

## Schoolboy letter from J.W.Harvey to William Lincolne, Feb 22 1803

Hackney, 22nd Feb 1803

Dear Friend

You know that it was the agreement between us that I should write you a letter after I had been away from Witham about three weeks or a month if anything particular occurred. Sorry to state to you that there has something befell me which I little thought of when I left you. You may think by my saying that something has befell me that some sickness or accident has been my lot. No, blessed be God, I have enjoyed health as well as ever I did in my life. A misfortune has befell me by my own folly and foolishness. You must know that I had a very good Character at Mr. Palmer's till last wednesday week tho I do not mean to boast of my Character or any thing that belongs to me, but that was the case. When you must know last Wednesday Week I lost my Character my Reputation and my money, but I hope I shall soon get them all again as I am in a fair way for it. But to tell you the story I shall now begin. You must know that there is in our School a Boy whose Name is Prentice the same Boy was a Bankrupt and a Barbarian if I may be allowed to use the expression and everything that was bad. This boy owed a good deal of money and had nothing to pay except a watch which he offered to sell me and I was so foolish to say that I would buy it if the boy who I went partners with in money was willing to go halves he was willing and we made the Bargain for us to have the watch for (*torn paper here*) ...llings and we paid him ready money and with some of it he began to discharge some of his Debts which were pretty numerous as he owed 17 or 18 shillings. But that is not all of my story. I was going to Islington that afternoon to see my Sister as it was a half day's holiday and my partner and myself saw I might as well sell the watch at Islington perhaps we might get a little money and perhaps we might lose a little by it. But we pretty well knew we should not lose anything by it as it went on a diamond. I went to Islington and sold the watch for 45s to a Pawnbroker and came home with a good heart to think what a good bargain I had got as 15s profit is a good deal for a School Boy. This Prentice had promised the diamond to a Boy named Smith if he would get it taken out and something put in, in its stead. But this Smith hearing that I had bought the watch and sold it and found that he had lost the diamond as he expected to get a good deal of money by it ran and told Mr Palmer. But I did not know that it was come to Mr Palmer's ears. But what was my surprise when going out of the Hall I burst on Mr Palmer and heard him saying to Prentice what have you done with your watch tell me directly. Prentice with a downcast look and a sobbing heart replies I have sold it to Harvey Mr Palmer turning round to me says in a stern look and an angry voice Have you bought his Watch Harvey? Yes Sir. Where is it? At Islington Sir and where at Islington (*torn paper here*) to a Pawn B... (*torn paper here*) and how much (*torn paper here*) ...5s Sir and so you (*torn paper here*) of defrauding him out of 15s. Prentice is a Fool and you are a Rogue. You shall go to Islington this very Night. Go into the Hall and don't stir out till I send for you. You are quite out of my Books Harvey. Away I went into the hall talking with one of the boys who was my friend, but without stopping in the Hall, as I was told, I was going out of the Hall when I met with Mrs Palmer and she talked very serious with me about the matter. I

had to go back that very Night to Islington and buy the watch again of the Pawnbroker. They took all my money away from me as the Boys said I was going to run away but that was never my intention. I have had no (paper torn here) since which I find a very hard thing or I would have sent you something in the letter as I promised. I hope you will tell this story to no one as I don't wish any body to know it.

I carried your Mother's letter to Mrs Henty on the Thursday and they were all very well and she was so good as to say she would come to Hackney Meeting and take me home to dine with her which is a great rarity to a Schoolboy.

This is my last half year for School when I hope I shall have more letters from you and see you oftener I hope you will write to me immediately which will oblige your Sincere Friend

J. W. Harvey

Ref Be so kind as to give my duty to my Father and respects to Miss Potto I having not deal more to say but (*torn paper here*) making Y (*torn paper here*) ouble postage.

*The letter was written on 3 sides of a folded, large single sheet, which was then folded over twice, sealed with red wax and addressed to 'Mastr Lincolne, Mrs Lincolne's, Witham, Essex' and had 2 official postmarks on it. Harvey's handwriting starts very neatly in a cursive, regular script but deteriorates on the third page into more of a scrawl with several crossings-out and insertions. His use of capital letters and punctuation marks is rather random.*

*It is unknown who J.W. Harvey was, but he appears to be a boyhood friend of William Lincolne's at school in Hackney. William was nearly 15 years old at this time and had probably left school recently. Harvey seems to be about the same age or slightly younger. William lived with his mother and grandfather, Thomas Isaac, in Witham and Harvey asks William to send "his duty" to his father, so presumably the Harveys were family friends.*

*Harvey's sense of outrage at the underhand dealing of Prentice is quite comical, but heartfelt, and he is clearly very concerned at having lost "my Character my Reputation my money". It is touching that he begs William Lincolne to tell no one.*

*Transcribed from the original by Helen Wolvey, 3 x great granddaughter of William Lincolne, October 2018*