

NOTES FROM THE LIBRARY

COBBETT'S DUBLIN LETTERS

BY JOHN W. OSBORNE

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Alexander Library has four letters written by the English author and member of parliament William Cobbett from Dublin in September, 1834. They were written during a two months tour in Ireland which Cobbett made in the year before he died.¹ Although he liked the Irish and sympathized with them about their problems,² Cobbett spent much of his time in that country talking about English conditions. The four letters bear out his preoccupation with England.

On September 21, Cobbett wrote a letter to Lord Duncannon (John William Ponsonby), Home Secretary in the Melbourne ministry, pleading for some men from Cobbett's constituency in Lancashire, Oldham, who were sentenced to transportation. Usually a caustic critic of the Whig government, Cobbett here was a conciliatory and wrote of the "humanity and impartiality of the government."

The following day he wrote to his fellow MP from Oldham, John Fielden, a wealthy, humanitarian cotton manufacturer with whom Cobbett was friendly. In this letter he advised Fielden of his letter to Duncannon and noted that misery in Lancashire (where Oldham was located) and Yorkshire was less intense than that which he had seen in Ireland. On September 25, Cobbett wrote to Fielden again, noting this misery in Ireland: "All that you have ever imagined does not equal this."

On September 26, he addressed a long letter to John Dean, whom he had left in charge of his Surrey farm. The missive is vintage Cobbett. It is not really a letter but a series of eighteen numbered statements, beginning with the advice to "keep all my

¹ The most recent biography of Cobbett, George Spater's *William Cobbett: The Poor Man's Friend* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), devotes only two pages to this trip.

² For Cobbett's Irish policy see "William Cobbett and Ireland" by John W. Osborne, *Studies* (Dublin) Summer/Autumn, 1981, pp. 187-195.

letters; *number* then, read them over carefully, and look at them often." Although Dean was an experienced bailiff, Cobbett thought it necessary to instruct him about the minutest details of farm management. The letter is devoid of references to politics and is entirely concerned with the farm. Headed "Directions" (with three underlinings), this letter is not couched in the humble terms of Cobbett's communication to Duncannon and lacks even a statement hoping that Dean is in good health.

Cobbett's letters from Dublin reveal one of his most enduring characteristics: his absorption in the affairs of England regardless of his residence of the moment. This was also true of earlier, and much lengthier, visits to America. Cobbett was English through and through and despite his sympathy for the Irish and genuine distress over conditions in their island, his heart was in England. He could echo Bolingbroke's words in Shakespeare's *Richard II*—"where'er I wander, boast of this I can, though banished, yet a trueborn Englishman."

RUTGERS' MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY

Compiled by CLARK L. BECK, JR.

The Department of Special Collections and Archives of the Rutgers University Libraries house scores of manuscript collections which relate to the history of science and technology. Following is a list of those which are probably the most solid, but the numbers are by no means exhaustive.

1. ROEBLING Collection (45 cubic feet). This is probably the most important manuscript body at Rutgers relating to the history of science and technology. The collection comprises papers of John A. Roebling (1806-1869), Washington A. Roebling (1837-1926), John A. Roebling (1867-1952), Ferdinand W. Roebling (1842-1917), Ferdinand W. Roebling, Jr. (1878-1936), and John A. Roebling's Sons Company, 1876-1960. Included are correspondence; treatises on scientific and metaphysical subjects; reports, measured drawings, specifications, etc., re. suspension bridge building and other engineering projects; family and personal papers; diaries and other memorabilia of the initial century of the Roebling family's

achievements (ca. 1840-ca. 1940). The business papers contain minutes of directors' and stockholders' meetings, stockholders' investment files, investment accounts, financial statements, etc. The Roebbling material is among the most heavily demanded in Special Collections and Archives.

2. Philander BETTS Papers (12 cubic feet). This includes correspondence, reports, pamphlets, blueprints, etc., relating to public utilities, chiefly in New Jersey; material on mechanical and electrical engineering and the U.S. Army Engineer Corps. Betts was the chief engineer for the New Jersey Public Utilities Commission, 1910-1934.

3. Burton Edward LIVINGSTON Papers (10 cubic feet). Comprises correspondence and other papers as professor of plant physiology at the Johns Hopkins University, secretary of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, editor of the *American Scholar*, and member of the National Research Council, 1922-1948.

4. NEW JERSEY ACADEMY OF SCIENCE Records (7 cubic feet). Includes correspondence, minutes, reports, memoranda, financial statements, membership lists, papers re. the American Association for the Advancement of Science, etc., 1955-1979.

5. Wilson Stout HOWELL Papers (1 cubic foot). Features diaries; letter books; reminiscences of early experiences as an associate of Thomas Edison; notes, diagrams, tables, etc., concerning early electric lighting equipment; papers relating to the "Edison Pioneers," a society of engineers who had worked with Edison during the developing stages of electric lighting. The period covered is 1879-1942. Howell worked as a representative of the Edison Electric Light Company, installing and servicing lighting stations in various American cities.

6. Carl F. ADAMS Papers (1 cubic foot). Includes correspondence, clippings, diagrams, photographs, etc., of an early manufacturer and promoter of electric chairs, 1901-1935.

7. Lewis C. BECK Papers (3 cubic feet). Contains correspondence, journals, lectures, etc., of a noted nineteenth century authority on medicine, chemistry, botany, geology, mineralogy and zoology. Beck was professor of chemistry and natural history at Rutgers from 1830 to 1853.

8. George Hammell COOK Papers (20 cubic feet). This ex-

tensive body of material contains letters received, accounts, diaries, field notebooks, etc., pertaining to the New Jersey Geological Survey, agriculture, the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, meadow drainage projects, etc. Cook was State Geologist from 1864 to 1889 and founding director of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station.

9. NEW JERSEY SCIENCE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION Records (2 cubic feet). Features correspondence, minutes, membership lists, convention proceedings, publications, some papers of President Pauline McDowell. The inclusive dates are 1907-1965.

10. E. S. SPINNING (1 cubic foot). Consists of a reminiscence of a Somerset County, N.J., resident entitled "Early Electric Lighting on the Railroads," written in 1963. Spinning spent a long career as an electrician on a number of railroads in the 1900-1940 period.

11. Nicholas LOW Papers (1 cubic foot). Comprises letters received, bills, receipts, legal documents, etc., of a New York merchant who was director of the Society for the Establishment of Useful Manufacturers in Paterson, New Jersey, 1792-1796.

12. Edward VAN WINKLE Papers (2 cubic feet). Consists of typescript copies of papers relating to engineering, invention patents consultation, etc., 1905-1936.

13. INTERNATIONAL UNION OF ELECTRICAL, RADIO AND MACHINE WORKERS, AFL-CIO, Records (450 cubic feet). Files of James B. Carey, covering primarily the period of his presidency, 1949-1964. An inventory of this material, available in the University Archives, is divided into three groups: alphabetical general, office memos, and Carey speeches.