Belvidere Lowell Jan 22 [1860]

Dear Brother

I hope you will excuse me not writing sooner to you but under all circumstances I could not well write sooner for the very self same week I received your letter I had to find another boarding house Mrs. Robinson having been confined of another child so her Mother had to go to take care of the girls and me each to find a place to board out until such time their mother could come home again but I may here state that Mrs. Robinson has got another son and is doing very well and my sister has been home these last 3 weeks (2 weeks I should have said) well when I was boarding out I went to a poor English family that live out in the woods. I thought it would be some little assistance to them while I shoped but found it very inconvenient whilst boarding there for I could not write a letter the have a family of rough small children always in a uproar in the house and the weather here is too cold now to write in your bedroom. The first sunday my sister she was at home we all went to meeting there being a celebrated minister preaching. I was like the rest anxious to hear him so I put it off another sunday and last sunday there was service held in all the churches on this great calamity at Lawrence so of course I put it off again and now today as I write my hand opens and shuts as you see I am really distracted with pain having got a very bad cold. I was off work and in bed all day yesterday it appears to me I have not got properly accalimated yet but will just mention an instance to give you some idea of the weather here. we have been building a new workshop this last fall and me and my mate had to build some out building at the back last decem- ber and as a [specimen??] of the frost I will add what I never experienced in my life before the nails would freeze to our hands if you happen ed to set the side of your hand on the nails the would stick there as
many as could touch your skin. one day whilst putting on the floor a nail bounced from the floor and set with the head on the back of my hand and there it stood as erect as if it had been driven in to try the experiment how fast it would stick I turned my hand upside down and shook it to see if I could shake it off but no it – stuck there fast enough. I went to show my mate at it thought he would not beleive me if he did not see it but he was not surprised but when I took it off it brought only the thin skin with it but he told me he had often had the whole skin pulled off with them and the made awful sore places on your hand the man that attached the pipes to the boiler a day or two afterwards thoughtlesly put a small tac in his lips but behold he went to remove it it took off the skin and he had a very bad mouth afterwards all sweled and inflamed with the frost I merely mention this to show you how cold it is at times for A few days together and then it will be as warm almost as the majority of days in summer are in England. today is warm enough to go without coat tomorrow perhaps will be as cold, the calamity I mentioned in the commencement of this letter was a cotton mill 5 storys high falling whilst all the hands was at work about 13 minutes to 5 clock last tuesday but one just as the was lighting up I beleive it was not more than one or two minutes from the commencement to being laid in a heap of ruins the most shocking affair I ever saw or heard of before whilst labouring to get out the wounded and those buried beneath the ruins about nine o clock at night a man by accident was handing a cup of coffee to some woman that was buried underneath he put his lantern down in the debris the better to see his way when coming in contact with some hard substance he broke it and being charged with camphene it imme-
(camphine is a liquid we have here instead of oil or candles in most houses) diately exploded and set the whole fabric in flames those that was alive and unhurt wich might have been saved where burned alive. Lawrence
is about eight miles from Lowell so on wednesday morning me and 5 more of my mates took a sleigh and went down there and I must say of all the sicking spectacles I ever saw nothing could compare with this some I saw got out was not the slightest injured others was burned some from the head down to the body all burned away others their legs and lower portions of thier Body the rest apparently uninjured one family I was acquainted and went to see had a boy working in the weave room or basement story of the mill he escaped unhurt though buried underneath the whole fabric he told me that he saw the shafting all coming down and he crept under his loom and in a moment when he opened his eyes all was darkness he began to grope about and found A woman some men had got hold off and was getting out so he clung to her hoops and was dragged out with her the hoops as the women wear here are canes stitched in their under skirts to answer the purpose of crinoline but it is useless to occupy this letter with the details. I have sent you a couple of papers with particulars in only I think the [that] curtail the true account of dead and missing but dont pay any such mony as the want from you as you are only entitled to pay one penny for each paper I pay 2 cents on each when I post them you pay the same when you receive them. I will just state since I last wrote to you I have been sick and of work one month with the plurality I was no sooner at my work only some 2 or 3 days when my sister was took sick and we all thought she would have died but thank god she recovered and is hearty and strong again we have been very slack of work too at the shop for two months almost nothing to do and during the whole winter we have never lighted until last week but now we have a good prospect before us thank god I dont know what to think of Mrs. Dunn 18 weeks ago I sent her 2 pounds and 9 weeks ago I sent her 5 pounds and on the 2oth of next week I should send other 5 pounds but I really cannot think to keep sending money without having it answered
the very last letter I wrote to her I pressed to answer it immediately but it appears to me to be of no use but I will not send again untill I do get an answer from her I promise to send her 5 pounds every 3 months and have kept my promise steadfast till now as she as answer them something in reason until lately the time before I wrote to you and told you about her neglecting she sent me a very saucy letter such a one I dont wish to receive again. I tell you she has mention Margaret different times to me once she wanted to be married I sent word she had my entire approbation and if I could further her ends I would gladly assist her and now if she pleases to get a devorse I will pay all expenses and she can paint me in what coulors she likes if you would be kind to convey this to her by means of Nathan Brooks as I think the likeliest way I shall know how act I could remit the money to you and you engage with a lawer to would do the thing genuine for I dont feel like coming to England whilst I have her hanging on my hands and I should dearly like to come over to see my mother and children and all my old friends once more she makes a deal of bother about her watch I would freely send it as a present to her new husband and wish him health and happiness to wear it but she will never get it untill she does clear herself of me and then I should be glad to part with it. I sent word to Mrs. Dunn but she would not tell her as she said she did not wish to hurt her feeling I was rather surprised when I read your letter concerning my Mother for we received A letter from Nancy Spencer last summer saying she had a letter from Milton Winewand stating that my Mother has been confined to bed three months. If true it is strange you did not mention it. I was very sorry to hear you had been without work so long it is very bad indeed but I do hope and trust months before this reaches you you will be settled down again in some comfortable situation. I know it is awful bad to be without work without family of children. I have suffered enough of that in England and indeed since I came here what with slack work and sickness and sending money to England it has kept me poor enough. I was very thankfull to hear of your son Mark having got to a branch of business that is likely to do some good. You likewise ask me for A recept for – french polishing. I am sorry to say I have not got one myself but if you will see Dick Holt and give my kind love to him as I wish to be remembered to him I often think of him but durst not write to him on account of the treachery little Dickey practiced upon me and ask him to give you a recept for polish and likewise the additions to make it in varnish you will get both and when you write again to me please inclose them on copping them in your next letter to me as there is none here in Lowell but when I was in Bury I always got it ready at Comptons Druggist You will please return my sincere thanks to those kind and constant friends James Crabtree, John Charlson Mr. Smith and likewise Charles Nutt All (my sister Nancy mention in her portion of the letter) and tell them I was pleased to hear the had not forgot Jack and that I send my best wishes toward them and that I often cheer myself with the thought that I shall yet drain another pot with them before long but I have almost become a Yankee drinker now You did not state in your last letter wether Mr. Smith and Wife had got together again or not you might ask him if he thought it possible for her to get devor- sed and what the cost would be as I know the Old gal wants wedding bad enough as soon as you have got all necesary information that I require I hope you will not delay writing in return for I feel very anxious about it So with the few – remarks I will conclude with my Best love to you all as I have wrote this one letter of course you will show it to Nancy and it will serve you both likewise the newspapers the are the best account I could get. I hope you will remember me to my Mother and tell her we are all getting along first rate Yours respect J. Wood