

Love Letters

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Volume I of II

The Society of The Dofobs, Chicago, 1907

**LOVE LETTERS
OF
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE**

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PRIVATELY PRINTED
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CHICAGO
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INTRODUCTORY

In "Hawthorne and His Wife" and "Memories of Hawthorne" both Julian Hawthorne and his sister, Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, have given citations from the letters written by Nathaniel Hawthorne to Miss Sophia Peabody during their years of courtship. These excerpts were free and irregular, often, and evidently with specific intent, taken out of order and run together as if for the purpose of illustrating a point or emphasizing a particular phase of character. While the extracts were sufficiently numerous for the object desired, and while they gave an agreeable glimpse of an interesting period of Hawthorne's life, they were necessarily too fragmentary, too lacking in continuity, to convey any adequate idea of the simplicity, beauty, humor and tenderness of the letters, even considered in the matter of a literary style.

The original letters were acquired by Mr. William K. Bixby of St. Louis, and, at the urgent request of the Society of the Dofobs, of which he is a highly esteemed and honored member, turned over to the society with the understanding that they should be published for presentation to members only. It was specified also that great care should be exercised in going over the letters, that no apparent confidences should be violated and that all private and personal references, which might wound the feelings of the living or seem to speak ill of the dead, should be eliminated. It is indeed remarkable that in the large number of letters presented there was practically nothing which called for elision, nothing in the lighter mood which breathed a spirit beyond the innocent limits of good-natured banter. The work of the editors was consequently easy and grateful, and the task one of delight.

It is not claimed that these love letters, so-called, comprise the entire correspondence on Hawthorne's part between Miss Peabody and himself during the three-and-one-half years of courtship. Naturally a series of letters begun sixty-eight years ago, with all the vicissitudes of a shifting life, would not be preserved intact. But while some letters have been lost or destroyed, and others may not have been permitted for one reason or another to leave the possession of the family, the continuity here preserved is practically as complete as could be desired and fully illustrative of the qualities which make them so worthy of publication. In giving these letters to its members the society has conformed strictly to the exactions of the manuscript save in a few cases perhaps where haste on the part of the writer omitted a word, slightly obscuring the sense. It has been deemed advisable also to omit all notes or paragraphs of explanation. Happily the letters are sufficiently intelligible without such notes, and the conclusion has been reached that no needed purpose can be served by minor explanatory details relating to individuals mentioned or incidents suggested. It has been thought best as well to add a few letters extending beyond the period of courtship. No defence is necessary, for to the last they are "love letters" in the purest and truest sense of the words. This will be vindicated in the perusal.

In selecting two letters for facsimile reproduction the choice has fallen upon the letter from Brook Farm under date of April 13, 1841, and that from Salem written in the following year. Both illustrate the quiet, quaint humor of Hawthorne. In the Brook Farm letter he sketches drily his thinly veiled impressions of the community, and herein will be found the famous reference to "Miss Fuller's transcendental heifer" which has fallen little

short of immortality. Writing from the old home in Salem he makes his letter conspicuous by the fact that he prophesies banteringly—doubtless he little knew how truly—his own coming fame and the public craze to inspect his belongings. This humorous tribute to himself, in its mock, self-satisfied strain, suggests not so much the mental state of Horace predicting his metamorphosis and immortality as the good-natured prophecy of Burns that “you may expect henceforth to see my birthday inscribed among the wonderful events in the Poor Robin and Aberdeen Almanacks, along with the Black Monday and the Battle of Bothwell Bridge.” Horace, Burns, Hawthorne—how all exceeded their predictions, whether gravely or lightly made!

It is true that to many persons of sensibility the thought of publishing the love letters of men and women however distinguished or in the public mind is repugnant. It seems to them a violation of a sacred confidence, a wanton exposure of a tenderness not intended for the world as a part of its literary diversion. The objection in many instances is a fair one, and too often the obligation of delicacy has been violated and the dictates of gentle consideration have been unheeded. Of recent years more persons have been shocked than gratified by the exploitation of love letters of famous women or men, and by the ruthless tearing away of the veil which has concealed their happy love life, and this emotion of disapprobation has not been lessened by the apparent fact that a sordid motive inspired the publication. At the outset such impulse of disinclination possessed the gentleman who owns the Hawthorne manuscript and the members of the society with whom he conversed with reference to its appearance in type. It was only after the letters had been carefully read, the motive governing their publication seriously analyzed, and the respectful limits of their circulation considered, that this doubting impulse vanished.

That any one can read these letters without a warmer, closer feeling for the “shy, grave Hawthorne” seems impossible. To one who has perused them in manuscript, transcription and proof sheets there comes almost a conviction that he wrote them not merely for the woman waiting for the day when pledges should be sanctified, but with the half wish that all sympathetic spirits might see him and know him as he was. For gaily he speaks of his own bashfulness and reserve; hopefully he passes beyond the drudgery and disappointments of his position in life to the future which allures him; bravely he fights anxiety and care; with quaint humor and lightness of touch he pictures the scenes around that amuse and interest him. And when in loving remembrance he calls for the “Dove,” or with mock seriousness chides the “naughty Sophie Hawthorne,” a strong affection is breathed in gentleness, a manly tenderness delights in every line.

And whether toiling with the measurer in the vessel’s hold, or chafing with him in the somberness of the custom house, sharing now his relief from distasteful tasks and now his dreams for a happier day, the reader feels the spirit of the past. And above all the shadowy ghostliness of the threescore years seems to come the perfume of the apple blossoms that fell around the Wayside, with the gentle graciousness of a time well known to all, when youth and love and hope are young.

ROSWELL FIELD.

TO MISS PEABODY

Wednesday Afternoon, March 6th, 1839

My dearest Sophie:

I had a parting glimpse of you, Monday forenoon, at your window—and that image abides by me, looking pale, and not so quiet as is your wont. I have reproached myself many times since, because I did not show my face, and then we should both have smiled; and so our reminiscences would have been sunny instead of shadowy. But I believe I was so intent on seeing you, that I forgot all about the desirableness of being myself seen.

Perhaps, after all, you did see me—at least you knew that I was there. I fear that you were not quite well that morning. Do grow better and better—physically, I mean, for I protest against any spiritual improvement, until I am better able to keep pace with you—but do be strong, and full of life—earthly life—and let there be a glow in your cheeks. And sleep soundly the whole night long, and get up every morning with a feeling as if you were newly created; and I pray you to lay up a stock of fresh energy every day till we meet again; so that we may walk miles and miles, without your once needing to lean upon my arm. Not but what you *shall* lean upon it, as much as you choose—indeed, whether you choose or not—but I would feel as if you did it to lighten my footsteps, not to support your own. Am I requiring you to work a miracle within yourself? Perhaps so—yet, not a greater one than I do really believe might be wrought by inward faith and outward aids. Try it, my Dove, and be as lightsome on earth as your sister doves are in the air.

Tomorrow I shall expect a letter from you; but I am almost in doubt whether to tell you that I expect it; because then your conscience will reproach you, if you should happen not to have written. I would leave you as free as you leave me. But I do wonder whether you were serious in your last letter, when you asked me whether you wrote too often, and seemed to think that you might thus interfere with my occupations. My dear Sophie, your letters are no small portion of my spiritual food, and help to keep my soul alive, when otherwise it might languish unto death, or else become hardened and earth-incrusted, as seems to be the case with almost all the souls with whom I am in daily intercourse. They never interfere with my worldly business—neither the reading nor the answering them—(I am speaking of your letters, not of those “earth-incrusted” souls)—for I keep them to be the treasure of my still and secret hours, such hours as pious people spend in prayer; and the communion which my spirit then holds with yours has something of religion in it. The charm of your letters does not depend upon their intellectual value, though that is great, but on the spirit of which they are the utterance, and which is a spirit of wonderful efficacy. No one, whom you would deem worthy of your friendship, could enjoy so large a share of it as I do, without feeling the influence of your character throughout his own—purifying his aims and desires, enabling him to realise that this is a truer world than the feverish one around us, and teaching him how to gain daily entrance into that better world. Such, so far as I have been able to profit by it, has been your ministration to me. Did you dream what an angelic guardianship was entrusted to you?

March 7th. Your letter did come. You had not the heart to disappoint me, as I did you, in not making a parting visit, and shall again, by keeping this letter to send by Mary. But I disappoint you in these two instances, only that you may consider it a decree of Fate (or of

Providence, which you please) that we shall not meet on the mornings of my departure, and that my letters shall not come oftener than on the alternate Saturday. If you will but believe this, you will be quiet. Otherwise I know that the Dove will flutter her wings, and often, by necessity, will flutter them in vain. So forgive me, and let me have my own way, and believe (for it is true) that I never cause you the slightest disappointment without pain and remorse on my part. And yet, I know that when you wish me to do any particular thing you will always tell me so, and that if my sins of omission or commission should ever wound your heart, you will by no means conceal it.

I did enjoy that walk infinitely—for certainly the enjoyment was not all finite. And what a heavenly pleasure we might have enjoyed this very day; the air was so delicious, that it seemed as if the dismal old Custom House was situated in Paradise; and this afternoon, I sat with my window open, to temper the glow of a huge coal fire. It almost seems to me, now, as if beautiful days were wasted and thrown away, when we do not feel their beauty and heavenliness through one another.

Your own friend,

N. H.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, April 2^d, 1839

Mine own Dove,

I have been sitting by my fireside ever since teatime, till now it is past eight o'clock; and have been musing and dreaming about a thousand things, with every one of which, I do believe, some nearer or remoter thought of you was intermingled. I should have begun this letter earlier in the evening, but was afraid that some intrusive idler would thrust himself between us, and so the sacredness of my letter would be partly lost;—for I feel as if my letters were sacred, because they are written from my spirit to your spirit. I wish it were possible to convey them to you by other than earthly messengers—to convey them directly into your heart, with the warmth of mine still lingering in them. When we shall be endowed with our spiritual bodies, I think they will be so constituted, that we may send thoughts and feelings any distance, in no time at all, and transfuse them warm and fresh into the consciousness of those whom we love. Oh what a bliss it would be, at this moment; if I could be conscious of some purer feeling, some more delicate sentiment, some lovelier fantasy, than could possibly have had its birth in my own nature, and therefore be aware that my Dove was thinking through my mind and feeling through my heart! Try—some evening when you are alone and happy, and when you are most conscious of loving me and being loved by me—and see if you do not possess this power already. But, after all, perhaps it is not wise to intermix fantastic ideas with the reality of our affection. Let us content ourselves to be earthly creatures, and hold communion of

spirit in such modes as are ordained to us—by letters (dipping our pens as deep as may be into our hearts) by heartfelt words, when they can be audible; by glances—through which medium spirits do really seem to talk in their own language—and by holy kisses, which I do think have something supernatural in them.

And now good night, my beautiful Dove. I do not write any more at present, because there are three more whole days before this letter will visit you: and I desire to talk with you, each of those three days. Your letter did not come today. Even if it should not come tomorrow, I shall not imagine that you forget me or neglect me, but shall heave two or three sighs, and measure salt and coal so much the more diligently. Good night; and if I have any power, at this distance, over your spirit, it shall be exerted to make you sleep like a little baby, till the “Harper of the Golden Dawn” arouse you. Then you must finish that ode. But do, if you love me, sleep.

April 3d. No letter, my dearest; and if one comes tomorrow I shall not receive it till Friday, nor perhaps then; because I have a cargo of coal to measure in East Cambridge, and cannot go to the Custom House till the job is finished. If you had known this, I think you would have done your [best] possible to send me a letter today. Doubtless you have some good reason for omitting it. I was invited to dine at Mr. Hooper’s; with your sister Mary; and the notion came into my head, that perhaps you would be there,—and though I knew that it could not be so, yet I felt as if it might. But just as I was going home from the Custom House to dress, came an abominable person to say that a measurer was wanted forthwith at East Cambridge; so over I hurried, and found that, after all, nothing would be done till tomorrow morning at sunrise. In the meantime, I had lost my dinner, and all other pleasures that had awaited me at Mr. Hooper’s; so that I came back in very ill humor, and do not mean to be very good-natured again, till my Dove shall nestle upon my heart again, either in her own sweet person, or by her image in a letter. But your image will be with me, long before the letter comes. It will flit around me while I am measuring coal, and will peep over my shoulder to see whether I keep a correct account, and will smile to hear my bickerings with the black-faced demons in the vessel’s hold, (they look like the forge-men in Retsch’s Fridolin) and will soothe and mollify me amid all the pester and plague that is in store for me tomorrow. Not that I would avoid this pester and plague, even if it were in my power to do so. I need such training, and ought to have undergone it long ago. It will give my character a healthy hardness as regards the world; while it will leave my heart as soft—as fit for a Dove to rest upon—as it is now, or ever was. Good night again, gentle Dove. I must leave a little space for tomorrow’s record; and moreover, it is almost time that I were asleep, having to get up in the dusky dawn. Did you yield to my conjurations, and sleep well last night? Well then, I throw the same spell over you tonight.

April 4th. ½ past 9 P.M. I came home late in the afternoon, very tired, sunburnt and sea-flushed, having walked or sat on the deck of a schooner ever since sunrise. Nevertheless, I purified myself from the sable stains of my profession—stains which I share in common with chimney sweepers—and then hastened to the Custom House to get your letter—for I *knew* there was one there awaiting me, and now I thank you with my whole heart, and will straight way go to sleep. Do you the same.

April 5th. Your yesterday’s letter is received, my beloved Sophie. I have no time to answer it: but, like all your communications, personal or written, it is the sunshine of my life. I

have been busy all day, and am now going to see your sister Mary—and I hope, Elizabeth. Mr. Pickens is going with me.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY



Wednesday, April 17th, 1839—4 o'clock P.M.

My Dearest:

If it were not for your sake, I should really be glad of this pitiless east wind, and should especially bless the pelting rain and intermingled snowflakes. They have released me from the toils and cares of office, and given me license to betake myself to my own chamber; and here I sit by a good coal fire, with at least six or seven comfortable hours to spend before bed-time. I feel pretty secure against intruders; for the bad weather will defend me from foreign invasion; and as to Cousin Haley, he and I had a bitter political dispute last evening, at the close of which he went to bed in high dudgeon, and probably will not speak to me these three days. Thus you perceive that strife and wrangling, as well as east winds and rain, are the methods of a kind Providence to promote my comfort—which would not have been so well secured in any other way. Six or seven hours of cheerful solitude! But I will not be alone. I invite your spirit to be with me—at any hour and as many hours as you please—but especially at the twilight hour, before I light my lamp. Are you conscious of my invitation? I bid you at that particular time, because I can see visions more vividly in the dusky glow of fire light, than either by daylight or lamplight. Come—and let me renew my spell against headache and other direful effects of the east wind. How I wish I could give you a portion of my insensibility!—And yet I should be almost afraid of some radical transformation, were I to produce a change in that respect. God made you so delicately, that it is especially unsafe to interfere with His workmanship. If my little Sophie—mine own Dove—cannot grow plump and rosy and tough and vigorous without being changed into another nature then I do think that for this short life, she had better remain just what she is. Yes; but you will always be the same to me, because we have met in Eternity, and there our intimacy was formed. So get as well as you possibly can, and be as strong and rosy as you will; for I shall never doubt that you are the same Sophie who have so often leaned upon my arm, and needed its superfluous strength.

I was conscious, on those two evenings, of a peacefulness and contented repose such as I never enjoyed before. You could not have felt such quiet unless I had felt it too—nor could I, unless you had. If either of our spirits had been troubled, they were then in such close communion that both must have felt the same grief and turmoil. I never, till now, had a friend who could give me repose;—all have disturbed me; and whether for pleasure or pain, it was still disturbance, but peace overflows from your heart into mine. Then I feel that there is a Now—and that Now must be always calm and happy—and that sorrow and evil are but phantoms that seem to flit across it.

You must never expect to see my sister E. in the daytime, unless by previous appointment, or when she goes to walk. So unaccustomed am I to daylight interviews, that I never imagine her in sunshine; and I really doubt whether her faculties of life and intellect begin to be exercised till dusk—unless on extraordinary occasions. Their noon is at midnight. I wish you could walk with her; but you must not, because she is indefatigable, and always wants to walk half round the world, when once she is out of doors.

April 18th. My Dove—my hopes of a long evening of seclusion were not quite fulfilled; for, a little before nine o'clock John Forrester and Cousin Haley came in, both of whom I so fascinated with my delectable conversation, that they did not take leave till after eleven. Nevertheless, I had already secured no inconsiderable treasure of enjoyment, with all of which you were intermingled. There has been nothing to do at the Custom House today; so I came home at two o'clock, and—went to sleep! Pray Heaven you may have felt a sympathetic drowsiness, and have yielded to it. My nap has been a pretty long one, for—as nearly as I can judge by the position of the sun, it must be as much as five o'clock. I think there will be a beautiful sunset; and perhaps, if we could walk out together, the wind would change and the air grow balmy at once. The Spring is not acquainted with my Dove and me, as the Winter was;—how then can we expect her to be kindly to us? We really must continue to walk out and meet her, and make friends with her; then she will salute your cheek with her balmiest kiss, whenever she gets a chance. As to the east wind, if ever the imaginative portion of my brain recover from its torpor, I mean to personify it as a wicked, spiteful, blustering, treacherous—in short, altogether devilish sort of body, whose principle of life it is to make as much mischief as he can. The west wind—or whatever is the gentlest wind of heaven—shall assume your aspect, and be humanised and angelicised with your traits of character, and the sweet West shall finally triumph over the fiendlike East, and rescue the world from his miserable tyranny; and if I tell the story well, I am sure my loving and beloved West Wind will kiss me for it.

When this week's first letter came, I held it a long time in my hand, marvelling at the superscription. How did you contrive to write it? Several times since, I have pored over it, to discover how much of yourself was mingled with my share of it; and certainly there is a grace flung over the fac simile, which was never seen in my harsh, uncouth autograph—and yet none of the strength is lost. You are wonderful. Imitate this.

NATH. HAWTHORNE.

Friday, April 19th. Your Wednesday's letter has come, dearest. Your letters delight me more than anything, save the sound of your voice; and I love dearly to write to you—so be at peace on that score. You *are* beautiful, my own heart's Dove. Never doubt it again. I shall really and truly be very glad of the extracts; and they will have a charm for me that could not otherwise have been. I will imagine your voice repeating them, tremulously. The *spell* which you laid upon my brow will retain its power till we meet again—then it must be renewed.

What a beautiful day—and I had a double enjoyment of it, for your sake and my own. I have been to walk this afternoon, to Bunker's Hill and the Navy Yard, and am tired, because I had not your arm to support me.

God keep you from East winds and every other evil.

Mine own Dove's own Friend,

N. H.

½ past 5 P.M.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, April 30th, 6 P.M., 1839

My beloved,

Your sweetest of all letters found me at the Custom House, where I had almost just arrived, having been engaged all the forenoon in measuring twenty chaldrons of coal—which dull occupation was enlivened by frequent brawls and amicable discussions with a crew of funny little Frenchmen from Acadie. I know not whether your letter was a surprise to me—it seems to me that I had a prophetic faith that the Dove would visit me—but at any rate, it was a joy, as it always is; for my spirit turns to you from all trouble and all pleasure. This forenoon I could not wait as I generally do, to be in solitude before opening your letter; for I expected to be busy all the afternoon, and was already tired with working yesterday and today; and my heart longed to drink your thoughts and feelings, as a parched throat for cold water. So I pressed the Dove to my lips (turning my head away, so that nobody saw me) and then broke the seal. I do think it is the dearest letter you have written, but I think so of each successive one; so you need not imagine that you have outdone yourself in this instance. How did I live before I knew you—before I possessed your affection! I reckon upon your love as something that is to endure when everything that can perish has perished—though my trust is sometimes mingled with fear, because I feel myself unworthy of your love. But if I am worthy of if you will always love me; and if there be anything good and pure in me, it will be proved by my always loving you.

After dinner. I had to journey over to East Cambridge, expecting to measure a cargo of coal there; but the vessel had stuck in the mud on her way thither, so that nothing could be done till tomorrow morning. It must have been my guardian angel that steered her upon that mud-bank, for I really needed rest. Did you lead the vessel astray, my Dove? I did not stop to inquire into particulars, but returned home forthwith, and locked my door, and threw myself on the bed, with your letter in my hand. I read it over slowly and peacefully, and then folding it up, I rested my heart upon it, and fell fast asleep.

Friday, May 3d. 5 P.M. My dearest, ten million occupations and interruptions, and intrusions, have kept me from going on with my letter; but my spirit has visited you continually, and yours has come to me. I have had to be out a good deal in the east winds; but your spell has proved sovereign against all harm, though sometimes I have shuddered and shivered for your sake. How have you borne it, my poor dear little Dove? Have you been able to flit abroad on today's east wind, and go to Marblehead, as you designed? You

will not have seen Mrs. Hooper, because she came up to Boston in the cars on Monday morning. I had a brief talk with her, and we made mutual inquiries, she about you, and I about little C. I will not attempt to tell you how it rejoices me that we are to spend a whole month together in the same city. Looking forward to it, it seems to me as if that month would never come to an end, because there will be so much of eternity in it. I wish you had read that dream-letter through, and could remember its contents. I am very sure that it could not have [been] written by me, however, because I should not think of addressing you as “My dear Sister”—nor should I like to have you call me brother—nor even should have liked it, from the very first of our acquaintance. We are, I trust, kindred spirits, but not brother and sister. And then what a cold and dry annunciation of that awful contingency—the “continuance or not of our acquaintance.” Mine own Dove, you are to blame for dreaming such letters, or parts of letters, as coming from me. It was you that wrote it—not I. Yet I will not believe that it shows a want of faith in the steadfastness of my affection, but only in the continuance of circumstances prosperous to our earthly and external connection. Let us trust in GOD for that. Pray to GOD for it, my Dove—for you know how to pray better than I do. Pray, for my sake, that no shadows of earth may ever come between us, because my only hope of being a happy man depends upon the permanence of our union. I have great comfort in such thoughts as those you suggest—that our hearts here draw towards one another so unusually—that we have not cultivated our friendship, but let it grow,—that we have thrown ourselves upon one another with such perfect trust;—and even the deficiency of worldly wisdom, that some people would ascribe to us in following the guidance of our hearts so implicitly, is proof to me that there is a deep wisdom within us. Oh, let us not think but that all will be well! And even if, to worldly eyes, it should appear that our lot is not a fortunate one, still we shall have glimpses, at least—and I trust a pervading sunshine—of a happiness that we could never have found, if we had unquietly struggled for it, and made our own selection of the means and species of it, instead of trusting all to something diviner than our reason.

My Dove, there were a good many things that I meant to have written in this letter; but I have continually lapsed into fits of musing, and when I have written, the soul of my thoughts has not readily assumed the earthly garments of language. It is now time to carry the letter to Mary. I kiss you, dearest—did you feel it? Your own friend,

NATH. HAWTHORNE, ESQ.

(Dear me! What an effect that Esquire gives to the whole letter!)

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Salem, May 26th, 1839

Mine own Self,

I felt rather dismal yesterday—a sort of vague weight on my spirit—a sense that something was wanting to me here. What or who could it have been that I so missed? I thought it not best to go to your house last evening; so that I have not yet seen Elizabeth—but we shall probably attend the Hurley-Burley tonight. Would that my Dove might be there! It seems really monstrous that here, in her own home—or what was her home, till she found another in my arms—she should no longer be. Oh, my dearest, I yearn for you, and my heart heaves when I think of you—(and that is always, but sometimes a thought makes me know and feel you more vividly than at others, and *that* I call “thinking of you”)—heaves and swells (my heart does) as sometimes you have felt it beneath you, when your head was resting on it. At such moments it is stirred up from its depths. Then our two ocean-hearts mingle their floods.

I do not believe that this letter will extend to three pages. My feelings do not, of their own accord, assume words—at least, not a continued flow of words. I write a few lines, and then I fall a-musing about many things, which seem to have no connection among themselves, save that my Dove flits lightly through them all. I feel as if my being were dissolved and the idea of you were diffused throughout it. Am I writing nonsense? That is for you to decide. You know what is Truth—“what is what”—and I should not dare to say to you what I felt to be other than the Truth—other than the very “what.” It is very singular (but I do not suppose I can express it) that, while I love you so dearly, and while I am so conscious of the deep embrace of our spirits, still I have an awe of you that I never felt for anybody else. Awe is not the word, either; because it might imply something stern in you—whereas—but you must make it out for yourself. I do wish that I could put this into words—not so much for your satisfaction (because I believe you will understand) as for my own. I suppose I should have pretty much the same feeling if an angel were to come from Heaven and be my dearest friend—only the angel could not have the tenderest of human natures too, the sense of which is mingled with this sentiment. Perhaps it is because in meeting you, I really meet a spirit, whereas the obstructions of earth have prevented such a meeting in every other place. But I leave the mystery here. Some time or other, it may be made plainer to me. But methinks it converts my love into a religion. And then it is singular, too, that this awe (or whatever it be) does not prevent me from feeling that it is I who have the charge of you, and that my Dove is to follow my guidance and do my bidding. Am I not very bold to say this? And will not you rebel? Oh no; because I possess the power only so far as I love you. My love gives me the right, and your love consents to it.

Since writing the above I have been asleep; and I dreamed that I had been sleeping a whole year in the open air; and that while I slept, the grass grew around me. It seemed, in my dream, that the very bed-clothes which actually covered me were spread beneath me, and when I awoke (in my dream) I snatched them up, and the earth under them looked black, as if it had been burnt—one square place, exactly the size of the bedclothes. Yet there was grass and herbage scattered over this burnt space, looking as fresh, and bright, and dewy, as if the summer rain and the summer sun had been cherishing them all the time. Interpret this for me, my Dove—but do not draw any somber omens from it. What is signified [by] my nap of a whole year? (It made me grieve to think that I had lost so much of eternity)—and what was the fire that blasted the spot of earth which I occupied, while the grass flourished all around?—And what comfort am I to draw from the fresh herbage

amid the burnt space? But it is a silly dream, and you cannot expound any sense out of it. Generally, I cannot remember what my dreams have been—only there is a confused sense of having passed through adventures, pleasurable or otherwise. I suspect that you mingle with my dreams, but take care to flit away just before I awake, leaving me but dimly and doubtfully conscious of your visits.

Do you never start so suddenly from a dream that you are afraid to look round the room, lest your dream-personages (so strong and distinct seemed their existence, a moment before) should have thrust themselves out of dream-land into the midst of realities? I do, sometimes.

I wish I were to see you this evening. How many times have you thought of me today? All the time?—Or not at all? Did you ever read such a foolish letter as this? (Here I was interrupted, and have taken a stroll down on the Neck—a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful sunshine, and air, and sea. Would that my Dove had been with me. I fear that we shall perforce lose some of our mutual intimacy with Nature—we walk together so seldom that she will seem more like a stranger. Would that I could write such sweet letters to mine own self, as mine own self writes to me. Good bye, dearest self. Direct yours to

NATH. HAWTHORNE, ESQ.
Custom-House, Boston.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
No. 4 Avon Place,
Boston.

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, July 3^d, 1839

Most beloved Amelia,

I shall call you so sometimes in playfulness, and so may you; but it is not the name by which my soul recognizes you. It knows you as Sophie; but I doubt whether that is the inwardly and intensely dearest epithet either. I believe that “Dove” is the true word after all; and it never can be used amiss, whether in sunniest gaiety or shadiest seriousness. And yet it is a sacred word, and I should not love to have anybody hear me use it, nor know that GOD has baptised you so—the baptism being for yourself and me alone. By that name, I think, I shall greet you when we meet in Heaven. Other dear ones may call you “daughter,” “sister,” “Sophia,” but when, at your entrance into Heaven, or after you have been a little while there, you hear a voice say “Dove!” then you will know that your kindred spirit has been admitted (perhaps for your sake) to the mansions of rest. That word will express his yearning for you—then to be forever satisfied; for we will melt into one another, and be close, close together then. The name was inspired; it came without our being aware that you were thenceforth to be my Dove, now and through eternity. I do not remember, how nor when it alighted on you; the first I knew, it was in my heart to call you so.

Good night now, my Dove. It is not yet nine o'clock; but I am somewhat weary and prefer to muse about you till bedtime, rather than write.

July 5th, ½ past seven P.M. I must, somehow or other, finish this letter tonight, my dearest—or else it would not be sent tomorrow; and then I fear our head would ache, naughty head that it is. My heart yearns to communicate to you; but if it had any other means at hand, it certainly would not choose to communicate by the scratchings of an iron pen, which I am now compelled to use. This must and will inevitably be a dull letter. Oh how different from yours, which I received today. You are absolutely inspired, my Dove; and it is not my poor stupid self that inspires you; for how could I give what is not in me. I wish I could write to you in the morning, before my toils begin; but that is impossible, unless I were to write before daylight. At eventide, my mind has quite lost its elasticity—my heart, even, is weary—and all that I seem capable of doing is to rest my head on its pillow and there lay down the burthen of life. I do not mean to imply that I am unhappy or discontented; for this is not the case; my life is only a burthen, in the same way that it is so to every toilsome man, and mine is a healthy weariness, such as needs only a night's sleep to remove it. But from henceforth forever, I shall be entitled to call the sons of toil my brethren, and shall know how to sympathise with them, seeing that I, likewise, have risen at the dawn and borne the fervor of the mid-day sun, nor turned my heavy footsteps homeward till eventide. Years hence, perhaps, the experience that my heart is acquiring now will flow out in truth and wisdom.

You ask me a good many questions, my Dove, and I will answer such of them as now occur to me; and the rest you may ask me again, when we meet. First as to your letters. My beloved, you must write whenever you will—in all confidence that I can never be otherwise than joyful to receive your letters. Do not get into the habit of trying to find out, by any method save your own intuition, what is pleasing and what is displeasing to me. Whenever you need my counsel, or even my reproof, in any serious matter, you will not fail to receive it; but I wish my Dove to be as free as a Bird of Paradise. Now, as to this affair of the letters. I have sometimes been a little annoyed at the smiles of my brother measurers, who, notwithstanding the masculine fist of the direction, seem to know that such delicately sealed and folded epistles can come only from a lady's small and tender hand. But the annoyance is not on my own account; but because it seems as if the letters were prophaned by being smiled at—but this is, after all, a mere fantasy, since the smilers know nothing about my Dove, nor that I really have a Dove; nor can they be certain that the letters come from a lady, nor, especially, can they have the remotest imagination what heavenly letters they are. The sum and substance is, that they are smiling at nothing; and so it is no matter for their smiles. I would not give up one letter to avoid the "world's dread laugh,"—much less to shun the good-natured raillery of three or four people who do not dream of giving pain. Why has my Dove made me waste so much of my letter in this talk about nothing?

My dearest, did you really think that I meant to express a doubt whether we should enjoy each other's society so much, if we could be together all the time. No, no; for I always feel, that our momentary and hurried interviews scarcely afford us time to taste the draught of affection that we drink from one another's hearts. There is a precious portion of our happiness wasted, because we are forced to enjoy it too greedily. But I thought, as you do, that there might be more communication of the intellect, as well as communion of

heart, if we could be oftener together.

Your picture gallery of auxiliary verbs is an admirable fantasy. You are certainly the first mortal to whom it was given to behold a verb; though, it seems as if they ought to be visible, being creatures whose office it is (if I remember my grammar aright) “to be, to do, and to suffer.” Therein is comprehended all that we mortals are capable of. No; for, according to the definition, verbs do not feel, and cannot enjoy—they only exist, and act, and are miserable. My Dove and I are no verbs—or if so, we are passive verbs, and therefore happy ones.

(Rest of letter missing)

To Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Salem,
Massachusetts.

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, Monday Eveng July 15th [1839]

My blessed Dove,

Your letter was brought to me at East Cambridge this afternoon:—otherwise I know not when I should have received it; for I am so busy that I know not whether I shall have time to go to the Custom-House these two or three days. I put it in my pocket, and did not read it till just now, when I could be quiet in my own chamber—for I always feel as if your letters were too sacred to be read in the midst of people—and (you will smile) I never read them without first washing my hands!

And so my poor Dove is sick, and I cannot take her to my bosom. I do really feel as if I could cure her. [Portion of letter missing] Oh, my dearest, do let our love be powerful enough to make you well. I will have faith in its efficacy—not that it will work an immediate miracle—but it shall make you so well at heart that you cannot possibly be ill in the body. Partake of my health and strength, my beloved. Are they not your own, as well as mine? Yes—and your illness is mine as well as yours; and with all the pain it gives me, the whole world should not buy my right to share in it.

My dearest, I will not be much troubled, since you tell me (and your word is always truth) that there is no need. But, oh, be careful of yourself—remembering how much earthly happiness depends on your health. Be tranquil—let me be your Peace, as you are mine. Do not write to me, unless your heart be unquiet, and you think that you can quiet it by writing.

God bless mine own Dove. I have kissed those three last words. Do you kiss them too.

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

Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Wednesday eveg. July 17th [1839]

My Dearest,

I did not know but you would like another little note—and I think I feel a strange impulse to write, now that the whole correspondence devolves on me. And I wrote my other note in such a hurry, that I quite forgot to give you the praise which you so deserved, for bearing up so stoutly against the terrible misfortune of my non-appearance. Indeed, I do think my Dove is the strongest little dove that ever was created—never did any creature live, who could feel so acutely, and yet endure so well.

This note must be a mere word, my beloved—and I wish I could make it the very tenderest word that ever was spoken or written. Imagine all that I cannot write.

God bless you, mine own Dove, and make you quite well against I take you to your home—which shall be on Saturday eveg, without fail. Till then, dearest, spend your time in happy thoughts and happy dreams—and let my image be among them. Good bye, mine own Dove—I have kissed that holy word.

YOUR OWN, OWN, OWNEST.

My Dove must not look for another note.

To Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, July 24th, 1839—8 o'clock P.M.

Mine own,

I am tired this evening, as usual, with my long day's toil; and my head wants its pillow—and my soul yearns for the friend whom God has given it—whose soul He has married to my soul. Oh, my dearest, how that thought thrills me! We *are* married! I felt it long ago; and sometimes, when I was seeking for some fondest word, it has been on my lips to call you—"Wife"! I hardly know what restrained me from speaking it—unless a dread (for *that* would have been an infinite pang to me) of feeling you shrink back, and thereby discovering that there was yet a deep place in your soul which did not know me. Mine own Dove, need I fear it now? Are we not married? God knows we are. Often, I have

silently given myself to you, and received you for my portion of human love and happiness, and have prayed Him to consecrate and bless the union. Yes—we are married; and as God Himself has joined us, we may trust never to be separated, neither in Heaven nor on Earth. We will wait patiently and quietly, and He will lead us onward hand in hand (as He has done all along) like little children, and will guide us to our perfect happiness—and will teach us when our union is to be revealed to the world. My beloved, why should we be silent to one another—why should our lips be silent—any longer on this subject? The world might, as yet, misjudge us; and therefore we will not speak to the world; but why should we not commune together about all our hopes of earthly and external as well [as] our faith of inward and eternal union? Farewell for tonight, my dearest—my soul's bride!

July 25th. 8 o'clock, P.M. How does my Dove contrive to live and thrive, and keep her heart in cheerful trim, through a whole fortnight, with only one letter from me? It cannot be indifference; so it must be heroism—and how heroic! It does seem to me that my spirit would droop and wither like a plant that lacked rain and dew, if it were not for the frequent shower of your gentle and holy thoughts. But then there is such a difference in our situations. My Dove is at home—not, indeed, in her home of homes—but still in the midst of true affections; and she can live a spiritual life, spiritual and intellectual. Now, my intellect, and my heart and soul, have no share in my present mode of life—they find neither labor nor food in it; everything that I do here might be better done by a machine. I *am* a machine, and am surrounded by hundreds of similar machines;—or rather, all of the business people are so many wheels of one great machine—and we have no more love or sympathy for one another than if we were made of wood, brass, or iron, like the wheels of other pieces of complicated machinery. Perchance—but do not be frightened, dearest—the soul would wither and die within me, leaving nothing but the busy machine, no germ for immortality, nothing that could taste of heaven, if it were not for the consciousness of your deep, deep love, which is renewed to me with every letter. Oh, my Dove, I have really thought sometimes, that God gave you to me to be the salvation of my soul.

(Rest of letter missing)

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, July 30th, 8 (or thereabouts) P.M. [1839]

Beloved,

There was no letter from you to-day; and this circumstance, in connection with your mention of a headache on Sunday, made me apprehensive that my Dove is not well. Yet surely she would write, or cause to be written, intelligence of the fact (if fact it were) to the sharer of her well-being and ill-being. Do, dearest, give me the assurance that you will never be ill without letting me know, and then I shall always be at peace, and will not disquiet myself for the non-reception of a letter; for really, I would not have you crowd your other duties into too small a space, nor dispense with anything that it is desirable to

do, for the sake of writing to me. If you were not to write for a whole year, I still should never doubt that you love me infinitely; and I doubt not that, in vision, dream, or reverie, our wedded souls would hold communion throughout all that time. Therefore I do not ask for letters while you are well, but leave all to your own heart and judgment; but if anything, bodily or mental, afflicts my Dove, her beloved *must* be told.

And why was my dearest wounded by that silly sentence of mine about “indifference”? It was not well that she should do anything but smile at it. I knew, just as certainly as your own heart knows, that my letters are very precious to you—had I been less certain of it, I never could have trifled upon the subject. Oh, my darling, let all your sensibilities be healthy—never, never, be wounded by what ought not to wound. Our tenderness should make us mutually susceptible of happiness from every act of each other, but of pain from none; our mighty love should scorn all little annoyances, even from the object of that love. What misery (and what ridiculous misery too) would it be, if, because we love one another better than all the universe besides, our only gain thereby were a more exquisite sensibility to pain for the beloved hand and a more terrible power of inflicting it! Dearest, it never shall be so with us. We will have such an infinity of mutual faith, that even real offenses (should they ever occur) shall not wound, because we know that something external from yourself or myself must be guilty of the wrong, and never our essential selves. My beloved wife, there is no need of all this preachment now; but let us both meditate upon it, and talk to each other about it;—so shall there never come any cloud across our inward bliss—so shall one of our hearts never wound the other, and itself fester with the sore that it inflicts. And I speak now, when my Dove is not wounded nor sore, because it is easier than it might be hereafter, when some careless and wayward act or word of mine may have rubbed too roughly against her tenderest of hearts. Dearest, I beseech you grant me freedom to be careless and wayward—for I have had such freedom all my life. Oh, let me feel that I may even do you a little wrong without your avenging it (oh how cruelly) by being wounded.

(Rest of letter missing)

TO MISS PEABODY



Custom House, August 8th, 1839

Your letter, my beloved wife, was duly received into your husband’s heart yesterday. I found it impossible to keep it all day long, with unbroken seal, in my pocket; and so I opened and read it on board of a salt vessel, where I was at work, amid all sorts of bustle, and gabble of Irishmen, and other incommodities. Nevertheless its effect was very blessed, even as if I had gazed upward from the deck of the vessel, and beheld my wife’s sweet face looking down upon me from a sun-brightened cloud. Dearest, if your dove-wings will not carry you so far, I beseech you to alight upon such a cloud sometimes, and let it bear you to me. True it is, that I never look heavenward without thinking of you, and I doubt whether it would much surprise me to catch a glimpse of you among those upper regions. Then would all that is spiritual within me so yearn towards you, that I should leave my

earthly incumbrances behind, and float upward and embrace you in the heavenly sunshine. Yet methinks I shall be more content to spend a lifetime of earthly and heavenly happiness intermixed. So human am I, my beloved, that I would not give up the hope of loving and cherishing you by a fireside of our own, not for any unimaginable bliss of higher spheres. Your influence shall purify me and fit me for a better world—but it shall be by means of our happiness here below.

Was such a rhapsody as the foregoing ever written in the Custom House before? I have almost felt it a sin to write to my Dove here, because her image comes before me so vividly—and the place is not worthy of it. Nevertheless, I cast aside my scruples, because, having been awake ever since four o'clock this morning (now thirteen hours) and abroad since sunrise, I shall feel more like holding intercourse in dreams than with my pen, when secluded in my room. I am not quite hopeless, now, of meeting you in dreams. Did you not know, beloved, that I dreamed of you, as it seemed to me, all night long, after that last blissful meeting? It is true, when I looked back upon the dream, it immediately became confused; but it had been vivid, and most happy, and left a sense of happiness in my heart. Come again, sweet wife! Force your way through the mists and vapors that envelope my slumbers—illumine me with a radiance that shall not vanish when I awake. I throw my heart as wide open to you as I can. Come and rest within it, Dove.

Oh, how happy you make me by calling me your husband—by subscribing yourself my wife. I kiss that word when I meet it in your letters; and I repeat over and over to myself, “she is my wife—I am her husband.” Dearest, I could almost think that the institution of marriage was ordained, first of all, for you and me, and for you and me alone; it seems so fresh and new—so unlike anything that the people around us enjoy or are acquainted with. Nobody ever had a wife but me—nobody a husband, save my Dove. Would that the husband were worthier of his wife; but she loves him—and her wise and prophetic heart could never do so if he were utterly unworthy.

My own Room. August 9th—about 10 A.M. It is so rare a thing for your husband to find himself in his own room in the middle of the forenoon, that he cannot help advising his Dove of that remarkable fact. By some misunderstanding, I was sent on a fruitless errand to East Cambridge, and have stopped here, on my return to the Custom House, to rest and refresh myself—and what can so rest and refresh me as to hold intercourse with my darling wife? It must be but a word and a kiss, however—a written word and a shadowy kiss. Good bye, dearest. I must go now to hold controversy, I suppose, with some plaguy little Frenchman about a peck of coal more or less; but I will give my beloved another word and kiss, when the day's toil is over.

About 8 o'clock P.M.—I received your letter, your sweet, sweet letter, my sweetest wife, on reaching the Custom House. Now as to that swelled face of ours—it had begun to swell when we last met; but I did not tell you, because I knew that you would associate the idea of pain with it, whereas, it was attended with no pain at all. Very glad am I, that my Dove did not see me when one side of my face was swollen as big as two, for the image of such a monstrous one-sidedness, or double-sidedness, might have haunted her memory through the whole fortnight. Dearest, is it a weakness that your husband wishes to look tolerably comely always in your eyes?—and beautiful if he could!! My Dove is beautiful, and full of grace; she should not have an ugly mate. But to return to this “naughty swelling”—it

began to subside on Tuesday, and has now, I think, entirely disappeared, leaving my visage in its former admirable proportion. Nothing is now the matter with me; save that my heart is as much swollen as my cheek was—swollen with love, with pent-up love, which I would fain mingle with the heart-blood of mine own sweet wife. Oh, dearest, how much I have to say to you!—how many fond thoughts.

Dearest, I dare not give you permission to go out in the east winds. The west wind will come very often I am sure, if it were only for the sake of my Dove. Have nothing to do with that hateful east wind.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, August 21st, 1839

My dearest will be glad to know that her husband has not had to endure the heavy sunshine this afternoon;—he came home at three o'clock or thereabout, and locking the door, betook himself to sleep—first ensuring himself sweet slumber and blissful dreams (if any dreams should come) by reperusing his sweet wife's letter. His wife was with him at the moment of falling asleep, and at the moment of awaking; but she stole away from him during the interval. Naughty wife! Nevertheless, he has slept and is refreshed—slept how long he does not know; but the sun has made a far progress downward, since he closed his eyes.

Oh, my wife, if it were possible that you should vanish from me, I feel and know that my soul would be solitary forever and ever. I almost think that there would be no "forever" for me. I could not encounter such a desolate Eternity, were you to leave me. You are my first hope and my last. If you fail me (but there is no such if) I might toil onward through this life without much outward change, but I should sink down and die utterly upon the threshold of the dreary Future. Were *you* to find yourself deceived, you would betake yourself at once to God and Heaven, in the certainty of there finding a thousand-fold recompense for all earthly disappointment; but with me, it seems as if hope and happiness would be torn up by the roots, and could never bloom again, neither in this soil nor the soil of Paradise.

August 22d. Five or six o'clock P.M. I was interrupted by the supper bell, while writing the foregoing sentence; and much that I might have added has now passed out of my mind—or passed into its depths. My beloved wife, let us make no question about our love, whether it be true. Were it otherwise, God would not have left your heart to wreck itself utterly—His angels keep watch over you—they would have given you early and continued warning of the approach of Evil in any shape.

Two letters has my Dove blessed me with, since that of Monday—both beautiful—all three, indeed, most beautiful. There is a great deal in all of them that should be especially

answered; but how may this be effected in one little sheet?—moreover, it is my pleasure to write in a more desultory fashion.

Nevertheless, propound as many questions as you see fit, in your letters, but, dearest, let it be without expectation of a set response.

When I first looked at that shadow of the Passing Hour, I thought her expression too sad; but the more I looked the sweeter and pleasanter it grew—and now I am inclined to think that few mortals are waited on by happier Hours than is my Dove, even in her pensive moods. My beloved, you make a Heaven round about you, and dwell in it continually; and as it is your Heaven, so is it mine. My heart has not been very heavy—not desperately heavy—any one time since I loved you; not even your illness and headaches, dearest wife, can make me desperately sad. My stock of sunshine is so infinitely increased by partaking of yours, that even when a cloud flits by, I incomparably prefer its gloom to the sullen, leaden tinge that used to overspread my sky. Were you to bring me, in outward appearance, nothing save a load of grief and pain, yet I do believe that happiness, in no stinted measure, would somehow or other be smuggled into the dismal burthen. But you come to me with no grief—no pain—you come with flowers of Paradise; some in bloom, many in the bud, and all of them immortal.

August 23d—between 7 and 8 P.M. Dearest wife, when I think how soon this letter will greet you, it makes my heart yearn towards you so much the more. How much of life we waste! Oh, beloved, if we had but a cottage somewhere beyond the sway of the east wind, yet within the limits of New England, where we could be always together, and have a place to *be* in—what could we desire more? Nothing—save daily bread, (or rather bread and milk, for I think I should adopt your diet) and clean white apparel every day for mine unspotted Dove. Then how happy I would be—and how good! I could not be other than good and happy, when your kiss would sanctify me at all my outgoings and incomings. And you should draw, and paint, and sculpture, and make music, and poetry too, and your husband would admire and criticise; and I, being pervaded with your spirit, would write beautifully and make myself famous for your sake, because perhaps you would like to have the world acknowledge me—but if the whole world glorified me with one voice, it would be a meed of little value in comparison with my wife's smile and kiss. For I shall always read my manuscripts to you, in the summer afternoons or winter evenings; and if they please you I shall expect a smile and a kiss as my reward—and if they do not please, I must have a smile and kiss to comfort me.

Good bye—sweet, sweet, dear, dear, sweetest, dearest wife. I received the kiss you sent me and have treasured it up in my heart. Take one from your own husband.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, August 25th, 1839

Dearest Wife,

I did not write you yesterday, for several reasons—partly because I was interrupted by company; and also I had a difficult letter to project and execute in behalf of an office-seeker; and in the afternoon I fell asleep amid thoughts of my own Dove; and when I awoke, I took up Miss Martineau's *Deerbrook*, and became interested in it—because, being myself a lover, nothing that treats earnestly of love can be indifferent to me. Some truth in the book I recognised—but there seems to be too much of dismal fantasy.

Thus, one way or another, the Sabbath passed away without my pouring out my heart to my sweet wife on paper; but I thought of you, dearest, all day long. Your letter came this forenoon, and I opened it on board of a salt-ship, and snatched portions of it in the intervals of keeping tally. Every letter of yours is as fresh and new as if you had never written a preceding one—each is like a strain of music unheard before, yet all are in sweet accordance—all of them introduce me deeper and deeper into your being, yet there is no sense of surprise at what I see, and feel, and know, therein. I am familiar with your inner heart, as with my home; but yet there is a sense of revelation—or perhaps of recovered intimacy with a dearest friend long hidden from me. Were you not my wife in some past eternity?

Dearest, perhaps these speculations are not wise. We will not cast dreamy glances too far behind us or before us, but live our present life in simplicity; for methinks that is the way to realise it most intensely. Good night, most beloved. Your husband is presently going to bed; for the bell has just rung (those bells are always interrupting us, whether for dinner, or supper, or bed-time) and he rose early this morning, and must be abroad at sunrise tomorrow. Good night, my wife. Receive your husband's kiss upon your eyelids.

August 27th. ½ past 7 o'clock. Very dearest, your husband has been stationed all day at the end of Long Wharf, and I rather think that he had the most eligible situation of anybody in Boston. I was aware that it must be intensely hot in the middle of the city; but there was only a very short space of uncomfortable heat in my region, half-way towards the center of the harbour; and almost all the time there was a pure and delightful breeze, fluttering and palpitating, sometimes shyly kissing my brow, then dying away, and then rushing upon me in livelier sport, so that I was fain to settle my straw hat tighter upon my head. Late in the afternoon, there was a sunny shower, which came down so like a benediction, that it seemed ungrateful to take shelter in the cabin, or to put up an umbrella. Then there was a rainbow, or a large segment of one, so exceedingly brilliant, and of such long endurance, that I almost fancied it was stained into the sky, and would continue there permanently. And there were clouds floating all about, great clouds and small, of all glorious and lovely hues (save that imperial crimson, which was never revealed save to our united gaze) so glorious, indeed, and so lovely, that I had a fantasy of Heaven's being broken into fleecy fragments, and dispersed throughout space, with its blessed inhabitants yet dwelling blissfully upon those scattered islands. Oh, how I do wish that my sweet wife and I could dwell upon a cloud, and follow the sunset round about the earth! Perhaps she might; but my nature is too earthy to permit me to dwell there with her—and I know well that she would not leave me here. Dearest, how I longed for you to be with me, both in the shower and the sunshine. I did but half see what was to be seen, nor but half feel the

emotions which the scene ought to have produced. Had you been there, I do think that we should have remembered this among our most wondrously beautiful sunsets. And the sea was very beautiful too. Would it not be a pleasant life to—but I will not sketch out any more fantasies tonight.

Beloved, have not I been gone a great while? Truly it seems to me very long; and it [is] strange what an increase of apparent length is always added by two or three days of the second week. Do not you yearn to see me? I know you do, dearest. How do I know it? How should I, save by my own heart?

Dearest wife, I am tired now, and have scribbled this letter in such slovenly fashion that I fear you will hardly be able to read it—nevertheless, I have been happy in writing it. But now, though it is so early yet, I shall throw aside my pen, especially as the paper is so nearly covered.

My sweet Dove,

Good night.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, September 23^d 1839. ½ past 6 P.M.

Belovedest little wife—sweetest Sophie Hawthorne—what a delicious walk that was, last Thursday! It seems to me, now, as if I could really remember every footstep of it. It is almost as distinct as the recollection of those walks, in which my earthly form did really tread beside your own, and my arm upheld you; and, indeed, it has the same character as those heavenly ramblings;—for did we tread on earth ever then? Oh no—our souls went far away among the sunset clouds, and wherever there was ethereal beauty, there were we, our true selves; and it was there we grew into each other, and became a married pair.

Dearest, I love to date our marriage as far back as possible, and I feel sure that the tie had been formed, and our union had become indissoluble, even before we sat down together on the steps of the “house of spirits.” How beautiful and blessed those hours appear to me! True; we are far more conscious of our relation, and therefore infinitely happier, now, than we were then; but still those remembrances are among the most precious treasures of my soul. It is not past happiness; it makes a portion of our present bliss. And thus, doubtless, even amid the joys of Heaven, we shall love to look back to our earthly bliss, and treasure it forever in the sum of an infinitely accumulating happiness. Perhaps not a single pressure of the hand, not a glance, not a sweet and tender tone, but will be repeated sometime or other in our memory.

Oh, dearest, blessedest Dove, I never felt sure of going to Heaven, till I knew that you loved me; but now I am conscious of God's love in your own. And now, good bye for a little while, mine own wife. I thought it was just on the verge of supper-time when I began to write—and there is the bell now. I was beginning to fear that it had rung unheard while I was communing with my Dove. Should we be the more ethereal, if we did not eat? I have a most human and earthly appetite.

Mine own wife, since supper I have been reading over again (for the third time—the two first being aboard my saltship—the Marcia Cleaves) your letter of yesterday—and a dearest letter it is—and meeting with Sophie Hawthorne twice, I took the liberty to kiss her very fervently. Will she forgive me? Do know yourself by that name, dearest, and think of yourself as Sophie Hawthorne? It thrills my heart to write it, and still more, I think, to read it in the fairy letters of your own hand. Oh, you are my wife, my dearest, truest, tenderest, most beloved wife. I would not be disjoined from you for a moment, for all the world. And how strong, while I write, is the consciousness that I am truly your husband!

My little Dove. I have observed that butterflies—very broad-winged and magnificent butterflies—frequently come on board of the salt ship when I am at work. What have these bright strangers to do on Long Wharf, where there are no flowers or any green thing—nothing but brick stores, stone piles, black ships, and the bustle of toilsome men, who neither look up to the blue sky, nor take note of these wandering gems of air. I cannot account for them, unless, dearest, they are the lovely fantasies of your mind, which you send thither in search of me. There is the supper-bell. Good-bye, darling.

Sept. 25th. Morning.—Dove, I have but a single moment to embrace you. Tell Sophie Hawthorne I love her. Has she a partiality for her own, own

HUSBAND.

TO MISS PEABODY



*Custom House, October 10th, 1839—½ past 2
P.M.*

Belovedest, your two precious letters have arrived—the first yesterday forenoon, the second today. In regard to the first, there was a little circumstance that affected me so pleasantly, that I cannot help telling my sweetest wife of it. I had read it over three times, I believe, and was reading it again, towards evening in my room; when I discovered, in a remote region of the sheet, two or three lines which I had not before seen, and which Sophie Hawthorne had signed with her own name. It is the strangest thing in the world that I had not read them before—but certainly it was a happy accident; for, finding them so unexpectedly, when I supposed that I already had the whole letter by heart, it seemed as if there had been a sudden revelation of my Dove—as if she had stolen into my room (as, in her last epistle, she dreams of doing) and made me sensible of her presence at that very moment. Dearest, since writing the above, I have been interrupted by some official

business; for I am at present filling the place of Colonel Hall as head of the measurers' department—which may account for my writing to you from the Custom House. It is the most ungenial place in the whole world to write a love-letter in:—not but what my heart is full of love, here as elsewhere: but it closes up, and will not give forth its treasure now.

I do wish mine own Dove had been with me, on my last passage to Boston. We should assuredly have thought that a miracle had been wrought in our favor—that Providence had put angelic sentinels round about us, to ensure us the quiet enjoyment of our affection—for, as far as Lynn, I was actually the sole occupant of the car in which I had seated myself. What a blissful solitude would that have been, had my whole self been there! Then would we have flown through space like two disembodied spirits—two or one. Are we singular or plural, dearest? Has not each of us a right to use the first person singular, when speaking in behalf of our united being? Does not “I,” whether spoken by Sophie Hawthorne's lips or mine, express the one spirit of myself and that darlingest Sophie Hawthorne? But what a wilful little person she is! Does she still refuse my Dove's proffer to kiss her cheek? Well—I shall contrive some suitable punishment: and if my Dove cannot kiss her, I must undertake the task in person. What a painful duty it will be!

October 11th—½ past 4 P.M. Did my Dove fly in with me in my chamber when I entered just now? If so, let her make herself manifest to me this very moment, for my heart needs her presence.—You are not here dearest. I sit writing in the middle of the chamber, opposite the looking-glass; and as soon as I finish this sentence, I shall look therein—and really I have something like a shadowy notion, that I shall behold mine own white Dove peeping over my shoulder. One moment more—I defer the experiment as long as possible, because there is a pleasure in the slight tremor of the heart that this fantasy has awakened. Dearest, if you can make me sensible of your presence, do it now!—Oh, naughty, naughty Dove! I have looked, and saw nothing but my own dark face and beetle-brow. How could you disappoint me so? Or is it merely the defect in my own eyes, which cannot behold the spiritual? My inward eye can behold you, though but dimly. Perhaps, beloved wife, you did not come when I called, because you mistook the locality whence the call proceeded. You are to know, then, that I have removed from my old apartment, which was wanted as a parlor by Mr. and Mrs. Devens, and am now established in a back chamber—a pleasant enough and comfortable little room. The windows have a better prospect than those of my former chamber, for I can see the summit of the hill on which Gardner Greene's estate was situated; it is the highest point of the city, and the boys at play on it are painted strongly against the sky. No roof ascends as high as this—nothing but the steeple of the Park-street church, which points upward behind it. It is singular that such a hill should have been suffered to remain so long, in the very heart of the city; it affects me somewhat as if a portion of the original forest were still growing here. But they are fast digging it away now; and if they continue their labors, I shall soon be able to see the Park-street steeple as far downward as the dial. Moreover, in another direction, I can see the top of the dome of the State-House; and if my Dove were to take wing and alight there (the easiest thing in the world for a dove to do) she might look directly into my window, and see me writing this letter. I glance thither as I write, but can see no Dove there.

(Rest of letter missing)

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, October 3^d, 1839. ½ past 7 P.M.

Ownest Dove;

Did you get home safe and sound, and with a quiet and happy heart? Providence acted lovingly toward us on Tuesday evening, allowing us to meet in the wide desert of this world, and mingle our spirits. It would have seemed all a vision then, now we have the symbol of its reality. You looked like a vision, beautifullest wife, with the width of the room between us—so spiritual that my human heart wanted to be assured that you had an earthly vesture on. What beautiful white doves those were, on the border of the vase; are they of mine own Dove's kindred? Do you remember a story of a cat who was changed into a lovely lady?—and on her bridal night, a mouse happened to run across the floor; and forthwith the cat-wife leaped out of bed to catch it. What if mine own Dove, in some woeful hour for her poor husband, should remember her dove-instincts, and spread her wings upon the western breeze, and return to him no more! Then would he stretch out his arms, poor wingless biped, not having the wherewithal to fly, and say aloud—"Come back, naughty Dove!—whither are you going?—come back, and fold your wings upon my heart again, or it will freeze!" And the Dove would flutter her wings, and pause a moment in the air, meditating whether or no she should come back: for in truth, as her conscience would tell her, this poor mortal had given her all he had to give—a resting-place on his bosom—a home in his deepest heart. But then she would say to herself—"my home is in the gladsome air—and if I need a resting-place, I can find one on any of the sunset-clouds. He is unreasonable to call me back; but if he can follow me, he may!" Then would the poor deserted husband do his best to fly in pursuit of the faithless Dove; and for that purpose would ascend to the topmast of a salt-ship, and leap desperately into the air, and fall down head-foremost upon the deck, and break his neck. And there should be engraven on his tombstone—"Mate not thyself with a Dove, unless thou hast wings to fly."

Now will my Dove scold at me for this foolish flight of fancy;—but the fact is, my goose quill flew away with me. I do think that I have gotten a bunch of quills from the silliest flock of geese on earth. But the rest of the letter shall be very sensible. I saw Mr. Howes in the reading-room of [the] Athenaeum, between one and two o'clock to-day; for I happened to have had leisure for an early dinner, and so was spending a half-hour turning over the periodicals. He spoke of the long time since your husband had been at his house; and so I promised, on behalf of that respectable personage, that he would spend an evening there on his next visit to Salem. But if I had such a sweetest wife as your husband has, I doubt whether I could find [it] in my heart to keep the engagement. Now, good night, truest Dove in the world. You will never fly away from me; and it is only the infinite impossibility of it that enables me to sport with the idea.

Dearest, there was an illegible word in your yesterday's note. I have pored over it, but cannot make it out. Your words are too precious to be thus hidden under their own vesture. Good night, wife!

October 4th.—5 or thereabout P.M. Mine own Dove, I dreamed the queerest dreams last night, about being deserted, and all such nonsense—so you see how I was punished for that naughty nonsense of the Faithless Dove. It seems to me that my dreams are generally

about fantasies, and very seldom about what I really think and feel. You did not appear visibly in my last night's dreams: but they were made up of desolation; and it was good to awake, and know that my spirit was forever and irrevocably linked with the soul of my truest and tenderest Dove. You have warmed my heart, mine own wife: and never again can I know what it is to be cold and desolate, save in dreams. You love me dearly—don't you?

And so my Dove has been in great peril since we parted. No—I do not believe she was; it was only a shadow of peril, not a reality. My spirit cannot anticipate any harm to you, and I trust you to God with securest faith. I know not whether I could endure actually to see you in danger: but when I hear of any risk—as, for instance, when your steed seemed to be on the point of dashing you to pieces (but I do quake a little at that thought) against a tree—my mind does not seize upon it as if it had any substance. Believe me, dearest, the tree would have stood aside to let you pass, had there been no other means of salvation. Nevertheless, do not drive your steed against trees wilfully. Mercy on us, what a peril that was of the fat woman, when she “smashed herself down” beside my Dove! Poor Dove! Did you not feel as if an avalanche had all but buried you. I can see my Dove at this moment, my slender, little delicatest white Dove, squeezed almost out of Christendom by that great mass of female flesh—that ton of woman—that beef-eater and beer-guzzler, whose immense cloak, though broad as a ship's mainsail, could not be made to meet in front—that picture of an ale-wife—that triple, quadruple, dozen-fold old lady.

Will not my Dove confess that there is a little *nonsense* in this epistle? But be not wroth with me, darling wife;—my heart sports with you because it loves you.

If you happen to see Sophie Hawthorne, kiss her cheek for my sake. I love her full as well as I do mine own wife. Will that satisfy her, do you think? If not, she is a very unreasonable little person.

It is my chiefest pleasure to write to you, dearest.

YOUR OWNEST HUSBAND.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, October 23^d, 1839—½ past 7 P.M.

Dear little Dove,

Here sits your husband, comfortably established for the evening in his own domicile, with a cheerful coal fire making the room a little too warm. I think I like to be a very little too warm. And now if my Dove were here, she and that naughty Sophie Hawthorne, how happy we all three—two—one—(how many are there of us?)—how happy might we be! Dearest, it will be a yet untasted bliss, when, for the first time, I have you in a domicile of

my own, whether it be in a hut or a palace, a splendid suit of rooms or an attic chamber. Then I shall feel as if I had brought my wife home at last. Shall Sophie Hawthorne be there too? Yes, mine own Dove, whether you like it or no. You would wonder, were I to tell you how absolutely necessary she has contrived to render herself to your husband. His heart stirs at her very name—even at the thought of her unspoken name. She is his sunshine—she is a happy smile on the visage of his Destiny, causing that stern personage to look as benign as Heaven itself. And were Sophie Hawthorne a tear instead of a smile, still your foolish husband would hold out his heart to receive that tear within it, and doubtless would think it more precious than all the smiles and sunshine in the world. But Sophie Hawthorne has bewitched him—for there is great reason to suspect that she deals in magic. Sometimes, while your husband conceives himself to be holding his Dove in his arms, lo and behold! there is the arch face of Sophie Hawthorne peeping up at him. And again, in the very midst of Sophie Hawthorne's airs, while he is meditating what sort of chastisement would suit her misdemeanors, all of a sudden he becomes conscious of his Dove, with her wings folded upon his heart to keep it warm. Methinks a woman, or angel (yet let it be a woman, because I deem a true woman holier than an angel)—methinks a woman, then, who should combine the characteristics of Sophie Hawthorne and my Dove would be the very perfection of her race. The heart would find all it yearns for, in such a woman, and so would the mind and the fancy;—when her husband was lightsome of spirit, her merry fantasies would dance hand in hand with his; and when he was overburthened with cares he would rest them all upon her bosom.

Dearest, your husband was called on by Mr. Hillard yesterday, who said that he intended soon to take a house in Boston, and, in that case, would like to take your respectable spouse to lodge and breakfast. What thinks my Dove of this? Your husband is quite delighted, because he thinks matters may be managed so that once in a while he may meet his own wife within his own premises. Might it not be so? Or would his wife—most preposterous idea!—deem it a sin against decorum to pay a visit to her husband? Oh, no, belovedest. Your unreserve, your out-gushing frankness, is one of the loveliest results of your purity, and innocence, and holiness. And now good night, wife worshipful and beloved. Amid many musings, nine o'clock has surprised me at this stage of my epistle.

October 24th.—½ past 6 P.M. Dearest Dove, your letter came to-day; and I do think it the sweetest of all letters—but you must not therefore suppose that you have excelled yourself; for I think the same of each successive one. My dearest, what a delightful scene was that between Sophie Hawthorne and my Dove, when the former rebelled so stoutly against Destiny, and the latter, with such meek mournfulness, submitted. Which do I love the best, I wonder—my Dove, or my little Wild-Flower? I love each best, and both equally; and my heart would inevitably wither and dry up, and perish utterly, if either of them were torn away from it. Yet, truly I have reason to apprehend more trouble with Sophie Hawthorne than with my Dove.

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

TO MISS PEABODY

Custom House, Novr. 14th [1839]

My dearest Wife,

May God sustain you under this affliction. I have long dreaded it for your sake. Oh, let your heart be full of love for me now, and realise how entirely my happiness depends on your well-being. You are not your own, dearest—you must not give way to grief. Were it possible, I would come to see you now.

I will write you again on Saturday.

YOUR OWN HUSBAND.

My dearest, this note seems cold and lifeless to me, as if there were no tenderness nor comfort in it. Think for yourself all that I cannot speak.

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

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, Novr. 15th—very late [1839]

Dearest and best wife, I meant to have written you a long letter this evening; but an indispensable and unexpected engagement with Gen. M'Neil has prevented me. Belovedest, your yesterday's letter was received; and gave me infinite comfort. Yet, Oh, be prepared for the worst—if this may be called worst, which is in truth best for all—and more than all for George. I cannot help trembling for you, dearest. God bless you and keep you.

I will write a full letter in a day or two. Meantime, as your husband is to rise with peep of day tomorrow, he must betake him to his mattress. Good night, dearest.

YOUR OWNEST.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Salem.

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, Nov. 17, 1839—6 P.M. or thereabout.

I received no letter from my sweetest wife yesterday; and my heart is not quite at ease about her. Dearest, I pray to God for you—and I pray to yourself, too; for methinks there

is within you a divine and miraculous power to counteract all sorts of harm. Oh be strong for the sake of your husband. Let all your love for me be so much added to the strength of your heart. Remember that your anguish must likewise be mine. Not that I would have it otherwise, mine own wife—your sorrows shall be just as precious a possession to me as your joys.

Dearest, if you could steal in upon your husband now, you would see a comfortable sight. I wish you would make a sketch of me, here in our own parlour; and it might be done without trusting entirely to imagination, as you have seen the room and the furniture—and (though that would be the least important item of the picture) you have seen myself. I am writing now at my new bureau, which stands between the windows; there are two lamps before me, which show the polished shadings of the mahogany panels to great advantage. A coal fire is burning in the grate—not a very fervid one, but flickering up fitfully, once in a while, so as to remind me that I am by my own fireside. I am sitting in the cane-bottomed rocking-chair (wherein my Dove once sate, but which did not meet her approbation); and another hair-cloth arm-chair stands in front of the fire. Would that I could look round with the assurance of seeing mine own white Dove in it! Not that I want to see her apparition—nor to have her brought here by miracle, but I want that full assurance of peace and joy, which I should have if my belovedest wife were near me in our own parlor.

Sophie Hawthorne, what a beautiful carpet did you choose for me! I admire it so much that I can hardly bear to tread upon it. It is fit only to be knelt upon; and I do kneel on it sometimes. As you saw it only in narrow strips, I doubt whether even you can imagine what an effect is produced by the tout ensemble, spreading its fantastic foliage, or whatever it is, all over the floor. Many times today have I found myself gazing at it; and I am almost tempted to call in people from the street to help me admire it worthily. But perhaps they would not quite sympathize with my raptures. I am doubtless somewhat more alive to the merits of this carpet, because it was your choice, and is our mutual property. My Dove, there is an excellent place for a bust over the bookcase which surmounts my bureau; some time or other, I shall behold a creation of your own upon it. At present, I have no work of art to adorn our parlour with, except an allumette-holder, on the mantel-piece ornamented with drawings from Flaxman. It was given me by Elizabeth; and, considerably to my vexation, one of the glasses has been broken, during the recent removal of my household gods.

My wife, I like sleeping on a mattress better than on a feather-bed. It is a pity, however, that a mattress looks so lean and lank;—it certainly does not suggest such ideas of comfort and downy repose as a well-filled feather-bed does; but my sleep, I think, is of better quality, though, indeed, there was nothing to complain of on that score, even while I reposed on feathers. You need not be afraid of my smothering in the little bed-room; for I always leave the door open, so that I have the benefit of the immense volume of air in the spacious parlor.

Mrs. Hillard takes excellent care of me, and feeds [me] with eggs and baked apples and other delectable dainties; and altogether I am as happily situated as a man can be, whose heart is wedded, while externally he is still a bachelor.

My wife, would you rather that I should come home next Saturday and stay till Monday,

or that I should come to Thanksgiving and stay the rest of the week? Both I cannot do; but I will try to do the latter, if you wish it; and I think I shall finish the salt-ship which I am now engaged upon, about Thanksgiving time—unless foul weather intervene to retard our progress. How delightfully long the evenings are now! I do not get intolerably tired any longer; and my thoughts sometimes wander back to literature and I have momentary impulses to write stories. But this will not be, at present. The utmost that I can hope to do, will be to portray some of the characteristics of the life which I am now living, and of the people with whom I am brought into contact, for future use. I doubt whether I shall write any more for the public, till I can have a daily or nightly opportunity of submitting my productions to the criticism of Sophie Hawthorne. I have a high opinion of that young lady's critical acumen, but a great dread of her severity—which, however, the Dove will not fail to temper with her sweetness.

Dearest, there is nothing at all in this letter; and perhaps it may come to you at a time when your heart needs the strongest, and tenderest, and most comfortable words that mine can speak to it. Yet what could I say, but to assure you that I love you, and partake whatever of good or evil God sends you—or rather, partake whatever good God sends you, whether it come in festal garments or mourning ones; for still it is good, whether arrayed in sable, or flower-crowned. God bless you, belovedest,

YOUR OWNEST HUSBAND.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, Novr. 19th, 6 P.M., [1839]

Belovedest Wife,

My heart bids me to send you a greeting; and therefore I do it, although I do not feel as if I had many thoughts and words at command tonight, but only feelings and sympathies, which must find their way to you as well as they can. Dearest, I cannot bear to think of you sitting all day long in that chamber, and not a soul to commune with you. But I endeavor, and will still endeavor, to send my soul thither, from out of the toil and tedium of my daily life;—so think, beloved, whenever solitude and sad thoughts become intolerable, that, just at that moment I am near you, and trying to comfort you and make you sensible of my presence.

Beloved, it occurs to me, that my earnest entreaties to you to be calm and strong may produce an effect not altogether good. The behests of Nature may perhaps differ from mine, and be wiser. If she bids you shed tears, methinks it will be best to let them flow, and then your grief will melt quietly forth, instead of being pent up till it breaks out in a torrent. But I cannot speak my counsel to you, dearest, so decidedly as if I were with you; for then my heart would know all the state of yours, and what it needed. But love me

infinitely, my wife, and rest your heart with all its heaviness on mine. I know not what else to say;—but even that is saying something—is it not, dearest?

I rather think, beloved, that I shall come home on Saturday night, and take my chance of being able to come again on Thanksgiving-day. But then I shall not be able to remain the rest of the week. That you want me I know; and, dearest, my head and heart are weary with absence from you; so that it will be best to snatch the first chance that offers. Soon, mine own wife, I shall be able to spend much more time with you.

YOUR LOVINGEST HUSBAND.

Does Sophie Hawthorne keep up my Dove's spirits?

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, Novr. 20th, ½ past 8 P.M., [1839]

Dearest, you know not how your blessed letter strengthens my heart on your account; for I know by it that God and the angels are supporting you. And, mine own wife, though I thought that I revered you infinitely before, yet never was so much of that feeling mingled with my love, as now. You are yourself one of the angels who minister to your departing brother—the more an angel, because you triumph over earthly weakness to perform those offices of affection. I feel, now, with what confidence I can rest upon you in all my sorrows and troubles—as confident of your strength as of your love. Dearest, there is nothing in me worthy of you. My heart is weak in comparison with yours. Its strength, it is true, has never been tried; for I have never been called to minister at the dying bed of a dear friend; but I have often thought, that, in such a scene, I should need support from the dying, instead of being able to give it. I bless God that He has made Death so beautiful as he appears in the scene which you describe—that He has caused the light from the other side to shine over and across the chasm of the grave.

My wife, my spirit has never yearned for communion with you so much as it does now. I long to hold you on my bosom—to hold you there silently—for I have no words to write my sympathy, and should have none to speak them. Sometimes, even after all I have now learned of your divine fortitude, I feel as if I shall dread to meet you, lest I should find you quite worn down by this great trial. But, dearest, I will make up my mind to see you pale, and thinner than you were. Only do not be sick—do not give me too much to bear.

Novr. 21st, ½ past 5 P.M. Mine own Dove, your fourth letter came today, and all the rest were duly received, and performed their heaven-appointed mission to my soul. The last has left a very cheering influence on my spirit. Dearest, I love that naughty Sophie Hawthorne with an unspeakable affection, and bless God for her every minute; for what my Dove could do without her, passes my comprehension. And, mine own wife, I have

not been born in vain, but to an end worth living for, since you are able to rest your heart on me, and are thereby sustained in this sorrow, and enabled to be a help and comfort to your mother, and a ministering angel to George. Give my love to George. I regret that we have known each other so little in life; but there will be time enough hereafter—in that pleasant region “on the other side.”

Beloved, I shall come on Saturday, but probably not till the five o’clock train, unless it should storm; so you must not expect me till seven or thereabouts. I never did yearn for you so much as now. There is a feeling in me as if a great while had passed since we met. Is it so with you?

The days are cold now, the air eager and nipping—yet it suits my health amazingly. I feel as if I could run a hundred miles at a stretch, and jump over all the houses that happen to be in my way. Belovedest, I must bring this letter to a close now, for several reasons—partly that I may carry it to the Post-Office before it closes; for I hate to make your father pay the postage of my wife’s letters. Also, I have another short letter of business to write;—and, moreover, I must go forth into the wide world to seek my supper. This life of mine is the perfection of a bachelor-life—so perfectly untrammelled as it is. Do you not fear, my wife, to trust me to live in such a way any longer?

Belovedest, still keep up your heart for your husband’s sake. I pray to God for quiet sleeps for my Dove, and cheerful awakings—yes, cheerful; for Death moves with a sweet aspect into your household; and your brother passes away with him as with a friend. And now farewell, dearest of wives. You are the hope and joy of your husband’s heart. Never, never forget how very precious you are to him. God bless you, dearest.

YOUR OWNEST HUSBAND.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, Novr. 25th, 1839—6 P.M.

Belovedest Wife,

This very day I have held you in my arms; and yet, now that I find myself again in my solitary room, it seems as if a long while had already passed—long enough, as I trust my Dove will think, to excuse my troubling her with an epistle. I came off in the two o’clock cars, through such a pouring rain, that doubtless Sophie Hawthorne set it down for certain that I should pass the day and night in Salem. And perhaps she and the Dove are now watching, with beating heart, to hear your husband lift the door-latch. Alas, that they must be disappointed! Dearest, I feel that I ought to be with you now; for it grieves me to imagine you all alone in that chamber, where you “sit and wait”—as you said to me this morning. This, I trust, is the last of your sorrow, mine own wife; in which you will not

have all the aid that your husband's bosom, and the profoundest sympathy that exists within it, can impart.

I found your letter in the Measurer's Desk; and though I knew perfectly well that it was there, and had thought of it repeatedly, yet it struck me with a sense of unexpectedness when I saw it. I put it in my breast-pocket, and did not open it till I found myself comfortably settled for the evening; for I took my supper of oysters on my way to my room, and have nothing to do with the busy world till sunrise tomorrow. Oh, mine own beloved, it seems to me the only thing worth living for that I have ever done, or been instrumental in, that God has made me the means of saving you from the heaviest anguish of your brother's loss. Ever, ever, dearest wife, keep my image, or rather my reality, between yourself and pain of every kind. Let me clothe you in my love as in an armour of proof—let me wrap my spirit round about your own, so that no earthly calamity may come in immediate contact with it, but be felt, if at all, through a softening medium. And it is a blessed privilege, and even a happy one, to give such sympathy as my Dove requires—happy to give—and, dearest, is it not also happiness to receive it? Our happiness consists in our sense of the union of our hearts—and has not that union been far more deeply felt within us now, than if all our ties were those of joy and gladness? Thus may every sorrow leave us happier than it found us, by causing our hearts to embrace more closely in the mutual effort to sustain it.

Dearest, I pray God that your strength may not fail you at the close of this scene. My heart is not quite at rest about you. It seems to me, on looking back, that there was a vague inquietude within me all through this last visit; and this it was, perhaps, that made me seem more sportive than usual.

Did I tell my carefulest little wife that I had bought me a fur cap, wherewith my ears may bid defiance to the wintry blast—a poor image, by the way, to talk of *ears bidding* defiance. The nose might do it, because it is capable of emitting sounds like a trumpet—indeed, Sophie Hawthorne's nose bids defiance without any sound. But what nonsense this is. Also (I have now been a married man long enough to feel these details perfectly natural, in writing to my wife) your husband, having a particular dislike to flannel, is resolved, every cold morning, to put on two shirts, and has already done so on one occasion, wonderfully to his comfort. Perhaps—but this I leave to Sophie Hawthorne's judgment—it might be well to add a daily shirt to my apparel as the winter advances, and to take them off again, one by one, with the approach of spring. Dear me, what a puffed-out heap of cotton-bagging would your husband be, by the middle of January! His Dove would strive in vain to fold her wings around him.

My beloved, this is Thanksgiving week. Do you remember how we were employed, or what our state of feeling was, at this time last year? I have forgotten how far we had advanced into each other's hearts—or rather, how conscious we had become that we were mutually within one another—but I am sure we were already dearest friends. But now our eyes are opened. Now we know that we have found all in each other—all that life has to give—and a foretaste of eternity. At every former Thanksgiving-day I have been so ungrateful to Heaven as to feel that something was wanting, and that my life so far had been abortive; and therefore, I fear, there has often been repining instead of thankfulness in my heart. Now I can thank God that he has given me my Dove, and all the world in her.

I wish, dearest, that we could eat our Thanksgiving dinner together; and were it nothing but your bowl of bread and milk, we would both of us be therewith content. But I must sit at our mother's table. One of these days, sweetest wife, we will invite her to our own.

Will my Dove expect a letter from me so soon? I have written this evening, because I expect to be engaged tomorrow—moreover, my heart bade me write. God bless and keep you, dearest.

YOUR OWNEST DEODATUS.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, Novr. 29th, 1839—6 or 7 P.M.

Blessedest wife,

Does our head ache this evening?—and has it ached all or any of the time to-day? I wish I knew, dearest, for it seems almost too great a blessing to expect, that my Dove should come quite safe through the trial which she has encountered. Do, mine own wife, resume all your usual occupations as soon as possible—your sculpture, your painting, your music (what a company of sister-arts is combined in the little person of my Dove!)—and above all, your riding and walking. Write often to your husband, and let your letters gush from a cheerful heart; so shall they refresh and gladden me, like draughts from a sparkling fountain, which leaps from some spot of earth where no grave has ever been dug. Dearest, for some little time to come, I pray you not to muse too much upon your brother, even though such musings should be untinged with gloom, and should appear to make you happier. In the eternity where he now dwells, it has doubtless become of no importance to himself whether he died yesterday, or a thousand years ago; he is already at home in the celestial city—more at home than ever he was in his mother's house. Then, my beloved, let us leave him there for the present; and if the shadows and images of this fleeting time should interpose between us and him, let us not seek to drive them away, for they are sent of God. By and bye, it will be good and profitable to commune with your brother's spirit; but so soon after his release from mortal infirmity, it seems even ungenerous towards himself, to call him back by yearnings of the heart and too vivid picturings of what he was.

Little Dove, why did you shed tears the other day, when you supposed that your husband thought you to blame for regretting the irrevocable past? Dearest, I never think you to blame; for you positively have no faults. Not that you always act wisely, or judge wisely, or feel precisely what it would be wise to feel, in relation to this present world and state of being; but it is because you are too delicately and exquisitely wrought in heart, mind, and frame, to dwell in such a world—because, in short, you are fitter to be in Paradise than here. You needed, therefore, an interpreter between the world and yourself—one who

should sometimes set you right, not in the abstract (for there you are never wrong) but relatively to human and earthly matters;—and such an interpreter is your husband, who can sympathise, though inadequately, with his wife’s heavenly nature, and has likewise a portion of shrewd earthly sense, enough to guide us both through the labyrinths of time. Now, dearest, when I criticise any act, word, thought, or feeling of yours, you must not understand it as a reproof, or as imputing anything wrong, wherewith you are to burthen your conscience. Were an angel, however holy and wise, to come and dwell with mortals, he would need the guidance and instruction of some mortal; and so will you, my Dove, need mine—and precisely the same sort of guidance that the angel would. Then do not grieve, nor grieve your husband’s spirit, when he essays to do his office; but remember that he does it reverently, and in the devout belief that you are, in immortal reality, both wiser and better than himself, though sometimes he may chance to interpret the flitting shadows around us more accurately than you. Hear what I say, dearest, in a cheerful spirit, and act upon it with cheerful strength. And do not give an undue weight to my judgment, nor imagine that there is no appeal from it, and that its decrees are not to be questioned. Rather, make it a rule always to question them and be satisfied of their correctness;—and so shall my Dove be improved and perfected in the gift of a human understanding, till she become even *earthly-wiselier* than her sagacious husband. Undine’s husband gave her an immortal soul; my beloved wife must be content with an humbler gift from me, being already provided with as high and pure a soul as ever was created.

God bless you, belovedest. I bestow three kisses on the air—they are intended for your eyelids and brow, to drive away the head-ache.

YOUR OWNEST.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Custom-House, Novr. 30th [1839]

Mine own Dove,

You will have received my letter, dearest, ere now, and I trust that it will have conveyed the peace of my own heart into yours; for my heart is too calm and peaceful in the sense of our mutual love, to be disturbed even by my sweetest wife’s disquietude. Belovedest and blessedest, I cannot feel anything but comfort in you. Rest quietly on my deep, deep, deepest affection. You deserve it all, and infinitely more than all, were it only for the happiness you give me. I apprehended that this cup could not pass from you, without your tasting bitterness among its dregs. You have been too calm, my beloved—you have exhausted your strength. Let your soul lean upon my love, till we meet again—then all your troubles shall be hushed.

Your ownest, happiest,

DEODATUS.

How does Sophie Hawthorne do? Expect a letter on Tuesday. God bless my dearest.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, December 1st, 1839—6 or 7 P.M.

My Dearest,

The day must not pass without my speaking a word or two to my belovedest wife, of whom I have thought, with tender anxieties mingled with comfortable hopes, all day long. Dearest, is your heart at peace now? God grant it—and I have faith that He will communicate the peace of my heart to yours. Mine own wife, always when there is trouble within you, let your husband know of it. Strive to fling your burthen upon me; for there is strength enough in me to bear it all, and love enough to make me happy in bearing it. I will not give up any of my conjugal rights—and least of all this most precious right of ministering to you in all sorrow. My bosom was made, among other purposes, for mine ownest wife to shed tears upon. This I have known, ever since we were married—and I had yearnings to be your support and comforter, even before I knew that God was uniting our spirits in immortal wedlock. I used to think that it would be happiness enough, food enough for my heart, if I could be the life-long, familiar friend of your family, and be allowed to see yourself every evening, and to watch around you to keep harm away—though you might never know what an interest I felt in you. And how infinitely more than this has been granted me! Oh, never dream, blessedest wife, that you can be other than a comfort to your husband—or that he can be disappointed in you. Mine own Dove, I hardly know how it is, but nothing that you do or say ever surprises or disappoints me; it must be that my spirit is so thoroughly and intimately conscious of you, that there exists latent within me a prophetic knowledge of all your vicissitudes of joy or sorrow; so that, though I cannot foretell them before-hand, yet I recognize them when they come. Nothing disturbs the preconceived idea of you in my mind. Whether in bliss or agony, still you are mine own Dove—still my blessing—still my peace. Belovedest, since the foregoing sentence, I have been interrupted; so I will leave the rest of the sheet till tomorrow evening. Good night, and in writing these words my soul has flown through the air to give you a fondest kiss. Did you not feel it?

Decr. 2d.—Your letter came to me at the Custom-House, very dearest, at about eleven o'clock; and I opened it with an assured hope of finding good news about my Dove; for I had trusted very much in Sophie Hawthorne's assistance. Well, I am afraid I shall never find in my heart to call that excellent little person "Naughty" again—no; and I have even serious thoughts of giving up all further designs upon her nose, since she hates so much to have it kissed. Yet the poor little nose!—would it not be quite depressed (I do not mean

flattened) by my neglect, after becoming accustomed to such marked attention? And besides, I have a particular affection for that nose, insomuch that I intend, one of these days, to offer it an oblation of rich and delicate odours. But I suppose Sophie Hawthorne would apply her handkerchief, so that the poor nose should reap no pleasure nor profit from my incense. Naughty Sophie Hawthorne! There—I have called her “naughty” already—and on a mere supposition, too.

Half a page of nonsense about Sophie Hawthorne’s nose! And now have I anything to say to my little Dove? Yes—a reproof. My Dove is to understand, that she entirely exceeds her jurisdiction, in presuming to sit in judgment upon herself, and pass such severe censure as she did upon her Friday’s letter—or indeed any censure at all. It was her bounden duty to write that letter; for it was the cry of her heart, which ought and must have reached her husband’s ears, wherever in the world he might be. And yet you call it wicked. Was it Sophie Hawthorne or the Dove that called it so? Naughty Sophie Hawthorne—naughty Dove—for I believe they are both partakers of this naughtiness.

Dearest, I have never had the good luck to profit much, or indeed any, by attending lectures; so that I think the ticket had better be bestowed on somebody who can listen to Mr. Emerson more worthily. My evenings are very precious to me; and some of them are unavoidably thrown away in paying or receiving visits, or in writing letters of business; and therefore I prize the rest as if the sands of the hour-glass were gold or diamond dust. I have no other time to sit in my parlor (let me call it ours) and be happy by our own fireside—happy in reveries about a certain little wife of mine, who would fain have me spend my evenings in hearing lectures, lest I should incommode her with too frequent epistles.

Good bye, dearest. I suppose I have left a dozen questions in your letter unanswered; but you shall ask them again when we meet. Do not you long to see me? Mercy on us,—what a pen! It looks as if I had laid a strong emphasis on that sentence. God bless my Dove, and Sophie Hawthorne too.—So prays their ownest husband.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, Decr. 5th, 1839—5 P.M.

Dearest wife,

I do wish that you would evince the power of your spirit over its outward manifestations, in some other way than by raising an inflammation over your eye. Do, belovedest, work another miracle forthwith, and cause this mountain—for I fancy it as of really mountainous bulk—cause it to be cast into the sea, or anywhere else; so that both eyes may greet your husband, when he comes home. Otherwise, I know not but my eyes will have an inflammation too;—they certainly smarted in a very unwonted manner, last

evening. “The naughty swelling!” as my Dove (or Sophie Hawthorne) said of the swollen cheek that afflicted me last summer. Will kisses have any efficacy? No; I am afraid not, for if they were medicinal, my Dove’s eyelids have been so imbued with them that no ill would have come there. Nevertheless, though not a preventive, a kiss may chance to be a remedy. Can Sophie Hawthorne be prevailed upon to let me try it?

I went to see my wife’s (and of course my own) sister Mary, on Tuesday evening. She appeared very well; and we had a great deal of good talk, wherein my Dove was not utterly forgotten—(now will Sophie Hawthorne, thinking the Dove slighted, pout her lip at that expression)—well then, my Dove was directly or indirectly concerned in all my thoughts, and most of my words. Mrs. Park was not there, being gone, I believe, to some lecture. Mary and your husband talked with the utmost hopefulness and faith of my Dove’s future health and well-being. Dearest, you *are* well (all but the naughty swelling) and you always will be well. I love Mary because she loves you so much;—our affections meet in you, and so we become kindred. But everybody loves my Dove—everybody that knows her—and those that know her not love her also, though unconsciously, whenever they image to themselves something sweeter, and tenderer, and nobler, than they can meet with on earth. It is the likeness of my Dove that has haunted the dreams of poets, ever since the world began. Happy me, to whom that dream has become the reality of all realities—whose bosom has been warmed, and is forever warmed, with the close embrace of her who has flitted shadowlike away from all other mortals! Dearest, I wish your husband had the gift of making rhymes; for methinks there is poetry in his head and heart, since he has been in love with you. You are a Poem, my Dove. Of what sort, then? Epic?—Mercy on me,—no! A sonnet?—no; for that is too labored and artificial. My Dove is a sort of sweet, simple, gay, pathetic ballad, which Nature is singing, sometimes with tears, sometimes with smiles, and sometimes with intermingled smiles and tears.

I was invited to dine at Mr. Bancroft’s yesterday with Miss Margaret Fuller; but Providence had given me some business to do; for which I was very thankful. When my Dove and Sophie Hawthorne can go with me, I shall not be afraid to accept invitations to meet literary lions and lionesses, because then I shall put the above-said redoubtable little personage in the front of the battle. What do you think, Dearest, of the expediency of my making a caucus speech? A great many people are very desirous of listening to your husband’s eloquence; and that is considered the best method of making my debut. Now, probably, will Sophie Hawthorne utterly refuse to be kissed, unless I give up all notion of speechifying at a caucus. Silly little Sophie!—I would not do it, even if thou thyself besought it of me.

Belovedest, I wish, before declining your ticket to Mr. Emerson’s lectures, that I had asked whether you wished me to attend them; for if you do, I should have more pleasure in going, than if the wish were originally my own.

Dearest wife, nobody can come within the circle of my loneliness, save you;—you are my only companion in the world;—at least, when I compare other intercourse with our intimate communion, it seems as [if] other people were the world’s width asunder. And yet I love all the world better for my Dove’s sake.

Good bye, belovedest. Drive away that “naughty swelling.”

YOUR OWNEST HUSBAND.

Do not expect me till seven o'clock on Saturday—as I shall not leave Boston till sunset.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, Decr. 11th, 1839—7 P.M.

Belovedest,

I am afraid you will expect a letter tomorrow—afraid, because I feel very sure that I shall not be able to fill this sheet tonight. I am well, and happy, and I love you dearly, sweetest wife;—nevertheless, it is next to impossibility for me to put ideas into words. Even in writing these two or three lines, I have fallen into several long fits of musing. I wish there was something in the intellectual world analogous to the Daguerrotype (is that the name of it?) in the visible—something which should print off our deepest, and subtlest, and delicatest thoughts and feelings as minutely and accurately as the above-mentioned instrument paints the various aspects of Nature. Then might my Dove and I interchange our reveries—but my Dove would get only lead in exchange for gold. Dearest, your last letter brought the warmth of your very heart to your husband—Belovedest, I cannot possibly write one word more, to-night.

This striving to talk on paper does but remove you farther from me. It seems as if Sophie Hawthorne fled away into infinite space the moment I try to fix her image before me in order to inspire my pen;—whereas, no sooner do I give myself up to reverie, than here she is again, smiling lightsofly by my side. There will be no writing of letters in Heaven; at least, I shall write none then, though I think it would add considerably to my bliss to receive them from my Dove. Never was I so stupid as to-night;—and yet it is not exactly stupidity, either, for my fancy is bright enough, only it has, just at this time, no command of external symbols. Good night, dearest wife. Love your husband, and dream of him.

Decr. 12th—6 P.M. Blessedest—Dove-ward and Sophie Hawthorne-ward doth your husband acknowledge himself “very reprehensible,” for leaving his poor wife destitute of news from him such an interminable time—one, two, three, four days tomorrow noon. After seven years’ absence, without communication, a marriage, if I mistake not, is deemed to be legally dissolved. Does it not appear at least seven years to my Dove, since we parted? It does to me. And will my Dove, or naughty Sophie Hawthorne, choose to take advantage of the law, and declare our marriage null and void? Oh, naughty, naughty, naughtiest Sophie Hawthorne, to suffer such an idea to come into your head! The Dove, I am sure, would not disown her husband, but would keep her heart warm with faith and love for a million of years; so that when he returned to her (as he surely would, at some period of Eternity, to spend the rest of eternal existence with her) he would seem to find in her bosom the warmth which his parting embrace had left there.

Very dearest, I do wish you would come to see me, this evening. If we could be together in this very parlour of ours, I think you, and both of us, would feel more completely at home than we ever have before in all our lives. Your chamber is but a room in your mother's house, where my Dove cannot claim an independent and separate right; she has a right, to be sure, but it is as a daughter. As a wife, it might be a question whether she has a right. Now this pleasant little room, where I sit, together with the bed-room in which I intend to dream tonight of my Dove, is my dwelling, my castle, mine own place wherein to be, which I have bought, for the time being, with the profits of mine own labor. Then is it not our home?

(Rest of letter missing)

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, Decr. 18th, 1839—nearly 7 P.M.

Belovedest,

I wish you could see our parlour to-night—how bright and cheerful it looks, with the blaze of the coal-fire throwing a ruddy tinge over the walls, in spite of the yellow gleam of two lamps. Now if my Dove were sitting in the easiest of our two easy chairs—(for sometimes I should choose to have her sit in a separate chair, in order to realise our individuality, as well as our unity)—then would the included space of these four walls, together with the little contiguous bed-room, seem indeed like home.—But the soul of home is wanting now. Oh, naughtiest, why are you not here to welcome your husband when he comes in at eventide, chilled with his wintry day's toil? Why does he not find the table placed cosily in front of the fire, and a cup of tea steaming fragrantly—or else a bowl of warm bread and milk, such as his Dove feeds upon? A much-to-be-pitied husband am I, naughty wife—a homeless man—a wanderer in the desert of this great city; picking up a precarious subsistence wherever I happen to find a restaurateur or an oyster-shop—and returning at night to a lonely fireside. Dearest, have I brought the tears into your eyes? What an unwise little person is my Dove, to let the tears gather in her eyes for such nonsensical pathos as this! Yet not nonsensical either, inasmuch as it is a sore trial to your husband to be estranged from that which makes life a reality to him, and to be compelled to spend so many God-given days in a dream—in an outward show, which has nothing to satisfy the soul that has become acquainted with truth. But, mine own wife, if you had not taught me what happiness is, I should not have known that there is anything lacking to me now. I am dissatisfied—not because, at any former period of my life, I was ever a thousandth part so happy as now—but because Hope feeds and grows strong on the happiness within me. Good night, belovedest wife. I have a note to write to Mr. Capen, who torments me every now-and-then about a book which he wants me to manufacture. Hereafter, I intend that my Dove shall manage all my correspondence:—indeed, it is my purpose to throw all sorts of trouble upon my Dove's shoulders. Good night now, dearest.—

December 20th—7 P.M. Blessedest wife—has not Sophie Hawthorne been very impatient

for this letter, one half of which yet remains undeveloped in my brain and heart? Would that she could enter those inward regions, and read the letter there—together with so much that never can be expressed in written or spoken words. And can she not do this? The Dove can do it, even if Sophie Hawthorne fail. Dearest, would it be unreasonable for me to ask you to manage my share of the correspondence, as well as your own?—to throw yourself into my heart, and make it gush out with more warmth and freedom than my own pen can avail to do? How I should delight to see an epistle from myself to Sophie Hawthorne, written by my Dove!—or to my Dove, Sophie Hawthorne being the amanuensis! I doubt not, that truths would then be spoken, which my heart would recognise as existing within its depths, yet which can never be clothed in words of my own. You know that we are one another's consciousness—then it is not poss—My dearest, George Hillard has come in upon me, in the midst of the foregoing sentence, and I have utterly forgotten what I meant to say. But it is not much matter. Even if I could convince you of the expediency of your writing my letters as well as your own, still, when you attempted to take the pen out of my hand, I believe I should resist very strenuously. For, belovedest, though not an epistolarian by nature, yet the instinct of communicating myself to you makes it a necessity and a joy to write.

Your husband has received an invitation, through Mr. Collector Bancroft, to go to Dr. Channing's to-night. What is to be done? Anything, rather than to go. I never will venture into company, unless I can put myself under the protection of Sophie Hawthorne. She, I am sure, will take care that no harm comes to me. Or my Dove might take me "under her wing."

Dearest, you must not expect me too fervently on Christmas eve, because it is very uncertain whether Providence will bring us together then. If not, I shall take care to advise you thereof by letter—which, however, may chance not to come to hand till three o'clock on Christmas day. And there will be my Dove, making herself nervous with waiting for me. Dearest, I wish I could be the source of nothing but happiness to you—and that disquietude, hope deferred, and disappointment, might not ever have aught to do with your affection. Does the joy compensate for the pain? Naughty Sophie Hawthorne—silly Dove—will you let that foolish question bring tears into your eyes?

My Dove's letter was duly received.

Your lovingest
HUSBAND.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, December 24th, 1839. 6 or 7 P.M.

My very dearest,

While I sit down disconsolately to write this letter, at this very moment is my Dove expecting to hear her husband's footstep upon the threshold. She fully believes, that, within the limits of the hour which is now passing, she will be clasped to my bosom. Belovedest, I cannot bear to have you yearn for me so intensely. By and bye, when you find that I do not come, our head will begin to ache;—but still, being the “hopingest little person” in the world, you will not give me up, perhaps till eight o'clock. But soon it will be bed-time—it will be deep night—and not a spoken word, not a written line, will have come to your heart from your naughtiest of all husbands. Sophie Hawthorne, at least, will deem him the naughtiest of husbands; but my Dove will keep her faith in him just as firmly and fervently, as if she were acquainted with the particular impossibilities which keep him from her. Dearest wife, I did hope, till this afternoon, that I should be able to disburthen myself of the cargo of salt which has been resting on my weary shoulders for a week past; but it does seem as if Heaven's mercy were not meant for us miserable Custom-House officers. The holiest of holydays—the day that brought ransom to all other sinners—leaves us in slavery still.

Nevertheless, dearest, if I did not feel two disappointments in one—your own and mine—I should feel much more comfortable and resigned than I do. If I could have come to you to-night, I must inevitably have returned hither tomorrow evening. But now, in requital of my present heaviness of spirit, I am resolved that my next visit shall be at least one day longer than I could otherwise have ventured to make it. We cannot spend this Christmas eve together, mine own wife; but I have faith that you will see me on the eve of the New Year. Will not you be glad when I come home to spend three whole days, that I was kept away from you for a few brief hours on Christmas eve? For if I went now, I could not be with you then.

My blessedest, write and let me know that you have not been very much disturbed by my non-appearance. I pray you to have the feelings of a wife towards me, dearest—that is, you must feel that my whole life is yours, a life-time of long days, and therefore it is no irreparable nor very grievous loss, though sometimes a few of those days are wasted away from you. A wife should be calm and quiet, in the settled certainty of possessing her husband. Above all, dearest, bear these crosses with philosophy for my sake; for it makes me anxious and depressed, to imagine your anxiety and depression. Oh, that you could be very joyful when I come, and yet not sad when I fail to come! Is that impossible, my sweetest Dove?—is it impossible, my naughtiest Sophie Hawthorne?

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, Jany. 1st, 1840. 6 o'clock P.M.

Belovedest wife,

Your husband's heart was exceedingly touched by that little backhanded note, and likewise by the bundle of allumettes—half a dozen of which I have just been kissing with great affection. Would that I might kiss that poor dear finger of mine! Kiss it for my sake,

sweetest Dove—and tell naughty Sophie Hawthorne to kiss it too. Nurse it well, dearest; for no small part of my comfort and cheeriness of heart depends upon that beloved finger. If it be not well enough to bear its part in writing me a letter within a few days, do not be surprised if I send down the best surgeon in Boston to effect a speedy cure. Nevertheless, darlingest wife, restrain the good little finger, if it show any inclination to recommence its labors too soon. If your finger be pained in writing, your husband's heart ought to (and I hope would) feel every twinge.

Belovedest, I have not yet wished you a Happy New Year! And yet I have—many, many of them; as many, mine own wife, as we can enjoy together—and when we can no more enjoy them together, we shall no longer think of Happy New Years on earth, but look longingly for the New Year's Day of eternity. What a year the last has been! Dearest, you make the same exclamation; but my heart originates it too. It has been the year of years—the year in which the flower of our life has bloomed out—the flower of our life and of our love, which we are to wear in our bosoms forever. Oh, how I love you, belovedest wife!—and how I thank God that He has made me capable to know and love you! Sometimes I feel, deep, deep down in my heart, how dearest above all things you are to me; and those are blissful moments. It is such a happiness to be conscious, at last, of something real. All my life hitherto, I have been walking in a dream, among shadows which could not be pressed to my bosom; but now, even in this dream of time, there is something that takes me out of it, and causes me to be a dreamer no more. Do you not feel, dearest, that we live above time and apart from time, even while we seem to be in the midst of time? Our affection diffuses eternity round about us.

My carefulest little wife will rejoice to know that I have been free to sit by a good fire all this bitter cold day—not but what I have a salt-ship on my hands, but she must have some ballast, before she can discharge any more salt; and ballast cannot be procured till the day after tomorrow. Are not these details very interesting? I have a mind, some day, to send my dearest a journal of all my doings and sufferings, my whole external life, from the time I awake at dawn, till I close my eyes at night. What a dry, dull history would it be! But then, apart from this, I would write another journal of my inward life throughout the self-same day—my fits of pleasant thought, and those likewise which are shadowed by passing clouds—the yearnings of my heart towards my Dove—my pictures of what we are to enjoy together. Nobody would think that the same man could live two such different lives simultaneously. But then, as I have said above, the grosser life is a dream, and the spiritual life a reality.

Very dearest, I wish you would make out a list of books that you would like to be in our library; for I intend, whenever the cash and the opportunity occur together, to buy enough to fill up our new book-case; and I want to feel that I am buying them for both of us. When I next come to Salem, you shall read the list, and we will discuss it, volume by volume. I suppose the book-case will hold about two hundred volumes; but you need not calculate upon making such a vast collection all at once. It shall be accomplished in small lots; and then we shall prize every volume, and receive a separate pleasure from the acquisition of it.

Does it seem a great while since I left you, dearest? Truly, it does to me. These separations lengthen our earthly lives by at least nine-tenths; but then, in our brief seasons of

communion, there is the essence of a thousand years. Was it Thursday that I told my Dove would be the day of my next appearance?—or Friday? “Oh, Friday, certainly!” says Sophie Hawthorne. Well; it must be as naughty Sophie says.

Oh, belovedest, I want you. You have given me a new feeling, blessedest wife—a sense, that strong as I may have deemed myself, I am insufficient for my own support; and that there is a tender little Dove, without whose help I cannot get through this weary world at all. God bless you, ownest wife.

YOUR OWNEST HUSBAND.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, Jany. 3^d, 1840—3 P.M.

What a best of all possible husbands you have, sweetest wife, to be writing to you so soon again, although he has heard nothing from you since the latter part of the year 1839! What a weary length of time that naughty finger has been ill! Unless there are signs of speedy amendment, we must begin to think of “rotation in office,” and the left hand must be nominated to the executive duties of which the right is no longer capable. Yet, dearest, do not imagine that I am impatient. I do indeed long to see your delicatest little penmanship; (what an enormity it would be to call my Dove’s most feminine of handwritings *penmanship!*) but it would take away all the happiness of it, when I reflected that each individual letter had been a pain to you. Nay; I would not have you write, if you find that the impediments of this mode of utterance check the flow of your mind and heart.

But you tell me that the wounded finger will be no hindrance to your painting. Very glad am I, dearest; for you cannot think how much delight those pictures are going to give me. I shall sit and gaze at them whole hours together—and these will be my happiest hours, the fullest of you, though all are full of you. I never owned a picture in my life; yet pictures have always been among the earthly possessions (and they are spiritual possessions too) which I most coveted. I know not what value my Dove’s pictures might bear at an auction-room; but to me, certainly, they will be incomparably more precious than all the productions of all the painters since Apelles. When we live together in our own home, belovedest, we will paint pictures together—that is, our minds and hearts shall unite to form the conception, to which your hand shall give material existence. I have often felt as if I could be a painter, only I am sure that I could never handle a brush;—now my Dove will show me the images of my inward eye, beautified and etherealised by the mixture of her own spirit. Belovedest, I think I shall get these two pictures put into mahogany frames, because they will harmonize better with the furniture of our parlor than gilt frames would.

While I was writing the foregoing paragraph, Mary has sent to inquire whether I mean to go to Salem tomorrow, intending, if I did, to send a letter by me. But, alas! I am not going. The inquiry, however, has made me feel a great yearning to be there. But it is not possible, because I have an engagement at Cambridge on Saturday evening; and even if it were otherwise, it would be better to wait till the middle of the week, or a little later, when I hope to spend three or four days with you. Oh, what happiness, when we shall be able to look forward to an illimitable time in each other's society—when a day or two of absence will be far more infrequent than the days which we spend together now. Then a quiet will settle down upon us, a passionate quiet, which is the consummation of happiness.

Dearest, I hope you have not found it impracticable to walk, though the atmosphere be so wintry. Did we walk together in any such cold weather, last winter? I believe we did. How strange, that such a flower as our affection should have blossomed amid snow and wintry winds—accompaniments which no poet or novelist, that I know of, has ever introduced into a love-tale. Nothing like our story was ever written—or ever will be—for we shall not feel inclined to make the public our confidant; but if it could be told, methinks it would be such as the angels might take delight to hear. If I mistake not, my Dove has expressed some such idea as this, in one of her recent letters.

Well-a-day! I have strolled thus far through my letter, without once making mention of naughty Sophie Hawthorne. Will she pardon the neglect? Present my profound respects to her beloved nose, and say that I still entreat her to allow my Dove to kiss her cheek. When she complies with this oft-repeated petition, I shall hope that her spirit is beginning to be tamed, and shall then meditate some other and more difficult trials of it. Nonsense! Do not believe me, dear little Sophie Hawthorne. I would not tame you for the whole Universe.

But now good bye, dearest wife. Keep yourself in good heart while I am absent, and grow round and plump and rosy;—eat a whole chicken every day;—go to bed at nine o'clock or earlier, and sleep sound till sunrise. Come to me in dreams, beloved. What should I do in this weary world, without the idea of you, dearest! Give my love to your father and mother, and to Elizabeth.

God bless you, darling.

YOUR OWNEST HUSBAND.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, Jany. 24th, 1840—4 P.M.

Ownest Dove,

Your letter came this forenoon, announcing the advent of the pictures; so I came home as

soon as I possibly could—and there was the package! I naturally trembled as I undid it, so eager was I to behold them. Dearissima, there never was anything so lovely and precious in this world. They are perfect. So soon as the dust and smoke of my fire had evaporated, I put them on the mantelpiece, and sat a long time before them with clasped hands, gazing, and gazing, and gazing, and painting a fac-simile of them in my heart, in whose most sacred chamber they shall keep a place forever and ever. Belovedest, I was not long in finding out the Dove in the Menaggio. In fact, she was the very first object that my eyes rested on, when I uncovered the picture. She flew straightway into my heart—and yet she remains just where you placed her. Dearest, if it had not been for your strict injunctions that nobody nor anything should touch the pictures, I do believe that my lips would have touched that naughty Sophie Hawthorne, as she stands on the bridge. Do you think the perverse little damsel would have vanished beneath my kiss? What a misfortune would that have been to her poor lover!—to find that he kissed away his mistress. But, at worst, she would have remained on my lips. However, I shall refrain from all endearments, till you tell me that a kiss may be hazarded without fear of her taking it in ill part and absenting herself without leave.

Mine ownest, it is a very noble-looking cavalier with whom Sophie is standing on the bridge. Are you quite sure that her own husband is the companion of her walk? Yet I need not ask—for there is the Dove to bear witness to his identity. That true and tender bird would never have alighted on another hand—never have rested so near another bosom. Yes; it must be my very self; and from henceforth it shall be held for an absolute and indisputable truth. It is not my picture, but the very I; and as my inner self belongs to you, there is no doubt that you have caused my soul to pervade the figure. There we are, unchangeable. Years cannot alter us, nor our relation to each other.

Ownest, we will talk about these pictures all our lives and longer; so there is no need that I should say all that I think and feel about them now; especially as I have yet only begun to understand and feel them. I have put them into my bed-room for the present, being afraid to trust them on the mantel-piece; but I cannot help going to feast my eyes upon them, every little while. I have determined not to hang them up till after I have been to Salem, for fear of the dust and of the fingers of the chamber-maid and other visitants. Whenever I am away, they will be safely locked up, either in the bureau or in my closet. I shall want your express directions as to the height at which they ought to be hung, and the width of the space between them, and other minutest particulars. We will discuss these matters, when I come home to my wife.

Belovedest, there are several obstacles to my coming home immediately. At present, two of the Measurers are employed, and another is detained at his home in Chelsea by the sickness of his family, and Colonel Hall continues too unwell to be at the Custom-House; so that I am the only one in attendance there; and moreover I have a coal vessel to discharge to-morrow. But this state of affairs will not continue long. I think I cannot fail to be at liberty by Tuesday or Wednesday at furthest; and at all events, next week shall not pass without our meeting; even if I should have barely time to press you in my arms, and say goodbye. But the probability is, that I shall come to spend a week.

Dearissima, be patient—Sophie Hawthorne as well as the Dove.

My carefulest little wife, I am of opinion that Elizabeth has been misinformed as to the

increased prevalence of the small-pox. It could not be so generally diffused among the merchants and business-people without my being aware of it; nor do I hear of its committing such fearful ravages anywhere. The folks at the Custom-House know of no such matter; nor does George Hillard. In truth, I had supposed (till I heard otherwise from you) that all cause for alarm was past. Trust me, dearest, there is no need of heart-quake on my account. You have been in greater danger than your husband.

God be with you, blessedest and blessingest. I did ...

(Remainder of letter missing)

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, February 7th, 1840—½ past 3 P.M.

Ownest Dove,

Can you reckon the ages that have elapsed since our last embrace? It quite surpasses my powers of computation. I only know that, in some long by-gone time, I had a wife—and that now I am a widowed man, living not in the present, but in the past and future. My life would be empty indeed, if I could neither remember nor anticipate; but I can do both; and so my heart continues to keep itself full of light and warmth. Belovedest, let it be so likewise with you. You promised me—did you not?—to be happy during our separation, and really I must insist upon holding you to your word even if it should involve a miracle.

Dearest, I have hung up the pictures—the Isola over the mantel-piece, and the Menaggio on the opposite wall. This arrangement pleased me better, on the whole, than the other which we contemplated; and I cannot perceive but that the light is equally favorable for them both. You cannot imagine how they glorify our parlor—and what a solace they are to its widowed inhabitant. I sit before them with something of the quiet and repose which your own beloved presence is wont to impart to me. I gaze at them by all sorts of light—daylight, twilight, and candle-light; and when the lamps are extinguished, and before getting into bed, I sit looking at these pictures, by the flickering fire-light. They are truly an infinite enjoyment. I take great care of them, and have hitherto hung the curtains before them every morning; and they remain covered till after I have kindled my fire in the afternoon. But I suppose this precaution need not be taken much longer. I think that this slight veil produces a not displeasing effect, especially upon the Isola—a gentle and tender gloom, like the first approaches of twilight. Nevertheless, whenever I remove the curtains I am always struck with new surprise at the beauty which then gleams forth. Mine ownest, you are a wonderful little Dove.

What beautiful weather this is—beautiful, at least, so far as sun, sky, and atmosphere are concerned; though a poor wingless biped, like my Dove's husband, is sometimes

constrained to wish that he could raise himself a little above the earth. How much mud and mire, how many pools of unclean water, how many slippery footsteps and perchance heavy tumbles, might be avoided, if we could but tread six inches above the crust of this world. Physically, we cannot do this; our bodies cannot; but it seems to me that our hearts and minds may keep themselves above moral mud-puddles, and other discomforts of the soul's path-way, and so enjoy the sunshine.

I have added Coleridge's Poems, a very good edition in three volumes, to our library. Dearest, dearest, what a joy it is to think of you, whenever I buy a book—to think that we shall read them aloud to one another, and that they are to be our mutual and familiar friends for life. I intended to have asked you again for that list which you shewed me; but it will do the next time I come. I mean to go to a book-auction this evening. When our book-case is filled, my bibliomania will probably cease; for its shelves, I think, would hold about all the books that I should care to read—all, at least, that I should wish to possess as household friends.

What a reprehensible husband am I, not to have inquired, in the very first sentence of my letter, whether my belovedest has quite recovered from the varioloid! But, in truth, it seemed so long since we parted, that none but chronic diseases can have subsisted from that time to this. I make no doubt, therefore, but that the afflicted arm is entirely recovered, and that only a slight scar remains—which shall be kissed, some time or other. And how are your eyes, my blessedest? Do not torture them by attempting to write, before they are quite well. If you inflict pain on them for such a purpose, your husband's eyes will be sensible of it, when he shall read your letters. Remember that we have now a common property in each other's eyes.

Dearest, I have not seen Colonel Hall since my return hither—he being gone to Maine. When he comes back, or shortly thereafter, I will try to prevail on your neglectful spouse to pay you a short visit. Methinks he is a very cold and loveless sort of person. I have been pestering him, ever since I began this letter, to send you some word of affectionate remembrance; but he utterly refuses to send anything, save a kiss apiece to the Dove's eyes and mouth, and to Sophie Hawthorne's nose and foot. Will you have the kindness to see that these valuable consignments arrive at their destination? Dearest wife, the letter-writer belies your ownest husband. He thinks of you, and yearns for you all day long.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, Feby. 11th, 1840—7 P.M.

Belovedest,

Your letter, with its assurance of your present convalescence, and its promise (to which I shall hold you fast) that you will never be sick any more, caused me much joy.... Dearest,

George Hillard came in just as I had written the first sentence; so we will begin on a new score.

Your husband has been measuring coal all day, aboard of a black little British schooner, in a dismal dock at the north end of the city. Most of the time, he paced the deck to keep himself warm; for the wind (north-east, I believe it was) blew up through the dock, as if it had been the pipe of a pair of bellows. The vessel lying deep between two wharves, there was no more delightful prospect, on the right hand and on the left, than the posts and timbers, half immersed in the water, and covered with ice, which the rising and falling of successive tides had left upon them; so that they looked like immense icicles. Across the water, however, not more than half a mile off, appeared the Bunker Hill monument; and what interested me considerably more, a church-steeple, with the dial of a clock upon it, whereby I was enabled to measure the march of the weary hours. Sometimes your husband descended into the dirty little cabin of the schooner, and warmed himself by a red-hot stove, among biscuit-barrels, pots and kettles, sea-chests, and innumerable lumber of all sorts—his olfactories, meanwhile, being greatly refreshed by the odour of a pipe, which the captain or some of his crew were smoking. But at last came the sunset, with delicate clouds, and a purple light upon the islands; and your husband blessed it, because it was the signal of his release; and so he came home to talk with his dearest wife. And now he bids her farewell, because he is tired and sleepy. God bless you, belovedest. Dream happy dreams of me tonight.

February 12th—Evening.—All day long again, best wife, has your poor husband been engaged in a very black business—as black as a coal; and though his face and hands have undergone a thorough purification, he feels as if he were not altogether fit to hold communion with his white Dove. Methinks my profession is somewhat akin to that of a chimney-sweeper; but the latter has the advantage over me, because, after climbing up through the darksome flue of the chimney, he emerges into the midst of the golden air, and sings out his melodies far over the heads of the whole tribe of weary earth-plodders. My dearest, my toil today has been cold and dull enough; nevertheless your husband was neither cold nor dull; for he kept his heart warm and his spirit bright with thoughts of his belovedest wife. I had strong and happy yearnings for you to-day, ownest Dove—happy, even though it was such an eager longing, which I knew could not then be fulfilled, to clasp you to my bosom. And now here I am in our parlour, aweary—too tired, almost, to write.

Well, dearest, my labors are over for the present. I cannot, however, come home just at present, three of the Measurers being now absent; but you shall see me very soon. Naughtiest, why do you say that you have scarcely seen your husband, this winter? Have there not, to say nothing of shorter visits, been two eternities of more than a week each, which were full of blessings for us? My Dove has quite forgotten these. Oh, well! If visits of a week long be not worth remembering, I shall alter my purpose of coming to Salem for another like space;—otherwise I might possibly have been there, by Saturday night, at furthest. Dear me, how sleepy I am! I can hardly write, as you will discover by the blottings and scratchings. So good-bye now, darlingest;—and I will finish in the freshness of the morning.

February 13th—Past 8 A.M. Belovedest, how very soon this letter will be in your hands. It

brings us much closer together, when the written words of one of us can come to the heart of the other, in the very same day that they flowed from the heart of the writer. I mean to come home to our parlour early to-day; so, when you receive this letter, you can imagine me there, sitting in front of the Isola. I have this moment interrupted myself to go and look at that precious production. How I wish that naughty Sophie Hawthorne could be induced to turn her face towards me! Nevertheless, the figure is her veritable self, and so would the face be, only that she deems it too beautiful to be thrown away on her husband's gaze. I have not dared to kiss her yet. Will she abide it?

My dearest, do not expect me very fervently till I come. I am glad you were so careful of your inestimable eyes as not to write to me yesterday. Mrs. Hillard says that Elizabeth made her a call. Good-bye. I am very well to day, and unspeakably happy in the thought that I have a dearest little wife, who loves me pretty well. God bless her.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, March 11th, 1840—2 P.M.

Blessedest,

It seems as if I were looking back to a former state of existence, when I think of the precious hours which we have lived together. And now we are in two different worlds—widowed, both of us—both of us deceased, and each lamenting ...

(Portion of letter missing)

Belovedest, almost my first glance, on entering our parlor after my return hither, was at the pictures—my very first glance, indeed, as soon as I had lighted the lamps. They have certainly grown more beautiful during my absence, and are still becoming more perfect, and perfecter, and perfectest. I fancied that Sophie Hawthorne, as she stands on the bridge, had slightly turned her head, so as to reveal somewhat more of her face; but if so, she has since turned it back again. I was much struck with the Menaggio this morning;—while I was gazing at it, the sunshine and the shade grew positively real, and I agreed with you, for the time, in thinking this a more superlative picture than the other. But when I came home about an hour ago, I bestowed my chiefest attention upon the Isola; and now I believe it has the first place in my affections, though without prejudice to a very fervent love for the other.

... Dove, there is little prospect for me, indeed; but forgive me for telling you so, dearest—no prospect of my returning so soon as next Monday; but I have good hope to be again at liberty by the close of the week. Do be very good, my Dove—be as good as your nature will permit, naughty Sophie Hawthorne. As to myself, I shall take the liberty to torment myself as much as I please.

My dearest, I am very well, but exceedingly stupid and heavy; so the remainder of this letter shall be postponed until tomorrow. Has my Dove flown abroad, this cold, bright day? Would that the wind would snatch her up, and waft her to her husband.

How was it, dearest? And how do you do this morning? Is the wind east? The sun shone on the chimney-tops round about here, a few minutes ago; and I hoped that there would be a pleasant day for my Dove to take wing, and for Sophie Hawthorne to ride on horseback; but the sky seems to be growing sullen now. Do you wish to know how your husband will spend the day? First of the first—but there rings the bell for eight o'clock; and I must go down to breakfast.

After breakfast;—First of the first, your husband will go to the Post-Office, like a dutiful husband as he is, to put in this letter for his belovedest wife. Thence he will proceed to the Custom House, and finding that there is no call for him on the wharves, he will sit down by the Measurers' fire, and read the Morning Post. Next, at about half past nine o'clock, he will go to the Athenaeum, and turn over the Magazines and Reviews till eleven or twelve, when it will be time to return to the Custom-House to see whether there be a letter from Dove Hawthorne—and also (though this is of far less importance) to see whether there be any demand for his services as Measurer. At one o'clock, or thereabouts, he will go to dinner—but first, perhaps, he will promenade the whole length of Washington street, to get himself an appetite. After dinner, he will take one more peep at the Custom-House, and it being by this time about two o'clock, and no prospect of business to-day, he will feel at liberty to come home to our own parlor, there to remain till supper-time. At six o'clock he will sally forth again, to get some oysters and read the evening papers, and returning between seven and eight, he will read and re-read his belovedest's letter—then take up a book—and go to bed at ten, with a blessing on his lips for the Dove and Sophie Hawthorne.

THINE OWNEST.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, March 15th, 1840—Forenoon.

Best-belovedest,

Thy letter by Elizabeth came, I believe, on Thursday, and the two which thou didst entrust to the post reached me not till yesterday—whereby I enjoyed a double blessing in recompense of the previous delay. Nevertheless, it were desirable that the new Salem postmaster be forthwith ejected, for taking upon himself to withhold the outpourings of thy heart, at their due season. As for letters of business, which involve merely the gain or loss of a few thousand dollars, let him be as careless as he pleases; but when thou wouldst utter thyself to thy husband, dearest wife, there is doubtless a peculiar fitness of thy

communications to that point and phase of our existence, at which they ought to be received. However, come when they will, they are sure to make sweetest music with my heart-strings.

Blessedest, what an ugly day is this!—and there thou sittest as heavy as thy husband's heart. And is his heart indeed heavy? Why no—it is not heaviness—not the heaviness, like a great lump of ice, which I used to feel when I was alone in the world—but—but—in short, dearest, where thou art not, there it is a sort of death. A death, however, in which there is still hope and assurance of a joyful life to come. Methinks, if my spirit were not conscious of thy spirit, this dreary snow-storm would chill me to torpor;—the warmth of my fireside would be quite powerless to counteract it. Most absolute little wife, didst thou expressly command me to go to Father Taylor's church this very Sabbath?—(Dinner, or luncheon rather, has intervened since the last sentence)—Now, belovedest, it would not be an auspicious day for me to hear the aforesaid Son of Thunder. Thou knowest not how difficult is thy husband to be touched or moved, unless time, and circumstances, and his own inward state, be in a “concatenation accordingly.” A dreadful thing would it be, were Father Taylor to fail in awakening a sympathy from my spirit to thine. Darlingest, pray let me stay at home this afternoon. Some sunshiny Sunday, when I am wide awake, and warm, and genial, I will go and throw myself open to his blessed influences; but now, there is but one thing (thou being absent) which I feel anywise inclined to do—and that is, to go to sleep. May I go to sleep, belovedest? Think what sweet dreams of thee may visit me—think how I shall escape this snow-storm—think how my heavy mood will change, as the mood of mind almost always does, during the interval that withdraws me from the external world. Yes; thou bidst me sleep. Sleep thou too, my beloved—let us pass at one and the same moment into that misty region, and embrace each other there.

Well, dearest, I have slept; but Sophie Hawthorne has been naughty—she would not be dreamed about. And now that I am awake again, here are the same snow-flakes in the air, that were descending when I went to sleep. Would that there were an art of making sunshine! Knowest thou any such art? Truly thou dost, my blessedest, and hast often thrown a heavenly sunshine around thy husband's spirit, when all things else were full of gloom. What a woe—what a cloud it is, to be away from thee! How would my Dove like to have her husband continually with her, twelve or fourteen months out of the next twenty? Would not that be real happiness?—in such long communion, should we not feel as if separation were a dream, something that never had been a reality, nor ever could be? Yes; but—for in all earthly happiness there is a but—but, during those twenty months, there would be two intervals of three months each, when thy husband would be five hundred miles away—as far away as Washington. That would be terrible. Would not Sophie Hawthorne fight against it?—would not the Dove fold her wings, not in the quietude of bliss, but of despair? Do not be frightened, dearest—nor rejoiced either—for the thing will not be. It might be, if I chose; but on multitudinous accounts, my present situation seems preferable; and I do pray, that, in one year more, I may find some way of escaping from this unblest Custom-House; for it is a very grievous thralldom. I do detest all offices—all, at least, that are held on a political tenure. And I want nothing to do with politicians—they are not men; they cease to be men, in becoming politicians. Their hearts wither away, and die out of their bodies. Their consciences are turned to India-rubber—or to some substance as black as that, and which will stretch as much. One thing, if no more,

I have gained by my Custom-House experience—to know a politician. It is a knowledge which no previous thought, or power of sympathy, could have taught me, because the animal, or the machine rather, is not in nature.

Oh my darlingest wife, thy husband's soul yearns to embrace thee! Thou art his hope—his joy—he desires nothing but to be with thee, and to toil for thee, and to make thee a happy wife, wherein would consist his own heavenliest happiness. Dost thou love him? Yes; he knoweth it. God bless thee, most beloved.

THINE OWNEST HUSBAND.

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

TO MISS PEABODY

(Fragment only)

And now good night, best, beautifullest, belovedest, blessingest of wives. Notwithstanding what I have said of the fleeting and unsatisfying bliss of dreams, still, if thy husband's prayers and wishes can bring thee, or even a shadow of thee, into his sleep, thou or thy image will assuredly be there. Good night, ownest. I bid thee good night, although it is still early in the evening; because I must reserve the rest of the page to greet thee upon in the morning.

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, March 26th, 1840—Afternoon.

Thou dearest wife,

Here is thy husband, yearning for thee with his whole heart—thou, meanwhile, being fast asleep, and perhaps hovering around him in thy dreams. Very dreary are the first few centuries which elapse after our separations, and before it is time to look forward hopefully to another meeting—these are the “dark ages.” And hast thou been very good, my beloved? Dost thou dwell in the past and in the future, so that the gloomy present is quite swallowed up in sunshine? Do so, mine ownest, for the sake of thy husband, whose desire it is to make thy whole life as sunny as the scene beyond those high, dark rocks of the Menaggio.

Dearest, my thoughts will not flow at all—they are as sluggish as a stream of half-cold lava. Methinks I could sleep an hour or two—perhaps thou art calling to me, out of the midst of thy dream, to come and join thee there. I will take a book, and lie down awhile,

and perhaps resume my pen in the evening. I will not say good bye; for I am coming to thee now.

March 27th,—Before breakfast.—Good morning, most belovedest. I felt so infinitely stupid, after my afternoon's nap, that I could not possibly write another word; and it has required a whole night's sleep to restore me the moderate share of intellect and vivacity that naturally belongs to me. Dearest, thou didst not come into my dreams, last night; but, on the contrary, I was engaged in assisting the escape of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette from Paris, during the French revolution. And sometimes, by an unaccountable metamorphosis, it seemed as if my mother and sister were in the place of the King and Queen. I think that fairies rule over our dreams—beings who have no true reason or true feeling, but mere fantasies instead of those endowments.

Afternoon.—Blessedest, I do think that it is the doom laid upon me, of murdering so many of the brightest hours of the day at that unblest Custom-House, that makes such havoc with my wits; for here I am again, trying to write worthily to my ethereal, and intellectualest, and feelingest, and imaginativest wife, yet with a sense as if all the noblest part of man had been left out of my composition—or had decayed out of it, since my nature was given to my own keeping. Sweetest Dove, shouldst thou once venture within those precincts, the atmosphere would immediately be fatal to thee—thy wings would cease to flutter in a moment—scarcely wouldst thou have time to nestle into thy husband's bosom, ere thy pure spirit would leave what is mortal of thee there, and flit away to Heaven. Never comes any bird of Paradise into that dismal region. A salt, or even a coal-ship is ten million times preferable; for there the sky is above me, and the fresh breeze around me, and my thoughts, having hardly anything to do with my occupation, are as free as air.

Nevertheless, belovedest, thou art not to fancy that the above paragraph gives thee a correct idea of thy husband's mental and spiritual state; for he is sometimes prone to the sin of exaggeration. It is only once in a while that the image and desire of a better and happier life makes him feel the iron of his chain; for after all, a human spirit may find no insufficiency of food fit for it, even in the Custom-House. And with such materials as these, I do think, and feel, and learn things that are worth knowing, and which I should not know unless I had learned them there; so that the present portion of my life shall not be quite left out of the sum of my real existence. Moreover, I live through my Dove's heart—I live an intellectual life in Sophie Hawthorne. Therefore ought those two in one to keep themselves happy and healthy in mind and feelings, inasmuch as they enjoy more blessed influences than their husband, and likewise have to provide happiness and moral health for him.

Very dearest, I feel a great deal better now—nay, nothing whatever is the matter. What a foolish husband hast thou, misfortunate little Dove, that he will grieve thee with such a long Jeremiad, and after all find out that there is not the slightest cause for lamentation. But so it must often be, dearest—this trouble hast thou entailed upon thyself, by yielding to become my wife. Every cloud that broods beneath my sky, or that I even fancy is brooding there, must dim thy sunshine too. But here is no real cloud. It is good for me, on many accounts, that my life has had this passage in it. Thou canst not think how much more I know than I did a year ago—what a stronger sense I have of power to act as a man

among men—what worldly wisdom I have gained, and wisdom also that is not altogether of this world. And when I quit this earthy cavern, where I am now buried, nothing will cling to me that ought to be left behind. Men will not perceive, I trust, by my look, or the tenor of my thoughts and feelings, that I have been a Custom-House officer.

Belovedest!—what an awful concussion was that of our two heads. It was as if two worlds had rushed together—as if the Moon (thou art my Moon, gentlest wife) had met in fierce encounter with the rude, rock-promontoried Earth. Dearest, art thou sure that thy delicatest brain has suffered no material harm? A maiden's heart, they say, is often bruised and broken by her lover's cruelty; it was reserved for naughtiest me to inflict those injuries upon my mistress's head....

(Portion of letter missing)

To Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, March 30th, 1840—5 or 6 P.M.

Infinitely belovedest,

Thy Thursday's letter came not till Saturday—so long was thy faith fullest husband defrauded of his rights! Thou mayst imagine how hungry was my heart, when at last it came. Thy yesterday's letter, for a wonder, arrived in its due season, this forenoon; and I could not refrain from opening it immediately; and then and there, in that earthy cavern of the Custom-House, and surrounded by all those brawling slang-whangers, I held sweet communion with my Dove. Dearest, I do not believe that any one of those miserable men ever received a letter which uttered a single word of love and faith—which addressed itself in any manner to the soul. No beautiful and holy woman's spirit came to visit any of them, save thy husband. How blest is he! Thou findest thy way to him in all dismallest and unloveliest places, and talkest with him there, nor can the loudest babble nor rudest clamor shut out thy gentle voice from his ear. Truly, he ought not to bemoan himself any more, as in his last letter, but to esteem himself favored beyond all other mortals;—but truly he is a wayward and incalculable personage, and will not be prevailed with to know his own happiness. The lovelier thou art, mine ownest, the more doth thy unreasonable husband discontent himself to be away from thee, though thou continually sendest him all of thyself that can be breathed into written words. Oh, I want thee with me forever and ever!—at least I would always have the feeling, amid the tumult and unsuitable associations of the day, that the night would bring me to my home of peace and rest—to thee, my fore-ordained wife. Well—be patient, heart! The time will come. Meantime, foolishest heart, be thankful for the much of happiness thou already hast.

Dearest, thy husband was very reprehensible, yesterday. Wilt thou again forgive him? He went not to hear Father Taylor preach. In truth, his own private and quiet room did have

such a charm for him, after being mixed and tossed together with discordant elements all the week, that he thought his Dove would grant him indulgence for one more Sabbath. Also, he fancied himself unfit to go out, on account of a cold; though, as the disease has quite disappeared to-day, I am afraid he conjured it up to serve his naughty purpose. But, indeed, dearest, I feel somewhat afraid to hear this divine Father Taylor, lest my sympathy with thy admiration of him should be colder and feebler than thou lookest for. Belovedest wife, our souls are in happiest unison; but we must not disquiet ourselves if every tone be not re-echoed from one to the other—if every slightest shade be not reflected in the alternate mirror. Our broad and general sympathy is enough to secure our bliss, without our following it into minute details. Wilt thou promise not to be troubled, should thy husband be unable to appreciate the excellence of Father Taylor? Promise me this; and at some auspicious hour, which I trust will soon arrive, Father Taylor shall have an opportunity to make music with my soul. But I forewarn thee, sweetest Dove, that thy husband is a most unmalleable man;—thou art not to suppose, because his spirit answers to every touch of thine, that therefore every breeze, or even every whirlwind, can upturn him from his depths. Well, dearest, I have said my say, on this matter.

What a rain is this, my poor little Dove! Yet as the wind comes from some other quarter than the East, I trust that thou hast found it genial. Good bye, belovedest, till tomorrow evening. Meantime, love me, and dream of me.

March 31st.—Evening.—Best Wife, it is scarcely dark yet; but thy husband has just lighted his lamps, and sits down to talk to thee. Would that he could hear an answer in thine own sweet voice; for his spirit needs to be cheered by that dearest of all harmonies, after a long, listless, weary day. Just at this moment, it does seem as if life could not go on without it. What is to be done?

Dearest, if Elizabeth Howe is to be with you on Saturday, it would be quite a calamity to thee and thy household, for me to come at the same time. Now will Sophie Hawthorne complain, and the Dove's eyes be suffused, at my supposing that their husband's visit could be a calamity at any time. Well, at least, we should be obliged to give up many hours of happiness, and it would not even be certain that I could have the privilege of seeing mine own wife in private, at all. Wherefore, considering these things, I have resolved, and do hereby make it a decree of fate, that my present widowhood shall continue one week longer. And my sweetest Dove—yes, and naughtiest Sophie Hawthorne too—will both concur in the fitness of this resolution, and will help me to execute it with what of resignation is attainable by mortal man, by writing me a letter full of strength and comfort. And I, infinitely dear wife, will write to thee again; so that, though my earthly part will not be with thee on Saturday, yet thou shalt have my heart and soul in a letter. Will not this be right, and for the best? "Yes, dearest husband," saith my meekest little Dove; and Sophie Hawthorne cannot gainsay her.

Mine unspeakably ownest, dost thou love me a million of times as much as thou didst a week ago? As for me, my heart grows deeper and wider every moment, and still thou fillest it in all its depths and boundlessness. Wilt thou never be satisfied with making me love thee? To what use canst thou put so much love as thou continually receivest from me? Dost thou hoard it up, as misers do their treasure?

THINE OWN BLESSEDEST HUSBAND.

April 1st. Before breakfast.—Good morning, entirely belovedest.

Sophie Hawthorne, I have enclosed something for thee in this letter. If thou findest it not, then tell me what thou art.

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

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, April 3^d, 1840.—Evening.

Blessedest wife, thy husband has been busy all day, from early breakfast-time to late in the afternoon; and old Father Time has gone onward somewhat less heavily, than is his wont when I am imprisoned within the walls of the Custom-House. It has been a brisk, breezy day, as thou knowest—an effervescent atmosphere; and I have enjoyed it in all its freshness, breathing air which had not been breathed in advance by the hundred thousand pairs of lungs which have common and indivisible property in the atmosphere of this great city.—My breath had never belonged to anybody but me. It came fresh from the wilderness of ocean. My Dove ought to have shared it with me, and so have made it infinitely sweeter—save her, I would wish to have an atmosphere all to myself. And, dearest, it was exhilarating to see the vessels, how they bounded over the waves, while a sheet of foam broke out around them. I found a good deal of enjoyment, too, in the busy scene around me; for several vessels were disgorging themselves (what an unseemly figure is this—“disgorge,” quotha, as if the vessels were sick at their stomachs) on the wharf; and everybody seemed to be working with might and main. It pleased thy husband to think that he also had a part to act in the material and tangible business of this life, and that a part of all this industry could not have gone on without his presence. Nevertheless, my belovedest, pride not thyself too much on thy husband’s activity and utilitarianism; he is naturally an idler, and doubtless will soon be pestering thee with bewailments at being compelled to earn his bread by taking some little share in the toils of mortal man.

Most beloved, when I went to the Custom-House, at one o’clock, Colonel Hall held up a letter, turning the seal towards me; and he seemed to be quite as well aware as myself, that the long-legged little fowl impressed thereon was a messenger from my Dove. And so, naughtiest, thou art not patient. Well; it will do no good to scold thee. I know Sophie Hawthorne of old—yea, of very old time do I know her; or rather, of very old eternity. There was an image of such a being, deep within my soul, before we met in this dim world; and therefore nothing that she does, or says, or thinks, or feels, ever surprises me. Her naughtiness is as familiar to me as if it were my own. But dearest, do be patient; because thou seest that the busy days are coming again; and how is thy husband to bear his toil lightsomely, if he knows that thou art impatient and disquieted. By and bye, as soon as God will open a way to us, we will help one another bear the burthen of the day, whatever it may be.

My little Dove, the excellent Colonel Hall, conceiving, I suppose, that our correspondence must necessarily involve a great expenditure of paper, has imparted to thy husband a quire or two of superfine gilt-edged, which he brought from Congress. The sheet on which I am now writing is a specimen; and he charged me to give thee a portion of it, which I promised to do—but whether I shall convey it to thee in the mass, or sheet by sheet, after spoiling it with my uncouth scribble, is yet undetermined. Which wouldst thou prefer? Likewise three sticks of sealing-[wax] did the good Colonel bestow; but unfortunately it is all red. Yet I think it proper enough that a gentleman should seal all his letters with red sealing-wax; though it is sweet and graceful in my Dove to use fancy-colored. Dearest, the paper thou shalt have, every sheet of it, sooner or later; and only that it is so burthensome to thy foolish husband to carry anything in his hand, I would bring it to thee. Meantime, till I hit upon some other method, I will send it sheet by sheet.

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

TO MISS PEABODY

Custom-House, April 6th, 1840. 5 P.M.

How long it is, belovedest, since I have written thee a letter from this darksome region. Never did I write thee a word from hence that was worth reading, nor shall I now; but perhaps thou wouldst get no word at all, these two or three days, unless I write it here. This evening, dearest, I am to have a visitor—the illustrious Colonel Hall himself; and I have even promised him a bed on my parlor floor—so that, as thou seest, the duties of hospitality will keep me from communion with the best little wife in the world.

Hearts never do understand the mystery of separation—that is the business of the head. My sweetest, dearest, purest, holiest, noblest, faithfulest wife, dost thou know what a loving husband thou hast? Dost thou love him most immensely?—beyond conception, and dost thou feel, as he does, that every new throb of love is worth all other happiness in the world?

Dearest, my soul drank thy letter this forenoon, and has been conscious of it ever since, in the midst of business and noise and all sorts of wearisome babble. How dreamlike it makes all my external life, this continual thought and deepest, inmostest musing upon thee! I live only within myself; for thou art always there. Thou makest me a disembodied spirit; and with the eve of a spirit, I look on all worldly things—and this it [is] that separates thy husband from those who seem to be his fellows—therefore is he “among them, but not of them.” Thou art transfused into his heart, and spread all round about it; and it is only once in a while that he himself is even imperfectly conscious of what a miracle has been wrought upon him.

Well, dearest, were ever such words as these written in a Custom-House before? Oh, and what a mighty heave my heart has given, this very moment! Thou art most assuredly

thinking of me now, wife of my inmost bosom. Never did I know what love was before—I did not even know it when I began this letter. Ah, but I ought not to say that; it would make me sad to believe that I had not always loved thee. Farewell, now, dearest. Be quiet, my Dove; lest my heart be made to flutter by the fluttering of thy wings.

April 7th. 6 P.M. My tenderest Dove, hast thou lived through the polar winter of to-day; for it does appear to me to have been the most uncomfortable day that ever was inflicted on poor mortals. Thy husband has had to face it in all its terrors; and the cold has penetrated through his cloak, through his beaver-cloth coat and vest, and was neutralised nowhere but in the region round about his heart—and that it did not chill him even there, he owes to thee. I know not whether I should not have jumped overboard in despair today, if I had not sustained my spirit by the thought of thee, most beloved wife; for, besides the bleak, unkindly air, I have been plagued by two sets of coal-shovellers at the same time, and have had to keep two separate tallies simultaneously. But, dearest, I was conscious that all this was merely a vision and a phantasy, and that, in reality, I was not half-frozen by the bitter blast, nor plagued to death by those grimy coal-heavers, but that I was basking quietly in the sunshine of eternity, with mine own Dove. Any sort of bodily and earthly torment may serve to make us sensible that we have a soul that is not within the jurisdiction of such shadowy demons—it separates the immortal within us from the mortal. But the wind has blown my brain into such confusion that I cannot philosophise now.

Blessingest wife, what a habit I have contracted of late, of telling thee all my grievances and annoyances, as if such trifles were worth telling—or as if, supposing them to be so, they would be the most agreeable gossip in the world to thee. Thou makest me behave like a child, naughtiest. Why dost thou not frown at my nonsensical complaints, and utterly refuse thy sympathy? But I speak to thee of the miseries of a cold day, and blustering wind, and intractable coal-shovellers, with just the same certainty that thou wilt listen lovingly and sympathisingly, as if I were speaking of the momentous and permanent concerns of life.

Dearest, ... (portion of letter missing)

I do not think that I can come on Friday—there is hardly any likelihood of it; for one of the Measurers is indisposed, which throws additional work on the efficient members of our honorable body. But there is no expressing how I do yearn for thee! The strength of the feeling seems to make my words cold and tame. Dearest, this is but a poor epistle, yet is written in very great love and worship of thee—so, for the writer's sake, thou wilt receive it into thy heart of hearts. God keep thee—and me also for thy sake.

THINE OWNEST.

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

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, April 15th, 1840.—Afternoon.

Belovedest—since writing this word, I have made a considerable pause; for, dearest, my mind has no activity to-day. I would fain sit still, and let thoughts, feelings, and images of thee, pass before me and through me, without my putting them into words, or taking any other trouble about the matter. It must be that thou dost not especially and exceedingly need a letter from me; else I should feel an impulse and necessity to write. I do wish, most beloved wife, that there were some other method of communing with thee at a distance; for really this is not a natural one to thy husband. In truth, I never use words, either with the tongue or pen, when I can possibly express myself in any other way;—and how much, dearest, may be expressed without the utterance of a word! Is there not a volume in many of our glances?—even in a pressure of the hand? And when I write to thee, I do but painfully endeavor to shadow into words what has already been expressed in those realities. In heaven, I am very sure, there will be no occasion for words;—our minds will enter into each other, and silently possess themselves of their natural riches. Even in this world, I think, such a process is not altogether impossible—we ourselves have experienced it—but words come like an earthy wall betwixt us. Then our minds are compelled to stand apart, and make signals of our meaning, instead of rushing into one another, and holding converse in an infinite and eternal language. Oh, dearest, have [not] the moments of our oneness been those in which we were most silent? It is our instinct to be silent then, because words could not adequately express the perfect concord of our hearts, and therefore would infringe upon it. Well, ownest, good bye till tomorrow, when perhaps thy husband will feel a necessity to use even such a wretched medium as words, to tell thee how he loves thee. No words can tell it now.

April 15th. Afternoon.—Most dear wife, never was thy husband gladder to receive a letter from thee than to-day. And so thou didst perceive that I was rather out of spirits on Monday. Foolish and faithless husband that I was, I supposed that thou wouldst not take any notice of it; but the simple fact was, that I did not feel quite so well as usual; and said nothing about it to thee, because I knew thou wouldst desire me to put off my departure, which (for such a trifle) I felt it not right to do—and likewise, because my Dove would have been naughty, and so perhaps have made herself ten times as ill as her husband. Dearest, I am quite well now—only very hungry; for I have thought fit to eat very little for two days past; and I think starvation is a remedy for almost all physical evils. You will love Colonel Hall, when I tell you that he has not let me do a ... (few words missing) ... and even to-day he has sent me home to my room, although I assured him that I was perfectly able to work. Now, dearest, if thou givest thyself any trouble and torment about this past indisposition of mine, I shall never dare to tell thee about my future incommodities; but if I were sure thou wouldst estimate them at no more than they are worth, thou shouldst know them all, even to the slightest prick of my finger. It is my impulse to complain to thee in all griefs, great and small; and I will not check that impulse, if thou wilt sympathise reasonably, as well as most lovingly. And now, ownest wife, believe that thy husband is well;—better, I fear, than thou, who art tired to death, and hast even had the headache. Naughtiest, dost thou think that all the busts in the world, and all the medallions and other forms of sculpture, would be worth creating at the expence of such weariness and headaches to thee. I would rather that thy art should be annihilated, than that thou shouldst always pay this price for its exercise. But perhaps, when thou hast

my bosom to repose upon, thou wilt no longer feel such overwhelming weariness. I am given thee to repose upon, that so my most tender and sensitivest little Dove may be able to do great works.

And dearest, I do by no means undervalue thy works, though I cannot estimate all thou hast ever done at the price of a single throb of anguish to thy belovedest head. But thou has achieved mighty things. Thou hast called up a face which was hidden in the grave—hast re-created it, after it was resolved to dust—and so hast snatched from Death his victory. I wonder at thee, my beloved. Thou art a miracle thyself, and workest miracles. I would not have believed it possible to do what thou hast done—to restore the lineaments of the dead so perfectly that even she who loved him so well can require nothing more;—and this too, when thou hadst hardly known his living face. Thou couldst not have done it, unless God had helped thee. This surely was inspiration, and of the holiest kind, and for one of the holiest purposes.

Dearest, I shall long to see thee exceedingly next Saturday; but having been absent from duty for two or three days past it will not be right for me to ask any more time so soon. Dost thou think it would?

How naughty was thy husband to waste the first page of this letter in declaiming against the blessed art of writing! I do not see how I could live without it;—thy letters are my heart's food; and oftentimes my heart absolutely insists upon pouring itself out on paper, for thy perusal. In truth, if the heart would do all the work, I should probably write to thee the whole time of my absence; but thou knowest that the co-operation of the hand and head are indispensable; and they, not being able to comprehend the infinite necessity of the heart's finding utterance, are sometimes sluggish.

April 17th.—Before breakfast.—Ownest, I am perfectly well this morning. Dost thou love me? Dearest, expect not another letter till Tuesday. Is thy weariness quite gone?

THINE OWNEST, OWNEST HUSBAND.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, April 19th, 1840.—Forenoon.

Dearest, there came no letter from thee yesterday; and I have been a little disquieted with fears that thou art not well and art naughty enough to conceal it from thy husband. But this is a misdemeanor of which my Dove ought not to be lightly suspected. Or perhaps, ownest wife, thou didst imagine that I might mean to surprise thee by a visit, last evening, and therefore, instead of writing, didst hope to commune with me in living words. Best belovedest, if I could have come, I would have given thee notice beforehand; for I love not surprises, even joyful ones—or at least, I would rather that joy should come quietly, and as

a matter of course, and warning us of its approach by casting a placid gleam before it. Mine own wife, art thou very well? Thy husband is so, only love-sick—a disease only to be cured by the pressure of a certain heart to his own heart.

Belovedest, what a beautiful day was yesterday. Wert thou abroad in the sky and air? Thy husband's spirit did rebel against being confined in his darksome dungeon, at the Custom-House; it seemed a sin—a murder of the joyful young day—a quenching of the sunshine. Nevertheless, there he was kept a prisoner,—till it was too late to fling himself on a gentle wind and be blown away into the country. I foresee, dearest, that thou wilt, now that the pleasant days of May and June are coming, be tormented quite beyond thine infinite patience, with my groans and lamentations at being compelled to lose so much of life's scanty summertime. But thou must enjoy for both of us. Thou must listen to the notes of the birds, because the rumbling of wheels will be always in my ears—thou must fill thyself with the fragrance of wild flowers, because I must breathe in the dust of the city—thy spirit must enjoy a double share of freedom, because thy husband is doomed to be a captive. It is thine office now, most sweet wife, to make all the additions that may be made to our common stock of enjoyment. By and bye, there shall not be so heavy burthen imposed upon thee. When I shall be again free, I will enjoy all things with the fresh simplicity of a child of five years old; thou shalt find thine husband grown young again, made over all anew—he will go forth and stand in a summer shower, and all the worldly dust that has collected on him shall be washed away at once. Then, dearest, whenever thou art weary, thou shalt lie down upon his heart as upon a bank of fresh flowers.

Nearly 6—P.M. Thy husband went out to walk, dearest, about an hour ago, and found it very pleasant, though there was a somewhat cool wind. I went round and across the common, and stood on the highest point of it, whence I could see miles and miles into the country. Blessed be God for this green tract, and the view which it affords; whereby we poor citizens may be put in mind, sometimes, that all God's earth is not composed of brick blocks of houses, and of stone or wooden pavements. Blessed be God for the sky too; though the smoke of the city may somewhat change its aspect—but still it is better than if each street were covered over with a roof. There were a good many people walking on the mall, mechanicks apparently and shopkeepers' clerks, with their wives and sweethearts; and boys were rolling on the grass—and thy husband would have liked to lie down and roll too. Wouldst thou not have been ashamed of him? And, Oh, dearest, thou shouldst have been there, to help me to enjoy the green grass, and the far-off hills and fields—to teach me how to enjoy them, for when I view Nature without thee, I feel that I lack a sense. When we are together, thy whole mind and fancy, as well as thy whole heart, is mine; so that all thy impressions from earth, sea, and sky, are added to all mine. How necessary hast thou made thyself to thy husband, my little Dove! When he is weary and out of spirits, his heart yearneth for thee; and when he is among pleasant scenes, he requireth thee so much the more.

My dearest, why didst thou not write to me, yesterday? It were always advisable, methinks, to arrange matters so that a letter may be sent on each Saturday, when I am not coming home; because Sunday leaves me free to muse upon thee, and to imagine the state and circumstances in which thou art—and the present Sunday I have been troubled with fancies that thou art ill of body or ill at ease in mind. Do not thou have any such foolish fancies about me, mine ownest. Oh, how we find, at every moment of our lives, that we

ought always to be together! Then there would be none of these needless heartquakes; but now how can they be avoided, when we mutually feel that one-half our being is wandering away by itself, without the guidance and guard of the other half! Well; it will not be always so. Doubtless, God has planned how to make us happy; but thy husband, being of a rebellious and distrustful nature, cannot help wishing sometimes that our Father would let him into His plans.

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, April 21st, 1840.—Custom-House.

I do trust, my dearest, that thou hast been enjoying this bright day for both of us; for thy husband has spent it in his dungeon—and the only ray of light that broke upon him, was when he opened thy letter. Belovedest, I have folded it to my heart, and ever and anon it sends a thrill through me; for thou hast steeped it with thy love—it seems as if thy head were leaning against my breast. I long to get home, that I may read it again and again; for in this uncongenial region, I can but half comprehend it—at least, I feel that there is a richness and sweetness in it, too sacred to be enjoyed, save in privacy. Dearest wife, thy poor husband is sometimes driven to wish that thou and he could mount upon a cloud (as we used to fancy in those heavenly walks of ours) and be borne quite out of sight and hearing of all the world;—then, at last, our souls might melt into each other; but now, all the people in the world seem to come between us. How happy were Adam and Eve! There was no third person to come between them, and all the infinity around them only served to press their hearts closer together. We love [one] another as well as they: but there is no silent and lovely garden of Eden for us. Mine own, wilt thou sail away with me to discover some summer island?—dost thou not think that God has reserved one for us, ever since the beginning of the world? Ah, foolish husband that I am, to raise a question of it, when we have found such an Eden, such an island sacred to us two, whenever, whether in Mrs. Quincy's boudoir, or anywhere else, we have been clasped in one another's arms! That holy circle shuts out all the world—then we are the Adam and Eve of a virgin earth. Now good-bye dearest; for voices are babbling around me, and I should not wonder if thou wert to hear the echo of them, while thou readest this letter.

April 22d—6 o'clock P.M. To-day, dearest, I have been measuring salt, on Long-Wharf; and though considerably weary, I feel better satisfied than if I had been murdering the blessed day at the Custom-House. Mine own wife, how very good wast thou, to take me with thee on that sweet walk, last Monday! And how kind-hearted was that sensible old stump! Thou enquirest whether I ever heard a stump speak before. No, indeed; but "stump-speeches" (as thou mayst learn in the newspapers) are very common in the western country. Belovedest, I have met with an immense misfortune. Dost thou sympathise from the bottom of thy heart? Wouldst thou take it upon thyself, if possible? Yea; I know thou wouldst, even without asking the nature of it; and truth to tell, I could be selfish enough to wish that thou mightest share it with me. Now art thou all in a fever of anxiety! I feel the fluttering of thy foolish little heart. Shall I tell thee? No.—Yes; I will. I

have received an invitation to a party at General McNeil's, next Friday evening. Why will not people let your poor persecuted husband alone? What possible good can it do for me to thrust my coal-begrimed visage and salt-befrosted locks into good society? What claim have I to be there—a humble Measurer, a subordinate Custom-House officer, as I am! I cannot go. I will not go. I intend to pass that evening with my wife—that is to say, in musings and dreams of her, and moreover, it was an exceeding breach of etiquette, that this belovedest wife was not included in the invitation.

My duties began at sunrise, after a somewhat scanty night's rest; for George Hillard and his brother, from London, came to see me, when I was preparing to go [to] bed; and I was kept up pretty late. But I came home at about four o'clock, and straightway went to bed! What a sinful way was that of misusing this summer afternoon! I trust, most dear wife, that the better half of my being has drawn from the sweet day all the honey that it contained. I feel as if it were not so much matter, now, whether my days pass pleasantly or irksomely, since thou canst be living a golden life for both of us. Sometime or other, we will contribute each an equal share of enjoyment.

Dearest, thou knowest not how I have yearned for thee. And now there is but one day more of widowhood! Sophie Hawthorne must not expect me any more on Fridays, till the busy season is over. If I can always come on the appointed Saturday, it will be a great mercy of Heaven; but I trust in Heaven's goodness, and the instrumentality of Colonel Hall. Now God bless thee, ownest wife. God bless us.

To Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, May 15th, 1840.

Darlingest,

I did not reach home last night till candle-light, and then I was beyond expression weary and spiritless; and I could as soon have climbed into Heaven without a ladder, as to come to see thee at Mrs. Park's. So, instead of dressing to pay a visit, I undressed and went to bed; but yet I doubt whether I ought not to have gone, for I was restless and wakeful a great part of the night; and it seemed as if I had scarcely fallen asleep, when I awoke with a start, and saw the gray dawn creeping over the roofs of the houses. So then it was necessary for thy poor husband to leave his pillow, without enjoying that half-dreaming interval which I so delight to devote to thee. However the fresh morning air made a new creature of me; and all day I have felt tolerably lively and cheerful—as much so as is anywise consistent with this intolerable position of near distance, or distant nearness, in which we now find ourselves. Truly Providence does not seem to have smiled on this visit of thine, my dearest. The dispensation is somewhat hard to bear. There is a weight and a gnawing at my heart; but, belovedest, do let thy heart be cheerful, for thy husband's sake.

Very reviving to me was thy letter, mine ownest. Colonel Hall brought it at noon to the eating-house where we had agreed to dine together; and I forthwith opened it and read it while my beefsteak was broiling. It refreshed me much more than my dinner—which is a great deal for a hungry man to say. Dearest, I am in admirable health; it is not the nature of my present mode of life to make me sick; and my nightly weariness does not betoken anything of that kind. Each day, it is true, exhausts all the life and animation that there is in me; but each night restores as much as will be required for the expenditure of the next day. I think this week has been about as tough as any that I ever experienced. I feel the burthen of such constant occupation the more sensibly, from having had so many idle intervals of late.

Oh, dearest, do not thou tire thyself to death. Whenever thou feelest weary, then oughtest thou to glide away from all the world; and go to sleep with the thought of thy husband in thy heart. Why do not people know better what is requisite for a Dove, than thus to keep her wings fluttering all day long, never allowing her a moment to fold them in peace and quietness? I am anxious for thee, mine ownest wife. When I have the sole charge of thee, these things shall not be.

Belovedest, didst thou not bless this shower? It caused thy husband's labors to cease for the day, though it confined him in the cabin of the salt-ship till it was over; but when the drops came few and far between, I journeyed hither to our parlor, and began this scribble. Really I did not think my ideas would be alert enough to write half so much; but I have scrawled one line after another; and now I feel much revived, and soothed and cheered in mind. I shall sleep the more quietly, sweetest wife, for having had this talk with thee—thou wilt bless my sleep. I wish that thou couldst receive this letter to-night, because I am sure thou needest it.

Let me know, mine ownest, what time thou intendest to go to Salem; and if it be possible, I will come to the Depot to see thee. But do not expect me too fervently, because there are many chances that it will not be in my power. What a time this has been for my Dove and me! Never, since we were married, have the fates been so perverse. And now farewell, my dearest, dearest wife, on whom I repose, in whom I am blest—whom I love with all the heart that is in me, and will love more and more forever, as I grow more worthy to love thee. Be happy, dearest; for my happiness must come through thee.

God bless thee, and let me feel his blessing through thy heart.

Thy lovingest husband—
DE L'AUBEPINE.

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, May 19th, 1840

My dearest,

Where in the world art thou?—or hast thou flown away to Paradise, naughtiest Dove,

without bidding thy husband farewell? I know not whereabout this letter will find thee; but I throw it upon the winds in the confidence that some breeze of Heaven will bear it to thee; for I suppose heart never spoke to heart, without being heard, and sooner or later finding a response. Perhaps some hearts that speak to other hearts here on earth may find no response till they have passed far into Eternity; but our hearts catch each other's whispers even here. Happy we! But, belovedest, how is it that thou hast sent me no token of thy existence, since we parted on the Hoopers' doorstep, when thou didst press my hand without a word? It seems an age since then. Thou saidst, on Sunday, that thou shouldst probably return to Salem to-day; but surely thou hast not gone. I feel lonely and not cheerful—my spirit knows not whereabout to seek thee, and so it shivers as if there were no *Thou* at all—as if my Dove had been only a dream and a vision, and now had vanished into unreality and nothingness.

But tomorrow I shall surely hear from thee: and even should it be otherwise, I shall yet know, with everlasting faith, that my Dove's heart has been trying to make me sensible of its embraces all this time. My dearest, was not that a sweet time—that Sabbath afternoon and eve? But why didst thou look up in my face, as we walked, and ask why I was so grave? If I was grave I know no cause for it, beloved. Lights and shadows are continually flitting across my inward sky, and I know neither whence they come nor whither they go; nor do I inquire too closely into them. It is dangerous to look too minutely at such phenomena. It is apt to create a substance, where at first there was a mere shadow. If at any time, dearest wife, there should seem—though to me there never does—but if there should ever seem to be an expression unintelligible from one of our souls to another, we will not strive to interpret it into earthly language, but wait for the soul to make itself understood; and were we to wait a thousand years, we need deem it no more time than we can spare. I speak only in reference to such dim and intangible matters as that which suggested this passage of my letter. It is not that I have any love for mystery; but because I abhor it—and because I have felt, a thousand times, that words may be a thick and darksome veil of mystery between the soul and the truth which it seeks. Wretched were we, indeed, if we had no better means of communicating ourselves, no fairer garb in which to array our essential selves, than these poor rags and tatters of Babel. Yet words are not without their use, even for purposes of explanation,—but merely for explaining outward acts, and all sorts of external things, leaving the soul's life and action to explain itself in its own way.

My belovedest, what a misty disquisition have I scribbled! I would not read it over for sixpence. Think not that I supposed it necessary to sermonize thee so; but the sermon created itself from sentence to sentence; and being written, thou knowest that it belongs to thee, and I have no right to keep it back. Dearest, I was up very early this morning, and have had a good deal to do, especially this afternoon. Let me plead this excuse for my dulness and mistiness. I suspect that, hereafter, my little Dove will know how to estimate the difficulty of pouring one's self out in a soul-written letter, amid the distractions of business and society—she herself having experienced these checks upon her outpourings.

Now good bye, mine ownest wife. God bless us both—or may God bless either of us, and that one will bless the other. Dost thou sleep well now-a-nights, belovedest? Of whom dost thou dream? Thy husband's long days and short nights hardly leave him time to dream.

THINE OWNEST.

Dearest, just as I was folding this letter, came thy note. Do thou be at the Depot as soon as possible after eleven; and I will move Heaven and earth to meet thee there. Perhaps a little before eleven.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
South Street.

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, May 29th, 1840.—6 P.M.

My dearest,

Rejoice with thy husband, for he is free from a load of coal, which has been pressing upon his shoulders throughout all this hot weather. I am convinced that Christian's burthen consisted of coal; and no wonder he felt so much relieved when it fell off and rolled into the sepulchre. His load, however, at the utmost, could not have been more than a few bushels; whereas mine was exactly one hundred and thirty-five chaldrons and seven tubs.... Oh, my dearest, I feel the stroke upon mine own head. Except through thee, I can never feel any torment of that nature; for all these burning suns have blazed upon my head, unprotected except by a black hat, and yet I have felt no more inconvenience than if I had been sitting in the pleasant gloom of a dewy grot. Belovedest, be a great deal more careful of thyself. Remember always that thou art not thine own, but that Providence has entrusted to thy keeping a most delicate physical frame, which belongs wholly to me, and which therefore thou must keep with infinitely more care than thou wouldst the most precious jewel. And yet, I would not have thee anxious and watchful like an invalid; but thou shouldst consider that thou wert created to dwell nowhere but in the clime of Paradise, and wast only placed upon this earth, because thy husband is here and cannot do without thee—and that east-winds and fierce suns are evil unknown in thy native region, and therefore thy frame was not so constructed as to resist them; wherefore thine own wise

precautions must be thy safeguard. Blessedest, I kiss thy brow,—at least, I kiss the air thrice; and if none of the three kisses reach thee, then three very precious things will have gone forth from my heart in vain. But if any of thy headache and bewilderment have remained hitherto, and now thou feelest somewhat like a breath of Heaven on thy brow, we will take it for granted that my kisses have found thee out. Good bye now, dearest wife; for I am weary and stupid; and as I need not be at the Custom-House before eight or nine o'clock tomorrow, thou shalt have the rest of the letter freshly written in the morning.

Now it will be lucky for thee if thou gettest the last page of this letter entirely full. Dearest, thy last letter had the fragrance of a bank of violets—yea, all sorts of sweet smelling flowers and perfumed shrubs. I can lie down and repose upon it, as upon a bed of roses. It rejoices me to think that my whole being is not enveloped with coal-dust, but that its better half is breathing the breath of flowers. Oh, do be very happy, mine ownest wife, and fill thyself with all gentle pleasures that lie within thy reach; because at present thou hast a double duty to perform in this respect; since, so far as my enjoyments depend on external things, I can contribute nothing to the common stock of happiness. And yet dearest, nothing that I ever enjoyed before can come into the remotest comparison with my continual enjoyment of thy love—with the deep, satisfied repose which that consciousness brings to me; a repose subsisting, and ever to subsist, in the midst of all anxieties, troubles and agitations.

Belovedest, I sometimes wish that thou couldst be with [me] on board my salt-vessels and colliers; because there are many things of which thou mightst make such pretty descriptions; and in future years, when thy husband is again busy at the loom of fiction, he would weave in these little pictures. My fancy is rendered so torpid by my ungenial way of life, that I cannot sketch off the scenes and portraits that interest me; and I am forced to trust them to my memory, with the hope of recalling them at some more favorable period. For three or four days past, I have been observing a little Mediterranean boy, from Malaga, not more than ten or eleven years old, but who is already a citizen of the world, and seems to be just as gay and contented on the deck of a Yankee coal-vessel, as he could be while playing beside his mother's door. It is really touching to see how free and happy he is—how the little fellow takes this whole wide world for his home, and all mankind for his family. He talks Spanish—at least, that is his native tongue; but he is also very intelligible in English, and perhaps he likewise has smatterings of the speech of other countries, whither the winds may have wafted this little sea-bird. He is a Catholic; and yesterday, being Friday, he caught some fish and fried them for his dinner, in sweet oil; and really they looked so delicate that I almost wished he would invite me to partake. Every once in a while, he undresses himself and leaps overboard, plunging down beneath the waves, as if the sea were as native to him as the earth; then he runs up the rigging of the vessel, as if he meant to fly away through the air. Do thou remember this little boy, dearest, and tell me of him one of these days; and perhaps I may make something more beautiful of him than thou wouldst think from these rough and imperfect touches.

Belovedest, is thy head quite well? Art thou very beautiful now? Dost thou love me infinitely?

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

Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, June 2^d, 1840—Before Breakfast

My dearest,

Thy Friday's letter came in due season to the Custom-House; but Colonel Hall could not find time to bring it to the remote region of the earth, where I was then an exile; so that it awaited me till the next morning. At noon, came thy next letter, at an interval of several hours from the receipt of the former—a space quite long enough to be interposed between thy missives. And yesterday arrived thy letter of the Sabbath—and all three are very precious to thy husband; and the oftener they come the more he needs them. Now I must go down to breakfast. Dost thou not wonder at finding me scribbling between seven and eight o'clock in the morning? I do believe, naughtiest, that thou hast been praying for the non-arrival of salt and coal—not considering that, if thy petitions are heard, the poor Measurers will not earn a sixpence.

Belovedest, I know not what counsel to give thee about calling on my sisters; and therefore must leave the matter to thine own exquisite sense of what is right and delicate. We will talk it over at an early opportunity. I think I can partly understand why they appear cool towards thee; but it is for nothing in thyself personally, nor for any unkindness towards my Dove, whom everybody must feel to be the loveablest being in the world. But there are some untoward circumstances. Nevertheless, I have faith that all will be well, and that they will receive Sophie Hawthorne and the Dove into their heart of hearts; so let us wait patiently on Providence, as we always have, and see what time will bring forth. And, my dearest, whenever thou feelest disquieted about things of this sort—if ever that be the case—do thou speak freely to thy husband; for these are matters in which words may be of use, because they concern the relations between ourselves and others. Now, good bye, belovedest, till night. I perceive that the sun is shining dimly; but I fear that there is still an east wind to keep my Dove in her dove-cote.

Towards night—Ownest wife, the day has been spent without much pleasure or profit—a part of the time at the Custom-House, waiting there for the chance of work,—partly at the Athenaeum, and partly at a bookstore, looking for something suitable for our library. Among other recent purchases, I have bought a very good edition of Milton (his poetry) in two octavo volumes; and I saw a huge new London volume of his prose works, but it seemed to me that there was but a small portion of it that thou and I should ever care about reading—so I left it on the shelf. Dearest, I have bought some lithographic prints at auction, which I mean to send thee, that thou mayst show them to thy husband, the next afternoon that thou permittest him to spend with thee. Thou art not to expect anything very splendid; for I did not enter the auction-room till a large part of the collection was sold; so that my choice was limited. Perhaps there are one or two not altogether unworthy to be put on the walls of our sanctuary; but this I leave to thy finer judgment. I would thou couldst

peep into my room and see thine own pictures, from which I have removed the black veils; and there is no telling how much brighter and cheerfuller the parlor looks now, whenever I enter it.

Belovedest, I love thee very especially much today. But then that naughty Sophie Hawthorne—it would be out of the question to treat her with tenderness. Nothing shall she get from me, at my next visit, save a kiss upon her nose; and I should not wonder it she were to return the favor with a buffet upon my ear. Mine own Dove, how unhappy art thou to be linked with such a mate!—to be bound up in the same volume with her!—and me unhappy, too, to be forced to keep such a turbulent little rebel in my inmost heart! Dost thou not think she might be persuaded to withdraw herself, quietly, and take up her residence somewhere else? Oh, what an idea! It makes my heart close its valves and embrace her the more closely.

Well, dearest, it is breakfast time, and thy husband hath an appetite. What dost thou eat for breakfast?—but I know well enough that thou never eatest anything but bread and milk and chickens. Dost thou love pigeons in a pie? I am fonder of Dove than anything else—it is my heart's food and sole sustenance. God bless us.

THINE OWN HUSBAND.

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, June 11th, 1840—5 or 6 P.M.

My blessedest,

Thou hast strayed quite out of the sphere of my imagination, and I know not how to represent thy whereabouts, any more than if thou hadst gone on pilgrimage beyond the sea, or to the moon. Dost thou still love me, in all thy wanderings? Are there any east-winds there? Truly, now that thou hast escaped beyond its jurisdiction, I could wish that the east wind would blow every day, from ten o'clock till five; for there is great refreshment in it for us poor mortals that toil beneath the sun. Dearest, thou must not think too unkindly even of the east-wind. It is not, perhaps, a wind to be loved, even in its benigntest moods; but there are seasons when I delight to feel its breath upon my cheek, though it be never advisable to throw open my bosom and take it into my heart, as I would its gentle sisters of the South and West. To-day, if I had been on the wharves, the slight chill of an east wind would have been a blessing, like the chill of death to a world-weary man. But, dearest, thou wilt rejoice to hear that this has been one of the very idlest days that I ever spent in Boston. Oh, hadst thou been here! In the morning, soon after breakfast, I went to the Athenaeum Gallery; and during the hour or two that I stayed, not a single visitor came in. Some people were putting up paintings in one division of the room; but we might have had the other all to ourselves—thy husband had it all to himself—or rather, he did not have it, nor possess it in fulness and reality, because thou wast not there. I cannot see pictures without thee; so thou must not expect me to criticise this exhibition. There are two pictures there by our friend (thy friend—and is it not the same thing?) Sarah Clark—

scenes in Kentucky. Doubtless I shall find them very admirable, when we have looked at them together. The gallery of sculpture I shall not visit, unless I can be there with thee.

From the picture gallery I went to the reading-room of the Athenaeum, and there read the magazines till nearly twelve—thence to the Custom-House, and soon afterwards to dinner with Colonel Hall—then back to the Custom-House, but only for a little while. There was nothing in the world to do, and so, at two o'clock, I came home and lay down on the bed, with the Faery Queen in my hand, and my Dove in my heart. Soon a pleasant slumber came over me; it was not a deep, sound sleep, but a slumbrous withdrawing of myself from the external world. Whether thou camest to me in a dream, I cannot tell; but thou didst peep at me through all the interstices of sleep. After I awoke, I did not take up the Faery Queen again, but lay thinking of thee, and at last bestirred myself and got up to write this letter. My belovedest wife, does it not make thee happy to think that thy husband has escaped, for one whole summer day, from his burthen of salt and coal, and has been almost as idle as ever his idle nature could desire?—and this, too, on one of the longest days of all the year! Oh, could I have spent it in some shady nook, with mine own wife! Now good-bye, blessedest. So indolent is thy husband, that he intends now to relieve himself even from the sweet toil of shaping his thoughts of thee into written words; moreover, there is no present need of it, because I am not to be at the Custom-House very early, and can finish this letter tomorrow morning. Good-bye, dearest, and keep a quiet heart.

June 12th. ½ past 7 A.M.—Belovedest, art thou not going to be very happy to-day? I hope so, and believe so; and, dearest, if thou findest thyself comfortable at Concord—and if the Emersonians love thee and admire thee as they ought—do not thou too stubbornly refuse to stay a week longer than the term first assigned.

(Remainder of letter missing)

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, June 22^d, (Monday) ½ past 4 [1840]

Ownest, Colonel Hall put thy letter into my hand at our eating-house, so that its reception was timed very like that of mine to thee; but thy husband cared not for ceremony, nor for the presence of fifty people, but straightway broke the “long-legged little fowl” asunder and began to read. Belovedest, what a letter! Never was so much beauty poured out of any heart before; and to read it over and over is like bathing my brow in a fresh fountain, and drinking draughts that renew the life within me. Nature is kind and motherly to thee, and taketh thee into her inmost heart and cherisheth thee there, because thou lookest on her with holy and loving eyes. My dearest, how canst thou say that I have ever written anything beautiful, being thyself so potent to reproduce whatever is loveliest? If I did not know that thou lovest me, I should even be ashamed before thee. Sweetest wife, it gladdens me likewise that thou meetest with such sympathy there, and that thy friends have faith that thy husband is worthy of thee, because they see that thy wise heart could

not have gone astray. Worthy of thee I am not; but thou wilt make me so; for there will be time, or eternity enough, for thy blessed influence to work upon me. Would that we could build our cottage this very now, this very summer, amid the scenes which thou describest. My heart thirsts and languishes to be there, away from the hot sun and the coal-dust and the steaming docks, and the thick-pated, stubborn, contentious men, with whom I brawl from morning till night, and all the weary toil which quite engrosses me, and yet occupies only a part of my being which I did not know existed before I became a Measurer. I do think that I should sink down quite disheartened and inanimate if thou wert not happy, and gathering from earth and sky enjoyment for both of us; but this makes me feel that my real, innermost soul is apart from all these unlovely circumstances,—and that it has not ceased to exist, as I might sometimes suspect, but is nourished and kept alive through thee. Belovedest, if thou findest it good to be there, why wilt thou not stay even a little longer than this week? Thou knowest not what comfort I have in thinking of thee and those beautiful scenes; where the east wind cometh not, and amid those sympathizing hearts, which perhaps thou wilt not find elsewhere—at least not everywhere. I feel as if thou hadst found a haven of peace and rest, where I can trust thee without disquiet, and feel that thou art safe. It thou art well and happy, if thy cheek is becoming rosier, if thy step is light and joyous there, and if thy heart makes pleasant music, then is it not better for thee to stay a little longer? And if better for thee, it is so for thy husband likewise. Now, ownest wife, I do not press thee to stay, but leave it all to thy wisdom, and if thou feelest that it is now time to come home, most gladly will he welcome thee.

Dearest, I meant to have written to thee yesterday afternoon, so that thou shouldst have received the letter today, but Mrs. Hillard pressed her husband and myself to take a walk into the country, because his health needed such an excursion. So, after taking a nap, we set forth over the western avenue—a dreary, treeless, fierce-sunshiny, irksome road; but after journeying three or four or five miles, we came to some of the loveliest rural scenery—yes, the very loveliest—that ever I saw in my life. The first part of our road was like the life of toil and weariness that I am now leading; the latter part was like the life that we will lead hereafter. Would that I had thy pen, and I would give thee pictures of beauty to match thine own; but I should only mar my remembrance of them by the attempt. Not a beautiful scene did I behold but I imaged thee in the midst of it—thou wast with me in all the walk, and when I sighed it was for thee, and when I smiled it was for thee, and when I trusted in future happiness, it was for thee; and if I did not doubt and fear, it was altogether because of thee. What else than happiness can God intend for thee?—and if thy happiness, then mine also. On our return, we stopped at Braman's baths, and plunged in, and washed away all stains of earth, and became new creatures. Dearest, I sympathize with thee in thy love of the bath, and conveniences for it must not be forgotten in our domestic arrangements. Yet I am not entirely satisfied with any more contracted bath than the illimitable ocean; and to plunge into it is the next thing to soaring into the sky.

This morning I rose early to finish measuring a load of coal, which being accomplished in the forenoon, and there being little prospect of anything more to do, Colonel Hall, who perceived that thy husband's energies were somewhat exhausted by the heat, and by much brawling with the coal-people, did send me home immediately after dinner. So then I took a nap, with a volume of Spenser in my hand, and awaking at four, I re-re-reperused thy last letter, and sat down to pour myself out to thee, and in so doing, dearest wife, I have

had great comfort. And now the afternoon is beautiful in its decline; but my feet are somewhat afflicted with yesterday's excursion; so that I am in doubt whether to go out again, although I should like a bath.

Belovedest, I must not forget to thank Mr. Emerson for his invitation to Concord; but really it will not be in my power to accept it. Do thou say this in the way it ought to be said, and let him know what a business-machine thy husband is. Now, good-bye. Art thou very happy? I trust so, dearest. Thou hast our whole treasure of happiness in thy keeping. Keep it safe, ownest wife, and add to it continually. God bless thee.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Rev. R. W. Emerson,
Concord, Massachusetts.
(Forwarded, Salem).

TO MISS PEABODY



Boston, July 10th, 1840—Morning

Belovedest,

Doubtless thou didst expect a letter from me yesterday; but my days have been so busy, and my evenings so invaded with visitants, that I have not had a moment's time to talk with thee. Scarcely, till this morning, have I been able to read thy letter quietly. Night before last, came Mr. Jones Very; and thou knowest that he is somewhat unconscionable as to the length of his calls. Yesterday I came home early; and had the fates been propitious, thou shouldst have had a long letter; but in the afternoon came Mr. Hillard's London brother, and wasted my precious hours with a dull talk of nothing; and in the evening I was sorely tried with Mr. Conolly, and a Cambridge law-student, who came to do homage to thy husband's literary renown. So my sweetest wife was put aside for these idle people. I do wish the blockheads, and all other blockheads in this world, could comprehend how inestimable are the quiet hours of a busy man—especially when that man has no native impulse to keep him busy, but is continually forced to battle with his own nature, which yearns for seclusion (the solitude of a united two, my belovedest) and freedom to think, and dream, and feel.

Well, dearest, thy husband is in perfect health this morning, and good spirits; and much doth he rejoice that thou art so soon to be near him. No tongue can tell—no pen can write what I feel. Belovedest, do not thou make thyself sick in the bustle of removing; for I think that there is nothing more trying, even to a robust frame and rugged spirit, than the disturbance of such an occasion. Now, good-bye; for I must hurry to the Custom-House to see Colonel Hall, who is going out of town for two days, and will probably leave the administration of our department in my hands.

God bless thee, belovedest;—and perhaps thou wilt receive another letter before thy advent, but do not thou count upon it.

Thine ownest Husband,
DE L'AUBEPINE.

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

TO MISS PEABODY

54 Pinckney St., August 9th [1840]

Ownest Dove,

I have almost forgotten how to write letters—not having put pen to paper for that purpose (or any other, indeed) since my last to thee; but I cannot help writing thee a few lines, now when I had hoped to be listening to thy sweetest voice. Art thou much changed in this intervening time? Is thy hair grown gray? Art thou an old woman? Truly, it does appear very, very long to thy husband—an incomputable period. Belovedest, I had been out this forenoon; and when I returned, there was thy letter, lying on the threshold of my chamber-door. I had a presage of calamity, as soon as I saw it. Had I known of this visit of thine aunt, I would have taken the opportunity to go to Salem, and so we would have had next Sunday to ourselves. Does thine aunt say that thou lookest in magnificent health?—and that thou art very beautiful? If she has not yet said so thou shouldst ask her opinion on that point.

Belovedest, even if thine aunt Curtis should stay a week, do not thou incommode thy mother and sisters by trying to arrange a meeting. It is very painful to me to disturb and derange anybody in the world.

Thou dost not say whether thou art very well to-day—and whether thou art light of heart. I beseech thee never to write me even the shortest note, without giving me a glimpse of thyself in the very moment of writing;—and yet, I leave it all to thee, and withdraw this last petition. Thou knowest best what to write; for thou art an inspired little penwoman.

Thy husband is to measure salt at the end of Long Wharf tomorrow, and the next day, and probably the next, and the next. It is as desirable a place and employment as a Measurer can expect; so let thy visions of me be rather pleasurable than otherwise. I am in particularly good health; but my heart hungers for thee—nevertheless, I mean to be cheerful and content. Do thou be so likewise, little Dove—and naughty Sophie Hawthorne too. Now, good-bye. This is a very empty letter—at least, it would be so, if it had not an infinite love in it. God bless thee.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
No. 13 West street,
Boston.

TO MISS PEABODY

54 Pinckney St. August 24th, ¼ past 6 P.M.
[1840]

Own belovedest,

I had a presentiment of a letter from thee this morning; and so was not at all surprised when I saw thy father in the long, low, darksome room where thy husband was in durance. But I had not the least anticipation of the intelligence which thou didst send me; and it is the harder to be borne, because—(do not be naughty, ownest Dove)—I have an indispensable engagement at Cambridge tomorrow afternoon and evening; whereby our meeting must be delayed yet another day. Dearest, do set me a lofty example of patience. Be very good and very quiet, and enjoy thy Aunt Curtis's society to the utmost, and press her to stay with thee till Wednesday at six o'clock. But not an hour longer! Thou must absolutely eject [her] with thine own tender little hands, if she propose to tarry that night also.

Belovedest, I went to the Hurley Burley last evening; and considering that it was the first time I had been there without thee since we were married, I enjoyed it very well. We had a good deal of talk; but I missed thy gentle voice, which is surely the sweetest sound that was ever heard anywhere save in Paradise. Thy husband talked somewhat more than is his wont, but said nothing that is at all worth repeating; and I think he might as well have dispensed with saying anything. He shows his wisdom and policy much more in his general silence than in his occasional loquacity. Dearest, if I had not so high a respect for thy judgment, I should pronounce thy husband but a tolerable person, at best; but as thou hast been impelled to give thy precious self to such a man, there must be more in him than ordinary eyes can perceive. Miss Burley proposed to me to write an address of some kind for the Bunker-Hill fair; but I manifested no readiness to comply—neither do I feel any. Has my Dove contributed anything?

I went home in the midst of that beautiful rain, and sat up two hours with Elizabeth and Louisa.

This has not been a toilsome day, my wife. Indeed, I have had nothing to do; nor is it certain that I shall be employed tomorrow morning. Quite unexpected is this lull amid the tempest of business. I left the Custom-House at about four o'clock, and went to the bath, where I spent half an hour very deliciously. Dearest, we must have all sorts of bathing conveniences in our establishment. Thou art a water-spirit, like Undine. And thy spirit is to mine a pure fountain, in which I bathe my brow and heart; and immediately all the fever of the world departs. Thou art—but I cannot quite get hold of the idea that I meant to express; and as I want to leave a part of the page till tomorrow morning, I will stop here. God bless thee. I think I shall dream of thee to night, for I never loved thee so much.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
No. 13 West street,
Boston.

TO MISS PEABODY

54 Pinckney St. Sept. 18th, 1840. 8 o'clock P.M.

Sweetest Dove,

Thy father, apparently, did not see fit to carry thy letter to the Custom-House; and yet I think my intuition informed me that a letter was written; for I looked into the Desk very eagerly, although Colonel Hall neither pointed with his finger nor glanced with his eye, as is his custom when anything very precious is in store. It reached me here in mine own tabernacle, about half an hour since, while I sat resting myself from the toils of the day, thinking of thee, my Dove.

Thou didst make me happier, last evening, than I ever hoped to be, save in Heaven—and still that same happiness is around me and within me. I am the happier for everything thou dost and sayest—thou canst not possibly act so that I will not love thee better and be the happier for that very individual action.

Dearest, it was necessary that I should speak to thee to-night; but thou must not look for such a golden letter as thou didst write this morning; for thy husband is tolerably weary, and has very few thoughts in his mind, though much love in his heart. I cannot do without thy voice—thou knowest not what a sweet influence it has upon me, even apart from the honied wisdom which thou utterest. It thou shouldst talk in an unknown tongue, I should listen with infinite satisfaction, and be much edified in spirit at least, if not in intellect. When thou speakest to me, there is mingled with those earthly words, which are mortal inventions, a far diviner language, which thy soul utters and my soul understands.

Ownest Dove, I did not choose to go to Malden this evening, to hear the political lecture which I told thee of; for, indeed, after toiling all day, it is rather too hard to be bothered with such nonsense at night. I have no desire to go anywhither, after sunset, save to see mine own wife; and as to lectures, I love none but “curtain lectures”;—for such I suppose thine may be termed, although our beloved so far hath no curtains. Dearest, when we live together, thou wilt find me a most tediously stay-at-home husband. Thou wilt be compelled to rebuke and objurgate me, in order to gain the privilege of spending one or two evenings in a month by a solitary fireside.

Sweetest wife, I must bid thee farewell now, exhorting thee to be as happy as the angels; for thou art as good and holy as they, and have more merit in thy goodness than they have; because the angels have always dwelt in sinless heaven; whereas thy pilgrimage has been on earth, where many sin and go astray. I am ashamed of this letter; there is nothing in it worthy of being offered to my Dove; but yet I shall send it; for a letter to one's beloved wife ought not to be kept back for any dimness of thought or feebleness of expression, any more than a prayer should be stifled in the soul, because the tongue of man cannot breathe it eloquently to the Deity. Love has its own omniscience; and what Love speaks to Love is comprehended in the same way that prayers are.

Ownest, dost thou not long very earnestly to see thy husband? Well—thou shalt see him on Monday night; and this very night he will come into thy dreams, if thou wilt admit him there.

Thy very lovingest, and very sleepest,

HUSBAND.

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

TO MISS PEABODY

Salem, Oct. 4th, 1840— $\frac{1}{2}$ past 10 A.M.

Mine ownest,

Here sits thy husband in his old accustomed chamber, where he used to sit in years gone by, before his soul became acquainted with thine. Here I have written many tales—many that have been burned to ashes—many that doubtless deserved the same fate. This deserves to be called a haunted chamber, for thousands upon thousands of visions have appeared to me in it; and some few of them have become visible to the world. If ever I should have a biographer, he ought to make great mention of this chamber in my memoirs, because so much of my lonely youth was wasted here, and here my mind and character were formed; and here I have been glad and hopeful, and here I have been despondent; and here I sat a long, long time, waiting patiently for the world to know me, and sometimes wondering why it did not know me sooner, or whether it would ever know me at all—at least, till I were in my grave. And sometimes (for I had no wife then to keep my heart warm) it seemed as if I were already in the grave, with only life enough to be chilled and benumbed. But oftener I was happy—at least, as happy as I then knew how to be, or was aware of the possibility of being. By and bye, the world found me out in my lonely chamber, and called me forth—not, indeed, with a loud roar of acclamation, but rather with a still, small voice; and forth I went, but found nothing in the world that I thought preferable to my old solitude, till at length a certain Dove was revealed to me, in the shadow of a seclusion as deep as my own had been. And I drew nearer and nearer to the Dove, and opened my bosom to her, and she flitted into it, and closed her wings there—and there she nestles now and forever, keeping my heart warm, and renewing my life with her own. So now I begin to understand why I was imprisoned so many years in this lonely chamber, and why I could never break through the viewless bolts and bars; for if I had sooner made my escape into the world, I should have grown hard and rough, and been covered with earthly dust, and my heart would have become callous by rude encounters with the multitude; so that I should have been all unfit to shelter a heavenly Dove in my arms. But living in solitude till the fulness of time was come, I still kept the dew of my youth and the freshness of my heart, and had these to offer to my Dove.

Well, dearest, I had no notion what I was going to write, when I began, and indeed I doubted whether I should write anything at all; for after such communion as that of our last blissful evening, it seems as if a sheet of paper could only be a veil betwixt us. Ownest, in the times that I have been speaking of, I used to think that I could imagine all passions, all feelings, all states of the heart and mind; but how little did I know what it is

to be mingled with another's being! Thou only hast taught me that I have a heart—thou only hast thrown a light deep downward, and upward, into my soul. Thou only hast revealed me to myself; for without thy aid, my best knowledge of myself would have been merely to know my own shadow—to watch it flickering on the wall, and mistake its fantasies for my own real actions. Indeed, we are but shadows—we are not endowed with real life, and all that seems most real about us is but the thinnest substance of a dream—till the heart is touched. That touch creates us—then we begin to be—thereby we are beings of reality, and inheritors of eternity. Now, dearest, dost thou comprehend what thou hast done for me? And is it not a somewhat fearful thought, that a few slight circumstances might have prevented us from meeting, and then I should have returned to my solitude, sooner or later (probably now, when I have thrown down my burthen of coal and salt) and never should [have] been created at all! But this is an idle speculation. If the whole world had stood between us, we must have met—if we had been born in different ages, we could not have been sundered.

Belovedest, how dost thou do? If I mistake not, it was a southern rain yesterday, and, next to the sunshine of Paradise, *that* seems to be thy element.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Salem, Novr. 27th, Friday [1840]

Dearest Wife,

Never was a wife so yearned for as thou art. I wonder how I could have resolved to be absent from thee so long—it is far too long a time to be wasted in a suspension of life. My heart is sometimes faint for want of thee—and sometimes it is violent and tumultuous for the same cause. How is it with thine, mine ownest? Dost thou not feel, when thou goest to bed, that the day is utterly incomplete?—that it has been an unsatisfactory dream, wherein the soul groped wearily for something that it could not obtain? Thus it is with thy husband.

What a history wilt thou have to tell me, when I come back! We shall be a week in getting through it. Poor little Dove, I pity thee now: for I apprehend that, by this time, thou hast got thy husband's dullest of all books to read. And how many pages canst thou read, without falling asleep? Well is it for thee, that thou hast adopted the practice of extending thyself on the sofa, while at thy studies; for now I need be under no apprehension of thy sinking out of a chair. I would, for thy sake, that thou couldst find anything laudable in this awful little volume; because thou wouldst like to tell thy husband that he has done well.

Oh, this weather!—how dismal it is. A sullen sky above, and mud and “slosh” below! Thy husband needs thy sunshine, thou cheerfulest little wife; for he is quite pervaded and imbued with the sullenness of all nature. Thou knowest that his disposition is never the

most gracious in the world; but now he is absolutely intolerable. The days should be all sunshine when he is away from thee; because, if there were twenty suns in the unclouded sky, yet his most essential sunshine would be wanting. Well, there is one good in absence; it makes me realise more adequately how much I love thee—and what an infinite portion of me thou art. It makes me happy even to yearn and sigh for thee as I do; because I love to be conscious of our deep, indissoluble union—and of the impossibility of living without thee. There is something good in me, else thou couldst not have become one with me, thou holy wife. I shall be happy, because God has made my happiness necessary to that of one whom He loves. Thus is it that I reason with myself; and therefore my soul rejoices to feel the intermingling of our beings, even when it is felt in this longing desire for thee.

Dearest, amongst my other reasons for wishing to be in Boston, wouldst thou believe that I am eager to behold thy alabaster vase—and the little flower-vase, and thy two precious pictures? Even so it is. Thou, who art the loadstone of my soul, hast magnetised them, therefore they attract me.

I met Frederic Howes last evening, and promised to go there to-night; although he seemed to think that Miss Burley will be in Boston. Perhaps thou wilt see her there. I wonder if she will not come and settle with us in Mr. Ripley's Utopia. And this reminds me to ask whether thou hast drawn those caricatures—especially the one of thy husband, staggering, and puffing, and toiling onward to the gate of the farm, burthened with the unsaleable remnant of Grandfather's Chair. Dear me, what a ponderous, leaden load it will be!

Dearest, I am utterly ashamed of my handwriting. I wonder how thou canst anywise tolerate what is so ungraceful, being thyself all grace. But I think I seldom write so shamefully as in this epistle. It is a toil and torment to write upon this sheet of paper; for it seems to be greasy, and feels very unpleasantly to the pen. Moreover the pen itself is very culpable. Yet thou wouldst make the fairest, delicatest strokes upon the same paper, with the same pen. Thou art beautiful throughout, even to the minutest thing.

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Salem, Jany. 12th, 1841

Infinitely dearest, I went to the post office yesterday, after dinner, and inquiring for a letter, thy "visible silence" was put into my hands. Canst thou remotely imagine how glad I was? Hast thou also been gladdened by an uncouth scribbling, which thy husband dispatched to thee on Monday? Oh, belovedest, no words can tell how thirsty my spirit is for thine! Surely I was very reprehensible to conceive the idea of spending a whole week and more away from thee. Why didst thou not scold me? and go with me wherever I went? Without thee, I have but the semblance of life. All the world hereabouts seems dull and drowsy—a vision, but without any spirituality—and I, likewise an unspiritual shadow,

struggle vainly to catch hold of something real. Thou art my reality; and nothing else is real for me, unless thou give it that golden quality by thy touch.

Dearest, how camest thou by the headache? Thou shouldst have dreamed of thy husband's breast, instead of that Arabian execution; and then thou wouldst have awaked with a very delicious thrill in thy heart, and no pain in thy head. And what wilt thou do to-day, persecuted little Dove, when thy abiding-place will be a Babel of talkers? Would that Miss Margaret Fuller might lose her tongue!—or my Dove her ears, and so be left wholly to her husband's golden silence! Dearest wife, I truly think that we could dispense with audible speech, and yet never feel the want of an interpreter between our spirits. We have soared into a region where we talk together in a language that can have no earthly echo.

Articulate words are a harsh clamor and dissonance. When man arrives at his highest perfection, he will again be dumb!—for I suppose he was dumb at the Creation, and must perform an entire circle in order to return to that blessed state. Cousin Christopher, by thy account, seems to be of the same opinion, and is gradually learning to talk without the use of his voice.

Jany. 15th. Friday.—Oh, belovedest, what a weary week is this! Never did I experience the like. I went to bed last night, positively dismal and comfortless. Wilt thou know thy husband's face, when we meet again? Art thou much changed by the flight of years, my poor little wife? Is thy hair turned gray? Dost thou wear a day-cap, as well as a night cap? How long since didst thou begin to use spectacles? Perhaps thou wilt not like to have me see thee, now that Time has done his worst to mar thy beauty; but fear thou not, sweetest Dove, for what I have loved and admired in thee is eternal. I shall look through the envious mist of age, and discern thy immortal grace as perfectly as in the light of Paradise. As for thy husband, he is grown quite bald and gray, and has very deep wrinkles across his brow, and crowsfeet and furrows all over his face. His eyesight fails him, so that he can only read the largest print in the broadest day-light; but it is a singular circumstance, that he makes out to decypher the pygmy characters of thy epistles, even by the faintest twilight. The secret is, that they are characters of light to him, so that he could doubtless read them in midnight darkness. Art thou not glad, belovedest, that thou wast ordained to be a heavenly light to thy husband, amid the dreary twilight of age?

Grandfather is very anxious to know what has become of his chair, and the Famous Old People who sat in it. I tell him that it will probably arrive in the course of to-day; and that he need not be so impatient; for the public will be very well content to wait, even were it till Doomsday. He acquiesces, but scolds, nevertheless.

I saw thy cousin Mary Tappan yesterday, and felt the better for it, because she is connected with thee in my mind. Dearest, I love thee very much!!!! Art thou not astonished? I wish to ask thee a question, but will reserve it for the extreme end of this letter.

I trust that thou art quite well, belovedest. That headache took a very unfair advantage, in attacking thee while thou wast away from thy husband. It is his province to guard thee both from head-ache and heart-ache; and thou performest the same blessed office for him, so far as regards the heart-ache—as to the head-ache, he knows it not, probably because his head is like a block of wood.

Now good-bye, dearest, sweetest, loveliest, holiest, truest, suitablest little wife. I worship

thee. Thou art my type of womanly perfection. Thou keepest my heart pure, and elevatest me above the world. Thou enablest me to interpret the riddle of life, and fillest me with faith in the unseen and better land, because thou leadest me thither continually. God bless thee forever.

Dost thou love me?

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

TO MISS PEABODY



Salem, Jany. 27th, 1841—½ past 2 P.M.

Very dearest, what a dismal sky is this that hangs over us! Thy husband doth but half live to-day—his soul lies asleep, or rather torpid. As for thee, thou hast been prating at a great rate, and has spoken many wonderful truths in to-day's conversation.

Belovedest, thou wast very sweet and lovely in our walk yesterday morning; and it gladdens me much that Providence brought us together. Dost thou not think that there is always some especial blessing granted us, when we are to be divided for any length of time? Thou rememberest what a blissful evening came down from Heaven to us, before our last separation; insomuch that our hearts glowed with its influence, all through the ensuing week. And yesterday there came a heavenly morning, and thou camest with it like a rosy vision, which still lingers with me, and will not quite fade away, till it be time for it to brighten into reality. Surely, thou art beloved of Heaven, and all these blessings are vouchsafed for thy sake; for I do not remember that such things used to happen to me, while I was a solitary sinner. Thou bringest a rich portion to thy husband, dearest—even the blessing of thy Heavenly Father.

Whenever I return to Salem, I feel how dark my life would be, without the light that thou shedst upon it—how cold, without the warmth of thy love. Sitting in this chamber, where my youth wasted itself in vain, I can partly estimate the change that has been wrought. It seems as if the better part of me had been born, since then. I had walked those many years in darkness, and might so have walked through life, with only a dreamy notion that there was any light in the universe, if thou hadst not kissed mine eye-lids, and given me to see. Thou, belovedest, hast always been positively happy. Not so thy husband—he has only been not miserable. Then which of us has gained the most? Thy husband, assuredly.

When a beam of heavenly sunshine incorporates itself with a dark cloud, is not the cloud benefitted more than the sunshine? What a happy image is this!—my soul is the cloud, and thine the sunshine—but a gentler, sweeter sunshine than ever melted into any other cloud.

Dearest wife, nothing at all has happened to me, since I left thee. It puzzles me to conceive how thou meetest with so many more events than thy husband. Thou wilt have a volume

to tell me, when we meet, and wilt pour thy beloved voice into mine ears, in a stream of two hours' long. At length thou wilt pause, and say—"But what has *thy* life been?"—and then will thy stupid husband look back upon what he calls his life, for three or four days past, and behold a blank! Thou livest ten times as much [as] he; because thy spirit takes so much more note of things.

I met our friend Mr. Howes in the street, yesterday, and held a brief confabulation. He did not inquire how my wife's health is. Was not this a sin against etiquette? Dearest, thy husband's stupid book seems to meet more approbation here, than the former volume did—though *that* was greeted more favorably than it deserved. There is a superfluity of newspaper puffs here, and a deficiency in Boston, where they are much needed. I ought to love Salem better than I do; for the people have always had a pretty generous faith in me, ever since they knew me at all. I fear I must be undeserving of their praise, else I should never get it. What an ungrateful blockhead thy husband is!

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

TO MISS PEABODY



54 Pinckney St., 12 o'clock A.M. Monday [1841]

Truest Heart,

I cannot come to thee this evening, because my friend Bridge is in town, whom I hardly have seen for years past. Alas! I know not whether I am a very faithful friend to him; for I cannot rejoice that he is here, since it will keep me from my Dove. Thou art my only reality—all other people are but shadows to me: all events and actions, in which thou dost not mingle, are but dreams.

Do thou be good, dearest love, and when I come, tomorrow night, let me find thee magnificent. Thou didst make me very happy, yesterday forenoon—thou wast a south-west wind—or the sweetest and wholesomest wind that blows, whichever it may be. I love thee more than I can estimate; and last night I dreamed of thee. I know not exactly what; but we were happy.

God bless thee.

Thine ownest husband,
THEODORE DE L'AUBEPINE.

A Madame,
Madame Sophie Amelie de L'Aubepine,
Rue d'Ouest,
à Boston.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,

West-street,
Boston.

TO MISS PEABODY

54 Pinckney St., March 12th,—Sunday [1841]

My Life,

I have come back to thee! Thy heart gives thee no warning of my presence; yet I am here—embracing thee with all the might of my soul. Ah, forgetful Dove! How is it that thou hast had no spiritual intelligence of my advent? I am sure that if yearnings and strivings could have brought my spirit into communion with thine, thou wouldst have felt me within thy bosom.

Thou truest-Heart, thou art conscious of me, as much as a heavenly spirit can be, though the veil of mortality. Thou has not forgotten me for a moment. I have felt thee drawing me towards thee, when I was hundreds of miles away. The farther I went, the more was I conscious of both our loves. I cannot write how much I love thee, and what deepest trust I have in thee.

Dearest, expect me at six o'clock this afternoon. I have not the watch, as thou knowest, and so it may be a few moments before or after six. Oh, I need thee this very, very moment—my heart throbs, and so does my hand, as thou mayst see by this scribble. God bless thee! I am very well.

THINE OWNEST HUSBAND.

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

TO MISS PEABODY

Salem, March 18th, 1841

Dearest wife, here is thy poor husband, enduring his banishment as best he may. Methinks all enormous sinners should be sent on pilgrimage to Salem, and compelled to spend a length of time there, proportioned to the enormity of their offenses. Such a punishment would be suited to sinners that do not quite deserve hanging, yet are too aggravated for the States-Prison. Oh, thy naughty husband! If it be a punishment, he well deserves to suffer a life-long infliction of it, were it only for slandering his native town so vilely. Thou must scold him well. But, belovedest, any place is strange and irksome to me, where thou art not; and where thou art, any place will be home. Here I have made a great blot, as thou

seest; but, sweetest, there is, at this moment, a portrait of myself in the mirror of that inkspot. Is not that queer to think of? When it reaches thee, it will be nothing but a dull black spot; but now, when I bend over it, there I see myself, as at the bottom of a pool. Thou must not kiss the blot, for the sake of the image which it now reflects; though, if thou shouldst, it will be a talisman to call me back thither again.

Thy husband writes thee nonsense, as his custom is. I wonder how thou managest to retain any respect for him. Trust me, he is not worthy of thee—not worthy to kiss the sole of thy shoe. For the future, thou perfectest Dove, let thy greatest condescension towards him, be merely an extension of the tip of thy forefinger, or of thy delicate little foot in its stocking. Nor let him dare to touch it without kneeling—which he will be very ready to do, because he devoutly worships thee; which is the only thing that can be said in his favor. But, think of his arrogance! At this very moment.—

March 19th. Forenoon.—Dearest soul, thou hast irrecoverably lost the conclusion of this sentence; for I was interrupted by a visitor, and have now forgotten what I meant to say. No matter; thou wilt not care for the loss; for, now I think of it, it does not please thee to hear thy husband spoken slightingly of. Well, then thou shouldst not have married such a vulnerable person. But, to thy comfort be it said, some people have a much more exalted opinion of him than I have. The Rev. Mr. Gannet delivered a lecture at the Lyceum here, the other evening, in which he introduced an enormous eulogium on whom dost thou think? Why, on thy respectable husband! Thereupon all the audience gave a loud hiss. Now is my mild little Dove exceedingly enraged, and will plot some mischief and all-involving calamity against the Salem people. Well, belovedest, they did not actually hiss at the praises bestowed on thy husband—the more fools they!

Ownest wife, what dost thou think I received, just before I re-commenced this scribble? Thy letter! Dearest, I felt as thou didst about our meeting, at Mrs. Hillard's. It is an inexpressible torment. Thy letter is very sweet and beautiful—an expression of thyself. But I do trust thou hast given Mr. Ripley a downright scolding for doubting either my will or ability to work. He ought to be ashamed of himself, to try to take away the good name of a laboring man, who must earn his bread (and thy bread too) by the sweat of his brow.

Sweetest, I have some business up in town; and so must close this letter—which has been written in a great hurry, and is not fit to be sent thee. Say what thou wilt, thy husband is not a good letter-writer; he never writes, unless compelled by an internal or external necessity; and most glad would he be to think that there would never, henceforth, be occasion for his addressing a letter to thee. For would not that imply that thou wouldst always hereafter be close to his bosom?

Dearest love, expect me Monday evening. Didst thou expect me sooner? It may not be; but if longing desires could bear me to thee, thou wouldst straightway behold my shape in the great easy chair. God bless thee, thou sinless Eve—thou dearest, sweetest, purest, perfectest wife.

THINE OWNEST.

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

TO MISS PEABODY

Pinckney St., April 4th, [1841]

Very dearest-est,

I have hitherto delayed to send these stories, because Howes' Masquerade was destroyed by the printers: and I have been in hopes to procure it elsewhere. But my own copy of the Magazine, in Salem, is likewise lost; so that I must buy the Boston Book and request Mary's acceptance of it.

Belovedest, how dost thou do this morning? I am very well; and surely Heaven is one with earth, this beautiful day. I met Miss Burley in the street, yesterday, and her face seemed actually to beam and radiate with kindness and goodness; insomuch that my own face involuntarily brightens, whenever I think of her. I thought she looked really beautiful.

Oh, dearest, how I wish to see thee! I would thou hadst my miniature to wear in thy bosom; and then I should feel sure that now and then thou wouldst think of me—of which now, thou art aware, there can be no certainty. Sweetest, I feel that I shall need great comfort from thee, when the time of my journey to the far wilderness actually comes. But we will be hopeful—thou shalt fill thy husband with thy hopefulness, and so his toil shall seem light, and he shall sing (though I fear it would be a most unlovely sort of screech) as he drives the plough.

Now, belovedest, good-bye. My visit to Salem will be so brief, that a letter would hardly reach thee, before I myself shall return; so it will not be best for me to write. God bless thee and keep thee; which he will do without my prayers, because the good and pure, of which class my Dove is the best and purest, always dwell within the walls of Heaven. I am in great haste, most beloved; so, embracing thee,

I remain thy lovingest husband,

NATH.

HAWTHORNE.

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

Transcriber's Note:

Obvious typographical errors have been corrected.
Inconsistent spelling and hyphenation in the original document have been preserved.