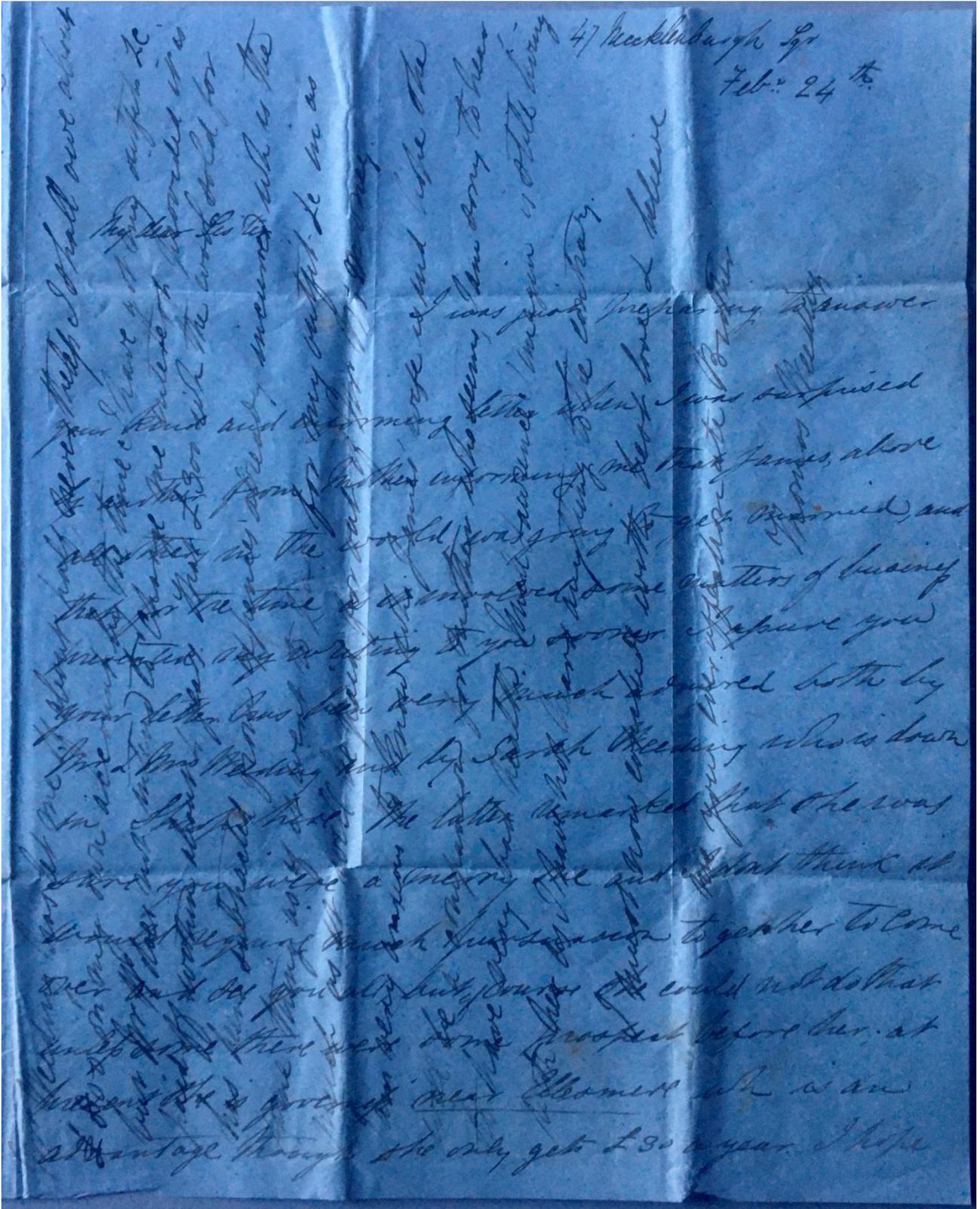


Letter 8: Dating, photography and preparing for India



47 Mecklenburgh Sq

Feb 24th

My dear Sister,

I was just preparing to answer your kind and informing letter when I was surprised by another from Mother informing me that James, above all others in the world, was going to get married, and that for the time, as it

involved some matters of business prevented my writing to you sooner. I assure you your letter has been very much admired both by Mr & Mrs Weeding And by Sarah Weeding who is down in Shropshire. The latter remarked that she was sure you were a merry one and I don't think it would require much persuasion to get her to come over and see you all but of course she could not do that unless there were some prospect before her, at present **she is Governess near Ellesmere wh(sic) is an advantage though she only gets £30 a year.** I hope you will not be offended at my showing your letters, but I only did it with a desire of letting others share in the treat of reading them with myself.

I must really keep a list of the names of all my nephews & nieces or I shall be forgetting 3 or 4 of them. I thought it was very well when they made their appearance one at a time but now that twins have come into fashion and the prospect of another supply by James' marriage, there will be quite a colony of relations before very long.

You see there is no counting on quiet steady people not getting married in fact I rather think they are the first to do so, but what surprises me more than anything is that your marriages all seem to come about without any courtship or at least I never hear of any but all of a sudden am informed that so & so is married. While James was single I did have the good example before my eyes but what I am to trust to now I do not know, however not being engaged yet **if I can only wait till I get to India I daresay there will not be so much temptation among the ladies of colour and those English ladies who go out on purpose to get married.**

Several of my College companions have already left England one of them has given me a very handsome gold ring as a remembrance, I gave him a set of shirt studs tho(sic) not equal in value. We were very great friends at College & he wanted me to come and stay with him in Scotland but I had not an opportunity. Mrs Weeding has also been very kind in giving me several things and treating to theatres etc in addition is going to make me a present of anything I like to select up to £10 in value & Mrs J Baggallay has also asked me to choose a present, but I would rather leave it to her as one does not know to what amount one ought to ask. **I am thinking of getting a revolving pistol** as Mrs Weeding as they are very much required in India.

Yesterday I went down to Dr Lords and dined there and wished him good bye. It is a very sad time with a good many going to India as many are leaving very old parents whom they can hardly expect to see again. Mrs Weeding is also having a likeness of me taken, it is in the miniature style and costs about £13. **I have also had a photographic likeness** wh(sic) is taken in about half a minute by means of reflection and light, they are generally very exact but mine is considered to be looking too solemn by some tho(sic) they say it is a most correct likeness. Mrs Barkley wants one of the same sort & I will try and get you one. I have been to a good many dances but I don't care very much about them and infinitely prefer field sports. I hope if there is a vessel going from VDL to Bombay you will try and get me some kangaroo dogs sent. They must be of good quality or they will hardly pay their expenses, and tho(sic) I have great partiality for Van DL horses I believe it does not pay to have them sent so far as Bombay tho(sic) many are sent to Calcutta, and at Bombay you are nearer to the Arabian horses wh(sic) are of course very fine. People here seem to think that the great quantities of gold being discovered must have a great effect on the value of gold money and that persons with fixed incomes will suffer very much, it will however act favourably to persons who are now owing money in as much as they will only have to pay the same number of pounds as originally stipulated tho(sic) those pounds be only worth ten shillings to the person who receives them. With respect to the debt wh(sic) I have contracted and wh(sic) I have referred to in Mothers letter Mrs Weeding has let me off about half never the less I shall owe about £80 on my own account by the time I have got my outfits etc but Mr W does not intend to charge me interest provided it is paid off within about 4 years. That £300 wh(sic) the wool sold for has been subtracted from expenses already incurred wh(sic) is the same thing as if it went to pay for my outfits etc in as much as if it will be paid for out of Mr W's money.

I am very anxious to know who James' wife is and hope she will be a companion for Mother who seems, I am sorry to hear to have very bad health. Uncle Lawrence I imagine is still living with her as I have not heard anything to the contrary.

I must now conclude with best love & believe me your ever affectionate brother

Thomas Weeding

Mecklenburgh Sqr

Mecklenburgh Square and its garden were part of the Foundling Estate, a residential development of 1792 - 1825 on fields surrounding and owned by the Foundling Hospital. The Square was named in honour of King George III's Queen, Charlotte of Mecklenburgh-Strelitz. It was begun in 1804, but was not completed until 1825. It is notable for the number of historic terraced houses that face directly onto the square and the Mecklenburgh Square Garden.

“if I can only wait till I get to India I daresay there will not be so much temptation among the ladies of colour and those English ladies who go out on purpose to get married”

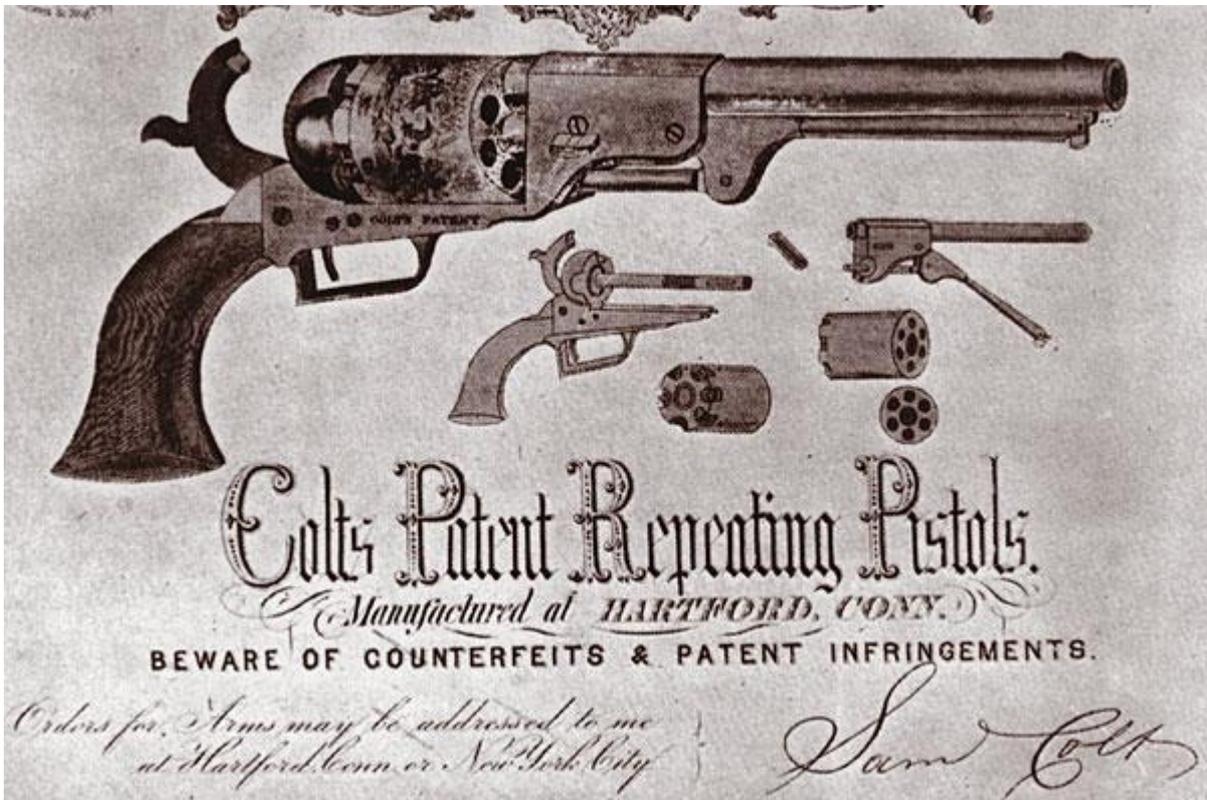
Strange though it may sound, this really was a ‘thing’ – ie, British women travelling to India to find husbands. Indeed, there were numerous guide books available to advise women on what to wear, what to pack, what not to do. By the time Thomas is writing, ‘going native’ (ie forming a relationship with a woman of colour) was very much frowned upon.



Idealised view of the life of Anglo-Indian women ca 1890. Note that the Anglo-Indian lady lounges whilst the ‘lady of colour’ does the real work. The Indian servant to the left is a ‘punka wallah’: his job is to continually pull a rope attached to the fan which you can just see at the top of the picture.

I am thinking of getting a revolving pistol

'Revolvers' were still fairly new at the time Thomas was writing. First patented by Samuel Colt in 1836, revolvers ushered in automatic firing – ie, no inconvenient waiting around to load the weapon whilst your attacker is approaching



One of the very first advertisements for Samuel Colt's new 'revolving pistol'

Iver Johnson Revolvers

are not toys: they shoot straight and kill. You may need one only once in your lifetime: buy now, so you will have it at that time.

SAFETY \$6.
HAMMERLESS
AUTOMATIC

ACCIDENTAL DISCHARGE IMPOSSIBLE

Papa says it won't hurt us!

Absolutely Safe

Send for Our fire-arms encyclopædia

IVER JOHNSON'S ARMS & CYCLE WORKS, FITCHBURG, MASS. U.S.A.

Later in the 19th century, retailers used the 'safety' catch as a unique selling point – ie, their loaded guns were safe enough for small children to play with. About the same time, some beer brewers were advertising beer as a healthy drink for toddlers:



How Mother and Baby "Picked Up"

A case of Blatz Beer in your home means much to the young mother, and obviously baby participates in its benefits.

The malt in the beer supplies nourishing qualities that are essential at this time and the hops act as an appetizing, stimulating tonic.

Main 2400

BLATZ
MILWAUKEE
Always the same good old *Blatz*

"I have also had a photographic likeness..."

Thomas has had his 'likeness' taken at the Great Exhibition (see previous letter). Photography was still very new at this point, and curiously Thomas spots something that modern viewers always notice with Victorian photographs: "mine is considered too solemn by some".

This was almost certainly caused by the long exposure times required for early photographs; many studio photographers had special chairs constructed which would hold the sitters head still for the required time. Hence no laughing or smiling (try holding a smile for 2.5 minutes...).

Incredibly, Thomas' likeness survives to this day, although sadly much scratched and damaged by time. Thanks to indefatigable Weeding researcher John Gould for permission to use this image:



Thomas Weeding, 1851 (Courtesy John Goold)



What you don't see in Thomas' photograph – mid 19th century photographers chair, adjustable to the height and shape of the sitter