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## Documents Online

**Title:** Letter from William Wilkins to His Children

**Date:** May 17, 1835

**Location:** O-Friends-1982-2

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May 17<sup>th</sup> 35.

St Petersburg, Sunday -

My dear six children -

Yesterday I wrote to Mother complaining of being a little unwell and depressed in spirits - I ought not to have done so - but it is a relief to me, were to complain - This evening I feel quite well again - I thought we were going to have fine weather - but to day it is cold & this morning (19<sup>th</sup> May) it again snowed a little - This morning the first steam boat took its departure for Lubek - & last evening the first boat from that place arrived here - and a happy arrival for me - It brought me letters from Mother, Maria and Charles, dated on the 21<sup>st</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> of March - and acknowledging the rec<sup>t</sup>. of my long letter to Maria dated on New Year's day - By this it appears my letters are a very long while on the way before they reach you - Letters are generally rec<sup>d</sup>. here in 5 & 6 weeks from New York by the Merchant's -

My dear Maria -

I thank you for your letter - it gave me much pleasure - It is written in the way you should always write to me - familiarly, & telling me, as you would talk to me, all the little news and whatever comes into your head - I assure, with great satisfaction, that you are improving at school and anxious to learn - You must understand me - that I have never intended to rebuke you, or find fault - I love you dearly, and am anxious, day and night, for your improvement - I am solicitous that you should be industrious now, and learn all you can at your present age, so that you may have more time hereafter to amuse yourself - more leisure for pleasure & enjoyment when I return to be your bed - I am glad to find by your letter and Mother's that you can work tapestry as well as the young ladies of this city - I shall tomorrow amuse myself in purchasing for you patterns and wools of yarn which will be sent in the box for Mother by the first American vessel - In that box you will also find for yourself, a port folio, a watch, chain of hooks - I am picking up some other things for you which I shall carry home with me - I rec<sup>d</sup>. the smugness of your person - but not of your foot nor that of your Mother - I desire both - but I sometimes think that my scolding and complaining letters are not always need - This is not the place for you which to send you any dresses - They are dear, since the materials brought from France - Do you take care of the little things I send you? Or, are they very soon broken, and thrown carelessly into a drawer, accompanied by that abominable family phrase - "I don't care"? Careless and slovenly young ladies are horrible things - You should always recollect that, what is worth buying and sending a great distance, is worth preserving - We shall see - your little sun-tan, your watch & port folio, &c. will be an experiment upon you.

My dear Charles -

To you also, my son, I am indebted for a kind



and affectionate letter. For this letter, I thank you; but I thank  
you still more for being so good a boy - Mother always writes  
to me how good and obedient you are. Continue so, my  
dear boy and Heaven reward you! I wish you could  
fully know how pleased, how delightful, how happy I am  
when I hear of your continued goodness. I am glad to  
hear from yourself how you are going on at school. I am  
very anxious about you learning the languages - You are now  
in Virgil, & I hope you have commenced, or very soon will  
commence the Greek. You tell me of your intention to  
ride to the farm. Take care what horses you mount.  
Run no risk with a wild or dangerous horse. Tell mother  
- or she must watch you well in this particular. So Ma-  
ria tells me old Mr. Cowan is dead, and one of his sons  
has been arrested & in jail for murder of his flock! There  
is a lesson and an example for you, my dear son. See the  
evil to which bad young men come! See in this unfortunate  
young man the consequences of being disobedient - of fro-  
licking and of dissipation and idleness! In the box  
I have mentioned you will find for yourself, a coat, a  
cap and a small gold watch. The watch, is sent to  
convince you that I believe you to be a good boy - You  
must, therefore, not be uneasy about my opinion of you.  
You ask me to bring you home a Newfoundland dog - I will,  
if I can procure one. I believe a finely bred one is difficult  
to be obtained. I saw a very large & beautiful jet black  
one at the porter's gate of Chatsworth in England, the fine  
seat of the Duke of Devonshire. You seem to regret that I  
had not brought you with me. I often times wish I had. But, still  
you are better at home with your mother - I should always have been  
afraid of your getting unwell, and then you would have had  
in me a wretched nurse of a distracted parent. You ask me  
about my coming home. I can only answer by telling you that  
not one moment of life passes without thinking of you & desiring  
to see you and anxiously longing for my home. It is on ac-  
-count of that very home - for you all, my beloved children that  
I am here and suffering the pain of separation.

My dear Pet - This is Tuesday, the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, it  
has been snowing all day! See what a climate your father  
lives in. Tell Maria that to day I went out in the storm  
and bought for her patterns, <sup>4/8</sup> canvas and yarn for embroidery.  
I paid for them one hundred <sup>4/8</sup> roubles, that is, twenty <sup>three</sup> dollars.  
This shows how dear every thing is here. But, I am anxious to  
do every thing in my power to please & gratify my children. They  
are all so very good. Do you often think of me & talk of me?  
I have just been delighted to receive from Boston a basket full  
of newspapers, books & pamphlets sent to me by Mr. Henshaw.  
He is very kind. In the Box, my dear Pet, I shall send your  
ring and pocket. With both of which, I know, you will be  
pleased.

My dear Bidd.

I am glad to hear on your account that Mr.  
Stone is about to remove his school back to the Hill, for



you will then again be able to visit your home more fre-  
-quently - I shall buy you in the box a new coat and a  
cap - I shall send three caps - one of cloth & two of hair,  
that there may be the better chance of fitting you & Buff.  
Give my affectionate remembrance to your good friend Mr.  
Biddle, and tell him he is a shabby fellow for giving up  
his diary - This comes of rivalry in farming - He is spited  
because he finally he can't come near me as a practical  
agriculturist -

My dear Sophy -

Tell Kit ~~mean~~ to turn her off and leave her  
for my pet when I return home - I suppose she thinks herself too  
old now, as well as great things since she has commenced  
to learn Astronomy, to be father's pet any more - Do you  
still get up at day light, stir the fire & learn your lesson?  
In the Box there will be for you some coral beads and  
rings for your dear little fingers -

My dear Hett -

I suppose you are still a spoiled  
child, nursing after another of her Pat: Well,  
Kit, mother for your father and tell <sup>her</sup> the Box  
will contain some more linen (the only article  
to be had here at a reasonable price) and  
an emerald ring which I have had made for her  
& which will open, & which she will understand  
when she sees it, and I know will value and  
cherish it - I send you also, my dear little  
Hett, coral beads for your neck & rings for your fingers  
and toes - Kiss your Aunt Hollings, and for her and all  
your aunts and uncles & cousins and, in short, all  
"short cake & coffee folks" -

This letter will, in all likelihood, overtake  
letter to Mother of last Saturday, as I shall send  
the steamer back of tomorrow, Wednesday, the 20<sup>th</sup>

God bless you all my dear ones -

Your affectionate father -

Wm Wilkins



LL

Mrs. Wm Wilkins,

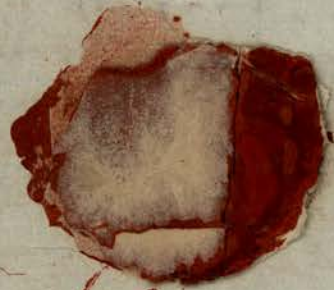
Pittsburgh,

Pennsylvania,

United States.

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Chas. A. ...  
A. ...  
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May 17th '35

St. Petersburg Sunday

My dear six children -

Yesterday I wrote to Mother complaining of being a little unwell and depressed in spirits. I ought not to have done so - but it is a relief to me when I complain. This evening I feel quite well again. I thought we were going to have fine weather, but today it is cold and this morning (17th May) it again snowed a little. This morning the first steam boat took its departure for Lubec and last evening the first boat from that place arrived here - and a happy arrival for me. It brought me letters from Mother, Maria and Charles, dated on the 21st and 23rd of March, and acknowledging the rec't of my long letter to Maria dated on New Year's day. By this it appears my letters are a very long while on the way before they reach you. Letters are generally rec'd here in 5 & 6 weeks from New York by the Merchants.

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My Dear Charles,

To you also, my son, I am indebted for a kind and affectionate letter. For this letter, I thank you; but I thank you still more for being so good a boy. Mother always writes to me how good and obedient you are. Continue so, my dear boy and Heaven reward you! I wish you could fully know how pleased how delighted, how happy I am when I hear of your continued goodness. I am glad to hear from yourself how you are going on at school. I am very anxious about your learning the languages. You are now in Virgil, and I hope you have commenced, or very soon will commence the greats. You tell me of your intention to ride to the farm. Take care what horses you mount. Know no risk with a wild or dangerous horse. Tell Mother she must watch you well in this particular. So Maria tells me old Mr. Cowan is dead, and one of his sons has been arrested and in jail for murder and has fled! There is a lesson and an example for you, my dear son. See the end to which bad young men come! See in this unfortunate young man the consequences of being disobedient -- of frolicking and of dissipation illness! In the box I have mentioned you will



find for yourself a coat, a cap and a small gold watch. The watch is sent to convince you that I believe you to be a good boy. You must, therefore, not be uneasy about my opinion of you. You ask me to bring you home a Newfoundland dog. I will, if I can procure one. I believe a finely bred one is difficult to be obtained. I saw a very large and beautiful jet black one at the porter's of Chatsworth (?) in England, the fine seat of the Duke of Devonshire. You seem to regret much I had not brought you with me. I oftentimes wish I had. But, still, you are better at home with your mother. I should always have been afraid of your getting unwell, and then you have had in me a wretched nurse and a distracted parent. You ask me about my coming home. I can only answer by telling you that not one moment of life passes without thinking of you and desiring to see you and anxiously longing for my home. It is on account of that very home, for you all, my beloved children that I am here and suffering the pain of separation.

My dear Pet,

This is Tuesday, the 19th of May, and it has been snowing all day! See what a climate your father is living in. Tell Maria that today I went out in the storm and bought her patterns, canvass and yarn for embroidering. I paid for them one hundred & 18 roubles, that is, twenty three and 3/4 dollars. This shows how dear everything is here. But, I am anxious to do everything in my power to please and gratify my children. They are all so very good. Do you often think of me and talk of me? I have just been delighted to receive from Boston a basket full of newspapers, books and pamphlets sent to me by Mr. Henshaw. He is very kind. In the box, my dear Pet, I shall send your ring and locket, with both of which, I know, you will be pleased.

My dear Bidd

I am glad to hear on your account that Mr Stone (?) is about to remove his school back to the hill, for you will then again be able to visit your home more frequently. I shall have for you in the box a new coat and a cap. I shall send three caps, one of cloth and two of hair, that there may be the better chance of fitting you and Hett. Give my affectionate remembrance to your good friend Mr. Biddle, and tell him he is a shabby fellow for giving up his dairy. This comes of rivalry in farming. He is spited because he finds he can't come near them as a practical agriculturist.

My dear Sophy,

Tell Kit I mean to turn her off and have you for my pet when I return home. I suppose she thinks herself too old now, as well as great things since she has commenced to learn Astronomy, to be father's pet any more. Do you still get up at daylight, stir the fire and learn your lessons? In the box there will be for you some coral beads and rings for your dear little fingers.

My dear Hett,

I suppose you are still a spoiled child, running after Mother and her Pet: well, kiss Mother for your father and tell her the box will contain some more linen (the only article to be had here at a reasonable price) and an emerald ring which I have had made for her and which will open, and which she will understand when she sees it, and I know will value and cherish it. I send you also, my dear little Hett, coral beads for your neck and rings for your fingers and toes. Kiss your aunt Hollingsworth for me and all your aunts and uncles and cousins and, in short, all "short cake and coffee folks".

*This letter will in all likelihood overtake a letter to Mother of last Saturday, as I shall send it on the steam boat tomorrow, Wednesday, May 30*

*God bless you all, my dear children.*