

135

ALS H284

Highcroft House
 Milford
 Godalming
 Surrey
 Sep. 5 1884

Dearly beloved

Good for the histology – I am sending the proof of Cartilage Connective tissue & bone to Clay¹ with directions to send slips on to you – & you can cut them about as you please. Most of our examiners have not a notion of what histology means at present – & I think it will be good for other folks to get it into their heads that it is not all sections & carmine.

It makes more in bulk than I could have wished – but I have not said more than is needful for clearness so far as I know.

I took a good deal of pains to get clear about these matters two or three years ago & it's a pity the result should be lost.

I think some valuable illustrations might be got out of the German edition of Ranvier – It is unluckily incomplete & I can't make out that there is or ever was a French edition – there is nothing at all good elsewhere.²

Muscle & nerve are pretty nearly done & will go to Clay early next week.

Ever Yours
 T. H. H.

¹ Richard Clay and Sons, printers.

² Louis Antoine Ranvier (1835–1922), French histologist. *Traité technique d'histologie*, Paris, F. Savy, 1875; German edition *Technisches Lehrbuch der Histologie*, Leipzig, Vogel, 1877.

136

ALS H285

Highcroft House
 Milford
 Godalming
 Sep. 18 1884¹

My dear Foster

I send you by this post the chapter about the ear. I don't think there is a word beyond what is necessary to make the account clear & intelligible – and it is of no use to add to the number of accounts which are not clear & intelligible. I have been laughing over my “trihedon” – it is a regular bull.

I am sending off by this post to printer my last instalment of histology, nerve to wit minus development. I have said nothing about Remaks fibres. It has been in my mind year after year to examine them in the light of what Ranvier says but my time has been murked & muddled away. I don't know what you will say to various new terms. I have found myself compelled to use them in my lectures in years past. The present nomenclature of nerve is especially abominable – muscle nearly as bad.

Does anybody know anything about effect of prolonged boiling the water in nerve bundle – I know what happens when electrical organs are then heated but have not made direct experiment on a nerve bundle. I want it for parallel with muscle. You will see that I have said that optic nerve fibres have no Schwannian Sheath (*neurotheca mihi*) & no Ranvier's nodes I believe I am right but cannot call to mind how I know about it.

So long as I sit still & write or read I am all right – otherwise not good for much which is odd considering that I eat drink & sleep like a top.

I suppose that everybody starts life with a certain capital of life stuff & that expensive habits have reduced mine.

Ever yours
 T. H. H.

¹ From the content and date of the next letter this is possibly dated 8 September.

137

Huxley Papers 4:227

Shelford
 Cambs
 Sept 18 [1884]

Dear Huxley

Those lazy Clay people did not send the proofs till yesterday – & I have not finished them yet. When I have worked them over I will send them to 4 M. Pl.

Mrs Huxley's letter did not give a bright account of you. I think you will feel all the better when you get into harness again – and I take this opportunity of reproaching you in some bad physiology in a late letter – when you spoke of a stock of vital energy being used up. I believe in the machine getting out of order & being worn out – but not in a god-given stock of energy infused at birth. Your machine is not in the best order – but I don't believe in it being worn out – your difficulty is in the awful friction your tearing style of life & work engenders.

I expect in another 10 years – you may perhaps mellow down into a softly going engine – but your metal is all right & I trust to see you as perky as a sandboy even so soon as next month.

Ever thine
 M. Foster

138

ALS H286

Fowey Hotel
 Fowey
 Cornwall
 Sept. 27. 1884

My dear Foster

I return your proof with a few trifling suggestions here & there. I doubt you had better leave out “to the exclusion of his” in the fifth paragraph. It rather suggests that he has allowed his pupils to take credit for what is his – which is very likely true but need not be said – also I doubt that the last paragraph is superfluous – but think over it.

I fancy we may regard the award as practically settled, and a very good award it will be.

The address is beginning to loom in the distance¹ – I have half a mind to devote some part of it to a sketch of the recent novelties in histology touching the nucleus question & molecular physiology.

1884

My wife sent me your letter. By all means let us have a confabulation as soon as I get back and settle what is to be done with the “aged P.”

I am not sure that I shall be at home before the end of the week – My lectures do not begin till next week, and the faithful Howes² can start the practical work without me so that if I find myself picking up any good in these parts, I shall probably linger here or hereabouts – But a good deal will depend on the weather – inside as well as outside. I am convinced that the prophet Jeremiah (whose works I have been studying) must have been a flatulent dyspeptic – there is so much agreement between his views and mine.
Ever yours
T. H. Huxley

¹The presidential address.

²Thomas George Bond Howes (1853–1905), one of Huxley’s demonstrators at South Kensington and his assistant from 1874. See also note to letter 175.

139

ALS H287

Science and Art Department
South Kensington
Oct. 4. 1884

My dear Foster

Back to work today and very little inclined to do anything.

The proofs of Lessons have not turned up. You have not told me what you think of the modification of the histology.

Have they sent you a copy of inclosed?

Ever yours
T. H. H.

140

ALS H288

4 Marlborough Place
Abbey Road, N.W.
Oct. 5 1884

My dear Foster

You told my wife you would come up some day after the 1st & talk over the state of affairs – will you come & dine & sleep any day this week except Saturday? The spare room is empty.

There was some talk about having the Anniversary Dinner at some other place than Willis room this year but I forget what was said. I have referred the matter to Evans. The Anniversary is on Dec 1 this year you must recollect – In writing to Evans I thought it was right to mention to him the possibility of my retirement but I said nothing definite.

From what he said to me last year, I cannot doubt that you will have to reckon with him as a candidate and that he would come forward as against Lubbock for example.

I got better while I was in Cornwall & Wales and, at present, I don't think there is anything the matter with me except a profound disinclination to work. I never before knew the proper sense of the term "vis inertiae".

Ever yours
T. H. Huxley

141

ALS H289

4 Marlborough Place
Abbey Road, N.W.
Oct. 8 1884

My dear Foster

We shall be very glad to see you on Friday.

I came to the conclusion that I had better put myself in Clark's hands again & he has been here this evening overhauling me for an hour.¹

He says there is nothing wrong except a slight affection of the liver & general nervous depression – but that if I go on the latter will get steadily worse & become troublesome – He insists on my going away to the South & doing nothing but amuse myself for three or four months.

1884

This is the devil to pay but I cannot honestly say that I think he is wrong – moreover, I promised the wife to abide by his decision.

We will talk over what is to be done.

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

¹ Huxley's doctor, Sir Andrew Clark (1826–1893), physician to the London Hospital.

142

ALS H290

Athenaeum Club

Pall Mall S.W.

October 18 1884

My dear Foster

Best thanks for your letter & route. I am giving you a frightful quantity of troubles but as the old woman (Irish) said to my wife, when she gave her a pair of my old trousers for her husband, "I hope it may be made up to ye in a better world."

She is clear and I am clear that there is no reason on my part for not holding on if the Society really wishes I should – But of course I must make it easy for the Council to get rid of a fainéant President, if they prefer that course.

I wrote to Evans an unofficial letter two days ago & have had a very kind straightforward letter from him. He is quite against my resignation. I shall see him this afternoon here. I had to go to my office (Fishery).

Clark's course of physic is lightening my abdominal troubles – but I am preposterously weak with a kind of shabby broken down indifference to everything.

Ever yours

T. H. H.

143

Huxley Papers 4:229

Shelford
Oct 22 [1884]

Reverend Sir

I was delighted to have a letter from the Missus yesterday relating your prosperous arrival at Lugano. And we are all hoping that the Piazza, & Piazzetta, & San Marco & the gondola – & the whole lot of it have exorcised some of the blue devils & cast them out beyond the Lido.¹

It may be some lightening of your load to know that your fate is much envied by Miss Mercy Foster.² She would willingly be P.R.S. if she were sure to break down & sure to be sent to Venice. I have begun a scrawl but as yet I have no news to tell. The officers are all harmoniously agreed to urge Council to ask you to take a holiday without resigning – & I must say Evans is a regular trump. The course seems so clear that we are not going to meet till the Council of the 30th.

I envied you at Venice when I went on Saturday to a Lord Mayor's dinner to the Company of Authors – & I thanked goodness you were not there – a terrible ruffraff headed by Lord Houghton . . . Edmund Yates & G. A. Sala as his Lieutenants!³ As I believe you once justly observed “science is not literature.”

I beg to give you notice too that I am going to dine at the Philos [Philosophical] Club tomorrow because you can't & Evans won't be there. How much better to be in Venice.

The man is waiting for the letters, more next time. Only write to me when you can't help it.

Ever thine
M. Foster

Here lies the body of W. W.
Who never more will trouble you, trouble you.⁴

¹ On Clark's recommendation Huxley travelled in Italy from mid-October 1884 until April 1885, returning briefly for his daughter Rachel's wedding on 6 November.

² Foster's daughter.

³ Richard Monckton Milnes, first Baron Houghton, author of poems and political and social writings; the author Edmund Yates; George Augustus Sala, journalist and novelist.

⁴ Often quoted epitaph, referring here to Walter White, assistant secretary of the Royal Society, who had handed in his resignation.

ALS H291

Lugano Nov. 1. 1884

My dear Foster

Many thanks for your letter which reached me just before I left Venice a few days ago. I found the Pension-Suisse everything that could be wished and I. Fenili was all attention. In fact as I was his only guest for most of the time he was bound to make much of me – He is by way of being a philosophe agnostic & great lover of science & scientific books.

I have had a variety of troubles internal haemorrhoids among the rest – I laid up a day here in consequence of them as I did not wish to identify myself with Venice fundamentally.

Venice itself just suited me. I chartered a capital gondolier and spent most of my time exploring the lagoons – Especially I paid a daily visit to the Lido & filled my lungs with the sea air, & rejoiced in the absence of stinks. For Venice is like her population (at least the male part of it) handsome but odorous – Did you notice how handsome the young men are & how little beauty there is among the women?

I stayed eight days in Venice & then returned by easy stages first to Padua where I wanted to see Giotto's work then to Verona and then here. Verona delighted me more than anything I have seen – and we will spend two or three days there as we go back.

As for myself, I really have no positive complaint now. I eat well and I sleep well – and I should begin to think I was malingering – if it were not for a sort of weariness & deadness that hangs about me accompanied by a curious nervous excitability.

I expect that this is the upshot of the terrible anxiety I have had about my daughter Marian¹ – Ever since her confinement she has been in a most unsatisfactory condition – which gradually settled down into something like melancholia – Half an hour before I left Victoria, I had most afflicting intelligence of her state – and I do not wish my worst enemy the misery I endured until I had telegraphic intelligence at Luzerne – It fairly finished me for the time & I suspect it will leave its marks for a long while. More recently I have had better reports & I have every hope now that my poor child's recovery will be speedy & complete.

Some of these days I will tell you more about this burden I have been carrying with me. For the present, you will do me a great favour, if you are asked about her, if you will say that she fell into a bad state of health after her confinement & had to go into the country for special treatment.

I suppose you discussed your runaway President the day before yesterday & I shall hear the result when I reach home on the 5th.

1884

I would give a great deal to be able to escape facing the wedding – for my nervous system is in the condition of that of a frog under opium.

But my Rachel must not go off without the paternal benediction² – On the 11th the wife & I start back here.

Ever yours faithfully

T. H. Huxley

¹ Huxley's daughter Marian (Mady) had suffered a mental breakdown following the birth of her daughter Joyce.

² Huxley returned to England for the marriage of his daughter Rachel (1862–1934) to Alfred Eckersley (d. 1895), a civil engineer, on 6 November.

145

ALS H292

Hotel Britannique,

Naples

Nov. 30 1884

My dear Foster

Which being St Andrew's Day,¹ I think the expatriated P. ought to give you some account of himself.

We had a prosperous journey to Locarno – but there plumped into bitter cold weather & got chilled to the bone as the only guests in the big hotel though they did their best to make us comfortable. I made a shot at bronchitis but happily failed & got all right again.

Pallanza was as bad – At Milan temperatures at noon 39° F. freezing at night. Verona much the same. Under these circumstances we concluded to give up Venice & made for Bologna. There found it rather colder. Next, Ravenna, where it snowed. However, we made ourselves comfortable in the queer hotel & rejoiced in the mosaics of that sepulchral marsh.

At Bologna I had assurances that the Sicilian quarantine was going to be taken off at once² – and as the reports of the railway travelling & hotels in Calabria were not encouraging I determined to make for Naples – or rather, by way [of] extra caution for Castellammare. All the way to Ancona the Apennines were covered with snow & much of the plain also. Twenty miles south of Ancona however the weather changed to warm summer & we rejoiced accordingly. At Foggia I found that the one decent hotel that used to exist was non extant so we went on to Naples.

Arriving at 10.30 very tired got humbugged by a lying Neapolitan who palmed himself off as the Commissionaire of the Hotel Bristol – & took us into an omnibus belonging to another hotel – that of the Bristol being, as he said, “broke” – After a drive of three miles or so got to the Bristol & found it shut up! After a series of adventures & a good deal of

strong language on my part – knocked up the people here who took us in though the hotel was in reality shut up like most of those in Naples.

As usual the weather is “unusual” – hot in the sun, cold round the corner & at night. Moreover, I found by yesterday’s paper that the beastly Sicilians won’t give up their ten days quarantine. So all chance of getting to Catania or Palermo is gone – I am not sure whether we shall stay here for some time or go to Rome – but at any rate we shall be here a week.

Dohrn is away getting subsidies in Germany for his new ship. We inspected the Aquarium this morning. Eisig and Mayer³ are in charge. Madame is a good deal altered in the course of the twelve years that have elapsed since I saw her – but says she is much better than she was. There is evidently another Dohrnule on the way.

As for myself, I got very much better when in North Italy in spite of the piercing cold. But the fatigue of the journey from Ancona here & the worry at the end of it did me no good & I have been seedy for a day or two – However, I am picking up.

I see one has to be very careful here – We had a lovely drive yesterday out by Pausicippo, but the wife got chilled & was shakey this morning. However, we got very good news of our daughter this evening & that has set us both up.

My blessing for tomorrow will reach you after date. Let me hear how everything went off.⁴

Our return in May I regret is really impracticable on account of the Fishery Report – I cannot be so long absent from the Home Office whatever I might manage with S.K.

With our love to Mrs Foster & you.

Ever yours very faithfully

T. H. Huxley

¹Day of the annual general meeting of the Royal Society.

²Quarantine had been imposed after the cholera outbreak. See Frank M. Snowden, *Naples in the time of cholera, 1884–1911*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

³Hugo Eisig (1847–1920) and Paul Mayer (1848–1923), German zoologists and assistants at the Naples station.

⁴The Royal Society anniversary dinner.

146

Huxley Papers 4:231

Shelford

Dec 2 [1884]

Dear Huxley

The Anniversary went off very well yesterday – Evans’ address was really very good I think & the fellows seemed to like it. The dinner also went off very well, except that this child made a dull & too long speech in proposing Ludwig’s¹ health – the Herr Prof. was

1884

himself in capital form – highly delighted – he made us a long oration on the features of British influence on the world. 'orrid 'ymms – the Lord Mayor, Salisbury, Fry, & smaller Fry were there & spoke. – Lubbock was there & spoke. Donnelly came as my guest. I need hardly say that there were no end of inquiries after you – & that you were remembered in the toasts.

If you can drag yourself back in mind to this dull country you might nominate through me your Vice Presidents – the Council are now the list I enclose.

I wish I knew how – or indeed where you are – for I have heard nothing since you left & am sending this to 4 M. P. for transmission – & I shall then ask for news.

Evans is in great force – & I think he has very much strengthened his position in view of Presidentship. I do hope you are having good news of the poor patient. I will write you again soon – but must finish now in order to catch post.

Best love to the wife

Ever thine

M. Foster

Hooker, Strachey, F. Evans, Burdon Sanderson, Flower, Moseley, G. Darwin, Carey Foster, de la Rue, Hugo Müller, Abney, Christie, Etheridge, Noble.²

¹ Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig (1816–1895), professor of physiology at Leipzig, had been awarded the Copley Medal for his investigations in Physiology.

² Joseph Hooker (1817–1911); Richard Strachey (1817–1908); Frederick John Owen Evans (1815–1885); John Burdon Sanderson (1828–1905); William Flower (1831–1899); Henry Moseley (1844–1891); George Darwin (1845–1912); George Carey Foster (1835–1919); Warren de la Rue (1815–1889); Hugo Müller (1833–1915); William de Wiveleslie Abney (1843–1920); Sir William Henry Mahoney Christie (1845–1922); Robert Etheridge (1819–1903); Andrew Noble (1831–1915).

147

Huxley Papers 4:233

Shelford

Dec. 4. 84

Just got your letter delighted to hear from you especially news about M. – & considering all things, judge your report good. I forgot to put Rayleigh's name on list of Council I sent in my letter.¹ I should fancy you will run Evans, Rayleigh, Hooker, Strachey, Flower.

1884

Will write again soon. All well – Leader in Times today on R.S.² Mrs F joins in best wishes

M. F.

¹ John William Strutt (1842 – 1919), third Baron Rayleigh, physicist.

² ‘St. Andrew’s Day fell this year on a Sunday’, *The Times*, Thursday, Dec. 4, 1884, p. 9, issue 31308, col. E. The editorial described the anniversary dinner and regretted Huxley’s absence “on personal grounds”.

148

ALS H293

Hotel Britannique

Naples

Dec. 7. 1884

My dear Foster

I was very glad to get your letter of the 2nd which reached me yesterday evening – it has crossed mine which I wrote to you shortly after we reached Naples and when I was rather down in the mouth from the wretched cold weather & the wife being laid up with a bad cold – also liver damnable. However we are now looking up again as for the last three days we have had lovely summer – only a little cool in the evening – The wife is getting rid of her cold & I took a long walk this morning over the [height] Camaldoli way.

I find I have to be very careful about night air – but nothing does me so much good as six or seven miles walk between breakfast & lunch – at a good sharp pace – So I conclude that there cannot be much the matter, and yet I am always on the edge so to speak of that infernal hypochondria.

We have settled down here very comfortably, and I do not think we shall care to go any further south. Madame Dohrn and all the people at the Stazione are very kind & want to do all sorts of things for us. The other day we went in the launch to Capri intending next day to go to Amalfi. But it threatened bad weather, so we returned in the evening – the journey knocked us both up & we had to get out of another projected excursion to Ischia today. The fact is I get infinitely tired with talking to people and can’t stand any deviation from regular & extremely lazy habits. Fancy my being always in bed by ten o’clock & breakfasting at 9!

It is delightful to hear that the dinner went off so well. The only thing I regret is having missed Ludwig – I was sure that Evans would do what he had to do well – and he has behaved so admirably so far as I am concerned, that the more he strengthens his position the better pleased I shall be. It is early days yet to arrive at any fixed conclusion, but I have a strong impression that my day is over, so far as work of any kind that involves

pressure or anxiety is concerned. And I should be right glad to see the question of the Presidency satisfactorily settled. That Evans would do all the work that has to be done better than any of the other possible candidates I have not the least doubt. The only question in my mind is whether his scientific position is strong enough.

As to the Vice Presidents – the modest Sec^y has made no suggestions (Oh dear no!) but the underscored names of Hooker, Strachey, Flower & De la Rue are just the right ones – Add of course Evans (treas).

Are you nearly delivered of the “Lessons” yet? I meant to have had our new arrangement just ship-shape with one another & Macmillan before I left – Mind I see to it as soon as I get back or I shall go & die & leave you in the lurch. Did we not agree that you were to have a third of the profits?

The wife joins with me in love to you & Mrs Foster – she says she is going to write her own account of my doings – The only fault she really has to find is that I don’t smoke enough.

Ever yours
T. H. Huxley

149

Huxley Papers 4:234

Shelford
Cambs
England
Dec. 10. 84

Dear Huxley

My delight in receiving a letter from you sent from Naples, was very much increased by a letter from Mrs Henry, giving exceedingly good news of Mrs Collier¹ and saying that she would probably go abroad after Xmas. This I am sure will do you both the utmost good – & I shall expect to hear a most brilliant account next time. I can’t help thinking that you & she have both turned the corner. I don’t know how her plans will modify yours – but I cannot help thinking that it would be a capital thing if you all met somewhere in the Riviera & slayed the cold weather out there – going about from place to place on both sides Genoa but especially on the Ponente side. If you stick to wine & apollinari water – & carefully avoid any of the native water not boiled I do not think you need fear anything – and it is so warm & delightful all the winter there – none of the bitter cold of Rome & Florence. You could get capital walks – & Marian capital sketches – and you would not seem so far away as in Sicily.

I don’t think there is much news to tell you – you probably saw the leader in the Times of Dec. 2 on the R.S. complaining that we were not “arrogant” enough. When you come back, we will see what we can do to take away this reproach.²

The Govt. Grant comes in next week – & apparently we shall not have much difficulty in getting rid of the whole balance. Master Ray³ has found he says a hydroid stage of his fresh water medusae & we are going to have that to-morrow. Gabriel is lecturing at Aberdeen. I am all right, having got thro' the term's work & just taking breath before the sweet Training College people send me their shift. Wife joins in best love to both of you.

Ever thine

M. F.

¹ Huxley's daughter Marian (married to John Collier).

² He means leader in *The Times* of December 4. See letter 147.

³ E. Ray Lankester communicated his discovery to *The Times* ('The freshwater Medusa', *The Times*, Thursday, Dec. 4, 1884, p. 7, issue 31308, col. D). It was published by Alfred Gibbs Bourne, 'On the occurrence of a hydroid phase of *Limnocoedium Sowerbii*, Allman and Lankester', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*, 1884–1885, 38: 9–14.

150

Huxley Papers 4:236

Shelford, Cambs

England

Dec. 13. 84

Dear Huxley

We are a sort of Corsican brothers, each writing to each, just when the other is writing.¹

I am writing this because Evans seems to want to have a formal letter from you appointing Vice Presidents – & therefore if you have not done so, please write him such a letter as he can read out at Meeting of Soc. Christie was on last years Council, Flower was not – but Christie was not on last years V.P. Last years V.P. were Treas [Evans], Argyll, De la Rue, F. Galton, Prestwich.² Of those you have suggested for V.P., F. Evans & Christie were on Council last year, Hooker, Flower, Strachey, Rayleigh, not. However probably you have written to Evans by this time.

I forgot to tell you that the stupid Council chose Dana & Cornu³ for For. Memb. We ran Baeyer (Chemist) & Kowalewski, a tie or nearly so three times and then gave it up. We have now two vacancies and we propose very soon to fill these up with Baeyer and Kowalewski.⁴

1885

I have corrected the Histology chapter of Elem. Lessons but am in a difficulty about woodcuts – these I hope to make in a few days & then shall soon run the thing off. All the rest is printed off. Take care of unboiled water – & cold at sunset. Hirst⁵ talks of coming out to Italy or Sicily almost directly.

Ever thine

M. Foster

The L.s.d. matter about Elem. Lessons can be left till you return.

¹ Alexandre Dumas, *Les frères corses*, 1844, translated as *The Corsican brothers*.

² George Douglas Campbell, eighth Duke of Argyll (1823–1900); Francis Galton (1822–1911); and Joseph Prestwich (1812–1896).

³ James Dwight Dana (1813–1895), American geologist, mineralogist and zoologist; Marie Alfred Cornu (1841–1902), French physicist.

⁴ Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Adolf von Baeyer (1835–1917), professor of chemistry at the University of Munich, and Alexander Onufrievitch Kowalewski (1840–1901), Russian embryologist and zoologist, were both elected foreign members of the Royal Society in 1885.

⁵ Possibly Thomas Archer Hirst (1830–1892), mathematician. See following letter, note 4.

151

ALS H296

Hotel Victoria
Via dei due Macelli
Rome
Jan. 8 1885

My dear Foster

We have been here a fortnight very well lodged – south aspect, fireplace & all the rest of the essentials except sunshine – Of this last there is not much more than in England & the grey skies day after day, are worthy of our native land. Sometimes it rains cats & dogs all day by way of a change – as on Christmas day – but it is not cold – “Quite exceptional weather” they tell us – but that seems to be the rule everywhere. We have done a respectable amount of gallery slaving and I have been amusing myself by picking up the topography of ancient Rome – I was going to say pagan Rome but the inappropriateness of the distinction strikes me – papal Rome being much more stupidly & childishly pagan

than imperial – I never saw a sadder sight than the kissing a wretched bedizened doll of a Bambino that went on in the Ara Coeli on Twelfth day. Your puritan soul would have longed to arise & slay.

However, that is not what I took up my pen to write about. Fowler, Professor of Logic, Oxford, is here & I have met with him two or three times.¹ He reminded me that I had made some sort of promise months ago, to Jowett, to consult with my colleagues about getting the Dean of Westminster² to put a bust of Henry Smith³ in the Abbey – I am perfectly clear that the Dean will do nothing of the sort without very great pressure and my own opinion is that however considerable a man Smith was in himself – his scientific position would not warrant us in putting such pressure upon him. I wish you would talk to Stokes & Hirst⁴ about it – and if they are of the same mind – another question arises. Fowler said that it had been suggested that the Royal Society would accept it but that Maskelyne⁵ had scotched the notion, declaring that we gave room to no busts except those of Presidents. Herein Maskelyne spoke as a fool in as much as neither Mrs Somerville, nor Falconer, nor Lyell were Presidents, and I told Fowler that without in any way committing myself to what the Society would be disposed to do, I thought that if the offer were made to us it would be favourably considered.

I told him further that I would write to you on the subject and ask you to place yourself in communication with him – He will be on his way back tomorrow.

As to myself – though it is a very unsatisfactory subject and one I am tired of bothering my friends about, I am like the farmer at the rent-dinner – and don't find myself much "farrarder" – That is to say I am well for a few days & then all adrift, and have to put myself right by dosing with Clark's pills which are really invaluable – They will make me believe in those pills I saw advertised in my youth & which among other things were warranted to cure "the indecision of juries." – I really can't make out my own condition – I walked seven or eight miles this morning over Monte Mario & out in the Campagna without any particular fatigue, and yesterday I was as miserable as an owl in sunshine. Something perhaps must be put down to the relapse which our poor girl had a week ago and which became known to us in a terrible way – She had apparently quite recovered and arrangements were made for their going abroad and now everything is upset.⁶ I warned her husband that this was very likely but did not sufficiently take the warning to myself.

You are taking a world of trouble for me – and Donnelly writes I am to do as I like so far as they are concerned, I have heard nothing from the Home Office, and I suppose it would be proper for me to write if I want any more leave. I really hardly know what to do. I can't say I feel very fit for the hurly burly of London just now – but I am not sure that the wholesomest thing for me would not be at all costs to get back to some engrossing work – If my poor girl were well, I could perhaps make something of the dolce far niente – but at present, one's mind runs to her when it is not busy in something else.

I expect we shall be here a week or ten days more – at any rate, this address is safe – afterwards to Florence. What am I to do in the Riviera? Here & in Florence there is always some distraction – You see the problem is complex.

1885

I am glad that White's business is settled – I should like to have altered & reviewed the duties of the Asst Secretary – so as to make him less of a clerk & more of an accountant to the secretaries.⁷

My wife who is very lively, thanks you for your letter (which I have answered) & joins with me in love to Mrs Foster & yourself.

Ever yours

T. H. H.

¹ Thomas Fowler (1832–1904), philosopher, Wykeham professor of logic at Oxford.

² George Granville Bradley (1821–1903), Dean of Westminster from 1881 to 1902.

³ Henry John Stephen Smith (1826–1883), mathematician.

⁴ Thomas Archer Hirst became FRS in 1861 and was elected to council in 1864.

⁵ (Mervyn Herbert) Nevil Story-Maskelyne (1823–1911), professor of mineralogy at Oxford.

⁶ See letters 144 and 149.

⁷ White had just retired as assistant secretary.

152

Huxley Papers 4:238

Shelford

Cambs, England

Jan 9 85

My dear Huxley

We have crossed the Rubicon! Donnelly being of opinion that a movement to get your leave extended would not create a difficulty about the pension.

I saw Andrew last night and after listening patiently to a lecture on his views on the structure of the lung from 10 to 11.30 pm, came away with a certificate in my pocket. This I presented at the Home Office this morning stating that I was authorised to do so by Mrs Huxley. G. Lushington¹ was not in so I could not hear anything further about it. I also assisted Andrew in the concoction of a private letter from himself to the great H.O. Panjandrum, further urging the extension of the leave. So I have some hope that the R.S. will have no chance of seeing their P. this side Easter – I had seen Andrew in the morning when he told me some disquieting news about Mrs Collier – so having a few minutes to spare I ran up to 4 M. Pl. & found Miss Nettie² – quite the mistress of the house – doing accounts on the drawing room table, as all young house keepers ought to do (her little experience of a writer's mistressship will increase her value to the happy young About to be whoever he will be) – & was greatly comforted by her statement which had all the air of being authentic. She insists that Maidee after the relapse is distinctly better than ever she has been before – & that excellent token, she has begun to take to her painting. Nettie further reported that Savage³ had seen her and while prophesying the

relapse which has occurred insists that she is going to get quite well. I know Savage and though, through the impulse to be true to his name, he succeeds in bearing a rather rough outside, I have very great confidence in his skill & judgement. So Pater amans amatusque, I think it is high time you looked sharp, and worked your orders pretty smart, or else the filia a ague will get well before you – and with your age and experience to say nothing of your knowledge of physiology, you ought to be ashamed of allowing this.

I am glad you have got to Rome and if that galy R. H. Scott⁴ would leave off irritating the clerk of the weather & let you (& us) have some decent sunny days, you may find the wherewith to amuse you. They were some people those old Romans, & that's a fact – & the “dying gladiator” makes you feel inside out – only don't go on the Palatine in the afternoon & stay there after sunset.

I suppose you will move on to Firenze after a while – I wish you would make Young's acquaintance & ask him what hotel to go to – he lived many years in Florence & knows it and the Hotels – in any case don't go to the Pace.

We have got a Ctee to see about Troubleyou's successor – they have reported in favour of Rix⁵ – & propose to advertise a successor to Rix. He, H. Rix seems very happy – and there is a kind of jerky spring in his walk which leads me to suspect that some young woman somewhere has been led or will soon be led to look out for domestic furniture in consequence of the Ctee's report. Evans is very vigorous and jovial & Gabriel is as he always is & no one else can be.

I have wiped off the Training Colleges – they are rather better this year – and am struggling with the figures for the Histology chapter in the Infant.

Of course – I knew it before – but I did not know it quite so fully that there is not a single illustration in any book which shews what you want to show & what ought to be shewn. As for muscle & nerve I am in despair, & shall have I think to draw some myself – but I am going to have another search tomorrow.

You are not forgotten at the Athenaeum. Last night I reclined in a corner of the Famatorium – while a select company were telling each other stories – there was a race for point in the stories – & one old gentleman won the crown & silenced all the rest by the riddle touching Adam & Eve which the Lord Mayor asked you – In justice to the teller I ought to state that he duly [quoted] the authority. Let us hear that you have thrown away the [in diurni] pill box as being no longer wanted – & are lifting high the Chianti flask.

Ever thine
M. Foster

¹ Godfrey Lushington (1832–1907), legal assistant under-secretary at the Home Office. He became permanent under-secretary in 1885.

² Huxley's daughter, Henrietta (1863–1940).

³ Sir George Savage (1842–1921), psychiatrist.

⁴ Robert Henry Scott (1833–1916), meteorologist.

⁵ Herbert Rix (1850–1906) was appointed assistant secretary to the Royal Society, replacing Walter White who had resigned the previous year. See letter 143.

Huxley Papers 4:241

Shelford
Cambs
Jan. 14. 85

Dear Huxley

The official letter explaining your leave for two months from Feb. 13th – reached me this morning and I posted it off to you at once. I have written to Lushington telling him I have done so, & saying he would doubtless hear from you very soon. I received on Monday yours dated Jan. 8th – of course our letters crossed – I think your report of yourself is a good one on the whole – & that you mean to get better & live to a ripe old age.

I have not heard anything more about Mrs Collier – but I trust that the very shocking news of the death of her husband's cousin – R. Collier's niece – will not affect her for bad.¹ Since she is not coming out my Riviera suggestion falls to the ground – it won't do for you to be boxed up among invalids & flâneurs with only Monaco as a distraction. I should not if I were you leave Rome till you are tired – & should make a good long stay at Florence. And I think it would suit your book – if the weather ceases to be exceptional – to pay flying visits to some of the old cities – Orvieto etc. etc. – and if all goes well, at the end of March & beginning of April the southern Alps will be becoming pleasant – I can strongly recommend Riva.

Can you return to the old mine so far as to write a few words of preface for an *Infant*?² Collings has got nearly all the drawings now & I shall soon bustle it out. I have felt driven to modify your historical nomenclature – would you care to see a proof as it stands now.

I must confess too that my wish all along has been that the title page should have no change – it would break all the old association to alter it – Please let it stand – as to my share of plunder. We can easily arrange that.

My love to Mrs Huxley, tell her that I think she & I have managed the extension scheme very well.

Ever thine
M. Foster

¹ Lilian Collier, niece of Sir Robert Collier was found shot on January 12. *The Times* initially reported suicide, however a verdict of accidental death was given by the coroner's jury.

² A new revised edition of *Lessons in elementary physiology*, first published in 1866.

154

ALS H297

Hotel Victoria
Via dei due Macelli
Jan 16 1885

My dear Foster

It seems to me that I am giving my friends a world of trouble – but as the Irishwoman to whom my wife gave a pair of old breeches of mine said “I hope the Lord will make it up to ye.”

I have had a bad week of it and the night before last was under the impression that I was about to succumb shortly to a complication of maladies – & moreover that a wooden box that my wife had just had made would cost thousands of pounds in the way of payment for extra luggage before we reached home. I do not know which hypochondriacal possession was the more depressing. I can laugh at it now but I really was extraordinarily weak & ill.

We had made up our minds to bolt from Rome to Florence at once, when I suddenly got better – and today am all right – So as we hear of snow at Florence we shall stop where we are – It has been raining cats & dogs here & the Tiber rose 40 ft & inundated the low grounds – But “cantabit elevatus” it can’t touch us, & at any rate the streets are washed clean – The climate is mild here. We have a capital room & all the sunshine that is to be had plus a good fire when needful and at worst one can always get a breezy walk on the Pincio hard by.

However about the leave. Am I to do anything or nothing? I am dying to get back to steady occupation & English food & the sort of regimen one can maintain in one’s own house. On the other hand, I stand in fear of the bitter cold of February & early March – and still more of the thousand & one worries of London outside one’s work – So I suppose it will be better if I keep away till Easter or at any rate to the end of March. But I must hear something definite from the H.O. I have written to Donnelly to the same effect.

My poor Marian’s relapse did not do us any good, for all that I expected it – However the last accounts are very favourable.

I wrote to Evans the other day about a re-arrangement of the duties of the Secretary & Asst Secretary – I thought it was better to write to him than to you on that subject – & I begged him to discuss the matter with the officers. It is quite absurd that Stokes & you should waste your time in press drudgery.

We are very prudent here – and the climate suits us both, especially my wife, who is so vigorous that I depute her to go & see the Palazzi & tell me all about them when she comes back. Old Rome is endlessly interesting to me and I can always potter about & find occupation. I think I shall turn antiquary – it’s just the occupation for a decayed naturalist – though you need not tell the Treasurer I say so.

With our love to Mrs Foster & yourself

Ever yours
T. H. H.

155

ALS H298

Hotel Victoria – Rome
Via dei due Macelli
Feb 1 1885

My dear Foster

Anything more disgraceful than the way in which I have left your letter of more than a fortnight in age unanswered, I don't know – I thought the wife had written about the leave (& she thought I had, as she has told you) but I knew I had not answered the questions about the title – still less considered the awful incubus (x 10,000 dinners by hepatic deep [objection/objective]) of the preface

There is such a thing as justice in this world – not much of it, but still some – and it is partly on this ground & partly because I want you, in view of future eventualities, to have a copyright in the book – that I propose we should join our names.

Of course, if you would really rather not, for any good reason you may have, I have nothing further to say – But I don't think that the sentimental reason is a good one – and unless you have a better I wish you would let the original proposal stand.

However, having stated the case afresh I leave it for you to say yes or no & shall abide by your decision without further discussion.

As to the Preface – if I am to write it, please send me the old Preface – I think the book was published in 1864 – or was it 1866? & it ought to be come of age or nearly so.

You might send me the histological chapter – not that I am going to alter anything, but I should like to see how it looks.

I will knock the Preface off at once, as soon as I hear from you.

The fact is, I have been much better in the course of the last few days – the weather has been sunshiny but cool & bracing & I have taken to quinine – Tried Clark's strychnine, but it did not answer so well.

I am in hopes that I have taken a turn for the better and that there may yet be the making of something better than a growling hypochondriacal old invalid about me – But I am most sincerely glad that I am not obliged to be back 10 days hence – there is not much capital accumulated yet.

I find that the Italians have been doing an immense deal in prehistoric archaeology of late years & far more valuable work than I imagined – But it is very difficult to get at – and as Loescher's¹ head man told me the other day when I asked for an Italian book published in Rome “Well you see it is so difficult to get Roman books in Rome.”

I am ashamed to be here two months without paying my respects to the Lincei, and I am going today – The unaccountable creatures meet at 1 o'clock – lunch time!

Best love from my wife & self to Mrs Foster & yourself

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

¹ An Italian publisher.

156

Huxley Papers 4:246

Shelford

Feb. 7. 85

My dear Huxley

Please receive herewith as the bagmen say, all the prefaces prefixed to the last edition. We are not so old as you think – sweet nineteen – no more. Aren't you old enough & wise enough to know that the only valid reasons in this world are sentimental ones – it is so as regards the title. As to copyright I will talk to old Mac. about it – & if my name is necessary it shall be on the title page – but otherwise I hope this time you will let me have my own way – just for an occasional treat.

Your letter to me & one to Donnelly, which I saw last week, were very pleasing for both seem to show that you are really now making progress at which we all rejoice. And it is especially cheering to know that you won't be back in London next week, much as it would gladden our hearts to see your face. I sometimes feel inclined to break my determination not to go out of England this spring and to ask Mrs F. to take me out to meet you on your return home after Easter.

We are going on pretty fairly at B.H.¹ Klein read a paper on cholera on Thursday.² He has I think upset Koch – at least I don't see where he has made a mistake – but his results are purely negative. However we could hardly expect any more.

I have got the soiree Ctee to approve of an informal Reunion (not a Reception for no one is to receive) on the evening of the council in March – & the Soc. is going to provide cigars!!

Moseley has written me a letter proposing that the library should be open in the evening and that a room or rooms for writing etc or conversation should be set apart for the use of fellows – that will probably come on for council on the 19th Feb. If you feel disposed to write a letter, you might indite your views for me or for Evans to read to Council – but don't bother. I have written to Fowler & we are going to have Smith's bust – Gabriel seems anxious not to lessen his proof reading duties – I have warned Rix that I shall use him a good deal – but I doubt if G. G. will much.

1885

What a terrible business is this Gordon trouble – it really was on Thursday a day of mourning, humiliation and rage – when the news came.³

Please tell Mrs Huxley with my love that I don't mind waiting a fortnight if two letters are always sent instead of one.

Ever thine

M. Foster

I have told them to keep two pages clear for preface.

¹ Burlington House.

² E. E. Klein, 'The relation of bacteria to Asiatic cholera', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*, 1884–1885, **38**: 154–157. For Klein, see letter 46.

³ General Charles George Gordon (1833–1885) had been killed on 26 January at Khartoum, along with the entire garrison, by Sudanese Mahdists following a ten-month siege.

157

ALS H299

Rome

Feb 14 1885

My dear Foster

Voilà the preface – a work of great labour! & which you may polish & alter as you like, all but the last paragraph¹ – You see I have caved in. I like your asking to have your own way “for once.” My wife takes the same line, does whatever she pleases & then declares I leave her no initiative.

If I talk of public affairs – I shall simply fall a blaspheming. I see the “Times” holds out about Gordon² & does not believe he is killed. Poor fellow – I wish I could believe that his own conviction (as he told it me) is true & that death only means a larger government for him to administer – Anyhow it is better to wind up that way than to go growling out one's existence as a ventose hypochondriac – dependent upon the condition of a few square inches of mucous membrane for one's Heaven or Hell.

As to private affairs – I think I am getting solidly but very slowly better. In fact I can't say there is much the matter with me, except that I am weaker than I ought to be and that a sort of weary indolence hangs about me like a fog – Marian is wonderfully better and her husband has taken a house for them at Norwood. If I could be rejoiced at anything I should be at that – but it seems to me as if since that awful journey when I first left England – “the springs was broke”, as that vagabond tout said at Naples.

It has turned very cold here & we are uncertain when to leave for Florence, but probably next week. The Carnival is the most entirely childish bosh I have ever met with among grown people.

Want to finish this now for post but will write again speedily – Moseley’s proposition is entirely to my mind & I have often talked of it. The R.S. rooms ought to be house of call & quasi-club for all F.R.S. in London.

Wife is bonny barring a cold. It is as much as I can do to prevent her sporting a mask & Domino!

With best love

Ever yours

T. H. H.

¹ In the final paragraph Huxley expressed his obligations to Foster for this edition concluding, “My friend has indeed done so much during my enforced idleness, that I should have been better satisfied if he would have permitted me to associate his name with mine on the title-page.”

² *The Times* stated that although “something of a very serious kind happened at Khartoum on the 26th of January”, much was left to conjecture and that as yet there was no reliable information on the fate of General Gordon (Feb. 14, 1885, p. 9, issue 31370, col. A).

158

Huxley Papers 4:250

Shelford

Cambs

March 8 [1885]

Dear Huxley

“What can a man do better” on his natal day than scribble off a few lines to his “guide philosopher & friend.” Forty nine years ago (!!) my mother was in travail with this child about this time, & the dear old woman still lives to wish him happy returns. For once the elements are with me in so far that a bright sun is shining and in spite of a sharp frost in the night the air is soft & balmy. And I am hoping that Italian actinic rays are also stimulating your skin, and by mysterious vaso motor and metabolic nerves are reflexly whipping up that tardy liver of yours to vigorous work. I am hoping that the Firenze air will shew that Rome was doing you good after all, though you did not know it till you had left the Seven Hills.

We are going on as usual at B. H. (I always feel that these initials are unhappily suggestive of various bad names, but it is convenient to use them). The man James¹ whom we have appointed in Rix place, promises very well indeed. W. W. did not like our passing over his black nephew who works on scientific catalogue, but we did right nevertheless.

On Thursday the 19th we are to have a Free & Easy – when incense will ascend. I am naturally anxious that it should be successful. We have also passed through Soirée & House Ctee resolutions to open library up to 6 pm (closing on Saturdays at 1 pm), to keep the little room on ground floor open from 10 to 6 for use of Fellows, where they

1885

may do what they d— please, & buy a lot of comfortable chairs & rugs so that a Fellow may feel that his society does not hate his presence. W. W. shakes his head and says the R.S. is rushing down the steep place, but Caela² backs me up, & Gabriel accepts the inevitable.

I have worked off all the questions for S.K. I got Adam to help me in the Adv. & Honours [matters]. I didn't want to bother you.

The preface is in print, without change – but those stupid Clays are very tardy with the last sheets.

We are having (outside the Soc, Dyer & myself) a tussle with the Home Sec. about the Glasgow Botany Chair.³ Otherwise all is serene.

Between you & me & Mrs Huxley I want April to come. I want to see your face, & see if between us we can't complete the cure of you.

Ever thine

M. Foster

¹ A Mr James was appointed to the post of clerk to the Royal Society, replacing Herbert Rix who had become assistant secretary.

² Possibly a nickname for Evans.

³ Frederick Orpen Bower (1855–1948) was appointed Regius Professor of Botany at the University of Glasgow in 1885.

159

ALS H300

Hotel de Milano

Florence

March 12 1885

My dear Foster

My wife and I send you our hearty good wishes (antedated by four days). I am not sure we ought not to offer our best thanks to your mother for providing us with as staunch a friend as people ever were blessed with. It is possible that she did not consider that point nine and forty years ago; but we are just as grateful as if she had gone through it all on our account.

We start on our way homeward tomorrow or next day, by Bologna to Venice first & then to England by the way we came – taking it easy – The Brenner is a long way round & I hear very cold. I think we may stay a few days at Lugano, which I liked very much when there before. Florence is very charming but there is not much to be said for the climate – my wife has been bothered with sore throat, to which she is especially liable ever since we have been here. Old residents console her with the remark that Florentine sore throat is a regular thing in the spring. The alternations of heat & cold are detestable. So we stand thus – Naples bad for both – Rome good for her bad for me – Florence, bad

129

for her – baddish for me. Venice has to be tried, but stinks & mosquitoes are sure to render it impossible as soon as the weather is warm. Siena is the only place that suited both of us and I don't think that would exactly answer to live in. Nothing like foreign travel for making one content with home.

I shall have to find a country lot suited to my fortunes when I am paid off. Couldn't you let us have your gardener's cottage? My wife understands poultry and I shall probably have sufficient strength to open the gate & touch my hat to the Dons as they drive up. I am afraid Ethel¹ is not steady enough for waiting maid or I would offer her services.

Did I tell you that Nettie has made up her mind to train for a concert singer? She has a magnificent voice and Madame [Seeman] who is teaching her is confident of her success. We don't much like it but the girl is ambitious & frets over what she considers an objectless life – so I feel bound to put my prejudices in my pocket & let her have her head – putting my foot down at the limit between the concert & the stage. We have a formal convention on that point.

They are good children as we were, and I would not wish them altered – except for their own happiness – but for that I am afraid they inherit too much storm & strife from the paternal – to say nothing of the maternal side.

I am glad to hear of the improvement with society arrangements – especially as the smokery has been determined in my absence – I heard from Evans yesterday & wrote just now to say I had some doubt about shutting up on Saturday afternoon as it is often the only chance a Gov't official (I speak feelingly) has of being absent from his post. However I see the difficulty.

Miss [Rush] & her friend have been very kind here & I am afraid they will say I am very churlish, as I have called only once. But I really can't talk much. Siglioli has made me promise to go & see Mantegazza² with him this afternoon & I am repenting & my wife is scolding me for what she is pleased to call my lack of resolution.

I have so little the matter that I am ashamed to play invalid – and yet seeing people & talking with them even for a short time, wearies me inexpressibly – I begin to understand Herbert Spencer's condition better than I did.

My address at Venice will be Pension Suisse, Canal Grande where I was in the autumn. We may stop a day or two at Bologna but not more – Stay at Venice will depend upon how it suits. Any how we shall work back slowly and stop a few days at Lugano – which took my fancy very much when I was there in the autumn – Get home by 10th or 11th April.

You said something about the possibility of taking a trip out – is that upon the cards still Miss [Rush] seemed to think not.

I am rejoiced to hear that the lessons & the questions are launched – they loom large to me as gigantic undertakings in which a dim & speculative memory suggests I once took part – but probably it is a solar myth and I am too sluggish to feel much compunction for the extra trouble you have had.

1885

Perhaps I shall revive when my foot is on my native heath in the shady groves of the Evangelist.³

The wife is out photograph hunting – nothing diminishes her activity – otherwise she would join in love & good wishes to Mrs Foster & yourself.

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

¹ Ethel (1866–1941) was Huxley's youngest child.

² Paolo Mantegazza (1831–1910), Italian neurologist, physiologist and anthropologist.

³ St John's Wood.

160

Huxley Papers 4:252

Shelford, Cambs

March 20 1885

Dear Huxley

It was very delightful to have such a long & such a cheery letter from you and I must just send a line in return though I don't feel sure whether it will reach you, for I rather guess Venezia will be rather too cold to suit either you or Mrs Huxley.

It is also delightful that we can now count the days "till the holidays" that is till the time when we may see you once more in the flesh – & bring old England to bear on completing your cure.

Our free & easy at the R.S. came off last night – but it was very poorly attended. This has rather discouraged me; on the other hand those who did come spoke in terms of very decided approval of the steps – & insisted that next time it would be crowded, the small attendance being due to the Fellows not understanding what it was. It seems to take a good deal of Kinetic energy to get anything in the heads of the F.R.S.'s as in those of other people.

Very mysterious are draughts & currents. We put aside the little Committee room on the ground floor (Transit of Venus room) for smoking. In that room the odour of tobacco was hardly distinguishable – but a most diabolic pot house blast swept up the grand staircase & whirled about in the doorway of the "Saloon" where the P.R.S. stands & makes his bow!!!

It was pitiable to see W. W. walking about distractedly the whole of Thursday morning (& probably for days before) with a bill for spittoons in his hand – asking Has it indeed come to this?

Owing to the uncertainty of the post I have not sent you the proofs of Elem. Lessons – but worked them off at once.

Give my love to your host at Pension Suisse if you are still there.

No chance of meeting you on the way home. My mistress whom I obey in all things says we are to go to Bath for 2 days & to the Isle of W for 7 days – & then home. No crossing the channel.

Best love to your Missus.

Ever thine

M. Foster

161

ALS H301

Pavilion Hotel

Folkestone

April 8 1885

My dear Foster

Behold us back after half a gale of wind in our teeth all the way from Boulogne. We are not going up to town till Saturday morning as we shall both be glad of a rest.

As I doubted that both the Treasurer & the Secretaries might be holiday making I have written to Rix to ask him unless there is a good reason to the contrary to postpone my Council ordered for 16th until 23rd.

Reason being that Leonard¹ is going to be married at Oxford on the 16th and the venerable P. must needs be there. I left him to fix any day after the 12th & of course he has chosen the most inconvenient – but it is my fault for not barring Thursdays.

I should not like to be absent from the first Council after my return – and the fact that 16th was this Thursday did not dawn upon me until last night in Paris.

I have written to Evans but as he is likely to be away I wish you would ask Stokes if there is any cause or impediment & if not write to Rix to change the day.

As for myself I have nothing very satisfactory to say – By the oddest chance we met Andrew Clark in the boat & he says I am a very bad colour – which I take it is the outward & visible sign of the inward & carnal state – I may sum that up by saying that there is nothing the matter but weakness & indisposition to do anything, together with a perfect genius for making mountains out of molehills.

After two or three fine days at Venice – we have had nothing but wet or cold – or hot & cold at the same time, as in that prodigious imposture the Riviera – Of course it was the same story everywhere “perfectly unexampled season”.

Moral. if you are perfectly strong and well brave Italy – but in search of health stop at home.

1885

It has been raining cats & dogs & Folkestone is what some people would call dreary – I could go & roll in the mud with satisfaction that it is English mud.

It will be jolly to see you again – Wife unites in love.

Ever yours
T. H. Huxley

¹ Huxley's son Leonard (1860–1933) married Julia Arnold, Matthew Arnold's niece.

162

ALS H302

4 Marlborough Place
Abbey Road, N.W.
April 12 1885

My dear Foster

The Council business is all right. Poor Rix was rather in a fix – because suspected me of meddling & wrote to tell him to let things be – but that blessed invention the telegraph settled it.

It is very jolly to be home & I feel better already. Clark has just been here overhauling me – and he seems very confident that he shall screw me up.

I have renounced dining out & smoking (!!!) by way of preliminaries – God only knows whether I shall be permitted more than the smell of a mutton chop for dinner – But I have great faith in Andrew who set me straight before when other “physicians’ aid was vain.”

It will be very jolly to see you – I am bound to be at Home Office on Tuesday afternoon up to 4 o'clock. If you don't turn up by then I will go on to Council meeting of Athenaeum where you have only to send up & I will come down.

Ever yours
T. H. Huxley