

Iron Bridge May 7th 1863
5.30 p.m.

My dear Mamma,

This will be a pic-nic letter.

First, on Thursday, telegrams came from Worcester and from Guverson at Paddington about the Saloon carriages of which there were two; then J.F. was writing out lists of the provisions and giving us directions; I had charge of the Lemonade & Soda-water (6 dozen in all); there were 150 lbs of meat, fowl and fish, sweet-meats without end and 5 dozen of wine (champagne, sherry & claret) with beer and porter ad lib. Piding, Robt, Lwisay, Motcutt

myself, W^{ro} Humphreys, (J. To cook)
a tent man and a man servant
went down at 8 o'clock; and at
the end of the train was a truck
with two tents and all the
provisions; this was left unhooked
at Linsley when we were met
by Tom Jones our faithful chain-
man and a bargee who had
taken an Ironbridge boat down
the river in the morning, as the
river had to be crossed and there
is only one small boat at Linsley.
Rob and I then proceeded up
to the Castle and got the stable
man to bring down a cart &
horse to the ferry and conveyed

the tents &c to the bottom of
the hill on which the tent was
to be pitched; this however took
two journeys to accomplish;
Rob, the tent-man and I then
carried up most of the tents
which was the hardest work
I have done this many a day
(N.B. all the rest were getting
the traps across the river during
this time) and then it took more
than ^{an} hour to get up the tent;
this you must understand was
a huge marquee 40 feet
long and 25 ft wide, and
there was also a provision and
pantry tent of smaller size.

Having got the tent up we then went back to the station, which was about a mile off, to meet the party and we had fog signals placed on the line for a salute.

The two saloons were the last in the train and were unhooked at Linsley so there was no hurry getting out and the rest of the train went on at once.

Then there was the greatest excitement crossing the ferry as the current is rapid, the boats flat bottomed and shaky and no seats for the people.

All got across safely and we then walked up to the castle and went through the chief rooms

which are very handsome, oak panelling, pictures &c. Mr White - more does not live there now but he had sent orders to give us all assistance required and that everyone was to help us.

By this time we were pretty well "paired" and the band had begun to play at the tent ~~two~~ towards which were slowly proceeding, I in charge of a Miss Cooke, when George came running to say I was wanted at the tent and was also to get the people away somehow - there was a party of a dozen or more under my guidance - so I explained to them how to get to

the tent (only by a round of a mill
or so!) and went off full speed
to assist at the tent, when we
had no small task to get the
repast spread out beneath
the tent. However this was at
last done, the party assembled,
the ladies seated on cloaks
coats &c, - I had brought my
plaid which was very useful
all day - and we carved, helped
the ladies, poured out champagne
for them and did all we could;
then we tried to get a mouthful
of something solid, but the ladies
were so anxious for dancing that
we had little ^{time} for anything

but drinking champagne. In due
time the grass ^{was} cleared and swept
under the tent and away we went
at quadrilles, lancers, polkas,
waltzes &c for an hour or
more, I kept up till the last
dance but was then so tired that
I had to give in, being fairly
worn out from the hard work
of the morning. Then the folk
scattered, "paired" and went off
walking about the place (800
acres of park). I then took charge
of a Miss Nevett, a Shrewsbury
lady who was not up for much
walking and we wandered about
and rested till it seemed time
to go back to the tent; then there

was a final "Sir Roger" and we
all went back to the Station where
tea was got ready in the waiting
room and then ^{more} dancing on the
platform till train time. It
rained off and on the whole day
but the tent was dry inside
and none of the ladies seemed
to mind the wet grass in the
least - it is one of the very
few advantages Englishwomen
have over Irishwomen, this in-
difference of theirs to the weather.

We then got back by train and
we left the carriages at the station
here at 8.45; 10 hours they
~~would~~ were absent from Shrews-
bury altogether. I don't think

anything could have gone off better
everybody seemed to enjoy themselves
and feel at ease. I am very
glad of it for J.F.'s sake, for
it has cost him over £50
and it must be remembered
that we seven gentlemen and
his cook and housemaid had
to arrange everything from
first to last. It would be
no use to tell you names as
you ^{know} none of them, but
there were 60 people in all
and we had ^{5 of} the C.B. Dale
brass band - volunteers, who came
in uniforms. The only contretemps
at all was during the dancing

on the platform when Mr Field
and a lady fell right across
the rails, & though able to go on
dancing, ^{they} must ~~not~~ certainly
have been considerably hurt.
This morning Rob and Notcutt
went down to Apley to bring
back the tent and whatever
had to be left behind yesterday
but I believe the 5 down of
wine were fully disposed of
yesterday. I turned in last
night at nine and slept till
7 this morning and was down
at the office ~~at~~ 8 and worked
till four. I have been writing

this in a desperate hurry as
I am going up to Sutton
Cottage to night for the
Sunday and have a lot to
do first. John Fowler
was here to day but I only
saw him going over the
bridge. He came last night
(to Shrewsbury) at 11 and left
for London to day at 4;
I shall hear more about him
this evening. I got a letter
from you this evening, and
some papers yesterday. There
were some very handsome girls

at the picnic, but all the
females over 21 looked
heavy and Saxon - full-faced
- looking, - or in other words,
as if they stuffed at dinner.

I don't like ~~the~~ way these
Englishwomen drink beer and
porter; as they say in Germany
it looks so "crass".

There were 9 Engineers yesterday
and a contractor (Mr Field)
so the profession was well
represented.

Your affectionate son
Francis C. Prendergast

Perhaps the people at Rostrevor might
like to see this.