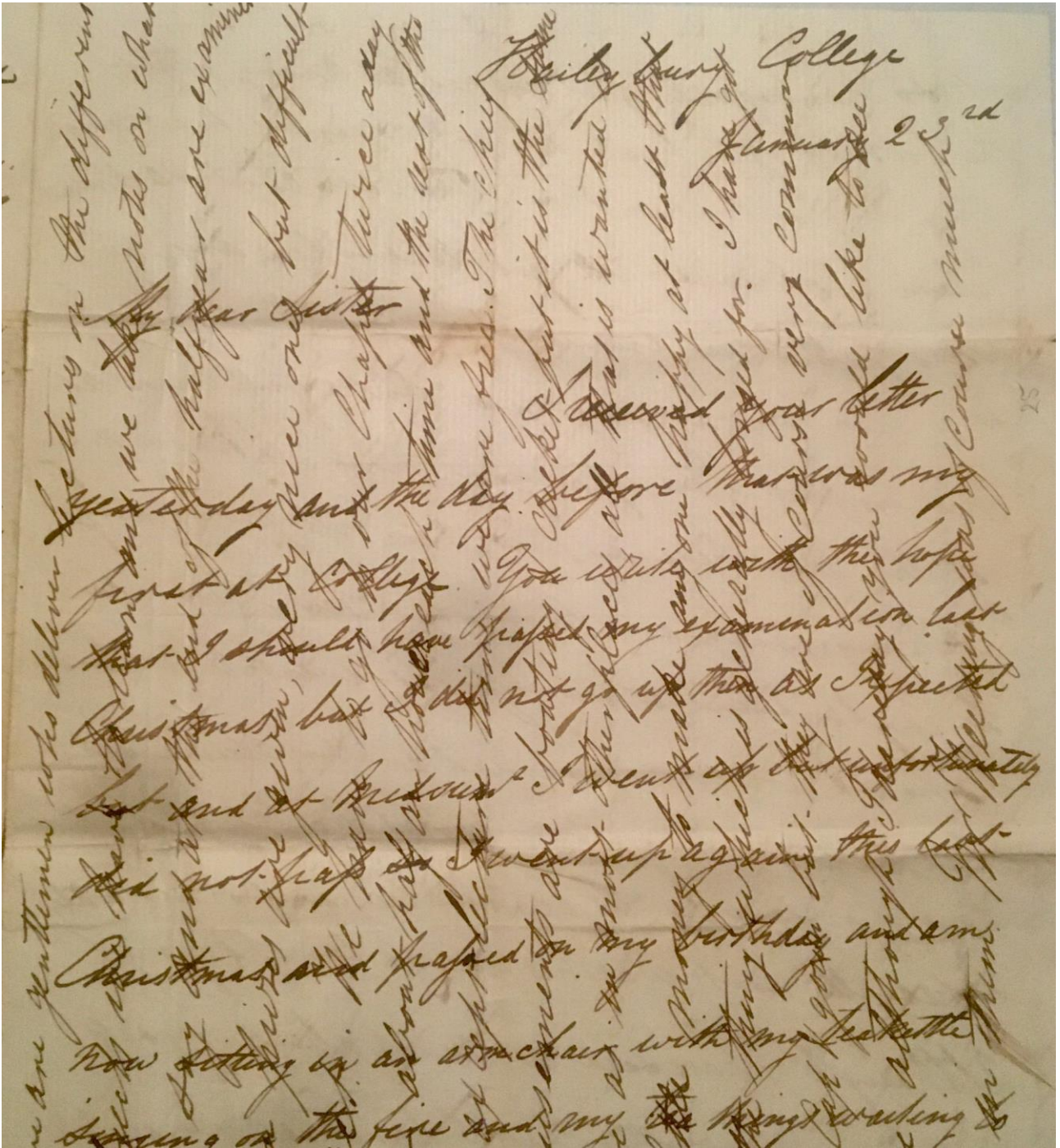


Letter 6: Thomas Weeding enters Haileybury College, 23 January 1851



Dear Sister,
I received your letter yesterday and the day before that was my first at College. You write with the hope that I shall have passed my examination last Christmas but I did not go up then as I expected but and at Midsummer I went up but unfortunately did not pass so I went up again this last Christmas and passed on my birthday and am now sitting in an armchair with my teakettle singing on the fire and my tea things waiting to be removed. My room is comfortable but of course not so handsomely furnished as many others the owners of which do not consider how much they lay out upon them. There are about 80 students here and I

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must tell you that when any one has passed his examination for this College he is a man not a young man but a full man, let me impress this upon your mind. I know many of the men here so that I am not quite among strangers again as I was when I first came to England and when I first went to Dr Lords.

I should however have had another chum who had been reading with me at Mr Hawlaynes but he did not pass his examination unfortunately especially as it was his second time of trying. Although I have said so much about myself I have not forgotten that I have to congratulate you on becoming a Mother as also Fanny upon having another child. You say you doubt not but that your child will be noisy as he is a boy. Now I do not agree with you there but think he is more likely to be quiet than a girl, look to number one for instance, you know what bird you were called after and I think Mother used to tell a story of a lady whose child did not talk so soon as she expected so she consulted the Doctor, but he as soon as he heard it was a girl (missing text) then there is no fear of its not being able to talk upon which the lady was offended. I don't think one persons love affairs are very interesting to others but I can't help telling you that I got desperately in love with a young lady at Blackheath, she is very pretty, her name is Gudge. And her father is a Secretary to the House of Commons but neither he nor Mamma knew what friends their daughter and I were only her brothers and sister knew it. I do not know what she thinks of our parting. All I think about it is that I am very sorry but can't cry. She made me a very handsome purse. **I must now tell you a little about this College.** It is situated about 2 miles from Hertford and consists of a large four-sided building containing about four acres open space in the centre **which is called the Quad** which again is the short for Quadrangle. Every man has a room to himself. We breakfast and tea alone (except when invited out by one another); and dine in a large hall all together. The head of the College is "Prin" (Principal) as he is called is **a celebrated clergyman named Mr Melvill** whom Mr Weeding knows and to whom he gave me a letter of introduction.

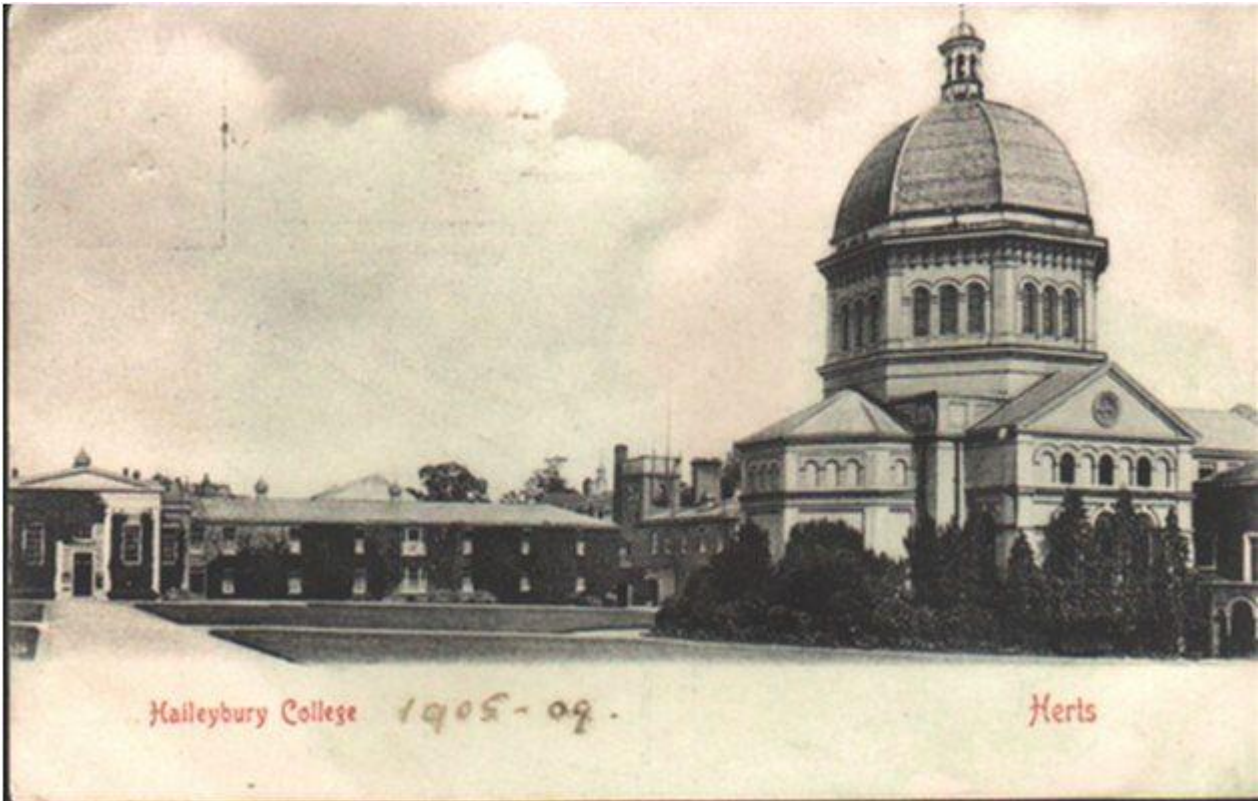
We do not of course say lessons (being men) but there are gentleman who deliver lectures on the different subjects we have to learn and we take notes on what they say and at the end of the halfyear are examined. When prizes are given, very nice ones but difficult to get. We have to go to our Chapel twice a day for about half an hour each time and the rest of the day except lecture time we are free. The chief amusements are boating & cricket but it is the same here as in most other places, all that is wanted is a little money to make any one happy at least that is the thing which is generally longed for. I have got my cap & gown but they are of course very common here although I daresay you would like to see me in them Mr Weeding was of course much pleased at my passing and did not mind much when I failed last Midsummer, it is a very common thing to be rejected even two and three times; this last time 21 out of 32 passed. I enclose a letter to Uncle Lawrence which perhaps you will let him have as soon as convenient, it is an answer to one he wrote me a short time since which I delayed answering until after my examination. There has been a great deal of frost this winter. There is a meeting at Hertford against free trade. And **a great many of the men have gone hoping there will be a row etc there**, there generally is at these meetings, which are now very numerous in the country and I think the English Farmers have good reason to complain.

You promise me that your little boy shall write to me as soon as he is able, it will seem so strange to hear from a little animal who was not in existence when I left, it makes me feel quite old. My direction for the next two years will be Haileybury College, Hertford. I have got a watch which Mr Weeding helped me choose, it is a silver one and keeps beautiful time. I must now conclude with love to Mother Fanny & James and nephews & nieces & all other relations believe me to remain Your affectionate Brother

Thomas Weeding

I must now tell you a little about this College

James is of course referring to the East India Company College at Haileybury in Hertfordshire. As the name suggests, the college was the chosen place of education for young men seeking a career in the Indian Civil Service. Entry to Haileybury was far from easy (note the examinations Thomas had undertaken, and for which he had previously crammed at Mr Hawlayne's school). The school was built by the East India Company at the then staggering cost of £92,000, with the grounds designed by none other than Humphrey Repton.



which is called the Quad

The 'quad' (quadrangle) at Haileybury is vast as can be seen here:



a celebrated clergyman named Mr Melvill

Henry Melvill was the Principal ('Prin') of Haileybury from 1844 to 1858.



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If Thomas and his classmates were expecting a 'row', they were in for a disappointment. 'Free Trade' v 'Protectionism' was the hot-button issue of the day, with flaring tempers and even riots sometimes resulting from these meetings. Alas, though, the meeting held at Hertford on Friday 25 January 1850 was fairly ordinary, as observed by the Morning Chronicle's reporter:

"It had originally been proposed...to hold a county meeting, but in the present state of public feeling in the vicinity, it seemed a dangerous experiment to call a meeting open to both parties"

Coming from a farming family, Thomas would almost certainly have been a 'protectionist' (ie, in favour of tariffs on imports).



This is perhaps more the atmosphere Thomas was hoping for...