

Hawthorne Nathaniel

**Love Letters of Nathaniel
Hawthorne. Volume 2 of
2**



Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Hawthorne N.

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Nathaniel Hawthorne

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LOVE LETTERS OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

TO MISS PEABODY

Oak Hill, April 13th, 1841

Ownest love,

Here is thy poor husband in a polar Paradise! I know not how to interpret this aspect of Nature – whether it be of good or evil omen to our enterprise. But I reflect that the Plymouth pilgrims arrived in the midst of storm and stept ashore upon mountain snow-drifts; and nevertheless they prospered, and became a great people – and doubtless it will be the same with us. I laud my stars, however, that thou wilt not have thy first impressions of our future home from such a day as this. Thou wouldst shiver all thy life afterwards, and never realise that there could be bright skies, and green hills and meadows, and trees heavy with foliage, when now the whole scene is a great snow-bank, and the sky full of snow likewise. Through faith, I persist in believing that spring and summer will come in their due season; but the unregenerated man shivers within me, and suggests a doubt whether I may not have wandered within the precincts of the Arctic circle, and chosen my heritage among everlasting snows. Dearest, provide thyself with a good stock of furs; and if thou canst obtain the skin of a polar bear, thou wilt find it a very suitable summer dress for this region. Thou must not hope ever to walk abroad, except upon snow-shoes, nor to find any warmth, save in thy husband's heart.

Belovedest, I have not yet taken my first lesson in agriculture, as thou mayst well suppose – except that I went to see our cows foddered, yesterday afternoon. We have eight of our own; and the number is now increased by a transcendental heifer, belonging to Miss Margaret Fuller. She is very fractious, I believe, and apt to kick over the milk pail. Thou knowest best, whether in these traits of character, she resembles her mistress. Thy husband intends to convert himself into a milk-maid, this evening; but I pray heaven that Mr. Ripley may be moved to assign him the kindest cow in the herd – otherwise he will perform his duty with fear and trembling.

Ownest wife, I like my brethren in affliction very well; and couldst thou see us sitting round our table, at meal-times, before the great kitchen-fire, thou wouldst call it a cheerful sight. Mrs. Parker is a most comfortable woman to behold; she looks as if her ample person were stuffed full of tenderness – indeed, as if she were all one great, kind heart. Wert thou here, I should ask for nothing more – not even for sunshine and summer weather; for thou wouldst be both, to thy husband. And how is that cough of thine, my belovedest? Hast thou thought of me, in my perils and wanderings? I trust that thou dost muse upon me with hope and joy; not with repining. Think that I am gone before, to prepare a home for my Dove, and will return for her, all in good time.

Thy husband has the best chamber in the house, I believe; and though not quite so good as the apartment I have left, it will do very well. I have hung up thy two pictures; and they give me a glimpse of summer and of thee. The vase I intended to have brought in my arms, but could not very conveniently do it yesterday; so that it still remains at Mrs. Hillards's, together with my carpet. I shall bring them [at] the next opportunity.

Now farewell, for the present, most beloved. I have been writing this in my chamber; but the fire is getting low, and the house is old and cold; so that the warmth of my whole person has retreated to my heart, which burns with love for thee. I must run down to the kitchen or parlor hearth, when thy image shall sit beside me – yea, be pressed to my breast. At bed-time, thou shalt have a few lines more. Now I think of it, dearest, wilt thou give Mrs. Ripley a copy of Grandfather's Chair and Liberty Tree; she wants them for some boys here. I have several copies of Famous Old People.

April 14th. 10 A.M. Sweetest, I did not milk the cows last night, because Mr. Ripley was afraid to trust them to my hands, or me to their horns – I know not which. But this morning, I have done wonders. Before breakfast, I went out to the barn, and began to chop hay for the cattle; and with such "righteous vehemence" (as Mr. Ripley says) did I labor, that in the space of ten minutes, I broke the machine. Then I brought wood and replenished the fires; and finally sat down to breakfast and ate up a huge mound of buckwheat cakes. After breakfast, Mr. Ripley put a four-pronged instrument into my hands, which he gave me to understand was called a pitch-fork; and he and Mr. Farley being armed with similar weapons, we all then commenced a gallant attack upon a heap of manure. This office being concluded, and thy husband having purified himself, he sits down to finish this letter to his most beloved wife. Dearest, I will never consent that thou come within half a mile of me, after such an encounter as that of this morning. Pray Heaven that his letter retain none of the fragrance with which the writer was imbued. As for thy husband himself, he is peculiarly partial to the odor; but that whimsical little nose of thine might chance to quarrel with it.

Belovedest, Miss Fuller's cow hooks the other cows, and has made herself ruler of the herd, and behaves in a very tyrannical manner. Sweetest, I know not when I shall see thee; but I trust it will not be longer than the end of next week. I love thee! I love thee! I wouldst thou wert with me; for then would my labor be joyful – and even now it is not sorrowful. Dearest, I shall make an excellent husbandman. I feel the original Adam reviving within me.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
13 West street,
Boston.

TO MISS PEABODY

Oak Hill, April 16th, ½ past 6 A.M. [1841]

Most beloved, I have a few moments to spare before breakfast; and perhaps thou wilt let me spend them in talking to thee. Thy two letters blessed me yesterday, having been brought by some private messenger of Mrs. Ripley's. Very joyful was I to hear from my Dove, and my heart gave a mighty heave and swell. That cough of thine – I do wish it would take its departure, for I cannot bear to think of thy tender little frame being shaken with it all night long.

Dearest, since I last wrote thee, there has been an addition to our community of four gentlemen in sables, who promise to be among our most useful and respectable members. They arrived yesterday, about noon. Mr. Ripley had proposed to them to join us, no longer ago than that very morning. I had some conversation with them in the afternoon, and was glad to hear them express much satisfaction with their new abode, and all the arrangements. They do not appear to be very communicative, however – or perhaps it may be merely an external reserve, like that of thy husband, to shield their delicacy. Several of their prominent characteristics, as well as their black attire, lead me to believe that they are members of the clerical profession; but I have not yet ascertained from their own lips, what has been the nature of their past lives. I trust to have much pleasure in their society, and, sooner or later, that we shall all of us derive great strength from our intercourse with them. I cannot too highly applaud the readiness with which these four gentlemen in black have thrown aside all the fopperies and flummeries, which have their origin in a false state of society. When I last saw them, they looked

as heroically regardless of the stains and soils incident to our profession, as thy husband did when he emerged from the gold mine.

Ownest wife, thy husband has milked a cow!!!

Belovedest, the herd have rebelled against the usurpation of Miss Fuller's cow; and whenever they are turned out of the barn, she is compelled to take refuge under our protection. So much did she impede thy husband's labors, by keeping close to him, that he found it necessary to give her two or three gentle pats with a shovel; but still she preferred to trust herself to my tender mercies, rather than venture among the horns of the herd. She is not an amiable cow; but she has a very intelligent face, and seems to be of a reflective cast of character. I doubt not that she will soon perceive the expediency of being on good terms with the rest of the sisterhood. I have not been twenty yards from our house and barn; but I begin to perceive that this is a beautiful place. The scenery is of a mild and placid character, with nothing bold in its character; but I think its beauties will grow upon us, and make us love it the more, the longer we live here. There is a brook, so near the house that we shall [be] able to hear it ripple, in the summer evenings; but, for agricultural purposes, it has been made to flow in a straight and rectangular fashion, which does it infinite damage, as a picturesque object.

Naughtiest, it was a moment or two before I could think whom thou didst mean by Mr. Dismal View. Why, he is one of the best of the brotherhood, so far as cheerfulness goes; for, if he do not laugh himself, he makes the rest of us laugh continually. He is the quaintest and queerest personage thou didst ever see – full of dry jokes, the humor of which is so incorporated with the strange twistifications of his physiognomy, that his sayings ought to be written down, accompanied with illustrations by Cruikshank. Then he keeps quoting innumerable scraps of Latin, and makes classical allusions, while we are turning over the gold mine; and the contrast between the nature of his employment and the character of his thoughts is irresistibly ludicrous.

Sweetest, I have written this epistle in the parlor, while Farmer Ripley, and Farmer Farley, and Farmer Dismal View, are talking about their agricultural concerns, around the fire. So thou wilt not wonder if it is not a classical piece of composition, either in point of thought or expression. I shall have just time before breakfast is ready – the boy has just come to call us now – but still I will tell thee that I love thee infinitely; and that I long for thee unspeakably, but yet with a happy longing. The rest of them have gone into the breakfast room;...

(Portion of letter missing)

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
13 West street,
Boston.

TO MISS PEABODY

Brook Farm, April 28th, 1841 – 7 A.M.

Mine ownest, what a beautiful bright morning is this! I do trust that thou hast not suffered so much from the late tremendous weather, as to be unable now to go abroad in the sunshine. I tremble, almost, to think how thy tender frame has been shaken by that continual cough, which cannot but have grown more inveterate throughout these interminable ages of east wind. At times, dearest, it has seemed an absolute necessity for me to see thee and find out for a certain truth whether thou wert well or ill. Even hadst thou been here, thou wouldst have been penetrated to the core with the chill blast. Then how must thou have been afflicted, where it comes directly from the sea.

Belovedest, thy husband was caught by a cold, during his visit to Boston. It has not affected his whole frame, but took entire possession of his head, as being the weakest and most vulnerable part.

Never didst thou hear anybody sneeze with such vehemence and frequency; and his poor brain has been in a thick fog – or rather, it seemed as if his head were stuffed with coarse wool. I know not when I have been so pestered before; and sometimes I wanted to wrench off my head, and give it a great kick, like a foot-ball. This annoyance has made me endure the bad weather with even less than ordinary patience; and my faith was so far exhausted, that, when they told me yesterday that the sun was setting clear, I would not even turn my eyes towards the west. But, this morning, I am made all over anew; and have no greater remnant of my cold, than will serve as an excuse for doing no work to-day. Dearest, do not let Mrs. Ripley frighten thee with apocryphal accounts of my indisposition. I have told thee the whole truth. I do believe that she delights to disquiet people with doubts and fears about their closest friends; for, once or twice, she has made thy cough a bugbear to thy husband. Nevertheless, I will not judge too harshly of the good lady, because I like her very well, in many respects.

The family has been dismal and dolorous, throughout the storm. The night before last, William Allen was stung by a wasp, on the eyelid; whereupon, the whole side of his face swelled to an enormous magnitude; so that, at the breakfast table, one half of him looked like a blind giant (the eye being closed) and the other half had such a sorrowful and ludicrous aspect, that thy husband was constrained to laugh, out of sheer pity. The same day, a colony of wasps was discovered in thy husband's chamber, where they had remained throughout the winter, and were now just bestirring themselves, doubtless with the intention of stinging me from head to foot. Thou wilt readily believe, that not one of the accursed crew escaped my righteous vengeance. A similar discovery was made in Mr. Farley's room. In short, we seem to have taken up our abode in a wasps' nest. Thus thou seest, belovedest, that a rural life is not one of unbroken quiet and serenity.

If the middle of the day prove warm and pleasant, thy husband promises himself to take a walk, in every step of which thou shalt be his companion. Oh, how I long for thee to stay with me; in reality, among the hills, and dales, and woods, of our home. I have taken one walk, with Mr. Farley; and I could not have believed that there was such seclusion, at so short a distance from a great city. Many spots seem hardly to have been visited for ages – not since John Eliot preached to the Indians here. If we were to travel a thousand miles, we could not escape the world more completely than we can here.

Sweetest, I long unspeakably to see thee – it is only the thought of thee that draws my spirit out of this solitude. Otherwise, I care nothing for the world nor its affairs. I read no newspapers, and hardly remember who is President; and feel as if I had no more concern with what other people trouble themselves about, than if I dwelt in another planet. But, still, thou drawest me to thee continually; and so I can realise how a departed spirit feels, while looking back from another world to the beloved ones of this. All other interests appear like shadows and trifles; but love is a reality, which makes the spirit still an inhabitant of the world which it has quitted.

Ownest wife, if Mr. Ripley comes into Boston on Sunday, it is my purpose to accompany him. Otherwise, thou mayst look for me some time during the ensuing week. Be happy, dearest; and above all, do shake off that tremendous cough. Take great care of thyself, and never venture out when there is the least breath of east-wind; but spread thy wings in the sunshine, and be joyous as itself.

God bless thee.

Thine Ownest.

Will thy father have the goodness to leave the letter for Colonel Hall at the Post Office?
Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
13 West street,
Boston.

TO MISS PEABODY

Brook Farm, May 4th, 1841. ½ past 1 P.M.

Belovedest, as Mr. Ripley is going to the city this afternoon, I cannot but write a letter to thee, though I have but little time; for the corn field will need me very soon. My cold no longer troubles me; and all this morning, I have been at work under the clear blue sky, on a hill side. Sometimes it almost seemed as if I were at work in the sky itself; though the material in which I wrought was the ore from our gold mine. Nevertheless, there is nothing so unseemly and disagreeable in this sort of toil, as thou wouldst think. It defiles the hands, indeed, but not the soul. This gold ore is a pure and wholesome substance; else our Mother Nature would not devour it so readily, and derive so much nourishment from it, and return such a rich abundance of good grain and roots in requital of it.

The farm is growing very beautiful now – not that we yet see anything of the pease or potatoes, which we have planted; but the grass blushes green on the slopes and hollows. I wrote that word blush almost unconsciously; so we will let it go as an inspired utterance. When I go forth afield, I think of my Dove, and look beneath the stone walls, where the verdure is richest, in hopes that a little company of violets, or some solitary bud, prophetic of the summer, may be there; to which I should award the blissful fate of being treasured for a time in thy bosom; for I doubt not, dearest, that thou wouldst admit any flowers of thy husband's gathering into that sweetest place. But not a wild flower have I yet found. One of the boys gathered some yellow cowslips, last Sunday; but I am well content not to have found them; for they are not precisely what I should like to send my Dove, though they deserve honor and praise, because they come to us when no others will. We have our parlor here dressed in evergreen, as at Christmas. That beautifullest little flower vase of thine stands on Mr. Ripley's study table, at which I am now writing. It contains some daffodils and some willow blossoms. I brought it here, rather than kept it in my chamber, because I never sit there, and it gives me many pleasant emotions to look round and be surprised (for it is often a surprise, though I well know that it is there) by something which is connected with the idea of thee.

Most dear wife, I cannot hope that thou art yet entirely recovered from that terrible influenza; but if thou art not almost well, I know not how thy husband will endure it. And that cough too. It is the only one of thy utterances, so far as I have heard them, which I do not love. Wilt thou not be very well, and very lightsome, at our next meeting. I promise myself to be with thee next Thursday, the day after tomorrow. It is an eternity since we met; and I can nowise account for my enduring this lengthened absence so well. I do not believe that I could suffer it, if I were not engaged in a righteous and heaven-blessed way of life. When I was in the Custom-House, and then at Salem, I was not half so patient; though my love of thee has grown infinitely since then.

We had some tableaux last evening, the principal characters being sustained by Mr. Farley and Miss Ellen Slade. They went off very well. I would like to see a tableaux arranged by my Dove.

Dearest, I fear it is time for thy clod-compelling husband to take the field again. Good bye.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,

13 West street,

Boston.

TO MISS PEABODY

Brook Farm, June 1st, 1841 – nearly 6 A.M.

Very dearest,

I have been too busy to write thee a long letter by this opportunity; for I think this present life of mine gives me an antipathy to pen and ink, even more than my Custom-House experience did. I could not live without the idea of thee, nor without spiritual communion with thee; but, in the midst of toil, or after a hard day's work in the gold mine, my soul obstinately refuses to be poured out on paper. That abominable gold mine! Thank God, we anticipate getting rid of its treasures, in the course of two or three days. Of all hateful places, that is the worst; and I shall never comfort myself for having spent so many days of blessed sunshine there. It is my opinion, dearest, that a man's soul may be buried and perish under a dung-heap or in a furrow of the field, just as well as under a pile of money. Well; that giant, Mr. George Bradford, will probably be here to-day; so there will be no danger of thy husband being under the necessity of laboring more than he likes, hereafter. Meantime, my health is perfect, and my spirits buoyant, even in the gold mine.

And how art thou, belovedest? Two or three centuries have passed since I saw thee; and then thou wast pale and languid. Thou didst comfort me in that little note of thine; but still I cannot help longing to be informed of thy present welfare. Thou art not a prudent little Dove, and wast naughty to come on such a day as thou didst; and it seems to me that Mrs. Ripley does not know how to take care of thee at all. Art thou quite well now?

Dearest wife, I intend to come and see thee either on Thursday or Friday – perhaps my visit may be deferred till Saturday, if the gold mine should hold out so long. I yearn for thee unspeakably. Good bye now; for the breakfast horn has sounded, some time since. God bless thee, ownest.

Thy Lovingest Husband.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
13 West street, Boston.

TO MISS PEABODY

Brook Farm, Friday, July 9th, ½ past 5 P.M. [1841]

Oh, unutterably ownest wife, no pen can write how I have longed for thee, or for any the slightest word from thee; for thy Sunday's letter did not reach me till noon of this very day! Never was such a thirst of the spirit as I have felt. I began to wonder whether my Dove did really exist, or was only a vision; and canst thou imagine what a desolate feeling that was. Oh, I need thee, my wife, every day, and every hour, and every minute, and every minutest particle of forever and forever.

Belovedest, the robe reached me in due season, and on Sabbath day, I put it on; and truly it imparted such a noble and stately aspect to thy husband, that thou couldst not possibly have known him. He did really look tolerably personable! and, moreover, he felt as if thou wert embracing him, all the time that he was wrapt in the folds of this precious robe. Hast thou made it of such immortal stuff as the robes of Bunyan's Pilgrim were made of? else it would grieve my very heart to subject it to the wear and tear of the world.

Belovedest, when dost thou mean to come home? It is a whole eternity since I saw thee. If thou art at home on a Sunday, I must and will spend it with my ownest wife. Oh, how my heart leaps at the thought.

God bless thee, thou belovedest woman-angel! I cannot write a single word more; for I have stolen the time to write this from the labors of the field. I ought to be raking hay, like my brethren, who will have to labor the longer and later, on account of these few moments which I have given to thee. Now that we are in the midst of haying, we return to our toil, after an early supper. I think I never felt so vigorous as now; but, oh, I cannot be well without thee. Farewell,

Thine Ownest.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody.

TO MISS PEABODY

Brook Farm, Aug. 13th, 1841

Dearest unutterably, Mrs. Ripley is going to Boston this morning, to Miss Slade's wedding; so I sit down to write a word to thee, not knowing whither to direct it. My heart searches for thee, but wanders about vaguely, and is strangely dissatisfied. Where art thou? I fear that thou didst spend yesterday in the unmitigated east wind of the seacoast. Perhaps thou art shivering, at this moment.

Dearest, I would that I were with thee. It seems as if all evil things had more power over thee, when I am away. Then thou art exposed to noxious winds, and to pestilence, and to death-like weariness; and, moreover, nobody knows how to take care of thee but thy husband. Everybody else thinks it of importance that thou shouldst paint and sculpture; but it would be no trouble to me, if thou shouldst never touch clay or canvas again. It is not what thou dost, but what thou art, that I concern myself about. And if thy mighty works are to be wrought only by the anguish of thy head, and weariness of thy frame, and sinking of thy heart, then do I never desire to see another. And this should be the feeling of all thy friends. Especially ought it to be thine, for thy husband's sake.

Belovedest, I am very well, and not at all weary; for yesterday's rain gave us a holyday; and moreover the labors of the farm are not as pressing as they have been. And – joyful thought! – in a little more than a fortnight, thy husband will be free from his bondage – free to think of his Dove – free to enjoy Nature – free to think and feel! I do think that a greater weight will then be removed from me, than when Christian's burthen fell off at the foot of the cross. Even my Custom-House experience was not such a thralldom and weariness; my mind and heart were freer. Oh, belovedest, labor is the curse of the world, and nobody can meddle with it, without becoming proportionably brutified. Dost thou think it a praiseworthy matter, that I have spent five golden months in providing food for cows and horses? Dearest, it is not so. Thank God, my soul is not utterly buried under a dung-heap. I shall yet retain it, somewhat defiled, to be sure, but not utterly unsusceptible of purification.

Farewell now, truest wife. It is time that this letter were sealed. Love me; for I love thee infinitely, and pray for thee, and rejoice in thee, and am troubled for thee – for I know not where thou art, nor how thou dost.

Thine Ownest.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Mr. Daniel Newhall,
Lynn, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Brook Farm, 18th Aug. 1841. ½ 12 P.M.

Belovedest, Mrs. Ripley met me at the door, as I came home from work, and told me that Mary was at Mrs. Park's, and that I might have an opportunity to send a message to thee. Whether thou hast written I do not know. At all events, Mrs. Ripley has not yet given me the letter; nor have I had a chance to ask her what she has heard about thee; such a number of troublesome and intrusive people are there in this thronged household of ours. Dearest, if thou hast not written, thou art very sick – one or the other is certain. That wretched and foolish woman! Why could not she have put the letter on my table, so that I might have been greeted by it immediately on entering my room? She is not fit to live.

Dearest, I am very well; only somewhat tired with walking half a dozen miles immediately after breakfast, and raking hay ever since. We shall quite finish haying this week; and then there will be no more very hard or constant labor, during the one other week that I shall remain a slave. Most beloved,

I received thy Lynn letter on Saturday, and thy Boston letter yesterday. Then thou didst aver that thou wast very well – but thou didst not call thyself magnificent. Why art thou not magnificent? In thy former letter, thou sayest that thou hast not been so well for two months past. Naughtiest wife, hast thou been unwell for two months?

Ownest, since writing the above, I have been to dinner; and still Mrs. Ripley has given no sign of having a letter for me; nor was it possible for me to ask her – nor do I know when I can see her alone, to inquire about thee. Surely thou canst not have let Mary come without a letter. And if thou art sick, why did she come at all? Belovedest, the best way is always to send thy letters by the mail; and then I shall know where to find them.

Aug. 17th – After breakfast. – Dearest, thou didst not write – that seems very evident. I have not, even yet, had an opportunity to ask Mrs. Ripley about thee; for she was gone out last evening; and when she came back, Miss Ripley and another lady were with her. She mentioned, however, that thy sister Mary looked very bright and happy; so I suppose thou couldst not be very intensely and dangerously sick. I might have asked Mrs. Ripley how thou didst, even in the presence of those two women; but I have an inexpressible and unconquerable reluctance to speak of thee to almost anybody. It seems a sin. Well; I do not feel so apprehensive about thy health as I did yesterday; but, sweetest, if thou hadst sent some distinct message, even though not a letter, it would have saved thy husband some disquietude. Now farewell for the present. I do long to see thee, but know not how to get to thee. Dost thou love me at all? It is a great while since thou hast told me so.

Ownest wife, I meant to have finished this letter this afternoon, and to have sent it by William Allen in the morning; but I have just learnt that Mr. Ripley is about to start for Boston; so I conclude suddenly. God bless thee, and make thee magnificent, and keep thee so forever and ever. I love thee. I love thee.

Thine Ownest.

Do not write to me, if thou art not well.
Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Boston, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Brook Farm, Aug. 22nd, 1841

Most dear wife, it seems a long time since I have written to thee. Dost thou love me at all? I should have been reprehensible in not writing, the last time Mr. and Mrs. Ripley went to town; but I had an indispensable engagement in the bean-field – whither, indeed, I was glad to betake myself, in order to escape a parting scene with poor Mr. Farley. He was quite out of his wits, the night before, and thy husband sat up with him till long past midnight. The farm is pleasanter now that he is gone; for his unappeasable wretchedness threw a gloom over everything. Since I last wrote to thee, we have done haying; and the remainder of my bondage will probably be light. It will be a long time, however, before I shall know how to make a good use of leisure, either as regards enjoyment or literary occupation.

When am I to see thee again? The first of September comes a week from Tuesday next; but I think I shall ante-date the month, and compel it to begin on Sunday. Wilt thou consent? Then, on Saturday afternoon, (for I will pray Mr. Ripley to give me up so much time, for the sake of my past diligence) I will come to thee, dearest wife, and remain in the city till Monday evening. Thence I shall go to Salem, and spend a week there, longer or shorter according to the intensity of the occasion for my presence. I do long to see our mother and sisters; and I should not wonder if they felt some slight desire to see me. I received a letter from Louisa, a week or two since, scolding me most pathetically

for my long absence. Indeed, I have been rather naughty in this respect; but I knew that it would be unsatisfactory to them and myself, if I came only for a single day – and that has been the longest space that I could command.

Dearest wife, it is extremely doubtful whether Mr. Ripley will succeed in locating his community on this farm. He can bring Mr. Ellis to no terms; and the more they talk about the matter, the farther they appear to be from a settlement. Thou and I must form other plans for ourselves; for I can see few or no signs that Providence purposes to give us a home here. I am weary, weary, thrice weary of waiting so many ages. Yet what can be done? Whatever may be thy husband's gifts, he has not hitherto shown a single one that may avail to gather gold. I confess that I have strong hopes of good from this arrangement with Munroe; but when I look at the scanty avails of my past literary efforts, I do not feel authorized to expect much from the future. Well; we shall see. Other persons have bought large estates and built splendid mansions with such little books as I mean to write; so perhaps it is not unreasonable to hope that mine may enable me to build a little cottage – or, at least, to buy or hire one. But I am becoming more and more convinced, that we must not lean upon the community. Whatever is to be done, must be done by thy husband's own individual strength. Most beloved, I shall not remain here through the winter, unless with an absolute certainty that there will be a home ready for us in the spring. Otherwise I shall return to Boston, – still, however, considering myself an associate of the community; so that we may take advantage of any more favorable aspect of affairs. Dearest, how much depends on these little books! Methinks, if anything could draw out my whole strength, it should be the motives that now press upon me. Yet, after all, I must keep these considerations out of my mind, because an external purpose always disturbs, instead of assisting me.

Dearest, I have written the above in not so good spirits as sometimes; but now that I have so ungenerously thrown my despondency on thee, my heart begins to throb more lightly. I doubt not that God has great good in store for us; for He would not have given us so much, unless He were preparing to give a great deal more. I love thee! Thou lovest me! What present bliss! What sure and certain hope!

Thine Ownest Husband.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
13 West-street,
Boston.

TO MISS PEABODY

Salem, Sept. 3d, 1841 – 4 o'clock P.M.

Most beloved, – Thou dost not expect a letter from thy husband; and yet, perhaps, thou wilt not be absolutely displeased should one come to thee tomorrow. At all events, I feel moved to write; though the haze and sleepiness, which always settles upon me here, will certainly be perceptible in every line. But what a letter didst thou write to me! Thou lovest like a celestial being, (as truly thou art,) and dost express thy love in heavenly language; – it is like one angel writing to another angel; but alas! the letter has miscarried, and has been delivered to a most unworthy mortal. Now wilt thou exclaim against thy husband's naughtiness! And truly he is very naughty. Well then; the letter was meant for him, and could not possibly belong to any other being, mortal or immortal. I will trust that thy idea of me is truer than my own consciousness of myself.

Dearest, I have been out only once, in the day time, since my arrival. How immediately and irrecoverably (if thou didst not keep me out of the abyss) should I relapse into the way of life in which I spent my youth! If it were not for my Dove, this present world would see no more of me forever. The sunshine would never fall on me, no more than on a ghost. Once in a while, people might discern my figure gliding stealthily through the dim evening – that would be all. I should be only a shadow of

the night; it is thou that givest me reality, and makest all things real for me. If, in the interval since I quitted this lonely old chamber, I had found no woman (and thou wast the only possible one) to impart reality and significance to life, I should have come back hither ere now, with the feeling that all was a dream and a mockery. Dost thou rejoice that thou hast saved me from such a fate? Yes; it is a miracle worthy even of thee, to have converted a life of shadows into the deepest truth, by thy magic touch.

Belovedest, I have not yet made acquaintance with Miss Polly Metis. Mr. Foote was not in his office when I called there; so that my introduction to the erudite Polly was unavoidably deferred. I went to the Athenaeum this forenoon, and turned over a good many dusty books. When we dwell together, I intend that my Dove shall do all the reading that may be necessary, in the concoction of my various histories; and she shall repeat the substance of her researches to me. Thus will knowledge fall upon me like heavenly dew.

Sweetest, it seems very long already since I saw thee; but thou hast been all the time in my thoughts; so that my being has been continuous. Therefore, in one sense, it does not seem as if we had parted at all. But really I should judge it to be twenty years since I left Brook Farm; and I take this to be one proof that my life there was an unnatural and unsuitable, and therefore an unreal one. It already looks like a dream behind me. The real Me was never an associate of the community; there has been a spectral Appearance there, sounding the horn at day-break, and milking the cows, and hoeing potatoes, and raking hay, toiling and sweating in the sun, and doing me the honor to assume my name. But be thou not deceived, Dove, of my heart. This Spectre was not thy husband. Nevertheless, it is somewhat remarkable that thy husband's hands have, during the past summer, grown very brown and rough; insomuch that many people persist in believing that he, after all, was the aforesaid spectral horn-sounder, cow-milker, potatoe-hoer, and hay-raker. But such people do not know a reality from a shadow.

Enough of nonsense. Belovedest, I know not exactly how soon I shall return to the Farm. Perhaps not sooner than a fortnight from tomorrow; but, in that case. I shall pay thee an intermediate visit of one day. Wilt thou expect me on Friday or Saturday next, from ten to twelve o'clock on each day, – not earlier nor later.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Boston, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Salem, Sept. 9th, 1841 – A.M.

Ownest love,

In my last letter, I left it uncertain whether I should come Friday or Saturday, because I deemed it good to allow myself the freedom of choosing the day that should be most vacant from all earthly care and inconvenience, so that thou mightest be sure to meet the whole of me; and, likewise, I desired to have a brightest and sunniest day, because our meetings have so often been in clouds and drizzle. Also, I thought it well that thy expectation of seeing thy husband should be diffused over two days, so that the disappointment might be lessened, if it were impossible for me to come on the very day appointed. But these reasons are of no moment, since thou so earnestly desirest to know the day and hour. Unless the sky fall, belovedest, I will come tomorrow. I know of no obstacle; and if there were a million, it would be no matter. When once we are together, our own world is round about us, and all things else cease to exist.

Belovedest, thy letter of a week from Thursday reached me not till Tuesday! It had got into the hands of the penny-post. Farewell, ownest. I love thee with infinite intensity, and think of thee continually.

Thine Ownest Husband.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Boston, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Salem, Sept. 10th, 1841 – A.M.

Most dear wife, thou canst not imagine how strange it seems to me that thou shouldst ever suffer any bodily harm. I cannot conceive of it – the idea will not take the aspect of reality. Thou art to me a spirit gliding about our familiar paths; and I always feel as if thou wert beyond the reach of mortal accident – nor am I convinced to the contrary even by thy continual gashings of thy dearest fingers and sprainings of thy ankle. I love thee into the next state of existence, and therefore do not realise that thou art here as subject to corporeal harm as is thy husband himself – nay, ten times more so, because thy earthly manifestation is refined almost into spirit.

But, dearest, thy accident did make thy husband's heart flutter very riotously. I wanted to hold thee in mine arms; for I had a foolish notion that thou wouldst be much better – perhaps quite well! I cannot tell thee all I felt; and still I had not the horrible feelings that I should expect, because there was a shadowiness interposed between me and the fact, so that it did not strike my heart, as the beam did thy head. Let me not speak of it any more, lest it become too real.

Sweetest, thou dost please me much by criticising thy husband's stories, and finding fault with them. I do not very well recollect Monsieur de Miroir; but as to Mrs. Bullfrog, I give her up to thy severest reprehension. The story was written as a mere experiment in that style; it did not come from am depth within me – neither my heart nor mind had anything to do with it. I recollect that the Man of Adamant seemed a fine idea to me, when I looked at it prophetically; but I failed in giving shape and substance to the vision which I saw. I don't think it can be very good.

Ownest wife, I cannot believe all these stories about Munroe, because such an abominable rascal never would be sustained and countenanced by respectable men. I take him to be neither better nor worse than the average of his tribe. However, I intend to have all my copy-rights taken out in my own name; and if he cheats me once, I will have nothing more to do with him, but will straightway be cheated by some other publisher – that being, of course, the only alternative.

Dearest, what dost thou think of taking Governor Shirley's young French wife as the subject of one of the cuts. Thou shouldst represent her in the great chair, perhaps with a dressing glass before her, and arrayed in all manner of fantastic finery, and with an outre French air; while the old Governor is leaning fondly over her, and a Puritan counsellor or two are manifesting their disgust, in the background. A negro footman and French waiting maid might be in attendance. Do not think that I expect thee to adopt my foolish fancies about these things. Whatever thou mayst do, it will be better than I can think. In Liberty Tree, thou mightest have a vignette, representing the chair in a very battered, shattered, and forlorn condition, after it had been ejected from Hutchinson's house. This would serve to impress the reader with the woeful vicissitudes of sublunary things. Many other subjects would thy husband suggest, but he is terribly afraid that thou wouldst take one of them, instead of working out thine own inspirations.

Belovedest, I long to see thee. Do be magnificently well by Saturday – yet not on my account, but thine own. Meantime, take care of thy dearest head. Thou art not fit to be trusted away from thy husband's guidance, one moment.

Dear little wife, didst thou ever behold such an awful scribble as thy husband writes, since he became a farmer? His chirography always was abominable; but now it is outrageous.

God bless thee, dearest and may His hand be continually outstretched over thy head. Expect me on Saturday afternoon.

Thine Ownest Husband.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Boston, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Salem, September 14th, 1841 – A.M.

Ownest beloved, I know not whether thou dost expect a letter from thy husband; but I have a comfortable faith that it will not be altogether unwelcome; so I boldly sit down to scribble. I love thee transcendently; and nothing makes me more sensible of the fact, than that I write thee voluntary letters, without any external necessity. It is as if intense love should make a dumb man speak. (Alas! I hear a knocking at the door, and suspect that some untimely person is about to call me away from my Dove.)

Afternoon. – Dearest, it was even as I suspected. How sad it is, that we cannot be sure of one moment's uninterrupted communication, even when we are talking together in that same old chamber, where I have spent so many quiet years! Well; thou must be content to lose some very sweet outpourings wherewith my heart would probably have covered the first, and perhaps the second page of this sheet. The amount of all would have been, that I am somewhat partial to thee – and thou hast a suspicion of that fact, already.

Belovedest, Master Cheever is a very good subject for a sketch – especially if thou dost portray him in the very act of executing judgment on an evil-doer. The little urchin may be laid across his knee, and his arms and legs (and whole person, indeed) should be flying all abroad, in an agony of nervous excitement and corporeal smart. The Master, on the other hand, must be calm, rigid, without anger or pity, the very personification of that unmitigable law, whereby suffering follows sin. Meantime, the lion's head should have a sort of sly twist of one side of its mouth, and wink of one eye, in order to give the impression, that, after all, the crime and the punishment are neither of them the most serious things in the world. I would draw this sketch myself, if I had but the use of thy magic fingers. Why dost thou – being one and the same person with thy husband – unjustly keep those delicate little instruments (thy fingers, to wit) all to thyself?

Then, dearest, the Acadians will do very well for the second sketch. Wilt thou represent them as just landing on the wharf? – or as presenting themselves before Governor Shirley, seated in the great chair? Another subject (if this do not altogether suit thee) might be old Cotton Mather, venerable in a three cornered hat and other antique attire, walking the streets of Boston, and lifting up his hands to bless the people, while they all revile him. An old dame should be seen flinging or emptying some vials of medicine on his head, from the latticed window of an old-fashioned house; and all around must be tokens of pestilence and mourning – as a coffin borne along, a woman or children weeping on a door-step. Canst thou paint the tolling of the old South bell?

If thou likest not this subject, thou canst take the military council, holden at Boston by the Earl of Loudoun, and other captains and governors – his lordship in the great chair, an old-fashioned military figure, with a star on his breast. Some of Louis XV's commanders will give thee the costume. On the table and scattered about the room must be symbols of warfare, swords, pistols, plumed hats, a drum, trumpet, and rolled up banner, in one heap. It were not amiss that thou introduce the armed figure of an Indian chief, as taking part in the council – or standing apart from the English, erect and stern.

Now for Liberty tree – there is an engraving of that famous vegetable in Snow's History of Boston; but thou wilt draw a better one out of thine own head. If thou dost represent it, I see not what scene can be beneath it, save poor Mr. Oliver taking the oath. Thou must represent him with a bag wig, ruffled sleeves, embroidered coat, and all such ornaments, because he is the representative of aristocracy and artificial system. The people may be as rough and wild as thy sweetest fancy can make them; – nevertheless, there must be one or two grave, puritanical figures in the midst. Such an one might sit in the great chair, and be an emblem of that stern spirit, which brought about the revolution. But thou wilt find this is a hard subject.

But what a dolt is thy husband, thus to obtrude his counsel in the place of thine own inspiration! Belovedest, I want soon to tell thee how I love thee. Thou must not expect me till Saturday afternoon. I yearn infinitely to see thee. Heaven bless thee forever and forever.

Thine Ownest.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Boston, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Brook Farm, Sept. 22d, 1841 – P.M.

Dearest love, here is thy husband again, slowly adapting himself to the life of this queer community, whence he seems to have been absent half a life time – so utterly has he grown apart from the spirit and manners of the place. Thou knowest not how much I wanted thee, to give me a home-feeling in the spot – to keep a feeling of coldness and strangeness from creeping into my heart and making me shiver. Nevertheless, I was most kindly received; and the fields and woods looked very pleasant, in the bright sunshine of the day before yesterday. I had a friendlier disposition towards the farm, now that I am no longer obliged to toil in its stubborn furrows. Yesterday and to-day, however, the weather has been intolerable – cold, chill, sullen, so that it is impossible to be on kindly terms with Mother Nature. Would I were with thee, mine own warmest and truest-hearted wife!

Belovedest, I doubt whether I shall succeed in writing another volume of Grandfather's Library, while I remain at the farm. I have not the sense of perfect seclusion, which has always been essential to my power of producing anything. It is true, nobody intrudes into my room; but still I cannot be quiet. Nothing here is settled – everything is but beginning to arrange itself – and though thy husband would seem to have little to do with aught beside his own thoughts, still he cannot but partake of the ferment around him. My mind will not be abstracted. I must observe, and think, and feel, and content myself with catching glimpses of things which may be wrought out hereafter. Perhaps it will be quite as well that I find myself unable to set seriously about literary occupation for the present. It will be good to have a longer interval between my labor of the body and that of the mind. I shall work to the better purpose, after the beginning of November. Meantime, I shall see these people and their enterprise under a new point of view, and perhaps be able to determine whether thou and I have any call to cast in our lot among them.

Sweetest, our letters have not yet been brought from the Post Office; so that I have known nothing of thee since our parting. Surely we were very happy – and never had I so much peace and joy as in brooding over thine image, as thou wast revealed to me in our last interview. I love thee with all the heart I have – and more. Now farewell, most dear. Mrs. Ripley is to be the bearer of this letter; and I reserve the last page for tomorrow morning. Perhaps I shall have a blessed word from thee, ere then.

Sept. 23d – Before breakfast. – Sweetest wife, thou hast not written to me. Nevertheless, I do not conclude thee to be sick, but will believe that thou hast been busy in creating Laura Bridgman. What a faithful and attentive husband thou hast! For once he has anticipated thee in writing.

Belovedest, I do wish the weather would put off this sulky mood. Had it not been for the warmth and brightness of Monday, when I arrived here, I should have supposed that all sunshine had left Brook Farm forever. I have no disposition to take long walks, in such a state of the sky; nor have I any buoyancy of spirit. Thy husband is a very dull person, just at this time. I suspect he wants thee. It is his purpose, I believe, either to walk or ride to Boston, about the end of next week, and give thee a kiss – after which he will return quietly and contentedly to the farm. Oh, what joy, when he will again see thee every day!

We had some tableaux last night. They were very stupid, (as, indeed, was the case with all I have ever seen) but do not thou tell Mrs. Ripley so. She is a good woman, and I like her better than I did – her husband keeps his old place in my judgment. Farewell, thou gentlest Dove – thou perfectest woman —

Thine Ownest Husband.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Boston, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Brook Farm, Sept. 25th, 1841 – ½ past 7 A.M.

Ownest Dove, it was but just now that I thought of sending thee a few lines by Mr. Ripley; for this penning of epistles is but a wretched resource. What shall I do? What shall I do? To talk to thee in this way does not bring thee nearer; it only compels me to separate myself from thee, and put thee at a distance. Of all humbugs, pretending to alleviate mortal woes, writing is the greatest.

Yet, thy two letters were a great comfort to me – so great, that they could not possibly have been dispensed with. Dearest, I did not write thee what Mr. and Mrs. Ripley said to me, because they have said nothing which I did not know before. The ground, upon which I must judge of the expediency of our abiding here, is not what they may say, but what actually is, or is likely to be; and of this I doubt whether either of them is capable of forming a correct opinion. Would that thou couldst be here – or could have been here all summer – in order to help me think what is to be done. But one thing is certain – I cannot and will not spend the winter here. The time would be absolutely thrown away, so far as regards any literary labor to be performed, – and then to suffer this famished yearning for thee, all winter long! It is impossible.

Dearest, do not thou wear thyself out with working upon that bust. If it cause thee so much as a single head-ache, I shall wish that Laura Bridgman were at Jericho. Even if thou shouldst not feel thyself wearied at the time, I fear that the whole burthen of toil will fall upon thee when all is accomplished. It is no matter if Laura should go home without being sculptured – no matter if she goes to her grave without it. I dread to have thee feel an outward necessity for such a task; for this intrusion of an outward necessity into labors of the imagination and intellect is, to me, very painful.

Oh, what weather! It seems to me as if every place were sunny, save Brook Farm. Nevertheless, I had rather a pleasant walk to a distant meadow, a day or two ago; and we found white and purple grapes, in great abundance, ripe, and gushing with rich juice when the hand pressed their clusters. Didst thou know what treasures of wild grapes there are in this land. If we dwell here, we will make our own wine – of which, I know, my Dove will want a great quantity.

Good bye, sweetest. If thou canst contrive to send me a glimpse of sunshine, I will be the gratefullest husband on earth. I love thee inextinguishably. Thou hast no place to put all the love which I feel for thee.

Thine Ownest Husband.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Boston, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Brook Farm, Septr. 27th, 1841. 7½ A.M.

Dearest love,

Thy two letters of business came both together, Saturday evening! What an acute and energetic personage is my little Dove! I say it not in jest (though with a smile) but in good earnest, and with a comfortable purpose to commit all my business transactions to thee, when we dwell together. And why dost thou seem to apprehend that thou mayst possibly offend me. Thou canst do so never, but only make me love thee more and more.

Now as to this affair with Munroe. I fully confide in thy opinion that he intends to make an unequal bargain with thy poor simple and innocent husband – never having doubted this, myself. But how is he to accomplish it? I am not, nor shall be, in the least degree in his power; whereas, he is, to a certain extent, in mine. He might announce his projected library, with me for the editor, in all the newspapers in the universe; but still I could not be bound to become the editor, unless by my own act; nor should I have the slightest scruple in refusing to be so, at the last moment, if he persisted in treating me with injustice. Then, as for his printing Grandfather's Chair, I have the copy-right in my own hands, and could and would prevent the sale, or make him account to me for the profits, in case of need. Meantime, he is making arrangements for publishing this library, contracting with other booksellers, and with printers and engravers, and, with every step, making it more difficult for himself to draw back. I, on the other hand, do nothing which I should not do, if the affair with Munroe were at an end; for if I write a book, it will be just as available for some other publisher as for him. My dearest, instead of getting me within his power by this delay, he has trusted to my ignorance and simplicity, and has put *himself* in *my* power. Show the contrary, if thou canst.

He is not insensible of this. At our last interview, he himself introduced the subject of our bargain, and appeared desirous to close it. But thy husband was not prepared, among other reasons, because I do not yet see what materials I shall have for the republications in the library; the works that he has shown me being all ill-adapted for that purpose; and I wish first to see some French and German books, which he has sent for to New York. And, belovedest, before concluding the bargain, I have promised George Hillard to consult him and let him do the business. Is not this consummate discretion? And is not thy husband perfectly safe? Then why does my Dove put herself into a fever? Rather, let her look at the matter with the same perfect composure that I do, who see all around my own position, and know that it is impregnable.

Most sweet wife, I cannot write thee any more at present, as Mr. Ripley is going away instantaneously; but we will talk at length on Saturday, when God means to send me to thee. I love thee infinitely, and admire thee beyond measure, and trust thee in all things, and will never transact any business without consulting thee – though on some rare occasions, it may happen that I will have my own way, after all. I feel inclined to break off this engagement with Munroe; as thou advisest, though not for precisely the reasons thou urgest; but of this hereafter.

Thy Most Own Husband.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,

Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Boston, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Brook Farm, Sepr. 29th, 1841. – A.M.

Ownest wife, I love thee most exceedingly – never so much before; though I am sure I have loved thee through a past eternity. How dost thou do? Dost thou remember that, the day after tomorrow, thou art to meet thy husband? Does thy heart thrill at the thought?

Dearest love, thy husband was elected to two high offices, last night – viz., to be a Trustee of the Brook Farm estate, and Chairman of the Committee of Finance!!!! Now dost thou not blush to have formed so much lower an opinion of my business talents, than is entertained by other discerning people? From the nature of my office, I shall have the chief direction of all the money affairs of the community – the making of bargains – the supervision of receipts and expenditures &c. &c. &c. Thou didst not think of this, when thou didst pronounce me unfit to make a bargain with that petty knave of a publisher. A prophet has no honor among those of his own kindred, nor a financier in the judgment of his wife.

Belovedest, my accession to these august offices does not at all decide the question of my remaining here permanently. I told Mr. Ripley, that I could not spend the winter at the farm, and that it was quite uncertain whether I returned in the spring.

Now, farewell, most dear and sweet wife. Of course, thou canst not expect that a man in eminent public station will have much time to devote to correspondence with a Dove. I will remember thee in the intervals of business, and love thee in all my leisure moments. Will not this satisfy thee?

God bless thee, mine ownest – my treasure – thou gold and diamond of my soul! – my possession forever – my enough and to spare, yet never, never, to be spared! Sweetest, if it should be very stormy on Saturday, expect me not – but the first fair day thereafter.

I put all my love into one kiss, and have twice as much left as before.

Thy Truest Husband.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Boston, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Brook Farm, Octr. 9th – Before Breakfast [1841]

Most dear,

Here is thy husband trying to write to thee, while it is so dark that he can hardly see his own scribble – not that it is very early; for the sun is up long ago, and ought to be shining into my window. But this dismal gloom! I positively cannot submit to have this precious month all darkened with cloud and sullied with drizzle.

Dearest, I return the manuscript tale. It is pretty enough; but I doubt whether it be particularly suited to the American public; and, if intended for publication, I trust it will undergo a very severe revision. It will need it. I speak frankly about this matter; but I should do the same (only more frankly still) if the translation were my Dove's own.

I wonder whether Munroe has yet returned Grandfather's Chair to Elizabeth. I send back his books to-day.

Belovedest, I think thou wilt see me in the latter half of next week. Thou needest not to give up any visit to South Boston on this account; for I cannot get to thee before twelve o'clock. It will be but an hour or so's visit.

*Thine with deepest and keenest love,
Theodore De L'Aubepine.*

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Boston, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Brook Farm, October 18th, Saturday [1841]

Most dear wife, I received thy letter and note, last night, and was much gladdened by them; for never has my soul so yearned for thee as now. But, belovedest, my spirit is moved to talk to thee to day about these magnetic miracles, and to beseech thee to take no part in them. I am unwilling that a power should be exercised on thee, of which we know neither the origin nor the consequence, and the phenomena of which seem rather calculated to bewilder us, than to teach us any truths about the present or future state of being. If I possessed such a power over thee, I should not dare to exercise it; nor can I consent to its being exercised by another. Supposing that this power arises from the transfusion of one spirit into another, it seems to me that the sacredness of an individual is violated by it; there would be an intrusion into thy holy of holies – and the intruder would not be thy husband! Canst thou think, without a shrinking of thy soul, of any human being coming into closer communion with thee than I may? – than either nature or my own sense of right would permit me? I cannot. And, dearest, thou must remember, too, that thou art now a part of me, and that, by surrendering thyself to the influence of this magnetic lady, thou surrenderest more than thine own moral and spiritual being – allowing that the influence *is* a moral and spiritual one. And, sweetest, I really do not like the idea of being brought, through thy medium, into such an intimate relation with Mrs. Park!

Now, ownest wife, I have no faith whatever that people are raised to the seventh heaven, or to any heaven at all, or that they gain any insight into the mysteries of life beyond death, by means of this strange science. Without distrusting that the phenomena which thou tellest me of, and others as remarkable, have really occurred, I think that they are to be accounted for as the result of a physical and material, not of a spiritual, influence. *Opium* has produced many a brighter vision of heaven (and just as susceptible of proof) than those which thou recountest. They are dreams, my love – and such dreams as thy sweetest fancy, either waking or sleeping, could vastly improve upon. And what delusion can be more lamentable and mischievous, than to mistake the physical and material for the spiritual? What so miserable as to lose the soul's true, though hidden, knowledge and consciousness of heaven, in the mist of an earth-born vision? Thou shalt not do this. If thou wouldst know what heaven is, before thou comest thither hand in hand with thy husband, then retire into the depths of thine own spirit, and thou wilt find it there among holy thoughts and feelings; but do not degrade high Heaven and its inhabitants into any such symbols and forms as those which Miss Larned describes – do not let an earthly effluence from Mrs. Park's corporeal system bewilder thee, and perhaps contaminate something spiritual and sacred. I should as soon think of seeking revelations of the future state in the rottenness of the grave – where so many do seek it.

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