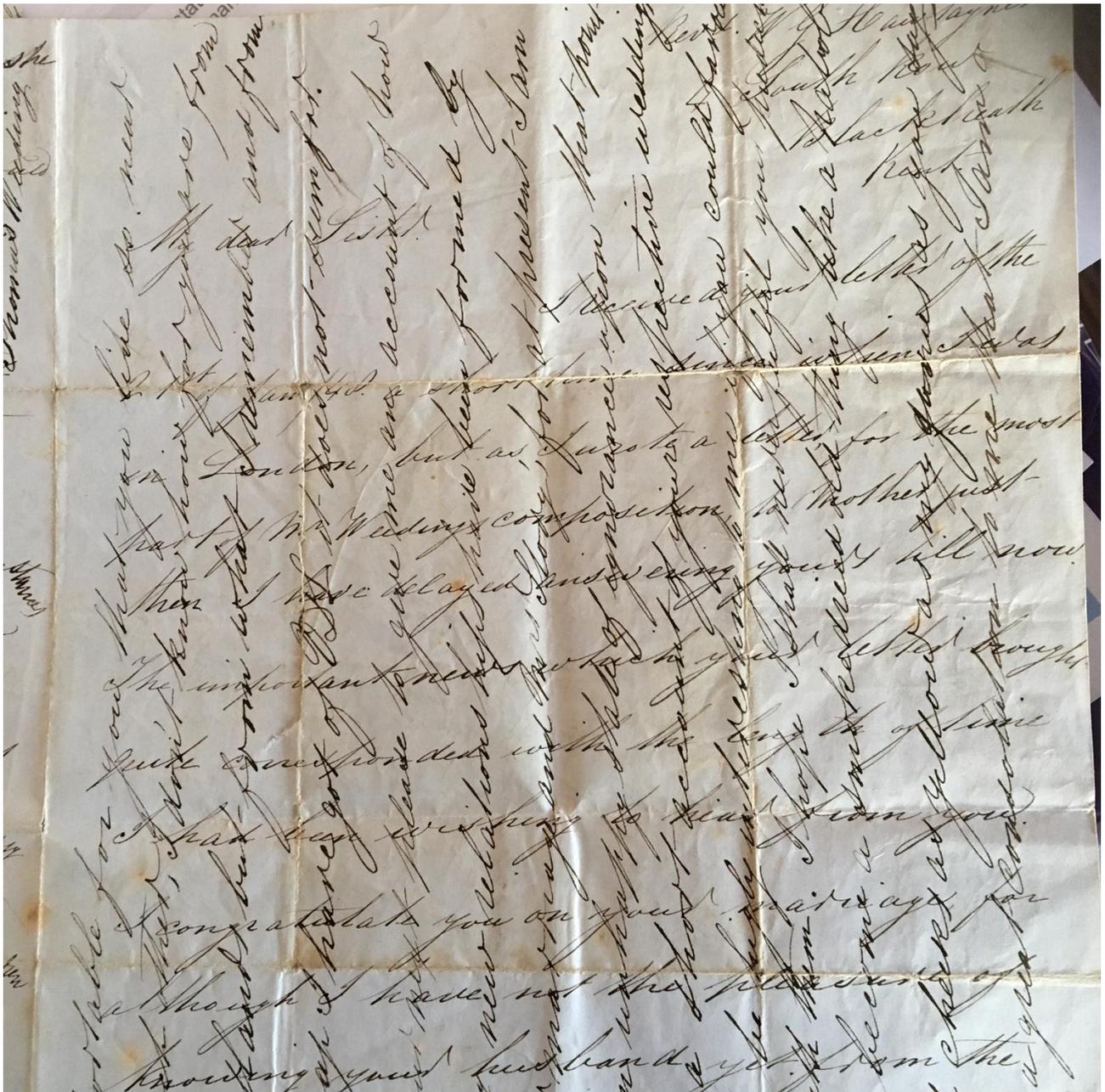


Annotated Letter Number 5 : Thomas Weeding to his sister Harriett 19 June 1848



Rev. W G Hawtayne

4 South Row
Blackheath
Kent

My dear Sister,

I received your letter of the 21st Jan/48 a short time since when I was in London, but as I wrote a letter for the most part of Mr Weeding's composition, to Mother just then I have delayed answering yours till now.

The important news which your letter brought quite corresponded with the length of time I had been wishing to hear from you. I congratulate you on your marriage for although I have not the pleasure of knowing your husband yet from the affectionate manner in which you (missing text) of him I am sure you have made a (missing text) with which you are well pleased. I have also to

congratulate Mrs Story, for I suppose I must no longer call her Fanny, respecting my niece Miss Louisa Fanny Story. I am quite proud of my new title, Uncle Tom, but I must not fancy myself a few years older as you say, or perhaps I shall think it is time for me to begin love matters, especially as I have had such good examples from my elder sisters, and that would not do at all for me as I could not study at the same time, at least I imagine not from what I have heard about love. It was very singular that the chaps here had given me the name of Uncle Tom some time before I heard that I really was such, I have of course lost my old title of King of the Grubs? now I have come here. I am very anxious to hear from Mrs Story and do not doubt when do that I (missing text) will see a great difference in her style as (missing text) in yours, I don't mean in the handwriting itself but in the substance of the letter seems much more sedate than formally, it is however very natural that it should be so.

In your last when speaking of Mrs Story, say she is very fond of her baby of course as a Mother – I have not the least doubt on that point notwithstanding that I have some recollections of her once saying that if she not had children she would keep the little troublesome things in a room by themselves, young ladies that talk so are generally the ones when they get children to be too kind to them, I hope however she will not fall into that mistake which is very prevalent in England in my formidable opinion **a spoiled child is almost as bad as a scolding wife or a crowing hen**. I hope Mother continues in good health, I can quite understand that she had considerable anxiety lately; she should keep as quiet as possible although I am afraid recommending her to do so would not avail much as I am sure she could not sit still and see all the domestic affairs go wrong as in all probability they would do if left entirely to the servants.

It would not do for either James or me to think of we doing under present circumstances although I daresay he will agree with me that the prospect of a bachelors life is not at all a pleasant one. I sometimes say to my school chaps when talking lightly on the subject, that I shall marry a black lady in India and when I go leave her there to take care of the children if there should be any I need hardly say I have no very serious intentions of adopting that plan. It must be very comfortable for you that you live so near to each other, I don't know how far you are from Oatlands but from what I remember and from a map I have got of VDL it does not seem far.

In your next please to give me an account of how many new relationships have been formed by your marriage and Mrs Story; for at present I am in an unhappy state of ignorance upon that point also a short account of your respective weddings will be highly interesting to me if you could favour me with them. I hope I shall never fulfil your prediction and become **a smokedried old thing like a nabob** with cheeks as yellow as my (...) as you say.

(Missing text) a great consolation to me that I am a (missing text) for a Civil and not a Military appointment (missing text) in former you need not expose yourself to the Sun much and I am sure I shall have a long lecture on the subject of preserving my health from Mr Weeding before I go; at the same time I am sure the short yet sound piece of advice you gave me on that point could not be esteemed so highly and I shall endeavour to conform myself to it. I am expecting to hear from Aunt Barkley & I wrote to her a short time since, the last time I heard of her was that she was quite well. **I have been lately confirmed at Greenwich by the Bishop of London**, there were a great many others confirmed at the same time and I thought it a very grand ceremony.

You can direct all your letters here for some time to come for I shall make arrangements that if I do go away I shall be able to have them sent me from here. I am expecting to go up to Haileybury College next Christmas I may be later, if I do go then I shall most likely get out to India in about 3 years time from now. We have had several cricket matches here and have generally come off victorious, I am getting quite a noted player at it. I daresay Mother had received letters requesting

her to send testimonials of my birth & baptism, but in case she has not perhaps you would be kind enough to ask her to so do, they are necessary for my examination on entering Haileybury.

I am glad like you to hear James took the wool to Market, I hope he was pleased with the result of his commission; In my last letter but one to Mother I sent a series of recommendations respecting the farm, I hope she has received the letter although I don't expect it to receive much attention as it is very easy for me to talk of improvement at a distance, but of course any one who is present can see much better what should or should not be done. I am anxious to hear how Uncle Lawrence and all other relations get on; I suppose you have not heard anything of James Morris? I am glad to hear the Oatlands church is finished at last. Please to give my love to Mother, Mrs Story, James etc and accepting the same yourself.

Believe me remain

Your affectionate brother

Thomas Weeding

June 19th/48

“a spoiled child is almost as bad as a scolding wife or a crowing hen”

Thomas, although quite young at this point (he celebrated his 17th birthday two weeks before this letter) he does seem to have soaked up the attitudes of his day, in particular towards women. In 19th century England, a wife should be a 'helpmeet', companion, mother, housewife, unpaid drudge – but never ever should she scold her husband; this was the epitome of bad female behaviour and bought ridicule on the husband....



This cartoon was published less than a year before Thomas' comments, and slyly recommends a dose of ether (an early anaesthetic) to help ignore a scolding wife...

HOW TO ESCAPE FROM A SCOLDING WIFE.

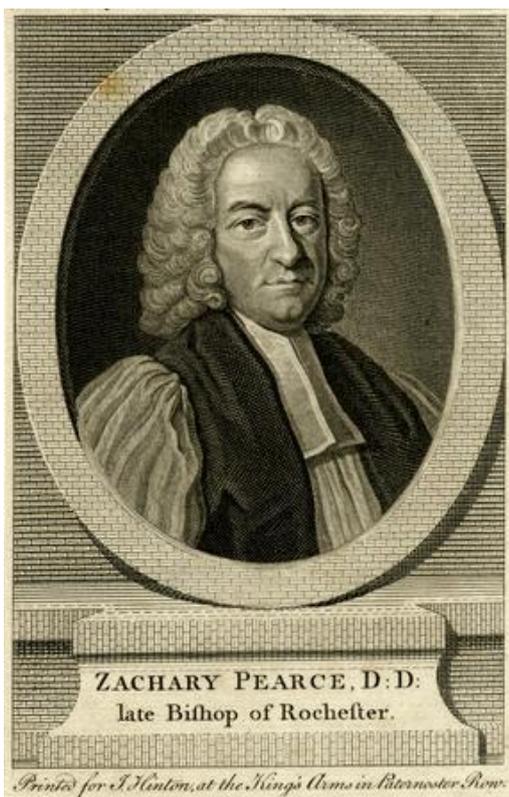
Patient (inhaling Ether). "THIS IS REALLY QUITE DELIGHTFUL—A MOST BEAUTIFUL DREAM."



A similar suggestion from 1830 (this one suggests forcibly administering laughing gas)

“I have been lately confirmed at Greenwich by the Bishop of London....”

Mass confirmation services have a long history in the Anglican Church; there are recorded cases of thousands of communicants being confirmed in a single ceremony. Perhaps the best example is that of Zachary Pearce, Bishop of Rochester. In October 1773 he held a service at Greenwich at which 700 people were confirmed. The following day he could not speak from the exertion and never recovered his voice, his strength ‘gradually waned’ and Bishop Pearce died 8 months later.



“a smokedried old thing like a nabob”

Thomas’s mind is clearly on his future career in India. The word ‘nabob’ derives from Urdu and came into common use in the 17th century to define an Englishman who had made a fortune in India and returned home. In the 19th century, the word ‘Nabob’ was generally understood to imply a degree of bad taste, in the sense that the person being called a nabob was behaving like an Eastern potentate and generally ‘showing off’ their wealth. Many nabobs used their Indian wealth to finance seats in Parliament.



“Tom Raw visits Taylor & Co’s Emporium, Calcutta 1828’. Here the implication is clear – the Nabob Tom Raw has made his money but cannot buy the appurtenances of a true gentleman