

99

Huxley Papers 4:127

June 25 1876

My dear Foster

These awful plates – you will curse them or me by your Gods.

But they really won't do – just look at them after waiting so long we must produce something decent and I've nothing for it but to make the drawings all over again when I come back from abroad and stand over somebody's shoulder while they are being done.

I have not telegraphed to [Collings] as he asks but leave it to you to tell him what to do.

I do not see that affairs are much marked by the alterations of the Bill in the Lords.

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

100

Huxley Papers 4:129

4 Melville St, Edin.

June 29 1876

My dear Foster

I do not see what else you could have done than was done about the plates with the flow of curses loud & deep before you. So I give you my blessing & absolution.

I am very glad to hear your report of Harry.¹ Thanks for Mrs Foster's & your kind care of him. I wish you would look at him with a medical eye & tell me what I ought to do with him. I think he has a good constitution but an excitable brain. As a baby of three or four he had an imagination which knew no bounds between fiction & fact and by injudicious treatment he might have been converted into a liar of the first magnitude – He is wonderfully affectionate & sensitive and has all the faculties which lead people to love & spoil a boy – Women will play the devil with him & he with them as he gets older if he doesn't alter.

The remedy for all this would be hard occupation but as soon as we set him to that his brain becomes excited & he begins gnashing his teeth at night and having fearful visions. Ought I to send him to school in the country?

1876

I am a good deal of your opinion about Cardwell but he is not under Hutton's thumb. Only just a cold blooded cautious Mr Facing-both ways – one of your d-d “moderate men” who are neither for God, nor for the enemies of God & should be in the hell in which Old Dante put 'em.

Kindest regards to Domina

Ever Yours

T. H. H.

¹ Huxley's younger son, Henry (1865–1946).

101

Huxley Papers 4:131

4 Melville Street. Edinb.

July 4 1876

My dear Foster

I would send back my 25 copies to have the plates stitched in if I could get at 'em – But they are at South Kensington – and unless Parker can get at them I am at a loss what to do.

However, I shall be up for Council of the R.S on Saturday 14th – but then I certainly shall not be able to get to S.K. so what is the use of that. It must be till I come back from Yankee land – If you want to say anything to me Saturday 15th is positively my last afternoon within your reach till October.

I read the somewhat dilute document you sent to me & approved of it on the whole, but did not sign as I do not think it is proper for ex-commissioners to meddle while the Government measure is pending. I wrote to that effect to Pye Smith when I returned the document.

But it seems there is not the least chance of the bill getting through the Commons this Session, and the row will hang over till 1877. So much the worse.

I am very much obliged for your opinion about Harry. And when we come back I must try to find the right man in the right place for him. But he is a peculiar boy & it will not be easy.

1876

I suppose I shall hear about Jodrell Fund at the Council. I will let you know if anything is done.¹

Ever yours very kindly

T. H. Huxley

Thank Mrs Foster with very best regards for the motherly care she is bestowing on my laddie.

¹ See letter 95.

102

Huxley Papers 4:208

Shelford

July 13 [1876?]¹

My dear Huxley

1. The future of Dew's shop² depends a. on Dew himself.
b. on the shop apart from Dew.

a. I believe that Dew, even if no one joined him would stick to it. When he first began I was afraid he would very soon get tired of it & throw it over – I see no sign of this – on the contrary he appears to take a more & more fixed & vigorous interest in it – and I think that if such a man as Horace Darwin joined him, the thing might, as far as he is concerned, be most confidently looked forward to as a permanency.

b. If Dew sticks to it, the affair seems sure to be a success – and may be a very decided success. In any future of this country one may I imagine, safely count on fair prospects for philosophical apparatus. Unless we go absolutely to the dogs we must hold our own & indeed be prominent in learning & teaching. If so, apparatus will always be a good trade. And if so Dew's shop will do well, they have large capital – have already got, & will continue to get the best tools, & the best workmen in the country or indeed in the world – the things they turn out are exceedingly good – & they are already getting a good name. Dew's business capacities are quite exceptional – & he is is [*sic*] clearly now in his element. They are sending goods to America & Australia – & will I fancy soon make an inroad on the continent – so that, you see, one must not count on a clientele in England only. Of course the sale of philosophical apparatus is limited – but it is steady and increasing – & I see every reason that it would easily support another partner – perhaps even more. Dew only wants interest for his capital.

Fulcher³ is a working man only – can only take a corresponding share of profits. I mean he would of course take less than a trained and educated man like Darwin – I don't of course know the exact profits at present – but I feel confident that a good man joining might soon, in one or two years or so, derive a respectable & safe income from it – supposing that trade generally does not get worse.

2. I have difficulty in saying anything about Horace Darwin I know so little about him.⁴ He seems like his brother Frank to lack energy & decision – but he seems like Frank also, thoughtful & intellectually active. Of course if he joined Dew – he would be the theoretical and scientific arm of the place – I don't know enough about either him or engineering to say how he would do. I know Dew has a high opinion of him – & reports good opinions of him as held by other engineers – & if he is really an ingenious fertile man in this respect, the shortcomings I fancy I see would not matter much. Dew has all the energy & decision needed for the business part of the affair, if Darwin can keep up the scientific part.

Lastly Dew is very fond of Horace – & I have no doubt about the two going well together in harness.

There that is about all I can say I think. If Horace were to propose to Miss Mercy in a year or two – & she a few years older, I think, I should give them my blessing as far as the shop is concerned – especially if as I suppose Horace has in addition some little means of his own. Considering the general prospects of engineering – apparatus seems the best look out. Mum's the word – though the unbridled mind has a tendency to construct hypotheses to explain what this is all about!!

I hope the ceremony went off well & that the happy pair report well.⁵

Ever thine

M. Foster

P.S.

To get more exact data to go upon – I could, without letting cats out of bags, ask Dew to explain to me the exact financial condition & prospects, so that you might compare it with known & older establishments such as Elliott Bros.

¹ Although Dawson dates this letter to “1876?”, it is likely to be later than this, possibly 1879.

² This was the concern that became the Cambridge Scientific Instrument Company. See M. J. G. Cattermole and A. F. Wolfe, *Horace Darwin's shop*, Bristol, Hilger, 1987.

³ Robert Fulcher, a mechanic, was trained as an instrument maker by James Stuart, professor of mechanism at Cambridge, and in 1879 set up a workshop with Dew-Smith in Cambridge. See Cattermole and Wolfe, *Horace Darwin's shop*, pp. 12–24.

⁴ Horace Darwin (1851–1928), civil engineer and manufacturer of scientific instruments, ninth child of Charles Darwin.

⁵ If this letter dates to 1879 this probably refers to the wedding of Huxley's daughter Marian (1859–1887) and the artist John Collier (1850–1934), which took place on 30 June.

103

Huxley Papers 4:133

S.K.

Oct 12 1876

My dear Foster

A young Edinburgh man – Geddes by name – who has been attending my lectures & working here ever since last year is thinking of going to Cambridge if he has a chance of sitting a scholarship anywhere. What had he better do? He is a sharp fellow wants to devote himself to a scientific career and I am interested in him.¹

We have had a first rate tour in America – you must come & hear the whole story of it which is too long to tell by pen. Wife younger by ten years than when she went.

I got the mulligrubs coming back but I am all right again now.

With best regards to Mrs Foster who is well I hope.

Ever Yours

T. H. Huxley

¹ Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) went to Cambridge but returned to Scotland to become professor of botany in Dundee. He became increasingly interested in civics and town planning.

104

Huxley Papers 4:216

Shelford

Jan. 3. 81

Reverend Sir

I meant to have given you the enclosed before.

I sent off the tests to Donnelly yesterday & will send you draft report in a day or two.
NP 44.4 p.c.

1st Class 14.4 p.c.

Total number 629

The papers were exceedingly long – & if the Depart. like to give me an extra douceur – they are quite at liberty to do so as far as I am concerned!!

They didn't send the formula for the bill – perhaps you won't mind filling it up if Donnelly gives it you – or telling him he can send it as soon as he likes!

1882

As to R.S. of course if things turn out & Flower¹ won't stand, I will see if I can conscientiously follow your bidding.²

Ever thine

M. F.

¹ Sir William Henry Flower (1831–1899), zoologist and Hunterian Professor of Comparative Anatomy, Royal College of Surgeons.

² Foster succeeded Huxley as biological secretary of the Royal Society in 1881.

105

ALS H260

4 Marlborough Place

Abbey Road, N.W.

July 24 1882

My dear Foster

I am quite overwhelmed by the disastrous news about Balfour. The last thing I said to the poor dear fellow was to beg him to run no risks this time and he laughingly assured me he would not.¹

I was as fond of him as if he had been a son or a younger brother – and for his interests & views the loss is wholly irreplaceable.

For you it must be worse than for every one outside his family on all grounds public & private.

I am haunted by the thing & it is a good thing for me that I have to go to the Tyne County on fishery business tomorrow.²

Take care of yourself my dear fellow, I am beginning to have a horror of being left alone – like a dry old stick not worth burning or blowing down.

My wife sends her kind love & will write to Mrs Foster – she is in great trouble about it.

Ever

Yours affectionately

T H Huxley

¹ Balfour had fallen to his death in a climbing accident in the Alps.

² Huxley had been appointed to an inspectorship of fisheries in 1881.

Huxley Papers 4: 138

Feb 25 1883

My dear Foster

Monday is 27th & not 28th – but if you mean Monday – I will be at Athenaeum at 4 p.m. or as near thereafter as I can. There's a meeting of the Executive Committee at the College of Physicians at 5 – which I should like to attend.

I have had a letter from Sladen telling me of Miss Munn's application¹ but also saying that Cunningham² who is working already wants to go on. I do not think it would do to turn him out for Miss Munn & I have told Sladen so.

The Egyptian Exploration Society is wholly archaeological³ – at least from the cut of it I have no doubt it is so – & they want all the money to find out the pawn brokers' shops which Israel kept in Pithom & Rameses & then walked off with the pledges.

That is the real reason why Pharaoh & his host pursued them; & then Moses & Aaron bribed the post boys to take out the lynch-pins.

That is the real story of the Exodus – as detailed in a recently discovered papyrus which neither Brugsch nor Maspero⁴ have as yet got hold of.



T. H. H.

¹ Emily Munn, Huxley's American lab worker.

² Possibly Joseph Thomas Cunningham, see letter 315, note 2.

³ Founded in 1882, the Egyptian Exploration Fund (later the Egyptian Exploration Society) was established to survey and excavate archaeological sites in Egypt and Sudan and publish the results.

⁴ The French Egyptologist Gaston Maspero (1846–1916) and his assistant Emile Brugsch.

ALS H295

4 Marlborough Place
Abbey Road, N.W.
March 4 1883

My dear Foster

I see it is just thirteen years, since, on the occasion of giving away the prizes to the medical students of University College, I advocated the abolition of Botany, Zoology & Materia Medica (in the sense of pharmacy) in the medical curriculum.¹ I have been advocating the exision of these superfluties (especially of the pill & plaster buisness) and the replacement of them by the essentials of a) Pathology & b) Therapeutics (= Pharmacology) ever since. Indeed the last part of my address to the medical congress deals with this theme.

The “mills of God grind slow” but I am glad to hear that the Cambridge machinery is at last in motion – & I hope that it will “grind small” while it is about the operation.

Now over to your questions. The elimination of Botany & Zoology from the list of medical studies – did not arise from any doubt in my mind as to the value of a knowledge of the principles of Biological Science to those who like medical students, are concerned with that which, after all, is applied Biology. But I proposed that they should get that knowledge along with the other preliminary studies e.g. Physics & Chemistry.

Thus the proposals Nos. 1 & 2 of the printed document you have sent me are altogether to my mind; and I think that, if they are carried, Cambridge will have done a great deal for the reform of medical studies.

Whether the elementary Biology as it is defined in No. 2 is enough or not depends a good deal upon the manner in which it is taught.

There is ample material in the course, for the illustration of every great principle of morphology & physiology, if the teacher understands his business. But I think it would be very desirable to add the Dog or the Rabbit.

Experience has convinced me that learning anatomical & histological technique & Mammalian Anatomy & Physiology, in the rough, so to speak, on a dog or a rabbit – is the best of all preparations for the study of human anatomy & physiology.

I am sometimes astonished to find how much a fairly industrious & intelligent student will pick up in three months from a proper course of elementary biology.

But the sort of knowledge of your dog which is wanted is morphology & not detailed anatomy – The student should know his dog in plan & section – should understand relation of skull to spinal column, fore limb to hind limb & so on – to the [certain] neglect of the *ophyses* and even of the facets of the mesocuneiforma. And the physiology should be of the same sort – Even Dr Allchin I suppose, will allow that certain broad facts, such as that the blood does not go down one leg & up the other – are to be apprehended, without a specially “physiological mind” – and might exercise the brain of an infant without fear of cerebral congestion.

You know more about the nature of the undergraduate than I do – and if you can get him to attend to his dog without examination, so much the better. I was once a member of a commission in Ireland, which had the power of swearing witnesses. However, we determined not to swear them & the consequence was they told the truth in the most surprising way. Perhaps the harassed Undergraduate might be so overjoyed by the prospect of no examination that he would work with special zest –

Seriously, for the average man, the love of anatomy may be safely said to be an acquired taste, like that for truth or olives, and I think it would be a great help for any student to be interested in his anatomy by getting to look at it from a morphological point of view.

I think I have now answered all your questions and as I am afraid I have been rather discursive here & there I will put briefly what I should like to see done.

1. Send the drug-business into outer darkness.
2. Teach the elements of pathology & pharmacology as thoroughly & carefully as you do those of anatomy & physiology.
3. Abolish systematic zoology & botany.
4. Teach the principles of Animal & Vegetable morphology & physiology – (adding rabbit or dog to list of subjects for practical work) & confine the first MB exams to Elementary Biology with Physics & Chemistry.

Ever yours very kindly

T. H. Huxley

¹ 'On medical education' (1870), *Collected essays*, vol. 3, pp. 303–322.

108

ALS H262

4 Marlborough Place
Abbey Road, N.W.
May 13 [1883]

My dear Foster

Let us say Thursday 17th at 4.15 for the meeting.

I am dog tired with yesterday's function. Had to be at the Exhibition in full fig at 10 AM & did not get home from the Fishmongers' Dinner till 1.20 this morning.¹

1883

Will you tell me what all this has to do with my business in life and why the last fragments of a mis-spent life that are left to me are to be frittered away in all this drivel?

Yours savagely

T. H. H.

¹ The International Fisheries Exhibition opened in South Kensington on May 12. That evening, a banquet to celebrate the opening of the exhibition was given by the Fishmongers' Company at their hall near London Bridge.

109

ALS H263

Secretary of State Home Department

June 27 1883

My dear Foster

I called on Grosvenor Place at ten o'clock this morning & saw Cumberbatch¹ and his colleagues. From what they told me of the case I had no doubt it was hopeless. Diarrhoea & haemorrhage continued – temperature over 103° without tenable remission. I called again just now to find that the poor fellow had died about an hour after I left.²

It is very grievous in all ways. Only the other day he & I were talking of the almost miraculous way in which the X club had held together without a break for some 18 years & little did either of us suspect that he would be the first to go.³

A heavy responsibility falls on you in the Royal Society. It strikes me you will have to call another meeting of the council before the recess for the consideration of the question of the Presidency. It is hateful to talk of these things but I want you to form some notion of what had best be done as you come up tomorrow.

Stokes is a possibility but none of the other officers I think.

Ever

Thine

T. H. H.

¹ Probably Lawrence Trent Cumberbatch, physician practising at Belgrave Square.

² The mathematician William Spottiswoode (1825–1883), then president of the Royal Society and member of the X-Club, had died of typhoid.

³ The X-Club, established by Huxley in 1864, was an informal but influential group of scientists who dined together each month. Of the nine members of the “club”, five became presidents of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and three of the Royal Society itself. See Roy MacLeod, ‘The X-Club: a social network of science in late-Victorian England’, *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 1970, **24** (2): 305–322.

110

ALS H264

Science and Art Department
South Kensington
June 29 1883

My dear Foster

This morning I got a letter from G. Spottiswoode withdrawing his letter of yesterday. The Dukes & political people appear to have come out so strongly in favour of the proposal for the Abbey that it is to go on. In my judgement this is not exactly the way men of science ought to get into Westminster Abbey if they go there at all. But of course I am not going to say or do anything more – except obey the wishes of the family.¹

Ever yours very kindly
T. H. Huxley

¹ A long list of distinguished people signed the memorial to the Dean of Westminster asking for Spottiswoode to be buried in Westminster Abbey; the burial took place there on 5 July 1883.

111

ALS H265

Science and Art Department
South Kensington
July 2 1883

My dear Foster

Report read – addition made about Biology – signed & sent in.

On receipt of your telegram I wrote to Geo. Spottiswoode asking him to add your signature if not too late.

I hear there was a carping article in the “Observer” yesterday. No notice of the time of the funeral has reached me yet.

Am I to appear at the Council meeting on Thursday or not?

Several people have been to me in great alarm lest Siemens¹ should be brought in by a small vote – and I pacified them by telling them in confidence, what was to happen.

The worst of it is that I see myself gravitating towards the Presidency en permanence that is to say for the ordinary period. And that is what I by no means desired.

1883

Abney² has been at me (as a sort of deputation he told me, from a lot of the younger men) to stand.

However I suppose there is no need to come to any decision yet.³

Ever yours very kindly

T. H. Huxley

¹ Sir Charles William Siemens (1823–1883), electrical engineer and metallurgist.

² William de Wiveleslie Abney (1843–1920), pioneer of spectro-photography.

³ In order that the president of the Royal Society be chosen for his eminence in science and not on the basis of social standing or wealth, Huxley agreed to be nominated to fill the vacancy but only until the Society elections at the general meeting in November. However, he was at this stage also being urged to stand for the usual five-year period. See Marie Boas Hall, *All scientists now: the Royal Society in the nineteenth century*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 118–119.

112

ALS H266

Science and Art Department

South Kensington

July 18 1883

My dear Foster

I believe that the statutes B Price¹ refers to expressly forbid the election of the circumcised!

So that a certain great mathematician who is unable to produce foreskin on demand, would be out of the running.

It is very unlucky for me that I signed the memorial requesting the Council of University College to re-consider the decision about Mrs Besant & Miss Bradlaugh when I was quite innocent of any possibility of holding the P.R.S.²

I must go to the meeting of members today & define my position in the matter with some care, under the circumstances.

Mrs Besant was a student in my Teacher's class here last year & a very well conducted lady like person; but I have never been able to get hold of the "Fruits of Philosophy", & do not know to what doctrine she has committed herself.

They seem to have excluded Miss Bradlaugh – simply on the noscitur a sociis³ principle.

1883

It will need all the dexterity I possess to stand up for the principle of religious & philosophical freedom, without giving other people a hold for saying that I have identified myself with Bradlaugh – a man for whom I entertain personally, politically & philosophically a sincere dislike & contempt.

Pray for me

Ever Yours

T. H. H.

¹ Bartholomew Price (1818–1898), Sedleian Professor of Natural Philosophy at Oxford.

² Annie Besant (1847–1933) and the atheist Charles Bradlaugh (1833–1891) had served a six-month jail sentence for reprinting an old birth-control pamphlet *Fruits of philosophy*. Besant and Bradlaugh's daughter had subsequently been excluded from botany classes at University College. For Besant and Bradlaugh, see Roger Manvell, *The trial of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh*, London, Elek, Pemberton, 1976.

³ Literally “a thing is known by its associates”.

113

ALS H267

4 Marlborough Place

Abbey Road, N.W.

Aug 1 1883

My dear Foster

I came back only last night from Paris where I sped on Friday night in a horrid state of alarm from a cursed blundering telegram which led me to believe that Leonard¹ (you know he got his first class to our great joy) who had left for the Continent on Saturday was ill or had had an accident.

The whole affair is an extraordinary imbroglio but it turned out that Fred Waller² had fallen ill in Switzerland & telegraphed to be met at Charing Cross – giving a hotel in Paris as an alternative place where he would be found if too ill to come on & they left out the Charing X in the telegram.

So by the time I got to Paris I found a telegram from home that he was safe here. He has had some queer fever or other but is getting better now.

Judging by my scrawl which is worse than usual I should say the anxiety had left its mark but I am none the worse otherwise.

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

¹ Huxley's second son Leonard (1860–1933).

² Huxley's son-in-law, married to his eldest daughter Jessie.

114

ALS H268

4 Marlborough Place
St John's Wood
N.W.
Aug 8 1883

My dear Foster

Just off on fishery business – with a good deal of holiday in it – to South Wales & Devon – I am not sure that I shall be back by Thursday but I will write to you when I know.

Waller is better & going across today. The blunder of the telegram was not his – but that of the telegrapher who in addition swindled him out of a franc for adding his name – which he did not add after all!

I am none the worse.

Don't bother your head about the balance now or hereafter. To tell you the truth I do so little on the Examiner business that I am getting ashamed of taking even the retaining fee and you will do me a favour if you will ease my conscience.

Ever yours
T. H. H.

The wife & such of her chicks as are not fled go to Highcroft House, Milford, Godalming on Thursday.

I was at R.S. yesterday. There is nothing doing.

115

ALS H269

Highcroft
Milford
Godalming
Aug. 16 1883

My dear Foster

I was only a couple of days on tour when I returned from the West Country – and as there seemed to be no R.S. business in hand I did not bother you to come up.

But if you want a confabulation at any time I am at your service.

Hooker wrote me that somebody who has a personal grant from Gov. Fund can't get the money from the Treasury – I have asked him to let me have particulars that I may write to Lingen.¹ I suppose the estimates are not passed yet but it is ridiculous to punish grantees for the waste of time in the House of Commons. Will you try & find out if there are any more cases of the kind so that we may bring the matter up at the meeting of the Govt. grant Council?

I have just been put on Senate of University of London. I tried hard to get Lord Granville to let me off – in fact I told him I could not attend the meetings except now & then but there was no escape. I must have a talk with you about what is to be done there.²

Then there is the Fishery Commission that I also strongly objected to but had to cave in so far as I agreed to attend some meetings in the latter half of September.

This is a lovely country & I have been reading novels & walking about for the last four days. I must be all right mind & limb for I walked over twenty miles the day before yesterday & except a blister on one heel was none the worse.

Ever yours
T. H. H.

¹Ralph Robert Wheeler Lingen, first Baron Lingen (1819–1905), permanent secretary of the Treasury.

²Granville George Leveson-Gower, second Earl Granville (1815–1891), was chancellor of the University of London.

116

ALS H270

Highcroft House
Milford
Godalming
Aug 27 1883

My dear Foster

I do not see anything to add or alter to what you have said about Balfour – except to get rid of that terrible word “urinogenital” which he invented – and I believe I once adopted out of mere sympathy I suppose.¹

Darwin is on my mind and I will see what can be done here by & by. Up to the present I have been filing away at Rede Lecture² – I believe that getting things into shape takes me more & more trouble as I get older – whether it is loss of faculty or increase of fastidiousness I can't say – but at any rate it costs me more time & trouble to get things finished – and when they are done I should prefer burning to publishing them.

Haven't you any suggestions to offer for Anniversary address? I think the Secretaries ought to draw it up, like a Queen's speech.

1883

Mind we have a talk some day about University of London. I suppose you want an English Sorbonne. I have thought of it at times but the Philistines are strong.

Weather jolly but altogether too hot for any thing but lying in the grass “under the tegmination of the patulous fage”³ as the poet observes.

Ever yours very kindly

T. H. Huxley

¹ Foster was writing the obituary notice of Balfour for the Royal Society. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*, 1883, **35**: xx–xxvii.

² Huxley was writing the obituary notice of Darwin although this was not published until 1888. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*, 1888, **44**: i–xxv. He had delivered the Rede Lecture ‘On animal forms’ at Cambridge on June 12, an abstract of which was published subsequently in *Nature*, June 21 1883, 28: 187–189. *Scientific memoirs*, vol. 5, pp. 69–79.

³ Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Autocrat of the breakfast-table*, chapter 10. Holmes wrote “termination” not “tegmation”.

117

ALS H271

Highcroft House
Milford
Gming [Godalming]
Sep 12. 1883

My dear Foster

Many thanks for the notes for address which will come in very usefully.

We shall leave thus on Friday as my wife has some fal-lals to look after before we start for the north on Monday.

The worst of it is that it is not at all certain that the Commission will meet & do any work – However I am pledged to go and I daresay that Brechin Castle is a very pleasant place to stay in.

If the Commission does not sit I shall get back to London as soon as possible – But for the present the only address I can give you for the next ten or twelve days is Brechin Castle, Brechin, N.B.

Ever yours T. H. Huxley

Have been very lazy lately which means that I have done a great many things that I need not have done & have left undone those which I ought to have done.

Nowadays that seems to me to be the real definition of a holiday.

118

ALS H272

Brechin Castle

Brechin

N.B.

Sep. 19 1883

My dear Foster

We got here yesterday. The Commission doesn't meet till next week – so, like the historical donkey of Jeshurun¹ I have nothing to do but wax fat and kick in this excellent pasture.

At odd times lately my mind has been a good deal exercised about the Royal Society. I am quite willing to go on in the chair if the Council & the Society wish it. But it is quite possible that the Council who chose me when the choice was limited to their own body – might be disposed to select some one else when the range of choice is extended to the whole body of the Society – and I am very anxious that the Council should be made to understand, when the question comes forward for discussion after the recess, that the fact of present tenancy constitutes no claim in my eyes.

The difficulty is, how is this to be done? I cannot ask the Council to do as they please, without reference to me, because I am bound to assume that that is what they will do – and it would be an impertinence to assume the contrary.

On the other hand, I should at once decline to be put in nomination again, if it could be said that by doing so I had practically forced myself either upon the Council or upon the Society.

Heaven be praised, I have not many enemies, but the two or three with whom I have to reckon don't stick at trifles – and I should not like by any inadvertence to give them a handle.

I have had some thought of writing a letter to Evans,² such as he could read to the Council at the first meeting in October, at which I need not be present.

The subject could then be freely discussed, without any voting or resolution on the minutes and the officers could let me know whether in their judgement it is expedient I should be nominated or not.

In the last case I should withdraw on the ground of my other occupations – which, in fact, is a very real obstacle – and one which looms large in my fits of blue-devils, which have been more frequent of late than they should be in holiday time.

Now, will you turn all this over in your mind – perhaps you might talk it over with Stokes.

Of course I am very sensible of the honour of being P.R.S. but I should be much more sensible of the dishonour of being in that place by a fluke or in any other way than by the free choice of the Council & Society.

1883

In fact I am inclined to think that I am morbidly sensitive on the last point, and so instead of acting on my own impulse as I have been tempted to do – I submit myself to your worship's wisdom.

I am not sure that I should not have been wiser if I had stuck to my original intention of holding office only till S. Andrew's Day.³

Ever yours very kindly

T. H. Huxley

¹ "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked", Deuteronomy 32: 15.

² Sir John Evans (1823–1908), archaeologist, then treasurer of the Royal Society.

³ The Society's general elections were held on St Andrew's Day, 30 November.

119

Huxley Papers 4:218

Shelford

Sept 22 1883

Dear Huxley

That you are waxing fat is very joyous news – as to your kicking, that is a somewhat old matter & I doubt its dependence on your CH₂ storage.

I had half a mind to come up & talk to you about the P.R.S. – but my natural indolence conquered – and I did not. I had a talk about a week or so ago with Gabriel¹ –

He said that undoubtedly you would be acceptable and indeed the desired of the great body of the fellows but that "one or two of the older fellows" would not be so enthusiastic – he had on previous occasions referred to the views of these "one or two older fellows." I insisted that the interests of science and of the Society really narrowed us to two men – yourself & himself – & continued that I understood he did not wish for it – & indeed had definitely refused to allow himself to be nominated – To my surprise he harked back from his definite refusal – & for some time we discussed the pros & cons of his being P.R.S. – I told him that you had said to me that you would on no account allow yourself to be nominated if he desired the post, and urged him to make up his mind & decide. I shall see him in a few days – & I hope then to get a decision from him.

I think the matter stands thus – The great body of fellows – & all the younger & working ones, want you & will howl if you are not appointed – "one or two older fellows" don't want you – & I fancy they have got at Gabriel & are egging him on to allow himself to be nominated – I don't think he will consent – If he does I think that he must go in.

If he does not, I think in justice to the Society and to science, you must be willing, & Mrs Huxley must suffer you, to take up the burden.

I believe the Council would be unanimous, but I do not think that you ought to insist on them being unanimous. Some one or two of them may be played upon by the “one or two” older fellows – and to allow them to mar the business would hardly be right.

Nor do I think it advisable for you to write the proposed letter – It will be the duty of the officers to make it clear that we start fair unprejudiced by any result of the bye election – and I think it will come best if, supposing you to be absent, we, (I for example) just state the views given in your letter to me, if I find it necessary.

My own view is that if Stokes does not stand it will be taken for granted that you must be President – there will not be any question about it – because if Stokes won’t stand – the “one or two older fellows” have no other man. The only man I can conceive of is Paget² – & he won’t do at all. I am very sorry both for you & Mrs Huxley – but I think that if the feeling of Council is for you you ought to take it – whether that feeling be absolutely unanimous or not – The right people know you don’t hanker after it – & also know you are the right man – & you must consider them as well as your own feelings.

If you were to fall away we should be in Queer Street – Lubbock is not quite the man – & between ourselves Evans I fancy, can’t quite give up hankering after it.

There I hope I have made my actions clear to you – If Stokes stands, I shall be in despair – but otherwise there is nothing for it but for you to take it.

Do a little shooting or fishing.

Ever thine

M. F.

About Philip Carpenter’s paper – the other referee says Phil Trans if you agree send a line to me or Stokes – the printers want copy.³

¹ G. G. Stokes was called by his middle name “Gabriel” on account of his “angelic Christian conservatism”, see Desmond, *Huxley*, p. 531.

² The surgeon, Sir James Paget (1814–1899).

³ Philip Herbert Carpenter (1852–1891), zoologist and palaeontologist, ‘On a new crinoid from the southern sea’, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 1883, **174**: 919–933.

120

ALS H273

Brechin Castle
 Brechin
 N.B.
 Sep. 24 1883

My dear Foster

I shall be off to Aberdeen tomorrow & not be back here till the day after, so I had better reply to your letter at once.

What you tell me about Stokes, surprises me very much, as I should never have committed myself to standing for re-election if you & Evans had not assured me that he would not accept the office. And that you & he were quite right in so doing is obvious to me from Stokes' tacit assent to what Evans said in his speech to the Council at the time of the election.

If after this, Stokes stands, I think he treats me very badly; and I should not feel the slightest hesitation about my present right to fight the question out with him if I were so disposed.

But I am not so disposed. The contest would be bad for the society, and idiotic, on my part, seeing that, all along, I have been doubtful of the wisdom of accepting the post under any circumstances – and that I have very often repented of my provisional acceptance already.

At the same time, I don't think it would be fair to me or to those who would be my supporters (if it came to a contest) that I should give way, or even appear to give way, to opposition which I had a right to think would not exist. It would be best that I should at once signify my intention of not standing – on the grounds of re-consideration of my various burdens & of my health during the vacation – so unless very strong reasons to the contrary make their appearance in the course of the present week, I shall write to Evans to that effect next Sunday (we return on Saturday).

I suppose it is proper to address any official letter on such a subject to him as Treasurer – and I shall take the earliest opportunity of making known what I have done publicly.

It really would be an infinite relief to me to be out of the whole business – I have never competed for anything in the way of honour in my life. And I cannot allow myself to be even thought of as in such a position now – where with all respect for the honour & glory, they do not appear to me to be in any way equivalent to the burden – and I am not at all sure that I may not be able to serve the right cause outside the Chair rather than in it.

I have been reading this screed over to my wife & she being a “fair woman” in more senses than one – agrees.

On the one side she would like me to be free of the burden; on the other side, she would like me to bear it if I can be of real use without too much risk.

1883

What she would not like any more than I, is that I should be mixed up with any contest for such a thing.

The notion makes us both creep – and you are to be the guardian angel to keep my old age out of any such dirt.

Ever yours very kindly

T. H. Huxley

P.S. I agree about P. H. Carpenter paper (with same questions of conscience).¹

¹ See previous letter.

121

Huxley Papers 4:220

Shelford

Cambs

Sep 26 [1883]

Reverend Sir

Please – please – don't be in a hurry – I thought I ought to tell you about Stokes, because I wished you to know every turn – but perhaps it would have saved you bother if I had waited till Stokes had recovered himself.

I don't think he will stand – but please don't write any letters till you have heard again from or seen me. I will see Stokes & run him in a corner – & will come up on Monday & talk the matter over with you – & if necessary you shall write your letter on Tuesday – but I don't want you to throw the thing up on what may be after all a false alarm.

Mrs Huxley is a brick – her position & mine are the same – for your own sake I wish you not be Pres – but for every other reason it seems desirable – above all things I don't want you to get into a contest and I think that by Monday, one's way will be clear before us. So please don't waste any time yet in cogitating this terrible letter to Evans. Sufficient for day week is the evil thereof – take a holiday till next.

Ever thine

M. Foster

122

Huxley Papers 4:226

[Telegram]

Oct 1 83

From:
Foster
Pancras

To:
Prof Huxley
4 Marlbro Place NW

Got "them both this afternoon"¹ all three very strongly of opinion that you should keep on will write.

¹ Alexander William Williamson (1824–1904), chemist and foreign secretary of the Royal Society, and Sir John Evans. See following letter.

123

Huxley Papers 4:222

Shelford
Oct 2 1883

Dear Huxley

I caught Williamson, – and found him very decided that you ought to go on – his reasons being

That you were much more fitted in every way than Stokes, and that matters had gone now too far – that everybody expected and wished you to be permanent President – and that your withdrawal, whatever reasons you might give, would create trouble.

Leaving Williamson, I luckily caught Evans at the Club – & arranged a meeting of the three in the afternoon – Evans also agreed with Williamson – it was therefore useless for me to attempt to work out your deliverance from the Bonds. I was commissioned to make known to you that the officers are willing to undertake the responsibility of advising you not to write the letter you propose but to let things go on as they were going on.

I saw Stokes this morning and told him exactly what had taken place that you had left the decision as to whether you should withdraw at once or not to the judgement of the three officers – and that we had advised you not to withdraw. I naturally said as little as was necessary & withdrew as rapidly as possible from a not wholly pleasant task but Stokes evidently saw clearly what was the bearing of our decisions – and I imagine that if Stokes is left to himself the incident is closed – If anything further happens it will be because influences have been brought to bear.

The communication of the fact of the decision of the three is official – but naturally the form in which I have put it in this letter is more or less private – and so there will be no harm in my saying that I deem my railway & cab fare well spent, in fact that I did a very good day's work. Any how things looked much easier for me on that homeward than on the outward journey.

Ever thine

M. Foster

124

ALS H274

Secretary of State, Home Department

Oct 3 1883

My dear Foster

There was an Irish bricklayer who once bet a hodman he would not carry him up to the top of an exceeding high ladder in his hod. The hodman did it – but Paddy said, “I had great hopes, now, ye'd let me fall just about six rounds from the top.”

I told the story before when I was up for the School board but it is so applicable to the present case that I can't help coming out with it again.

If you, dear good hodman would but have let me fall!

However as the thing is to be it is very pleasant to find Evans & Williamson & you, so hearty in the process of elevation – and in spite of blue devils I will do my best to “do my duty in the state of life I'm called to.”¹

But I believe you never had the advantage of learning the Church Catechism.

I have been tickled at the notion of your interview with Stokes – After the parlour of the male spider you had to bolt as soon as impregnation with an idea was effected – lest you should be devoured.

If there is any good in what is done you certainly deserve the credit of it, for nothing but your letter stopped me from kicking over the traces at once. Do you see how Evolution is getting made into a bolus and oiled outside for the ecclesiastical swallow by Doctor Flower & Le Gros Clark² – Before you die you will see a new version of the Athanasian Creed “whosoever will be saved before all things it is necessary that he hold the

1883

Evolutionary Faith. And the Evolutionary Faith is this that there was one cosmic gas out of which an infinite quantity of Persons have been evolved” etc. etc.

Ever thine

Thomas, by the grace of E Faith

P.R.S.

¹ Part of the Anglican Catechism response to “What is thy duty towards thy Neighbour?”

² The surgeon Sir William Henry Flower and the anatomist Frederick Le Gros Clark (1811–1892), had spoken on ‘Recent advances in natural science in their relation to the Christian faith’ at the Church Congress in Reading.

125

ALS H275


4 Marlborough Place

Abbey Road, N.W.

Oct. 15 1883

My dear Foster

I see a reference in the Pall Mall¹ tonight to some document which has been submitted by Koch to the German Government embodying results of recent researches in Egypt on the Cholera.² Do you know anything about this? What is the title? & where is it to be got?

It would form the basis for a stinging  in address.

I have just sent [Fraser] a strong testimonial for Belfast chair & hope he may get it.

I am half inclined to publish my London Hospital address which was repeated verbatim & not sent to me.³ I think it might yet be possible to put a spoke in the wheel of that stupid medical act which was still born last session.⁴

What think you?

Ever yours

T. H. H.

¹ ‘The cholera germ’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 Oct. 1883, issue 5807.

² Koch had been sent to Egypt as leader of the German Cholera Commission.

³ Huxley had delivered the opening address of the 1883–84 session at the London Hospital Medical School (see ‘The state and the medical profession’ (1884), *Collected essays*, vol. 3, pp. 323–346). He is perhaps referring to the article in *The Times*, ‘Professor Huxley at the London Hospital’, Wednesday, Oct. 10, 1883, p. 8, issue 30947, col. B.

⁴ The Medical Act Amendment Bill (see *British Medical Journal*, March 24 1883: 578–584). This proposed the introduction of conjoint examining Boards between universities and corporations such that all students should pass examinations of one of the boards in medicine, surgery and midwifery before admission to the Medical Register. The bill was set aside at the end of the parliamentary session. For medical education in the nineteenth century, see Charles Newman, *The evolution of medical education in the nineteenth century*, London, Oxford University Press, 1957.

126

ALS H276

4 Marlborough Place
Abbey Road, N.W.
Nov. 10 1883

My dear Foster

The inclosed just received from White. He is getting more nonchalant than he used to be in his mode of communication with the officers.

I think the letter will do very well.

I have been trying to get some political & other swells to come to the dinner. – Lord Mayor is coming – thought I would ask him on account of City and Guilds business – Lord Chancellor probably Courtney, M.P., promised, & I made the greatest blunder I ever made in my life by thoughtlessly writing to ask Chamberlain (!!!) – utterly forgetting the row with Tyndall.¹

By the mercy of providence he can't come this year, though I must ask him next (if I am not kicked out for my sins before that) as he is anxious to come.

Science ought to be in league with the radicals.

I sent my address to printers two or three days ago & shall beg you to look over a proof as soon as I get some.

There are a lot of blanks to be filled up which I should like to talk about on Thursday.

Ever yours
T. H. H.

¹ Tyndall had resigned from his position as scientific adviser to Trinity House and the Board of Trade over the decision of Joseph Chamberlain, President of the Board of Trade, to use oil instead of gas to illuminate lighthouses. See Eve and Creasey, *Life and work of John Tyndall*, pp. 229–234.

127

Huxley Papers 4:140

Nov 26 1883

My dear Foster

I could not leave the room when I was at the funeral today¹ to come to you & you did not come to me so I could not give you the draft which was in my pocket & which I inclose. I have as you will see prepared another – but I am not quite sure it is right.

1883

I do not want the wicked to blaspheme over our having changed our minds about certain Institutions.

You had just left the Athenaeum when I got there from the funeral [awfully hungry] at past three o'clock.

I think you have achieved wonders in getting out the opinion of the Committee!

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

¹ The funeral of Sir Charles William Siemens was held in Westminster Abbey.

128

ALS H277

Secretary of State

Home Department

Nov. 28 1883

My dear Foster

Stokes tells me that he has explained to you that he will be about on 30th. He asked me to apply to Routh¹ to propose Thomson's health² – which I have done. If you could incense Routh that a short sharp & decisive speech is what is wanted it would be well.

Jowett³ is unable to come on account of cough which bothers him – Under these circumstances if you are sure that Porter⁴ won't take it amiss & that he really would be glad to escape speaking I will omit the Universities.

There will be a big dinner. I hear more than 100 down already – I wish it were over.

Ever yours kindly,

T. H. Huxley

¹ Edward John Routh (1831–1907), mathematician.

² Sir William Thomson had been awarded the Royal Society's Copley Medal for "(1) his discovery of the law of the universal dissipation of energy; (2) his researches and eminent services in physics, both experimental & mathematical, especially in the theory of electricity and thermodynamics".

³ Rev. Benjamin Jowett (1817–1893), master of Balliol College, Oxford. See also letters 184 and 185.

⁴ Possibly Rev. James Porter (d. 1900), vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge.

129

ALS H278

Secretary of State
Home Department
Dec. 12. 1883

My dear Foster

I have left your letter of this morning behind – no I haven't. But go among the vultures, thou dove, it will be good for you – If Courtney is stiff I can but go & fight him as last resort. I shall be at S.K. tomorrow morning but I think you know all about the business.

I enclose Roy's¹ letter – I am quite prepared to go in for recommending investigation – it will be an excellent opportunity for the G. F. Comm² to commence the initiation of inquiry, which I took great care originally to define as part of its work – though it has seemed a dead letter till now.

Get Roy to prepare a full memorandum on the case & let you know when we can get posted up about it.

Ever yours
T. H. H.

¹ Charles Smart Roy (1854–1897), then professor superintendent of the Brown Animal Sanatory Institution.

² Government Funding Committee.

130

ALS H279

Science and Art Department
South Kensington
July 17 1884

My dear Foster

Packet of proofs received. If I can I will look at them before I go away tomorrow looking after [“potentius”]. If not – they will have to wait till next week. In the mean while just look at the inclosed.

Answer seems to me 1) that practically teachers will take or be given credit for being able to teach the subject in which they have passed at Training College.

1884

- 2) that students having the advantage of good teaching such as they get or are supposed to get in Training Coll. – ought to be able to pass decently in advanced stage.
- 3) that we were ordered by Department to adopt standard we have adopted.

If you agree

Please draw up minutes that we may both sign.

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

131

ALS H280

Highcroft House

Milford

Godalming

Aug. 9. 1884

My dear Foster

I had to go up to town on Friday – and yesterday I went & had all my remaining teeth out – & came down here again with a shrewd suspicion that I was really drunk & incapable however respectable I might look outwardly. At present I can't eat at all & I can't smoke with any comfort. For once I don't mind using italics.

I have gone over Hirsch's letter & your reply – I think copy of Hirsch's letter ought to go to the Treasury and that we should simply summarize its contents leaving Hirsch responsible.

If you could talk over the matter with Stokes – & send the draft you two agree on to Evans – I think that it would save time. It need not come back to me unless any important difference of opinion turns up & that is hardly likely.

I enclose draft and Hirsch's letter also the performance of Stokes drunken slave.

Then I send the two cuts.

Heaven be praised! I had brought down no copy of physiology with me & so could not attend to your proof – Got it yesterday, so I am now at your mercy.¹

But I have gone over the proofs now & send you a deuce of a lot of suggestions.

Just think over additions to smell & taste to bring them into harmony.

The Saints salute you. I am principally occupied in studying the Gospels.

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

¹ Huxley returned to this area of Surrey which he had so enjoyed the previous year and worked on a new edition of *Lessons in elementary physiology*, London, Macmillan, 1885.

132

ALS H281

Highcroft House
 Milford
 Godalming
 Aug. 26 1884

Dearly Beloved

I have been going over the ear chapter this morning & as you will see have suggested some additions – those about the lamina spiralis are certainly necessary – item substitution of trihedral for triangular.

I want also very much to get into heads of students that in sensation it is all modes of motion up to & in sensorium & that the generation of feeling is the specific reaction of a particle of the sensorium when stimulated just as contraction, etc, is the specific reaction of a muscular fibre when stimulated by its nerve – The psychologists make the fools of themselves they do because they have never mastered this elementary fact. But I am not sure whether I have put it well & I wish you would give your mind to it. As for me I have not had much mind to give lately – a fortnight's spoon-meat reduced me to inanity & I am only just picking up again – However, I walked ten miles yesterday afternoon so there is not much the matter.

I will see what I can do with the histology business. I wanted to rewrite it but I am not sure yet whether I shall be able.

Between ourselves I have pretty well made up my mind to clear out of everything next year, R.S. included – I loathe the thought of wasting any more of my life in endless distractions – and so long as I live in London there is no escape for me – I have half a mind to live abroad for six months in the year.

Ever yours
 T. H. H.

I enclose letter from Deutsch lunatic to go before council & be answered by Foreign Secretary.

ALS H282

Highcroft House
 Milford
 Godalming
 Aug. 29 1884

Dearly beloved

I enclose the proofs, having mustered up volition enough to go over them at once. I think the alterations will be great improvements. I see you interpret yourself about the movements of the larynx.

As to the histology, I shall have a shot at it, but if I do not send you MS. in a week's time, go ahead – I am perplexed about the illustrations – but I see nothing for it but to have new ones in all the cases which you have marked. Have you anybody in Cambridge who can draw the things from preparations?

You are like Trochu with your “plan”¹ & I am anxious to learn it – But have you reflected, 1°, that I am getting deafer & deafer & that I cannot hear what is said at the Council table & in the Society's rooms half the time people are speaking? And 2°, that so long as I am President, so long must I be at the beck & call of everything that turns up in relation to the interests of science – So long as I am in the chair, I cannot be a *fainéant* or refuse to do anything & everything incidental to the position.

My notion is to get away for six months, so as to break with the “world, the flesh & the devil” of London – for all which I have conceived a perfect loathing – six months is long enough for anybody to be forgotten twice over by everybody but personal friends.

I am contemplating a winter in Italy but I shall keep on my house for Harry's sake & as a *pied à terre* in London – & in the summer come & look at you at Burlington House as the old soap-boiler used to visit the factory. I shall feel like the man out of whom the legion of devils departed when he looked at the Gambades of the two thousand pigs going at express speed for the waters of Tiberias.²

By the way, did you ever read that preposterous & immoral story carefully? It is one of the best attested of the Miracles – and rests on a far better foundation than the story of the resurrection – you will observe 1) that it is a stupid lie to begin with 2) that Jesus cheats the devils by seeming to agree not to send them out of the country – while he only sends them to the bottom of the sea!! 3) that without asking with your leave or by your leave he destroys some poor Gadarene's 2000 pigs – a feat which would ensure him six months imprisonment with hard labour, in this or any other well ordered country.

1884

When I have retired from the chair (which I must not scandalise) I shall write a lay sermon on the text. It will be impressive.³

My wife sends her love, & says she has her eye on you – she is all for retirement.
Ever yours
T. H. Huxley

I am very sorry to hear of poor Mangles' death – but I suppose there was no other chance.⁴

¹ Louis Jules Trochu (1815–1896), French military leader and politician who developed a “plan” for defending Paris during the siege of 1870–71.

² Mark 5: 1–14.

³ Huxley writes about the Gaderene swine in his exchanges with Gladstone in 1890; see letters 309–311. T. H. Huxley, ‘The keepers of the herds of swine’ (1890), *Collected essays*, vol. 5, pp. 367–392.

⁴ James Henry Mangles (1832–1884), trained in law but was known in the horticultural world. He was elected a fellow of the Linnean Society in 1874.

134

ALS H283

Highcroft House
Milford
Godalming
Sep. 1. 1884

My dear Foster

I send you the inclosed to see what you think of the plan. Nail & hair we will fill in from existing text.

I am doing the parts on Cartilage, muscle & nerve indeed they are nearly done. Bone & tooth will come in from text as special modifications in relation with cartilage & Conn tissue. I am loth to use any new terms but I see no help for it on sundry cases. However, let me know what you think.

You will d—— my scrawl I know but I don't remember ever being taught to write well.

Ever yours
T. H. H.