

163

ALS H303

Science and Art Department
 South Kensington
 May 2 1885

My dear Foster

Do the officers meet at 1 o'clock at the R.S. on Thursday or not? Nothing was said before we parted on this head. Is there any need we should as there is little or nothing but council's papers?

Can you settle these points with Stokes & tell Rix to let us all know whether we meet at 1. or not? If we meet at 1 – the Examiners ought to meet here early – say as soon after 11. as may be.

I expect to be dead tired after the soirée & so I shall not lecture on Thursday morning. Consequently I am open to meet you & the Asst Exs whenever you like – subject to our meeting or not meeting at R.S. at 1 o'clock – Make whatever arrangement suits you within these limits.

Obedience be hanged. It would not lie in my mouth as the lawyers say, to object to anybody getting his own way if he can.

If Clark had not been a personal friend of mine I should not have hesitated a moment about deciding in his favour – Under the circumstances it was quite clear what I should do if I were forced to decide and I thought it would have been kindly & courteous to the President if he had been let off the necessity of making a decision which was obviously disagreeable to him.¹

If, on the other hand it was wished to fix the responsibility of what happened on him – I am glad that he had the opportunity of accepting it. I never was more clear as to what was the right thing to do.

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

¹ Huxley's friend and doctor Sir Andrew Clark had been proposed for election to the Royal Society. He was duly elected.

164

Huxley Papers 4:254

Shelford
May 4 [1885]

Reverend Sir

So the “day of strangulation” has arrived at last,¹ and with it the humble petition of your friends that you may be induced to defer the “happy dispatch” for, say at least 10 years, when the subject may again come up for consideration. For your petitioners are respectfully inclined to think that if your Sixty-ship may be induced so far to become an Apostle, as to give up the Fishery Business – and be led to leave the Black Board at S.K. to others, the t’other side sixty years, may after all be the best years of your life. In any case they would desire to bring under your notice the fact that they feel they want you as much as ever they did.²

Ever thine

M. F.

¹ Huxley turned sixty on 4 May 1885, the age at which he had said scientists should be strangled.

² In May, Huxley sent his formal resignation as Inspector of Fisheries and as professor at South Kensington; he also announced his resignation as president of the Royal Society.

165

ALS H304

4 Marlborough Place
Abbey Road, N.W.
May 27 1885

My dear Foster

I am going down to Shropshire to look into a bit of fishery business tomorrow so I shall not be at South Kensington on Saturday.

What are you putting in the minutes on the upshot of the Presidency question at last meeting of Council?

I am anxious that it should clearly appear that I expressed my desire to retire at the next anniversary.

I was perplexed what to do about Hooker’s resolution as I doubt if the proposal to refer the matter to a committee would have met with universal assent.

1885

I am convinced that what with my perennial weariness & my deafness I ought to go – whatever my kind friends may say.

Ever yours very kindly

T. H. Huxley

166

ALS H305

Secretary of State Home Department

June 16 1885

My dear Foster

I packed up the honours & advanced papers today & told Homes to send them in.

I am sorry to say that the perkiness of last week¹ was only a spurt & I have been in a disgusting state of blue devils lately. Can't make out what it is for I really have nothing the matter except a strong tendency to put the most evil construction upon every thing.

I am fairly dreading tomorrow but why I don't know – probably an attack of modesty come on late in life & consequently severe.²

Very likely it will do some good & make me “fit” for Thursday.³

We go down this afternoon & come back either tomorrow night or Thursday morning

Ever yours

T. H. H.

¹ Huxley had delivered an address on 9 June at the unveiling of the Darwin statue at South Kensington.

² Oxford had conferred on him an honorary doctorate of civil laws.

³ Royal Society Council meeting.

167

ALS H306

Science and Art Department

South Kensington

June 27 1885

My dear Foster

I have just come upon a note to the advertisement of the second edition of the “Lessons” in Macmillan but which states in effect that all that has been done by way of revision is your work & that I have had nothing to do with it!

I wish Macmillan would let one or other of us see their confounded advertisements for, of course, I cannot let this go on.

I have written to G. Macmillan a letter stating the exact facts of the case & have asked them to send it on to you.

At the same time, I have asked him to see about carrying out the arrangements about the copyright or other arrangement for a proper recognition of your great help of which I spoke to him the other day.

Ever yours
T. H. Huxley

168

ALS H307

Secretary of State Home Department
July 14 1885

My dear Foster

I have agreed the Report & sent it on – also insisted to Donnelly on the importance of sending appendix to teachers – He assures me they will be distributed & that previous documents of the same kind always have been distributed to teachers.

Item. D. says that they are about instituting a practical examination for Honours men.

Item. I put it to him that there ought to be a practical examination for all Teachers certificates – this would be a good step & about as much as we are likely to get at present.

As regards the marking he is very stiff – Says that without marking of individual questions, they have no means of giving definite answers when an examination result is challenged or of proving that there has been no carelessness & that every answer was duly considered – Quite agreeing with you on the general questions I think that from the point of view of practice the requirement is justifiable. When I was examiner alone the separate values were always given & until quite recently we have jointly required them – they are given in all the other examinations. Of course we could trust Langley & Lea¹ – but the giving of numbers for each question is an undoubted check upon less experienced & this mostly Assistant Examiners – However you had better have a talk with Donnelly about it yourself.

I have been idling in the country for two or three days – but like the woman with the issue “I am not better but rather worse” – blue devils & funk – funk & blue devils – Liver I expect.

Ever yours
T. H. Huxley

¹ Arthur Sheridan Lea (1853–1915), lecturer in physiology at Cambridge.

169

ALS H308

Science and Art Department
 South Kensington
 July 16 1885

My dear Foster

The high temperature has evidently rendered you ductile if not malleable – As to the matter of fact you're another!

Seriously, we have to consider not only how things will work but how they will look – and you will never persuade the philistines that the block estimate could be properly checked & controlled. Don't think P.S. would suit me – the great thing about a Doctor is faith in him and in spite of all you say, I lack that – I have not seen Andrew for an age, as he has been ill himself but I shall go & look him up again – Everybody tells me I look so much better that I am really ashamed to go growling about and confess that I am continually in a blue funk & hate the thought of any work – especially if scientific or anything requiring prolonged attention.

The x club is going to smithereens, as if a charge of dynamite had been exploded in the midst of it. Busk¹ is slowly fading away – Tyndall is, I fear, in a bad way – and I am very anxious about Hooker – I had a talk with Dyer about him and tried to impress caution upon him when we were at his place the other day.

But it is very hard to know what is best to do. He is the man to become hipped to death without incessant activity of some sort or other – I am sure that the habit of incessant work into which we all drift – is as bad in its way as dram-drinking – In time you cannot be comfortable without the stimulus.²

However, we are going to Mrs Darwin at Down on Saturday & I hope to meet him there & talk with him seriously.

The blessed Treasury can't make up their minds whether I am to be asked to stay on as Dean or not – & till they do I can't shake off any of my fetters!

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

¹ George Busk (1807–1886), naval surgeon, zoologist and palaeontologist, was elected fellow of the Royal Society in 1850, and was a member of the X-Club. He died in August the following year.

² Hooker's "incessant activity" did not stop his outliving Huxley by sixteen years, dying in 1911, aged ninety-four.

170

ALS H309

Secretary of State Home Department
July 24 1885

My dear Foster

I withdraw & apologise to the Treasury.

They have given the £1200 unconditionally as a special pension.

Ever Yours

T. H. Huxley

171

ALS H310

4 Marlborough Place,
N.W.
July 25 1885

My dear Foster

I don't think we need call a meeting of Council to act on the accompanying letter – Will you be so kind as to write the letter to the Secretary of the Board of Works (I believe that includes Woods and Forests) and ask his attention to the matter.

I can't be off yet as the stupid treasury people are dawdling over the final settlement of my affairs – However I am going to see my boy at Charterhouse today and have to be off on Monday for three days fishery business – the last – thank Heaven – in Devonshire.

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

172

ALS H311

Athenaeum Club
Pall Mall
Aug 1 1885

My dear Archangel

I am going to write to you notwithstanding – and at length too – so look out.

Lankester has been writing to me too – a most remarkable epistle and one which would have brought an ink shower bath on his head from me in days that were – before the Douglas blood was cooled.

It appears that I have given him reason to think that he is entitled to the reversion of the biological chair at S.K. – that either Lord Rosebery or I – perhaps both – are responsible for his making an ass of himself over the Edinburgh chair¹ – that every thing rests with me and that unless I go and upset all the decisions of the Department he will go to the devil without further loss of time – leaving me responsible for his blood – and I suppose brains – and all this with a copiousness which is really wonderful.

I cannot trust his discretion or his fairness in the case of matters of controversy and I have therefore written back very cautiously altogether declining to discuss the matter – the last time we talked about it you agreed L. was impossible & recommended Milnes Marshall. It's all very fine to say that if you were in our place you would swallow him – I should like to see you do it & to note the after effect of perturbation in your viscera!

However the new arrangement will have been carried out if Lankester had had no existence. The new arrangement of the work develops the botanical side & causes a want of two assistants instead of me.

We had to contrive pay for the extra work & extra men with the Treasury absolutely costive. They do not even pay me for remaining Dean & except that I don't want to desert the ship yet, I should have taken to my heels altogether.

I am going down to my brother in law this afternoon but back on Monday when I will write about the "statement" which I have not had time to read yet.²

I am much disposed to go for Lankester & I think Hooker is also but I want to have a look at Fellow Turks before finally deciding.

Don't know what has happened to the money – but the estimates only found the other day.

We hope to get away next week sometime to the sea – I am decidedly better.

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

¹ Lankester had applied for and accepted the Regius Chair of Natural History at Edinburgh in 1882, despite warnings from Huxley that conditions might not be to his liking. He immediately regretted his move, resigned and re-applied for his old post at University College London.

² Presumably regarding the award of the Royal Society's Royal Medal; see following letters.

173

Huxley Papers 4:256

Shelford
Aug 2 [1885]

Reverend Sir

What a troublesome man you are. I told you not to write – because I knew what you would write – and you have written exactly what I thought you would! It is very nice to have letters from you – but I wanted to save you the trouble of writing. Since I wrote, Lankester has written me again – I, & having no fear before me – have written him a few plain truths.

There is a mixture in him of the most bare-faced conscience-less selfishness with a certain good nature – & vigorous power of work, & meek acceptance of rebuke which completely fascinates me & leads me to do things for him that my judgement does not approve of.

Please don't go & write an exposition of your views about his claims for medal.¹ If you approve of my statement as a whole mend the holes in it as far as you can without trouble – if you do not burn it or send it back.

Delighted to hear you are better.

Ever thine
M. F.

¹ Lankester was awarded the Royal Society's Royal Medal for his "discoveries concerning the embryology and morphology of the mollusca and his services to embryology & animal morphology in general".

174

ALS H312

Athenaeum Club
Pall Mall
Aug 4 1885

My dear Foster (always an archangel of some sort)

The last batch of documents shall receive attention as soon as I recover some intellect by the sad sea cooves to which we shall betake ourselves at Filey on Thursday – I have promised the wife to be off on that day and as I am rapidly getting seedy again I am anxious

to be off myself – So there is no chance of our meeting on Friday as I wish there was – Lots of things I should like to talk to you about.

I have looked over Moseley & your statements. I don't like the former at all. Yours is very much to the purpose but I cannot help thinking you have overdone it in one or two places.

Balfour was a head & shoulders taller in all respects than L. to my mind and I really don't think there is any comparison between them as embryologists. Then as to the statement on p. 5. I should say that E van Beneden¹ & the Hertwigs each have done much better work – to say nothing of Fol² Wiedersheim³ & others. On the other hand you have left out the palaeontological work.

I promised that I would look at Salter's⁴ work before deciding & must do so but I have little doubt I shall be disposed to go for Lankester.⁵

Salter is minutely ingenious and ingeniously minute – but I am not sure yet that there is anything large under the details.

Do you know of anybody who can be recommended to Miss Garrett, the writer of the inclosed letter?

Is there anybody at Girton?

Could the Girton authorities tell of anybody?

Please answer if you can & send the paper back to my house marked “to be forwarded”.

I wish you a pleasant holiday.

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

¹ Edouard Van Beneden (1846–1910), Belgian embryologist.

² Hermann Fol (1845–1892), Swiss biologist and zoologist.

³ Robert Wiedersheim (1848–1923), German anatomist.

⁴ Possibly Samuel James Augustus Salter (1825–1897), dentist and botanist.

⁵ For the Royal Medal.

175

ALS H313

4 Marlborough Place
Abbey Road, N.W.
Aug 5 1885

My dear Foster

The reason why you have not had your pay is that you have never sent in your account!!!

1885

I inquired at S.K. today – now I come to think of it I have signed some Asst Exs accounts. Healy will send you yours especially tonight – so that it will not want my signature.

Off to Filey tomorrow and very glad to go as I am getting rather seedy again.

The Treasury business is all settled – Howes & Scott will be Asst Professors, one for zoology the other for Botany & I retain general superintendence – as part of the great unpaid.¹

You will get your files in time now & I suppose will be off on Saturday.

Best wishes to you all

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

¹ T G B Howes was made assistant professor of zoology, and Dukinfield Henry Scott (1854–1934), assistant professor of botany. Huxley continued at South Kensington as honorary dean. See Desmond, *Huxley*, p. 542, note 18.

176

ALS H314

Casalini
West Bournemouth
Sept 8 1885

My dear Foster

I inclose herewith 1) 2 reports of Abney paper¹ 2) 2 of a Hindes paper² which had been sent to my house and by a piece of stupidity were not forwarded to me at Filey though a letter of Stokes about the former was – I wrote to him & settled about it.

For Hindes paper on the other hand, nothing has been done – I agree to its being printed & I do not think it worth while to send on to Evans & Williamson both of whom are I believe still away. I could not suggest a lithographer so I have sent the whole papers on to you.

So much for business.

I am glad to hear you are all safe back & I hope all the better for your trip.

Filey was not very successful for us – lodgings not altogether comfortable and weather anything but good – in fact it grew so cold & wet at last that we could not stand it any longer, and hearing from Mrs Waller that she & her husband & chicks were very well off here we determined to migrate.

I wish we had been here all along as we have charming quarters & the temperature is much more to the taste of both of us.

I got seedy again before leaving Filey and I am not right yet – though on the whole a good deal better than when I left town – but I doubt there is some chronic bedevilment hanging about either liver or intestine.

Ever yours
T. H. Huxley

¹ William de Wiveleslie Abney, 'The solar spectrum, from $\lambda 7150$ to $\lambda 10,000$ ', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 1886, **177**: 457–469.

² George Jennings Hinde (1839–1918), geologist and paleontologist, 'On beds of sponge-remains in the Lower and Upper Greensand of the South of England', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 1885, **176**: 403–453.

177

Huxley Papers 4:258

Shelford
Sep 10 85

Reverend Sir

This child's breakfast this morning was made all the more delectable by the sight of your beautiful MSS – and he is very thankful to hear that you are prospering at Bournemouth instead of fretting at Filey – I did not like to interfere with your projects, but if you had consulted me I should have told you that I think a man who goes for pleasure north of Cambridge when he can go south is an ———.

I take it that you are "getting on" – & whatever it be which sojourns around your abdominal viscera to your grief & pain is to the great joy of your friends "making itself less". Stay at Bournemouth until you get thoroughly bored – & only come back to the village when you can't keep away any longer. We had a very pleasant trip of 3 weeks – We went first to a little albergo height Col D'Ollen at the head of the Val Sesia – this was about 10 000 feet, the highest hotel in Europe (barring the hut on the Theodule) – & the cooking was excellent – water boiled just at the right temperature to make tea – but we couldn't breathe – & were surrounded by a thick mist from 9 am to 4 pm so that instead of seeing the Duomo at Milan as we ought to have done, we could not see each other at ten paces – our conversation flagged, so we ran off to Zermatt where we found 9000 people, archbishops & such like huddled in 3 hotels – so after staying there a few days we came home.

We looked out for your offspring but saw & heard nothing of them.

I have attended to the R.S. documents – I have told James to ask Camb. Sci. Instr. Co. for an estimate of Hinde's Plates. Dew is putting his long back into Lithography & turning out some admirable work – & I think it is time that the plates in the Phil. Trans. ceased to be the laughing stock of the scientific public. I expect their estimate will exceed £55

Gabriel's limit – but I hope you will vote for efficiency against parsimony. As to Abney and his “lines” I have worked myself into an absolute fog about them – & can only hope that providence will in some way clear the matter up. If my memory does not deceive me, I sent you some memoranda relative to the R.S. proposing certain changes.

I do not want you to write me about them but I should like you to think over them – & if you like scribble your comments – I beg your pardon – comment on them by way of notes for the perusal of the other officers. Anyhow I feel sure we ought to do something – don't write me a scrawl – because before long we shall meet & then you can say all you have to say!

I also want your Presidential blessing on a proposal that we should have a smoking free & easy early in October – on the night of the 1st Council – but before you do this you must hear all that Evans has to say against it – the old fogies who hate 'bacca, poured their complaints into his ear.

I have had some private correspondence with Lister of the F. O.¹ One Dutrieux Bey² of Paris thought that if he Lister told the R.S. to give Jules Guérin [*sic*]³ a gold medal for having always insisted on the uselessness of quarantine in cholera, the R.S. would do it especially since “a few weeks ago Lord Lyons⁴ had been asking the Academie de Science to nominate someone whom he might report to the R.S. as deserving the medal”!!! I gave Lister all the necessary data.

We all join in best love to you & your spouse & eke⁵ best wishes to the House of Waller – I hope all your news of the rest of the family is good.

Ever thine

M. Foster

The direction on the envelope is a masterly forgery of your own MS.

¹ Sir Thomas Villiers Lister (1832–1902), assistant under secretary of state for foreign affairs.

² Dutrieux Bey, French public health doctor.

³ Jules Guérin (1801–1886), Parisian surgeon.

⁴ Richard Bickerton Pemell Lyons, Earl Lyons (1817–1887), British ambassador in Paris.

⁵ An archaic term meaning: also, too, moreover; in addition. See OED.

178

ALS H315

Casalini
 W. Bournemouth
 Sep 17. 1885

My dear Foster

I am very glad to hear that Dew is going to devote himself to Lithography and I hope he will be able to take away our reproach – I am for efficiency at all costs.

I have looked through your memoranda and find therein much to agree with – we will talk about details when we meet. The practical difficulty in the way of reform is how to get over Stokes' conservatism. It is not in nature for a man to wish to alter his ways when they have been the habit of thirty years; and if he is pressed he is as likely as not to resign the Secretaryship.

Of the many reasons in favour of my getting out of the Presidential Chair is that Stokes might be hoisted into it – and so give reform a chance. Only he might be more difficult to deal with as President!

I am anything but clear as to the course I had best take myself – while undoubtedly much better in general health – I am in a curious state of discouragement and should like nothing better than to remain buried here, or anywhere else, out of the way of trouble & responsibility. It distresses me to think that I shall have to say something definite about the Presidency at the meeting of Council in October.

By the way when shall that be? Ordinarily we take the 3rd Thursday but that falls on the 14th [*sic*:15th] this year. Any day will suit me however if you will arrange it with Stokes and Evans.

I am not at all sure that I can give my blessing to the “Tabagie”. When I heard of it I had great doubts as to its being a wise move – It is not the function of “smoke” so much, as the principle of having meetings in the Society's rooms, which are not practically (whatever they may be theoretically) open to all the fellows – and which will certainly be regarded as the quasi-private parties of one of the officers. You will have all sorts of jealousies roused – and talk of a clique etc. etc. etc.

When I was secretary the one thing I was most careful to avoid was the appearance of desiring to exert any special influence – But there was a jealousy of the x club – and only the other day to my great amusement I was talking to an influential member of the Royal Society Club about the possibility of fusing it with the Phil. Club & he said, forgetting I was a member of the latter Oh! we don't want any of those line-pullers! – Poor dear innocent dull-as-ditchwater Phil Club! However we can talk about all this when we meet.

1885

We return to town on the 26th. Are you likely to be up any day that week?

Best love from us, the Wallers went back to Gloucester some time ago all the better for their run – all flourishing with one exception – but reports there are not unfavourable. I hope the amendment though slow may be sure.

Ever yours
T. H. Huxley

179

ALS H316

Casalini
W. Bournemouth
Sep. 25. 1885

My dear Foster

Come on Tuesday (29th) & lunch with me at Marlborough Place – Wife says she will have some extra strong coffee for you – after other drinks – bien entendu.

I have been getting something wrong with my good ear & consequently have been as deaf as a post for a day or two – but I am beginning to hear again. I hear there is a man by the name of Dalby to be trusted in ear matters¹ – I think I shall go & see him though I am mortally afraid of getting seven devils worse than the first.

All right about Council for 29th – I thought it was third Thursday & not last.

We go back tomorrow & I am sorry to leave the place.

Ever yours
T. H. Huxley

What time will suit you best 1. PM or 1.30? Send a post card today.

¹ William Bartlett Dalby (1840–1918), aural surgeon, St George's Hospital.

180

ALS H321

4 Marlborough Place
Abbey Road, N.W.
Oct 30. 1885

My dear Foster

I have gone carefully over the questions – I think lung would be a better compulsory second question than spinal ganglion. And I have rather expanded the two compulsories so that there may be no excuse for grumbling about them – you will get proof of course.

I think the lowest point of my curve of ups & downs is gradually rising – but I have by no means reached the point when I can cheerfully face anything – I got over the Board of Visitors (2 hours & a half) better than I expected but my deafness was a horrid nuisance.

I believe the strings of the old fiddle will tighten up a good deal, if I abstain from attempting to play upon the instrument at present – but that a few jigs now will probably ruin that chance.

But I will say my final word at our meeting next week. I would rather step down from the chair than dribble out of it – Even the devil is in the habit of departing with a “melodious twang”¹ & I like the precedent.

Ever yours very faithfully

T. H. Huxley

¹ Lord Byron, *The vision of judgement* (1822), stanza 102.

181

ALS H317

4 Marlborough Place
Abbey Road, N.W.
October 30 1885

My dear Foster

Abney spoke to me today about the Secretaryship. I told him that other names had been mentioned besides Rayleigh¹ – but that the officers were not committed to anything and that if they followed my advice they would leave perfect freedom of action to the Council – as I had tried to do in the matter of the Presidency.

1885

I added that I thought his best course would be to put the matter in the hands of some members of Council and absent himself from the meeting.

If Rayleigh won't take the office & there is any talk of Carey Foster² or other member of Council – he must be warned to stop away otherwise we shall have to swallow the first man who happens to be mentioned – Rayleigh would be unquestionably the man if he only lived in London (or if the Foreign Secretary took any part in the business) but it will be very awkward to have not a single resident active officer.

I am by no means convinced that you have an accurate report of Abney's business capacity – I hear quite the contrary from people who should know.

Please tell Stokes if you see him about Abney.

Ever yours

T. H. H.

¹ John William Strutt, third Baron Rayleigh, took over as secretary of the Royal Society (Physical Sciences) in 1885 from George Gabriel Stokes who became president.

² George Carey Foster (1835–1919), professor of experimental physics, University College, London.

182

ALS H318

4 Marlborough Place
Abbey Road, N.W.
Nov 2. 1885

My dear Foster

No doubt Rayleigh is the best man – and if we can get him we shall do well.

If we can't the choice seems to be between C. Foster & Abney and it is very important to us to take the better – I am quite open to correction either way. I think your minute will do very well.

I have written something about the mode of electing fellows with indirect reference to what was said at the British Ass. & I should like to know what you think of it.

[Library Cm] by all means on the 12th.

No more official [memoranda] for me my friend – not even For. Sec – but really Williamson should mend his ways or go.

Why can't you come & dine, or at any rate stop here on Tuesday night? There is a room ready for you. If you really can't let me know what time between 8 & 9 would be convenient – there are a thousand things I want to talk to you about.

Ever yours

T. H. Huxley

149

183

ALS H319

4 Marlborough Place

N.W.

Nov. 17. 1885

My dear Foster

I am happily getting to the end of my address but I find two or three gaps which I can hardly fill up out of my own head. – I have written to Stokes about one or two & now I am going to bother you.

What about state of Challenger publications?¹ I forgot to ask you the other day when you spoke about Murray² not wanting a Committee. Has he sent in a Report?

My address has got longer than I intended and I don't think I shall say anything about papers presented to the Society. It is a custom which may become awkward by & by and for once may be more honoured in the breach than the observance.

Sir W. Armstrong³ does not bite at my suggestion so I have been obliged to knock out a pretty paragraph I had written about his munificent donation! Schade!

Don't answer this but don't let us forget to talk over the matter on Thursday.

Ever yours

T. H. H.

¹ Huxley spoke of the official Reports of the Scientific Results of the *Challenger* expedition in his presidential address. Nineteen Reports had been published, six more were in press, and all Reports would be published by the end of 1887.

² John Murray (1841–1914), marine scientist and oceanographer, and a member of the *Challenger* expedition. In 1882, on Charles Wyville Thomson's death, he became editor of the expedition's reports. See *Oxford DNB*, vol. 39, pp. 959–961.

³ Sir William Armstrong had offered £7000 to set up a fund to abolish annual subscriptions to the Royal Society.

184

ALS H322

4 Marlborough Place

Dec. 26. 1885

My dear Foster

Please read the inclosed letter from Jowett (confidentially).¹ I had suggested the possibility of diminishing the Greek & Latin for the science and medical people, but that you

1885

see he won't have. But he is prepared to load the classical people with science by way of making things fair.

It may be worth our while to go in for this, and trust to time for the other. What say you?

Merry Christmas to you. The G.O.M. is going to reply so I am likely to have a happy new year!² I expect some fun, and I mean to make it an occasion for some good earnest. Ever yours faithfully

T. H. Huxley

¹ In addition to being master of Balliol College, Jowett was also at the time vice-chancellor of Oxford University, see *Oxford DNB*, vol. 30, pp. 756–762. Jowett had sent Huxley a letter on 23 December 1885 discussing scientific and classical education at Oxford (Huxley Papers 7:60); see following letter.

² William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898) had published 'Dawn of creation and of worship: reply to Dr. Reville', *The Nineteenth Century*, Nov. 1885, **18**: 685–706, in which he had attempted to reconcile the biblical creation with scientific evidence. Huxley responded in the following issue 'The interpreters of Genesis and the interpreters of nature', *The Nineteenth Century*, Dec. 1885, **18**: 849–860. A further exchange followed in the new year and sparked a debate in *The Times*.

185

Huxley Papers 4:265

Shelford

Cambs

Dec. 30 [1885]

Reverend Sir

A Happy New Year! – and many of them, & may you more & more demonstrate the folly of strangling men at 60.

I have worked out the teachers – unless I have been unduly lenient, they have done dramatically better this year – but rejoicing like angel (as Michael ought) over those who got through with the heart and the pleura, I was inclined to overlook everything else – I have sent papers back & send you my report that you may see it before it goes in, even if you do not sign it.

These papers remind me that I should like to have a talk with you some day if I can remember it about the possibility of putting in a practical exam for the advanced May papers – & I think we might probably do this for the Training Colleges. It only means expense to the Department.

I return Jowett's letter – and am inclined to think that perhaps it would be as well to insist on physics or chemistry or both in Responses at O. & Little Go at C.¹ – we might take up their cry "It is bad to specialize too early" – & insist that the Latin & Greek tack should cease that habit of specializing early, in which they have been brought up these long years.

If we carry this then perhaps Jowett & Co will in the course of a few years recognise that a pint pot will only hold a pint, & cry out for easement & then will come the time for alternatives. Meanwhile a race of idiots – hydrocephalics – will have been raised – but Jowett & Co must bear the responsibility of that.

But I doubt if you will do much by bringing the R.S. to bear on Jowett & tother Oxford & Cambridge big wigs – I believe the best way will be to work on the Head Masters – & convert them. I fancy that this is really easier than going straight to the Univ. If we could get the Head Masters to say that they wished for Physics etc. in the Res. exam we should get it.

I told Griffith of Harrow to try & see you and talk to you about it.

My own scheme is of the following kind.

Divide subjects into Groups

I	II	III
Greek	Mathematics	English Literature
Latin	Physics	History
French	Chem.	Geography
German		Biology

Every candidate to satisfy the examiner in 3 subjects – one subject to be in group I and one subject in group II otherwise to have free choice – for my own part I would have no limitations but leave absolute choice – & trust to free trade – Providence the Schoolmaster – the boys' own tendencies – being left to settle what he shall take up.

There is a preliminary point to settle – by what is the purpose of Responsions or Previous exam.

I say it is simply a guard for the University that the lads sent up shall have had enough discipline & show evidence of enough mental power to justify the expectation that they will profit by their stay at the University.

Others say no, it is an instrument in the hands of the Univ. to determine school education?

Don't answer this.

Ever thine

M. Foster

¹ The first university examinations at Oxford and Cambridge.