

Direct, Brisbane, Moreton Bay, Via Sydney  
New S. W.  
Brisbane, Moreton Bay<sup>1</sup> Nov. 25/41

My Dear Mrs Simpson

At length I have determined to write you a few lines, though as yet I have not heard a word from you since I left England - I have almost abandoned all hope of ever again hearing from any of the Simpsons, for it is now upwards of 18 months since I sent the melancholy details of my poor wife's fate<sup>2</sup> - I sent the particulars to Charles<sup>3</sup> in the first instance & afterwards to Cal on Parch enclosed in a letter to Mr Edward Simpson<sup>4</sup> - Both vessels surely cannot have been wrecked & it appears to me very strange that no notice should have been taken of them - I cannot now recapitulate the dreadful circumstances; she suffered so much & bore it so patiently that I can never forget the trying scene - Poor Sophie! she showed throughout an heroic firmness & never for a moment refrained at her unhappy fate - As I cannot but suppose you must have heard something of my movements since the melancholy event I shall come at once to my present prospects - It is now upwards of 15 months<sup>5</sup> that myself and my friend Wiseman<sup>6</sup> took up our abode in the Bush, toiling like Slaves & living like Savages - For the last 6 months I have, however, had medical charge of the Government Establishment during the absence of the Colonial Surgeon<sup>7</sup> - This has been of some service to me as the people seem to think they have been more successfully treated than formerly - In fact right or wrong I have gotten a name by it, which is likely to lead to formidable results - The settlement though not yet absolutely released from penal Regulations, has been

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<sup>1</sup> Simpson occupied a cottage on the bank of the Brisbane River behind the site of the present Customs House. This is the likely location from which the letter was written. Simpson purchased this land in 1848, when it was offered for sale by the Crown. See: Cilento, R., *The Life and residences of the Hon Stephen Simpson MD JP MLC*, Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> Simpson arrived in Sydney on 26 January 1840 with his wife Sophia Anna Simpson aboard the *Wilmot*. Mrs Simpson gave birth to a daughter, also Sophia, on 8 May 1840. The child died eight days later, on 13 May 1840. Mrs Simpson died on 19 May 1840, aged 36. See *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 May 1840 p 2, col 1; 25 May 1840 p 7, col 5.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Simpson, Attorney and Land Tax Commissioner for Litchfield?

<sup>4</sup> This could be Edward Simpson of Lichfield or his son Edward Simpson (later Hicks) (1814-1889) Conservative MP for Cambridgeshire (1879-1885) who entered Inner Temple in 1837.

<sup>5</sup> Simpson and Wiseman arrived in Brisbane on the *Speculator* at the end of July 1840.

<sup>6</sup> William H Wiseman was a friend of Simpson, who travelled to Sydney with Simpson on the *Wilmot*. In 1855 Wiseman was appointed Police Magistrate in Rockhampton.

<sup>7</sup> On 6 May 1841, Governor Sir George Gipps approved payment of 7/6 per day to Simpson for duties as acting colonial surgeon, in the absence of Dr David K Ballow: *Colonial Secretary Letterbook* (Jan 1832-May 1842), p 421, No 41/4075; 41/2

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opened to Squatters, who have liberty to set down anywhere on the immense plains and forest without 50 miles of Brisbane - As this Country is thought to be very superior to most other parts of the Colony there has been a great rush towards it & there are already about 40 large Cattle and Sheep establishments in the neighbourhood - They are in charge of about 800 men besides women and children - You will be surprised to hear that the prospectors are almost all men of education and good connexions - they have even an Eton Cricket Club on the Downs & most of them have been brought up at the universities - I have now staying within for medical treatment a son of Mr Collin McKenzie,<sup>8</sup> a Scotch Baronet of 12 000 per Annum & he has large establishment near here - There is also a nephew of the Governor's with a son of Admiral Elliots<sup>9</sup> keeping a Sheep Station - We have also several Hon<sup>bles</sup> - indeed there is scarcely an exceptional person among them - The consequence of this congregation of souls has been the want of a Doctor -. Several of the principal Settlers have therefore applied to me to take the medical charge of their men & provide a Private Hospital at Brisbane for the reception of bad cases. As it would be impossible for me to visit the Stations & take care of the Hospital at the same time. I proposed to the Colonial Surgeon here to join me - This he was nothing loath to do, seeing I was likely to have it all my own way - Under the firm of Simpson & Co, Mr Ballow & myself have commenced operations - For the present the Commandant here has allowed me to appropriate one of the buildings at the Farm<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Sir Colin Mackenzie, 1st Baronet of Kilcoy in the County of Ross, Scotland (1782-1845). A cousin of this Mackenzie, Sir Robert Ramsay Mackenzie (1811-1873), was Premier of Queensland from August 1867 to November 1868. He succeeded as 10<sup>th</sup> Baronet of Coul in Nova Scotia on the death of his brother William on 21 December 1868 and returned to live on the family estate in Scotland in 1871.

<sup>9</sup> Gilbert John Elliot (1818-1852), officer in the service of the 47th Regiment, married Isabella Elizabeth Gore on 27 November 1849 at All Saints Parramatta.

<sup>10</sup> Before moving to the cottage on the Customs House riverbank, on their arrival in 1940 Simpson and his companion W H Wiseman had lived in a cottage at Eagle Farm, formerly part of the Women's Prison, with the permission of Commandant Gorman.

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for the reception of patients - in the meantime I have written off to Governor to obtain permission to erect a Private Hospital & Medical Store at Brisbane with security as to the future possession of the land it may be built upon when the Settlement is thrown open to purchasers - There is little doubt but I shall obtain it, as I shall be well backed by the Settlers & the Colonial Secretary will do all he can to assist me - I have already gotten a plan for my building & have men at work cutting and splitting timber for the purpose - The undertaking is no doubt gigantic for my means, but no matter "nothing ventured, nothing gained" a truism in this Colony, when half the great fortunes have been made out of nothing - Unfortunately too at the present moment the money market here is in a dreadful state & a general bankruptcy seems at hand - men who have got wealth in Cattle, Sheep & Land can with difficulty find money to pay their men's wages - Should I be able to get up my building before the Settlement opens it will not cost half what it would after, as wages here are now very moderate - In fact if I can any how weather the first year I have no doubt for the result & hope in ten years to pay you a visit in Old England - The moment the vessel sails I shall mount my nag, armed with a brace of Pistols & a Broadsword (for the Natives here have been very troublesome of late), & best my course in the bush - The first Station I have to visit is about 60 miles off, the others at intervals of, from 10 to 20 miles, I expect to be absent about a month living the whole time in a way that you in England can form no idea.

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of & sleeping & like worse- but no matter, it must be done if I mean to make money - My terms are to take medical charge of whole stations after payment of 1 £ per head for the men & 10 Shillings for women and children annually - accoutrements 2 £ extra - Non subscribers 10<sup>s</sup> per consultation & three shillings per day in the Hospital - for this I visit the Stations once in 3 months & if extra journeys are required they pay according to the distance - of course these charges do not include Masters or any but the labouring class - I am much

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to have the principal direction of the concern & my partner is a very good natured man & not likely to interfere with me - a thing essential to me as I cannot play second fiddle<sup>11</sup> - I have now I think brought up my adventures to the present time & when you have a spare moment: shall be glad to know how you are getting on the other side of the Globe and if you see any of my Lichfield<sup>12</sup> connexions you may just hint that I am still alive - with kind regards to Mr S & your family, believe me

Yours very sincerely

S Simpson

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<sup>11</sup> After his discharge from the Army in 1817, Simpson went to Edinburgh, where he qualified M.D. Simpson was not to continue his medical career. On 28 March 1842, Moreton Bay was proclaimed a free settlement. On 3 May 1842, following an inquiry into the conduct of the Moreton Bay Commandant, Lieutenant Owen Gorman, Governor Gipps instructed Gorman to hand over his papers to Simpson: *Col Sec Letterbook* Jan. 1832-May 1842, p. 476; No. 42/14. Simpson was appointed Acting Police Magistrate and Commissioner of Crown Lands for the District of Moreton: *NSW Govt Gazette* 10 May 1842, p 639, 691. Governor Gipps' despatch to Lord Stanley about the appointment noted:

“This gentleman, who is of the Medical Profession, was strongly recommended to me for an appointment in the Colony by Lord J. Russell's letter of 28 July 1841, at the instance, as I have reason to believe, of the Duke of Sutherland or of some member of His Grace's Family. The appointment of Medical Men to offices the duties of which bring them into communication with the aborigines is, *ceteris paribus*, desirable. . .”

Despatch No. 245, 41/1842, p. 951. The appointment was approved by Lord Stanley on 11 June 1843. Simpson had served as the personal physician to the son of the Duchess of Sutherland on his grand tour of Europe. The Commissioners of Crown Lands were the sole officials of Government in areas outside the settled districts and as such they had magisterial authority. Commissioners were to maintain law and order in their Districts: Act 2 Vict. No. 27 (1839). A principal object of the 1839 Act “was to put a stop to the atrocities which have of late been so extensively committed beyond the boundaries, both by the Aborigines and on them.” See: *NSW Govt Gazette*, 22 May 1839, p 605. Simpson was appointed a trustee of the Brisbane General Hospital in 1848.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Simpson was baptised on 29 July 1793 at Lichfield, Staffordshire, England: J Iltis, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. It appears he was born at Walston, Warwickshire, England.

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Mrs Simpson

Canons<sup>13</sup>

Mitcham

Surrey England

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Should you at any time have a spare Weekly

Paper it would be acceptable

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<sup>13</sup> The manor "Canons" at Mitcham is a large Georgian house built on lands of the priory of St. Mary Overy. The Dovecote built by the Augustinians in 1515 still stands. In 1545, following the dissolution of the monasteries, Henry VIII sold the manor of Mitcham, which passed through various owners to the Cranmer family. By 1836, the last of the Cranmers, Emily, married William Simpson of Lichfield. It is likely this is the Mrs Simpson to whom the letter is addressed.