Letters of Edward Steere

DAVID NEAVE

Edward Steere, the writer of these letters was born in London in 1828. He attended University College, London, becoming a Doctor of Law and entering the Inner Temple in 1850. But his interests lay more in theology and history than in law and so in 1854 he gave he gave up the Bar and joined the Guild of St. Alban which was a group of laymen working among the poor of London and the provinces. Within a few months he became London Steward of the Guild and Editor of the Guild Paper. The middle of the nineteenth century saw the revival of religious communities within the Church of England; one of the earliest, the Brotherhood of St. James, Tamworth, a lay community, was founded by Steere in 1855. But it was a failure for the members had joined with a far too romantic and medieval idea of monasticism. With the failure of the Brotherhood, Steere entered the church and was ordained deacon in September, 1856. His first curacy was at Kingskerswell, Devon, where he met his wife Mary Bridget Brown the daughter of the Lord of the Manor; he married her in June, 1858. A month earlier he had come to Lincolnshire as Curate of Skegness and to help his friend William George Tozer who was Rector of Burgh-le-Marsh with Winthorpe. Steere was ordained priest by John Jackson, Bishop of Lincoln in May, 1858. In October, 1859 he was presented to the Rectory of Little Steeping, Lincolnshire a living he held until January, 1872.

In 1862 however, William Tozer was offered and accepted the post of Bishop to the tribes dwelling in the neighbourhood of Lake Nyasa and the River Shiré, and asked Steere to accompany him, which he did the following year. Steere did not return to England from Central Africa until 1868, he then lived for three years at Little Steeping, writing books on East African languages. (His Swahili exercises are still used throughout East Africa.) He returned to Africa, to Zanzibar, in 1872 because Bishop Tozer was so ill that he returned to England and resigned his bishopric in 1873.

In August 1874, Steere was consecrated third bishop in Central Africa. He had not wanted to be bishop, but he began building straightway the impressive Zanzibar Cathedral on the site of the old Slave Market. While bishop he made two tremendous journeys on foot to Nyasaland alone except for African guides. Steere was continually attacked by fever and one Sunday morning, August 27th, 1882 he was found unconscious in bed at Zanzibar and died later in the day. He was buried in the Cathedral he had built. His wife Mary died the following year in Lincoln Asylum and was buried at Little Steeping.

These letters are in the archives of the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, U.M.C.A. A.III/1.
LETTERS OF EDWARD STEERE


1. Kingskerswell, Devon. 20th September, 1857
   Tozer¹ has been down here and wants me to go and help him in Lincolnshire, the Bp. has just offered him Burgh and Winthorpe Vicarages and he is going to ask the Bp. to let me preach and take charge of them for the four or five weeks it will occupy him to get clear of his present curacy. If the Bp. does so, he will pay my expenses and so I get a change of air and a holiday for nothing.

2. Kingskerswell. 7th October, 1857
   My direction after tomorrow will be Burgh-in-the-Marsh, Lincolnshire. I am going I believe to preach there, is it not comic to go away for a holiday in a strange Diocese and have leave to preach, when one cannot do it in ones own. ——— I have got £5 from Tozer for travelling expenses, but I am very hard up, notwithstanding.

3. Burgh, Boston, Lincolnshire. 15th October, 1857
   Do I not boast a long direction now. I suppose I shall not want money till I return as I consider myself Curate of Burgh for the time being. I preached 3 times on Sunday and I have been to see everybody that I have heard of as being laid up. Tozer got me leave from the Bp. to preach so I can preach here but not in Exeter Diocese. I fancy this is a very unusual position. Mine is an unusual holiday too. I have sole charge of 1700 people and two churches to serve four miles apart. Burgh stands on a hill then there is about four miles and a half of level fenland to the sea and within half a mile of the sea stands the other church — Winthorpe. They are both fine perpendicular churches, the old benches in Winthorpe Chancel are particularly fine. The sands along the shore are fine — hard and level. I expect Tozer over to see me next week — I shall go to him perhaps in the week after. Though we are in the same county the letters journey up to London and down again to get from Burgh to Kelsey and from Kelsey to Burgh.

4. Burgh. 4th November, 1857
   I have only £2 to live on till March. ——— I have every reason to be satisfied with my success here. Last Sunday being communion Sunday here, I preached at Skegness in the morning it is only a mile or two from Winthorpe so I drove with our Churchwarden and as it was a lovely day everything went very well.

5. Burgh. 20th October, 1857
   Tozer has behaved very liberally about my expenses here, he wants me to stay till Christmas at least and it would be a great profit to me to stay here altogether but I suppose that it is very improbable.

   I set off again for Kingskerswell on Friday morning next if not before.

7. Kingskerswell. 1st January, 1858
   I went over to Teignmouth on Tuesday and stayed a day or two with Mr. and Miss Tozer,² they all want me to go to Burgh and I should like it exceedingly. But Mr. Fowler³ is not now likely to leave Kerswell.
8. Kingskerswell. 2nd January, 1858

Tozer is not yet actually Vicar of Burgh or I should make a great effort to get to him, which would give me a little increase in stipend.

9. Kingskerswell. February, 1858

I have just been concocting a letter to my intended Rector.¹ I shall have a Rector then—of Skegness, he lives I find in Nottinghamshire. He is dreadfully afraid of being Tractarianized, but I don’t intend to jump over the reading desk door or stand on my head in the pulpit or even to have two little boys to hold up the ends of my stole or sprinkle the people with a dolls broom or anything very particularly novel.

10. Kingskerswell. 20th March, 1858

I am trying to arrange if possible some scheme for either getting to Skegness at Trinity or finding someone to do the duty there between Trinity and Michaelmas. I hoped to be ordained priest at Lincoln on Trinity Sunday.

11. Kingskerswell. 23rd March, 1858

The Burgh people all call it Boro’ except the men at the station, who make a compromise and call it Burring.

12. Kingskerswell. 8th April, 1858

... at Teignmouth whence I come for a day or two to stay with the Tozers. [Writs about the examination at Lincoln for curacy. J. Jackson, Bishop of Lincoln formerly Rector of St. James, Piccadilly.] Tozer is vicar of Burgh and Winthorpe the following is a map: [A sketch map follows in the text] by which you will see that Skegness and Winthorpe go together very naturally and that Burgh is a world farther off. Four times as far in fact and the journey down to Winthorpe is not in all seasons pleasant, then you see Tozer promises a good slice of stipend and the Winthorpe children go to Skegness school, in fact the two parishes are in many ways connected.

13. Kingskerswell. 19th April, 1858

I am high busy packing up as yesterday was Mr. Fowler’s last Sunday. I have got thirty feet of new rope making for me and I have exhausted the stock of tea chests in the village. Tozer is keeping school and working his Parishes as well and is beginning to feel that he is a sort of exile and wants Devonshire news, so I shall be glad to get up to his assistance.

14. Burgh. 3rd May, 1858

I am arrived here all safe and sound. I preached in Burgh Church yesterday morning and read the prayers at Winthorpe in the afternoon and at Burgh in the evening. He [Tozer] is looking for a schoolmaster for Burgh. I got to Lincoln in the evening and left it again at 7 the next morning there was a single carriage attached to a luggage train, which left Boston, when our’s arrived so I come on hither direct, things are very quaint here, and I have a great deal to do this month I have heard from the Bishop who gives me leave to preach. Tozer is in School all day.

15. Burgh. 7th May, 1858

I am exceedingly busy reading and visiting for Tozer who is in school all day. I went down to Winthorpe with him yesterday to a Vestry meeting where they were correcting the assessments for the poor rates. The first Vestry meeting I ever was at in my life. They all

65
LETTERS OF EDWARD STEERE

seemed cordial to the Clergy though most of the farmers live in other parishes and only keep a sort of Bailiff on their land. Tozer is going away tomorrow to stay till Monday, so I shall be all alone on Sunday when you get this. I caught a nasty little cold on my journey which I was afraid might affect my voice but I am in hopes it will be quite gone by Sunday. Tozer does not read so fast as he did but he still shouts after a fashion that to my mind destroys all feeling of reverence, however he is exceedingly popular and blows them up out of the pulpit in a style that does one good to hear. I smell of smoke to this moment from the effect of the pipes of many men indulged in last night. The King of Steegness is a reprobate, a great Elvington or Etherington or what ever the name was on Ludgate Hill and they say the man himself was a native of Burgh.

16. Burgh. 22nd May, 1858

I have not yet quite determined where I am to live being in negotiation with a Mr. Dring, a farmer, at Winthrop for some rooms in his farm house, where now only a labourer lives, the said labourer's wife evidently wishes to keep all the house to herself so I am met with many difficulties.

I shall let you know how I get on at Lincoln I leave on Wednesday morning. Tozer is going down to Winthrop tomorrow morning to administer Holy Communion and will do so here on Trinity Sunday so I shall be alone in the morning. I have preached five times, but I was a good deal puzzled when the Bishop sent for two of my sermons.

17. Lincoln. 29th May, 1858

I have just returned from Riseholme, the examination being now over. I got here about the middle of the day on Wednesday and some more men came in the course of the day. We were 17 in all, 11 for Deacons orders and 6 for priests, 9 were accommodated at Riseholme, five here at the Secretary's house among the ruins of the old palace and three at the Deanery. An omnibus came for us at a little before 9 a.m. on Thursday and carried us over to Riseholme whence we returned at about 10 in the evening. We went first to chapel where the Bishop or one of the Priest Candidates read the prayers and one of the Deacon Candidates read the lessons. I said the prayers yesterday evening. After morning prayers Mr. Mackenzie who was not very long ago Rector of St. Martins in the Fields, gave us a sort of short lecture, his subjects were Missions — treatment of dissenters — preaching and tracts and parochial libraries — he spoke very nicely and made sensible observations. Then we adjourned into the examination room and had a spell at some written questions until 1. Then they brought in sandwiches and so forth and we had an hours run in the park. At two the papers began again until five then we were at liberty till half past six, at half past six came the dinner. I sat next to the Bishop the first day, we had an exceedingly nice friendly conversation and a good plain dinner. After dinner we had coffee and then we adjourned into the drawing room where Mrs. Jackson appeared and we had tea handed round. So we talked and looked at books and so forth till nine, then we went to the chapel and each evening we have had a short address from the Bishop, by the end of which our omnibus was ready for us and we were thoroughly tired. Nothing could be nicer than the Bishop and everybody concerned and it is very nice to see that it gives rise to a sort of personal loyalty to our superior and has a strong influence over all the men, queer fishes as some of them are. We all went twice to the Bishop during the examination once to read him some Greek testament and answer general questions upon it, and the second time this morning when we took in our papers on practical subjects and he concludes his questioning. I went in second being I suppose in order of merit. A very nice little man named Bennett went in before me and next after me a Cambridge man named Roy who if we did go in order of merit I am rather proud of beating. The Bishop merely told me that he was perfectly satisfied and need not detain me and gave me back the
DAVID NEAVE

sermons he had asked me for. He makes all candidates for Priests orders send him two sermons preached by them while Deacons. We are going back at 5.30 to sign the Articles and get our papers in order, there we shall dine and have our final charge and tomorrow will be the Ordination in the Cathedral, Dr. Jeremie is to preach the sermon, he is Subdean and Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. I heard him preach when I went to see David there, he is a great preacher. So endeth I suppose the last examination I shall have to go through. I hope I may always satisfy the Bishop as well, for he is a very good kind man indeed and takes a great interest in all ones doings.

18. Winthorpe, Burgh, Boston. 8th July, 1858

We are not final here, there is a little house in Skegness which will suit us better in some respects as the kitchen arrangements here are very awkward. Tozer was quite knocked up last Sunday, he has got a schoolmaster and is talking of going home to Teignmouth for a month if he can get his duty taken.

19. Winthorpe. 23rd July, 1858

Tozer has been rather knocked up and is gone into Devonshire. He seems at last to have found a Master quite to his mind.

20. Winthorpe. 11th August, 1858

Mrs. Cartinal having heard of my wedding has got Wm. Swinnerton to write furiously demanding a table of hers which I always considered I was to keep, however I don’t wish to get into a row, so I shall return it when we move to our cottage which will be I suppose in a month. We want a feather bed pillow and two wash hand stands, two tables one round the other either a little one or one fit for a bedroom and a sofa.

P.S. I enclose some Anemone seed to be sown in October.

21. Winthorpe. 16th August, 1858

I suppose from the direction that I am indebted to you for the two catalogues from Heals and John Maples which arrived today. The postman forgot them as he passed in the morning so we did not get them till he passed on his way back. He starts from Burgh about nine goes down to Skegness then past this house (about 11) to Ingoldmells and Addlethorpe, he passes us on his way back about 2. He is a barber by trade and is going to cut my hair tomorrow on his way. We have just had notice that Sam Smith and his wife are leaving the house at Skegness we are to go to, so we shall soon be moving in, if nothing unexpected should occur to hinder. Mary desires to be very kindly remembered to you and wishes you lived nearer.

22. Vicarage, Burgh. 4th September, 1858

We shall be in our new house now in a week.

23. Skegness. 3rd March, 1859

Many thanks for the hamper which arrived in Skegness this afternoon after post time. The many roots were in very fair condition considering the time of the journey. I planted them all out this afternoon and Tozer came down while we were busy about it. “Ha!” says he “all engaged in horticultural amusements, I like to see young people in their gardens.” Tozer gave a tremendous supper about a week ago to more than 80 great lads of Burgh and people from Winthorpe in the Schoolroom with games and singing afterwards, company broke up about 11.30. We have had great winds here, everybody says what a dry season it is and today was as warm as June.
LETTERS OF EDWARD STEERE

24. Burgh. 18th April, 1859

I came up on Saturday to help Tozer his voice had gone exceedingly wrong on Wednesday and so I promised to take the Saturday evening prayers for him. On Sunday, as Skegness is the smaller church, I arranged to take Burgh and Winthorpe morning and afternoon and Wright arranged to preach and I to read in the Evensong on condition that he would sit at the Communion in state and hold his tongue. Mr. and Miss Tozer are to be here in the middle of the day. I am waiting to help in the morning prayers and Tozer is gone to take the money at the School. Minis wants to be Tozer's curate. Tozer works far too hard.

25. Skegness. 9th June, 1859

I hope to exchange duties for six weeks with the Rev. Edwin Trevelyan Smith of St. Paul's, Warwick. We had a family down here a few weeks since from Wainfleet Fen, with the Diptheria, a little boy died before they came, a baby and the eldest daughter (about 18) died here. Mr. Cholmeley7 and his sisters rode over very often to see them and I called several times, the poor girl seemed quite resigned and happy. Old John Marshall is ill which sets me doubting whether I ought to bury him if he dies as he is notoriusest old sinner about. I saw Wm. Everington driving home from Spilsby on Monday so drunk that he could not sit steady in the rig. They are shearing, or as they call it clipping this week. Last year they clipped about twelve hundred sheep. Little Mr. Whaler has had an uncle die who has left him a farm at Mumby, so he is gone to take possession and as it happened just before the day of the Visititation, Wm. Everington took Wm. Marshall8 up with him and got him sworn as a Parish Churchwarden instead. So you see we are full of changes and last but not least, I hear the Rector of Ingoldmells is dead and that Mr. Edman9 has applied to the Patron to give it him. I wish him no harm but as I wish the people of Ingoldmells no harm either, I cannot hope he may get it.

The garden has grown up so full of plants that we have had to pull up some to make room for the others, but the cold winds have nipped many of the best. It has been chilly and misty and windy here lately. Let me know all about yourself and how you are getting on.

P.S. Old Mr. Tozer is gone. Miss Tozer is going to stay sometime at Burgh. I have not seen much of them lately, but I hear they are making little gardens all over Burgh Churchyard.

26. St. Paul's Parsonage, Warwick. 4th July, 1859

Sorry I have not answered letters. The truth is I have had the ague and have only just got rid of it. I had three fits at Skegness and then it missed for a fortnight but after I got here I had three more. We came by Peterborough, Stamford and Rugby, staying one night at Stamford which is the very model of a respectable town. The Marquis of Exeter lives at Burleigh Park just out of there in a great palace of a house and the whole town is a sort of pendant to it. There are six churches, five of them old all in capital order and several really splendidly restored.

27. Skegness. 8th August, 1859

We got home just time enough for a great feast of the united parishes on Tuesday last. Mr. Harrison and I counted 167 children of Skegness and Winthorpe schools. A merry-go-round and a brass band were brought down from Burgh. Winthorpe Church was decorated with 9 flags thus: [sketch in text] it had not looked so gay for centuries. About two the children met in front of Mr. Dring's house and there were swarms of banners some from Burgh, some from Partney. There was cricket in a field and wandering on the shore and at five o'clock the children had cake and tea and after that tea for the adults in Mr. Dring's barn. Skegness furnished several trays, Mrs. Everington 1, Mrs. Peet Overton 1, Mrs. McNutt at
the Coastguard station I, Mrs. Hildred I and our own. There were thirteen tea makers and hundreds of drinkers. Tickets 1/- for farmers, 6d. for labourers. About 800 people altogether were on the premises. Then to church. On the Altar was a sheaf of wheat the first cut in the neighbourhood with a cross of bright flowers pinned on it, a wreath of ivy with seeds growing out of it went round the bottom of the Altar on the floor. Then the Burgh choir formed at the house bearing banners and 7 clergy in surplices followed singing the Te Deum on the road to Church. The Church was crowded there was a full Cathedral service. The first lesson by Mr. Rob. Giles, Vic., Partney the second by Mr. Walker of Croft, the sermon by Mr. C. Allington 39 of Muchton. £6 was collected for an organ. Ann went over to help at tea and stayed out all night with the key in her pocket so the next morning I paid her up and sent her off. Old Mrs. Moody is coming down to us for a week or two. Toger has a successor to her now a Mrs. White a prim sour looking old lady. He goes to Devonshire and then to France this week, starting tomorrow. Minis is coming to be curate at Burgh if the place suits him sometime next week. It has been exceedingly wet yesterday and today, if it lasts it will spoil the harvest.

28. Skegness. 10th October, 1859

I have been waiting day by day for the last three weeks to have something final and decisive to write to you about a subject of great interest. I have had some correspondence with the agents of Lord Willoughby de Eresby about my being presented to the Rectory of Little Steeping near Spilsby. I do not know the exact value it is stated at £180 not much, but still better than any probable Curacy. There will be a house to be built which will be paid for by money from Queen Anne’s Bounty. The village is rather a pretty one and the parish is small. It lies about as far from Spilsby as this is from Burgh. I expected to have heard before this that I was actually presented but I have not received the news. If it is done I owe it to the Tokers having mentioned my name to Robert Giles of Partney who passed it on to his brother of Belleau who moved it to Lord Willoughby. The late Rector died in May he was also Incumbent of Paddington the curate was an old man named Tumman, who is quite or all but mad on the subject of Prophecy, he is over seventy and would I believe have had the living if he had not written a mad letter to Lord Willoughby saying that he should only want it for six years or seven at the farthest and then he hoped his Lordship might find a refuge in the land of Edom! So he was not presented but I have just heard that Lord Willoughby has promised to allow him £50 a year as long as he lives by way of compensation for not making him Rector. It makes us believe in good people to hear of such generosity as this. Give my condolences to Ann etc. Poor Mrs. Ellison was very kind to me. P.S. Mr. Minis is staying at Burgh as a sort of Curate for his board and lodging. I have just had a death and a funeral the first of a Skegness Parishioner since I have been here it was John Green the Methodist near Winthorpe. I said I should be rather glad if they would sing a hymn over the grave, but though there were two preachers there they could not raise a tune.

29. Skegness. 21st October, 1859

I have been presented to Little Steeping. I shall go there at Christmas if anyone can be found to come here. There will be a house to be built and the endowment is not quite £200—all land, however that is certainly a hundred more than I have here and therefore by no means to be despised. I hope I shall be better able to help you sometimes though I shall have many things to do. The church is ill placed and not in good order, there is no singing and the School is under the charge of a deaf old parish clerk. Minis is going away again, he is so atrociously lazy and fanciful and worldly that there is no getting on with him at all. I am hoping to get out the little “Persecutions”, the sheets are just ready though I am sorry to see them with so many misprints.
30. Skegness. 26th October, 1859

I go to Steeping at Christmas and Mr. Elgood is to come back here and “tant pis pour” Skegness.

31. 8 Adam Street, Adelphi. 1st December, 1859

[In London to see off Mary and her sister to Devonshire and looking into memoirs of Bishop Butler in the British Museum. Staying with Charley Hayward[15]] I read myself in at Little Steeping two Sundays ago and I am very well pleased with the look of things there. Everything wants stirring up and making new and the people seem to feel that they do. I am still in treaty with Lord Willoughby about what he will give towards the house and I find that the Railway Company paid £400 for some land that they took of which about £200 is I suspect still outstanding somewhere. [The Rector of Little Steeping v. The East Lincolnshire Railway.] Robert Hayward has become one of the masters at Harrow. Persecutions[14] out today or tomorrow. The Curtain at Skegness was put up the Friday before Advent Sunday. A new Organ was opened on Advent Sunday at Winthorpe it cost Sixty pounds, they had full choral service twice and all the country to look on. Mr. Elgood is coming back at Christmas to succeed me. I shall begin work at Steeping then but stay for awhile with the Tozers.

32. Burgh. Christmas Eve, 1859

Mary is at Barton but does not think it so much like home as even Skegness. I am to be Provost[12] for a while. So to all the manifold business, I should otherwise have had, I have got this added. Mr. Elgood will I believe be in Skegness tonight and leave again on Monday morning, everyone is supposing he thinks of getting married, but there is no sure ground to go upon. They are putting into the Church although today the new gas fittings—a standard under each arch—which only arrived last night from Skidmore’s at Coventry. Our goods are now in a house at Little Steeping and when Mary wants to come back we must try to find lodgings somewhere in Spilsby or Halton. I have just opened an account at Clayton’s and Garfitt’s Bank in Spilsby it is very convenient to have a Banker and as I shall now receive £70 or £80 half yearly I want some place to store it. The house is not yet at all settled. I am to build just on the Church side of the old Parsonage and Charley Hayward has the plans nearly ready, but Lord Willoughby has not yet stated what he will give and of course everything depends upon that.

33. Burgh [ie Marsh], Boston. 12 Jan. 1860

I am still staying with Tozer but I expect to remove to lodgings in Spilsby in a little more than a weeks time, so as to be able to get more easily to Steeping, and then I hope your Deed will soon be ready. We made a faint attempt last Sunday to sing the Evening Hymn, but it was next door to a failure. I have sent up my sketch of Butler’s Life[14] and I suppose the new editions of the Sermons, etc. will soon be in the Press. I have seen Mr. Elgood several times, he seems inclined to go on as well as he can. I have heaps of letters to write about the Guild, which is not more flourishing than usual.

34. Burgh [ie Marsh], Boston. 14 Jan. 1860

I should think the name was G or C Vernon Blunt, the letters on the seal seem to be G.A.B., and the inscription to run thus Fide, Ferarverantia, Diacippnia i.e. In faith, perseverance and order. Little notes on pink paper are not generally despicable though they don’t look very manly.
DAVID NEAVE

It is currently reported that Mr. Arthur Wright is now to marry one of the Miss Hairbys, I should think a very prudent sort of match. Tozer has heard from the Bishop that he may probably have an increase in his living in a year or so, and has just advertised for a Curate. There is no end of a row in the Guild about my remarks on Bryan King.  

I am going to move on Friday next into Spilsby, so I shall tell everybody after that to address to me—Little Steeping, Spilsby. I can stop the letters at Spilsby and so shall avoid changing my address again when I get down to the Parish.

35. Spilsby. 1 Feb. 1860

I heard yesterday finally from Lord Willoughby that he will give £100 this year and £100 next to the Little Steeping house, and I have sent up to Queen Ann's bounty to know what I can borrow. Charley's plans are ready and I have been filling up a dyke along where I propose to build. I find the gross Annual Income of the Rectory is £206 14s. 1d. The Income Tax, Drainage Tax and rates, etc., may be taken at £15—the interest on my house, if I can borrow as I wish £400, will be about £30 at first, diminishing a little more than 10/- each year for 30 years when it will have been paid off. So that I may reckon upon a little more than £160 with a house. Then there is the Chancel to be rebuilt and of course lots of Parochial Improvements which I must take a good share in. I shall enjoy spending money on building and improving, I know no way that promises so permanent results.

I have just received from a man at Cambridge a long extract from one of Bp. Butler's charges at Bristol which has never been printed so I am in lucks way just now.

Tomorrow I am going to London to meet Mary who has greatly enjoyed her two months in Devonshire, but says she is glad to come back. I am lodging here at a Mr. Sivers, till we can get something done at Steeping. I trembled yesterday when I was asked if I should like some men to help in the singing, and professing myself glad was informed that they meant to bring a Clarionet and a bass viol. I said we would try how things would go. I wonder whether I shall have the courage to send them about their business if I don't like it?

Letter from Mary Steere to her sister-in-law Ann Steere.

Vine Cottage, Skegness. 5th April, 1859

How very kind of you to send such a hamper of plants, for the garden, we all went out to help plant, and water them, and just as our dresses were pinned up to our waists, who should we see looking over the garden gate but Mr. Tozer, he joined in helping us for some time and then all came in to tea. I hear his father and sister will be here in a fortnight by which time Mr. Tozer will be over at the Vicarage. On Saturday morning Mrs. Walls came from Boothby with a party to spend the day on the sands and in her way, called and invited us to join them, and also dine at Mrs. Tucks at two o'clock, so we went and enjoyed it exceedingly, the morning was fine and mild, but in the afternoon it came into thick rain which spoilt all their pleasure we got very wet before we reached home. We have walked to Wainfleet once since you left us. I never shall forget it we were all three so tired, coming home I thought we never should have reached Skegness, it must be much further than Burgh. We are thinking of going to Boston one day this week, Edward and I have not been before, and we are anxious Emily should see Boston Church before she returns to Devonshire. The people here have commenced their May cleaning and Ann is very anxious to begin turning out also, we are going to have the kitchen plastered and coloured and this room near the kitchen papered, also the passages so that we shall be busy for some little time. Has Edward told you of Ann's engagement to Thomas—the man, who drove us to Boothby, he is Mr. Hildred's ostler I only hope he is not trifling with Ann. On Thursday a Mr. Wild, Curate of Great Grimby

71
LETTERS OF EDWARD STEERE

is going to preach in our Schoolroom and I fancy he is to remain the night with us—Sunday morning Edward is going to Burgh to preach a sermon on behalf of the Church Building Society and Mr. Tozer is coming down here and after dinner we hope to journey over to Winthorpe with him to hear Sir George. I went to see Mrs. Hutson one day last week, she is getting better slowly, although her cough is still bad she enquired most kindly for you—and so do the Evingtons whenever I see them. Kate is gone to stay with her Aunt and the little one with her sister Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Evington is I fancy going to London soon, their shepherd is ill so William, and John have quite as much as they can do looking after sheep and lambs. The Bride and Bridgroom, have been at Croft a week, so we must go and call on them. I am anxious to see what they are like, Mr. Walker is four and twenty and she is eighteen. It is not quite decided whether I return with Emily—but I think I shall about the Middle of May. My Brother Henry is now in London, and may perhaps come down and see us, The Harmonium is back, and now does very nicely.

Notes

1 Willima George Tozer, (1829-99) St. John’s College, Oxford; Wells Theological College; Curate of North Kelsey 1856; Vicar of Burgh-cum-Winthorpe, 1857-63; 2nd Bishop to the tribes dwelling in the neighbourhood of Lake Nyasa and the River Shire, 1863-73; Bishop of Jamaica and Honduras, 1879; Rector of South Ferriby, 1888-91.
2 Father and sister of William Tozer. They lived at Teignmouth, Devon. Miss Helen Tozer was later a missionary in C. Africa.
3 Rev. C. A. Fowler, Rector of Kingskerswell, Devon.
4 Rev. Roger Peckington (1803-80), Rector of Wylesby, Notts. 1833-80; Rector of Skegness 1834-80.
5 William Evington. Coal Merchant and Farmer.
6 Eliza Cartinale of Lichfield. Steere was once engaged to marry her.
7 Rector of Wanlees St. Mary.
8 William Marshall, a Skegness farmer.
9 Rev. Edward Edman, Curate of Ingoldmells and Addlethorpe.
13 Prowast of the Guild of St. Alban.
16 William Sivers, plumber and painter, Spilsby.
17 Wife of the Rev. Joseph Walls of Bonhby Hall, Spilsby. He was one of the founders of Skegness as a watering place.
18 Mrs. Steere’s sister, Emily Brown.
19 Hildreds kept the New Hotel, Skegness.
20 Rector of Croft.

In 1856 White’s Directory, Skegness is described thus:

''SKEGNESS, a pleasant village and bathing place on the sea coast . . . . has in its parish about 1644 acres of land, 366 inhabitants. It has several private lodging-houses and two large and commodious hotels, which are provided with warm, cold, and shower baths, and can each make up about 30 beds. A life boat and bathing machines are stationed on the beach. Skegness until lately an obscure village, is rising in celebrity, both as a bathing place and a port, upwards of 6000 tons of coals being landed here in one summer.’’