My Dear Professor

I fear you will think I am unmindful of you in your retreat on Staten Island, and that I ought to have written if I could not go to see you before this time. All I have to say is that I have been so pressed with business and overcome with hot weather that I have not had the energy to do any thing to which I was not urged by dire necessity.

The repairs and improvement of the building have commenced, and consequently I am surrounded with workmen, and deep in the discussion of plans. Professor Baird left more than a month ago and Mr Rhee who is quite delicate left two weeks since. Had the weather continued as warm as it was when I returned from N.Y. I would have been obliged to give up; but for the last few days the temperature has been quite [desirable]. Besides the heat we have suffered more than ever before in Washington on account of the mosquitoes. Most of our family find it very suffocating to sleep under a net and are therefore exposed to the full attack of the little tormentors.

We did hope to get away before this, but I have been so detained by the printer and the architect that I could not begin to think of leaving. Besides this Mary met with an accident which would have detained us had nothing else stood in the way. She was shutting the door of our clothes press when a plaster cast of the head of Washington fell from the top cut her temple, and broke one of the side bones of her nose. Fortunately we
August 18, 1865 (Doc. 294)

procured a surgeon from the armory Hospital who dressed the wound and set the bone. Though confined principally to her room she is doing very well and bids fair to escape without a scar. Helen is still [at] Oxford Pennsylvania improving in health and [?spirits].

I have nothing of interest to communicate. The [?severe] weather has so oppressed me that I have [kept] closely to the house, with the exception of a drive about sundown two or three times a week. Davis has not been in this city for six weeks past. He has gone I presume on a visit to the Lakes to Report on Light House matters. Gen. Delafield has been absent from the meetings of the Board for three weeks and Admiral Shubrick a week longer. I received a message from Chief Justice Chase that he was at home, and I shall do myself the honor to pay my respects to him. Perhaps when I return from the north I may inform him of my arrival and be honored with a call in return.

Mr Jillson¹ has resigned his position as librarian of the Patent Office, and I am about to endeavour to get the appointment for Schaeffer,² by calling on Mr. McCulloch for assistance. I am not sure of success though the effort must be made. Schaeffer has done better in the War department than in any other position which he has held. I forgot to mention that Commander Jenkins³ is in the city, on what duty I know not. His family reside in Princeton next door to Professor Alexander’s. They were [burned] out a few weeks ago and lost a considerable amount of furniture and clothing. The commander thinks the secretary of the Light House Board ought to be the head of the whole affair and the members of the Board merely serve as the ornamental part of the establishment.

There has been quite an alarm in this city on account of robbers and assassins, and the Smithsonian grounds have acquired a very unenviable notoriety. It is said that several men have been forceably robbed, and a number of women assaulted in these grounds within the present month. I have myself escaped all attacks of the kind though I am still in the habit of crossing the campus frequently at a late hour. The trees in the Smithson Park have grown astonishingly and were the walks kept in better order, and the canal filled up the grounds would be delightful— The canal is a vile nuisance and is continually growing worse. It would scarcely be tolerated in any other civilized city and should the cholera invade this city it would be the source of untold evil. I shall not be able to attend the meeting of the academy and do not think I shall be much missed. Although I desire honestly to do my duty in the society my interest in it since you are not present, will be much less. With kind regards to Mrs Bache I am as ever truly yours

Joseph Henry

535
August 23, 1865 (Doc. 295)

Private Letterpress, Henry Papers, Smithsonian Archives.
2. George C. Schaeffer did get the position. Henry Papers, 6:397n.

295. TO WILLIAM JONES RHEES

My Dear R.

Your letter\(^1\) of the 21\(^{st}\) has just come to hand, and I write immediately to say that I would prefer that you should extend your visit, at least a week or two longer than the time you mention. I shall not get away until the first of Sept. and Mr. Force can readily attend to the business from then until you come.

All our affairs are going on smoothly. The only jar we have had is that which has arisen from the impulsiveness, and deafness of the carpenter who, in his desire to purchase articles, and to direct affairs has run counter to the ideas of the architect. I shall give him an order to make no more purchases, or \(\dagger\)not\(\dagger\) to undertake any operation not immediately directed by Mr. Cluss.

All the exchanges which have been received since Professor Baird left have been sent off. The basement is in the way of being put in better condition than it has been in for some years past. I have directed the taking down of a large amount of brick work in the basement of the western range so as to give light and air to the fish room.

The value of the brick is a consideration of some importance. Its place can be supplied with a light [stone] work. The work on the towers is going on quite rapidly, and I doubt not that the [rooms] in the towers will be finished during the present year.

Mr. Alexander\(^2\) is engaged in the translation of the Italian article which we gave to Hulpin who has left the city to assist in editing the "world" I should say "nation" a new weekly paper published in N.Y.\(^3\)

The chief Justice has returned and is very kindly disposed—Mr Kennedy\(^4\) has the prospect of being elected president of the American Telegraph company with a salary of 5000 dollars. I see by the paper of this morning that his son has been promoted for meritorious conduct.\(^5\)

For the last two weeks the weather has been delightfully cool and were it not for the musquitoes I would be in a very comfortable condition. We

Smithsonian Inst\(^{on}\n
Aug 23\(^{rd}\) 1865