

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh Archives

Transcription of the notebook labelled 'Inverleith House' found in box 1 of the John Hutton Balfour Archives, GB235 JHB.

In the book, RBGE Regius Keeper John Hutton Balfour has transcribed a record of the correspondence between himself and H.M. Office of Works in 1878 in which he battles to make the house habitable so that he and his family can move in.

Transcription by RBGE Library volunteer Anne Taylor, September 2019

-oOo-

12th September [1878]

Requisition for 4 tons of coal sent to the Surveyor of H.M. Office of Works

Letter from Mr[?] Robertson

H.M. Office of Works 14th September 1878

Dear Sir, Will you kindly say where the coals asked for in your requisition of the 14th inst. are required to be delivered? It would appear from the requisition that they are for Inverleith House.

Yours very truly (signed) W.W. Robertson

To Professor Balfour M.D. etc.

Reprint[?] of letter from Regius Keeper to Mr[?] Robertson

Royal Botanic Gardens, 14th September 1878

Dear Sir, The coals are intended for drying Inverleith House and they may be delivered either at this House or at the Botanic Gardens – if delivered at the latter they could be weighed – you can do in this matter as you think best.

Yours truly (signed) J.H. Balfour

W. Robertson Esq.

Letter from Mr Robertson to Professor Balfour

H. M. Office of Works, Edinburgh 17th September 1878

Dear Sir, I have your favour of the 14th inst. It is now some time since the fires which were kept on in Inverleith House for the purpose of drying the House were discontinued, and as you are so soon to enter into occupation, I do not see my way to comply with your requisition of the 12th inst. I am sorry that I cannot meet your wishes in this matter.

Yours very truly (signed) W. W. Robertson

J. H. Balfour Esq M.D. etc, 27 Inverleith Row

Letter from Professor Balfour to Mr Robertson

27 Inverleith Row, 18th September 1878

Sir, I received your letter of 17th inst. and am astonished at the statement made by you to the effect that no further supply of coals is necessary in the drying of Inverleith House. I visited the house yesterday and found the walls damp in many places. I cannot take possession of the house in that condition.

Am I to infer from the statement in the latter part of your letter that I as Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden, inhabiting a government House am not to enjoy the privilege of being supplied with coals as in the case with other government officials. Do you positively refuse to comply with my order for 4 tons of coal? I shall be obliged by an answer at your earliest convenience as I am determined no longer to submit to unnecessary delays. May I beg that you will also inform me as to when the other matter mentioned in the list previously sent to you will be attended to.

I am, Sir, your obedt. Servant (signed) J. H. Balfour

To W. W. Robertson Esq, H. M. Office of Works

Letter from W Robertson to Professor Balfour

H. M. Office of Works, Edinburgh, 18th September 1878

Sir, I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of this days date, on the subject of your requisition for coals for Inverleith House. You are right in assuming that without the Board's special instructions I do not consider myself at liberty to supply coals for your domestic consumption, but as you consider yourself entitled to claim them I have submitted your letter to the Board and requested instructions. Will you please say to what list the question with which our letter concludes has reference?

I am, Sir, your obedt. Servant (signed) W. W. Robertson

To Professor Balfour M. D. etc

Royal Botanic Garden 18th September 1878

Sir, I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of today's date in answer to mine of same date. You inform me that you do not consider yourself at liberty to supply coals for my domestic consumption at Inverleith House, and that you have submitted my letter to the Board and requested instructions. I shall be obliged if you will inform me when I may expect a notice of the instructions you may receive from the Board. At the same time I beg to call your attention to the fact that the coals I ordered on Thursday 12th inst. and which you have declined to supply are for the purpose of drying Inverleith House preparatory to my occupation of it. You say in your letter of 17th inst. "it is now some time since the fires which were kept on in Inverleith House for the purpose of drying the house were discontinued, and I infer you mean that there is no further need for them the house being dry. In my letter of today's date I informed you that this is not the case and I now again state that the house is damp and as a medical man I deduce that it is so damp as it be not healthy. I therefore once more ask, do you refuse to supply my order? I am surprised at your question regarding the list to which I refer in my letter. I need only recal to your recollection that a list was put into your hands at the beginning of last week which you examined with me in presence of Mr Ross at Inverleith House.

I am, Sir, your obedt. servant (signed) J. H. Balfour

To W. Robertson Esq

19th September 1878

Sir, I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of yesterday's date, and in reply to your inquiry when you may expect a notice of the instructions I may receive from the Board on the matter of coal supply. I have to inform you that I shall communicate with you immediately on receipt of the Board's decision. The list of requirements to which you refer was addressed not to me, but to Mr Ross, but as it was brought to him at the house while I was there I had an opportunity of going over the items with him. Some of the work has already been done, part of it is in course of execution, some of it, you will remember I pointed out to you was not such as should be executed by this Board: eg, the press asked for in Servants Hall which as an article of furniture should be supplied by the tenant; while other items were quite unintelligible and although I referred to you for explanation, you were unable to indicate what was asked for.

You will see how impossible it is that matters can be attended to satisfactorily in this way and I would suggest that you should send me compete list of all your requirements which I may submit to the Board for direction.

I should also draw your attention to the fact that the mason, who, in accordance with your requisition, was sent to rebuild the wash house boiler, was stopped in his work, and had to refer to this department for renewed instructions before proceeding. As such interference adds unnecessarily to

the cost of the work, I have to request that you will arrange that in future workmen sent to execute repairs are not thus interfered with.

I am, Sir, your obedt. servant signed W. W. Robertson

J. H. Balfour Esq M.D. etc, 27 Inverleith Row

Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh 21st September 1878

Sir, I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 19th inst. in reply to mine of the 18th. I observe that you do not inform me whether you propose to comply with my order for coals. I request you will send me a definite answer at your earliest convenience. You complain that it is impossible to attend to matters satisfactorily because of the manner in which I make known my requirements. In the first place you state that the list of requirements was addressed to Mr Ross and not to yourself, but I may remind you that I had on the previous day personally spoken to you on the subject and given you a list, also that the requirements on the list had on several previous occasions been submitted to you verbally and that you had given your consent for the execution of several of them. As you remark, some of the work required has already been executed but I may draw your attention to the fact that in my letter of enquiry I referred to the remaining work still [...ented?].

I am glad to find that since my letter some more of the work has been put in hand and I trust that the remainder will soon be completed. Regarding your remark that some of the work was such as should not be executed by the Board, I am obliged for the definite information that the presses in the Servants Hall are to be regarded as articles of furniture to be supplied by the tenant. Finally as to your last cause of complaint that "other items were quite unintelligible" you cannot but remember that Mr Ross explained them? difficulty.

You ask that I should send to you a complete list of all my requirements. I sent to you yesterday a list of some things I wish done, and I now enclose a list of certain sanitary arrangements demanding immediate attention. But whilst these lists are as complete as I can make them just now, I beg you will distinctly understand that I shall on any future occasion send a notice of things which I may find wanting. Your accusation that I interfere with the work and these add unnecessarily to the cost, is I venture to say, quite uncalled for and I think had you been cognisant of the whole circumstances connected with the building in of? the wash house boiler you would not have founded your accusation on such a fact.

Yours, Sir, your obedt. servant (signed) J. H. Balfour

For lists see Order Book RBG Requisition!

Reprint by Dr Littlejohn – at the request of Professor Balfour, I, in company of one of my Sanitary Inspectors made an inspection of this house and its premises.

The Sanitary arrangements throughout the house showed good workmanship and were in excellent working order.

WC on first floor. Leakage to a considerable extent had occurred from the WC on the first floor whereby the roof of the drawing room had materially suffered. The leakage in question was the result of an accident and was not due to defective apparatus. At the same time I observed that there was no provision to prevent such overflows. Were an overflow pipe carried from the trap under the WC directly through the adjacent wall to the outer air, any leakage that might occur could be prevented damaging the house.

Front area. The area at the main entrance was very damp, and the various traps to carry off the surplus water were choked. The main cause of this dampness was evidently the water which came freely from the adjacent high grounds. Were a channel made along the top of the wall as at a the area would be kept dry [insert of a drawing of a cross-section of ground].

Washing house. In the floor of the washing house there is an ordinary Bell trap to carry off the water. Such a trap is easily displaced and affords a ready entrance to the gases from the drains. An ordinary syphon bend placed below the trap would entirely obviate this source of danger

Privy cesspool. In the outbuildings there was a large cesspool and the remains of an old privy. I would strongly recommend that the large cellar (alias a cesspool) should be entirely filled up and that no privy should be placed there. The situation is not good for the purpose and in addition the presence of such a privy would destroy the amenity of the dwelling house.

(Signed) Henry D. Littlejohn M.D.

Edinburgh 17th September 1878

H. M. Office of Works, Edinburgh

25th September 1878

Sir, I have to acknowledge receipt of yours of the 21st inst. in which you again ask if I propose to comply with your "order" for coals. I regret if I have not yet made this clear to you. I beg to refer you to my letter of the 17th inst. and can only add that I do not propose supplying any coal for Inverleith House until I receive the Board's instructions on the papers I have submitted which includes the requisition to which you refer. You mistake as to the lists of requirements to which you allude. The list which you handed to me contains only two items out of the 19 or 20 which compose the list handed to Mr Ross and, as I have informed you, several of the items in this latter list were quite unintelligible and remain so still neither you or Mr Ross having been able to explain what was meant by them. You are quite in error in supposing that Mr Ross was able to explain them. The facts connected with the stoppage of the work of rebuilding the wash house boiler are, I believe, as I stated them in my letter of the 19th but it is, I think, unnecessary to enter in to any controversy on the subject, as I rely upon your arranging as requested that in future workmen shall not be interfered with.

Will you please explain in detail what is required under the following 2 items of your requisition of the 20th inst.

Shelving in outer lobby press and ventilation

Shelves and pegs in housemaids press 3rd floor

I am, Sir, Your obedt. servant (signed) W. W. Robertson

J. H. Balfour Esq M.D. etc

Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh

September 27th [written on top of '23rd'] 1878

Sir, In reference to the queries at the end of your letter of this date, I have to state

1. The press on the left hand side of the outer lobby (immediately on entering) is perfectly dark and has no ventilation and there is no shelving in the inner part towards the north. The smell on entering it is very disagreeable and the walls are damp. Several shelves should be put up and a sky light should be opened in the outer part of press and a small window on east side of inner press, thus making arrangements similar to those in the press and WC on the west side of the passage.

The housemaids press is situated in the eastern portion of the second bedroom floor – the house maid will require 2 or 3 shelves for holding black lead box etc and pegs for dusters etc supports for [rooms] being the usual arrangements in a gentleman's house.

I may also mention to you that the Secretary of the Edinburgh District Water Trust has visited Inverleith House and has informed me that the means of water supply could scarcely be worse than it is at present and that a four inch pipe would be required from the Trustees main pipe.

I am, Sir, your obedt. servant

(signed) J. H. Balfour

The Surveyor H. M. Office of Works, Edinburgh

Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh

25th September 1878

Sir, Circumstances having arisen which render it necessary that I appeal to you I beg your earnest consideration of the following letter. You are aware that when the arrangement was made that I should occupy Inverleith House as an official residence in lieu of the sum which I have previously received annually as rent for my present house, it was on the understanding that the house should be made comfortable and suitable for a gentleman's residence. Upon this understanding and learning from the Head of your department in Edinburgh that Inverleith House would be in proper order early

this summer, I was induced to dispose of my present house, giving occupation in October. It is now many weeks beyond the time when, I was informed, I should be able to occupy Inverleith House, and as I must in a short period vacate my present house, I am anxious to have Inverleith House in a condition fit for my residence. But, Sir, the house is still so damp that I cannot yet take possession and reside there; and with reference to this point I beg to draw your special attention to the following fact showing that my wishes, which I venture to think you will pronounce reasonable and just, have been thwarted by the Head of your department in Edinburgh and that orders furnished to him in the regular official manner have been met with refusal. On the 12th Sep. I sent an order addressed to the Head of our department in Edinb for four tons of coal "for Inverleith House, Botanic Garden" I received a reply dated 14th Sep asking if the coals were intended for the Botanic Garden or for Inverleith House. On the 14th inst. I answered stating that they were intended for the drying of Inverleith House and I made it optional whether they went directly to Inverleith House or came first to the Botanic Garden to be weighed after the usual manner of dealing coals supplied regularly to the Garden. I received a reply on the 17th September couched in the following terms: - "It is now some time since the fires which were kept on in Inverleith House for the purpose of drying the House were discontinued and as you are so soon to enter into occupation I do not see my way to comply with your requisition of the 12th inst. I am sorry that I cannot meet your wishes in this matter". On the 18th inst. I replied as follows "I am astonished at the statement made by you to the effect that no further supply of coals is necessary for the drying of Inverleith House. I visited the house yesterday and found the walls damp in many places. I cannot take possession of the house in that condition. Am I to infer from the statement in the latter part of your letter, that I, as Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Gardens, inhabiting a Government House am not to enjoy the privilege of being supplied with coals as is the case with other Government officials. Do you positively refuse to comply with my order for four tons of coals?" I received an answer dated 18th inst. in the following words: - "You are right in assuming that without the Board's special instructions I do not consider myself at liberty to supply coals for your domestic consumption but as you consider yourself entitled to claim them I have submitted your letter to the Board and requested instructions". My reply of date 18th inst. was as follows:- "You inform me that you do not consider yourself at liberty to supply coals for my domestic consumption at Inverleith House and that you have submitted my letter to the Board and requested instructions. I shall be obliged if you will inform me when I may expect notice if the instructions you may receive from the Board. At the same time I beg to call your attention to the fact that the coals I ordered on Thursday 12th inst. and which you have declined to supply are for the purpose of drying Inverleith House, preparatory to my occupation of it. You say in your letter of 17th inst. that it is now some time since the fires which were kept on in Inverleith House for the purpose of drying the house were discontinued, and I infer you mean that there is no further use for them, the house being dry. In my letter of today's date I informed you that this is not the case and I now again state that the house is damp and as a medical man I declare that it is so damp as to be not healthy. I therefore once more ask do you refuse to supply my order?". The Head of your department writes on 19th inst. as follows: - "In reply to your enquiry, when you may expect a notice of the instructions I may receive from the Board on the matter of coal supply I have to inform you that I shall communicate with you immediately on the receipt of the Board's decision". On the 21st I wrote and asked once more if my order would be complied with and have only today 25th Sep received the following reply:- "I have to acknowledge receipt of yours of 21st inst. in which you again ask if I propose to comply with your "order" for coals. I regret if I have not yet made this clear to you. I beg to refer you to my letter of the 17th inst. and I can

only add that I do not propose supplying any coal for Inverleith House until I receive the Board's decision on the papers I have submitted to them which include the requisition of which you refer".

I am therefore compelled to apply to you in this matter you observe that the Head of your department in Edinb does not impugn my interpretation of his letter that he considers Inverleith House as dry and I am justified in concluding that he still thinks so. But I have stated that it is damp and am doing so now again. I bring forward the proof which has been supplied within a few days, viz that several fungi have appeared on the walls of some of the rooms. It being thus absolutely necessary fires should be lighted for drying the house, the delay (nearly a fortnight) which has been occasioned by my correspondence with the Head of your department in Edinburgh, having become intolerable, I have been obliged, on my own behalf to supply in the meantime, coals for drying the house, and thereby to incur expense for what I venture to submit should be supplied by the Board.

As regards the coals for my domestic consumption I was not aware that "special instructions" were required as I am supplied with these, for as I mentioned in my letter of 18th September to the Head of your department in Edinburgh, I know that it is the privilege of officials in positions similar to that which I occupy to be thus supplied. I beg further to draw your attention to the following facts connected with the arrangement of Inverleith House: the water pipe leading up to the house is much too small to furnish an adequate supply. This was pointed out to the Head of our department in Edinburgh and whilst admitting this fact, his only answer was that he would wait until the deficiency was felt and then he would ask the water company to increase the pressure. I submit, Sir, that this is a flagrant neglect and that the matter demands immediate attention. On another matter I would ask your consideration. Being desirous of knowing if the Sanitary arrangements in Inverleith House were satisfactory I had them officially examined by the Medical Officer of Health for Edinburgh and I now beg to forward to you a copy of his report. I should state that I have included the recommendations of the Report as matters I wished attended to, in a list of requirements which I supplied on the 21th inst. to the Head of your department here. The last subject I desire in this letter to being under your notice is that of the boiler in the washing house. By direction of the Head of your department in Edinburgh, the boiler which was previously there has been again built in. It is a very small one, and coated with rust as to be practically useless. My representation on this matter have been disregarded.

To all these matters, Sir, I would request your earnest attention. I have been throughout treated with but scant courtesy by the Head of your department in Edinburgh in connection with the arrangement of Inverleith House, but I have hitherto forborne from communicating with you.

Now therefore when I find my wishes upon matters of comfort and convenience so systematically treated with indifference and matters of importance for my own health and that of my family utterly disregarded I feel, Sir, that there is no other course open to me but to make an appeal to you which I now do.

I have the honor to be, Sir your obedt. servant

Signed J. H. Balfour M.D. Regius Keeper

Royal Botanic Garden

28th September 1878

Sir, Since writing to you I have received the enclosed report from my medical adviser, Dr Andrew Wood who has today examined the rooms at Inverleith House. Although I have been putting on fires at my own expense during the past week, the damp in the bedrooms still continues and the fungus growth is increasing. Dr Murchison a well known London physician, visited the house lately and gave an opinion similar to that of Dr Wood.

I have the honour to be, Sir your obedt. servant (signed) J. H. Blafour Regius Keeper

Reprint by Dr Andrew Wood

9 Darnaway St 28th Sep 1878

My dear Balfour. I have this day at your request visited and inspected Inverleith House with the view of ascertaining whether it is so dry as to be safely habitable by you. I found that in various parts of the house there is still a considerable amount of damp. In one room indeed there is a growth of fungi sufficiently indicative of damp. I would strongly advise you not to enter upon residence for a week at least, and that during the whole of that time large fires should be kept burning in every room of the house. If this be not done I should greatly fear that you and your family might seriously suffer in your health.

Yours very truly (signed) A Wood M.D.

Letter from the Secretary of the Edinburgh and District Water Trust, Sent to H. M. Office of Works, London September 1878

E. and D. W. T. 11 Royal Exchange 26th Sep 1878

Sir, Your letter of 20th inst. in which you request to be informed respecting the sufficiency of the means of water supply to Inverleith House called duly to hand. In reply I beg to inform you that I made an investigation into the matter and I find that the means of supply could scarcely be worse than it is at present. The service pipe for the whole premises is almost 400 yards long and $\frac{3}{4}$ " in diameter with a column stopcock the water way of which does not exceed $\frac{1}{2}$ " in area. It is hardly possible that the place can be supplied by such a pipe and stopcock. I would therefore recommend that at least a three inch cast iron pipe and three inch valve should be supplied. With a view of putting on hydrant a four inch pipe would be preferable to the three inch owing to the great length from the Trustees main pipe. The want of a proper pipe and appliance was seriously felt at the fire that took place at Inverleith House a year or two ago. The difference in cost between a 3 and a 4 inch pipe is insignificant.

The cistern accommodation and service pipe within the house is in every respect satisfactory.

(signed) R.A.F.A. [Coyne?]

Letter from the Secretary of the Chief Commissioner to the Regius Keeper

H.M. Office of Works 2nd October 1878

Sir, I am directed by the First Commissioner of Her Majesty's Works etc to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th 27th and 28th ultimo in regard to Inverleith House and in reply I am to acquaint you that the matters to which you refer are engaging the attention of the Board, and that a further communication will be made to you.

I am, Sir, your obedt. servant (signed) A. B. [Mitford?] Secretary

J.H. Balfour Esq M.D. etc

H.M. Office of Works, London 7th October 1878 B.9588/78

Sir, With reference to my letter to you of the 2nd inst. I am directed by the First Commissioner of Her Majesty's Works etc to inform you that the Board have caused full enquiry to be made into the various matters of which you complain in regard to Inverleith House. The Board are informed that some amount of dampness undoubtedly exists in the house: it appears however from the report of your own medical adviser that he was of opinion on the 28th ultimo that if fires were kept lighted for a week, it would suffice for bringing the residence into proper condition and having regard to the fact that when you entered into partial occupation of it, there were in store between one and two tons of coal available for the purpose of drying, the Board cannot think that you have any just cause of complaint on this ground.

As regards the supply of coal, generally, I am to state that it is not the practice of this Department to furnish the occupants of official residences with fuel for domestic purposes and that the Board regret that they are unable to make an exception in your favour.

The whole of the funds which Parliament sanctioned for the restoration of Inverleith House have already been expended and the Board do not feel that they would be justified in asking the Lords Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury to sanction any further expenditure for fitting up shelves and a skylight in the closet adjoining the entrance into which a gas bracket has already been introduced at your special request, or for fitting up the housemaids closet.

As regards the other items mentioned in your requisition of the 21st ultimo, I am to state that the Board are assured that no overflow is now possible from the water-closet on the first floor. The Board have however given instructions for the traps in the gratings of the front area to be cleaned and for a bell trap to be fixed in the wash-house, but they consider it unnecessary to form a channel along the top of the wall of the front area, as when the road in front shall be regravelled it can easily be formed in such a manner as to cause the water to flow away as formerly. The large cesspool in the outer buildings has been thoroughly cleaned out and the Board reserve for the present the question of filling it up and removing the privy.

The Board will give directions for the windows on the house to be cleaned on your finally taking possession of it, but they are unable to sanction this service in future, it not being the practice of this Department to clean the windows of such residences.

The cost of supplying a 3 inch pipe from the water main would be £70 for which, as I have before stated, the Board have no funds at their disposal. Their office in Scotland reports however that whenever the water service for the Arboretum shall be introduced, the supply in the house would be connected therewith, and he states that on the occasion he pointed out to you on the ground the route which the Arboretum pipe would take and showed you how the connection could be made and that you expressed yourself as quite satisfied with the arrangement. The existing pipe is no doubt very small but it is that which has hitherto supplied water to Inverleith House and until a new one can be fixed the Board trust that you will not experience so much inconvenience from it as you anticipate.

The Board have thus carefully considered and dealt with the whole of matters which you have brought under their notice. They observe, however, that in one of your communications you mention on several occasions, the order which you have given to their officer. Upon this point I am to remind you that neither the Board nor their officers can receive orders from any Public Official, but any requisition which may be submitted to their offices in Scotland will at all times receive due consideration. Whilst regretting that any misunderstanding should have arisen between yourself and this office in Scotland the Board cannot perceive that, in the exercise of the duties of this office and in the superintendence of the general economy of the Department under his care Mr Robertson has laid himself open to the charge which you make against him of want of courtesy and of flagrant neglect.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant (signed) A B [Mitford?] Secretary

Extract from letter from Dr Littlejohn to the Regius Keeper

Public Health Office, Police Chambers, Edinburgh

7th October 1878

My dear Professor I saw Mr Robertson who pled with me first to give him time as he had to keep within his estimates and he would satisfy all your wishes which he thought moderate -

Yours truly (signed) Henry D Littlejohn M. D.

Reprint of the Cryptogamic Society of Scotland as to the state of Inverleith House

We hereby certify that during the Conference of the Cryptogamic Society of Scotland we have carefully examined Inverleith House presently occupied by Professor Balfour as Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh. We found in the Hall and in Bedrooms various species of fungus which are indicative of a very damp state of the walls, and in one portion of the building the dry-rot fungus (*Merulius lachrymans*) is rapidly developing itself. From the extremely destructive properties of this fungus, we are of opinion that unless means are immediately taken to secure proper ventilation, the woodwork will be so destroyed as to involve heavy expenditure which a comparatively trifling outlay at present would save.

(Signed) F Buchanan White, Secretary C.S.Sc.

John Stevenson C.S.S.

M C Cooke L.L.D. C.S.S.

John E Vize M.A.

H Franklin Parsons M.D. Med Off Health Goole

Ben Carrington M.D.

Cecil H Sp Percival

F M Norman Commander R.N.

Andrew P Aitken Sc.D.

William B Boyd B.C.S.

A Stephen Wilson

Charles B Plowright M.R.C.S.

William Phillips F.L.S.

F Douglas M.D. Sec Berwickshire Nat Club

Wallis Elliot K.C.S.I. F.R.S.

B 9.588/78 Inverleith House, R.B.G Edinburgh

12th October 1878

Sir, I have to acknowledge the receipt of the communication from Her Majesty's Office of Works of date 6th October 1878. I regret that in many my previous letters I should have made use of the word "order" in place of requisition.

I am surprised to learn that after "full enquiry" the Board is satisfied that Inverleith House is not so damp as to justify my complaint. I certainly should not have stated that the house is damp did I not know it to be the case. The fact that fungi are still growing in the walls, is I venture to remark a sufficient evidence, and that this is the case is well known to the Head of your Department in Edinburgh who himself recovered one from the house on the day he made an inspection. For more than a fortnight I have had continuous fires in the house and have at my own expense consumed four tons of coal. My Medical Adviser certainly expected that a weeks fires would have had good effect but the result has proved that he was mistake – no doubt in any ordinary case of damp walls, it would have been effectual but considering the length of time during which they were exposed to the rain of a particularly wet season the drying process is naturally difficult. I beg to enclose a piece of paper from the wall of my own bedroom with the mycelium of a fungus developing upon it and also a portion of dry rot fungus, which is rapidly spreading upon the walls of the closet from which the Head of your Department here, [recovered?] a specimen. This closet is that for which I sent a requisition for

ventilation and in which the dampness is so marked that water trickles down the walls in sufficient quantity to be collected in a glass.

During the last week there has been a meeting of the Scottish Cryptogamic Society in Edinburgh and I have taken the opportunity of having the walls examined by several of the Members, a copy of whose report I beg to enclose.

As to my requisition for coals: as Sir Joseph Hooker at Kew is supplied with coals water and gas and I find also that Professor [Piaggi?] Smyth Astronomer Royal for Scotland who occupies a Government House, has an annual allowance for "fuel light and water" I certainly expected that as Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh, I should have the same privilege accorded to me – With these cases before me I do not understand how the granting of such a privilege in my case, can be called an "exception" as regards the supply of water to Inverleith House it is true that the Head of your Department here proposed to lay pipes of proper dimensions for the Arboretum and at the same time to arrange for a sufficient supply for Inverleith House. When he mentioned this many weeks ago I understood that the pipes would be laid before I entered into possession as at that time arrangements were in progress for laying out the walks, and I supposed that immediate steps would be taken for completing the Arboretum as conformity with the agreement entered into, at the time of the purchase of the ground, namely that the Arboretum should be laid out and open to the public within two years from the date of purchase. At present I cannot get water sufficient for household purposes. On Friday there was no water in the house after one o'clock pm and my servant had to go with pitchers to fetch water. As a rule the supply ceases about six pm. I fear that if this state of matters continues, it may lead to the bursting of the kitchen boiler.

I trust that the statements I now make may have some weight and that immediate steps may be taken for putting the house into proper order.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedt. servant (signed) J. H. Balfour Regius Keeper

Letter 1:

Sir, I have today received your application of recommendation for the Office of Curator of the Royal Garden here. I may state that the appointment rests with the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury not with me. I should however have been very glad to considered your claims [and to have recommended you' crossed out] but for the fact that I have a first rate man on the spot whom I have already recommended to the Treasury for appointment. I am, Sir yrs faithfully

[small sketch of a tree?]

Letter 2:

Inverleith House 23 Oct 1878

Sir, I request your immediate attention to the enclosed requisition. My servants are much alarmed and are not disposed to run the risk of being injured by the bursting of the kitchen boiler. The laundry

maid cannot do any work. My servants will not [...] to the many inconveniences and 2 who have been with me for several years have now given up their [inhabitation?].

I am sir your obedt. servant J. H. B. Reg K R. B. G.

Mr ? H? Gvt? Officer of Works, Edinburgh

Letter 3:

25 Oct 1878

Sir, [only a few legible words] Sir Your obedt. servant J H Balfour, Regius Keeper

[.....?] Office of Works

Letter 4:

Sir, I enclose a copy of a letter from Dr James Russell the Government [...] in [Sa.....?] in the fires his opinion as to the dry rot in the [...] Be so good as to forward it to the Board in London and oblige

Yr obedt. servant

Mr Simpson 5th November 1878

Letter 5:

and I am confident he will do well if he [rec..?] the appointment. I should have liked to introduce some fresh blood but in the circumstances I am satisfied I have adopted the best course.