

"The thought of her blooms in one's mind like the whitest of flowers: it makes one braver and more thankful to remember the simple faith and patience with which she bore her pain and trouble."

Frances to Edith.

-May 2" 1880. Dear Edith, Every word that I say to you this afternoon will be drowned in the voices of those bells. Chimes, my dear. The Cathedral is at the top of the hill just above. They've been calling joyously this long time, those bells. Now they are rolling slowly the Venite, adamus. I can't keep them out this letter - I just can't do it. The Venite adamus - perhaps that's given us to pitch from! I wonder if I can get Frances & the afternoon up to it. I didn't think so a minute ago when I sat down in this May rainstorm; but if the chimes come along and ring the gladness in, we shall just have to take it & pitch higher - that's all.

You were good to write me. I think of you as very busy always. It is such a busy world & you are so strong to do "The Lord hath need of you". I like to think about you, & some other dear people that I know on my still days - & have many days that are only this.

June 2" 1880 Well, dear, I have put the "June 2" " down & I have been sitting here ever since looking at it. There's something in the look of the word that makes my heart warm & glad. It comes to me, the June of the world, with a delicious undercurrent of joy, always. I cannot imagine any sorrow that would quite crush this feeling out of my heart. Just because there is such a thing as June, & just because there is such a girl as I - well, I know I never feel so sure that I ought to be glad of this last fact as I do in this kind of an air & this kind of a day - nor so sure of what's coming. You know, of course, the name goes back to the Mr. Olympus of things. Good & royal, isn't it? "Sacred to Juno," says the lexicon. "Sacred" .that sounds good, too. I'm glad we got our June from the celestials. Somebody else is thinking of the royal mountain, too. I take this from her last letter: "We sat down on a stone, Home & I, & entered into conversation, & this is what he told me -" Then the bright-eyed Athene went away to Olympus, where they say the seats of the gods ever steadfast abide: nor is it shaken by the wind, nor ever wet with rain, nor is there snow there, but cloudless the pure ether is outspread, & white splendor over lies it; here the blessed gods rejoice all the day long'."

I'm going to bring you right into this minute, into my most comfortable thought. It's that word "take". It seems so restful

-the feeling that just the being ready, the putting out of our hands is the whole of our part of it for so many of the "good & perfect gifts". There is so much waiting for us if we can only get to the taking point. Did you ever notice in the Testament how it is "receive ye" - "receive ye" - & "take ye" - "take ye" all the way through?

Is it as good a thought to you, I wonder, as to me - that we can be still & just "take"? That with all our reading & striving we can never come into possession of the best of the "comforter", even, but that it cometh" - we have only to be quiet & "take".

Talk to me sometimes about your sisters. I have an insatiable interest in other

people's little sisters. I tried to keep my sister little, but I couldn't. She would get tall in spite of me, & old & wise & profound & I know not what else.

"Oh that hillside of waving grain!" I echo your words. Do I "remember"? O my dear, will the grain ever grow long, & the wind come down & touch it that I do not remember!

-January 3" 1881. Good morning, dear! We are going to get a visit out of this morning. It feels like one of the real visiting kind. ++ We'll begin, I think, by finding out what kind of a world it is we're in on this particular morning, & we'll talk from outside in. A white world - a clear, white world. It began away back somewhere in the night. To think of the clouds dropping down upon us such things as these - those thick inexplorable clouds - children of the night. One would never dream that out of them gentle things like these would come. +++ Strange night! strange world of clouds! Out of the darkness of the one comes rosy dawn: out of the other softest drifts of snow. Is this the message the morning has for such haunting things as dreads? They too are dark things. Do they mean nothing but soft sweet touched upon our lives after all? Light, or snow-wreaths.

Hills are pretty good things - & they go well with cream. This takes us quite naturally to Portville. Yes, I saw burnt Hill, & the hill where the Arbutus grows, & the Arm & Shoulder across the river. I'm not setting myself up to teach you anything about Portville hills. ---We had long mornings on the piazza with Jean Paul, & Justin McCarthy's "History of Our Own Time", & Taine's "Philosophy of Art," & John Burrough's "no end".

We had afternoons of botanizing & fancy-work, & the "Tribune" & naps. Yes, m'am, naps. We had little walks in the garden after tea, picked nasturtiums, counted the rose-buds, named the pansie, scolded the verbenas, told the scarlet & flame of the geraniums every particular time that it was just about everything that could be put into color, & the arms of the big butternut tree that they were everything that could stand for shade & coaxing. Then we would sit on the porch & watch the night creep up the hills. Did you every go to Hookertown after ferns? That is one of the climaxes of an August morning.

Yes, that lake - now you can talk to me & I'll understand. I've learned the language from that blessed lake Erie, from Laura's own "joy-forever corner". I didn't just look at it & run away, but I saw daylight come & bless it twenty three mornings. I saw all the sweet ways daylight has with it : I learned what it was to wake up in the night & feel it there - lived with "a bit of infinity on my horizon".

So you were not happy with "Patience Strong". The "too-much"-ness is against it. Quite right. The "so-ness also. Right again. It's a sort of herb-extract of everything that can preach while it's a-simmering.

For a pure lark I think Paley's "Evidence" would have been much better.

Your dear wishes for me & your Christmas card came Christmas morning. What a blessed warming-up time Christmas is! -August 10" 1881. It is such a morning, dear, as we could take from & take from & still feel that we had only crept to the door of its fullness & looked out. It is here to the heart of summer that we have come. No more surprises laid away - no more unfoldings - but the great miracle of fullness before us. We can't

understand much of it, tho' we seem strangely enough to belong to it. It is only in rare moments that we find ourselves high enough to see even what it is like. Then we think of life unending.

These are such little glimpses at my window today. The summer that I feel is larger than this. All the broad sweet places where shadows have crept after sunshine; all the deeps of the woods with their manifold secrets; all the meanings of long mornings with the sun coming up; all the sparkle & shimmer & rest of water with the parable of color upon it; all the wide upland stretches; all the forest goo-paths with gleams of still water in the distance; all the nights coming up over the world with the sounds in them that only summer nights bring; all that I have ever known of summer – it is this that I have here with me this morning. How rich I feel! How glad I am to think that if anything in life seems limited it is we that limit it.

I have been reading Thoreau lately. Do you know him well? I can't tell you what a contrast it has been – his cheery out-door walks & my one bedroom window that looks nowhere. I couldn't see one sparrow even jump from an elm twig. But to go with Thoreau "cross-lots" on a ten mile walk – that was quite another thing. There wouldn't be a note nor a flutter up in the woods, there would be a thing to know about a swamp or a pasture that Thoreau couldn't tell you, & you feel all the time like poking him up to say more. ++ It is good in this age of hurry to stop & hear Mr. Thoreau talk about minnows, or, if you please, scarlet raks or ripe apples. Think of getting out of your room to do it!

I do not like to talk of myself & of my sickness, but I must talk this little bit to you. +++ There is a strange uncertainty in what may come. But whatever comes be glad in it--.. Let it all mean the brightest, sunniest thing to you.

Dec. 19" 1881. Is it so long since we have talked, dear? Perhaps so in the counting, but my thought has held on to you so, & filled the space with those thousand little things that were like talking to you – almost better sometimes, as touches of hands are better when the heart is full – that it seems as if there had not been any break ++ but we had kept right on.

I don't wonder that boys grow up sort of braced & toned up – that they have to cultivate that sense of feeling that to girl is so often a sixth sense. A girl gets so little of the wide free living which a boy is so often born to. And so it falls out that a boy sees his way though life. a girl feels hers.

I suppose one great question with us all is the kind of relief we seek for our moods. There is nothing, perhaps, that determined more the whole drift of our nature, next to our way of bearing sorrow, than the way we seek relief from it.

As to H. what she needs now above everything is somebody's arms. There are times when to the strongest there is nothing like a little human tenderness. There are moments when the dear Lord's best message to us is an arm around us.

The comfort part in my own statistics is very large. I'm not putting it at the best, but the best is putting itself at me. I say to again, "Be glad for me, whatever comes." When I said it you before there was the thought in my heart that perhaps for me there might be the going home : but there was a deeper thought than that & there is

today – the thought, dear, of the long waiting that is likely to come first. Be very glad for me in it all – in the pain – the slow waiting if it comes – the weary laying down. This is the hard part. For this, dear, put your hand in mine & be reverently glad. It is the joy of my life – the crown of it, dear one, that I am finding the gladness; that there is no longer faint far-off dawn, but that for me the morning has come. "Do not fear for me dark days. I think there is nothing dark for me henceforth. I have to do only with the present & the present is light & gladness."

–July 5" 1882. Well, my dear girl, to start with I am going to give you a downright hug. When a hug is downright it is the best one I know how to give. But hugs in this world have their limitations. As I have been known to remark on several occasions there are several things more satisfactory than a hug with a metal pen. But here it is, my dear – take it quick. It is only one more thing – I say this settling back & putting on my – why, no – not spectacles – surely what do people put on when they settle back to begin a moral reflection – people, I mean who have outgrown their airs & haven't yet come to spectacles? Well, as I had begun to remark, it (this hug, mind!) is only one more thing that has to stand in this world for a great deal better something somewhere!

I am looking this morning straight up into the elm trees & my thought gets all tangled up there where the leaves grow so thick & the limbs cross. In one of them there's a bird's nest. I take the greatest delight in giving you this little peep at it. I think you are one of the people the birds would be sure to tell. I don't know any house around us that's capable of making more poetry than that little home of theirs – & poets, you know, always confide in you! What else do I look at? Carts, my dear, & poor, spiny horses. I suppose there are a goodly number of sleek, fat, easy-going horses that I don't see. Horses take their chances like folks – but how in the world it is to be made up to these other horses I can't conceive. There must be a horse-heaven! I fully believe, you know, that there's a dog heaven.

There's such a delicious little thing in that journal of Hawthorne's that he kept when he was a boy? Can you imagine Hawthorne a boy? I'm afraid I imagine it less since I read this journal than before. But if you can say the alphabet of him backward & get him fixed up there in the wild edges of that little Maine town, & see him stopping his fishing long enough to write down what he saw & what he thought about it to please his uncle, you will be in fine trim to read that little colloquy he had with a horse. I think of it every time one of these sorry, graceless things goes by.

Do you know any horse real well? I wish, if you do, you would just mention my anxieties about their future sate, & find out for my comfort what they have made up their minds to about future felicity.

That bird from my big elm has come down for a wisp dropped by that big hay-wagon. How wise you look, you tiny brown thing! Isn't it a bit of rare good planning that that bird's nest should be set down – poetry over all this plodding prose? Planned? Why, of course, it was planned, & by a Heart that comprehends the meanings of all beauty. The sense of the doing for us beyond our thought is wonderful to me always. The great plannings are so beautiful : but the little things like these – the thinking of little things to please me – the sending the birds to me – the springing up of tiny weeds among the stones – I can't tell you how such things touch me! It is like walking behind somebody – every step – is it not? Well – the cart-wheels rumble on; the poor

much-worked horses go plodding by; the rag-men & the umbrella-men, & lack-a-day, the strawberry men go shouting by; the milk-wagons from Araby the blest go crunching over the cobble.

Perhaps it isn't just the out-look for a Browning talk.

It isn't that big orchard you & I would like to jump into this morning - & the bees aren't in the clover. Indeed there are no bees, & it's much to be feared there isn't any clover. However (let us begin it with a big H) ++ some of "Parcelsus" [Paracelsus] was lived out & written out I fancy under the inspiration of cobblestones. I quite believe the same of "The Soul's Tragedy". Perhaps there was an organ-grinder & a swarthy man selling strawberries. "Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign, I will be patient & proud & soberly acquiesce."

Get out of the atmosphere where people "scold for a principle" and, if heaven gives you the privilege unspeakable of getting into the atmosphere where people die for a principle", if it is only you or I we could write a poem. If it is Mr. Browning he can write "Lyrics of Life".

"Abt Vogler" touches me. I can't tell you how. Perhaps some of it is too near my own broken life for me not to understand. "And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence For the fulness of the days?"

Haven't I fought for this? It's a hard thing to stand before a failure - big or little.

I have told you that I was rested, & I am. God is taking care of that: but close beside all this rest there is pressing upon me the consciousness of the work that has dropped from my hands. If I had died into some strange existence where I knew nothing but the pause & the waiting, to pause & wait would have been almost easy thing by the side of this that has come. But to be dragged to one side & left, & to hear the battle going on without you - that is another thing. Some of the pain of the world lies very near me. This is perhaps why I feel so much, how real a thing the pain of other people is - & with it the wish that is so strong in me to help- and close by me there are such sad & sorry things - things that I have to know. They roll in like waves from that world full [sic] of sadder things & sorrier. And I lie & hear them.

The longing grows upon me to do real work; but with the longing comes more & more the consciousness that my hands are dropping. If then, my dear girl, I call out to you, forgive me if I seem too earnest - if indeed one could be too earnest in a world like this. If sometimes, when you see the vacant place at your side, you can be a little braver, a little stronger - if you reach out more tenderly to others - how glad - how very glad I shall be.

If there come moments when your heart fails you, or your courage flags, think, won't you of Frances, & don't, don't darling, know one discouraged hour!

The dear Christ bless you & endue you with power from on high! Dear love - always--.-Sept. 28" 1882 - [The last letter].

I can only peep out of the window for a minute to get a little of the feeling of the morning into me. ++ The feeling of the morning! I like to say it. I like to stand &

feel for a breath of that wider morning that is always somewhere. I can't say "morning" without thinking of it. Such a long, dear letter from you! I cannot say "I thank you, dear". It seems as if we had both got beyond any thanking for such things.

It is untold giving when one gives one's self. Your words are never commonplace events to me.

I'm glad you didn't let me miss Miss\_\_\_'s talk.

I was interested the more that she is at Michigan University. I prepared – perhaps you don't know it – to enter there. It was a dream that never came true; but I never hear that a girl went there or is there but it sets some of me stirring. My plans died, dear, so hard! I am ready to believe anything in regard to the possibilities of a strong friendship. I am ready to believe a long, long way beyond what I have lived; for you see I have only sent out a few feelers yet – & I don't know much about living – I've only begun.

Friendship is a constant surprise, I think. I suppose life is when one gets to the deeps beyond its shallows. A strong high friendship with another woman is as incomprehensible to some people as heaven its. I think those to whom an ideal marriage has been a thing known & lived are slowest to believe in the possibility of this other thing. +++ I think it is so with H. She has had, she feels, the very best that any life could offer in her love & marriage. That such a thing could even be approached in the tenderness & love of another woman is something she neither believes nor comprehends.

I am glad you have found a new friend this summer. You have discovered a new country! What a royal time is before you! & how the sun will shine, & the leaves rustle, & the birds sing as you explore it!

I have never talked you much about myself. You have taken me on trust so far. You do not know how little there is of me.

I am slow about saying things – too slow oftentimes. But my hour for writing you is nearly gone – I cannot say what is in my heart to say – until some other morning – I hope like this with the gold coming. It is so near your royal month. One thing I will say. I have wanted you to be happy in your thought of me. I have wished it very much. The pain of my life has doubtless come to you to hurt you in moments when I have seemed nearest perhaps: but you have not known, dearest, how much beyond any pain is the joy that has been given. So, be glad in your every thought of me. The Christ has come to me. "Go tell my brethren" were his words on that resurrection morning. Darling, I have come to tell you.