtless as ever although he does not seem inclined to drink at all he still thinks about doing things without the money and that is so different to Mother for she will not even buy a pound of tea without she has the money ready to pay for it. I am pleased to say all the children do all they can to help her they all had a few pounds in the Bank but since Mother has bought the land they have took it out to give her as every pound now is as

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precious as two used to be I only wish we could help her more I am sure if any of them could they would, but if they have luck to get their little harvest in I hope they will get on better I am certainly in great hopes that better days are yet in store for them nothing on earth would delight me so much as seeing my dear Mother comfortable situated once again but until she is I can never be quite happy.

John is now at the diggings with James and Thomas and should they be so prosperous as to find a good quantity of Gold which I hope they will we shall be as it were "landed again" We have not had a letter from John yet but are expecting one daily. I read an account that a gentleman I know in Melbourne had the first shovel full found a piece of solid gold the size of a duck's egg whereas there other gents that were with him only found 2 or three grains and Doctor Barker one of the party did not find any at all so it is all chance I have seen some of it in the stone it is found in is exactly the same as the marble on our land in fact it is thought that the Plenty all along abounds in gold it is on the Plenty one of the places they are finding so much they are finding it in many parts of the country it is thought that Victoria abounds in Gold, "now what do you think of our emigrating to this gold region?" Every one has left town to go to the diggings there is not a man or boy to be seen in town even the gents at the Bank are "off to the diggings" such an uproar never was known in the colony before not a ship can leave the bay for as soon as the ships get in port the sailors away to the Gold mines go where you will you cannot

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see a man unless it is an old man like my Father the papers are full of shops to let on account of the owners going to the “diggings” they are exactly the same plight at Sydney they are finding Gold all over the country; it seems to have raised some of the poor faint hearted English cakes now they have heard of Gold being found in quantities in Victoria they can raise courage enough to come out by ship loads but even now I would not persuade anyone to come all I can say is that the farewells of large families are complete soft cakes to remain in England when once they hear of a country that anyone must do work in if I were only a young man would not I go gold digging and even now I feel half inclined to dress in man’s clothes and go I am certain if I could not dig I could rock the cradle only I should be afraid they would know I was not a man as I should not like to part with my curls for that you know Uncle would spoil my beauty would it not and that certainly would be a great pity.

Truly Uncle as you are so rich and now as steam is from England to Australia you could come on a visit to our splendid country I am certain you would not regret and surely dear Aunt could manage the farm for one twelvemonths see how many gents go backwards and forwards I wish you would I fancy I see you coming up the bay. I am certain I could not wait until you reached the wharf if I knew what ship you were coming in, but alas I fear I shall never have that pleasure if I could see you and dear Elizabeth and Nathaniel over here

[SHEET 8]

I could then give up all thought of returning to England. I now find I shall not have soon to tell you more for as the writing is bad I fear you would never read it at all if I crops it so I must tell Elizabeth the other rubbish I can think of and please Uncle forgive me if you cannot read this for I am in such haste I am home for a month’s holiday so if I can get time I have to write to Aunt Sarah.

Mother wished me to say how very much obliged she was for your past kindness to her and it is in her constant prayer that God will reward you as it will never be in her power to repay you and for my own part dear Uncle if I could I would make you possessor of every thing you wish for your path should be showered with all pleasures and sorrow should be far from you Mother joins with me in a thousand loves to you all but above all do not my dear Uncle forgot Aunt Sarah for my dear Mother is continually talking about her I do not know how you will decide the loves for it was Mother’s wish I send so many I suppose she was afraid you would forget some of our dear friends at a distance from you such as Aunt Laubourne and Aunt and Uncle and Cousins Scotts oh I do so wish I could see you all. Do dear Uncle come and see us. If you would promise to come I would go and dig some dig some gold for you if I lost every thing else, I see from the English papers that you have had a great uproar caused by the Exhibition in London I saw the picture of the Crystal Palace in the Illustrated London News it must have been a splendid sight did you see it Uncle? Do Uncle please write to me I must now bid adieu with all our united loves to Yourself, dear Aunt and all hoping you are all well and believe we ever.

Your loving and affectionate niece. R.S. Greaves-



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