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Annie Brassey

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Anna, Lady Brassey (1839–87) was an English travel writer and philanthropist best known for her vivid accounts of ocean journeys undertaken with her family. Her husband was a Civil Lord of the Admiralty who made many ocean voyages by steam yacht to test this new technology. Anna Brassey's description of these travels led to her becoming a best-selling author. In 1886–7 the Brasseys sailed to India, Borneo and Australia, but sadly Annie died of malaria during the journey. Her account of the voyage was published in 1889 with a memoir by her husband. Her experiences are vividly described and accompanied by many delightful illustrations. Inconveniences are made light of, and she relishes new experiences and acquaintances, showing none of the condescension towards foreigners often exhibited by Victorian travellers. For more information on this author, see [http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svPeople?person\\_id=brasan](http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svPeople?person_id=brasan)

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# The Last Voyage, to India and Australia, in the 'Sunbeam'

ANNIE BRASSEY

EDITED BY MARY ANNE BROOME



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THE LAST VOYAGE,  
TO INDIA AND AUSTRALIA,  
IN THE 'SUNBEAM.'

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LADY BRASSEY.

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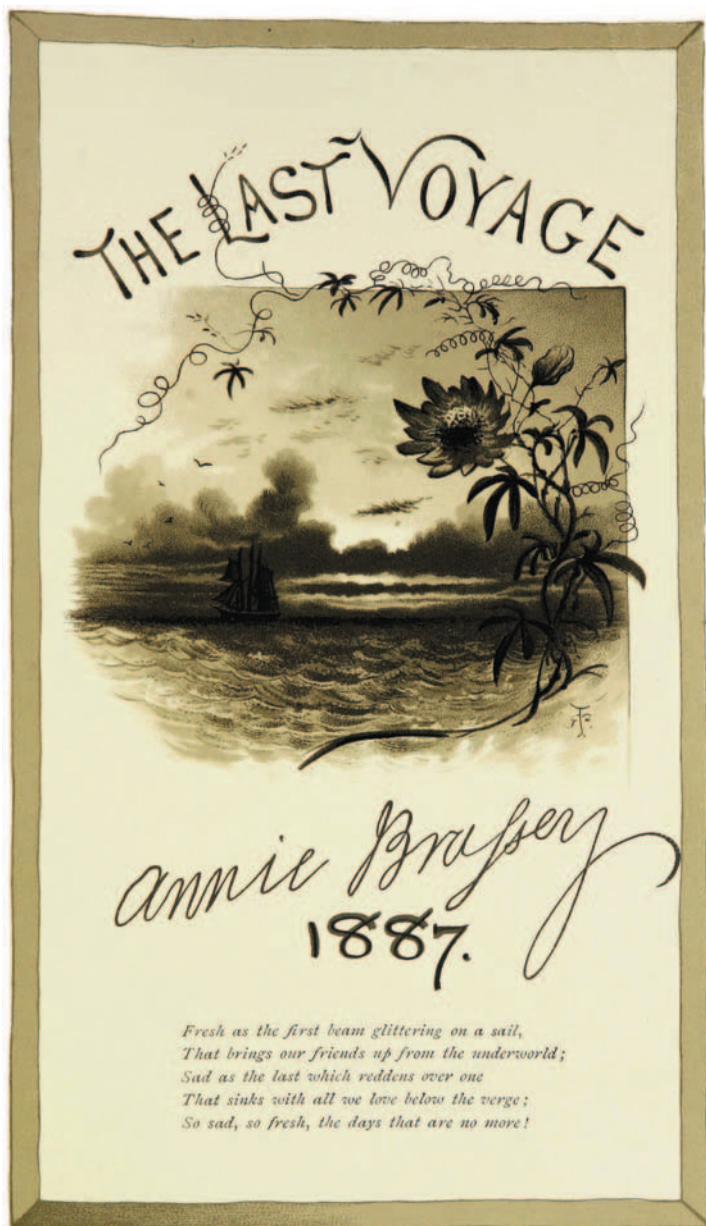
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## Preface.

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IN giving to the reading world these pages of the last Journal of one of the most popular writers of our day, no apology can be needed, and but little explanation.

A word had better perhaps be said, and said here, as to my share in its composition. It is now twelve years ago since my friend—then Mrs. Brassey—asked my advice and assistance in arranging the Diary she had kept during the eleven months' cruise of the 'Sunbeam.' This assistance I gladly gave, and she and I worked together, chiefly at reducing the mass of information gathered during the voyage. I often felt it hard to have to do away with interesting and amusing matter in order to reduce the book even to the size in which it appeared. It was a very pleasant and easy task, and I think the only difference of opinion which ever arose between us was as to the intrinsic merit of the manuscript. No one could have been more diffident than the writer of those charming pages; and it needed all the encouragement which both I and her friend and publisher, Mr. T. Norton Longman, could offer, to induce her to use many of the simple little details of her life, literally 'on the ocean wave.'

The success of the 'Voyage of the "Sunbeam"' need not

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be dwelt on here; it fully justified our opinion, surprising its writer more than any one else by its sudden and yet lasting popularity. Other works, also well received and well known to the public, followed during the next few years, with which I had nothing to do. This last Journal now comes before Lady Brassey's world-wide public, invested with a pathos and sadness all its own.

I venture to think that no one can read these pages without admiration and regret; admiration for the courage which sustained the writer amid the weakness of failing health, and regret that the story of a life so unselfish and so devoted to the welfare of others should have ended so soon.

On his return home, in December 1887, from this last cruise, Lord Brassey placed in my hands his wife's journals and manuscript notes, knowing that they would be reverently and tenderly dealt with, and believing that, on account of my previous experience with the 'Voyage of the "Sunbeam,"' I should understand better than any one else the writer's wishes.

My task has been a sad and in some respects a difficult one. Not only do I keenly miss the bright intelligence which on a former occasion made every obscure point clear to me directly, but the notes themselves are necessarily very fragmentary in places. It astonishes me that any diary at all should have been kept amid the enthusiasm which greeted the arrival and departure of the 'Sunbeam' at every port, the hurry and confusion of constant travelling, and, saddest of all, the evidences of daily increasing weakness. Great also has been my admiration for the indomitable spirit which lifted the frail body above and beyond all considerations of self. I need not here call attention to Lady Brassey's devotion to the cause of suffering shown in her unceasing efforts to establish branches of the St. John Ambulance Association all

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over the world. It will be seen that the last words of the Journal refer to this subject, so near the writer's heart.

I have thought it best to allow the mere rough outline diary of the first part of the Indian journey to appear exactly as it stands, instead of attempting to enlarge it, which could have been done from Lord Brassey's notes. But, unhappily, the chief interest now of every word of this volume will consist, not in any information conveyed—for that could easily be supplied from other sources—but in the fact of its being Lady Brassey's own impression jotted hastily down at the moment. After reaching Hyderabad there was more leisure and an interval of better health; consequently each day's record is fuller. After August 29th the brief jottings of the first Indian days are resumed, but I have not felt able to lay these notes before the public, for they are simple records of suffering and helpless weakness, too private and sacred for publication. They extend up to September 10th, only four days before the end.

No one but Lord Brassey could take up the story after that date, and it is therefore to his pen that we owe the succeeding pages. All through the Journal I found constant references to what are called in the family the 'Sunbeam Papers,' a journal kept by Lord Brassey and printed for private circulation. With his permission, I have availed myself of these notes wherever I could do so, and I believe that this is what Lady Brassey would have wished. There were also, with the MSS., many interesting newspaper extracts referring to public utterances of Lord Brassey, but of these want of space compels me only to give three, specially alluded to by his wife, which will be found in the Appendix.

Lady Brassey had created an extraordinarily intimate and friendly feeling between herself and her readers all over the

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world. It has been felt in accordance with this mutual and affectionate understanding to give little personal details, and even a memoir compiled by Lord Brassey for his children during the sad days following the 14th of September, to the friendly eyes which will read with regret the last Journal of one who has been their pleasant chronicler and chatty fellow-traveller for so long. It must always seem as if Lady Brassey wrote specially for those who did not enjoy her facilities for going about and seeing everything.

I must express my thanks to Lady Brassey's secretaries for the kind help they have afforded me, not only in deciphering MSS., but in verifying dates and names of places.

M. A. BROOME.

LONDON : *March* 1888.

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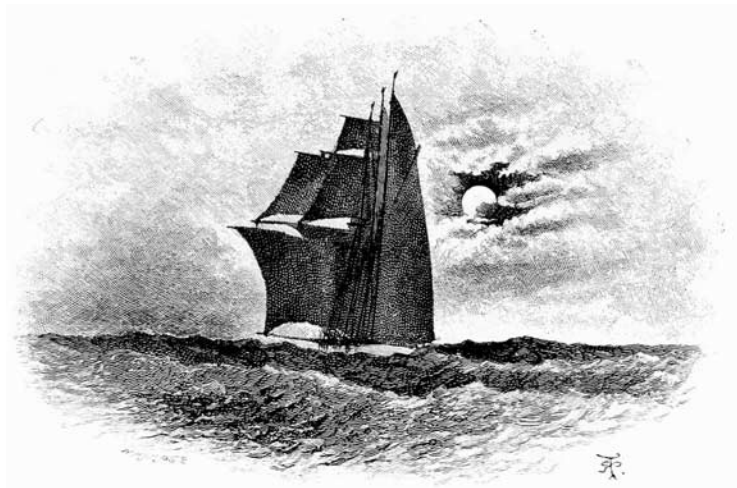
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## FOR MY CHILDREN.

A BRIEF MEMOIR OF THEIR DEAR MOTHER.

*'The greatest benefit which one friend can confer upon another is to guard, and excite, and elevate his virtues. This your mother will still perform if you diligently preserve the memory of her life and of her death.'*

*'There is something pleasing in the belief that our separation from those whom we love is only corporeal.'*

*'Here is one expedient by which you may, in some degree, continue her presence. If you write down minutely what you remember of her from your earliest years, you will read it with great pleasure, and receive from it many hints of soothing recollections, when time shall remove her yet further from you, and your grief shall be matured to veneration.'*

DR. JOHNSON.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,—In sorrow and grief I have prepared a sketch of the life and character of your dearly loved mother, whom it has pleased God to call to Himself. Slight and imperfect as it is, it may hereafter help to preserve some tender recollections, which you would not willingly let die.

I shall begin with her childhood. Her mother having

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died in her infancy, for some years your dear mother lived, a solitary child, at her grandfather's house at Clapham. Here she acquired that love of the country, the farm, and the garden which she retained so keenly to the last. Here she learned to ride; and here, with little guidance from teachers, she had access to a large library, and picked up in a desultory way an extensive knowledge of the best English, French, German, and Italian literature.

After a few years' residence at Clapham, your grandfather moved to Chapel Street, Grosvenor Place, and later to the house which you remember in Charles Street. At this period your mother's education was conducted by her attached and faithful governess, Miss Newton, whom you all know. She attended classes, but otherwise her life must have been even more solitary in London than at Clapham. Her evenings were much devoted to Botany, and by assiduous application she acquired that thorough knowledge of the science which she found so useful later, in describing the profuse and varied vegetation of the tropics.

And now I come to my engagement to your mother. How sweet it is to remember her as she was in those young days; in manners so frank and unaffected, and full of that buoyant spirit which to the end of her life never flagged. She enjoyed with a glad heart every pleasure. She was happy at a ball, happy on her horse, happy on the grouse-moor, devoted to her father, a favourite with all her relatives, and very, very sweet to me. Gladness of heart, thankfulness for every pleasure, a happy disposition to make the best of what Providence has ordered, were her characteristics.

We were married in October 1860. After our marriage we had everything to create—our home, our society, our occupations. We began life at Beauport; and wonderfully did your dear mother adapt herself to wholly unanticipated circumstances. Beauport became a country home for our

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nearest relations on both sides. As a girl, your mother had been a most loving daughter to her own father. After her marriage she was good and kind to my parents. To my brothers, until they were old enough to form happy homes of their own, she was an affectionate sister.

At the date of our marriage, no definite career had opened out for me. To follow my father's business was not considered expedient, and I had no commanding political influence. In the endeavour to help me to obtain a seat in Parliament, your dear mother displayed a true wife-like devotion. She worked with an energy and earnestness all her own, first at Birkenhead in 1861, and later at Devonport and Sandwich—constituencies which I fought unsuccessfully—and my return for Hastings in 1868 afforded her the more gratification. It had been the custom in the last-named constituency to invite the active assistance of ladies, and especially the wives of the candidates, in canvassing the electors. Your mother readily responded to the call. She soon became popular among the supporters of the Liberal party, and throughout my connection with Hastings she retained the golden opinions which she had so early won. Her nerve, high spirit, and ability, under the fierce ordeal of the petition against my return, have been described in his memoirs by Serjeant Ballantine, who conducted my case. He called your mother as his first witness for the defence, put one or two questions, and then handed her wholly unprepared to the counsel for the petitioners—the present Lord Chancellor. With unflinching fortitude your mother endured a cross-examination lasting for upwards of an hour. Her admirable bearing made a great impression upon the eminent judge (Mr. Justice Blackburn) who tried the case, and won the sympathies of the dense crowd of spectators. I remember how gratefully your mother acknowledged the mercy of Heaven in that crisis of her life. 'I could not have done it unless I had been helped,' were her simple words to me.

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Down to the latest election in which I was engaged, your dear mother, in the same spirit of personal devotion to her husband, wrought and laboured in the political cause. I have put her love for me as the prime motive for her efforts in politics; but she had too much intelligence not to form a judgment of her own on public issues. Her sympathies were instinctively on the side of the people, in opposition to the old-fashioned Toryism, so much more in vogue a quarter of a century ago than it is to-day.

In helping me to hold a seat in Parliament, your dear mother was inflicting upon herself a privation very hard to bear. Owing to the rapid changes in all the circumstances of our lives, it was difficult to preserve old associations. In the midst of new environments, to make her way alone was a great strain. It is some consolation to know what happiness I gave when, upon my release from the urgent demands of Parliamentary and official life, I was able to spend much of my time in her dear society. It is sad that this happy change should have come so late.

In addition to the share which she took in my Parliamentary labours, your mother undertook the exclusive management at home. This responsibility was gradually concentrated in her hands, owing to my long service in the House of Commons, combined with exceptionally heavy extra-Parliamentary work, finally culminating in my holding office at the Admiralty for more than five years.

How we shall miss her in everything! specially in the task of arranging in the museum, now near completion, the combined collections of our many journeys! She had so looked forward to being able to bring together these collections in London; one of her objects being to afford instruction and recreation to the members of the Working Men's Clubs, to whom she proposed to give constant facilities of access to the collection.



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The same spirit, which made your dear mother my helpmeet in my public life, sustained her, at the sacrifice of every personal predilection, in constant companionship with her husband at sea. She bore the misery of sea-sickness without a murmur or complaint. Fear in storm and tempest she never knew. She made yachting, notwithstanding its drawbacks, a source of pleasure. At Cowes she was always on deck, card in hand, to see the starts in the various matches. At sea she enjoyed the fair breezes, and took a deep interest in estimating the daily run, in which she was generally wonderfully exact. She had a great faculty for seamanship, and knew as well as anybody on board what should be done and what was being done on deck.

The same eager sympathy with every interest and effort of mine led your dear mother to help me as President of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union. She attended the meetings, distributed the prizes, and on one occasion entertained the members and their friends at Normanhurst. Upwards of a thousand came down from London, and were addressed by Lord Houghton and by M. Waddington, the French Ambassador. She also did all she could to encourage the Naval Artillery Volunteers. For years she attended inspections and distributed prizes on board the 'President' and the 'Rainbow.' She was always present at the annual service in Westminster Abbey. She witnessed the first embarkation in a gunboat at Sheerness. She carried through all the commissariat arrangements for the six hundred naval volunteers who were brought together from London, Liverpool, and Bristol for the great review at Windsor, sleeping under canvas for three nights in our encampment, and personally and most efficiently superintending every detail. The men were enthusiastic in their appreciation of her efforts.

The same interest was shown in my naval work. Your dear mother accompanied me frequently in my visits to the

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dockyard towns at home and abroad, attended naval reviews, and was present at the manœuvres on the coast of Ireland in 1885, and in Milford Haven in 1886. At home and abroad she always aided most cordially my desire to establish kindly relations with the naval profession, among whom she numbered, I am sure, not a few sincere friends. The same spirit of sympathy carried your mother with me on dreary and arduous journeys to Ireland, where she paid several visits to the Lough Swilly estates. She called personally on every tenant, asked them to visit the 'Sunbeam,' treated them most kindly, and won their hearts.

Her reception of the Colonial visitors to England last year, when suffering from severe illness, and the visits to the Colonies, which were the last acts of her life, are the most recent proofs which your dear mother was permitted to give of her genuine sympathy with everything that was intended for the public good. The reception which she met with in Australia afforded gratifying assurances of the wide appreciation of her high-minded exertions on the part of our Colonial friends.

The last day of comparative ease in your mother's life was spent at Darnley Island. You remember the scene: the English missionaries, the native teacher with his congregation assembled around him, the waving cocoa-nuts, the picturesque huts on the beach, the deep blue sea, the glorious sunshine, the beauty and the peace. It was a combination after your mother's heart, which she greatly enjoyed, resting tranquilly under the trees, fanned by the refreshing trade-wind. You will remember her marked kindness of manner in giving encouragement to the missionaries in their work. It was another instance of her broad sympathies.

In attempting to give a description of your dear mother's fine character, I cannot omit her splendid courage. I have referred to it as shown on the sea. You who have followed her with the hounds, as long as she had strength to sit in the saddle,

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will never forget her pluck and skill. Her courage never failed her. It upheld her undaunted through many illnesses.

And now I turn to that part of the work of her life by which your dear mother is best known to the outer world. Her books were widely read by English-speaking people, and have been translated into the language of nearly every civilised nation. The books grew out of a habit, early adopted when on her travels, of sitting up in bed as soon as she awoke in the morning, in her dressing-jacket, and writing with pencil and paper an unpretending narrative of the previous day's proceedings, to be sent home to her father. The written letter grew into the lithographed journal, and the latter into the printed book, at first prepared for private circulation, and finally, on completion of our voyage round the world, for publication. The favourable reception of the first book was wholly unexpected by the writer. She awoke and found herself famous.

Her popularity as a writer has been won by means the simplest, the purest, and most natural which can be conceived. Not a single unkind or ungenerous thought is to be found in any book of hers. The instruction and knowledge conveyed, if not profound, are useful and interesting to readers of all classes. The choice of topics is always judicious. A bright and happy spirit glows in her pages, and it is this which makes the books attractive to all classes. They were read with pleasure by Prince Bismarck, as he smoked his evening pipe, as well as by girls at school. Letters of acknowledgment used to reach your mother from the bedside of the aged and the sick, from the prairies of America, the backwoods of Canada, and the lonely sheep-stations of Australia. Those grateful letters were the most valued which were received from the cottages of the poor. As old George Herbert sings,

Scorn no man's love, though of a mean degree ;  
Love is a present for a mighty King.

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It was natural that your mother, with her eager nature, should be spurred on to renewed efforts by success. She set out on her last journey full of hope and enterprise. In India, in Borneo, in Australia, she was resolved to leave no place unvisited which could by any possibility be reached, and where she was led to believe that objects of interest could be found, to be described to readers who could not share her opportunities of travel. The enlargement of our programme of journeys within the tropics threw a heavy strain on her constitution. In Northern India her health was better than it had been for years, but she fell away after leaving Bombay. Rangoon and Borneo told upon her. She did not become really ill until the day after leaving Borneo, when she was attacked by the malarial fever which infests the river up which she had travelled to the famous bird's-nest caves. She suffered much until we reached the temperate climate of South Australia.

On leaving Brisbane we found ourselves once more in the tropics. Enfeebled by an attack of bronchitis caught at Brisbane, your mother was again seized with malarial fever. On the northern coast of Australia such fevers are prevalent, and our visits to Rockhampton, the Herbert River, Mourilyan, and Thursday Island, where we were detained ten days, were probably far from beneficial. No evil consequence was, however, anticipated; and without undue self-reproach we must bow with submission to the heavy blow which, in the ordering of Providence, has befallen us.

Your dear mother died on the morning of September 14, 1887, and her remains were committed to the deep at sunset on the same day (Lat. 15° 50' S., Long. 110° 35' E.) Every member of the ship's company was present to pay the last tribute of love and respect on that sad occasion. Your dear mother died in an effort to carry forward the work which, as she believed, it had pleased God to assign to her.

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From your mother's books let us turn to her charities; and first her public charities. You know how she has laboured in the cause of the St. John Ambulance Association, how she has taken every opportunity of urging forward the work in every place which we visited, in the West Indies, in the Shetlands, in London, at Middlesbrough, in Sussex. At all the ports at which we touched on our last cruise she spared no pains to interest people in the work. You heard her deliver her last appeal in the cause at Rockhampton. She spoke under extreme physical difficulty, but with melting pathos. As it was her last speech, so, perhaps, it was her best.

Your mother took up ambulance work at a time when it was little in fashion, because she believed it to be a good cause. By years of hard work, in speech, in letter, by interview, by pamphlet, by personal example and devotion, she spread to multitudes the knowledge of the art of ministering first-aid to the injured. We may rest assured that her exertions have been, under Providence, the means of saving many precious lives. In her last cruise you have seen how, when painful injuries have been received, she has been the first to staunch the bleeding wound, facing trying scenes with a courage which never faltered while there was need for it, but which, as the reaction which followed too surely told, put a severe strain upon her feeble frame.

Many could tell, in terms of deepest gratitude, what a true angel from heaven your dear mother had been to them in their hours of sickness. You will readily recall some of the most striking occasions.

That your mother accomplished what she did is the more to be admired when account is taken of the feeble condition of her health and of her many serious illnesses. She inherited weakness of the chest from her mother, who died of decline in early life. When on the point of first going out into society, she was fearfully burned, and lay for six months wrapped in

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cotton-wool, unable to feed herself. In the early years of our married life we were frequently driven away in the winter to seek a cure for severe attacks of bronchitis. In 1869 your mother caught a malarial fever while passing through the Suez Canal. She rode through Syria in terrible suffering. There was a temporary rally, followed by a relapse, at Alexandria. From Alexandria we went to Malta, where she remained for weeks in imminent danger. She never fully recovered from this, the first of her severe illnesses, and in 1880 she had a recurrence of fever at Algiers. It was followed by other similar attacks—at Cowes in 1882, in the West Indies in 1883, at Gibraltar in 1886, and on her last voyage, first at Borneo, and finally, and with the results we so bitterly lament, on the coast of Northern Queensland. Only indomitable courage could have carried your mother through so much illness and left her mental energies wholly unimpaired, long after her physical frame had become permanently enfeebled. Loss of health compelled her to withdraw in great measure from general society. She was unequal to the demands of London life, and from the same cause was unable to remain in England during the winter. Thus she gradually lost touch of relatives and friends of former years, for whom she had a genuine regard. In such society as she was able to see at the close of her too short life, she never failed to win regard and sympathy. There will be many sad hearts in Australia when the tidings of your mother's death reaches the latest friends whom she was privileged to win.

The truest testimony to your mother's worth is to be found in the painful void created in the home circle by her death. For me the loss must be irreparable. It would, indeed, be more than we could bear, if we had no hope for the future. We cling to that hope; and whatever our hand findeth to do, we must, like her, try to do it with all our might.

Such then was your dear mother: a constant worker,