

This is a letter to Eva Bowers' sister, Ethel, in New Zealand, from their mother<sup>1</sup>, concerning Eva's marriage to Alfred James Perkins (sec).

28 Fawkner St  
South Yarra  
April 15 1912

*My Dearest Ethel,*

*Here I am again to write my weekly digest after all the excitement. I did not get your letter till last night (Monday). I cannot understand how it is that you had not got our letters. I wrote as per usual and they were posted all right to catch the Wednesday mail but Lottie<sup>2</sup> was here and she said all N.Z. letters had to be posted on Tuesday instead of Wednesday on account of the holidays so I suppose that is how your letter has just not reached you. I am so sorry you have been disappointed. I did not want anything like that to happen to you. I said to Eva we must not neglect Ethel in our excitement over the wedding so I stayed up late to finish your letter. I daresay you haven't received them or least I hope so. I am very glad you are feeling much better. I guessed you feel home sick. I only wish you had been with us.*

*Well dear Ethel our dear Eva is married so we have had an exciting week quite a stream of visitors. I suppose I must try and tell you all details. Alf<sup>3</sup> arrived on Good Friday, had dinner with us, then he & Eva went out to Hilda's<sup>4</sup> and stayed to tea on Saturday they all went to Lotties for tea they all had a good time up there. Rene Evas second bridesmaid was with them she is a beaut girl you would like her very much.*

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Anne Elizabeth Tonge (Bowers). At this time Mary was about 61, Eva 24 and Ethel 36.

<sup>2</sup> Lottie (Charlotte), another sister was 34, and had been married to Edward Robertson for six years.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred James Perkins (sec) was 25. He had work in Sydney and returned to get married. They went back after the wedding.

<sup>4</sup> Hilda Ethel Lena (Perkins), 29, Alfred's sister, had been married to James Francis Brown, 30, for three years.

*On Monday it simply teamed with rain all day we were all getting a bit glum over it as the papers said it was going to continue. However Alf & Eva went out it being a holiday Easter Monday.*

*Les<sup>5</sup> was up at Kilmore in camp. They had a very rough time with the bad weather the wind carried away their tents and the horses got frightened and broke loose and stampeded all over the place and of course the boys had to go after them. I said to Eva here is a go I don't think Les will get down in time for the wedding however he arrived very late on Monday night. They were tired out you should have seen his clothes. They were in a state but he soon got over that difficulty by having a shower .. and clean clothes put on. Well Monday night we all got to bed rather late. Rene and I stayed home all day being too wet to go out anywhere so talked till late. I never slept all night thinking of having to part with Eva for good. Alf was taking her for his own.*

*Tuesday morning I got up about 4 O'clock and looked out at the weather my heart sank when I saw it teaming with rain. I got back to bed and rose again at 6 O'clock it was still teaming any everything looked gloomy and miserable. About 7 O'clock I went in to kiss Eva on her wedding morning and she said what kind of day is it and I said teaming with rain and she said what a pity but it cannot be helped it might clear up. So up she and Rene got as they had to be at the hair dressers by 10 O'clock to get their hair dressed and meet Rene there. Rene had a little message to do before she went to get hair dressed so she missed Eva and went alone & when she came home she had her hair up for the wedding but she said she thought she would keep it up as she was old enough she came and asked me how it suited and we all said grand she laughed so*

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<sup>5</sup> Leslie Wentworth Bowers, 19, was Eva's brother.

heartily and said *I think I look like a pelican.* We asked her what they charged and she said 5/- is that cheap. Eva said you little goose you should only have to pay a 1/- . She said they told her she wanted her hair singed and side combs & a net and of course they charged pretty stiff for them. She said they must have known she was from the country however their hair looked very nice. Then Rene, Eva and Bree came home to lunch, Eva was as happy as sand boy I had Mrs Gibson here minding the house and doing anything she wants. She is such a nice woman.

After a while I discovered Dada<sup>6</sup> had not bought himself a tie. After telling him to do so. Of course poor me I had to go down to Chapel St to get him a suitable tie. You can imagine I blessed him. I got home again had lunch. When the battle began. Alf's uncle came, Dr Hicks<sup>7</sup>. When we were just about going to get dressed however Douglas<sup>8</sup> entertained him in his sweater till Dada was dressed then he went and talked to the Dr. He is a lovely man & a perfect Gentleman. Such a nice face. Rene says he is the kindest man ever lived. Alf told Eva the same thing. Poor old Douglas he did work hard Tuesday morning. Ed borrowed a lot of flags 31 altogether and Douglas and Ed went down to the hall and hung them up. Ed was good he sent down all their pot plants for the platform. The little hall looked very nice. Ed done everything he could to help Douglas so that everything would be a success.

Well dear Ethel the time came for dressing the bride. Miss Watson came out to help dress her. I do not know what we would have done without her and all the time Eva was getting dressed she was as happy as she could be passing jokes etc. She said *I am not going to let mother brake*

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<sup>6</sup> Eva's father, Robert Blacklock Bowers, was 67.

<sup>7</sup> John Henry Clemens (Jack) Hicks was Alfred's mother's brother. He was 40. His first wife Marie Evans had died four years previously and he has a daughter Muriel who was eight. He had studied medicine at Melbourne and Edinburgh Universities. He was a GP in Colac.

<sup>8</sup> Eva's brother, Douglas Blacklock Bowers, was 27.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Daniel Clarke Robertson, 36, was Lottie's husband.

down and also said to us your wedding day is supposed to be the happiest day of your life why should you pull a long face. My word I think she smiled all day she was not in the least nervous. After she was dressed she went into the dining room to show the Doctor how she looked and he said she looked very nice. Eva said to him it will be your turn to see the pretty trustow as he was getting married himself the next day.

Well dear Ethel although I say it myself Eva made a lovely bride. She did look lovely in her dress everybody thought it a beautiful dress and she looked very graceful in it and her necklace looked beautiful it sparkled like diamonds of course it is a very good one. Alf gave her a pearl and saphire ring the night before they were married it is very pretty of course you know what the bridesmaid got. They are lovely brooches Audrey<sup>10</sup> got a nice plain gold bangle and little Willie Huit a seroviette ring. The bridesmaids looked charming in their pretty white gowns. Little Audrey and Willie looked so sweet everybody was delighted with them and they took their part so well. The flowers the bride and bridesmaids carried were well just glorious of course Eva's was white and the bridesmaids were copper coloured cactus Dahlias with broad pale blue streamers they were very effective Bree said she never saw anything so beautiful. Little Audrey carried pretty little basket with the same flowers it seemed a pity that they should fade. There is no doubt that Miss Kemp displays good taste in arranging here flowers. She was up at the church I suppose to see how they all looked. Little Willie carried a little crook tied with white ribbons. The church was crowded and it looked so pretty. Mrs Ried left all the easter decorations up for the event. Wedding and flower were nearly all white. Eva made the initials for Alf and herself and she done them very nicely. Alf hired the wedding bell from Miss Kemp. She made it so pretty.

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<sup>10</sup> Audrey and Willie were the flower children. The Audrey mentioned is highly likely to have been Ed and Lottie's first daughter was Audrey Robertson, who was born on 4 Sept 1907, and would have been 4½ years old.

Minnie promised to get Eva a lend of one but she did not do it. Minnie has not treated Eva nice at all. I think she expected to be one of our bridesmaids. She never came to see Eva's presents or to say goodbye. I felt very nervous going into the church when I saw the crowd.

I thought of you as I got to the church door being absent but never mind you can hope to see Eva in her own home in Sydney. I think I saw Mrs Walker in the church as I settled down. Mr & Mrs Stokes were greatly taken with the children in fact every body was gone on the whole bridal party. Many were heard to say it was the prettiest wedding they had ever seen it has been the talk of South Yarra. Our street was pretty gay the day of the wedding. Many did not know there was to be a wedding at our house it was a great surprise to them. When 3 taxis drove up them Lotties Hansom Cabalto .. car that would think we were doing it in style. Alf paid for 2 taxis I think everybody in the street was out at their doors having a look. Dear Mrs West came and had a look at Eva when she was dressed she is crying over her as if she belonged to her and says how she will miss her going in to have a chat with her. Mrs Davidson next door to Spicers came in to see Eva dressed and brought her a very pretty Indian worked tray cloth for a small tray or table don't you think it was good of her. She put some very nice words on the card on it. The Spicers never came near of course Maud is away. Fancy Mr Ferguson our grocer sent Eva two pretty pearl handle jam spoons. Eva did think a lot of it because she never expected it he spoke so well of Eva and said how highly she was respected at Willis's<sup>11</sup>. He knows some young fellow in there he said Eva was such a sociable girl very different to the one next door. Meaning Maud.

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<sup>11</sup> Willis & Sons Pty Ltd, 35 Little Collins St, Melbourne, were a leading Australian gold jewellery manufacturer. This probably where Eva met Alf. They also had an office in Sydney, which may have been connected to the move there.

Now I must come to the reception. First of all they had their photos taken at the side of the church. But it has not turned out very good. We had a rough proff down last night. Alf does not like them. I forgot to tell you the dull morning turned out fine for the afternoon only it got windy so Audrey's hair got blown about and has spoiled the look of her in the photo. The photographer has not arranged the group nicely at all. I would liked to have had the bridesmaids standing in the face of Bree and Rene all very good the flowers do not look really nice as when they carried them. Everything was done in such a hurry because the guests were being kept waiting in the church. When they did come out they got smothered in confetti. Edie just showered Dada and I with it as we were the first to come out of the church. We were pretty ancient bride and bridegroom don't you think. I have been told that my dress looked very nice indeed. You will say what a vain old woman. I felt everything I had on was good.

Ethel at your expense every body liked my bonnet very much. Arrived at the hall waiting for bride and guests. The guests had all arrived before the bride as they went for a spin around in the taxis before going to the hall. Eva had received her guests then they sat down to wedding tea. The tables looked very nice and the catering was very satisfactory. Every body appeared to enjoy themselves. Fancy Mr & Mrs Howson came, Its not often they get Mr Howson to a wedding even Mrs Robertson came with Mr Robertson. He told Ed<sup>2</sup> it was a real nice little turnout about one of the best he has been to for a long time. Daisy<sup>13</sup> rang Lottie up and told her how well her mother enjoyed herself. That is saying a good deal for us and not much for Harry's wedding. Mrs Robertson was disappointed with Harry's wedding It was to

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<sup>12</sup> Mr and Mrs Robertson would have been Edward Robertson's parents.

<sup>13</sup> Daisy was presumably Ed's sister.

proper. Mrs Ried would not have a bit of confetti thrown on any body so Lottie and Daisy felt a bit squashed as they each had a box.

Mr Conley's band played some very good music every body wanted to know who's band it was, so Douglas told them and said he was a friend of his. Alf sang two songs every body thought he had a lovely voice. I think every body got a surprise to see what a nice young fellow Eva had chosen. They were all taken with him I heard Mrs Lawton say to the lady next to her what a nice looking couple they were. Very few of them had ever seen Alf. Sal got a surprise she is gone on him. She thinks he has a lovely face. There is not any need to tell you how proud Eva and Alf are of each other.

Well I am going off my subject. Mr Wallace sang a good song and Leslie Perkins<sup>14</sup> he is the Rev now also sang song called Good Company. It is very pretty. Leslie Perkins kept the ball rolling all the time. He was grand. He gave a revelation about a Motor Car it was funny. Mrs Robertson did enjoy it and you should have heard Audrey and Willie laugh they quite enjoyed the fun. The speeches were very good. Leslie P is a grand speaker. He is just the kind of speaker who will draw a big church and he is not hallow minded. His father gave a lovely speech it came to him as easy as A.B.C. everyone admired him. Sal said she could kiss him. He seemed so nice to Mrs Lawton shouldered up and said he is a widower<sup>15</sup>. Perhaps she wanted to hang her hat up to him don't say anything.

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<sup>14</sup> Alf's brother, Leslie Ira Perkins, age 21.

<sup>15</sup> According to the research of Paul Farnworth, Alfred James Perkins (senior), who at 56 years of age was living at 164 Dryburgh St, Nth Melbourne, married again on 6 Dec 1911 at 101 Gore St, Fitzroy (a registry office) in a Congregational ceremony. His 26-year-old second wife was Mary Ellen Frances ("Freda") Ryan née Prendeville. This was four months before his son Alf's wedding on 9 April 1912. The family appears not to be aware of his marriage.

*She asked me would I ask Mr Perkins out to tea one Sunday and ask her to come over as well twice she has asked me that since Eva has been married. I would not think of doing such a thing. What a nice family Alf's people are. They think Eva is a very lucky girl. Alf spoke very well considering the bridegroom is supposed to be very nervous. Uncle Blacklock<sup>16</sup> spoke very nice and said he was glad to receive Alf as a new nephew. Mr Stokes responded on behalf of the two little children. He spoke well and Mr Wallace responded for the bride's parents. He spoke very nicely and said he had known us for a long time and said when you go to Mr & Mrs Bowers house you are made welcome and are treated as one of their own. He said many a time when they had been enjoying themselves they have missed the last train home. Bree said she felt inclined to say "here here".*

*When he finished his speech Leslie I made a grand speech he has a splendid dear voice. He made the people laugh they all thought he was a grand boy for entertaining. He is only 21. Don't you think he is clever. I expected him to tea on Sunday but he was preaching.*

*Well dear Ethel I think everybody enjoyed them selves. Nearly every body came and told me every thing has passed off very well indeed. Lottie came and told me she was taking stock. She said Eva looked lovely and thought her dress was lovely and was going to write and tell you all about it, in fact she thought of sending you a telegram. Did she do so. Eva got a good few telegrams from Alf's people that could not come. What do you think Ed done for fun. He got Willie Ross to write out a telegram and they gave it to be read out with heartfelt congratulations from*

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<sup>16</sup> Eva's father's mother was Charlotte Blacklock, so Uncle Blacklock could have been her brother, Dada's (Robert Bowers) uncle.

Uncle Walker. We all wondered who Uncle Walker was and who do you think it was he meant Mr Walker Lottie's friend.

I don't think after all the singing was over Eva slipped away home to get her dress changed as they had to catch the 1 1/4 past 7 train for Ballarat. Eva looks very nice in her blue costume and belact hat. Alf likes it very much. Lottie thinks she looks just like you in it. There was a crowd of the Perkins family going up to Ballarat to the Doctors wedding. He left before the breakfast was over as he had to catch the 1 1/4 past 4 train. His marriage was at 1 1/2 past 11 the next day. It was a pity. It could not be helped. Eva and Alf were at the wedding it was a toffy affair all tall hats & frock coats being a Doctor's marriage. Eva came home again Thursday Evening by the last train so they have been staying here. Did Lottie tell you of all the lovely presents Eva has got. She did not get one .. thing and every thing is useful. My word she is a lucky girl every body has been good to them. You should see the packing there is to be done. I hope nothing gets broken there. Such a lot of pictures. They ought to have a nice little house with all the nice things they have here. Eva got £ 16 in cheques and money so she is going to buy something they want when she gets her home and then write and tell each one that had given a cheque what she had bought with it.

Well dearest Ethel this is the worst part of all I have to tell you. I had to take my final good bye of Eva yesterday (Monday). I had promised her that I would not break down but there was not any use I could not keep it. They went by the express train the same one as you went by. She had a good few to see her off. Alf felt her leaving us but said he would take care of her and I am sure he will as Lottie says she thinks he loves the ground Eva walks on and she is the same to him. I don't think I have ever seen a more affectionate boy than what he is.

Lottie, Ed & all are gone on him. Douglas says he is one of the best. I sincerely hope it will always continue.

Well dear I think I will have to stop here for thought. I could write you pages more but my eyes are playing up. I will continue what I have not told you this time in my next. I had a telegram from Eva saying they had arrived safely after a very pleasant trip. It arrived about 2 O'clock this afternoon. There she is in a strange state with only her husband she is bound to feel lonely for a while that is why Alf was anxious to get back before his holidays were over so as to show her around. They are going to Mr Shipways to dinner on Sunday. There house will not be vacant for a fortnight so Eva only took what she wanted to wear as they will have to board for that time. I am feeling dreadfully lonely without her. Poor Les said to me you never miss them till they have gone do you. The boys say it is deadly. Les tried to practice and he came out again and said that it is not any good then he put the gramophone on and played one record and said that it is not any good and went to bed. We will have to get over it. We were just the same when you left home.

Did I tell you where Alf works, the men gave him a nice marble clock for the dining room and where he boards they gave him an evening. There was about 30 at it and presented him with a case of carbles so that was very nice. Now my dearest Ethel I must close trusting you are well and happy with heaps of fond love from all of us. Good Night.

From your ever loving

Mother

PS I hope you got our letter

Written in the top margin of the first page:

*My dearest thanks for writing an extra letter to keep my spirits up. I am feeling being dull and lonely will get over it soon. Will send wedding cake later on. Have not had time to see Miss Cresswell suppose she has gone to Sydney now.*

Written in the left margin of the first page:

*As Fancy Ethel the day Eva married Alf made his will and he has left every thing he possesses to Eva don't you think it was thoughtful of him. His brother Les and Douglas are executors to the will. Much love.*

Eva Victoria Louisa Bowers and Alfred James Perkins were married at Christ Church, South Yarra (Church of England) on April 9<sup>th</sup> 1912. The Church is on the corner of Punt Rd and Toorak Rd. Fawcner St. is a few blocks down, off Punt Rd. The marriage certificate lists Alfred's address as 40 Edgecliff Rd., Woolahra, Sydney, his occupation as jeweller and his father's occupation as insurance agent. Eva's address is 28 Fawcner St, South Yarra, and her father's occupation is commercial agent. The witnesses were Leslie I. Perkins and I. V. Lambell.

Eva and Alf's first son Norman was born in Sydney. After about two years they were back in Melbourne and lived at 105 Head Street, Elsternwick. Their sons Leslie and Gordon were born there and later went to the Christ Church school, adjacent to the church. (No fees were charged). After a few years, Alf became ill with tuberculosis and eventually died in 1924. In 1930 Eva, age 43, married John Joseph Roberts, a jeweller.

Ethel was married but had no children. There are family photos showing Eva visiting New Zealand and Ethel visiting Melbourne in later years.

A script font has been used for the letter to convey an impression of the handwriting. Original spelling, grammar and punctuation has been preserved, except that paragraph breaks have been inserted to make it more readable.

John Leslie Perkins, 3 March 2011.