

## LETTERS.

ATCHISON, KANSAS,

[Thanksgiving Evening, November 28, 1872.]

*Dear Father:*

I found your letter on my return from the United States Circuit Court at Topeka yesterday afternoon. It was my intention to have an old-fashioned celebration, for we rigidly adhere to all the traditions; but I woke in the night with a violent attack of sick headache, which enabled me only to take a cup of coffee for breakfast, and barely left me in a condition to join the family at dinner. We had a turkey of superb dimensions and cooked to perfection; potatoes, cranberries, celery from our garden, macaroni with cheese, quinces and pears from California, fresh figs from your boxes, raisins from Malaga, filberts, almonds, cheese from Nemaha County, pound, fruit, and jelly cake, mince and pumpkin pie; so that you see we did not suffer in our lonely cabin upon the frontier in the far West. Frank was with us, and we talked over old times, and remembered you all, from one end of the continent to the other. It has always been a hope of mine to unite the entire family on some Thanksgiving Day, here in Kansas under my own roof. I am the eldest of the brood, and the first emigrant, and could accommodate a crowd as well as any of them, and trust I may some time realize the anticipation.

The children banqueted with us at discretion. They think you grow figs as peaches grow in my garden, and regard you

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as the beneficent genius of their tender years. They continue in remarkable health, and give unabated promise of excellence.

My furnace is not yet in operation, but is in position, waiting the adjustment of the hot-air ducts. I think it will add to our comfort, as it certainly will conduce to the ease of the faithful Pendleton, who regards the fire-chamber capable of consuming four-foot wood with sentiments akin to ecstasy.

It has been very cold for a few days past, and the river is filled with floating ice that moves slowly southward, indicating that the current is gorged below. A strong north wind has been blowing all day, filling the air with clouds of yellow dust from the bars.

Frank continues to grow in the graces and good opinion of all who know him. He has many extraordinary mental characteristics: self-possession, poise, command of his faculties, a temper serene and placable, and intellectual powers that are prophetic of future growth. He seems to have fine capacity for work, and an absence of enthusiasms and sensibilities, which go so far to make life endurable and successful. He is doing a great deal of outside work: visiting, calling upon the members of the church and congregation; and has the entire confidence of his people.

I have thought much to-day of the long career of my life, which has been extended so long beyond my early anticipations, and rendered conspicuous by so many blessings which I am conscious I have not deserved, and which I never hoped to enjoy. Standing upon the uplands of middle life, my childhood and youth seem like the experiences of another planet; and though I have suffered much from the tortures of disturbed functions, diseased nerves, sensibilities unnaturally acute, the war in my members between the spirit and the flesh,

the agonies of conflict between unconquerable appetites, passions, impulses, and ambitions, and a conscience too sensitive to submit to moral anodynes, yet I have much to recall with gratitude to some Benign Power that has given me moderate measure of worldly success, a modest competence, and a reasonable assurance of the esteem of my fellows; a happy home, and hopeful children, whom it shall be my chief care to teach to shun the errors that have been my bane.

I have thought much, also, of that benevolent destiny that has protracted our existence as a family, unbroken through so many years; that gave to us in our early years the benefit and advantages of parental restraint and care, and has given to you the opportunity of seeing the practical results of your anxiety and toil in the establishment of your children in reputable positions in widely dissociated spheres in life. As time passes on, the burden of existence becomes more grievous: these anniversaries, once so bright and festal, grow ominous with shadows, and have a deep, sad, and solemn significance. Laden with the inexpressible pathos, the yearning regrets, the farewells of the past, its melancholy and its eternal pain, they also point with prophetic augury to that future, near or far, when anniversaries shall be no more. How happy they who live so that they are never afraid to die!

I trust that we may know many returns of this ancient festival; but, more than that, I hope that when, on some future Thanksgiving, the last survivor of us all recalls the vivid memories of those who have gone before, no grief may dim his vision save that which separation always brings, and that he may confidently and gratefully anticipate the hour which shall summon him to join a reunited family in a brighter world than this; a world which shall seem as the glorious waking from

a fevered dream, where sorrow has no dominion, where distance cannot separate, where time cannot chill, and the tragic limitations of earthly being are forever unknown.

With love to all at home,

Very truly your son,

J. J. I.

WASHINGTON, March 13, 1874.

*Sweet Heart:*

The day is dreadful—cold, cloudy—with a gusty tempest from the north bearing a storm of dust and gravel that blinds, wearies, and disgusts.

The great senator [Charles Sumner] was borne to the Capitol at nine and placed beneath the canopy in the Rotunda in a square casket upon a black base, and covered with the rarest and costliest flowers—lilies, violets, japonicas, smilax, camellias in wreaths, garlands, crosses, with evergreens prophetic of immortality. A dense surge of humanity moved endlessly through the corridors, aimlessly, curiously, black, white, ragged, unkempt, chilled with the cold blasts, and filing past the cold, livid, discolored face that lay beneath the transparent glass like a drowned man under the ice. There were no tears. The scene was heartless. Loud talk, vain babbling, and senseless laughter echoed through the stony thoroughfares; and still the throng surged on and on, without beginning and without end.

The Senate galleries were densely packed at an early hour. Tier above tier, it was a solid mass of faces, relieved against the dark drapery behind. At twelve the Senate was called to order, the journal read, and some formal business transacted. We were presented with black gloves and crape on the left arm. Soon the House of Representatives were announced, and took

their places on the south side of the chamber; then the representatives from Massachusetts with their families as mourners, noticeably old Ben Butler with his wife, a tall, graceful, striking-looking woman with aristocratic features and bearing; then the chief justice and associate justices of the Supreme Court in their black gowns; then the officers of the Army and Navy; the diplomatic corps in plain dress, headed by the formal courtier, Sir Edward Thornton; then President Grant and his Cabinet, who sat by the head of the coffin, the silver mountings of which shone through the mass of flowers. The President was dressed in plain, dark clothes, and sat as expressionless as stone, sometimes drumming his hat upon his knee.

The scene was exceedingly impressive, and the solemnities were austere, consisting only of prayer and selections read from the Scriptures. At ten minutes past one the amen was pronounced, and the House, the Court, the President, and the guests retired slowly from the chamber, and the Senate adjourned till Tuesday noon.

I send you some violets from a great purple mass crowned with white that exhaled their fragrance in the dim chamber that shall know him no more forever. Keep them as a memento of a great life that has ended to day.

I woke at half past two this morning after, bad dreams, feverish and restless, and longing for you and for Baby Constance, who has grown so tenderly in my heart. Much of our united lives came back to me, incidents forgotten, songs you sung to Ruth in winter midnights in the little back room up stairs so long ago; looks, caresses; painful, sad regrets for the injuries inflicted upon your love by my indifference and coldness and unkindness; wonder that your love had not ebbed away from me and left me stranded in misery forever; hopes

that we might not either be left long upon this desolate earth to mourn the other's loss. Oh, my darling! my heart cries out for you and will not be comforted. You must never forsake me, here or hereafter. If you go before me to the undiscovered country, guard me, and wait for me. If I precede you, search for me till you find me, with entreaties and importunities that will permit no denial, but will rescue me, though ages intervene, from the profoundest abyss.

I received your letter this morning in which you speak of the excitement about the judgeship, which has now, I suppose, finally terminated. Horton could not be appointed for many reasons, chiefly because the delegation was against him upon general grounds connected with his personal and political career. Pomeroy made himself specially obnoxious by meddling in the matter, and at one time I thought I was to be beaten, as the President told me he would not appoint Foster, and if we did not compromise and agree on some other man, he would take charge of the matter himself. The question at last became one purely of opposition to me, and the representatives openly boasted that they had at last got me beaten; but the result has strengthened me greatly here and at home. Horton promised the clerkship to a score, I presume, and I am glad to know the secret of Mrs. ——'s advocacy; but it may console her to know that he also promised it to Joe Wilson, Spaulding, Jo. Talbott, and many others, male and female. Perhaps the future may have some reward for her fidelity to his cause and her support of his fortunes.

This is a long letter, longer than I intended to inflict upon you when I began; but I could continue for an hour, did my other engagements afford me the time to spare.

I hope you are comfortable and contented, and that you will make your life active and useful, and not brood in solitude over our separation. You have the children with you, while I have nothing but the memory of you and them to console me in my loneliness.

Write me often, and think always with tender love of  
 Your faithful and affectionate HUSBAND.

WASHINGTON, Sunday, May 13.

*My dearest Love:*

Pullman regulates the temperature of his carriages by the calendar, and not by the thermometer--no fires after May 1st, and but one blanket; so that my journey was not wholly comfortable. Then, at breakfast in the Union Depot at St. Louis, Friday morning, the top windows at the north were open, and a cataract of cold, damp air poured down my back into my pantaloons pockets and stockings. So that I was chilly and goosefleshy all day, and could not get warm through the night.

From St. Louis to Washington, where I arrived about nine p. m. Saturday, I continuously read the letters of the wife of Thomas Carlyle, annotated by him after her death. I never specially "honed" after him, even in my callow days; but the letters are dramatically interesting. They disclose a most desolate, gloomy, and lamentable domestic tragedy, and are not without instructive admonition. I will send or bring them to you. The unavailing penitence of the selfish, dyspeptic, irascible, tyrannical old man, after she had left him forever to his gruel and his grumbling, is quite pathetic. She does not seem to have loved him much, if at all, indeed, nor to have

been specially faithful to him, I judge; but in one way she was his slave, and the record of forty years of servitude is dramatic. Good women are so much better than good men, and bad so much worse. Where the average lies I do not know. Perhaps in gross, the moral aggregate is much the same.

I came to my old lodgings direct from the station and found that Mrs. Crawford had taken the house in addition to her own across the street. General Rosecrans is here with his family. His wife is paralyzed and unable to move. He occupies my old rooms, and his wife and daughter the floor above. I am opposite them, on the second floor, in the rooms occupied by General Henderson last winter. There are many other guests, but unknown to me.

Going over to the Capitol, I bathed, and was shaved and trimmed by the olive-skinned "John," the only barber whose attentions I could ever endure without a shrinking shudder.

Judge Peters had come in from Chicago on the morning train, and we had a consultation, resulting in an appointment for Monday.

Mr. Plumb is yet here, and I expect to have an interview with him, perhaps this afternoon.

I see no reason why I may not leave for Haverhill by Thursday, and so home by the middle of the week thereafter.

The season is dilatory here also; foliage not being full, and the air icy and shivery.

I feel guilty at going away and leaving you mistress of all the confusion at home, but it really seemed unavoidable under the circumstances, and the worst appeared to be over. I thought of several little things, while awake in the cars the other night, that might have been done: a niche for a vase or statuette in the stairway in the space between the curved par-

tion and the chamber wall; an upright register in the south library wall, under the lower shelf in the new partition, etc., etc.; but "the wished-for comes too late." Don't forget to have the windows all made weather proof, and the floors planed down among the finishing touches, and the well curb and platform repaired, and the veranda floors repaired also, but not wholly relaid, as Neal will be sure to want to do if not resolutely restrained.

I hope the dear little anonymous baby continues to thrive. The delicate spark of her life was so near going out wholly that I believe her preservation bodes good fortune for her and the world into which she so prematurely came. But I babble. So good-bye for to-day.

I hope the children are all obedient. Give them my love.

Your own

J. J. I.

UNITED STATES SENATE CHAMBER,  
 WASHINGTON, May 13, 1881.

*Dear Father:*

I imagine that our dishes are bottom up when it rains not more than those of our neighbors. We are all disposed to think our misfortunes are exceptional, our diseases peculiar, our destinies unprecedented; but the lot of humanity everywhere is much the same. Great careers are necessarily few; vast fortunes must be infrequent; kings and presidents are scarce, and even the most exalted in station and estate receive about the same average of felicity as the rest of us. I have seen all classes and conditions of men, from the lowest to the loftiest, and the longer I live the more I am convinced that happiness is in the individual, and not in his accidents. Many

things seem alluring that attained have no charm, and many lives appear humble and obscure that are the vestibule of Paradise. And, after all, whether well or ill, the longest life is but a brief pulsation, like the momentary flash of a firefly in a garden at night; and whether its transitory torch is to be extinguished forever or to be relighted and burn eternally, we hope and dream, but know not.

Love to the family.

Very truly your son,

J. J. I.

ARCHISON, Sunday, January 24, 10 A. M.

*Dear Constance:*

The cold wave seems to have passed off, though I don't like to say much about it; for we had a pleasant day some time ago and talked considerably and chuckled over it, and that night the temperature sank below zero and stayed there for two weeks. It was a struggle for existence. We closed all the doors, shut off the hall, cut off the water, had fires in the grates, stuffed cotton in all the crevices, and lived like Esquimaux in their *igloos*. But it really is lovely this morning. I went out for a stroll, after breakfast, on the stone walk, in the sun. Two fat brown birds hopped about in the branches of one of the shrubs, and Jim Crow kept me company, sometimes walking alongside, and then going before, and rolling over a time or two to attract attention. When I pulled his tail and his ears, he growled ferociously, and hissed like a snake, and then rolled over again.

As I stood by the gate, looking down toward Mrs. Crowley's cabin—she and Tim are both ill with the grip, influenza,

colds, rheumatism, antiquity, etc.—the pealing bells of St. Benedict's broke out into a swelling tumult of exulting melody, vibrating and rising and falling, rolling north and south and east and west, down the valley and up to the shining zenith, and, after an entrancing interval, died away and were still. It was quite incredible that some shock-headed Paddy, who probably carries a hod or drives a dray during the week, could, by pulling a rope a few moments, produce such an ecstasy of sound on Sunday, without any idea that I would write you a letter concerning it.

Yes, it is aggravating, as you say, to be obliged to suspend your studies for a while, at the busy season, too; but it is better than to keep on and break down completely at the end. The mind has much influence, and a cheerful spirit is better than medicine. Resolve to be well; don't brood upon dark thoughts; throw open the windows of your soul to the sun; take short views of life; get plenty of air, plain food, and sleep, with moderate exercise.

Write to me if there is anything you want. I should be your friend, even if you were not my child. \* \* \* \* \*

I am going away next week, about the 1st of February, to speak at Ann Arbor, Michigan, in Kentucky, and some other places, and shall be absent perhaps two weeks. A letter will reach me at the Grand Pacific, Chicago, Tuesday and Wednesday, 2d and 3d, should you write next Sunday.

Affectionately your

PAPA.

Jan. 7. 18. 00.

Dearest wife. "Blue Grass" seems to be one of those compositions that the world will not willingly let die.

These were happy days when it was written. in the little cottage on the bluff, looking out over the great river with a roomful of babies, obscure and unknown, waiting for the

destiny, so soon to come. (That was to make me one of the conspicuous figures of the country for so many years) How far away it seems!

But I would not recall my life and live it over again, if I could unless with the power to improve lost opportunities, amend errors, correct mistakes.

How clearly we see our follies when it is too late.

Tom loving

Husband.

T am.

ATCHISON, December 15.

*Dear Constance:*

The question about the loss of either of the senses is so much a matter of sentiment and individual temperament that there is nothing to be said by one that could influence another.

To me the loss of sight would be the greatest affliction, because my love of Nature and physical beauty is so strong. Hearing is limited. At a short distance the loudest sounds are inaudible. So with taste. It gives delight, but the body can be nourished without the sensibility of the palate and the tongue. If dumb, we can still write and read and hear. If we are unable to perceive the fragrance of flowers, we can yet be charmed with their color and outline. If deaf, we can communicate with the eye and the pen. But to be blind is to be imprisoned in perpetual darkness; shut out from the universe, from the aspects of the earth, the sky, and the sea; unable to go or come; compelled to be led and fed and dressed like an infant, and denied the joy of beholding the faces that we love. But, after all, we adapt ourselves to these privations without much grief. I have seen many blind persons, but they are generally cheerful enough, and seem to enjoy life very well.

The soul is independent of the senses. These are the avenues through which it communicates with others temporarily, and are not necessary to its existence. I have no doubt there are many senses we do not possess; many properties of matter with which we are unacquainted; many more dimensions than length, breadth, and thickness; many more colors than those which glow in the rainbow and the rose; many conditions immediately about and around and within that we do not perceive any more than my horse understands history and

arithmetic, or than a fish swimming in the ocean comprehends the great steamships with their cargoes of men and women and merchandise ploughing the waves which are his firmament.

It is an incomparable morning. The grass glitters with thick white frost, and the dense columns of smoke and vapor from the town below ascend slowly toward the dazzling sky. The vibrations of the convent bell, ringing for nine, linger for an instant, cease, and are still.

Your affectionate

PAPA.

WASHINGTON, March 5, 1875.

*My dearest Wife:*

The Forty-third Congress ended amid uproar and confusion indescribable.

I went to the Capitol at ten A. M. on Wednesday and remained until one the next afternoon without sleep and almost without eating. I presided much of the time, and was in the chair till within five minutes of the final adjournment. Such tumult and turmoil I never witnessed before; but I got through without special difficulty, and was much complimented for my coolness and adroit management of the disorderly elements. The Vice-President was absolutely helpless and surrendered in despair, and sent for me to take his place while he retired to his room. The attendance in the galleries was immense.

I came home and went to bed at two P. M. and slept till eight. Took a light lunch and went again to bed at ten and slept till nine this morning.

The Senate assembled at twelve this noon in extraordinary session. The new senators were sworn in, and the proceedings

were very interesting. The galleries and floor were thronged with ladies and strangers.

Old Andy Johnson, whom I had never seen before, was greeted with applause, as was General Burnside, the new senator from Rhode Island. We sat an hour, and then adjourned till Monday.

I have taken Scott's seat in the middle aisle, directly across from Mr. Conkling.

The Pinchbeck case is to be considered; but I do not think it will take long to dispose of it, as everybody is anxious to get away as soon as possible.

The weather is inconceivably horrible—cold, wet, raining all day and snowing or sleetng all night, with occasional fogs thrown in by way of variety.

How much I long to be at home I cannot tell you. I shall leave at the first possible moment that public business will permit. I feel somewhat fatigued, now that the stimulus of excitement is over; but hope soon to recover my usual elasticity. I know how much you need me and what a relief it will be to you to turn the domestic sceptre over to

Your affectionate

HUSBAND.