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June 14, 1812

Dearest brother Samuel:

I had the great satisfaction of receiving your letter on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May and hearing that you were in the enjoyment of good health. Father was pleased with your report that his goods left Liverpool aboard the "Sampson" from Dublin bound for the continent, though is worried that the port is storm-bound.

My purpose in writing is direct. "Now observe," as our father often says, and read this letter very carefully. Its subject pertains to his machine, the Spinning Mule, and the Petition Father plans to present to the British Parliament for compensation. As you well know, he is by no means a rich man and has received very little for the contribution he has made with his invention.

Father has asked me to write, as he keeps us all apprised of his business affairs, especially since our dear mother passed away not too long ago. He is exceedingly busy. All of his time is invested in making contacts with influential people in Manufacturing to help him prepare and present his case to Parliament. Unfortunately, a lengthy lobbying is part of the process of receiving such a grant from the government, which father has found both frustrating and dispiriting.

He has almost spent in its entirety the £444 subscription raised by John Kennedy and George Lee of Manchester, given to him by Manufacturers who have profited from his Mule (of which he was promised £872 in total). Did you know that Mr. Arkwright himself offered to contribute? He cheerfully, addressed the merit of the invention, observed that Father was his most bitter rival, and henceforth subscribed thirty guineas. If you recollect, not one payment came from Bolton Manufacturers!

Though the subscription was much smaller than expected, Father rallied and invested this money in his workshop. His enterprising spirit under such circumstances can only be admired, and I have rarely seen him spend an idle moment since. His business at the steam-driven factory in Bolton owned by Joshua Wood & Co. is good. Our brothers William and James continue to help there with business of Spinning and Manufacturing. Father has installed two Mules, and employs three men, one woman and six children, though he still complains about training them and I wonder sometimes that he loves the business but dislikes managing people altogether.

Presently, with the remaining monies, Father wishes to increase his capacity for selling high quality cotton and plans to expand into the bleaching business. To this end, Father has leased Whitehall bleach works at Darwen, between Bolton and Blackburn, and will run the business with our brothers George and John as partners.

Which brings me to you, dear Samuel. Father's latest endeavour is a partnership with one Mr. Wylde, a cotton merchant, and he wishes you to quit the cotton trading that you are overseeing in Liverpool to participate in this business, in equal shares as a partner. He has recently visited a warehouse in Delph to house the business.

I write on Father's behalf to induce you to come home and resume working with him in this new venture. He has told me that you mean to give up Manufacturing altogether, and that your reasons include a fall in demand for textile goods, a mistrust based on your experience with bad contracts, but

mostly, they are driven by your unwillingness to bear any longer ill-treatment by our brother John. This news saddened me and put Father in an anxious state, but he has thought up this new endeavour and asked me to appeal to you to take him up on his offer, while he busies himself with his case.

Father does need our help, for he has experienced so many setbacks since first showing his Mule. If he had destroyed it, rather than giving it up to the public, this country would have lost the very machine whereby it has produced one of the first Manufactories in Europe of Muslim, Cambric, and cotton goods of superior quality.

On the matter of receiving a reward in recognition for the Mule's contribution to industry, Father has written to Sir Joseph Banks, the President of the Royal Society. He hopes to eventually bring his case before King George and his Ministers. But alas, the letter was poorly addressed, and it received no reply. When Father finally did hear back, the Society regretted to inform him that they were not in possession of funds to give large rewards for inventions and could not put forward his case because his invention was not considered "new."

Coming away emptyhanded after Hargreaves, Arkwright, and Watt received patents for their inventions has embittered Father. Upon hearing that Parliament has given Edmund Cartwright a £10,000 reward for his invention of the Power Loom, Father determined that it was time his efforts were similarly compensated.

At the time of writing this letter, Father has placed an application with Parliament for financial recognition of his services as inventor of the Spinning Mule. He has acted on the advice of Mr. Thomas Ainsworth, who you will know as the dignified landowner and operator of significant bleach works. Mr. Ainsworth recommended that the best way to put Father's case forward would be to present a petition signed by "the most respectable Spinners and Manufacturers" in the industry. And so, Father has been tirelessly writing to merchants, manufacturers, cotton spinners, bleachers, etc., to help him detail the history of his invention and how it changed the industry.

When Father presented his case to J. Blackburn, Esquire, the Member of Parliament stated that he was fully satisfied with every step that Father had taken and instructed him to act on Ainsworth's advice. Father has since visited with Sir Robt Peel and shown him a letter written by manufacturer Mr. Lee, describing the Mule's impact and Sir Robert Peel feels that the business of the Committee will be got through very soon. Father has friends in high places and speaks often of Sir Robert Peel's kindness on the matter, along with Lord Stanley's support as the Earl of Derby.

Our eldest brother George has been heavily involved in Father's activities, traveling to London, seeking out the likes of Mr. Ainsworth, and securing other esteemed individuals in the industry that will help Father promote his case.

In his methodical manner, Father is undertaking a survey of cotton spindles to prove the widespread effect and influence of the Mule on the Cotton Industry in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Based on the information he collects, Father will finalize his petition for presentation to Parliament. The latest news on the matter is that a meeting is being held this Tuesday at the Manchester Exchange to decide who will attend the Committee appointed to determine the outcome of Father's case.

The hour is late, dear brother, and I must go to bed. Father's situation is not yet resolved though we are all hopeful. I will write more as events transpire, but again beg of you to consider father's business proposal for a partnership with himself and Mr. Wylde.

Until I write again, I bid you goodnight.

Your loving sister, Betty

June 17, 1812

Dear Samuel,

Before the receipt of this, I trust you will have read about the Luddite risings, perhaps as reported in the *Manchester Gazette*? While I express gratitude for the actions of the Magistrate and the Military to quell the riots, many claim Parliament has been misinformed and events have been exaggerated by "spies" which has resulted in unnecessary violence.

Whatever the cause, it troubles me to report that the unrest that began in Nottingham has since spread to Yorkshire, Cheshire, and threatens our very own county of Lancashire.

Raids on textile workshops in Nottingham have been a nightly occurrence since the uprising began. Workers, upset by low wages and the use of unskilled labour, have been breaking into factories at night and to destroy the machines employed there. Letters threatening these break-ins have been sent to factory owners from a one "General Ned Ludd of Sherwood Forest and his Army of Redressers."

One frightening letter stated: "This is to inform you that if you do make any more two course Hole, you will have all your Frames broken and your Goods too, though you may think you have made your doom just I shall know how to break your frames, we will not suffer you to win, the Trade will die first, if we cant do it just to night, we will break them yet, and if we cant break them, we can break something better and we will do it in spite of the Devil."

In just these past three weeks, some two hundred stocking frames have been destroyed. The situation is getting so serious that King George IV himself has intervened, offering £50 to anyone "giving information on any person or persons wickedly breaking the frames" who are now known as "Luddites".

This "Ned Ludd" is meant to live near Leicester and was apprenticed to learn the art of framework-knitting. Failing to exert himself to the satisfaction of his master, a complaint was made to the Magistrate who recommended that Ned be whipped. This remedy, however, did not cure Ned's laziness but resulted in him taking up a hammer and demolishing the very machine that caused his punishment.

Hence the persons who have lately repeated Ned's operation in this and the neighbouring Counties have thought it proper to assume his name and conceal their own. He has become part of local folklore whom some call "the hero of Nottingham."

These Luddites have bold convictions and are hell-bent on violent protest. They gather for attack in the hundreds, some armed with muskets and fixed bayonets, and others with colliers' picks. At the head of the armed band, oftentimes a man of straw is carried to embody General Ned Ludd.

The unrest has spread to the Lancashire cotton mills that make use of power looms. On the 20th of March, the warehouse of William Radcliffe was attacked by a group of Luddites. *The Manchester*

*Gazette* reported: "On Monday afternoon a large body, not less than 2,000, commenced an attack, on the discharge of a pistol, which appeared to have been the signal; volleys of stones were thrown, and the windows smashed to atoms; the internal part of the building being guarded, a musket was discharged in the hope of intimidating and dispersing the assailants. In a very short time, the effects were too shockingly seen in the death of three, and it is said, about ten wounded."

This was followed by an attack on Burton's Mill near Manchester and the burning of Emanuel Burton's home. One of the deadliest Luddite attacks occurred this past 11<sup>th</sup> of April, and Rawfolds Mill in Yorkshire. After meeting at Saint Crispin public house, local croppers decided to destroy the cloth-finishing machinery at the mill. Its owner, William Cartwright, organized armed guards to protect his mill. The Luddites failed to gain entry, but two of the croppers were mortally wounded. Seven days later the Luddites killed William Horsfall, another large mill-owner in the area.

To quell the violence, the British Government of Spencer Perceval dispatched 14,000 soldiers, more than were mobilized in the Duke of Wellington's army to fight Napoleon on the Iberian Peninsula, so our father says.

The government has proposed that machine-breaking should become a capital offence. Lord Byron made a speech in the House of Lords on the subject, stating that "whilst these outrages must be admitted to exist to an alarming extent, it cannot be denied that they have arisen from circumstances of the most unparalleled distress." Byron criticized the plight of the working class, reduced to misery, ruin, and starvation by the continuance of war with France: "I have been in some of the most oppressed provinces of Turkey; but never, under the most despotic of infidel governments, did I behold such squalid wretchedness as I have seen since my return, in the very heart of a Christian country."

Despite the arguments made by Byron, Parliament passed the Frame Breaking Act, enabling those convicted of machine-breaking to be sentenced to death.

After the violence here, the authorities rounded up over a hundred suspects and arrested sixty-four. Three men were executed for the murder of Horsfall, and another fourteen were hung for the attack on Rawfolds Mill alone. It has been a most grievous affair in which the Luddites have been charged for "one of the greatest outrages that ever was committed in a civilized country... It is of infinite importance... that no mercy should be shown to any... and the sentence of the law... should be very speedily executed."

Father says the conflict is the direct result of the newly mechanized textile industry, in which his Spinning Mule has played a vital role. Though the first Mule used 48 spindles, they are now building Mules with 400 spindles and metal rollers. Alongside the Mule, the Jenny, the Water Wheel, and the Power Loom, Boulton and Watt's Steam Engine have pushed the industry forward. This new machinery was not introduced without opposition, and the sentiment of mistrust and suspicion, Father says, hearkens back to the frame-breaking riots of Blackburn.

The Luddite attacks have shed light on a distressing situation that appears to be alleviated at present, though this is mostly through government intervention.

Farewell until I write again,

Yours, Betty Crompton

June 27, 1812

Dearest Samuel,

Please excuse the poor quality of my writing, for I write in haste with much to relate about the progress of Father's petition before Parliament.

Amidst the instability of the Luddite riots, Father completed a tour of 650 cotton mills within a sixty-mile radius of Bolton, gathering evidence to prove the value of the Spinning Mule. The survey compared the number of Jenny, Water Frame, and Spinning Mule machines used for cotton-spinning. He has been as meticulous in the gathering of information for his Spindle Survey as he is in the recordkeeping of his accounts.

Forthwith are the numbers he has enumerated:

- ~ 100,000 spinners and 250,000 weavers working in the industry.
- ~ Of the spindles in use, 155,880 were on Hargreaves's Jenny, 310,516 were on Arkwright's Water Frame, and 4,600,000 were on the Mule.
- ~ Father estimates that 40 million pounds of cotton are spun on his machine annually.
- ~ Close to 700,000 people are directly or indirectly dependant on Mule-spun yarn for their livelihood.

Father presented his findings to Parliament yesterday in expectation of receiving up to £50,000 compensation, claiming that the Public have for many years derived great benefit from the Mule. Comparatively, our Father stated that he has received little to no advantage from his invention.

His case was helped by many pleading on his behalf. Sir Robert Peel confirmed to the Committee that the capital invested in the Cotton Industry was worth close to £4 million pounds, and that the industry accounted for between 4 and 5 per cent of the national income of Britain.

Sir Robert also noted that Richard Arkwright obtained a Patent for the use of his Water Frame in 1769, the benefit of which invention he enjoyed exclusively for fourteen years, and derived great advantage therefrom. Likewise did James Hargreaves receive a patent for the Jenny in 1770.

James Watt testified that two thirds of all the steam engines installed by his company in mills were for running Mules. Father argued that proved that his Spinning Mule has become the mainstay of cotton spinning in Britain. He also argued that with his patent, Arkwright would have every inducement to prevent the Mule from coming into use.

Concerning the issue of a patent, Mr. John Pilkington also gave evidence before the Committee, finding it difficult in the end to explain why he did not advise Father to secure a patent or assist him in doing so.

Father closed his arguments after proving the economic advantage of the Mule by demonstrating the improvements it made in the art of spinning, based on the machine's ability to produce weft as well as twist of a very high quality. Because of this, his invention was responsible for the shift in industry from the spinning wheel to the manufacture of woollen, linen, and all manner of cotton goods, of which Father furnished Committee members with samples.

It pleases me to tell you that based on his very thorough Petition, the Committee found Father to be deserving of a National Reward.

Members agreed that the development of the Cotton Industry, particularly in Great Britain, cannot be fully appreciated apart from the service rendered by the invention of the Spinning Mule. They recognized that Lancashire and surrounding counties have received a great deal of employ through it, but the country in general has enjoyed the most benefit. Sir John Peel observed that Father's machine has brought millions into the national treasury, the Exchequer, and has increased the trade of the Merchants immensely. Those who signed for father's petition believed it fit and right that he applied for remuneration. Their belief was that had father received a Banker's commission for what has gone into the Exchequer from his invention, he would be a very rich man indeed.

Still, in the end, after Father was able to prove the financial harm he has suffered by gathering evidence of the widespread reliance on his machine, the new chair of the Committee overseeing his claim awarded father a trivial sum of £5,000.

Father felt this blow most severely, as the process of lobbying has been a long and arduous one, the timing of which has not always worked in his favour. Much of the government's funds have been tied up fighting the Napoleonic wars. After making some headway, Father was also set back by the assassination of Spencer Perceval. It is rumoured that the Prime Minister was on his way to recommending that Father be granted the sum he requested when the tragedy occurred.

We are all disappointed by the insignificant sum granted and the general agreement is that Father has been much maligned. He has only ever sought the recognition and compensation due to him. His latest business ventures have put him in debt as he has worked diligently to expand his business and promote his present goods. These noble efforts and accomplishments are only diminished in stature by Father's wider interests in life, those being his family, as well as his religious and musical activities.

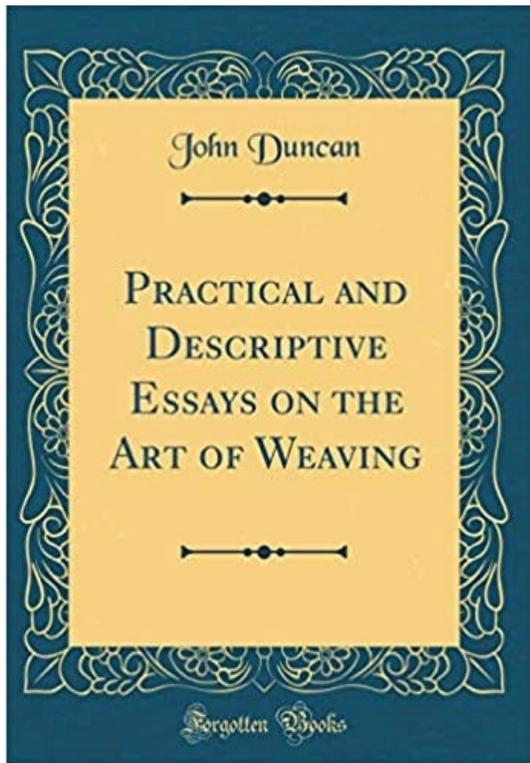
After receiving his grant, Father departed London directly, having had enough of the city, and will be home shortly. Keeping his proposal in mind, I ask that you return home as soon as possible to discuss matters further with him.

If only you will read this letter steadily, I have a perfect confidence that you will do what is right for both yourself and our Father.

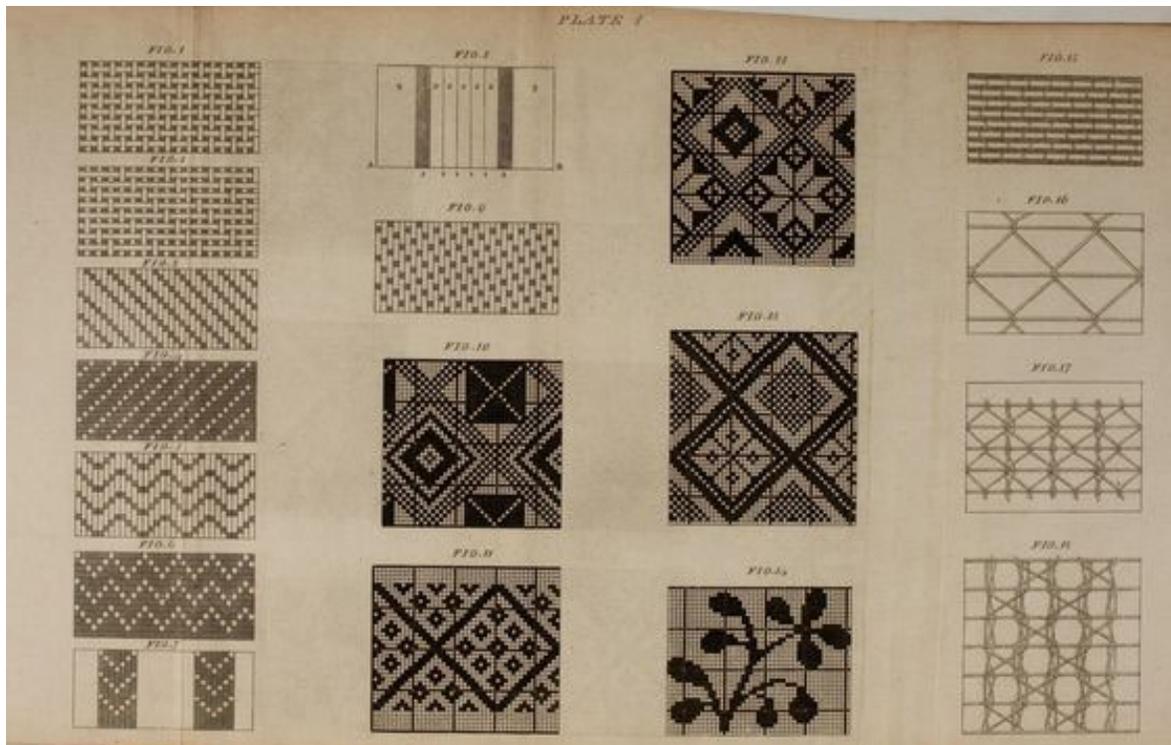
Yours affectionately,

Betty Crompton

P.S. Father wonders if you have his version of Duncan's *Essays on the Art of Weaving* in your possession? If so, he requests that you return it. The book would have been of some service to show, especially to his Manchester friends, though it is too late now.



<https://www.amazon.com/Practical-Descriptive-Weaving-Classic-Reprint/dp/0428367917>



Inset from the book, *Essays on the Art of Weaving* (cover above)

## Background

Less is known about Samuel's daughter, Betty, than his wife. Since the entire family was involved in Crompton's business of cotton spinning and manufacturing, the letter assumes that Samuel Sr. kept his daughter up to date on his business affairs. This letter covers the time of Crompton's petition to British Parliament for compensation for the Mule as well as the Luddite attacks. The premise is that Betty is updating her brother Samuel Jr., who is working out of Liverpool to manage the transport/export of Crompton's textiles and proposing to Samuel Jr. partnership in a new venture on her father's behalf, because he is too busy gathering evidence for his petition. Samuel Jr. did work out of Liverpool at one point and also complained of his brother John's laziness and ill treatment. The business ventures included were all undertaken by Crompton. The aim was also to highlight in this letter that despite following bad advice, Crompton did have some business sense with his recordkeeping, the details of the petition he gathered, and diversification and expansion of his goods and services.

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