

Dinton - Dalwood Letters

'Dinton' 14th November, 1830.

My dear Margaret,

So few events have happened since Charlotte wrote in October that I hardly know what to say to you. But as we wish to write constantly once a month, I will on no account omit to do so. We have made a list of all your wants, and Mama is endeavouring to collect them, so I hope they will soon follow this letter. We shall be glad to know if the thrashing machine answers your expectations. Hands are scarce with you and so it must be desirable. But those in Kent who possess them run the risk of having their ricks and barns set on fire. There have been disturbances there for some weeks, and it appears that the Magistrates are to blame in not taking active measures to prevent a continuance of them. There have been disturbances likewise in Surrey and Sussex. I hope they will soon be put down, but I cannot help thinking myself, though I am no great politician, that these riots are chiefly owing to the Revolution in France and the disaffected spirit on the continent, which is very catching. There is no want of employment here; as Papa mentioned yesterday, there are not hands enough, and they have been obliged to hire some hands from Compton to work on the roads. But I believe in general agriculturalists are not accused of rioting, but I fear there is a set as we used to call Radicals who are trying to create disaffection in the country.

Uncle and cousin Tom are here; the former remarkably well. He was much delighted by seeing another Grovely fox killed, which seemed quite to rouse him and remind him of former times when he acted as 'whipper-in' to Papa.

We are much annoyed at a mad dog having bitten several dogs in Teffont. The first that showed symptoms of hydrophobia was a little one of Ewance, the blacksmith. It was in generally particularly quiet, and, what was very unusual, was missing from home. It was afterwards found to have been round Chilmark, where it unfortunately bit a little girl in the face. On its return Ewance thought there was something so odd in its behaviour that he wisely chained it up, and it died in a day or two in a dreadful state. The child had been sent to Southampton as the only chance of it escaping the dreadful malady, as it was bitten too near the eye for an operation to be performed. Papa and Alexander have both been to Teffont trying to persuade the people of the necessity of killing their dogs, and Papa set an example by ordering a very fine foxhound puppy of William's that was at the 'Black Horse' to be hanged. I hope these precautions will prevent it spreading.

We are, thank God, quite well at home, but people in general are suffering from colds; the little Codringtons have all been poorly, and by a letter we had from Louisa this morning we find her little ones have not escaped. You cannot think how much interest I feel in your little people, and I often picture them to myself. Little Weeta will, no doubt, be a quiet, amiable little soul, and will soon be useful in a variety of ways. Alward is no doubt a fine-spirited fellow, but a little kindly check will prevent him becoming unruly.

To compensate us for a very wet summer we have had the finest autumn that ever was known. The crop of potatoes is prodigious. We are very busy making an addition to the eastern side of our garden, which I think will be a great improvement. It is to be called the Bee Garden, as I had a house made for my bees there; I have taken them under my special protection as I thought they were neglected, and I intend to have a bed of Thyme planted in front of the bee house, as they are particularly fond of it.

The shrubs on the west side of the house have made immense shoots, and some of them bid fair to equal the old trees that grow in front of the Justice Room.

I must conclude with my very best love,

Mary Ann Wyndham