

# THREE LETTERS TO HIS SISTER



## DRAFT

Correspondence in 1927 and 1928 from John Stewart Little (1851-1940) in New Zealand to his sister Martha Cochrane née Little (1847-1931) in Ireland.

Transcribed and edited by  
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North Yorkshire  
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## Introduction

Three interesting letters were found recently amongst the family papers. They were written in 1927 and 1928 by John Stewart Little (1851-1940) from Hastings, New Zealand to his older sister Martha (1847-1931) in Co. Donegal, Ireland.

I have transcribed them as best I could but, in a few instances, there are words and phrases that I have been unable to decipher. These are marked in the text with **yellow highlighting**. If anyone, reading this draft booklet, is able to fill in any of my gaps, please contact me by email (see the web site's Home page).

This booklet comes in three sections. [Section 1](#) has the original manuscript sheets with transcriptions on facing pages. In general, I have neither corrected spelling mistakes nor added punctuation, with one exception. JSL finished his long sentences with varying sizes of dot or even varying length dashes and in all these cases I have used a full stop.

[Section 2](#) is intended to make the transcripts easier and quicker to read. Spelling has been corrected and punctuation added. I have also added many footnotes to help identify the various people who JSL is writing about. Again, if anyone, reading this draft booklet, is able to correct or add to these footnotes, I would be very grateful.

[Section 3](#) shows what the pay in 1928 would be worth in today's money.

13<sup>th</sup> November 1927  
410 Lascelles Street  
Hastings  
H.B.  
N.Z.

Dear Martha

The Xmas mail leaves on Monday this being Sunday I am lying on my back on the sea shore trying to write you a Xmas greeting but the wind is so strong I can hardly do so. Den has a car (???) & he takes us out nearly every Sunday morning to the beach a distance of about nine miles where we spend the day & have dinner baked potatoes cold meat etc etc. We return in time for tea & then generally go to church, but I am not much in love with our parson as he is very high church & I do not like it, but suppose every one has a right to his own opinion - The people of Hastings are rather low church & therefore the attendance at church has fallen from quite a crowd to almost none yet the action to their high church. I often wonder why these high church men do not join the R.C. Now how have you been keeping I hope well. I was pleased Mary & Margaret were able to visit Kate they would have a lot to say to one another after so many years separation. Hetty was married last January & her husband died

13<sup>th</sup> November 1927  
 410 Lascelles Street  
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Dear Martha.

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some months after rather hard as they appeared very happy. Her name is Horneblow & she is expecting a baby any time now. I went down to the wedding & gave her away Horneblow looked a big strong fellow but he got something wrong with his liver & was in hospital for 3 months before he died. After the wedding I went & visited Annie's sisters. First I went to the McFarlane who has a nice plain house of 20 rooms & 450 acres land they have 4 boys. Next to the Wilsons who have a farm of 500 acres & lastly with Stewarts who have a farm 650 acres good land all this farm on freehold & not a penny owing on any of them so you see all the brotherinlaws are much better off than I am. I quite enjoyed my trip & it did me a world of good. I am thankful to say I keep in first class health except I have not got my leg quite right yet - it is gradually getting better. I suppose when one turns 76 they cannot expect to get well as quick as when younger. I have a lot to be thankful for my 6 boys are all steady lads & doing well. I forgot to tell you Will my eldest died in Christchurch about a year ago he had ulceration of the stomach. Annie sends her love & says she is kept so busy that she has not time to write. With best wishes for a happy Xmas to you & yours. Believe me ever your brother.

J.S.Little

*[Written sideways on in the left margin:]*

Tell Nora I quite appreciated her letter & will be pleased to get another.

Tell Hugh I received the silver in good order & that it came in quite handy.

I see how I got operated on but I will be pleased to see another  
see how I received the silver in good order & that is - come in guide party.

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 & gave her away Harnellow looked a big strong  
 fellow but he got something wrong with his liver  
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 After the wedding I went & visited Annies  
 sisters First I went to the McTearane who has  
 a nice place house of 20 rooms & 450 acs land  
 they have 4 boys. Then to the Wilsons who have a  
 farm of 500 acs & 1500 acs land the Stewarts who have  
 a farm 650 acs good land all these farms are freehold  
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 all the holdenlows are much better off  
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 Christchurch about a year ago he had ulceration of the stomach.  
 Annie sends her love & say she is kept so busy till she  
 has not time to write. With best wishes for a happy & nice  
 to you yours Believe me ever your father  
 J. Little

410 Lascelles Street  
Hastings  
Hawkes Bay  
N.Z. 21/10/28

My dear Martha

No doubt you will be surprised to hear that Mable purposes to take a trip to England next April. She is going as companion to a lady & is to stay with her in London for some weeks to see the sights etc etc. Then she intends to pay you a visit. She has wished for a long time to have a trip to Ireland & she is about to have her wish fulfilled. After she has seen you all she intends to go to America & take up nursing where she was offered a position some time back but could not get admitted but has overcome that difficulty. How have you been keeping I hope well. We had a letter from Loo a few days ago she was in the hill country & well. I have not heard from Mary & Min for a long time. I wrote them last Xmas but they did not reply. I do not remember if told you that my eldest boy Will died nearly a year ago. All the others are well except Kate who suffers from rheumatism she has been in the Napier hospital for the last eight years she has lost the use of one of her legs & all her fingers except the first finger & thumb on

*[In small writing sideways on at the top of this first page:]*

P.S. If you are writing to Mary & Min tell them that Mable will be in England about June.

N. 1  
 If you are  
 writing to May  
 then tell them  
 that in all cases  
 to in England  
 about June

410 Lascelles Street

Hastings

Hawkes Bay

N. 2 . 21/10/28

My dear Martha

No doubt you will be surprised to hear that Mable proposes to take a trip to England next April. She is going as companion to a lady & is to stay with her in London for some weeks to see the sights &c. Then she intends to pay you a visit. She has wished for a long time to have a trip to Ireland & she is about to have her wish fulfilled. After she has seen you all she intends to go America & take up nursing where she was offered a position some time back but could not get admitted but has overcome that difficulty - How have you been keeping shop well. We had a letter from Loo a few days ago she was in the hell county well. I have not heard from May or Min for a long time I wrote them last Xmas but they did not reply - I do not remember if I told you my eldest boy Will died nearly 6 year ago - all the others are well except Katie who suffers from rheumatism she has been in the Napier hospital for the last eight years she has lost the use of one of her legs & all her fingers except the first finger thumb on

each hand & it is wonderful how handy she is with her needle. Den the youngest boy (22) is on a holiday to Auckland (about 240 miles from here) to see his brother Jock who resides in Auckland. Den has been in the H.B. Meat Co. office for the last three years and is getting on well. Hugh is at present busy in his spare time building a moter shell which he intends using as a workshop to make the joinery for his house he has a ½ acre section where he intends building he is engaged but intend to build before marrying. Etty as you know lost her husband & her daughter is 9 months old & is not yet able to sit up by her self. I am afraid if it lives it will always be a handful. Etty keeps house for her fatherinlaw who is the same age as I am & not very strong. We have just had a v show I put in a brown high arm cock & got 2<sup>nd</sup> prize. I always said it was good bird so the boys bantered me to show it so I proved my judgement was wright. Marge is teaching & likes it & will be going to college in Christchurch for two years after the Dec. holiday. It is a government college & she will be paid during the time she is there. I think I have exhausted the news so with best wishes for you and yours.

Your brother  
J.S.Little

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 the Dec. holiday. It is a government college & she  
 will be paid during the time she is there  
 I think I have excused the news so with best  
 wishes for you & yours  
 Love Mother  
 J. Little

410 Lascelles Street  
Hastings  
H.B.  
N.Zealand  
6/11/28

Dear Martha

Nearly Xmas once more. I posted you today one of N.Z. Xmas numbers and hope you will like it. I think it was the Free Lance I sent you. I also posted to Loo the Auckland Weekly and to Kate the Weekly Press all Xmas No. so if you would like to change with each other you would get good idea of what N.Z. is like as each paper has its own stile. I think I told you in my last letter that Margaret my youngest has started teaching she will have after Xmas holidays to go to Christchurch College for two years before she becomes a fully fledged teacher. She will be allowed £30 per year for board "but will have to pay £60" - she is also paid a small salary something about £7 per month. However her brothers are good and they will help her. Den the next is in the H.B. Meat Co. office

410 Lascelles Street  
 Hastings  
 H.B.  
 N.Zealand  
 5/4/28

Dear Martha,

Nearly Xmas once more I posted you to say one of N.Z. Xmas numbers & hope you will like it I think it was the tree dance I sent you I also posted to Leo the Auckland weekly & to Kate the weekly Press all Xmas #s so if you like to change with each other you would get good idea of what N.Z. is like as each paper has its own style —

I think I told you in my last letter that Mary Kate my youngest has started teaching she will have after Xmas holidays to go to Chrestchurch College for two years before she becomes a fully pledged teacher — she will be allowed £30 per year for board but will have to pay £60 — she is also paid a small salary something about £7 per month — however her brothers are good & they will help her —  
 Don't forget is in the H.B. meat Co. offer

and gets a little over two hundred a year. Hugh the carpenter gets 2/6 per hour. Stewart gets £5.10.0 a week and Win in the bank about £5 per week. So you see they are all doing fairly well. Den has just been in for his exam for bookkeeping he took a correspondence course and Hugh is doing the same for artecture they are looking to get to the top. Their mother is very keen on education so the boys follow her example. Margaret passed her D exam jus lately. Perhaps all this family news will not be interesting to you but there is not much to write about. We have had a peculiar season a good deal of wind and rain. I suppose you saw that the Air Men have succeded in flying from Australia to N.Z. they had rather a trying time during both trips here and back. I had a letter from Kate a few days ago she must have a hard time with Charlie as he is helpless from what she says. What age is Charley! I hope I shall pass on before I get helpless. I trust you have been keeping well. With best wishes for you and yours for the coming Xmas.

Ever your brother

J.S.Little

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J. Little

13<sup>th</sup> November 1927  
 410 Lascelles Street  
 Hastings  
 H.B.<sup>1</sup>.  
 N.Z.

Dear Martha

The Xmas mail leaves on Monday this being Sunday. I am lying on my back on the sea shore trying to write you a Xmas greeting but the wind is so strong I can hardly do so. Den<sup>2</sup> has a car and he takes us out nearly every Sunday morning to the beach (a distance of about nine miles) where we spend the day and have dinner: baked potatoes, cold meat, etc. We return in time for tea and then generally go to church, but I am not much in love with our parson as he is very high church and I do not like it, but suppose everyone has a right to his own opinion. The people of Hastings are rather low church and therefore the attendance at church has fallen from quite a crowd to almost none **yet the action** to their high church. I often wonder why these high church men do not join the R.C. Now how have you been keeping, I hope well. I was pleased Mary<sup>3</sup> and Margaret<sup>3</sup> were able to visit Kate<sup>3</sup>; they would have a lot to say to one another after so many years separation. Hetty<sup>4</sup> was married last January and her husband died some months after; rather hard as they appeared very happy. Her name is **Horneblow** and she is expecting a baby<sup>5</sup> any time now. I went down to the wedding and gave her away. **Horneblow** looked a big strong fellow but he got something wrong with his liver and was in hospital for 3 months before he died. After the wedding I went and visited Annie's sisters<sup>6</sup>. First, I went to the McFarlanes who have a nice

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<sup>1</sup> H.B. is Hawkes Bay.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis Rupert Little (1906-e1971), youngest son in JSL's 2<sup>nd</sup> family.

<sup>3</sup> Who are Mary, Margaret and Kate?

<sup>4</sup> Henrietta Little (1883-?) one of JSL's daughters in the 1<sup>st</sup> family.

<sup>5</sup> In his next letter (21/10/1928) the baby is given as aged 9 months; probably born Dec 1927 or Jan 1928.

<sup>6</sup> JSL's 2<sup>nd</sup> wife Annie (1872-1950) had at least 3 sisters married to farmers McFarlane, Wilson & Stewart.

plain house of 20 rooms and 450 acres land; they have 4 boys. Next, to the Wilsons who have a farm of 500 acres and lastly, with the Stewarts who have a farm of 650 acres good land. All this farm on freehold and not a penny owing on any of them. So you see all the brother-in-laws are much better off than I am. I quite enjoyed my trip and it did me a world of good. I am thankful to say I keep in first class health except I have not yet got my leg quite right – it is gradually getting better. I suppose when one turns 76 they cannot expect to get well as quick as when younger. I have a lot to be thankful for; my 6 boys are all steady lads and doing well. I forgot to tell you Will, my eldest, died in Christchurch about a year ago - he had ulceration of the stomach. Annie<sup>7</sup> sends her love and says she is kept so busy that she has not time to write. With best wishes for a happy Xmas to you and yours.

Believe me ever your brother.  
J.S.Little

PS - Tell Nora<sup>8</sup> I quite appreciated her letter and will be pleased to get another. Tell Hugh<sup>8</sup> I received the silver in good order and that it came in quite handy.

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<sup>7</sup> JSL's 2<sup>nd</sup> wife Annie Mary Bates (1872-1950).

<sup>8</sup> JSL's nephew and niece (Martha's children) - Leonora Josephine Cochrane (1875-1951) & Hugh Crawford Cochrane (1874-1943).

410 Lascelles Street  
Hastings  
Hawkes Bay  
N.Z. 21/10/28

My dear Martha

No doubt you will be surprised to hear that Mable<sup>9</sup> proposes to take a trip to England next April. She is going as companion to a lady and is to stay with her in London, for some weeks, to see the sights, etc. Then she intends to pay you a visit. She has wished, for a long time, to have a trip to Ireland and she is about to have her wish fulfilled. After she has seen you all she intends to go to America and take up nursing where she was offered a position some time back, but could not get admitted, but has overcome that difficulty. How have you been keeping, I hope well. We had a letter from Loo<sup>10</sup> a few days ago; she was in the hill **country** and well. I have not heard from Mary and **Min** for a long time. I wrote to them last Xmas but they did not reply. I do not remember if told you that my eldest boy Will<sup>11</sup> died nearly a year ago. All the others are well, except Kate<sup>12</sup> who suffers from rheumatism. She has been in the Napier hospital for the last eight years. She has lost the use of one of her legs and all her fingers except the first finger and thumb on each hand and it is wonderful how handy she is with her **needle**. Den, the youngest boy (22), is on a holiday in Auckland (about 240 miles from here) to see his brother **Jock**<sup>13</sup> who resides in Auckland. Den has been in the H.B. Meat Co. office for the last three years and is getting on well. Hugh is at present busy in his spare time building a **moter shell** which he intends using as a workshop to make the joinery for his house. He has a ½ acre section where he intends building. He is engaged, but they intend to build

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<sup>9</sup> Mabel Little (1885-1956) was one of JSL's daughters in the 1<sup>st</sup> family.

<sup>10</sup> Eugenie Louise (Loo) Little (1856-1945), younger sister of JSL.

<sup>11</sup> William Henry Little (1878-Nov 1926) was JSL's eldest son in the 1<sup>st</sup> family.

<sup>12</sup> Is this Maria Catherine Little (1881-????), another of JSL's children in the 1<sup>st</sup> family?

<sup>13</sup> Is this Dennis' half-brother Johnnie from the 1<sup>st</sup> family?

before marrying. Etty, as you know, lost her husband, and her daughter is 9 months old and is not yet able to sit up by herself. I am afraid if it lives it will always be a handful. Etty keeps house for her father-in-law who is the same age as I am but not very strong. We have just had a **v** show; I put in a brown **high arm** cock and got 2<sup>nd</sup> prize. I always said it was good bird so the boys bantered me to show it. So I proved my judgement was right. Marge is teaching and likes it, and will be going to college in Christchurch for two years after the December holiday. It is a government college and she will be paid during the time she is there. I think I have exhausted the news, so with best wishes for you and yours.

Your brother  
J.S.Little

P.S. If you are writing to Mary and **Min** tell them that Mable will be in England about June.

410 Lascelles Street  
 Hastings  
 H.B.  
 N.Zealand  
 6/11/28

Dear Martha

Nearly Xmas once more. I posted you today one of N.Z. Xmas numbers and hope you will like it. I think it was the Free Lance I sent you. I also posted to Loo<sup>14</sup> the Auckland Weekly and to Kate<sup>15</sup> the Weekly Press; all Xmas Numbers. So if you would like to change with each other you would get a good idea of what N.Z. is like, as each paper has its own style. I think I told you in my last letter that Margaret, my youngest, has started teaching. She will have, after the Xmas holidays, to go to Christchurch College for two years before she becomes a fully fledged teacher. She will be allowed £30 per year for board “but will have to pay £60” – she is also paid a small salary something about £7 per month. However her brothers are good and they will help her. Den<sup>16</sup>, the next, is in the H.B. Meat Co. office and gets a little over two hundred a year. Hugh<sup>16</sup>, the carpenter, gets 2/6 per hour. Stewart<sup>16</sup> gets £5.10.0 a week and Win<sup>16</sup>, in the bank, about £5 per week. So you see they are all doing fairly well. Den has just been in for his exam for bookkeeping; he took a correspondence course. And Hugh is doing the same for architecture. They are looking to get to the top. Their mother is very keen on education so the boys follow her example. Margaret passed her D exam just lately. Perhaps all this family news will not be interesting to you, but there is not much to write about. We have had a peculiar season; a good deal of wind and rain. I suppose you saw that the Air Men have succeeded in flying from Australia to N.Z. They had rather a trying time

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<sup>14</sup> Eugenie Louise (Loo) Little (1856-1945), younger sister of JSL.

<sup>15</sup> Henrietta Catherine (Kate) Little (1850-1945), older sister of JSL.

<sup>16</sup> Stewart, Win, Hugh and Den are Margaret's older brothers and, with Margaret, JSL's 2<sup>nd</sup> family.

during both trips here and back. I had a letter from Kate<sup>17</sup> a few days ago; she must have a hard time with Charlie<sup>18</sup> as he is helpless from what she says. What age is Charley? I hope I shall pass on before I get helpless. I trust you have been keeping well. With best wishes for you and yours for the coming Xmas.

Ever your brother  
J.S.Little

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<sup>17</sup> Henrietta Catherine (Kate) Little (1850-1945), married to Charles Style Cochrane (1846-1928) in Ireland.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Style Cochrane died on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1928 (but the news had not reached NZ before this letter).

## Comparing pay in 1928 and 2011

In JSL's final letter, he describes what each of his sons (2<sup>nd</sup> family) is earning in 1928. The obvious question is what would this be in today's money?

The average annual rate of inflation in New Zealand during the whole of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was 4.67%. Therefore to get from say £1 per week in 1928 to its equivalent value in 2011 (ie in 83 years), we use the multiplier:

$$(1 + 0.0467)^{83} = 44.182$$

Thus £1 in 1928 is equivalent to \$44.18 in 2011.

So, the relevant part of JSL's letter could be rewritten in 2011 monetary values as:

**Den, in the H.B. Meat Co. office, gets a little over \$8,836 a year. Hugh, the carpenter, gets \$5.52 per hour. Stewart gets \$243 a week and Win, in the bank, about \$221 per week.**