**LETTER FROM MINNIE DIXIE TO HER AUNT CAROLINE IN WELLINGTON NZ 4 July 1883**

*A truly delightful letter from Minnie Dixie to her aunt Caroline Darby in Wellington in 1883. In this letter she tells her what she’s been doing for the past few years, how she was engaged to be married but it was broken off, how she assisted Alfred in the family business, and her deeply religious beliefs guide her in her work to help people. She also yearns to travel and marry a like-minded man, and she hopes her aunt and her new husband are getting on well in New Zealand.*

Bosworth House, Gloucester road

Brownwood Park, London

July 4th 1883

My dear Aunt

I dare say you have given up all hopes of a letter from me now having kept you so long. I deserve you to be angry with me, you must have thought by my behaviour I had forgotten you altogether, but assure you such as not been the case, I will begin by telling all about myself since I saw you, and then when you have read this, you will conclude I have not been idle or had many minutes to spare.

I think I was in Guildford in Surrey at a situation as milliner when you left (I am not quite sure of it) I was there 18 months and our business hours were 8.30 am until 9 pm, Saturdays until 10.30 pm, we were rather tired when the end of the week came, and I joined a bible class there for Thursday and another for Monday and prayer class for Tuesday, a needle working class for Wednesday and a practising class on Friday for the choir in the church to which I belonged, and I took a Sunday school class in the morning and afternoon. These classes were all pleasures and pastimes to me which I very much enjoyed, it is indeed a happiness to teach little children, it is quite true that it is better to give than to receive. While in Guildford I made friends with a very nice family, Mrs Daniel, Louie and Alice, they are a very nice happy Christian sympathy family, we are still great friends, Louie is my own age and we visit each other sometimes now, I call her my greatest companion and friend, I think it is good that all young people should have a new companion and also endeavour to pick out one better than one self. When I left there I was at home a little while until I found a situation in Ipswich in Suffolk. I was there only 4 months, but quite a tale is attached to that short time. I answered an advertisement for it and when I arrived I found it quite different to my expectations, a low class trade (and I was used to a first class), also very indifferent people. There was there Mr and Mrs Livoch the firm, Mr Fred Brown the brother of Mrs Livoch, the manager, and 2 young ladies in the shop. Mr Brown was the only one that had any business knowledge. Mrs Livoch was a woman that used to take too much to drink privately and used to let her bad temper out on us. Mr Livoch was a very amiable man. I used to work late every night there and had no time to go out far but on Sunday. I joined a church choir and took a Sunday school class in the afternoon which was a pleasant time after a week’s toil. It was refreshment at last the time came Fred Brown and myself were engaged to each other, he was a most amicable and good natured man, but he was very worldly minded and so very fond of gaiety; he had his mother and father and Mrs Livoch was his eldest sister so he made that his house but had his sister been different, he would have been not so worldly, she used to go to church on Sundays and read her bible and talk as though she was so good and yet lived such a different life, such hypocrisy as that is apt to make one (who is undecided) think there is no truth in religion, and so it was with Fred, he had got hardened and I think he loved me for taking such care of him and such pains with him, he went to church with us at last and I think was much impressed. He was ill once for 3 days and his sister took no notice of him, and I nursed him all the time, he was very grateful, he is very handsome, has a lovely olive complexion and beautiful dark wavy hair, he was then 28, he is 31 now, I was then 20 and are now 23, and will be 24 is November should God spare me.

At last, at the end of 4 months, I left there, my mother would not let me stay when she heard what kind of place it was. Fred came to London and saw mother, she liked him but not his connections, we were still engaged and writing to each other, but at last an aunt of his in Ipswich was very ill and dying, and Fred wrote for me to come down and stay there a little way from Mrs Livochs at his married brothers, they were very fond of me, but mother would not let me go, she did not know them and did not care for them, he wrote so many times and still I refused, he thought it so unkind of me when his aunt wanted to see me before she died and was so angry he broke it off. Of course I felt it very much, I was ill for some time after that for I was so fond of him. A girl’s first love is so deep you know and at that age too. It was a great deal for me, and I think it upset him too, for he never rested after that, he always wanted to go abroad, and the next January he went to South Africa, he came to see me first and I went to see him off and we parted good friends, and we each write occasionally as friends, we are both still disengaged, but I do not live in hopes of having him, for I am quite resigned to know he has been gone 18 months, and I can fully see that it was all the work of God. It would not have been right of me to marry a worldly man, for I am endeavouring to live a Christian life and want to be real and God’s word forbids us to be “unequally yoked together with unbelievers”. My desire is that if ever I marry, I want a Christian man, our lives will then be happy if we are both treading the same road, our minds, our desires will be the same. You know that the business is Alfred’s now, I have been here ever since that time and am his forewoman and I might say the whole of the business depends upon me, for I am sorry to say Alfred goes out and neglects it very much, he so much resembles dear father when he used to go out and leave it all to mother, but mother does not know this, the business is so much larger than it was a few years ago, we have so many men and women now, and so many boys and girls and they want some keeping in order, but although it is hard I love the work, I often think I must leave when Alfred is harsh with me but I believe it is God’s will that I should be here, his wife says she hopes I will stay on, because she knows nothing about the business, so I intend to stay until God opens another way for me. He has 2 dear little boys they are such beauties, I love them so much, the eldest will be 3 years in August, they are both pretty boys with such lovely eyes and hair.

I am a member of the Blue Ribbon Temperance Union, I hear you have started that in Wellington, I have been a total abstainer for nearly 6 years but joined the society 18 months, to try and do some good so my fellow men and women, I love working for God in some way. I give small temperance addresses every Saturday evening at a Temperance meeting for men and women, Harriet Johnson plays and sings to them and I try to speak to them, we have happy times. Harriet is a dear good girl, we are fast friends, she is going to treat them to a tea July 14th and I am to assist. The pleasure we can give those sort of people doubly repays one for the trouble. I still have a Sunday class of 8 girls, I hope that I shall always be able to do so, and I can thank God from my heart today for ever changing my heart and putting such desires in my mind, serving God dear aunt is such happiness, to have the peace of God in our heart is beyond all understanding, I would not part with this joy and love for all the money and pleasures the world could offer, youth is indeed the time one should love God for our heart is then full of fresh and new born love, but I am happy to say God will not reject the older people, he will not cast out one who comes and gives their heart to him, for his arms are always stretched out to receive us, He is not tired yet of saying “Come unto me”, “God is love”, “Jesus died for all”. My prayer is dear Aunt for you and uncle Fred that if we never see each other in this world, that we may meet in Heaven to live for ever with Jesus, oh and my prayer is that at the last there may not be out of all our family circle, I not be the missing, I read my mother’s letter and find that you and uncle are both well. I am glad of that, I am also glad you received the 200 pounds, I often think I should like to peep at your happy little house, I always had a desire to travel but I suppose I must wait. Mother is going to get Uncle Fred’s chain and try and write by the next mail and send it.

I dare say you have had Herbert’s letter to say he is coming to see you, perhaps they will arrange for him to bring it with him, but I do not know, mother will write and tell you herself.

You may be surprised to see such large sheets of paper but as I had kept you so long I thought I would tell you all and make up for it, and that after this I will write more often and send you a blue ribbon paper some times.

Mother received the news safely, there are some nice places in Wellington.

I hope you or uncle will write us a letter soon. All the boys and Mother and Margaret are quite well and send their love.

No one else is married or engaged.

Mrs Vernon is better.

Miss Wood is well.

Harriett Johnson is well.

Bob is still alive.

Alfred has a trap and 2 horses; extravagant boy.

I must now conclude with best love to you both,

I remain, your loving Niece Minnie

It is very very hot but very very wet.

July 4th 1883