

Written by JOSEPH WINCHESTER, from Old Land-Mill, KEYMER, SUSSEX, to his Sister, SARAH, living at COWBEACH, HERSTMONCEUX, SUSSEX, about the year 1836.

With pleasure, I now sit down to write
To you dear sister, on Wednesday night;
For you said when I'd a penny to spare,
I should write a letter to my sister, Sarah.

So now, I my pen have got,
To write to you I don't know what;
But if I had a plenty of time
I would turn it all into a rhyme.

You say you are glad to hear from me,
And I am sure I am from thee;
For your other letter gave me pleasure,
So write again as you have leisure.

When I wrote before, I did not know it.
That you, my sister, would turn Poet;
Though you called it a poor scrawl,
I really think it did beat all.

But you would think it rather queer,
My scrabbling about like this here;
But I think it no more than right
To tell you of our chat last night.

For I chattered on as fast as lay in my power.
For about the space of half an hour;
And I will tell you as near as I can,
How our conversation ran.

Last night as Mistress and I were sitting round the fire,
To hear of our family was her desire;
And we kept talking of one and another,
She asked if I had living both Father and Mother.

In answer to her I said,
"I have a Father living but Mother's dead;"
This question she asked among others,
If I had many sisters and brothers.

I said "Not so many as there had been
But of us all there was sixteen;"
Mistress said "You look like bees in a hive
If there was sixteen then alive."

But of it she made more fun
When I told her Mother had twenty-one;
I said "She had twelve girls and nine boys"
And directly down her work she lies.

She said "To night you can give
Me an account of where they all live;"
I will try and tell you where—
At Cowbeach lives our sister Sarah.

And Will, and Isaac, David, and Sam,
And Jane, she lives at Clippingham;
James, he lives at Rushlake Green,
Dick he lives at Rothingdean.

Esther has lately taken a flight,
Over the sea to the Isle of Wight;
I will tell you the rest if I can,
At Lewes, lives Fanny and Ann.

But to make rhyme it is a tight one,
Hannah and Bet they live at Brighton;
If I talk of London you will stare,
For Henry and Mary are living there.

Joe is living still at Old Land Mill,
And as he is a bit of a rhymers,
It is in the parish of Keymer.

Mistress asked if I could tell
If they were all doing well:
I said "There were none very poor, none very wealthy,
But all were pretty middling healthy."

I told her all she invited,
And she seemed quite delighted;
For people laughed at her for not having any,
Perhaps they did at Mother for having so many.

Perhaps you will find fault with this letter,
Because I had not wrote it better;
If to pick it out does your patience tire,
You must throw it all into the fire.

Unless you take a stick and lace Will, well,
For he is getting into a baddish state,
Stopping out Sunday nights so late;
But I must conclude and say no more
From your affectionate Brother, Joe.

Give my love as you think best,
To Father and Aunt and all the rest;
Sam and his wife in my behalf,
And accept the same yourself.

G. H. WINCHESTER,

Cowbeach, Herstmonceux, Sussex, 1897.