

Melrose Downes 5354

Portland, Victoria

June 19th 1864

My dear Father

I left Melbourne immediately after the arrival of the English mail & was much disappointed not to receive any letters from home by it. I conclude they have gone on to Sydney and have matters for them to be sent on board here. I think I told you in my last letter that I had some thoughts of coming into this District to practice for a few months. I am now staying with Mr. Francis Neely, one of the largest squatters in the District, and at whose instigation I first thought of settling here. He & his brothers were the first settlers in Victoria. They are all rich men & are more respected than any other family in Australia. I am here simply with the view of ascertaining the capabilities of the District to support a medical man & have not yet committed myself to any course of conduct. As I only arrived here on Friday night and it has been pouring with rain ever since I am not yet in a position to come to any decision about my future line of action but all that I have learned about the place I will tell you. I must just say that my 3 months sojourn in the Melbourne Hospital has not done me any good, in fact has convinced me that if I am to derive any benefit from the climate I must adopt an entirely different mode of life. Hence my desire to get into a place where I shall spend the greater part of

staying in the house. Mr. Henry is a fine old
gentleman with rather a notice of his own im-
portance but exceedingly kind & hospitable. He
lives on his own station ~~which~~ consists of
14,000 acres of purchased land forming an
estate which is unsurpassed in England for
beauty & fertility. On it he has 24,000 sheep
300 horses & about 2000 head of cattle so you
may imagine the land is pretty good. He
tells me his station alone is worth from ~~1000~~ 15-
1700 a year to a medical man & that his
influence will secure me other stations which
would secure me an income of 2400 a year.
He says he won't say anything beyond this
but that he believes another 6000 is to be added
by purchase in the township. From the position
he occupies this general character I place implicit
confidence in his statement, but of course I am
going round to the different squatters whom he
has mentioned & shall hear what they have
to say in the matter. As I came through the
village of Merino which is about 4 miles from
here I saw the cottage which Mr. Henry has
spoken for me if I decide to stay. My heart
sank within me for anything, from completely
without the pale of civilization & society I
don't believe exist. ~~of course~~ I had made up
my mind to abjure the pomp & trappings
of this wicked world before I started from
Melbourne, but such an utter separation from
civilized humanity - at the sight of those few
huts reminded me how about to inflict upon
myself, was enough to make me falter &
imply resolution, and I involuntarily exclaimed
"I can't stand this at any price." However after
thinking the matter calmly over, and perhaps
influenced to some extent by the companionship
of the fairly civilized inmates of this house I
have decided that such considerations ought
not to weigh with me & that other circumstances
being favorable I could manage to exist for
18 months or so, supported by the very present
idea of soon returning to my own, my native land.
N.B. Pray don't mistake this for a push of sentiment

The only thing which I doubt the advisability
 of remaining here is the climate. The winters
 are cold, long & rainy, and of the present
 weather is a sample of what we are to have
 for the next few months. I don't think it is
 the place for me. Mr. Kenly was against
 it because she want to get away - Mr. Kenly
 cites it up because he wishes to remain here
 for a few years & himself & desires me to do the
 same. I shall therefore reserve my judgment
 till I have more impartial authority on the
 subject. Certainly I have been free from Mouches
 during the last few days than I have in the house
 notwithstanding exposure to cold & wet on board
 the steamer & during my passage up here -
 I shall see how I get on at the end of a
 week or so & shall be much guided in my
 movements by my state then. In any case
 I shall be able to give you definite in-
 formation in my next letter. I will now
 complete my description of the party here -
 Mr. Kenly is one of the folliet women I ever
 met. She is about 40, tall handsome &
 forthy in fact a person of goodly presence.
 she must have been very beautiful when she
 was young & is seen now pleasant to look upon.

The eldest daughter who seems to be about 19 is
 a complete beauty. The second one 16 is
 better looking than mine in her. The youngest
 one 13 is very pretty & is the gem of the flock.

The foreman is a fool & not a cultivated fool
 so let her pass. The person with whom I
 have most in common & whom I find a
 most pleasant companion is Mr. Richmond
 Kenly, the wife of one of Mr. Kenly's nephews.

She has only been out here 2 or 3 years &
 seems to have moved in first rate society
 at home so she respects her separation from
 her species as much as I do. I am sorry to
 find that is leaving here very soon. The
 only son is at present in England & is about
 to enter at Cambridge in October next. I
 had serious thoughts of writing of Arthur &
 Lydia by this mail & in fact expressed

my intention of doing so in my last letter but
after mature deliberation I have decided that
I won't. I know they will take my silence in
good part for they will see the wisdom of
repenting in a variety of epistles which
I give you. Many also is entitled to a letter
but I know that will be passed on to her. I am
anxious to know how John is getting on. Hope
breccine news of him by taking letters which
I fondly hope are in thy way. I will
not add more now as I am rather
indisposedly absenting myself from the
ladies. I shall give you a long
letter next month.

With best love to all

Believe me, dear Father
Your ever affectionate son
J. Lewis Peckers

W. H. Peckers

Will you please send me this address
care of Grandfather's
Dorchester Hospital