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ALS H428

Hodeslea  
Staveley Road  
Eastbourne  
June 11 1894

My dear Foster

You are very welcome to the illustrations so far as I am concerned.

Cambridge could not have been beastlier than Eastbourne for the last fortnight but I have been fairly well since I got over the effects of the Premier's dinner.<sup>1</sup> What ever the papers may say I am not at H.M.'s command.

I had meant to attend the soirée on Wednesday by way of paying my respects to the Society but my doctor has bullied me out of it. Please make my excuses to the President.

I would look at Gadow's paper but really I do not know what has been doing in the last seven years. However if you are really hard up for a referee, send it me.

Ever yours  
T. H. Huxley

Don't forget the "docker".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Huxley attended a dinner with the Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, on 26 May 1894 to celebrate the Queen's birthday. See *Life and letters*, vol. 2, p. 373. Reported in *The Times*, Monday, May 28, 1894, p. 6, issue 34275, col. B.

<sup>2</sup> See letter 361.

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ALS H430

Hodeslea  
Staveley Road  
Eastbourne  
June 16 1894

My dear Foster

Here is the screed about Owen – Don't mind verbal errors as it has not the final corrections.<sup>1</sup>

Ever yours  
T. H. H.

<sup>1</sup>The draft of Huxley's chapter in Owen's biography, 'Owen's position in the history of anatomical science', *The life of Richard Owen*, edited by his grandson Rev. Richard Owen, London, John Murray, 1894.

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Huxley Papers 4:379

Nine Wells  
Great Shelford  
Cambridge  
June 20. 94

My dear Huxley

Pp. 1–40 – Very good and very interesting.

41–8 you praise Richard seven pages.

48–66 18 pages (!), you damn him.

Of course the seven pages of praise is all straightforward praise – and to you, to me and to those generally who know means a good deal while the greater part of the 18 pages is taken up with explaining why you damn him. But the effect on the lay mind may be that the praise will not be adequately appreciated while the negative criticism will be clearly appraised.

I don't see very well however what you can do to make the seven pages more effective; your simple statement of the facts ought to be sufficient and any attempt to "pan out", would only weaken the effect; but it has occurred to me that on p. 66 after *Naturphilosophie*, you might introduce a few sentences going back to praise.

Some sentences to the effect that in estimating Richard we must not dwell on his “philosophy” but on his anatomical memoirs, sentences to which your skill would lead you to give a happy turn, would leave a better taste in the mouth of the general reader than that which I fancy he will experience in reading it as it now stands.

I have hardly any detailed criticisms –

On p. 53, where red pencil – I think the phrases “ponder” “fair” judgement has [*sic*] rather a controversial twang I would rather say.

I should bear these and other passages of like tenor in mind when they attempt to estimate the real position which he took up in morphology; such passages also go far to explain the attitude which he later on assumed in regard to Darwinism.

On p. 64–65 I should rub it in even rather more strongly that Owen was as good as Weismann [*sic*]<sup>1</sup> – this seems to be a very good opportunity for you to cover Richard’s philosophy with the best modern varnish – as far as I can make out a certain school seems to think Weismann a sort of second Darwin – & to have said that Owen was as good (considering his day) as Weismann is, will serve as a simple reply to any one who might say that your own views had led you to unduly depreciate Owen’s philosophy. I mean “If the fellow damns Weismann we need not be hurt at his damning Owen”.

I don’t think I have anything else to say. As you see I have been a quite candid friend. I hope your London trip did you no harm – the soiree was quite successful.

Ever thine

M. Foster

<sup>1</sup> August Weismann (1834 –1914), German biologist.

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ALS H431

Hodeslea  
Staveley Road  
Eastbourne  
July 11 1894

My dear Foster

I was in hope we should have had the opportunity of talking over the “Procedures Committees” Report – but for all such engaged people there is no getting you.

I like the general plan and I do not know that I have much to criticise in detail – except that I am doubtful about telling any man whose paper has gone through the various ordeals before being asked to be read that only the title will be read.

1894

I think if I were the author that I should prefer to have my communication declined.

The interpretation of the instruction that [illegible] these papers “which mark a distinct step &c.” will be hard for the Sectional Committees.

I see no clear statements whether Sectional Committees are or are not, bound to send papers to referees. Six, with four for a quorum, is a small number of judges with full powers & no obligation to give reasons for their judgements. Scientific jealousies and favouritism broke down the old Committee of papers – But very likely this point has been considered.

I have returned the paper on the vertebral column – with a report.

It is a mass of details very valuable if accurate but with [ultra] German indifference to style & language often only verbally English. Somebody will have to Anglicise it for publication.

One reflection arises out of the consideration of the new regulation & that is that I am very glad I am not a Secretary – no end of work will come out of them.

May Providence strengthen thy back to the burden!

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

I have come up to attend a meeting of the Senate of the University – I hope finally to settle the fight that has been going on.

Convocations are a [must] & members for Universities ought to be abolished – the trail of the [careless] manager is seen everywhere.

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ALS H432

Spa Hotel  
Tunbridge Wells  
Aug 11 1894

My dear Foster

If there is a good report of my speech in any of the Oxford papers would you be so kind as to send me the number? I have no notes of it – I wrote something on Tuesday night – but the draft is no good as it was metamorphosed two or three times over on Wednesday.<sup>1</sup>

1894

I am very glad to hear the high [illegible] parties who own us – have arranged a congress.

Ever yours  
T. H. Huxley

If you have the opportunity of speaking to Van Beneden I wish you would tell him how much I regret that I was obliged to leave without seeing him again.

I am frightfully tired but the game was worth the candle.

<sup>1</sup> The Marquis of Salisbury, chancellor of the University of Oxford, had given the presidential address at the meeting of the British Association in Oxford, *Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*, London, John Murray, 1864, pp. 3–15. Huxley seconded Lord Kelvin's vote of thanks which was reported in *The Times*, Thursday, Aug. 9, 1894, p. 6, issue 34338, col. A.

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ALS H433

Hodeslea  
Staveley Road  
Eastbourne  
Aug 21 1894

My dear Foster

Many thanks for the papers which as it happened were addressed quite rightly. My wife & I suddenly discovered that unbeknownst to each other we both wanted to be at home again so back we came last Tuesday.

We are looking forward to your coming on Saturday & hope the fates will send some warmer weather for you than we have been favoured with.

Ever yours  
T. H. Huxley

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Huxley Papers 4:144

NOT TO BE ANSWERED

This I found yesterday cleaning out an old basket. Thought you would like to see it.

Oct 28 94

My dear Foster

There has always been a strong affinity between us – but until Mrs Foster's letter to my wife arrived just now I had no idea we “evolved” in such exactly correspondent series

	H.		F.
a)	Seediness	a)	Seediness
b)	liver	b)	liver
c)	doctor reports influenza	c)	doctor says influenza
d)	neuralgia	d)	neuralgia
e)	lumbago	e)	lumbago
f)	[Engagement (illegible) Renounced]	f)	E. H. R.

However you seem to have had rise of temperature which I had not: and I had a most vile attack of acute indigestion which I hope you escaped.

The oddest coincidence is f. Can it be called a sequel & how is pathology to connect it with the other symptoms?

How do you like lumbago? The most devilish part of it with me is a tendency to laugh at the queer positions in which it holds me – and so bring on a fresh turn of the screw.

I am so sorry you have the worry of work. Just stifle your conscience & let everything slide till you feel up to it again. It is far the best remedy and you have a right to take it.

I have continued to write the Austin Salisbury manifesto nevertheless – you will see it in “Nature” next week.<sup>1</sup> Oh that my hands had not been tied & I could have shown up the rottenness of the thing without giving occasion to the enemy to blaspheme.

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

Wife writing to Mrs Foster.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Past and present’, *Nature*, 1894, **51**: 1–3. Huxley commented in this leader on Salisbury's presidential address to the British Association meeting in Oxford.

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Huxley Papers 4:383

The Royal Society,  
Burlington House,  
London, W.  
Nov. 1. 1894

My dear Huxley

I have the great pleasure to make known to you that the President and Council of the Royal Society have at their meeting today awarded to you the Darwin Medal “for your researches on comparative anatomy and especially for your intimate association with Mr Darwin in relation to the ‘Origin of Species’”. The President and Council hope that you may feel yourself able to attend the anniversary meeting and receive the Medal.<sup>1</sup>

Yours very truly

M. Foster  
Sec. R.S.

<sup>1</sup>The Darwin Medal, established in 1890, was awarded biennially for researches in biology.

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Huxley Papers 4:384

Nine Wells  
Great Shelford  
Cambridge  
Nov. 2. 94

My dear Huxley

The coincidence is really worth communicating to the Psychical Society – “odious”<sup>1</sup> transference of maladies. I can only hope you have not been so hard hit as I have. I didn’t remember ever having been pulled down so much before – but I have taken great care of myself – cut 2 R.S. Councils for medals & election of new Council just think of that – !!! – & am now nearly well again, & looking forward to lecturing to-morrow.

I hope you are not displeased at the Darwin Medal – it was inevitable.

1894

I have not yet read the *Nature* article – am looking forward to it. By the bye shall you venture the *Nature* dinner?<sup>2</sup> I doubt if you ought, since you ought to reserve yourself for the R.S. dinner the week after.

You will give me the tip as to whether at R.S. you should say a few words – or no, & I will act accordingly. Of course your coming will be wholly dependent on weather, that goes of itself.

I am glad Waller<sup>3</sup> got benefit from the Italian lakes – he was by no means “fit” at Venice. He ought not to let himself be run down so.

Believe me

Ever thine

M. Foster

<sup>1</sup> Odic force, a name given by Baron Carl von Reichenbach to a hypothetical life force allied to electricity, magnetism, and heat.

<sup>2</sup> Dinner to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Nature*; the first issue was published on 4 November 1869.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick William Waller, Huxley’s son-in-law.

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ALS H434

Hodeslea  
Staveley Road  
Eastbourne  
Nov 2 1894

My dear Foster

Didn’t I tell the P.R.S., Secretaries, Treasurer, & all the Fellows thereof, when I spake about Hooker years ago, that thenceforth the Darwin Medal was to be given to the young and not to useless old extinct volcanoes? I ought to be very angry with you all for coolly ignoring my wise counsels.

But whether it is vanity or something a good deal better I am not. One gets chill with age and it is very pleasant to be warmed up unexpectedly even against one’s injunctions. Moreover my wife is very pleased not to say jubilant; and if I were made Archbishop of

1894

Canterbury I should not be able to convince her that my services to Theology – were hardly of the sort to be rewarded in that fashion.

I need not say what I think about your action in the matter, my faithful old friend –  
With our love to you both

Ever yours  
T. H. Huxley

I suppose you are all right again as you write from the R.S. Liver permitting I shall attend meeting & dinner. It is very odd that the Medal should come along with my pronouncement in “Nature” – which I hope you like – I cut out a rather stinging paragraph at the end.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ‘Past and present’, see letter 370.

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ALS H435

Hodeslea  
Staveley Road  
Eastbourne  
Nov 8 1894<sup>1</sup>

My dear Foster

I am very glad to hear you are getting better – just understand that you will have to go on taking care for the next twelve months – It was fully that time before I got over the effects of my bout a year & a half ago. I really don’t suppose that the last affair was anything but “liver”.

I have promised to go to the “Nature” Dinner if I possibly can. Indeed I should be sorry to be away.

As to the R.S. nothing short of being confined to bed will stop me – And I shall be good for a “few words” after dinner.

Thereafter, I hope not to appear again on any stage.

1894

My poor Fred Waller has troubles (not of his own making) to break a stronger back – some day or other I will tell you of them – He is one of those quiet plucky fellows who consumes his own smoke to the best of his ability & that is a wearing process.

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

There have I clean forgotten one of the things I sat down to write about – I thought my two sons and the two sons in law who are in England, Collier & Waller would like to come to Dinner on the 30<sup>th</sup> & wrote to invite them – now comes the circular limiting Fellows to one guest. What is to be done?

<sup>1</sup> Although both this letter and the following letter are dated there is some inconsistency with the dates.

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Huxley Papers 4:292

Nine Wells  
Great Shelford  
Cambridge  
Nov. 7 [1894]

My dear Huxley

The officers have power to put aside the rule where they deem it desirable – and if they did not seem it desirable in your case when would they? Eh? Mr Rix has instructions to send you on demand four guests' tickets. Shall you stay at the Metropole on the 30th? If so, I think I will do so too so that we may see as much as possible of each other.

You will return thanks for the medallists – that is for all of them except the Swede Cleve,<sup>1</sup> who has the Davy, & who will also speak – at least this I think will be the

1894

arrangement but I will let you know definitely after the 21st & I will tell Rix to send you “statement of claims” for medals.

I am daily better – but continue & shall continue to take care.

Ever thine

M. Foster

Your guests will not of course sit with you among the swells – most probably they will be not far from me.

<sup>1</sup> Per Theodor Cleve (1840–1905), professor of chemistry at the University of Uppsala, was awarded the Davy Medal in 1894 for his “researches on the chemistry of the rare earths”.

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ALS H436

Hodeslea  
Staveley Road  
Eastbourne  
Nov 9 1894

My dear Foster

Thanks for arranging about the tickets. Rix has sent me the proposers’ statements and I will be ready to do the thanks.<sup>1</sup>

I shall put up at the Metropole and it will be jolly to have your company.

It is heartily raw here & no doubt worse among your four – so nochmals take care of yourself

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

<sup>1</sup> Huxley’s thanks was reported in ‘The Royal Society’, *The Times*, Saturday, Dec. 1, 1894, p. 10, issue 34436, col. A.

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ALS H437

Hodeslea  
 Staveley Road  
 Eastbourne  
 Dec 23 1894

My dear Foster

I suppose you have seen a copy of the document about a “Darwinian Society” sent out by Cunningham M.A.<sup>1</sup> (isn't he the hero of the “Epigone” & of the disparaging letter about Darwin [apropos] of the Booth business) – I am not impressed at all favourably by the project and if the starter of it is the man I mean, still less with the projector – He has shown no special capacity at Plymouth & his scientific claims are so far as I know next to nil.

However, I am open to change my opinion on good reason of course so I have written to Dyer & Lankester this morning to ask them as I ask you, to let me have an opinion about it – I do not “know the ropes” now adays & unless Cunningham is a greater donkey than I take him to be, he will not have taken the step he has without knowing that he will be backed by somebody more important than himself.

I suppose it is as likely as not that you have gone raging off to Venice or Timbuctoo for a holiday – so I will not mark this to be forwarded – but I should like to know what you think.

With our love & best wishes to Mrs Foster & yourself  
 Ever yours affectionately  
 T. H. Huxley

P.S. Why and oh why did people start the “Times” speech when it only wanted to have done with the whole R.S. business & retreat – however ungraciously? And why & oh why did the “auditors” send a letter which was sure to elicit the sort of answer which came?<sup>2</sup>

If I had been in Evans' shoes – I should have got my friends to call a special general meeting of the society – have put the case fully & frankly before it – got the plenary

1894

absolution which of course, would have followed – and sharply put a paragraph in the papers stating the result – without taking any notice of the correspondent.

Now the thing is all a mess! And considering Evans is the best Treasurer the Society has had in my time the irony of the situation is complete.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Thomas Cunningham, see letter 315, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> During December there had been correspondence between W. T. Thiselton-Dyer and “A Critic” regarding the Royal Society’s officials, its publications and the awarding of the Society’s medals. “A little story” from Critic that a cheque for £80 had not been paid to the winner of the Rumford Medal (*The Times*, Friday, Dec. 14, 1894, p. 14, issue 34447, col. F) prompted further correspondence including replies from the auditors and the treasurer John Evans.

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Huxley Papers 4:386

Nine Wells  
Great Shelford  
Cambridge  
Decemb 26 94

My dear Huxley

All best Xmas greetings. I am not going to write a letter, because if the weather keeps open I may run down to Eastbourne for next Sunday. I can’t be certain but in any case I come alone & since you will probably have your house full I shall go straight to the Hotel. I will write on Friday when I have decided – Meanwhile I think that that Cunningham business is entirely his own move – & I don’t think you need bother about it.

Ever yours

M. Foster

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ALS H438

Hodeslea  
Staveley Road  
Eastbourne  
Dec 28 1894

My dear Foster

We shall be delighted to see you – and you would not have been allowed to go to the Hotel – if my wife were not left in a quandary as to whether we shall have room or not – I suppose she will know on Saturday morning but that will be too late for you.

Thought we should know this morning.

However give us all the time you can.

In haste to catch the post.

Ever yours affectionately

T. H. Huxley

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Huxley Papers 4:388

Nine Wells  
Great Shelford  
Cambridge  
Sat am Dec. 29. '94

My dear Huxley

I fear my little scheme may have bothered you. I wanted all three of us, in the first place to run down to Eastbourne, but the ladies decided that they could not for various reasons (change of maid among others) leave home just now, so I proposed to myself, to run down alone for Sunday, & wrote you accordingly.

But a beastly gale sprang up last night – & this morning after receiving your letter, I found Margaret so unwilling that I should travel in the gale (which may increase) that I wired to you that I would not come.

It is probable that I may run down before lectures begin on Jan. 14 or so but I don't feel sure. I suppose I am certain to find you there; And if I come I hope you will let me go to the Hotel – I can then with a free conscience run down whenever I find I can without waiting to know whether it will bother Mrs Huxley or no – & again I shall thus not bother by proposing to come & not coming!

1894

Meanwhile as to Cunningham & his proposal I take it that he has no one at his back – & is as big an idiot as you have supposed him to be. He is the man, to whom you gave a Fellowship at Madgelen [*sic*] years ago & who has rewarded you ever since.

He wants a Darwinian Society in order that he may boss it – that is about the bottom of the matter I fancy.

With best wishes for the New Year to both of you from all of us.

Ever thine

M. Foster

What an odd production Owen's life is!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See letter 365. Owen's life, edited by his grandson, is not the most distinguished of the Victorian series of lives and letters.

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ALS H439

Hodeslea  
Staveley Road  
Eastbourne  
Dec 30 1894

My dear Foster

You did not bother us at all – but at the risk of sounding inhospitable – I may say that I was very glad to hear you were not coming in the bitter wind that blew all day & is continuing at present – quite venomously.

Mrs Foster exercised that wise discretion which characterises wives in general & herself in particular in stopping you.

I may have to go to London for a day – (I mean up in the morning & down to dinner) – about this university business in the course of the next fortnight<sup>1</sup> – but I know of nothing else to call me away – and so long as we see you I don't mind how – only it seems a pity that when there is a room at your service you should not use it. However after the 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. Leonard & his wife & chicks will be here for a fortnight or so & then we should be full.

I have taken no notice of Cunningham's idiotic circular.

1894

You may well say that Owen's biography is an old production – But it is very instructive in the way of showing firstly what the public like & secondly, how an accumulation of small truths may produce the effect of a big lie – Anything less like the man as he was than the picture of a genial & almost saintly devotee of science is hardly conceivable. There are no fictions so gross as biographies, except perhaps autobiographies.

With our love & good wishes to you all for the new year  
Ever yours affectionately  
T. H. Huxley

<sup>1</sup> Huxley came to London on 22 January for his last public engagement. He introduced a deputation to the Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, in favour of the Gresham Commission's report to establish a teaching university for London.

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ALS H440

Hodeslea  
Staveley Road  
Eastbourne  
Feb 25 1895

My dear Foster

A talk with you could do me good – but I am afraid there is no chance of London for me this week. The bad weather pretended to vanish but it is all back again this morning and I am told that influenza is raging in London worse than here.

If I could compound for a few hours neuralgia I would not mind – but these long weeks of debility make me very shy of the influenza demon – Here we are practically isolated.

We are very sorry to hear that Mrs Foster & Mercy have been pursued by that devil. Let them take care of themselves & 'ware chill. And pray don't get it yourself.

I once asked Gordon why he didn't have the African fever "Well, he said, you see fellows think they shall have it & they do – I didn't think so & didn't get it".

Exercise your thinking faculty to that extent.

Wife is getting better again I am glad to say.

With our love  
Ever yours  
T. H. H.

1895

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Huxley Papers 4:248

The Royal Society  
Burlington House, London, W.  
March 7. '95

Dear Huxley

Will you kindly look over this “wind up” Challenger letter & let me know if you think it can be amended.

I hope you are still keeping fit – so glad the wife is better.

My wife & daughter are pretty well all right again & I am keeping quite fit, within a few days' view of the end of the term. Shall we find you at Eastbourne if we have a chance of running down during the Easter vac? I want to talk to you about (1) the Brit. Mus. (2) the Pres. R.S. to take office Dec next!!<sup>1</sup>

I want to see your review of A. Balfour.<sup>2</sup> It would be rather amusing to write a parody on B's book bolstering up some d—d idiocy or other on the same lines. He & Salisbury run on the same lines. Is this the basis of Conservative statesmanship. Thank Ether I am a radical.

Ever thine

M. Foster

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Lister (1827–1912), first Baron Lister of Lyme Regis, became president of the Royal Society in 1895.

<sup>2</sup> Huxley's reply to Arthur Balfour's book *Foundations of belief*: 'Mr Balfour's attack on agnosticism. Part I', *Nineteenth Century*, March 1895, 37: 527–540.

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ALS H441

Hodeslea  
Staveley Road  
Eastbourne  
March 7 1895

My dear Foster

The wife took to her bed on Thursday last with Influenza; I followed suit on Friday; one of the maids on Saturday, & at one time there seemed a grim prospect of a collapse of the household. However we have stopped these for the present.

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Farnell says it is a mild type – but in the matter of aches & pains, listlessness, paroxysms of coughing & general incapacity I can give it a high character for efficiency.

My wife has been badly pulled down but I think she is a little better today. Probably because Ethel has been down to look after us. The sudden return of winter last night was not good for either of us – but I suppose we shall get about again in time.

I do not think I should make the R.S. ring such small beer of itself – I should say that the share of the Society, from the beginning, in the Expedition was very large & important. “Ether” knows (I like that) the trouble & worry Hooker & I had were frightful.

I should immensely like to hear about B.M. & P.R.S. – & you know how pleasant it would be to me to hear you – But what is the use of what a poor devil not even convalescent from influenza yet – may propose?

With our love

Ever yours

T. H. H.

Excuse bad writing but but [*sic*] [be] thankful it no worse.

I am hopeless about Balfour – The fruit of Gladstone is over him.

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Huxley Papers 4:390

Nine Wells  
Great Shelford  
Cambridge  
May 26 1895

My dear Huxley

No need to say how we have been watching you from afar all these dreadful weeks and how light our hearts now are at your continued progress.

I am not going to bother you with a long letter indeed I only write a line to say that so soon as ever you wish to see me, I will run down. I can easily come down by some early train after one of my nights in London – & return the same afternoon. Just to shake you by the hand & no more.

We are flourishing. I am first rate in spite a fortnight’s dinners & a nice little coil in re President at the R.S.

All join in love to both of you

Ever thine

M. Foster