My dear Will ¹

We were very glad to get your last two letters (which came 3 days apart) as we thought you might be completely snowed up or frozen or starved like the poor people in New York! And you last letter telling of your poor horses death is also very sad. No doubt your cowboy friends could have told you that horses cannot live so high up in winter without special care, but they thought it better for you to learn by dear-bought experience which lasts longer. Your experience on snow-shoes must also have been instructive. I expect they were much too heavy & unnecessarily long. Is there no place lower down on your route back you can go to for the rest of the winter? Though when this reaches you it will be spring in all decent countries! We have no news here. "Ardmore" not yet settled as to when to be sold or price asked, & I suppose nothing will be done for another month. I am still slowly hunting up information about the Greenells ’ & Wallaces. By the bye, did you take with you the old steel-headed seal (cannon-balls) or if not [[2]] do you know where it is? Also, Ma says you have one of the family rings with you. If so tell me exactly what is engraved on it, if anything. I told you I think about the big "Wallace Book" I have got. I have also found out that the old painting from which the portrait in your life of Wallace was taken, & which seems to me to be in all probability genuine, is in the possession of a clergyman in Dorsetshire, up beyond Dorchester. So I shall go there some time in the summer if he will show it me & let me have a photo of it, for the book.
I have got the list of Bulbs seeds &c. from Ruskin, and have sent them 18, 1/2D for seeds & a few bulbs, and half for a pair of braces-- the famous "Ruskin suspenders"! I am sorry the books I sent you have not come. I sent all about a week apart, and I have no doubt they have all been annexed in some Post office on the way. Books and Mags. are too tempting, and they know that nothing will be done about them. It is evident they must not be sent without being registered. Two or 3 weeks back I think I sent you a bit of "Chronicle" with my letter about White men in the Tropics. A week ago the Edition of the New York "Independent" wrote to ask me to write an article for them on the same subject which he said was of great interest just now-- so I did, & I have asked him to send you a copy of the number it appears in.

We are much pleased with your new idea of starting business in Bournemouth. It certainly looks promising & right to do well. It might be possible to get a workshop in some out-of-the-way place-- up a yard for instance-- quite cheap, & then arrange for a shop window or half of one to show a few things and receive orders, with telephone connection. This would save expense at first and if Mac lodged in the same house it would work well, while you could of course live here till you got a good business. You might start the electric clocks for the big hotels &c. finish up and patent my Argand candle lamp; patent here Mac's "Coal-consumption automatic recorder" & lots of other things. I still believe there is something in T.[homas] Sim's idea of the geared-saddle bicycle which you could give a trial, &c. &c. &c. &c. &c.!

Did you notice that wonderfully clever story about the Japanese & the Englishman, by the Whatnot? about 2-3 weeks back in the Clarion? I have been reading lately Craigs History of Ralahine, for the first time-- the cooperative farm in Ireland in 1831-33-- and I was so struck by it that I am writing an article to make it known and enforce its teachings. Mr. Craig, then quite a young man, had a genius for organisation, and his experiment proved a lot of things about Socialism which are constantly denied or said to be "impossible". I think many of the socialists know nothing of this most instructive & successful experiment in spite of most unpromising conditions & universal antagonism at starting. In former letters I have said what I had to day about your getting on to California as soon as possible.

Your affectionate Pa | Alfred R. Wallace [signature]
P.S. Your box of tools came about 2 weeks back. It is in your room.

ENDNOTES

1. ARW’s son, William Greenell Wallace (1871-1951).


3. The Clarion was a socialist weekly established by Robert Blatchford in 1890.


5. This is written vertically at the left hand side of page 4.

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