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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE JESSICA LETTERS: AN EDITOR'S
ROMANCE ***

The Jessica Letters

An Editor's Romance

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press
1904

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by

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

Published, April, 1904

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

Dear Jessica:

For a little while like shadows we have played our parts on a shadowy stage, aping the passions and follies of actual life. And now, as the kind authors who gave us being withdraw their support and leave us to fade away into nothingness, the doubt arises whether our little comedy was not all in vain. I do not know. A wise poet of the real world once said that man's life was merely the dream of a shadow, yet somehow men persuade themselves that their own pursuits are greatly serious. Was our life any less than that, and were not our hopes and sorrows and tremulous joy as full of meaning to us as theirs to the creatures who strut upon the stage of the world? Again I say, I do not know: Only I am troubled that so fair an image as yours should prove after all a dream, a shadow's dream, and melt so swiftly away:—

In what strange lines of beauty should I draw thee?
In what sad purple dreamshine paint thee true?
How should I make them see who never saw thee?
How should I make them know who never knew?

And my last word is a message. He who created me would convey in this, my farewell letter, his thanks to the creator of Jessica. He himself has found in our correspondence only pleasure, and, as he turns from this romance to other and different work of the pen, he hopes that she who

made you will be encouraged by your charm to deal bravely with her imagination and to give the world other romances quite her own and without the alloy of his coarser wit.

Philip.

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The First Part

which shows how Jessica visits an editor in the city, and what comes of it.

I

PHILIP TO JESSICA

NEW YORK, April 20, 19—.

MY DEAR MISS DOANE:

You will permit me to address you with this semblance of familiarity, I trust, for the frankness of our conversation in my office gives me some right to claim you as an acquaintance. And first of all let me tell you that we shall be glad to print your review of *The Kentons*, and shall be pleased to send you a long succession of novels for analysis if you can always use the scalpel with such atrocious cunning as in this case. I say atrocious cunning, for really you have treated Mr. Howells with a touch of that genial "process of vivisection" to which it pleases him to subject the lively creatures of his own brain.

"Mr. Howells," you say, "is singularly gifted in taking to pieces the spiritual machinery of unimpeachable ladies and gentlemen"; and really you have made of the author one of the good people of his own book! That is a malicious revenge for his "tedious accuracy," is it not? And you dare to speak of his "hypnotic power of illusion which is so essentially a freak element in his mode of expression that even in portraying the tubby, good-natured, elderly gentleman in this story he refines upon his vitals and sensibilities until the wretched victim becomes a sort of cataleptic." Now that is a "human unfairness" from a critic whom the most ungallant editor would be constrained to call fair!

I forget that I am asked to sit as adviser to you in a question of great moment. But be assured neither you nor your perplexing query has really slipped from my memory. Often while I sit at my desk in this dingy room with the sodden uproar of Printing House Square besieging my one barricadoed window, I recall the eagerness of your appeal to me as to one experienced in these matters: "Can you encourage me to give my life to literature?" Indeed, my brave votaress, there is something that disturbs me in the directness of that question, something ominous in those words, *give my life*. Literature is a despised goddess in these days to receive such devotion.

Naked and poor thou goest, Philosophy,

as Petrarch wrote, and as we may say of Literature. If you ask me whether it will pay you to employ the superfluities of your cleverness in writing reviews and sketches and stories,—why, certainly, do so by all means. I have no fear of your ultimate success in money and in the laughing honours of society. But if you mean literature in any sober sense of the word, God forbid that I should encourage the giving of your young life to such a consuming passion. Happiness and success in the pursuit of any ideal can only come to one who dwells in a sympathetic atmosphere. Do you think a people that lauds Mr. Spinster as a great novelist and Mr. Perchance as a great critic can have any knowledge of that deity you would follow, or any sympathy for the follower?

It has been my business to know many writers and readers of books. I have in all my experience met just four men who have given themselves to literature. One of these four lives in Cambridge, one is a hermit in the mountains, one teaches school in Nebraska, and one is an

impecunious clerk in New York. They are each as isolated in the world as was ever an anchorite of the Thebaid; they have accomplished nothing, and are utterly unrecognised; they are, apart from the lonely solace of study, the unhappiest men of my acquaintance. The love of literature is a jealous passion, a self-abnegation as distinct from the mere pleasure of clever reading and clever writing as the religion of Pascal was distinct from the decorous worship of Versailles. The solitude of self-acknowledged failure is the sure penalty for pursuing an ideal out of harmony with the life about us. I speak bitterly; I feel as if an apology were due for such earnestness in writing to one who is, after all, practically a stranger to me.

Forgive my naïve zeal; but I remember that you spoke to me on the subject with a note of restrained emotion which flatters me into thinking I may not be misunderstood. And, to seek pardon for this personal tone by an added personality, it distresses me to imagine a life like yours, with which the world must deal bountifully in mere gratitude for the joy it takes from you, —to imagine a life like yours, I say, sacrificed to any such grim Moloch. Write, and win applause for gay cleverness, but do not consider literature seriously. Above all, write me a word to assure me I have not given offence by this very uneditorial outburst of rhetoric.

Sincerely yours,
PHILIP TOWERS.

II

JESSICA TO PHILIP

MORNINGTOWN, GEORGIA, April 27, 19—.

MY DEAR MR. TOWERS:

Since my return home I have thought earnestly of my visit to New York. That was the first time I was ever far beyond the community boundaries of some Methodist church in Georgia. I think I mentioned to you that my father is an itinerant preacher. But for one brief day I was a small and insignificant part of the life in your great city, unnoted and unclassified. And you cannot know what that sensation means, if you were not brought up as a whole big unit in some small village. The sense of irresponsibility was delightful. I felt as if I had escaped through the buckle of my father's creed and for once was a happy maverick soul in the world at large, with no prayer-meeting responsibilities. I could have danced and glorified God on a curbstone, if such a manifestation of heathen spirituality would not have been unseemly.

But the chief event of that sensational day was my visit to you. Of course you cannot know how formidable the literary editor of a great newspaper appears to a friendless young writer. And from our brief correspondence I had already pictured you grim and elderly, with huge black brows bunched together as if your eyes were ready to spring upon me miserable. I even thought of adding a white beard,—you do use long graybeard words sometimes, and naturally I had associated them with your chin. You can imagine, then, my relief as I entered your office, with the last legs of my courage tottering, and beheld you, not in the least ferocious in appearance, and not even *old!* The revulsion from my fears and anxieties was so swift and complete that, you will remember, I gave both hands in salutation, and had I possessed a miraculous third, you should have had that also.

I am so pleased to have you confirm my judgment of Howells's novel; and that I am to have more books for review. I doubt, however, if Mr. Howells will ever reap the benefit of my criticisms, for not long since I read a note from him saying that he never looked into *The Gazette*. You must already have given offence by doubting his literary infallibility.

But on the whole you question the wisdom of my ambition to "give my life to literature." As to that I am inclined to follow Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler's opinion: "Writing is like flirting,—if you can't do it, nobody can teach you; and if you can do it, nobody can keep you from doing it." With a certain literary aspirant I know, writing is even more like flirting than that,—an artful folly with literature which will never rise to the dignity of a wedding sacrifice. She could no more give herself seriously to the demands of such a profession than a Southern mockingbird can take a serious view of music. He makes it quite independently of mind, gets his inspiration from the fairies, steals his notes, and dedicates the whole earth to the sky every morning with a green-tree ballad, utterly frivolous. Such a performance, my dear Mr. Towers, can never be termed a "sacrifice"; rather it is the wings and tail of humour expressed in a song. But who shall say the dear little wag has no vocation because his small feather-soul is expressed by a minuet instead of an anthem?

Therefore do not turn your editorial back upon me because I am incapable of the more earnest sacrifice. Even if I only chirrup a green-tree ballad, I shall need a chorister to aid me in winning those "laughing honours of society." And your supervision is all the more necessary, since, as you said to me, I live in a section where the literary point of view is more sentimental than accurate. This is accounted for, not by a lack of native wit, but by the fact that we have no scholarship or purely intellectual foundations. We are romanticists, but not students in life or art. We make no great distinctions between ideality and reality because with us existence itself is one long cheerful delusion. Now, while I suffer from these limitations more or less, my ignorance is not invincible, and I could learn much by disagreeing with you! Your letters would be antidotal, and thus, by a sort of mental allopathy, beneficial.

Sincerely,

III

PHILIP TO JESSICA

MY DEAR MISS DOANE:

There can be no doubt of it. Your reply, which I should have acknowledged sooner, gives substance to the self-reproach that came to me the moment my letter to you was out of my hands. All my friends complain that they can get nothing from me but "journalistic correspondence"; and now when once I lay aside the hurry and constraint of the editorial desk to respond to what seemed a personal demand in a new acquaintance, I quite lose myself and launch out into a lyrical disquisition which really applies more to my own experience than to yours. Will you not overlook this fault of egotism? Indeed I cannot quite promise that, if you receive many letters from me in the course of your reviewing, you may not have to make allowances more than once for a note of acrid personality, or egotism, if you please, welling up through the decorum of my editorial advisings. "If we shut nature out of the door, she will come in at the window," is an old saying, and it holds good of newspaper doors and windows, as you see.

But really, what I had in mind, or should have had in mind, was not the vague question whether you should "sacrifice your life to literature,"—that question you very properly answered in a tone of bantering sarcasm; but whether you should sacrifice your present manner of life to come and seek your fortune in this "literary metropolis"—Heaven save the mark! Let me say flatly, if I have not already said it, there is no literature in New York. There are millions of books manufactured here, and millions of them sold; but of literature the city has no sense—or has indeed only contempt. Some day I may try to explain what I mean by this sharp distinction between the making of books, or even the love of books, and the genuine aspiration of literature. The distinction is as real to my mind—has proved as lamentably real in my actual experience—as that conceived in the Middle Ages between the life of a *religiosus*, Thomas à Kempis, let us say, and of a faithful man of the world. But this is a mystery, and I will not trouble you with mysteries or personal experiences. You would write as your Southern mockingbird sings his "green-tree ballad"; the thought of that bird mewed in a city cage and taught to perform by rote and not for spontaneous joy, troubled me not a little. I am sending you by express several books....^[1]

IV

PHILIP TO JESSICA

MY DEAR MISS DOANE:

I have said such harsh things about our present-day makers of books that I am going to send you, by way of palliative, a couple of volumes by living writers who really have some notion of literature. One is Brownell's *Victorian Prose Masters*, and the other is Santayana's *Poetry and Religion*. If they give you as much pleasure as they have given me, I know I shall win your gratitude, which I much desire. It is a little disheartening and a justification of my pessimism that neither of these men has received anything like the same general recognition as our fluent Mr. Perchance, that interpreter of literature to the American *bourgeoisie*. I will slip in also a volume or two of Matthew Arnold, as a good touchstone to try them on. Now that you are becoming a professional weigher of books yourself, you ought to be acquainted with these gentlemen.

V

JESSICA TO PHILIP

MY DEAR MR. TOWERS:

Do not reproach yourself for having written me a "journalistic" letter. I always think of an editor as having only ink-bottle insides, ever ready to turn winged fancies into printed matter, or to enter upon a "lyrical disquisition" concerning them. Your distinction consists in a disposition to abandon the formalities of the editorial desk that you may "respond to the personal demands of a new acquaintance." And this humane amiability leads me to make a naïve confession. There are some people whose demands are always personal. I think it is their limitation, resulting from a state of naturalness, more or less primitive, out of which they have not yet evolved. They do not appeal to your judgment or wisdom or even to your sympathy, but to *you*. Their very spirits are composed of a sort of sunflower dust that settles everywhere. And if they have what we term the higher life at all, it is expressed by a woodland call to some tree-top spirit in you. Thus, here am I, really desirous of an abstract, artistic training of the mind, already taking liberties with the sacred corners of your editorial dignity by impressing *personal* demands.

And just so am I related to the whole of life,—even to the "publicans" in my father's congregation. Indeed, if the desire "to eat with sinners" insured salvation, there would be less

cause for alarm about my miraculous future state. The attraction, you understand, depends not upon the fact of their being sinners, but upon the sincerity of their mortality. The more unassumingly these reprobates live in their share of the common flesh, far below spiritual pretences, the more does my wayward mind tip the scales of unregenerate humour in their direction. My instincts hobnob with their dust. But do not infer that I have identified you with these undisciplined characters. When I was a child, out of the rancour of a well-tutored Southern imagination I honestly believed that every man the other side of Mason and Dixon's line had a blue complexion, thin legs, and a long tail. And once when I was still very young, as I hurried from school through a lonely wood, I actually *saw* one of these monsters quite plainly. And I thought I observed that his tail was slightly forked at the end! I have long since forgiven you these terrifying caudal appendages, of course, but, for all that, I keep a wary eye upon my heavenly bodies and at least one wing stretched even unto this day when my guardian angel introduces a Northern man. My patriotic instincts recommend at once the wisdom of strategy. And it is well the "personal demands" come from me to you; for, had the direction been reversed, by this time I should have sought refuge somewhere in my last ditch and run up a little tattered flag of rebellion to signify the state of my mind.

It is just as well that you advise me against trying my fortunes in your "literary metropolis." My father is set with all his scriptures against the idea. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to eternal life"; and, having predestined me for a deaconess in his church, he is firmly convinced that the strait and narrow way for me does not lie in the direction of New York. However, I have already whispered to my confidential hole-in-the-ground that nothing but the extremity of old-maid desperation will ever induce me to accept the vocation of a deaconess. Thus do a man's children play hide and seek with the beam in his eye while he practises upon the mote in theirs! But if, some day when the heavens are doubtful between sun and rain, you espy a little ruffled rainbow, propelled by a goose-quill pen, coquetting northward with the retiring clouds, know that 'tis the spirit of Jessica Doane arched for another outing in your literary regions.

Meanwhile you amaze me with the charge that "of literature the city has no sense, or indeed only contempt," and I await the promised explanation with interest. For my own part, I often wonder if there will remain any opportunities for literary intelligence to expand at all when the happy (?) faculty of man's ingenuity has devastated all nature's countenance and resources with "improvements," cut down all the trees to make houses of, and turned all the green waterways into horse-power for machinery. Then we shall have cotton-mill epics, phonograph elegies from the tops of tall buildings; and then ragtime music, which interprets that divine art only for vulgar heels and toes, will take the place of anthems and great operas.

The books have come, and among them is another lady's literary effort to make a garden. *Judith* it is this time, following hard upon the sunburned heels of *Elizabeth*, *Evelina*, and I do not know how many more hairpin gardeners. Why does not some man with a real spade and hoe give his experience in a sure-enough garden? I am wearied of these little freckled-beauty diggers who use the same vocabulary to describe roses and lilies that they do in discussing evening toilets and millinery creations.

VI

JESSICA TO PHILIP

MY DEAR MR. TOWERS:

We have had a visitor, Professor M—, the doctor of English literature in E— College, which you will remember is not very far from Morningtown. He came to examine a few first editions father has of some old English classics—(I have neglected to tell you that this is father's one carnal indulgence, dead books printed in funny hunchbacked type!). He is a young man, but so bewhiskered that his face suggests a hermit intelligence staring at life through his own wilderness. His voice is pitched to a Browning tenor tone, and I have good reasons for believing that he is a bachelor.

Still we had some talk together, and that is how I came to practise a deceit upon you. Seeing a copy of *The Gazette* lying on the table this morning, Professor M— was reminded to say that there was a "strong man," Philip Towers by name, connected with that paper now. I cocked my head at once like a starling listening to a new tune, for that was the first time I had heard your name praised by a literary man in the South. He went on to say that he had been delighted with your last book, *Milton and His Generation*, and asked if I had observed your work in the literary department of *The Gazette*. I admitted demurely that I had. He praised several reviews (all written by me!) particularly, and said that you were the only critic in America now who was telling the truth about modern fiction. Then he incensed me with this final comment:

"I do not understand how he does this newspaper work so forcefully, almost savagely, and is at the same time capable of writing such delicate, scholarly essays as this volume contains!"

"I have seen Mr. Towers," I remarked, mentally determining that you should suffer for that distinction.

"Indeed! what manner of man is he?"

"His dust has congealed, stiffened into a sort of plaster-of-Paris exterior, and he has what I call a *disinterred* intelligence!"

"A what?"

"A man whose very personality is a kind of mental reservation, and whose intelligence has been resurrected up through the thought and philosophy of three thousand years."

M— looked awkward but impressed.

And I hoped he would ask how you actually looked, for I was in the mood to give a perfectly God-fearing description of you.

But from the foregoing you will see that I am capable of sharing your literary glory on the sly, and without compunction. Indeed, the false rôle created in me a perverse mood. And I entered into a literary discussion with M— that outraged his pedantic soul. It was my way of perjuring his judgment, in return for his unwitting approval of my reviews. Besides, the assumption of infallibility by dull, scholarly men who have neither imagination nor genius has always amused me. And this one danced now as frantically as if he had unintentionally grasped a live wire that hurt and burned, but would not let go! Finally I said very engagingly:

"Doctor M—, I hope to improve in these matters by taking a course of instruction under you next year."

"Now God forbid that you should ever do such a thing, Miss Doane! I would sooner have you thrust dynamite under the chair of English Literature, than see you in one of my classes!"

Thus am I cast upon the barren primer commons of this cold world! And that reminds me to say that I have been reading the essays by Arnold and Brownell which you gave me, with no little animosity. Brownell's criticism of Thackeray is very suggestive, and brushes away a deal of trash that has been written about his lack of artistic method. But I never supposed such loose sentences would be characteristic of so acute a critic. They do not stick together naturally, but merely logically. And I am sure you would not tolerate them from me. But of all the books you have given me I like best George Santayana's *Poetry and Religion*. Who is he anyhow? It may be a disgraceful admission to make, but I never heard of him before. His name is foreign, and his style is not American. For when an American says a daring thing, particularly of religion, he says it impudently, with a vulgar bravado. But this man writes out his opinion coolly, simply, with that fine hauteur that will not condescend to know of opposition. I think that is admirable. Arnold's courtesy and satirical temperance in dealing with what he discredits is a pose by the side of this man's mental grace and courage. And you know how we usually denominate style: it is the little lace-frilled petticoat of the lady novelist's mincing passions, or the breeches that belong to a male author's mental respirations. But with this man, style is a spirit sword which cleaves between delusions and facts, which separates religion from reality and establishes it in our upper consciousness of ideality.

Is it not absurd for such a barbarian as I am to discuss these gospel-makers of literature with you? But it is much more remarkable that one or any of them should excite my admiration and respect. Really, if you must know it, Mr. Towers, this is where I grow humble-minded in your presence. I am fascinated with your ability to deal with the usually indefinable, the esoteric side of art,—the esoteric side of life by interpretation. And here I discover a shadowy, ghostly likeness between you and this George Santayana. You do not think toward the same ends, or write in the same style, but you *know* things alike, as if you had both drunk from the same Eastern fountain of mysteries.

And now I am about to change my gratitude into indignation. For I begin to suspect that you sent me these books to inculcate the doctrine of literary humility. If so, you have succeeded beyond your highest expectations. Until now, writing has been a series of desperate experiments with me. I progressed by inspiration. But these fellows—Arnold especially—discredit all such performances. And he does it with the air of an English gentleman inspecting a naked cannibal. He makes my flesh creep! He regards an inspiration as a sort of vulgarity that must be dressed and stretched before it can be used. From his point of view I infer that he considers genius as a dangerous kind of drunkenness that fascinates the world, but is really closely related to bad form in literature. On the other hand, father says that if Matthew Arnold had known of me he would have purchased me, placed me in a cage with a fountain pen, and exhibited me to his classes at Oxford as a literary freak!

VII

PHILIP TO JESSICA

MY DEAR MISS DOANE:

I will remember your amused hostility to "hairpin gardeners" and see that no more out-of-door books come to you until I have one with a stimulating odour of burning cornstalks and rotting cabbages. Meanwhile let me assure you that your reviews of *Elizabeth*, *Evelina*, *Judith*, and their sisters have been none the less delightful for a vein of wicked impatience running through them. The books I am now sending....

You ought not to be amazed at my dismal comments on latter-day literature. The fact is, you have dissected our present book-makers better than I could do it myself, for the reason that I am too amiable (I presume, you see, that I have the wit) to judge my fellow-workers with such merciless veracity.

But I have just read an article in the *Popular Science Monthly* which throws an unexpected light

on the subject. The paper is by Dr. Minot and is a biologist's comment on "The Problem of Consciousness." You might not suppose that an argument to show how "the function of consciousness is to dislocate in time the reactions from sensations" (!) would have much to do with the properties of literature, but it has. Let me copy out some of his words, as probably you have not seen the magazine:

"The communication between individuals is especially characteristic of vertebrates, and in the higher members of that subkingdom it plays a very great rôle in aiding the work of consciousness. In man, owing to articulate speech, the factor of communication has acquired a maximum importance. The value of language, our principal medium of communication, lies in its aiding the adjustment of the individual and the race to external reality. Human evolution is the continuation of animal evolution, and in both the dominant factor has been the increase of the resources available for consciousness."

Now that sounds pretty well for a scientist. It should seem to follow that literature, being, so to speak, the permanent mode of communication,—conveying ideas and emotions not merely from man to man, but from generation to generation,—is the predominant means by which this development of consciousness is attained. It is a pretty support we derive from the enemy. But mark the serpent in the grass—"the adjustment of the individual and the race to external reality." The real aim of evolution is purely external, the adjustment of man to environment; consciousness has value in so far as it promotes this adjustment. Flatly, to me, this is pure nonsense, a putting of the cart before the horse, a vulgar *hysteron-proteron*, none the less execrable because it is the working principle not of a single man, but of the whole of society to-day. Consciousness, I hold, is the supremely valuable thing, and progress, evolution, civilisation, etc., are only significant in so far as they afford nourishment to it. Literature is the self-sufficient fruit of this consciousness, I say; the world says it is a mere means of promoting our physical adjustment. You see I take up lightly the huge enmity of the world.

This is wild stuff to put into a journalistic letter, no doubt. If I were writing a treatise I would undertake to show that this difference of view in regard to consciousness and physical adjustment is the oldest and most serious debate of human intelligence. Saint Catharine, Thomas à Kempis, and all those religious fanatics who counted the world well lost, made a god of consciousness and thought very little of physical adjustment. The debate in their day was an equal one. To-day it is all on one side—and *væ victis!* I cry out—why should I not?—as one of the conquered, and I am charitable enough to advise another not to enter the combat. It is a poor consolation to wrap yourself in your virtue, mount a little pedestal, set your hand on your heart, and spout with Lucan: *The winning cause for the gods, but the vanquished for me!* Sometimes we begin to wonder whether, after all, the world may not be right, and at that moment the wind begins to blow pretty chill through our virtue.

VIII

PHILIP TO JESSICA

MY DEAR MISS DOANE:

Is my suspicion right? Was my last letter to you really a tangle of crude ideas? That has grown to be my way, until I begin to wonder whether the horrid noises of Park Row may not have thrown my mind a little out of balance. For my strength lay in silence and solitude. It is hard for me to establish any sufficient bond between my intellectual life and my personal relationships, and as a consequence my letters, when they cease to be mere journalistic memoranda, float out into a sea of unrestrained reverie.

Yet I would ask you to be patient with me in this matter. From the first, even before I saw you here in New York, I felt that somehow you might, by mere patience and indulgence, if you would, re-establish the lost bond in my life; that somehow the shadow of your personality was fitted to move among the shadows of my intellectual world. What a strange compliment to send a young woman!—for compliment it seems in my eyes.

Meanwhile, as some explanation of this intellectual twilight into which I would so generously introduce you, I am sending you a little book I wrote and foolishly printed several years ago on the quiet life of the Hindus. The mood of the book still returns to me at times, though I have cast away its philosophy as impracticable. I look for peace in the way that Plato trod, and some day I shall write my palinode in that spirit. Let me, in this connection, copy out a few verses I wrote last night and the night before. It is my first digression into poetry since I was a boy:

THE THREE COMMANDS

I

Out of this meadow-land of teen and dole,
Because my heart had harboured in its cell
One prophet's word, an Angel bore my soul
Through starry ways to God's high citadel.

There in the shadow of a thousand domes
I walked, beyond the echo of earth's noise;
While down the streets between the happy homes
Only the murmur passed of infinite joys.

Then said my soul: "O fair-engirdled Guide!
Show me the mansion where I, too, may won:
Here in forgetful peace I would abide,
And barter earth for God's sweet benison."

"Nay," he replied, "not thine the life Elysian,
Live thou the world's life, holding yet thy vision
A hope and memory, till thy course be run."

II

Then said my soul: "I faint and seek my rest;
The glory of the vision veils mine eyes;
These infinite murmurs beating at my breast
Turn earthly music into plangent sighs.

"Because thou biddest, I will tread the maze
With men my brothers, yet my hands withhold
From building at the Babel towers they raise,
And all my life within my heart infold."

The Angel answered: "Lo, as in a dream
Thy feet have passed beyond the gates of flame;
And evermore the toils of men must seem
But wasteful folly in a path of shame.

"Yet I command thee, and vouchsafe no reason,
Thou shalt endure the world's work for a season;
Work thou, and leave to others fame and blame."

III

I bowed submission, dumb a little while.
Then said my soul: "Thy will I dare not balk;
I reach my hands to labours that defile,
And help to rear a plant of barren stalk.

"Yet only I, because in life I bear
The vision of that peace, may never feel
The spur of keen ambition, never share
The dread of loss that makes the world's work real.

"Therefore in scorn I draw my bitter breath,
And sorrow cherish as my proudest right,
Till scorn and sorrow fade in sweeter death."
The Angel answered, turning as for flight:

"The labour sorrow-done is more than sterile,
And scorn will change thy vision to soul's peril:
Be glad; thy work is gladness, child of light!"

IX

JESSICA TO PHILIP

MY DEAR MR. TOWERS:

Many thanks for this copy of your book, *The Forest Philosophers of India*. I have just finished reading it, and now I understand you better. Your sense of reality has been destroyed by this mysticism of the East. The normal man has a more materialistic consciousness. But having lost that, your very spirit has dissolved into these strange illuminations which you call thought, but which I fear are only the ghostly rays of a Nirvana intelligence. With you life is but a breath without form, a whisper out of your long eternity. And I confess that to me the impression of a man not being at home in his own body is nothing short of terrifying.

You were not expecting so fierce a criticism of your own book from one of your own reviewers, I suspect. Ah, but your "Three Commands" have laid me under a spell. I cannot say anything about them without saying too much; and I am a little rebellious.

JESSICA TO PHILIP

MY DEAR MR. TOWERS:

I have not replied earlier to your letter on the problem of consciousness, because I was waiting to read Dr. Minot's article. At last I got hold of the magazine, and so far from finding your comments "a tangle of crude ideas," they have even proved suggestive—perhaps not in the way you expected. For following your line of thought, I wondered if it could have been some violent death-rate among our own species that has produced that desperate phenomenon, the literary consciousness of the historical novelist I have been reviewing for you. And, come to think of it, I do not know any other class of people whose problem of consciousness could be so readily reduced to a "bionomical" platitude. They all write for the same slaying purpose. Did you ever observe how few of their characters survive the ordeals of art? Usually it is the long-lost heroine, and the hero, "wounded unto death" however, and one has the impression that even these would not have lived so long but for the necessity of the final page. 43

But I must not fail to tell you of a dramatic episode in connection with my first venture into the realm of biological thought. *The Popular Science Monthly* has long been proscribed at the parsonage on account of its heretical tendencies. And my purpose was to keep a profound secret the fact that I had purchased a copy containing Minot's article. But some demon prompted me to inquire of my father the meaning of the term "epiphenomenon." Now a long association with the idea of omniscience has rendered him wiser in consciousness than in fact, which is a joke the imagination often plays upon serious people. But he could neither give a definition nor find the word in his ancient Webster. This dictionary is his only unquestioned authority outside the Holy Scriptures, and he declines to accept any word not vouched for by this venerable authority. Therefore he reasoned that "epiphenomenon" had been built up to accommodate some modern theory of thought, some new leprosy of the mind never dreamed of by the noble lexicographer. And so, fixing me with a pair of accusing glasses, he inquired: 44

"My daughter, where did you see this remarkable word?"

I do not question that I am a direct descendant from my fictitious grandmother, Eve! I am always being tempted by apples of information, and I have often known the mortifying sensation of wishing to hide my guilty countenance in my more modern petticoat on that account.

He read the "blasphemous" article through, only pausing to point out heresies and perversions of the sacred truth as he went along. But when he reached the sentence in which the author calmly asserts the theory of monism, he actually gagged with indignation: "My child, do you know that this godless wretch claims that the same principle of life which makes the cabbage also vitalises man?" I looked horrified, but I could barely restrain my laughter; for, indeed, there are "flat-dutch"-headed gentlemen in his congregation who might as well have come up at the end of a cabbage stalk for all the thinking they do. But I need not tell you that the magazine containing the profane treatise on consciousness was burned, while a livid picture was drawn of my own future if I persisted in stealing forbidden fruit from this particular tree of knowledge. 45

But your last letter put me into a more serious frame of mind. And I *am* complimented that you entertain the hope that I may be of assistance in re-establishing the lost bond between you and real life. But do you know that you have appealed to the missionary instincts of a barbarian? The attributes of patience and indulgence do not belong to natures like mine. Never has any affliction worked out patience in me, never has my strongest affection taken the form of indulgence. In me Love and Friendship, Sorrow and Gladness, take fiercer forms of expression. 46

But I will not conceal from you the fact that from the first I have felt in our relationship a curious sensation of magic in one opposed to mystery in the other. I have felt the abandon and madness of a happy dancer, whirling around the dim edge of your shadow-land in the wild expectation of beholding the disembodied spirit of you come forth to join me. It is not that I *wished* to work a charm, but the shadow of your mysterious life draws me into the opposition of a counter-influence. The gift of power is not in me to set foot across the magic line into the dim land of your soul, any more than I could dissolve into a breath of moonlit air, or a wave of the sea. For, in you, I seem to perceive some strange phenomenon of a spirit changed to twilight gloom which covers all your hills and valleys with the mournful shadow of approaching night. Often this conception appalls me, but more frequently I conceive a wild energy from the idea, as of one sent to rim the shadows in close and closer till some star shall shine down and bless them into heroic form and substance. And I have been amazed to find within my mind a witch's charm for working rainbow miracles upon your dim sky,—but so it is. There have always been mad moments in my life when I have felt all-powerful, as if I had got hold of the ribbon ends of an incantation! This is another one of my limitations at which you must not laugh. For a juggler must be taken seriously, or he juggles in vain; he must have an opportunity to create the necessary illusion in you to insure the success of his performance. Meanwhile, I go to make the circle of my dance smaller; who knows but to-morrow I may be a snow-bunting on your tall cliffs, or a little homeless wren seeking shelter in your valley. 47

So I am a disembodied ghost in your estimation, and you, "happy dancer," are whirling around the rim of my shadow-land with some sweet incantation learned in your Georgia woods to conjure me out into the visible world. Really I would call that a delicious bit of impertinence were I not afraid the word might be taken in the wrong sense.

And yet, I must confess it, there is too much truth in what you say. Some day, when I am bolder, I may unfold to you the whole story of my ruin—for it is a ruin to be disembodied, is it not? I may even indicate the single phrase, the mysterious word of all mysteries, that might evoke the spirit from the past and incarnate him in the living present. Do not try to guess the phrase, I beseech you, for it would frighten you now and so I should lose my one chance of reincarnation. When I visit you in the South, some day soon, I will tell you the magic word I have learned.

What hocus-pocus I must seem to be talking, as if there were some cheap tragedy in my life. Indeed there is nothing of the sort. I have lived as tamely as a house-cat, my only escapade having been an innocent attempt at playing Timon for a couple of years. The drama of my life has been a mere battling with shadows. Your relation of the effect produced in your home by Dr. Minot's heresies carries me back to the first act in that shadow fight, for I too was brought up by the strictest of parents, and, indeed, was myself, as a boy, a veritable prodigy of piety. What would you think of me as a preacher expounding the gospel over a piano-stool for pulpit to a rapt congregation of three? I could show you a sermon of that precocious Mr. Pound-text printed in the New York *Observer* when he was as much as nine years old—and the sermon might be worse.

I can recall these facts readily enough; but the battle of doubt and faith that I passed through a few years later I can no more realise than I can now realise your father's blessed assurance of heaven. I know vaguely that it was a time of unspeakable agony for me, a rending asunder, as it were, of soul and body. The doctrine was bred into my bones; I saw the folly of it intellectually, but the emotional comfort of it was the very quintessence of my life. The struggle came upon me alone and I was without help or guidance. Into those few years of boyish vacillation, I see now that the whole tragedy of more than a century of human experience was thrust. One day I sat in church listening to a sermon of appealing eloquence: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Was I too deliberately turning my back on the light? I hid my face and cried. That was the end. I came out of the church free, but I had suffered too much. Something passed from my life that day which nothing can replace; for perfect faith, like love, comes to a man but once.

I was empty of comfort and without resting-place for my spirit. Then said I: Look you, belief in this religion as dogma is gone; why not hold fast to its imaginative beauty! If revelation is a fraud, at least the intricacies of this catholic faith have grown up from the long yearning of the human heart, and possess this inner reality of corresponding with our spiritual needs. And for several years I wrought at Christian symbolism, trying to build up for my soul a home of poetical faith so to speak. But in the end this could not satisfy me; I knew that I was cherishing a sham, a pretty make-believe after the manner of children. Better the blindness of true religion than this illusion of the imagination. And I was now a grown man.

Then by some inner guidance I turned to India. How shall I tell you what I found in the philosophies of that land! One thing will surprise you. Instead of pessimism I found in India during a certain period of time a happiness, an exultation of happiness, such as the world to-day cannot even imagine. And I found that this happiness sprang from no pretended revelation but from a profound understanding of the heart. Do this, said the books, and you will feel thus, and so step by step to the consummation of ecstasy. I read and was amazed; I understood and knew that I too, if my will were strong, might slip from bondage and be blessed. But I saw further that the path lay away from this world, that I must renounce every desire which I had learned to call good, that I must strip my soul naked of all this civilisation which we have woven in a loom of three thousand years. The dying command of Buddha terrified me: "All things pass away; work out your own salvation diligently!" The words were spoken to comfort and strengthen the bereaved disciples, but to me they sounded as an imprecation, so different is the training of our society from theirs. The loneliness and austerity of the command appalled me; I would not take the first step, and turned back to seek the beautiful things of the eye.

And now at last I am caught up in the illusion of a new Western ideal—not Christianity, for that has passed away, strange as such a statement may sound to you in your orthodox home, but yet a legacy of Christ. Thou shalt love God with all thy heart and thy neighbour as thyself, was the law of Christianity. We have forgotten God and the responsibility of the individual soul to its own divinity; we have made a fetish of our neighbour's earthly welfare. We are not Christians but humanitarians, followers of a maimed and materialistic faith. This is the ideal of the world to-day, and from it I see but one door of escape—and none but a strong man shall open that door.

So I look at the world and life, but, even as I write, something like a foreboding shudder comes over me. I think of your home and your father and the straitness of the law under which you live, and I wonder whether after all the ghost of that fierce theology is yet laid. Can it be that this law which darkened my boyhood shall arise again and claim the joy of my maturer years?

Alas, you who venture to trip so gayly about the rim of my shadow-land with your brave incantations, behold what spirit of gloom and malignant mutterings you have evoked from the night. I have written more than I meant—too much, I fear.

MY DEAR MR. TOWERS:

An evangelist has been here this week. He fell upon us like a howling dervish who had fed fanaticisms on locusts and wild honey. And he has stirred up the spiritual dust of this community by showing an intimacy with God's plans in regard to us very disconcerting to credulously minded sinners. As for me, I have passed this primer-state of religious emotion. I am sure a kind God made me, and so I belong to Him, good or bad. In any case I cannot change the whole spiritual economy of Heaven with my poor prayers and confessions. I try to think of my shortcomings, therefore, as merely the incidents of an eternal growth. I shall outlive them all in the course of time, quite naturally, perennially, as the trees outlive the blight of winter and put forth each year a new greenness of aspiring leaves. I dare not say that I know God, and I will not believe some doctrines taught concerning Him; but I keep within the principle of life and follow as best I can the natural order of things. And for the most part I feel as logically related to the divine order as the flowers are to the seasons. I know that if this really is His world,

should the chosen guide
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,
I cannot miss my way.

Are you shocked, dear Shadow, at such a creed of sun and dust?—you, a dishoused soul, wandering like a vagrant ghost along life's green edge? After all, I doubt if I am so far behind you in spiritual experience. The difference is, I have two heavens, that orthodox one of my imagination, and this real heaven-earth of which I am so nearly a part. But you have forced the doors of mystery and escaped before your time. And you can never return to the old dust-and-daisy communion with nature, yet you are appalled at the loneliness and the terrible sacrifices made by a man in your situation. Your spiritual ambition has outstripped your courage. You are an adventurer, rather than an earnest pilgrim to Mecca.

And yet day after day as I have weathered farther and farther back in the church, like a little white boat with all my sails reefed to meet the gospel storm of damnation that has been raging from the pulpit, I have thought of you and your Indian philosophy, by way of contrast, almost as a haven of refuge. Our religion seems to me to have almost the limitations of personality. There can be no other disciples but Christian disciples. Our ethics are bounded by doctrines and dogmas. But, whether Buddhist or Christian, the final test of initiation is always the same—"All things pass away, work out your own salvation with diligence," "Die to the world," "Present your bodies a living sacrifice"—and you would not make these final renunciations. You "turned back to seek the beautiful things of the eye." Well, if one is only wise enough to know what the really beautiful things are, it is as good a way as any to spin up to God. Meanwhile, I doubt if that "Western ideal," the kind-hearted naturalism which "makes a fetish of our neighbour's welfare," will hold you long. Already you "see one door" of escape. I wonder into what starry desert of heaven it leads.

Do you know, I cannot rid myself of the notion that yours is an enchanted spirit, always seeking doors of escape; but at the moment of exit the wild wings that might have borne you out fail. Some earth spell casts you back, incarnate once more. A little duodecimal of fairy love divides the desires of your heart and draws one wing down. "The beautiful things of the eye," that is your little personal footnote, O stranger, which clings like a sweet prophecy to all your asceticism and philosophy. And prophecies cannot be evaded. They must be fulfilled. They are predestined sentences which shape our doom, quite independently of our prayers I sometimes think,—like the lily that determined to be a reed, and wished itself tall enough, only to be crowned at last with a white flag of blooms.

And do not expect me to pray you through these open ways of escape. I only watch them to wish you may never win through. Something has changed me and set my heart to a new tune. I must have already made my escape, for it seems to me that I am on the point of becoming immortal. As I pass along the world, I am Joy tapping the earth with happy heels. I am gifted all at once with I do not know what magic, so that all my days are changed to heaven. And almost I could start a resurrection of "beautiful things" only to see you so glad. But that will never be. There are always your wings to be reckoned with; and with them you are ever ready to answer the voices you hear calling you from the night heavens, from the temples and tombs of the East.

Yesterday I saw a woman sitting far back in the shadows of the church wearing such a look of sadness that she frightened me. It was not goodness but sorrow that had spiritualised her face. And to me she seemed a wan prisoner looking through the windows of her cell, despairing, like one who already knows his death sentence. "What if after all I am mistaken," I thought, "and there really is occasion for such grief as that!" I could think of nothing but that white mystery of sorrow piercing the gloom with mournful eyes. And when at last the "penitents" came crowding the altar with quaking cowardly knees, I fell upon mine and prayed: "Dear Lord, I am Thine, I will be good! Only take not from me the joy of living here in the green valleys of this present world!" Was such a prayer more selfish than the sobbing petitions of the penitents there about the church-rail, asking for heavenly peace? I have peace already, the ancient peace of the forests as sweet as the breath of God. I ask for no more.

You see, dear "Spirit of gloom," that I have sent you all my little scriptures in return for your "malignant mutterings." My God is a pastoral Divinity, while yours is a terrible Mystery, hidden

behind systems of philosophy, vanishing before Eastern mysticism into an insensate Nirvana, revealing ways of escape too awful to contemplate. I could not survive the thoughts of such a God for my own. I am *His* heathen. By the way, did you ever think what an unmanageable estate that is—"And I will give you the heathen for your inheritance"?

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XIII

PHILIP TO JESSICA

MY DEAR MISS DOANE:

What mental blindness led me to give you such a book? What demon of perversity tempted you to send me such a review of Miss Addams's Hull-House heresies? You know my abhorrence of our "kind-hearted materialism" (so you call it), yet you calmly write me a long panegyric on this last outbreak of humanitarian unrighteousness—unrighteousness, I say, vaunting materialism, undisciplined feminism, everything that denotes moral deliquescence. Of course I see the good, even the wise, things that are in the book, but why didn't you expose the serpent that lurks under the flowers?

As a matter of fact, what is good in the book is old, what is bad is new. Do you suppose that this love of humanity which has practically grown into the religion of men,—do you suppose that this was not known to the world before? The necessity of union and social adhesion was seen clearly enough in the Middle Ages. The notion that morality, in its lower working at least, is dependent on a man's relation to the community, was the basis of Aristotle's Ethics, who made of it a catchword with his *politikon zôon* (your father will translate it for you as "a political animal"). The "social compunction" is as ancient as the heart of man. How could we live peacefully in the world without it? Literature has reflected its existence in a thousand different ways. Here and there it will be found touched with that sense of universal pity which we look upon as a peculiar mark of its present manifestation. In that most perfect of all Latin passages does not Virgil call his countryman blessed because he is not tortured by beholding the poverty of the city—

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neque ille

Aut doluit miserans inopem, aut invidit habenti?

And is not the *Æneid* surcharged with pitying love for mankind, "the sense of tears in mortal things"? So the life and words of St. Francis of Assisi are full of the breath of brotherly love—not brotherhood with all men merely, but with the swallows and the coneys, the flowers, and even the inanimate things of nature. And the letters of St. Catherine of Siena are aflame with passionate love of suffering men.

But there is something deplorably new in these more modern books, something which makes of humanitarianism a cloak for what is most lax and materialistic in the age. I mean their false emphasis, their neglect of the individual soul's responsibility to itself, their setting up of human love in a shrine where hitherto we worshipped the image of God, their limiting of morality and religion to altruism. I deny flatly that "Democracy ... affords a rule of living as well as a test of faith," as Miss Addams says; I deny that "to attain individual morality in an age demanding social morality, to pride one's self on the results of personal effort when the time demands social adjustment, is utterly to fail to apprehend the situation"; I say we do *not* "know, at last, that we can only discover truth by rational and democratic interest in life." Why did you quote these sentences with approval? There is no distinction between individual and social morality, or, if there is, the order is quite the other way. All this democratic sympathy and social hysteria is merely the rumour in the lower rooms of our existence. Still to-day, as always, in the upper chamber, looking out on the sky, dwells the solitary soul, concerned with herself and her God. She passes down now and again into the noise and constant coming and going of the lower rooms to speak a word of encouragement or admonition, but she returns soon to her own silence and her own contemplation. (The heart of a St. Anthony in the desert of Egypt, the heart of many a lonely Hindu sage knows a divine joy of communication of which Hull House with its human sympathies has no conception.) Morality is the soul's debt to herself.

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It is a striking and significant fact that these humanitarians are continually breaking the simplest rules of honesty and decent living. Rousseau, the father of them all, sending his children (the children of his body, I mean) to the foundling asylum, is a notorious example of this; and John Howard is another. I have in my own experience found these people impossible to live with.

Let me illustrate this tendency to forget the common laws of personal integrity by allusion to a novel which comes from another college-settlement source. It is a story called, I think, *The Burden of Christopher*, published three or four years ago,—a clever book withal and rather well written. The plot is simple. A young man, just from his university, inherits a shoe factory which, being imbued with college-settlement sentimentalism, he attempts to operate in accordance with the new religion. Business is dull and he is hard-pressed by competitive houses. An old lady has placed her little fortune in his hands to be held in trust for her. To prevent the closing down of his factory and the consequent distress of his people, he appropriates this trust money for his business. In the end he fails, the crash comes, and, as I recollect it, he commits suicide. All well and good; but in a paragraph toward the end of the book, indeed by the whole trend of the story, we discover that the humanitarian sympathy which led the hero to sacrifice his individual integrity for the weal of his work-people is a higher law in the author's estimation than the old moral sense which would have made his personal integrity of the first importance to himself and

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to the world.

I submit to you, my dear reviewer, that such notions are subversive of right thinking and are in fact the poisonous fruit of an era which has relaxed its hold on any ideal outside of material well-being. For that reason when I read in Miss Addams's book such words as these, "Evil does not shock us as it once did," I am filled with anger. I wonder at the blindness of the age when I read further such a perversion of truth as this: "We have learned since that time to measure by other standards, and have ceased to accord to the money-earning capacity exclusive respect."—Have we?

XIV

PHILIP TO JESSICA

MY DEAR MISS DOANE:

I am troubled lest the letter I wrote yesterday should have seemed to breathe more of personal bitterness than of philosophic judgment. Did I make clear that my hostility to modern humanitarianism is not due to any contempt for charity or for the desire of universal justice? I dislike and distrust it for its false emphasis and for its perversion of morality—and the two faults are practically one.

Last night I was reading in *Piers Plowman* and came upon a passage which exactly illustrates what I mean. The old Monk of Malvern might be called the very fountainhead in English letters of that stream of human brotherhood which has at last spread out into the stagnant pool of humanitarianism. He wrote when the rebellion of Wat Tyler and Jack Straw was fermenting, when the people were beginning to cry out for their rights, and his vision is instinct with the finest spirit of love for the downtrodden and the humble. Yet never once does his compassion or indignation lead him to neglect spiritual things for material. Let me copy out a few of his lines on "Poverty":

And alle the wise that evere were,
By aught I kan aspye,
Preiseden poverte for best lif,
If pacience it folwed,
And bothe bettre and blesseder
By many fold than richesse.
For though it be sour to suffre,
Thereafter cometh swete;
As on a walnote withoute
Is a bitter barke,
And after that bitter bark,
Be the shelle aweye,
Is a kernel of comfort
Kynde to restore.
So is after poverte or penaunce
Paciently y-take;
For it maketh a man to have mynde
In God, and a gret wille
To wepe and to wel bidde,
Whereof wexeth mercy,
Of which Christ is a kernelle
To conforte the soule.

Imagine, if you can, such a speech in the precincts of Hull House! I am not concerned to exalt poverty, I know how much suffering it creates in the world; and yet I say that an age to which poverty is only a degradation without any possible spiritual compensation, is an age of materialism. I wish I might follow the use of the word *comfort* from its early nobility as you see it here down to its modern degeneracy, where it signifies the mere satisfaction of the body. The history of that word would be an eloquent sermon. Have I made myself clear? Do you understand what I mean by the false emphasis of our humanitarianism? And do you see why I could not stomach your review of Miss Addams's book?—I am sending by express several novels, among them....

XV

JESSICA TO PHILIP

MY DEAR MR. TOWERS:

Here in the South we are born into our traditions and we generally die by them. We never encourage the mental extravagance of adding new dimensions to our minds. When you have had an hour's conversation with any of us, or have exchanged three letters, you can be comfortably sure of what we think on any subject under the sun. Thus, you see, I was wholly unprepared for the point of view expressed in your last two letters. I thought you were a gentle disciple,—following the lights behind us indeed; but I did not suspect that you were bent upon this journey

through the dust of centuries with the temper of a modern savage.

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However, it seems a man must have either ass's ears or a cloven foot; and, soon or late, most of us expect to find our hero in Bottom's predicament. But I would rather have acknowledged the beam in my own eye than have discovered this diabolical split in your heel. All my life I have been familiar with the inhumanity of the merely spiritually minded. And I think it was because your own spirit was not denominational, nor fitted to any dogma of my acquaintance, that I trusted it. But really, the product is always the same. And I begin to wonder if there is not something fundamentally cruel in the law that governs soul-life. No matter what the age or the colour of the doctrine is, those most highly developed in this way generally show a *conscientious selfishness* that is dehumanising. They have no tender sense of touch, their relation to the world about them is obtuse; and for this reason, I think, they excite aversion in normally minded people.

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I leave you, my dear sir, to "expose the serpent lurking under the flowers." For my part, I believe humanitarianism is the better part of any religion. And while my knowledge of social orders does not reach so far back into the grave-dust of the past, I am unwilling to agree with you that it is "coeval with human nature." But it is one of the ends toward which all religions must tend,—for if a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?—But I forget! Love is not essential to your sort of Nirvana mysticism. In you, spirituality is a sort of cruel aspiration toward personal perfection. Still, that little scripture represents the advance made by this modern religion of Christianity over your Hindu theosophy.

Do you know I think a man's religious philosophy ought to fit him particularly for his present environment of earth and flesh. One cannot tell so much about the life after death. It may be necessary to make us over in the twinkling of an eye, and even to change the very direction of all spirit life in us. But here, we know accurately what the needs are; and any sort of wisdom that fails to provide us with the right way of dealing with one another is defective. Thus your Buddhism seems to me more mesmeric than satisfying. It is a way men have of murdering themselves, while continuing to live, into peace and oblivion. There is a surrender, a negation of life, a denial of total responsibilities, or human obligations, which to my mind indicates a monstrous selfishness, none the less real because its manifestations are passive and dignified by a philosophic pose. You see I am reading your last two letters by the light of certain earlier confessions.

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And again I do not think you can fairly complain of humanitarianism because in some books "it is synonymous with all that is lax and materialistic in the age." The author of a novel is never so concerned to tell the truth as he is to exploit and illustrate an interesting theory. You have no right to expect gospel from literary mountebanks. Nor can you judge the integrity of it by such disciples as Rousseau, who was merely a decadent soul fascinated by the contemplation of his own depravity. The scriptures of such a Solomon, however true in theory, are neither honest nor effective. But as a final climax of your argument, you declare that in your "own experience" you have found these humanitarians "impossible to live with." I do not wonder at that. A question far more to the point is, Did they find *you* impossible to live with? Come to think of it, I would rather live with a humanitarian, myself, even if his soul was carnally bow-legged. But my sort of charity is so perverse, so awry with humour, that the constant contemplation of a man trying to wriggle out of the flesh through some spiritual key-hole, made by his own imagination, into a form of existence much higher than agreeable, would be, to say the least of it, diverting.

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You copy several sentences from the Hull-House book in your letter and cry to me in an accusing voice to know why I quoted them in my review "with approval." Suppose I did not comprehend their important relation to the subject from your point of view? But I do understand enough to know that the "social compunction" in Aristotle's day was a mere theory, a sublime doctrine practised by a few, whereas now it is a great governing principle, a dynamic power in the social order of mankind. And I challenge your accuracy in calling such social sympathy "only a rumour in the lower rooms of our existence." My notion is that the choir voice of it has already reached that grand third story of yours, and that the "solitary soul" in the "upper chamber" will presently find herself along with other traditions—in the attic! Oh, I know your sort! You stay in your upper chamber as long as atmospheric conditions make it comfortable. But before this time I have known you to sneak down into those same "lower rooms" to warm yourself by humanitarian hearthstones. And that you are not nearly so immortal as you think you are is proved by these winter chills along the spine. There come occasions when you get tired of your own stars and long to feel the thrill of that royal life-blood that leaps like a ruby river of love through the grimy, toiling, battling humanitarian world beneath you. Did you once intimate to me that if ever I conjured you out of the shadows which seem to surround you, I should be horrified at the vision? Well, I am!

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XVI

PHILIP TO JESSICA

MY DEAR MISS DOANE:

So your servant has a cloven hoof and just escapes the adornment of ass's ears! Dear, dear, what a temper! But, jesting aside, you must not suppose I abhor the cant of humanitarianism from any thin-blooded selfishness or outworn apathy. Have I not made this clear to you? It is the negative side of humanitarianism (the word itself is an offence!), and not its portion of human

love that vexes my soul.

Through one of the crooked streets not far from Park Row that wind out from under the grim arches of the Brooklyn Bridge, I often pass on business. Here on the step at the entrance to a noisome court, where heaven knows how many families huddle together behind the walls of these monstrous printing-houses, there sits day after day a child, a little pale, peaked boy, who seems to belong to no one and to have nothing to do—sits staring out into the filthy street with silent, wistful eyes. There is only misery and endurance on his face, with some wan reflection of strange dreams smothered in his heart. He sits there, waiting and watching, and no man knows what world-old philosophy comforts his weary brain. The face haunts me; I see it at times in my working hours; it peers at me often from the surging night-throngs of upper Broadway; it passes dimly across my vision before I fall asleep. It has become a symbol to me of the long agony of human history. Because I know the misery of that face and the evil that has produced it, because I know that misery has been in the world from the beginning and shall endure to the end, and because my heart is sickened at the thought,—that is why I rebel so bitterly against a doctrine that turns away from all spiritual consolation for some vainly builded hope of a socialistic paradise on this earth. I have heard one of these humanitarians avow that he and practically all his friends were materialists, and such they are even when they will not admit it. Dear girl, believe me, I have lived over in my mind and suffered in my heart the long toil and agony which the human race has undergone in its effort to wrest some assurance of spiritual joy and peace from these clouds of illusion about us; I have read and felt what the Hindu ascetic has written of lonely conflict in the wilderness; I have heard the Greek philosophers reason their way to faith; I have comprehended the ecstasy of the early Christians; I have taken sides in the high warfare of mediæval realists against the cheap victory of nominalism. I know that the word of deliverance has been spoken by all these and that it is always the same word. And now come these humanitarians, with their starved imaginations, who in practice, if not in speech, deny all the spiritual insight of the race and seek to lower the ideal of mankind to their fools' commonwealth of comfort in this world. Because I revolt from this false and canting conception of brotherly love, am I therefore devoted to "conscientious selfishness"? Ah, I beg you to revise your reading of this book of my heart, and to remodel your criticism.

But I am saying not a word of what is most in my thoughts. In two days I shall set out for a trip to the South which will bring me to Morningtown. Will you turn away in horror if you see a wretched creature hobbling with cloven hoof up the scented lane of your village? For sweet charity's sake, for your own sweeter sake, believe that his heart is full of love however wrong his mind may be.

[1] Much of the routine matter in regard to reviewing has been omitted from these letters.

The Second Part

which shows how the editor visits Jessica
in the country, and how love
and philosophy sometimes clash.

XVII

PHILIP TO JESSICA

WRITTEN AFTER RETURNING FROM MORNINGTOWN

MY DEAR MISS DOANE:

It is all different and the morning has forgotten to return since I left you where your village meets the great world. Have you kept God's common dayspring imprisoned among your garden trees and flowers? What shall I say? What shall I not say? Only this, that I gave my happiness into your hands and you have broken it and let it drop to the ground. See what a shipwreck I have suffered of all my dreams. These long years of solitary reading and study I have been gathering up in my imagination the passions and joys and hopes of a thousand dead lovers,—the longing of Menelaus for Helen, the outcry of Catullus for Lesbia, the worship of Dante for Beatrice—all these I have made my own, believing that some day my love of a woman should be rendered fair in her eyes by these borrowed colours; and now I have failed and lost; and what I would give, you have accounted as light and insufficient. Is there no speech left to tell you all the truth? I am a little bewildered, and have not been able to pluck up heart of courage. Write me some word of familiar consolation; do not quite shut the door upon me until my eyes grow accustomed to this darkness. All the light is with you, and the beauty that God has given the world, all the meaning of human life,—and I turn my back on this and go out into the night alone. Dear girl, I would not utter a word of reproach. I know that my love, which seemed to me so good, may be as nothing to you, is indeed not worthy of you, for you are more than all my dreams—and yet it was all that I had. I shall learn perhaps to write to you as a mere reviewer of books;—the irony of it.

MY DEAR MR. TOWERS:

Can you believe it? I was absurdly glad to receive your letter this morning. Ever since you went away I have felt so brave and desolate—like a poor dryad who has fought her way out of her own little kingdom of love and peace and green silence, for the sake of a foreign ideal which really belongs to the world at large. (I shouldn't wonder if I did become a deaconess after all!) In my effort to escape a romantic sacrifice to a strange heathen divinity, I find myself offered upon this common altar in the name of a theory, Humanitarianism. My smoke arises. I have been consumed, and now I write you merely in the spirit,—you see I am learning *your* incantations. 87

But being disembodied, I may at least be truthful. Besides, it is sometimes wiser to make long-distance confessions than to tell the truth face to face. Then listen, dear Heart, it was not Philip, but poor Jessica who was vanquished that day as we walked through the lanes and fields around Morningtown. I do not know how to tell you, but of a sudden I am becoming learned in all the joys and griefs of this world. There is a sweetheart reason for them all, lying buried somewhere. For love is nature's vocation in us, I think. We cannot escape it. Our vision is already love-lit when the prince comes. All he needs do is to step within the radiant circle. Oh, my Heart, is it not terrible when you think of it, that we may keep our wills, but our hearts we cannot keep! They go from us happy pilgrims, and return unto us old and grey, sometimes lost and forsaken.

You came so fast upon the heels of your other letter that I did not have time to put on my shield and buckler before you were here in the flesh, formidable, real, cloven hoof and all! I was frightened and militant,—frightened lest you should win from me the freedom of my heart, militant for the freedom of my will. Well, at least I kept the latter, but I can tell you, it is making a poor bagpipe tune of the victory. When I went down to you that first evening, it was like going to meet an enemy, dear and terrible. I was divided between two impulses, both equally savage I think, either to stab or to fall upon your breast and weep. But you will bear me witness that my greeting in reality was conventionally awkward. In any case, your eyes would have saved me. They are wide and deep, and as you stood here by the window where I am writing now, with both my hands clasped in yours, I saw a bright beam leap up far within them like candles suddenly lighted in an open grave. You had not come merely to make peace with me, you had my capitulation ready, but I knew then I should never sign. Let the dead bury their dead; as for me, I am too much alive to die long and amicably with any ghost of a philosopher in the "upper chamber." I do not even belong in the "lower rooms," but outside under the skies of our ever green world. I have already determined that if there is nothing going on in heaven when I am translated thither, I will ask to be changed into a wreath of golden butterflies with permission to follow spring round and round the earth. 88

And that brings me to another part of my confession. You are aware that I do not really know *you*, only your mind. The time I saw you in New York does not count. For upon that occasion we only ran an editorial handicap just to try each other's intellectual paces, did we not? But when you ventured boldly down here upon my own heath—oh! that was a different matter. I meant to be as brave as a Douglas in his hall. You should not ride across my drawbridge and away again till I knew *you*. Well, you know the dull usual way of discovering what and who a stranger is, by asking his opinions or by classifying his face and expression according to biological records. Now, a man's features are only his great-grand somebody's modified or intensified, and his opinions, as in your case, may not represent him but his mental fallacies. So I invented a test of my own. I tried a man by a jury of my trees, not your peers exactly, but friends of mine who have become to me strong standards of excellence and virtue and repose in human nature. Dear Enemy, I coaxed you into my little heart-shaped forest, which you remember lies like a big lover's wreath on the Morningtown road beyond my father's church. And behold! it was as if we had come home together. We touched hands with the green boughs in friendly greeting. There was nothing to be said, no place now for a difference between us. For the rights and wrongs of the world did not reach beyond the shady rim of the silence there. Goodness and fidelity was the ground we trod upon, and we were native to it. Yet it was the first time I ever entered a little into sympathy with the exalted cruelty of your spiritual nature. For in the forest, ever present, is the intimation of Nature's indifference to pain. There is no charity in a commonwealth of trees. They live, decay, and die, and there is no sign of compassion anywhere. It is terrible, but there is a Spartan beauty in the fact. 89

But suddenly, as we sat there in the sweet green twilight, the thought pierced me like a pang that after all you are more nearly related to the life of the forest than I am. I merely love it, but you are like it in the cold, ruthless, upward aspiration of your soul. I long for a word with the trees, but you are so near and kin that your silence is speech. And then I asked myself this question: "What is the good, where is the wisdom in loving a tree man, who may shelter you, but never can be like you in life or love?" Always his arms are stretched upward to the heavens in a prayer to be nearer to the light. He is a sort of divine savage who cannot remember the earth heart that may love and die beneath him like the leaves upon the ground. Thus we came out of the wood, you who are made so that you can never really understand what you have lost, and I, with all my will in my wings, and stronger for the loss of my heart. Some day, perhaps, if I keep the wings, it will return, a little withered, but sound as a brownie's. Then, dear man of the trees, I shall bury it here in the forest like a precious seed. Who knows what it may come to be, my poor heart that was dead and shall live again,—a tall lady-tree as heartless as any man-oak, or 90

XIX

JESSICA TO PHILIP

MY DEAR MR. TOWERS:

Imagine if you can the moral perversity of a young woman who never regrets a witty deception or a graceful subterfuge, but repents sometimes in sackcloth and ashes for her truth-telling. I'd give half my forest now to have back the letter I sent you yesterday. But since I cannot recall it, I wish you to bear in mind that what was true of a woman's heart yesterday, to-day may be only a little breach of sentiment with which to reproach her prudence. We are never lastingly true. The best you can expect is that we be generally true to the mood we are in.

When you were here, I could not beguile you into a discussion of the subject upon which we differ so widely. Pardon the malicious reference, but it seemed to me that you had closed the door of your "upper chamber" and hastened down here to confess your own reality. And no challenge, however ingenious, could provoke you into displaying the cloven hoof of your "higher nature." When my father, for instance, who has long suspected the soundness of your doctrines, laid down one of his lurid hell-fire premises as an active reason for seeking salvation, I observed that you showed the agility of a spiritual acrobat in avoiding the conflict.

Nevertheless, I return to the point of divergence between us. You are angry with the humanitarians for their materialism. But you forget who the Hull-House classes are,—people so poor and starved and cold that their very souls have perished. You cannot teach your little goblin-faced boy who sits under the bridge the philosophy of the Hindu ascetic until you have fed and vitalised him, and stretched his poor withered imagination across the fair fields of youth's summer years. Believe me, the humanitarian's calling seems stupid from your point of view because you are born five hundred years before your time. When the Hull-House principles have abolished the poor and the rich, and have transplanted the whole human race far and wide over the hills and valleys of this earth, then will be time enough for the spiritual luxury of such teachings as yours.

The last batch of books has come, Creelman's novel, *Eagle Blood*, among them. Evidently it is a story written to prove the intellectual and commercial ascendancy of Americans over mere Anglo-Saxons. The heroine and a few romantic details are thrown in as a bait to the "average reader." Alas for the "average reader"! How many crimes of this sort are committed in his name! We can never hope to have a worthy literature until he has been eliminated from the consciousness of those who make it. In the days when he was not to be reckoned with, and men wrote for a very few appreciative admirers and some desperately cruel critics, then Carlyle began to swear at his "forty-million fool," and so attracted their attention, and ever since we have had them with us, forty-million average readers, calling for excitement and amusement. It is this same "forty-million fool" who has made historical romances an inexhaustible source of revenue to the writers of them. For he is naïve, and has never suspected the real dime-novel character of such fiction. Can you not get some one to write an article outlining a plan by which the "average reader" may be abolished?

XX

PHILIP TO JESSICA

DEAR JESSICA:

I will not for any consideration of custom put such a breach between my dreams and reality as to go on addressing you in the old formal way. It will be idle to protest; I have bought the privilege with a great price; nay, I have even bought you, and no outcry of your rebel will shall ever redeem you from this bondage to my hopes. One thing I know: there is no power in all the world equal to love, and he who has this power may win through every opposition. And was ever a man in such a position as mine? Others have been compelled to overcome a prejudice against what was base or unworthy in themselves, but I am forced to defend myself for my best heritage of understanding. Would it help me in your esteem if I flung away all my hard-won philosophy and ranged myself with the sentimentalists of the day? I will not believe it. I will fight this upstart folly while breath is in me, and I will teach you to fight it with me. This morning I took that poor book of Miss Addams's and, in place of what you sent me, wrote such a review as will quite astound the "forty-million fool" you so despise—we agree there, at least. And all the while I was writing, I kept saying to myself, How will Jessica answer that? and, Will not Jessica believe now that my hatred of humanitarianism does not spring from selfishness or contempt, but from sympathy for mankind?

Yet if anything could bring me to hate my brothers it would be this monstrous certainty that my feeling towards them stands in the way of the one supreme, all consuming desire of my heart. I could cry out in the words of the *Imitation*:

"As often as I have gone among men, I have returned less a man"; for their foolish chatter has stolen from me the possession without which we are dwarfed and marred in our being. Your love is more to me than all the hopes of men. You must hearken to me. I have charged the winds

with my passion; the scent of flowers shall tell you the sweetness of love; you shall not walk among your beloved trees but their whispering shall repeat the words they heard me speak. I will wrap you about with fancies and dreams and passionate thoughts till no way of escape is left you. You shall not read a book but some word of mine shall come between your eyes and the printed page. You shall not hear a simple song but you shall remember that music is the voice of love. You think that I have no heart for the many and can therefore have no heart for one. Dear girl, my love is so great that it has made me stronger a thousand times than you; there is no escape for you.

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As I passed the little goblin boy this morning I dropped a coin in his hand and said: "It is from a lady in Georgia who loves you." His face lighted up with surprise at the words (not at the money, for I have given him that before), and I was glad to extend the benediction of your sweetness a little further in the world. Believe me, I am not so foolish as to despise charity or true efforts to increase the comfort of the poor; but I know that poverty and pain and wretchedness can never be driven from the world by any besom of the law, and I do see that humanitarianism, sprung as it is from materialism and sentimentalism (what a demonic crew of *isms!*) has bartered away the one valid consolation of mankind for an impossible hope that begets only discontent and mutual hatred among men. They are the followers of Simon Magus, these humanitarians; they would buy the gifts of Heaven with a price; and their creed is the real Simonism. Have you ever read the *Imitation*, and do you remember these verses?

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For though I alone possessed all the comforts of the world and might enjoy all the delights thereof, yet it is certain that they could endure but a little.

Wherefore, O my soul, thou canst not be fully comforted, nor be perfectly refreshed, save in God, the comforter of the poor and the helper of the humble.

Let temporal things be for use, but set thy desire on the eternal.

Man draweth nearer to God so as he departeth further from all earthly comfort.

You have taught me to love, dear Heart; and now, as you see, you are teaching me to be orthodox. Do not think I shall give you up; there is only one power greater than my desire, and that is Death. I would not end with so ill-omened a word, but rather with your own sweet name, Jessica.

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XXI

JESSICA TO PHILIP

DEAR FATHER CONFESSOR:

You observe, I do not retaliate by addressing you as Dear Philip. After reflecting, I conclude that this would be an undue concession to make, while the above title removes you to a safer sphere. It limits and qualifies your relationship and at the same time affords me the happy advantage of confessing my heart to you. Really, I have always felt the need of such an officer in my spiritual kingdom. I could never reconcile myself to the incongruity of confessing in our experience meetings. It seemed to me that sharing my confidence with so many people was heterodox to nature itself. For this reason I have always thought that while Protestantism is based upon a nobler theory of the truth, Roman Catholicism is founded upon a much shrewder knowledge of human nature.

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However, I do not come seeking absolution for any sins. Such shortcomings as I have are so personal, so really a part of dear me, that I should scarcely be complete without them. They are vixenish plagues of character that distinguish me from more conventional saints. But now that I have willed myself away from you, I need no longer conceal my heart. My love has been shriven, and, like a little white ghost out of heaven, must hark back to you occasionally for a blessing.

To begin with, then, when your letter came this morning, I took just a peep inside to see if it was good, and then hurried away to our forest to enjoy it, for I always feel more at home with you there. And although the season is so far advanced that the whole earth is chilled and desolate, my heart was like the springtide, swelling with gladness. Joy reached to my vagabond heels, and I had much ado to maintain the resignation gait of a minister's daughter through the village streets. And once out of sight I kissed my hand quickly over my shoulder till my face burned. For had you not promised to attend me? "I will wrap you about with fancies and dreams," you said. I was like a young-lady comet drawing after me a luminous trail of love. I began to comprehend the advantages of my position, to rejoice in my sacrifice. I caught the finer aspiration of love, like one who lays down his life and finds it again in nobler forms. Brave, good father, this thing that you have revealed to me is like a sweet eternity. It neither begins nor ends: only we do that. When our time comes we are swept into the current of it, happy, predestined atoms, and afterwards we are lost out of it like the leaves on the trees. But love is like the wind in their branches; it never is gone. So it seems to me now when all my heart's leaves are stirred to gladness by the dear gale of love.

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But do not despise me, O sage in the upper chamber, for my selfishness. I keep far to the windward of you because I was made for love, not for sacrifice. The altar of your soul life is very fine, very beautiful, but I am too much alive to be offered up on such a table. Suppose I trusted you, gave myself with my heart, and in after years you should fall upon the idea of expurgating all sensations, all heresies, all affections from your life as the Brahmins do, what then would become of poor Jessica? I should sit upon your altar like a withered fairy, casting dust over my

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unhallowed head and calling down elfish curses upon you. Ah me! when I come upon a splendid man-statue that suddenly glows into living heart and flesh, I may wonder and love, but I should never trust myself in the arms of that phenomenon, lest, being clasped there, he should as suddenly turn back to his native stone and freeze the life in me!

Have you noticed that I tell you nothing of the village doings here, the little church sociables and a thousand commonplace details that go to make up the sum of existence amid such surroundings? It is because I do not really live among them. My mind is alien to these narrow margins of society and religion. But it is always of the little forest that I tell you, as if that were my real home, as indeed it is. And it is the dearer to me now that we have walked through it together. So in each letter you may expect a report of how things go there. This morning, as I looked about at the sober ground covered thick with dying leaves, I thought of what a gallant display of autumnal colors we had on that morning. Our little friends of the summer time are flitting here and there through the naked branches in silent confusion. There are no green boughs behind which to conceal their orchestral moods. Besides, their inspiration is gone, their singing hearts are benumbed by the cold. But for your letter thrust somewhere I could not have escaped the ghost of sadness that seemed to haunt the earth and sky. Suddenly, as I stood in the midst of it all, a cardinal flashed like a red spark into a tall pine, fluffed out his breast, and swept the forest with a defiant note of melody. It was a challenge to the long winter time, a prophecy of spring and of high green trees, and of a mate cloistered now far away in the wilderness: "You shall not hear a simple song, but you shall remember that music is the voice of love," whispered the letter against my heart. What a brave thing is life when we have love and the hope of spring latent within us! I admit, as I listened to the little red troubadour of the pine, that, had you been as near as the dreams and fancies that wrapped me about, this fight in me for freedom would have been at an end. Do not trust these feeble moods of mine, however; not one of them would last half the length of time you would need to make the journey from New York to Morningtown!

So! you have written such a review of Miss Addams's book as will astonish the "average reader," and all the while you wondered: "How will Jessica answer that?" Abridged, this is her opinion: That an editor should be careful how he kicks his heels at the spirit of his age. The world has an ancient and effective way of dealing with such heroes.

No, I am not familiar with the *Imitation*. But I gather from the passages you quote that it is a spiritual exercise prepared for those who "possess all the comforts of this life," and are weary enough of them to pass on to the philosophy of renunciation. But you should remember that the Hull-House classes have not had the necessary experience with comforts. Renunciation is impossible for them, for they have nothing to give up.

My love to the little goblin boy.

XXII

PHILIP TO JESSICA

MY DEAR JESSICA:

Did ever "Father Confessor" have so sweet and so wilful a sinner to shrive! Your only sin is that you love me, and do you think I shall grant absolution for that? As I read your letter with its wayward confession, it seemed to me indeed that I was in some temple of the gods instead of this book-littered den, and the rumble of the street was transfigured into the sound of triumphant music. And all the while the voice of the little penitent, hidden from my eyes, but almost within reach of my breath, murmured in my ears: "I love you, I love you, and that is my sin." Dear girl, when you have given me your heart, do you suppose I shall be slow to confiscate your will? It is not lawful that a man's, or a woman's, heart and will should be at enmity with each other. I know that your will is strong, but I know, too, that your heart is stronger. Why did you turn me away without one word of hope or consolation when I visited you in Morningtown? Out of the great store of happiness that God has given you, could you not spare one little morsel? Ah, I would not offer you up a sacrifice on the altar of any spiritual creed, but take you with me into that upper chamber that looks toward the golden sunrise. I would share your happiness and give you in return a portion in the hope that I too have found. With you at my side I could walk through the world, (for I am not such a recluse as you might suppose,) knowing that the desire of all men's hearts had fallen to me, and that my life was consecrated henceforth to noble uses. And yet to-day I am very sad.

Let me tell you a little story of the way your admired Simonians act when their general promulgations of brotherhood are brought to an individual test. Our proprietor and manager, a smooth-faced, meek-eyed Jew, who has made himself right with this world, at least, is much concerned with charities and civic meetings and reform clubs and progress societies and the preaching of universal democracy, and all that,—a veritable Pharisee among the humanitarians. He often asks me to give a good word to some Simoniacal book. Well, I have a poor broken-down Irishman named O'Meara, who reviews a certain class of publications for me. He is the kind of man you would never expect to meet in this country: a relic of eighteenth-century Grub Street,—a man who reads Latin and Greek, who can quote pages of the Fathers, who has a high ideal of literature and conscience in writing, and withal a victim to the demon whiskey that has dragged him down to the very gutter. His life has been a mystery to me, and some feeling of shame has kept him from ever telling me where and how he lives. At intervals he comes

shuffling into my office, with bleared eyes and palsied hand, and for charity's sake I give him a book to review—and not exactly for charity either, for he does his work well. Two or three weeks ago our Simoniacal manager came into my office and asked me who that tramp was whom he had seen several times go away with books. I told him the whole story, thinking to arouse his sympathy. What was my surprise when he broke out into a mild stream of abuse—the more startling because he ordinarily says so little—against allowing such besotted tramps to come into the offices! When a man drank himself into such a state as that there was no doing anything with him, etc. O'Meara came back in a day or two with his "copy," and I told him that the chief had ordered me to cut him off. Poor wretch! he said never a word for himself, but turned and shambled guiltily out of the room—I shall never forget the sound of his trailing, despondent feet.

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I heard no more from him until yesterday, when the office boy came in and told me a beggar child insisted on seeing me. What was my astonishment when it proved to be our goblin boy, who had been sent to ask me to come to his father; and his father was O'Meara! It all seemed as unsubstantial as a dream. I went with the child, of course. He guided me through the dark entry where I had seen him so often, in behind a great printing house, to a foul court hidden away from the street like some criminal outlaw. I will not try to describe the noisomeness of that reeking hole. I found O'Meara lying on a heap of sacks in a mouldering closet which was entirely dark save for what little light came through the doorway. Darkness, indeed, was his only comfort. He would not shake hands with me, for he has, withal, the instincts of a gentleman, and it seemed as if the shame of his whole degraded life lay with him before me in his misery. His tragedy will have been played out in a day or two, I think; and I wish the memory of it might also pass from my mind. What shall I do with the goblin boy? The hatefulness of it all stands between me and my thoughts of you. I cannot harden myself yet for a while to dream of pure beauty. I read your letter over and over, but its sweet medicament cannot purge my breast. Not even the acknowledgment of your love can drown these sighs I have heard.

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XXIII

JESSICA TO PHILIP

MY DEAR MR. PHILIP TOWERS:

You lack the proper ethical pose of a Father Confessor. I have excommunicated you. The charge against you is that you take an audacious advantage of the confessional, not to bless me, but to rejoice in my romantic vagrancy. For a man giving himself airs in the "upper chamber," you have very human ways, and I begin to suspect you only keep your creed and philosophy up there.

But you are greatly mistaken if you think you can ever wheedle me into such a sunrise attic. I can be domesticated, but not etherealised. And you hold strange doctrines for an ascetic. You think that because I love it will be easy to "confiscate" my will. Even *I* know better than that. We live to conquer our hearts. There is no freedom of mind and spirit till that decisive battle has been fought and won. My heart is a gay vagabond, ready to dance before the door of your tent, but my will is better disciplined. It weighs and counts the costs and rejects this sentimental bargain, because, O Stranger to my soul, I doubt if you can pay the interest love demands upon so large an investment. There is not enough of you; and your capital consists in something less vital,—in wind-cooled philosophies, and the passions of an occult spirit ever ready to escape into mysticism. Why will you not be content with a companionship on this basis? You keep your wings and you wish mine also. Well, you shall not have them! I have no disposition to simulate the example of those small insects who come out in early spring with splendid wings, make one flight far enough through the sunlight to lose them, and crawl all the remainder of their days in the domestic dust of their little tenements.

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Besides, does not the science of biology teach that romantic love, in the very nature of things, is transient?—a little heathen angel that we entertain unawares, who comes and goes at will? I cannot tell you what satisfaction and what distress that theory has caused me of late. I would have my own heart free, but I am willing to move my little heaven and earth to prolong your bondage. Selfish?—I know, but consider upon what loneliness and terror such selfishness is based. A man is always sufficient unto himself, particularly if he can abstract and divert himself into a line of thought as you are able to do, but a woman without a lover is a pathetic thing. There is no real reason for her existence; all her little miracles of expression and posing are for naught. She is a sort of prima donna lost out of the play. There is no one to give her the happy cue to the whole meaning of life. Oh, my Love! *I cannot* live without a lover. Do not bereave me! I should shrivel up, I am sure,—grow old and sour and sad. I might even become a deaconess with Hull-House propensities. I am a naïve beggar, you see; I ask all you have, and admit that I am unwilling to give in return what I myself have.

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Your account of O'Meara interests me. But what right have you to slip out of your stern character as a merely spiritual man, and assume the guise of a good Samaritan? Really it is not fair; your tender compassion is illogical, and, however benign, I cannot accept it as evidence in your favour. But your account of the poor man's distress touched my heart. And you ask me what ought to be done with the little goblin boy. Dear Philip, could *we* not adopt him? Think how many years then, we should have to correspond in and to dispute with each other about his upbringing! I would make the jackets and you should furnish the ethics for him. You should provide a home for him, and I would give a little of the warmth that any woman's tenderness

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imparts to any child. I will begin at once with a maternal dictation,—he must be sent into the country. For children are like lambs, I think; they also need to grow up in a green field, and to gambol there. He must have no cares, no obligations—just be encouraged to let go all the good and evil there is in him. When he has expanded to his natural size morally and physically, we can tell better what to do with him. Are you laughing at me, or are you scandalised at such a proposition? Then why did you ask my advice? When a child is without parents, is it not better to provide him with a pair of them, even if one is a wizard who knows how to metamorphose himself into many different personalities, such as sage, mystic, lover, good Samaritan, and I know not how many more?

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XXIV

PHILIP TO JESSICA

[THIS LETTER WAS WRITTEN BEFORE THE PRECEDING LETTER OF JESSICA'S, BUT WAS NOT RECEIVED UNTIL LATER.]

DEAR JESSICA:

I often wonder whether I have made it quite clear to you why it is possible to hold in high esteem personally the workers of Hull House and these other philanthropists, while detesting their views as formulated into a dogma. Just after I had sent off my last letter to you I met with something in a morning paper which will throw light on my position. In an address before Princeton Theological Seminary Dr. Lyman Abbott is reported to have used these words:

“To follow Christ is, first of all, to give yourself to the service of God by serving your fellow-men. This is more important than the question of the Trinity, of the atonement, or of creeds.”

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Now the question of the Trinity or of the atonement may not seem essential to me. My faith has passed out of them—beyond them, I trust; and at least I do not call myself a Christian. But remember that Dr. Abbott is a teacher of Christianity and was on this occasion addressing students of theology. Certainly to him and to his audience these are, they must be, the first of all matters in the realm of ideas, whether accepted or rejected, and to speak slightly of them is to show contempt for everything that transcends the material world. I know that Dr. Abbott, like some others, makes this service of our fellow-men to be a form of the service of God; but the slightest knowledge of the spirit of the day, indeed any intelligent reading of the words I have quoted, makes plain how entirely this “service of God” is a tag, a meaningless concession to an older form of speech. What seriously concerns our humanitarians is the service of mankind. Now am I not justified in saying that true religion would at least change the order of ideas and declare that to serve mankind is, first of all, to give one's self to the service of God? This is not a quibbling of words, but a radical distinction. It is because I find in all so-called humanitarians this tendency to place humanity before God, material needs before ideals, that I call them, when all is said, the most insidious foes of true religion. Their very virtues make them more dangerous than outspoken materialists and scoffers. It is largely due to them and their creed that we have no art and no literature; for art and literature depend, at the last analysis, on a reaching out after ideas, on an attempt to transmute material things into spiritual values,—on faith, in a word. The humanitarians cry out against the materialism and the commercial spirit of the age. They do not perceive that the only remedy against this degeneracy is the renewal of faith in something greater and higher than our material needs. Let them preach for a while the blessings of poverty and other-worldliness. The attempt to instil benevolence or so-called human justice into society as the chief message of religion is merely to play into the hands of the enemy. Do you see why I call them the real followers of Simon Magus, who sought to buy the gift of God with a price? “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.”

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Consider how impossible it would have been in any age of genuine or real creativeness for a leading preacher of Christianity to have pronounced Dr. Abbott's words, and you will see how far humanitarianism has fallen from faith in the spirit. I know that passages maybe quoted from the Bible which might seem to make Christ himself responsible for this new Simony; but Satan, too, may quote Scripture. Surely the whole tenor of Christ's teaching is the strongest rebuke to this lowering of the spirit's demands. He spent his life to bring men into communion with God, not to modify their worldly surroundings. Indeed, the world was to him a place of misery and iniquity, doomed to speedy destruction. He sought to save a remnant from the wrath of judgment as a brand is plucked from the fire, and he separated his disciples utterly from acquiescence in the comforts of this earth; they were to be in the world but not of it: “Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.” He taught poverty and not material progress. Those he praised were the poor and the meek and the unresisting and the persecuted—those who were cut off from the hopes of the world.

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And now, dear girl, do you ask me to apply my preaching to my own case? Of a truth I have faith. I think it my true service to men that I should learn to love you greatly; and out of that love shall flow charity and justice and righteousness toward the world. Let it be my meed of service that men shall see the beauty of my homage.

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DEAR JESSICA:

The end has come even sooner than I looked for it. This afternoon, little Jack, our goblin boy, came to my office and I followed him back to the dismal court where his father lay expecting me. I had arranged that the poor wretch should be carried into a room where at least there was a bed and where a ray of clean sunshine might greet his soul when departing on the long journey; and there I found him lying perfectly quiet save for the twitching of his hands outstretched on the counterpane. I thought a glimmer of content lightened his dull eyes as I sat down beside him. I talked with him a little, but he seemed scarcely to heed my words. Then turning his head towards me he plucked from under his pillow an old thumb-worn copy of *Virgil* (so bedraggled and spotted that no second-hand book-seller would have looked at it) and thrust it out to me, intimating by a gesture that he would have me read to him. I asked him where I should begin, and he held up two fingers as if to indicate the second book of the *Aeneid*; and there I began with the fall of Troy-town.

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He listened with apparent apathy, though I know not what echoes the sonorous lines awakened in his mind, until I came to the words:

Venit summa dies et ineluctabile tempus.

I saw his hands clench together feebly here, and then there was no more motion. Presently I looked into his face, and I knew that no sound of my voice, nor any sound of the world, could ever reach him again; for the story of his unspeakable sorrow, like the ruin of Troy, had been told to the end. He had spoken not a single word; he had carried the silence of his soul into the infinite silences of death. The secret of his life had passed with him. I shall probably never know what early dreams and ambitions had faded into this squalid despair. And his pitiful wan-faced boy—who was the child's mother? I am glad I do not know; I am only glad I can tell him of your love. I shall see that the father is buried decently with a wooden slab to distinguish his grave from the innumerable dead who rest in the earth. Might we not print above his body the last words of the poem he seems to have loved so much: *Fugit indignata sub umbras!* For I think it was the indignity of shame in the end that killed him. Is he not now all that Cæsar and Virgil are? Shall he not sleep as peacefully in his pauper's bed as the great General Grant in that mausoleum raised by the river's side?—Commonplace thoughts that came to me as I sat for a while musing in the presence of death; but is not death the inevitable commonplace that shall put to rout all our originality in the end?

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And all the while our Jack was sitting perfectly motionless by the window, looking out into the court—into the blue sky, I think. I picked up one of his thin hands and said to him: "Little Jack, your father has gone away from us and is at rest. There is a beautiful lady in the South who loves you as she loves me; will not her love make you happy?" He did not appear to understand me, but shrank into himself as if afraid. Indeed, sweet benefactress, I shall send him into the country somewhere as you bid me, and I shall see that your love brings him greater happiness than it has brought me, for with him you shall not withdraw with one hand what you have held out in the other.

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I went away, leaving an old woman to care for the dead man and his child. It will be long before I forget how alien and far-away the noises of the street sounded as I passed out of that chamber of silence. Is it not a strange thing that death should have this power of benediction? Of a sudden a breath comes out of the heavens, our little cares are touched by an eternal presence, a rift is blown in the thick mists that hem us about, and behold, we look out into infinite visionless space. And now I am back in my office. I open O'Meara's worn and much-stained *Virgil*, and inside the cover I find these words scribbled in pencil: "*I have cried unto God and He hath not heard my cry; but thou, O beloved poet, art ever near with consolation!*" I do not know whether the sentence is original with O'Meara or a quotation; it is certainly new to me. One other book I brought with me, and the two were the whole worldly possession of the dead man. This is a small but pretty thick blank-book, written over almost to the last page. I have not examined the contents carefully, but I can see that they are made up of miscellaneous passages copied from books and of reflections on a great variety of topics, with few or no records of events. One of the last entries is from Clarence Mangan's heart-breaking poem, *The Nameless One*:

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And tell how now, amid wreck and sorrow,
And want, and sickness, and houseless nights,
He bides in calmness the silent morrow
That no ray lights.

Him grant a grave to, ye pitying noble,
Deep in your bosoms: there let him dwell!
He, too, had tears for all souls in trouble
Here, and in hell.

And is it not a touch of Fate's irony that I should be sending this threnody of death to one who might expect to receive from me only messages and pleadings of love? Death and love are the very antipodes of our existence, one would say. And yet I do not know; I feel nothing incongruous in linking the twain together. Love, too, breaks open the barriers of our poor personality that the breath of the infinite may blow in upon us. I cannot say how it is with others, but so it is with me: love lays a hand upon me, and instantly the discords of the world

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are hushed in my ears, the little desires and fears that trouble me are shamed into silence, and I am rapt away into the infinitely great heart that throbs at the centre of all. It is strange, but life itself seems to pass away in the presence of this power that is the creator of life. I speak darkly, but my words have a meaning. And, dear sweetheart, be not afraid that you shall be left without a lover; that I shall bereave you! Do you think for an instant that I can cease to love? I cannot understand this war between your heart and your will; am I very stupid? Surely when I come to you, I shall bring this contention to an end, and you—it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive what you shall give me. Out of the conclusions of death into the prophecies of love! I am filled with wondering.

You shall hear more hereafter of poor Jack, our adopted child.

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XXVI

JESSICA TO PHILIP

MY DEAR PHILIP:

See how you shame me! For this long while I have wished to begin my letters thus, but I waited, hoping you would entreat me to do so. I expected you to provide an excuse. I thought my own pleasure would wear the genial air of a concession to your wishes. Indeed, the way you wait for me to be obliged to do such things of my own accord, fills me with superstitious anxieties. It is as if you had some unfair foreknowledge of the natural order of events. You would take things for granted, and thus produce an hypnotic effect by your convictions so strong as to compel my conformity. But I console myself with the reflection that all this is mental. You terrify only my intelligence with your strange sorcery. And for this reason I shall always escape your bondage, for I am too wise to concede my familiar territory to such an overbearing foreign power.

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However, I must not forget the prime object I have in writing this letter. It is to tell you that the little box of childish things, which you must have received already and wondered at, are *not* for the literary editor of *The Gazette*, but for Jack, sent with the hope that they may in some measure comfort his sad heart. I went so far as to purchase material for the promised set of jackets, when suddenly I remembered that I was ignorant of both his age and size. You have never told me that, though you have given me such a real picture of him that I could almost trust my imagination to cut those garments to fit him!

Your account of O'Meara's death affected me deeply. With what sublime abandon does such a man let go his soul into the mystery of that silence which we call eternity!

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Is it not strange how the same impressions come to many, but by different ways! "It will be long before I forget how alien and far-away the noises of the street sounded as I passed out of that chamber of silence," you said, and the sentence recalled a somewhat similar experience of my own on Cumberland Island, where father and I went last summer for a short vacation. One day, leaving the group of happy bathers to their surf, I climbed up inland among the sand-hills, that lie along the shore like the white pillows of fabulous sea-gods. Presently I came upon one of those great sand-pits that stretch along the Island, deep and wide like mighty graves. Far below me a whole forest stood in ghostly silence, with every whitening limb lifted in supplication, as if all had died in a terrified struggle with the engulfing sands. Unawares, I had happened upon one of Nature's griefs—and I do not know how to tell you, but the sight of it aged me. Of a sudden this death of the trees seemed a far-off part of my own experience. I was swept out of this contesting, energetic world into a still region where great events come to pass in silence, and inevitably. And so real was the illusion that, as I turned to hurry back, it seemed to me that centuries had passed since I saw the same little tuft of flowers like a group of purple fairies nodding to me from the top of a tall cliff. And so I stood there confused by the significance of this silence, so incredible that even the winds could not shake it. I felt so near and kin to death that I became "alien" to all the living world about me. For the first time in my life, I lost the *sense* of God, which is always a kind of mental protection against the terrors of infinity. There was nothing to pray to, only the sea on one side and this grave on the other, with a little trembling life between.

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Thus you will understand that not only have I had a similar experience to your own upon the occasion of O'Meara's death, but that for once I came into your region of shades and terrors. I was like one on the point of dissolution, and almost my soul escaped into your dim habitation. From your letters I had already learned how near together love and death stood in your consciousness. Each is an exit through which your spirit is ever ready to pass. And for the moment, crowded in with skeleton shadows there, you seemed sensibly near me. I was divided between fear and love. But the blood of life in me always triumphs,—and then it was that I made my first flight in consciousness from you. I kissed my hand to the twilight and ran! I am sure you were there, Philip, a cold-lipped spirit-lover seeking my mortal life. And, oh my Heart! is it wrong that I would love and be loved in the flesh? I do not object to spirituality, only it must have a visible presence and a warm cheek.

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P. S.—But, dear Philip, how am I to reconcile this tender charity to Jack with your anti-humanitarian views? Is a man's heart so divided from his philosophy? Or do you intend to make a mystic of that poor child, so that he may escape the woes of his condition? I am curious to see what you will do with him. Also, I shall certainly defend him against your Nirvana doctrines if I suspect you of juggling with his soul.

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PHILIP TO JESSICA

DEAR, TEASING, RARE JESSICA:

I have so many things to say to you. First of all, why do you blame me for my "foreknowledge"? You scold me for my hostility to the sentimentalism of the day, you scold me then for any act of common human sympathy, and now you take me to task because I foresee how you will address me in a letter. Dear me, what a horrid little scold it is! I wonder you didn't quote *The Raven*,—

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!"

But really no great powers of prophecy were required. Have you forgotten that in the very letter before this one you called me "Dear Philip"? And wasn't that a good index of your tempestuous, contradictory sweet self, that you should have begun your letter "My dear Mr. Philip Towers" and then thrown in your "Dear Philip" by the way, as if it would not be observed! Why, my naughty Jessica, when I came to that phrase, I just took my longest, biggest blue pencil and put a ring about it so that I might find it at a moment's notice and feast my eyes a thousand thousand times on its sweet familiarity. Do not suppose that anything ever escapes me in your letters. I can every little lapse in your spelling until I know it by heart. And you do make so many slips, you know, in your reviews as well as in your letters! I never correct them,—that would be a desecration, I think,—but send up your copy just as it comes to me. Indeed, I find myself imitating unawares some of your most unaccountable originalities. Only the other day I was in the reading-room and our head proofreader, a sour, wizened old man, cried out to me: "I say, Mr. Towers, what is the matter with your spelling? You write *propotion*^[2] for proportion and *propersition* for proposition, and get your *r*'s all mixed up generally!" There was a titter from all the girls in the room. Then said I: "Thou fool! knowest thou not that Jessica lives in the South, and treats her *r*'s with royal contempt as she was taught to treat the black man? And shall I not imitate her in this as in all her high-born originalities?" Of course I didn't say that aloud, but just thought it to myself. And really I do wonder sometimes that your excellent father, when he taught you Latin, should have permitted you to take such liberties with our good mother tongue. But after all it is only another sign of your right Southern wilfulness. Do you not take even greater liberties with poor human souls?

And you make my prophetic powers a bulwark for your licentious rebellion and declare that you will always escape my bondage. Shall you, indeed? You once intimated that I wore ass's ears. I begin to believe it. What a blind, solemn animal I was when I came to Morningtown to beg for your love! I was so afraid of you. And as we sat in the circle of your watching, motionless trees, something of their stiff ways entered into my heart. I told you of my love so solemnly, and you answered so solemnly. Fool! Fool! I should have spoken not a single word, but just taken you in my arms and kissed you once and twice. Don't frown now, it is too late. There would have been one wild, tempestuous outbreak of indignation, and then my dryad maiden would have known my "foreknowledge" indeed. Is it too late to rehearse that curtain-raiser? Dear girl, I would be merry, but I am not so sure that all is well with my heart. I need you so much now, for I have entered on a new path and the way is obscure before me. I need you. Your hand in mine would give me the courage I require.

Do you remember how you warned me of dangers when I reviewed Miss Addams's book? You, too, were a prophet. Let me tell you how it all came about. The other day I wrote up Mme. Adam's *Romance of My Childhood and Youth* (Addams and Adam—the name has a fatality for me), and took occasion to make it the text of a tremendous preachment against our latter-day Simony,—as well it might be, for Mme. Adam grew up in the thirties and forties when France was a huge seething caldron in which all these modern notions were brewing together. And unfortunately we are just beginning now where France left off a score of years ago. You have already seen the review, no doubt, and it is superfluous to repeat its argument. But for my own justification to you I want to quote a few sentences from the book. You disdained to make any reply to my letter on Lyman Abbott, and I fear you have grown weary of the whole subject; but certainly you will be interested in what I am copying out for you now. In one of her chapters, then, Mme. Adam writes:

Nature, Science, Humanity, are the three terms of initiation. First comes nature, which rules everything; then the revelations of nature, revelations which mean science—that is to say, phenomena made clear in themselves and observed by man; and lastly, the appropriation of phenomena for useful social purposes.... There is no error in nature, no perversity in man; evil comes only from society.... He [Mme. Adam's father] delighted in proving to me that it was useless for man to seek beyond nature for unattainable chimeras, for the infinite which our finite conception was unable to understand, and for the immaterial, which our materiality can never satisfactorily explain.... They [these humanitarian socialists] resembled my father. Their doubts—and they had many!—were of too recent a date to have dried up their souls; *they no longer believed in a divine Christ; they still believed in a human one*. They worshipped that mysterious Science, which replaced for them the supernatural, and which had not then brought all its brutality to light in crushing man under machinery.

Could anything be more illuminating than that? Does it not set forth the close cousinship of humanitarianism with socialism and the fungous growth of the two out of the mouldering ruins of faith and the foul reek of a sensuous philosophy? And do you not see why any surrender to

this modern cult of human comfort means the indefinite postponement of that fresh-dawning ideal which shall bring life to literature and art and evoke once more the golden destiny of man?

Well, this morning the particular Simon Magus who rules *The Gazette* walked into my office and, after some preliminary sparring, came out with a complaint which I knew had been preparing in his brain for some time. It seems that he had already been deluged with letters about my heretical attack on Miss Addams, and now a new storm had begun over my further delinquencies. He kindly told me that my views were a hundred years behind the age and that they were doing injury to the paper. Against the latter charge I had no defence, and immediately capitulated. To cut a disagreeable tale short, I anticipated his purpose and offered to make way for some man who would better harmonise with the benevolent policy of the paper. The first of the month comes in four days, and then I shall be thrown once again on my own resources. The shock, though expected, is a little disconcerting; for at times a man grows weary and discouraged in fighting against the perpetual buffeting of the current. But most of all I am wondering how my independence will affect the hopes that were beginning to colour my dreams. Dear Jessica, you will not forsake me now; you will put away your perversity and love me simply and unreservedly? There are difficulties before me, I know; but I am not afraid if only my heart is at peace. I am free, and if there is any power in my brain, any skill in my right hand, I will make such a pother that the world shall hear me. I will not die till I am heard. And so I ask you to help-me. With your love I shall be made bold, and no opposition and no repeated reverses shall trouble me. And in the end your happiness is in my making.

Indeed, your box of little things for Jack made Olympian merriment in Newspaper Row, for several men were in my office when I opened it. Jack is ten years old, small for his age, but quietly precocious. I cannot write more of him now. Address your next letter not to the office but to—; and when I open that letter will it bring me joy or grief? Your joy may cast a ruddy light on my path, but nothing that you can say will shake me in my firm resolve. No sorrow shall hinder me, but, oh, happy Heart! I, too, long for happiness.

XXVIII

JESSICA TO PHILIP

KIND SIR:

Which do you think requires the more grace in a woman, to hold out against a dear enemy or to yield? My own experience teaches me that there is more facility in resistance. Acting thus I have always felt in accord with natural instincts, and there is a barbaric sense of security in following them.... Yet I have only one thing to tell you in reply to your "so many." Can you guess what it is? Already I think the birds know it. I have so far departed from my natural order of perversity and self-protection that they feel it, and twitter together when I pass by. I think they look down upon me now with high-feathered contempt. Could anything be more mortifying?

Do not laugh, Philip! You have behaved little better than a robber in this matter. I have lost to you, but the game was not fair; dear mendicant, you played with a card up your sleeve! All my life I have planned to outwit predestination. I have ignored Sabbath-day doctrines and faith-binding dogmas to this end. I could even have held out indefinitely against your "foreknowledge," but when you come, heralded by an unexpected misfortune, asking "peace" of me that you may meet your own difficulties with a steadier courage, I find you invincible. It is as if you had suddenly slipped through the door of my heart and left will, betrayed, on guard outside. I have no defence in my nature against your plea. The diplomacy of your need takes me unawares, and, no matter how I fear the future, now I am bound to add myself to you in love and hope. The prospect is terrible and sweet. Already it has made me a stranger in my father's house, a foreigner among the trees, and a wakeful, frightened mystery to myself. I am full of tears and secrecy. I am no longer Jessica, the wind-souled dryad of the forest, but merely a woman in definition, facing a new world of pain and joy. Oh, my beloved! you have taken all that I have, all that I am! Henceforth I shall be only a part of you,—a little hyperbole of domesticity always following after, or advancing to meet you.... Dear gods of the world, defend me from such a fate! ... After all, I cannot admit the "one thing." I cannot submit to this annihilation, this absorption of character and personality. If you take me, you do so at your own risk, I will not promise "peace," but confusion rather. But if you get me, you must take me. Yet, if you come to Morningtown after me, I will deny my love, not out of perversity, but out of fear. The sight of you is a signal for me to take refuge upon my tallest bough. And I can no more come down to you than a young lady robin could fly into your pocket. It is all very well for you to exhort me to love you "simply and unreservedly,"—I do. Nothing could be simpler, more elemental, than my love is; and do I reserve a single thought of it from you? But I am not conventional enough in heart or training to surrender. My genius for you does not extend so far. To lose myself does not seem to me wise or logical, however scriptural or legal the practice is. The truth is, I cannot agree to be taken, any more than the little petticoated planet above your head can kick off her diadem of light. I do not know what you will do about it, because it is not my business to know these things. All I am sure of is that I love you, and that I belong to you if only you can get my extradition papers from Nature herself.

Meanwhile I have ventured to prepare my father's mind for a new idea. As we sat before the library fire this evening, each employed according to his calling, he with Fletcher's *Appeal* and I with my sewing, I asked the usual introductory question to our conversations. And it is always the signal for him to raise his shield of orthodoxy; for it has long been my habit to creep around

the corner of my private opinion and tease him with what he is pleased to term "the most blasphemous speculations." Therefore when I said, "Father, I wish to ask you a question," he looked up with the guarded eye of a man who expects an assault from an unscrupulous antagonist.

"Well, my daughter, ask."

"Which would you advise me to marry, father, a humanitarian whose highest law is the material welfare of his kind, or an ascetic whose spirituality is something more and something less than scriptural?"

"Neither, Jessica; if you must marry, choose a man who believes in the divinity of Christ and lives somewhere within the limits of the Ten Commandments!"—Heavens! think of bondage with a man who is bounded upon the north, east, south, and west of his soul by laws enacted to discipline the Israelites in the Wilderness! In that case, I should insist upon a bridal trip to Canaan, with the hope of reaching the Promised Land as a widow.

And this reminds me to ask you what manner of man you are yourself. Do you reflect that we have seen each other only twice? and both times you were on guard, once as an editor, and once as a lover. Even your face has faded to a mere shadow, and, if you persist in your petulant obstinacy about the picture^[3], is like to vanish clean away into nothing. Only your encompassing eyes peer at me with solemn expostulation out of the shimmering form I conjure up and call my lover. Is it quite fair, Philip? And as for your character, my hope is that, in spite of your mental pose as a sage, you have an unreasonable disposition, a chaotic temper. A long term of years with a serene, gentle-spirited man would be unbearable to me. Rather than prolong the futility of existence with one I could not provoke, even enrage, I should commit suicide. My own disposition is so equally divided between perversity and repentance that I could not endure the placidity, the ennui, of a level turnpike existence.

And now isn't it an evidence of your high-minded heartlessness, that in the same letter where you sue for love you also introduce a philosophical discussion and show even more heat in maintaining it than you do in your amorous petition? Why I cannot take warning and fly to the ends of my earth away from you now while there is yet time, is a mystery to me!

And so you expect to make such a pother in your opposition to the spirit of the times that all the world will hear you. Dear Master, I doubt if you will! Your bells ring too high up. The angels in heaven may hear you, but men are not listening in that direction. I did not reply to your contention against Lyman Abbott, because it is a far cry from you to me on this subject. In consciousness we are at opposite ends of a great problem, and I think the normal man walks somewhere between. Besides, I am not sure that I understand your position; I am not familiar with the starry highways of your mind. Still, in a general way it has always seemed to me that material things are, after all, "counters which represent spiritual realities." And I take comfort in the fact that it must require us all to work out the Great Plan,—humanitarian, sage, pilgrim, ascetic, even the butcher and candlestick maker. And while we do not know it, really we are working together for one end hidden now in the divine economy of far-off destiny and justice.... To me the wonder of wonders is that I may some day light a little taper in your upper chamber myself, and kneel together with you before the same window to worship. Only, dear Heart, please get your deity named before I come!

P.S.—As to my spelling, that is a coquettish licence I take with the genealogy of words. And you may tell your proofreader that the letter *r* has never been popular in the South since the war. There is hauteur in my omission of it, and it is a fact that we can express ourselves with far more vigour without *g*'s or *r*'s than you of the North can with them. For expression with us is not scholastic, but temperamental! Where is Jack?

XXIX

PHILIP TO JESSICA

KIND MADAM:

Yes, a little more than kind, dear Jessica, for you have put into my grasp the flower of perfect delight, and "my hand retains a little breath of sweet." You have opened a window into my heart and poured through it the warmth and golden glory of your own sunlight. I am filled with a joyousness of a new spring—and yet there is something in your letter that makes me a little sad. You express so frankly that reserve of resentment, even of bitterness, which always, I think, abides with a woman in all the sweetness of her love, but which with most women never comes to entire consciousness. Listen, dear Heart, while I talk to you of yourself and myself, until we comprehend each other better. It is so much easier for me to understand you than for you to understand me, because a woman's nature is single, whereas a man's is double, and in this duality lies all the reason of that enmity of the sexes which draws us together yet still holds us asunder.

You complain of my letter because I argue a philosophical proposition in it while pleading for love. Do you not know that this is man's way? And I would not try to deceive you: this philosophical proposition, which seems to you almost a matter of indifference, is more to me than everything else in the world. For it I could surrender all my heart's hope; for it I could sacrifice my own person; even, if the choice were necessary, which cannot be, I might sacrifice you. There is this duality in man's nature. The ambition of his intellect, the passion, it may be, to

force upon the world some vision of his imagination or some theorem of his brain, works in him side by side with his personal being, and the two are never quite fused. Can you not recall a score of examples in history of men who have led this dual existence? You reviewed for me Bismarck's Love Letters and were yourself struck by this sharp contrast between the iron determination of the man in public affairs and the softness and sweetness of his domestic life. That is but one case in point of the eternal dualism in masculine nature which a woman can never comprehend, and which always, if it confronts her nakedly, she resents. For a woman is not so. There exists no such gap in her between her heart and brain, between her outer and inner life. And the consequence shows itself in many ways. She is less efficient in the world and is never a creator or impresser of new ideas; but, on the other hand, her character possesses a certain unity that is the wonder of all men who observe. She calls the man selfish and is bitter against him at times, but her accusation is wrong. It is not selfishness which leads a man if needs be to cut off his own personal desires while sacrificing another; it is the power in him which impels the world into new courses. A man's virtues are aggressive and turned toward outer conquest and may have little relation to his own heart. But a woman's virtues are bound up with every impulse of her personal being; they work out in her a loveliness and unity of character which make the man appear beside her coarse and unmoral. Men of vicious private life have more than once been benefactors of the human race; I think that never happened in the case of a woman.

And because of this harmony, this unconsciousness in woman's virtue, a man's love of woman takes on a form of idealisation which a woman never understands and indeed often resents. What in him is something removed from himself, something which he analyses and governs and manipulates, is in the woman beloved an integral part of her character. Virtue seems in her to become personified and he calls her by strange names. For this reason men who make language tend always to give to abstract qualities the feminine gender, as you must have observed in Latin and might observe in a score of other tongues. For this reason, too, a man's love of woman assumes such form of worship as Dante paid to Beatrice or Petrarch to Laura. It would be grotesque for a woman to love in this way, for virtue is not a man's character, but a faculty of his character. And so is it strange that I should approach you asking for love that my soul may have peace? It cannot enter into my comprehension that such a cry should come from you to me. All that I strive to accomplish in the world, all that I gird myself to battle for, the ideals that I would lay down my life that men may behold and cherish,—is it not now all gathered up in the beauty and serenity of your own person? What I labour to express in words is already yours in inner possession. If I ask you for peace, it is not selfishness, dear girl; it is prayer. If you should come to me begging for peace, I should be filled with amazement; for I myself have it not. What I can give is love's unwearied tenderness and love's unceasing homage to the beauty of your body and your soul. More than that, I shall give you in the end the crown of the world's honour. Without you I may accomplish the task laid upon me, but only with heaviness of soul and abnegation of all that my heart craves. I was reading in an old drama last night until I came to these words, and then I set the book aside:

Once a young lark
Sat on thy hand, and gazing on thine eyes
Mounted and sung, thinking them moving skies.

In that sweet hyperbole I seemed to read a transcript of your beauty. If I am selfish, beloved, all love is selfishness.

Dear girl, it seems that always I must woo you in metaphysics and express my ardour in theorems. But have I not made myself understood? "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart," as a thousand women have quoted: and it is true. But do you not see that even for this reason his love swells into a passionate idolatry of the woman who knows no such cleavage in her soul. Try us with sacrifices. I could throw away every earthly good to bestow on you a year of happiness—only not my philosophic proposition, as you sarcastically call it. That is greater than I and greater than you—pray heaven it do not clash with the promise of our peace. Virgil, I think, meant to exhibit such a tragic conflict in his tale of Æneas and Dido, only poetwise the inner impulse which worked within Æneas he expressed dramatically as a messenger from the gods. It shows but little understanding of the poem or of human nature to censure Æneas as a cold egotist. Did he not sail away carrying anguish in his heart, *multa gemens*? For him there was destined toil and warfare, for Dido only terror and death. The tragedy fell hardest upon the woman, for so the Fates have ordered.

But why do I write such grim reflections? There is no tragedy, no separation, for us, but a great wonder of happiness:

The treasures of the deep are not so precious
As are the concealed comforts of a man
Locked up in woman's love.

All the marvellous words of the poets rush into my brain when I think of this new blessing. Yes, I have acted a robber's part, sweet Jessica, and he who ravished that great jewel from the Indian idol never carried away so large a draft on the world's happiness as this that I have stolen. I cannot be repentant while this golden glow is upon me; later I shall begin to question my own worthiness.

I cannot now tell you one half that is in my mind to write, or answer one half the questions in your letter. Jack is living with me just at present, but of him I will speak next time. I have planned to change my abode, but of that too next time. And I would not attempt to give a name

to the deity I serve in a postscript, as it were. Dear Heart, only let your love add a little to your happiness as it has added so much to mine; and trust me.—I am sending a letter to your father, the contents of which you might imagine even if he should not show it to you.

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XXX

JESSICA TO PHILIP

WRITTEN BEFORE THE RECEIPT OF THE PRECEDING LETTER

MY BELOVED:

Last night, I dreamed myself away to you. I walked beside you, a little wraith of love, through the silent night streets of your great city,—but you did not know me. There was no sky above us, only a hollow blackness, and the snow lay new and white upon the pavements; but I wore green leaves in my hair and a red Southern rose on my breast to remind you of a brown forest maid and summer-time far away—and you would not see me! I faced you in gay mockery and swept a bow, but the blue silence in your eyes terrified me. I held out my hands beseechingly, touched my cheek to yours, and you did not feel the pressure. Then I slipped down upon the snow and wept, and you did not hear me.

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We were both “in the spirit,” I think. Only, dear Love, when I am in the spirit, all my thoughts are of you; but though I looked far and near, I could not find in all your regions one little thought of poor Jessica. All was misty and dim within your portals. *Your* thoughts were vague ancient shapes that wandered past me like Brahmin ghosts. And not one gallant memory of Jessica legended upon those inner walls of yours!

Dear, I cannot escape now, my heart *will* not come back to me; and since it is too late I will not complain. But for a little while I must tell you these things and pray for your kind comfort, till I shall have become accustomed to your attic moods and exaltations.

Do you recall the woman I told you of last summer, whose sorrow-smitten face in the church terrified me so? Grief became credible to me as I gazed at her. And could it have been, do you think, a message foretold to me of this magic future, full of intangible fears, wherein I am to live with you?

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XXXI

PHILIP TO JESSICA

Love is a mystic worker of miracles, O my sweet visionary! for on that very day when you dreamed yourself away to me I beheld you suddenly standing before me, so life-like and appearing so wistfully beautiful that I reached out my hand to touch you—but grasped only the impalpable air. All day and late into the night I had been reading and reflecting, seeking in the ways of thought some word of comfort for the human heart, until at last my consciousness became confused. It often happens thus. So real is this search for some truth outside of me, that it seems as if my soul were a thing apart from me, a thing which left me to go alone on its dim and perilous way. I behold it as it were a shadow floating away from me out into that abyss of shadows which are the thoughts of many men long dead. And on this occasion the silence into which the Searcher went forth was vaster and more obscure than ever before, filled with unfathomable darkness as a clear night might look wherein no moon or stars appeared, and so lonely “that God himself scarce seemed to be there.”

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Then, as often when this mood comes upon me, I went out to walk under the hard flaring lights and amid the streaming crowds of Broadway, in order to bring back the sense of mortal illusion and unite myself once more to human existence. The people were pouring from the theatres, and I sought the densest throng. But still I could not awaken in myself the illusion of life. And then suddenly, without warning, there in the noisy brawl of the street, I beheld you standing before me, looking into my face and smiling. You wore a burning Southern rose upon your breast and were more wondrously and delicately fair than the dream of poets. And there was a smile upon your lips as if to say: “Dear Philip, thou hast put away the pleasures and loveliness of this world as they had been a snaring web of illusion; yet I do but look upon thee, and forthwith thou art pierced with love and know that in this scorned desire of beauty dwells the great reality.” I reached out my hand to touch the rose against your heart, but the vision was gone, and all about me was only the tumultuous mockery of the street. Sweetheart, you have smitten me with remorse. Shall I take from you only happiness, and give in return only this spectral dread? Ah, you shall learn that I am very real, very earthly, capable of love and tenderness and daily duties and quiet human sympathies! I told you of the dualism into which my life, into which, indeed, every man’s life, is cast; why will you persist in clinging to that part which is cold and inhuman instead of seizing upon that which is warm and very near by? I would not take you with me into those bleak ways where always there is fear lest our personality be swallowed up in the dark impersonal abyss. I would love you as a man loves a woman and cleaves to her. Nay, more, I perceive dimly in that love a strange reconciliation wherein the dual forces of my nature shall be made one, wherein truth and beauty shall blend together in a kiss, and there shall be no more seeking in obscurity, but only peace.

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When the vision faded from me on Broadway, I turned back to my home, and there, before the

dawn came, tried to write out in words one thought of the many that thronged upon me. I have almost forgotten the art of making rhymes if ever I knew it.

A RECONCILIATION

All beauteous things the world's allurements knows:
Starred Venus, when she droops on Tyrian couch
While Evening draws her dusky curtains close,
Or pearly from morning bath she seems to crouch;

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In bleak November one strayed violet;
The rathe spring-beauty scattered wide like snow;
The opal in a cirque of diamonds set;
Rare silken gowns that rustle as they flow;

The dumb thrush brooding in her lilac hedge;
The wild hawk towering in his proudest flight;
A silver fountain splashed o'er mossy ledge;
The sunrise flaming on an Alpine height;—

All these I've seen, yet never learned, till now
In thy sweet smiling, to accord my vow
Austere of truth with beauty's charmed delight.

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XXXII

JESSICA TO PHILIP

WRITTEN IN ANSWER TO LETTER XXIX

MY DEAR PHILIP:

You are a magician rather than a lover. And no lover, I think, was ever so subtle at reasoning. At least you do not act the part as I supposed it was played. A lover, I thought, was one who stood at the door of a woman's heart and serenaded till she crept out upon her little balcony of sighs and kissed her hand to him, or shed a tokening bloom upon his upturned countenance. So far as I could imagine, he was prehistoric in the simplicity of his methods. Two things I never suspected: that love is the kind of romantic exegesis you represent it to be, or that every lover, psychically, is a sort of twin phenomenon—that he is *two* men instead of one! And after he is married, I suppose he will be a domestic *trinity*, but with his godhead concerned with the affairs of the world at large. I am awed by the revelation; still, it excuses much in my conduct that I had before felt was reprehensible; for I have scarcely faced my own reflection in the glass since my ignominious capitulation. Something within charged treachery against poor Jessica. But if there are *two* of you, and only *one* of me, that fact gives a new and honourable complexion to my part in the transaction.

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However, the way you have multiplied yourself and doubled forces upon me may be good masculine tactics, but I am sure it is an unparliamentary advantage you have taken. For you have not only posed as a lover, but with the cunning words of a logician you prove what seemed wrong to be really a sublime right; and what I charged as selfishness, *you* call "a prayer." I am confused by your argument; it seems incontestable. But do you know, my Philip, that a woman's convictions are never reached by a mere argument? For they are hidden in her heart, not in her little bias-fold mind. And so, in spite of your sweet reasoning with me, and the assumption you make of omniscience concerning me, my convictions remain. Only, now, I do not know whether I cherish them against you or against the God who made me simple and you double.

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But granting all you say to be true, that every man has a personal life and at the same time a universal life energy as well, that there is in him a little domestic fortress of love, and a battle power of life apart,—admitting all this, how do you reconcile justice with the fact that you frankly offer only half of your duality for all of Jessica? Have you never suspected that she also has fair kingdoms of thought apart from your science of her? My Prophet, it is you who have discovered them to me! Love has added a sweet Canaan to my little hemisphere. I have heard invisible birds singing, I have trysted with spirits of the air since I knew you. And I have felt the pangs of a consciousness in me so new and so tender, that I am no longer merely the maid you know, but, dear Master, I am some one else, near and kin to you as life and spirit are kin! What is this strange white space in my soul that love has made, so real, yet so holy that I dare not myself lift the veil of consciousness before it? And all I know is that I shall meet you there finally heart to heart!—Philip, kiss me! For I am a frightened white-winged stranger in my own new heavens and new earth. I am no longer as you imagine, simply one, but I have a foreign power of life and death in me, and the fact terrifies me.

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You declare that there is a difference and a distance between a man's love and a man's mind which account for his dual nature. There is also an intelligence of the heart, more astute, more vital, which divides woman's nature also between the abandon of love and the resentment of understanding. We know, and we do not know, and we *feel*. What we know is of little consequence, what we feel is written upon the faces of each succeeding generation. But what

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we do *not* know constitutes that element of mystery in us that makes us also dual. For we feel and suspect further than we can understand. Thus, your faculty for projecting yourself in spirit further than I can follow, excites in me a terror of loneliness that sharpens into resentment. I am widowed by the loss of the higher half of your entity. Can you not see, Philip, it is not your views I combat, your theory about humanitarianism and all that? They are but the geometrical figures of thought in your mind; and I have no wish to disturb your "philosophic proposition." The point is, I love that in you more than I love the lover. And the passion with which you cling to it as something apart from our relationship offends me, excites forebodings. Tell me, are "philosophic propositions" alien to love? And after all do you think you are the only one who may claim them? This is a secret,—I have a little diagram of feminine wisdom hid away from you somewhere, founded upon the wit of love. And we shall see which lasts the longer, your proposition or my understanding!

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But I must not forget to speak of a matter much more practical just now. You mentioned the letter that you sent to father,—“The contents you might imagine even if he did not show it to you.” Well, he did not show it to me, but from the effect it produced upon him I am obliged to infer that it contained the most iniquitous blasphemies. Philip, I do hope you are not subject to fits of “righteous indignation!” I could welcome a season of secular rage in a man as I could a fierce wind in sultry weather, but this kind of fury that cloaks itself in the guise of outraged piety is very trying. No sooner did father read your letter than he strode in upon me like a grey-bearded firebrand. The offending letter was crushed in his hand, and his glasses were akimbo on his nose, the way they always are when he is perturbed. I spare you the details, but from the nature of his questions you might have thought he was examining you through me for a licence to preach. I did not try to deceive him in regard to your views, but my own impression of them is so nebulous that the very vagueness of my replies increased his alarm. Nor did I protest at the abuse he heaped upon your absent head. For I know how wickedly and unscrupulously you acted in the felony of my love, and there was a certain humorous satisfaction in hearing father give a “philosophic proposition” to your criminality. My only prayer was that he might not ask me if I loved you. Philip, I would rather live on bread and water a week than confess it to any living man besides yourself. But father has dwelt too long outside the realm of romance to ask that very natural question. Finally I protested feebly: “But how can it vitally affect a woman’s happiness whether or not her husband accepts the doctrine of repentance just as you do? Can he not love and cherish his wife even if he does question the veracity of Jonah’s whaling experience?” But when I looked up and saw his face, I was ashamed, and ran and kissed him, and straightened his glasses so that he could see me with both eyes. But, dear Heart, his eyes were too full of tears to fire upon me. And as I sat there upon the arm of his chair, twisting his sacred beard, this is what he told me. When my mother died, he said, and left me a little puckered pink mite in his arms, he had solemnly dedicated me to God. And he declared, moreover, that he could not be faithless to his vow by giving me in marriage to an infidel. Being an infidel, Philip, is much worse than being a plain heathen; an infidel is a heathen raised to the sixteenth power of iniquity! Now I rarely quote Scripture, for I have too much guile in me to justify the liberty, but I could not refrain from mentioning Abraham’s dilemma, it seemed so appropriate to the occasion,—how when he was about to offer up Isaac, he saw a little he-goat suggestively nearby fastened among the thorns; and I suggested that instead of sacrificing me he should take the widow Smith’s little Johnnie, who shows even at this early Sabbath-school age a pharisaical aptitude for piety. I pointed out that in the sight of heaven one soul is as worthy, as acceptable, as another. Besides, did not Isaac become a righteous man, even if he was not offered up and did live in this world of temptations an unconscionably long time? But father was not to be reasoned with or comforted. And yesterday, Sunday, he preached impressively from the text, “Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?” Of course *you* are the heathen, Philip, and of course *I* am the “vain thing.” But that is not father’s idea. The vain thing you imagine is that he will give his consent to our marriage! Well, you may settle it between you! All I know is that now I am predestined, but not in the dedicated deaconess direction!

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JESSICA, THE BRAVE.

P.S.—What do you think, *our* little forest is for sale. And oh, Philip, if some vandal buys my dear trees and cuts them down, my very life will die of grief! They are my brothers. And if a man built a house there and asked me to marry him, I would, if he were as ugly as old Jeremiah! (I suppose all the prophets were like this, their writings produce that impression!) And my father would consent, even if the bridegroom were a heathen instead of a prophet. For he would be obliged to attend religious services at Morningtown, and father does not believe any man can long remain under the drippings of his sanctuary without being forgiven. And I do not either. God would have mercy upon him somehow!

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XXXIII

PHILIP TO JESSICA

Your letter, dearest Jessica, and your father’s came by the same post, and the sensation they gave me was as if some moral confusion had befallen the elements and summer were mingled with winter in the same sky. Not that his letter was anything but kind and dignified, but it seemed to remove you and your life so far away from me. I confess I had some fears that he might insist on the little we have seen or, as the world judges, know of each other; it had not occurred to me that my “infidelity” would block my path to happiness—so little do the people I

commonly meet reck of that matter. I have been accusing the world all along of indifference to the spirit and to theology, and now, by a sort of poetical irony, I am blocked in my progress toward happiness by meeting one who adheres to an old-world belief in these things. The burden of his reply was in these words: "I cannot conceive that my daughter should give her heart to a man who was not strong in the faith in which she has herself been nurtured. I would gladly be otherwise convinced, but from all I can learn you are of those who trust rather in the pride of intellect than in the humility of Christian faith. "Why, my fair Jesuit, have you concealed your love as well as this! I think no one could live in the same house with me without hearing the bird that sings in my breast. You must tell your father the whole truth.

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Meanwhile I will write to him as best I can, but the real debate I must leave until I come to Morningtown. And how shall I persuade him that I have faith or that my faith is in any way an equivalent for his belief in the Christian dogma? Will he listen to me if I say that a man may believe the whole catechism and yet have no faith? Mankind, as I regard them, are divided into two pretty distinct classes: those to whom the visible world is real and the invisible world unreal or at best a shadow of the visible, and those to whom this visible realm with all its life is mere illusion whereas the spirit alone is the eternal reality. Faith is just this perception of the illusion enwrapping all these phenomena that to those without faith seem so real; faith is the voluntary turning away of the spirit from this illusion toward the infinite reality. It is because I find among the men of to-day no perception of this illusion that I deny the existence of faith in the world. It is because men have utterly lost the sense of this illusion that religion has descended into this Simony of the humanitarians. How shall I tell your father this? I think we should do better to discuss household economy than religion.

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Just now I am forcibly detained in New York by a number of petty duties, but in a few days I shall set forth on my second pilgrimage to Morningtown. Shall I have any wit to persuade your father that my "infidelity" is not the unpardonable sin, or that my love for you is sufficient to cover even that sin and a host of others? And how will Jessica meet me? She will not look now, I trust, for that cloven hoof which I never had and those ass's ears which, alas! I did flourish so portentously. Why, Jessica, according to your own words you will have a strange double lover to greet, and I think it would be mathematically correct if you gave two kisses in return for every one. It will be a new rendering of Catullus's *Da Basia*.

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And so your little forest is for sale. Could I buy that faerie land, sweetheart, and build therein a hidden house and over its threshold carry a sweet bride! Ah, you have rewritten the sacred story of Eden. Not for the love of woman should I be driven from the happy garden, but brought by woman's grace from the desert into the circle of perfect Paradise. Together we should hearken to the singing of birds; together, we should bend over the bruised flowers and look up into the green majesty of the trees; and sometimes, it might be, as we walked together hand in hand in the cool of the evening,—sometimes, it might be, we should hear the voice of our own happiness speaking to us from the shadows and deem that it was God. May angels and ministers of grace enfold you in their mercy for this dream of rapture you have given me! It shall feed my imagination in dreams until I come to you and learn in your arms the more "sober certainty of waking bliss."

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Yet, withal, would you be willing to forego your "brothers," as you call the trees, and this vision of hidden peace? Would it pain you to leave them and come with me into this great solitude of people which we call New York? How in that idyllic retreat should I keep my heart and mind on the stern purpose I have set before me? There, indeed, the world and all the concerns of mankind would sink so far from my care, would fade into the mist of such utter illusion, that I know not how I could write with seriousness about them. I need not the happiness of love's isolation, but the rude contact of affairs, yet with love's encouragement, to hold me within practical ideas. So it seems to me now, but I would not mar the beauty of your life. Of this and many more things we will talk together when I come.

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I have given up my old comfortable quarters in the—and have taken a couple of cheap rooms here at—. For some months I shall not be writing for money and I wished not to eat unnecessarily into my small savings. One room is a mere closet where I sleep, the other is pretty large, but still crowded immoderately with my books. I am hard at work on a book I have had in mind for several years,—the history and significance of humanitarianism. I need not tell you what the gist of that *magnum opus* is to be, and, dear sceptic, trust me it will be put into such a form as to stir up a pother whether with or without ultimate results. I have learned enough from the despised trade of journalism to manage that. When I return from Morningtown I shall give myself up utterly to composition. Two or three months ought to suffice for the work, for the material is already well in hand; and at the end of that time my pen shall turn to making money again. I have no anxiety about gaining a modest income—and can you imagine what that means to you and me?

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I had thought to send our goblin boy into the country as you bade me, but for a while I am keeping him here. He sleeps in a cot beside me, and in the day, when not at school or crouching in sphinxlike silence on the curbstone, he sits in a great chair by the window. Often when I look up from my book his eyes are fixed on me with a kind of mute appealing wonder. Somehow I could not let him go. He seems a link between us in our separation; and while my thoughts are set upon rebuking the errors of humanitarianism it will be well to have this object of human pity before my eyes.

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I wonder if you comprehend what a strange wistful letter you have written. You are no longer merely the maid I knew, and my ways of thought excite in you a terror of loneliness that sharpens into resentment—so you say. Once more, dear girl, we will talk of all this when I come.

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XXXIV

JESSICA TO PHILIP

I have a number of terms, my Philip, with which I might begin this letter, but I have not yet the courage to call you by such dear names beyond the whispering gallery of my own heart.

And you wonder how I have concealed my romantic deflections from father. Indeed, I am sure he has noticed a heavenly-mindedness in me for some time past; but out of the sanctity of his own heart he probably attributed this improvement to the chastening effects of a particularly gloomy course of religious reading that he has insisted upon my undertaking this winter. And, after all, father is not so far wrong as to my spiritual state, for when love becomes a woman's vocation, she carries blessings in her eyes and all her moods tiptoe reverently like young novices who follow one another down a cathedral aisle. This life of the heart becomes her piety, I think, and the highest form of religion of which she is capable. Jessica begins to magnify herself, you see! A kingdom of heaven has been set up within me, dear creator, and naturally I feel this extension of my boundaries.

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But do not expect me to tell father "the whole truth,"—how you first fascinated me with editorial magnanimity, then baited me with compliments, and later with deepest confidences, and finally slipped into my Arcadia disguised as a philosopher, but, when you had got entire possession, declared yourself a victorious lover! I wonder that you can contemplate the record you have made in this matter without blushing!

As for your "infidelity," and what you call your "faith," I think father will denounce them both as blasphemous. Religion to father is something more than "the poetry he believes in." It has the definition of experience, miracles, and a whole body of spiritual phenomena quite as real to him as your upper-chamber existence is to you. Only father has this advantage of you, he has a real Divinity, with all the necessary attributes of a man's God. His "voice of happiness" speaks to him from the stars, and he does not call it an echo, as you do, of a fair voice within your own heart. Father gets his salvation from the outside of his warring elements; you speak to your own seas, "Peace be still!" As for me, between you, I stand winking at Heaven; and I say: "It is evident that neither of them understands this mystery of life; I will not try to comprehend. I will be good when I can, and diplomatic when I must, and leave the rest to heaven and earth and nature." Meanwhile, I advise you not to quote your pagan authorities to father. If the very worst comes, you may say that you have almost scriptural proof of my affections,—and mind you say affections, father could not bear the romantic inflection of such a term as love. It sounds too secular, carnal, to him.

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You ask me if I will consent to abandon such a life as our forest offers and come with you into "this great solitude of people" which you call New York. Philip, when a man holds a starling in his hand he does not ask the bird whether it will stay here or wing yonder, but he carries it with him where he will; and the starling sings, no less in one place than in another, because its nature is to sing. But, I think, dear Master, the motive which prompts the song in the cage is not the same as the impulse to sing in the forest. So it is with me. If we live here among the trees, where their green waves make a summer sea high in the heavens above our heads, I could be as content as any bird is. But if you make our home in the city, or in the midst of a desert for that matter, I could not withhold one thought from your happiness, for love has transformed me, adapted life itself to a new purpose. I have been "called," and I have no will to resist, because my heart tells me there is goodness in the purpose, a little necklace of womanly virtues for me. When I think of pain, and sorrow, my eyes are holden, I can see only the fair form of love sanctified, and I can hear only your voice calling me to fulfil a destiny which you yourself do not understand. And as all these things approach, beloved, father's God is more to me than your fine illusion. I wish for guardian angels, I feel the need of a Virgin Mary and of all the lady mothers in heaven to bless me.

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But I have been telling you only of my inner life. Outwardly I shall ever be capable of the most heathen manifestations. For instance, loving as I do, how do you account for this personal animosity I feel toward you, almost a madness of fear at the thought of your approaching visit? There is something that has never been finished in this affair of our hearts. Perhaps it is that really you have never kissed me. Well, I find it as easy to write of kisses as to review a sentimental romance, but actually there is some instinct in me stronger than mind against the fact, do you understand? Philip, you have no idea of the depths of feminine treachery! Did I ever intimate a willingness to do such a thing? I do not say that I *wish* to kiss another, but I affirm that it would be easier for me to kiss my father's presiding elder—and heaven knows he is a didactic monster of head and whiskers! It is not that I do not love you, but that I do!

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Do you know what will happen when you come to Morningtown? I will meet you at the station, not as Jessica, but as the demure little home-made daughter of the Methodist minister here; we will greet each other with blighting formality, for there will be the station-master's wife to observe us; we will walk home along the main street, and we will speak of the most trivial or useful subjects, of the weather in New York, and of Jack more particularly. Out of sheer bravado I will scan your face now and then, but my eyes will not rest there long enough to fall before yours discomfited. When we reach the house father will greet you from his Sinai elevation, with pretty much the same holy-man courtesy Moses would have showed if a heathen Canaanite had

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appeared to him. And while you two are exchanging platitudes, I will escape into this room of mine, take one glance at my mirror, and then cover my face with my hands for joy and shame while the red waves of love mount as high as they will over it. Ah, Philip, I shall be *so* glad to see you, and so afraid! But you shall have small satisfaction in either fact, for I do not aim to make it easy for you to win what is already yours in my heart.

P.S.—So you are keeping Jack mured up with you and your *magnum opus*. No wonder he “crouches in sphinxlike silence on the curbstone.” He prefers it to your company. You once told me that you found humanitarians difficult to live with: I wonder what Jack thinks of mystical philosophers in the domestic relation. It almost brings tears to my eyes. And some day in a similar situation I may be driven to seek the cold curbstone for companionship.

XXXV

PHILIP TO JESSICA

It seems to me as I read your letters, my sweet wife to be, that I am only beginning to learn the richness of my fortune. And will you not, when you write to me next time—will you not call me by one of those dear names that you speak in the whispering gallery of your heart? I shall barely receive more than one letter from you now before I come to see you in person and tell over with you face to face the story of our love. Just a few more days and I shall be free.

But for the present I want to talk to you about Jack. Indeed, I feel a little sore on this point. It was you who proposed our adopting him, yet, after your first words of advice, you have left me to work out the situation quite unaided; and now I can see that you are laughing at me. Poor Jack, he was something like a “philosophical proposition” which I had never very thoroughly analysed. One thing, however, begins to grow perfectly clear: my home is no place for him; he is only a shadow in my life and needs to take on substance. Well, I thought at last I had solved the problem—or at least that O’Meara had solved it for me; but here too I was disappointed. Really, you must help me out of this muddle.

Do you remember the note-book of O’Meara’s that I told you about? Ever since his death I have been too busy really to look through the volume; but day before yesterday it occurred to me that I might find some information there about Jack’s parentage, and with that end in view I spent most of the day deciphering the smeared pages. At first I found everything in the notes except what I wanted, but toward the end of the book I discovered a whole group of memoranda and reflections in which the name Tarrytown occurred again and again. I will read you the notes when I come; without giving many events they tell in a disjointed way a little idyllic episode in the story of his life. He, too, knew love, and was loved. There in that village by the Hudson for a few short months he kept the enemy at bay and was happy. And then, too soon, came the fatal story—the only dated note in the book, I believe:

September 3d: A son was born and she has left me to care for him alone. I had thought that happiness might endure, and this too was illusion. I stand by the tomb and read the graven words: *Et ego in Arcadia fui*.

And so, yesterday, on a venture I took our little goblin boy with me to Tarrytown, and after some inquiry found that his mother’s relations were farm people living on the outskirts of the town. They proved to have been poor but respectable people. At present only the grandfather is living alone in the house, and he is very feeble. He was willing to assume the care of Jack, but I cannot persuade myself to leave the child in those trembling hands. Indeed, when it comes to the issue, I cannot quite decide to let him go entirely from me, for is he not one of the ties that bind me to you? I have brought him back with me to New York—which will only increase your merriment at my expense.

Some day when you have come to live in New York—if this is to be our home—we will go together up the river to Tarrytown, and you shall see the land where O’Meara dreamed his dream of happiness and where your adopted child was born.

And when we go there, I will take you to a bowered nook overhanging the river, where I passed the afternoon reading and thinking of many things. There together we will sit in the shadow of the trees and talk and plan together how *our* happiness, at least, shall be made to endure; and you shall teach me to lose this haunting sense of illusion in the great reality of love. And as the evening descends and twilight steals upon the ever-flowing water, I will take you in my arms a moment, and this shall be my vow: God do so to me and more also, if any darkness falls from my life upon yours, until our evening, too, has come and the light of this world passes quietly into the dream that lies beyond.

All this I thought yesterday while I sat alone and read once more the sad record of O’Meara’s ruin. He did not stay long in Tarrytown, it seems, after his loss, but came back to New York, bringing Jack with him, in the hope that this care might keep him from the old disgrace. Alas, and alas, you know the end! Sometimes apparently the vision of those peaceful days returned to him with piercing sweetness. Above all he associated them—so one may surmise from a number of memoranda—with a new meaning he began to discover in his beloved Virgil. For, somehow, the story of the *Æneid* became a symbol to him of the illusion of life. Especially the last bewildered, shadowy fight of Turnus, driven by some inner frenzy to his destruction, grew to be the tragedy of his own fall. Many verses from those books he quotes with comments only too clear. And is there not a touch of strange pathos in this memory of his summer joy?—

There the meaning of the *Georgics* was opened to me as it never was before. The stately lines of precept and the sunny pictures of the *lætas segetes* seemed to connect themselves with the smiling scenes about us. The little village lay among broad farm-checked hills, and the garden behind my house stretched back to the brow of a deep slope. In the cool shadows of the beech trees that edged this hill I used to lie and read through the long summer mornings; and often I would look up from the page, disturbed by the hoarse cawing of the crows as they flew up from the woods or fields nearby and flapped heavily across the valley. The effect of their flight was simple, but laid hold on the imagination in a peculiar manner. As they flew in a horizontal line the sloping hillside appeared to drop away beneath them like the subsiding of a great wave. It was just the touch needed to add a sense of mystic instability to the earth and to subtilise the prosaic farmland into the realm of illusion. Looking at the fields in this glorified light I first understood the language of the poet:

Flumina amem silvasque inglorius,

and his pathetic envy of those

Too happy husbandmen, if but they knew
The wonders of their state!

And when wearied of this wider scene I turned to the garden itself, still I was in Virgil's haunted world. Some distance from the house was a group of apple trees, under whose protecting branches stood a row of beehives; and nearby, in a tiny rustic arbor, I could sit through many a golden hour and read, while the hum of bees returning home with their burden of honey sounded in my ears. It was there I learned to enjoy the *levium spectacula rerum*, as he calls the story of his airy tribes; and there in that great quiet of nature,—so wide and solemn that it seemed a reproach against the noisy activities of men,—I learned what the poet meant to signify in those famous lines with which he closes his account of the warring bees:

These mighty battles, all this tumult of the breast,
With but a little scattered earth are brought to rest.

In this way Jack's father learned the illusion of life by looking back on his happy days. I did not mean to fill my letter with this long extract from his note-book, nor would I end with such ill-omened words. Dear girl, I too have learned the deception of life in other ways. Teach me, when I come to you, the great reality. In all O'Meara's memoranda after his return to New York I could find only a single direct allusion to the woman he loved. It was very brief: "On this day two years ago she said I made her happy!"

Shall I bring happiness to you when I come?

A CODICIL TO LETTER XXXIV

JESSICA TO PHILIP. WRITTEN BEFORE THE RECEIPT OF THE PRECEDING LETTER FROM PHILIP

Think of this,—I love you, but I do not know you. I only know your heart, your mind, that part of you which meets me in spirit like the light from some distant star that slips across my window sill at evening. But you, oh! Philip, I do not know *you*. You are a stranger whom I have seen only twice in my life. Do not be angry, my beloved, I do love you; but cannot you understand that I must get used to the idea of your being some one very real? These are thoughts forced upon me by your approaching visit, and so I ask a favour: Do not tell me when to expect you. If you threaten me with the identical day of your coming, I will vanish from the face of the earth! But if you come upon me unawares, I shall have been spared that consciousness of *confession* face to face involved by a deliberate welcome. And if you come thus, I shall not have time to retire behind my instinctive defence against you. You see that I plan in your favour, that I wish to be unrestrainedly glad when you come.

And about the kisses, you understand of course, dear Philip, that I am incapable of determining them really! I only contemplated the possibility when distance made it an impossibility. Still, you cannot fail to know that I love you, that it would even break my heart if you did not come! For, Philip, a woman's heart is like the Scriptures, apparently full of contradictions, but really it is the symbol of our everlasting truth, if only you have the wisdom to understand it.

And another thing, Philip, the more I think of it, the more I am scandalised by the way you drag that poor goblin child about. My heart yearns for him and his solitude in the midst of your philosophies. You have made a perfect jumping-jack of him for your lordly amusement, and it isn't fair. Bring him with you to Morningtown. I charge you. And remember, don't lose him or philosophise him out of existence on the way. I have talked with father about the boy, and he is primed with religious zeal to snatch this tender brand from your burning.

XXXVI

PHILIP TO JESSICA

Just a note, sweet lady, to bid you expect me on the afternoon train Thursday—and is not that a

long while from to-day? And please do not come to the station. I would not have our meeting chilled by the curious eyes of that station-master's wife; I remember the scrutiny of her gaze too well. And as for our greeting—you have made a very pretty story out of that, but have you not omitted Philip from the account? Is it not just possible that he may mar all Jessica's nicely laid plans? I have a suspicion that, in his crude masculine way, he may prefer to translate into fact what Jessica finds so easy to contemplate in words. I feel a bit uncertain as to how he will behave as a lover; the rôle is new to him, and he may be awkward and a bit vehement.

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Yes, I will bring Jack and leave him to be brooded under your kind maternal feathers. You will love him for the pathos of his eyes and for his quaint ways.

[2] It is unnecessary to say that the spelling throughout these letters has been corrected for the press.

[3] Alluding to a request not found in this correspondence.

The Third Part

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which shows how the editor again visits
Jessica in the country, and how love
is buffeted between philosophy
and religion.

XXXVII

PHILIP TO JESSICA

WRITTEN ON RETURNING FROM HIS VISIT TO MORNINGTOWN

Here I am back in my own room, in this solitude of books; and how different is this home-coming from that other when I brought with me only bitterness and despair!

Shall I tell you, sweetheart, some of the things I learned during my three days in Morningtown? First of all, I discovered that you are clothed with wonderful beauty. In a dim way I knew this before, but the full mystery of your loveliness was not revealed to me until this third time. Can it be that love has transformed you a little and added grace to grace, or is it only my vision that has been purged of its earthly dulness? I could love a homely woman whose spirit was fair, but to love one who is altogether beautiful, in whose perfect grace I can find no spot or blemish—that is the miracle of my blessedness. There was a strange light in your eyes that haunts me yet. Such a light I have seen on a lonely pool when the evening sunlight slanted upon it from over the brown hills of autumn, but nowhere else. My soul would bathe in that pure water and be baptised into the new faith.

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For my faith, of which I boasted so valiantly, has changed since I have seen you. Faith, I had thought, was a form of insight into the illusion of earthly things, of transient joys and fears. And always a little dread would creep into my heart lest love, too, should prove to be such an illusion, the last great deception of all, binding the bewildered soul in a web of phantom desires. So I still felt as I walked with you that first evening out into the circle of your trees. And there, dear Jessica, in the waiting silence and the grey shadows of that seclusion I put my arms about you and would have drawn you to my heart. Ah, shall I not remember the wild withdrawing of your eyes as I stooped over your face! And then with a cry of defiance and one swift bound, you tore yourself loose from me and ran like a frightened dryad deeper into the forest. That was a mad chase, and forever and forever I shall see your lithe form darting on before me through the mingled shadow and light. And when at last I caught you and held you fast, shall I not remember how you panted and fluttered against me like a bird in the first terror of captivity! And then, suddenly, you were still, and looked up into my face, and in your eyes I beheld the wonder of a strange mystery which no words can name. Only I knew that my dread was forever at end. It was for a second—nay, an eternity, I think—as if we two were rapt out of the world, out of ourselves, into some infinite abyss of life. It was as if the splendour of the apocalypse broke upon us, and poured upon our eyes the ineffable whiteness of heaven. I knew in that instant that love is not an illusion, but the one reality, the one power that dispels illusion, the very essence of faith. I shuddered when the vision passed; but its memory shall never fade. So much I learned on that day.

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And I also learned, or thought I learned, that your father's real objection to my suit lay not so much in his hostility to my views, as in his fear of losing you out of his life. And as I talked with him, even plead with him, I was filled with pity and with something like remorse for the sorrow I was to bring upon his heart. He is a saint, dear Love, but very human. You have said that I acted like a robber toward you. I could smile at your fury, but to your father I do indeed play the robber's part. Yet in the end I think he will learn to trust me and will give me the one jewel he treasures in this world. Shall a man do more than this? It is hard to remain in this uncertainty, but our love at least is all our own.

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JESSICA TO PHILIP

I have just received your letter, dear lover, and as I read it, all my lilies changed once more to roses—as they did, you remember how often, while you were here. This is your miracle, my Philip, for in the South you know we do not have the brilliant colour so noticeable in your Northern women. But now I have only to think of you, to whisper your name, to recall something you said or did, and immediately I feel the red rose of love burn out on cheek and brow. Indeed, I think it was this magic of colour that made the difference in my appearance which seems to have mystified you.

And will it please you to learn that at the end of each day, as the shadows begin to crowd down upon the world, I keep a tryst with you beneath the old Merlin oak where you first clasped me breathless and terrified in your arms? (Be sure, dear Heart, on this account, he will be the first sage in the forest to wear a green beard of bloom next spring!) And each time the memory of that moment, which began in such fright for me, and ended in such rapture for us both, rushes over me, I wonder that I could ever have feared the man whom I love. But you must not infer from this that I can be prodigal of my kisses. Only, in the future, I shall have a saner reason for withholding them,—that of economy. For if frugality is ever wise, and extravagance forever foolish, it must be true in love as in the less romantic experiences of life.

And now I have a sensation for you, Mr. Towers. Now that love has finished me, I have found my real self once more. I am no longer the bewildered woman, embarrassed by a thousand new sensations, lost in the maze of your illusions, but I am Jessica again, as remote from you, by moods, as the little green buds that swing high upon the boughs of these trees, wrapped yet in their brown winter furs. I mean that now I am able even to detach my thoughts from you at will and to live with the sort of personal emphasis I had before I knew you. I think it is because at last I am so sure of you that I can afford to forget you! How do you like that?

Besides, are we not now a part of the natural order, and does not everything there hint of a divine progression? The trees will be covered soon with the fairy mist of a new foliage, and our earth sanctified with many a little pageant of flowers. Goodness and happiness are foreordained. No real harm can befall us, now that we belong to this heavenly procession. All our days will come to pass, like the seasons of the year, inevitably. There is no longer any escape from our dear destiny. And as for me, dear Philip, I think there are already hopes enough in my heart to grow a green wreath about my head by next spring!

Jack is very well, but still a little foreigner in this land where there is so much space between things, so many wide sweeps of brown meadow for him to stretch his narrow street faculties across. He is silent but acquisitive, so I do not tease him with too many explanations. He will be happier for learning all these mysteries of nature herself, as he watches the miracle of new life now about to begin on the earth. Occasionally, however, when an unbidden thought of you makes it imperative that some one should be kissed, I sweep him up into my arms rapturously, and bestow my alms upon his brow. But if you could see the nonchalance, the prosaic indifference with which he endures these caresses, you *could* not be jealous!

XXXIX

PHILIP TO JESSICA

I have always known, dear Love, that the first gentleman was a gardener and that all men hanker after that blissful state of Adam whose only toil was to care for the world's early-blooming flowers. But what was our first great parent to me?

There is a garden in her face,
Where roses and white lilies show—

and I, even I, by some magic skill of commutation, am able to change the one bloom into the other. Was it not the rising colour on Cynthia's cheek that the poet described as "rose leaves floating in the purest milk"? And was it not Keats (or who was it?) who vowed he could "die of a rose in aromatic pain"? I could write an anthology on Jessica Blushing; indeed I could hardly otherwise be so pleasantly and virtuously employed as in going through the poets and bringing together all that they have said in prophecy of your many divine properties.

Meanwhile you have turned me into a poet myself—think of that!—me, for these dozen years a musty, cobwebbed groper in philosophies and religions! I have been sitting here by my fire for hours, smoking and dreaming and rhyming, rhyming and dreaming and smoking; and pretty soon the rumble of the first milk-waggons will come up from the street, and with that prosaic summons I shall go to bed when thrifty folk are beginning to yawn under the covers and think of the day's work.

I wonder sometimes if my inveterate pedantries do not amuse or, worse yet, bore you. I am grown so used to books and the language of books. I believe when Gabriel blows his trump I shall start up from my long slumber with a Latin quotation on my lips—*At tuba terribili*, like as not. (Query: Does Gabriel understand Latin, or is Hebrew your only celestial speech?)

I am trying to be facetious, but really the matter worries me a little. Have you been laughing at me because I scolded you for neglecting your Latin, and because I took a copy of Catullus in my

pocket when we made our Sunday excursion into the woods? Yet it was all so sweet to me. In the air hovered the first premonitions of spring, and the sunlight poured down upon the earth like an intoxicating wine that has been chilled in the cellar but is golden yellow with the glow of an inner fire. And some day I must set up an inscription on that Merlin oak over the nook where we sat together and talked and read, and ceased from words when sweeter language was required. As you leaned back against the warm, dry leaves I had piled up, with your great cloak twisted about your body—all except your feet, that would creep out into the sun, tantalising me with a thousand forbidden thoughts—I understood how the old Greeks dreamed of dryads, fairer than mortal women, who haunted the forests. It pains me almost to think of that hour; I cannot fathom the meaning of so much beauty; a dumb fear comes upon me lest you should fade from my life like an aerial vision and leave me unsatisfied. Yet you seemed very real that day, and your lips had all the fragrance of humanity.

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Was it not characteristic of me that I could not revel in that present bliss without seeking some warrant for my joy in ancient poetry? To read of Catullus and his passion while your heart throbbed against my hand seemed to lend a profounder reality to my own love. Dear dryad of the groves, yet womanly warm, because inevitably I connect my emotions with the hopes and fears of many poets who have trod the paths of Paradise before me, because I translate my thoughts into their passionate words, you must not therefore suppose that something fantastic and inhuman clings to my love for you. The deeper my feelings, the more certainly do they clothe themselves in all that my reading has garnered of rare and beautiful. Other men woo with flowers; I would adorn you also with every image and comparison of grace that the mind of man has conceived. The more fully my love invades every faculty of my soul and body, the more certain is it to assume for its own uses the labour and learning of my brain. You see I am welded more than I could believe into a feminine unity by your mystic touch, and that masculine duality of which I spoke is passing away. With some trepidation I write out for you these half-borrowed verses:

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VIVAMUS ATQUE AMEMUS

Dear Heart, the solitary glen we found,
The moss-grown rock, the pines around!
And there we read, with sweet-entangled arms,
Catullus and his love's alarms.
Da basia mille, so the poem ran;
And, lip to lip, our hearts began
With ne'er a word translate the words complete:—
Did Lesbia find them half so sweet?
A hundred kisses, said he?—hundreds more,
And then confound the telltale score!
So may we live and love, till life be out,
And let the greybeards wag and flout.
Yon failing sun shall rise another morn,
And the thin moon round out her horn;
But we, when once we lose our waning light,—
Ah, Love, the long unbroken night!

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XL

JESSICA TO PHILIP

A letter from my lover, so like him that it is the dearest message I have ever had from him. In this mood you are nearest akin to my heart. For if love fills my mind with a thousand woodland images, it sends you back to the classic groves of the ancients, where the wings of a bird might measure off destiny to a lover in an hexameter of light across his morning, and where the whole world was full of sweet oracles. The truth is we have need of an old Latin deity now. There was a romantic sympathy between the Olympian dynasty of gods and common men, more vital than our ascetic piety. And there are some experiences so essentially pagan that no other gods can afford to bless them!

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Indeed, since your departure I have found a sort of occult companionship with you in reading once more some of the old Latin poets. Father is gratified, for he thinks that after all I may sober into a Christian scholarship with the old Roman monks, and to this end he will tolerate even Catullus. But really the wisdom of love has given me a keener appreciation of these sweet classics. Did you ever think how wonderful is the youth, the simplicity, the morning freshness of all their thoughts. It is we moderns who have grown old, pedantic; and when some lyrical experience, such as love, suddenly rejuvenates us, drawing us back into the primal poetic consciousness, then we turn instinctively to these ancients for an interpretation of our hearts,—also because their definition of beauty, which is always the garment Love wears, is better than we can make now. With us "The Beautiful" is often mere cant, or a form of sentimentality, but with them it was a principle, a spiritual faculty that determined all proportions. Thus their very philosophies show a beautiful formality, a Parthenon entrance to life. And from first to last they never left the gay amorous gods of nature out of their thoughts. This is a relief, a tender companionship, that we have lost from our prosaic world. You see Jessica grows "pedantic" also!

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The poem you sent has awakened in me these reflections. The words of it slipped into my heart as warm as kisses.

But I have anxieties to tell you of. I fear trouble is brewing for us in father's prayer-closet. You remember the little volume you gave me, *The Forest Philosophers of India*? Well, he found it last night in the library, where I had inadvertently left it; and recognising the author as the same dragon who threatens the peace and piety of his household, he settled himself vindictively to reading it. The result exceeded my worst fears. If his daughter were about to become the hypnotised victim of an Indian juggler he would not be more alarmed. He holds that all truth is based upon the God idea. And he vows that you have attempted to dissolve truth by detaching it from this divine origin. You speak the truth in other words, but you are accused of blasphemously ignoring its sublime authorship. Nor is that all. Your philosophy must have gripped him hard, for he declares that you have an abnormally clairvoyant mind, and that "no female intelligence" can long withstand the diabolical influence of your heathen suggestions. Really it made my flesh creep! You might have thought he was warning me against a snake charmer. And when I declined to be alarmed, he locked himself up in his closet to fast and pray. This is the worst possible symptom in his case, for he will work himself into a frenzy, and before ever he eats or drinks he will get "called" to take some radical stand against us.

Meanwhile, besides a growing affection for Jack, I take a factitious interest in him because he was your daily companion for several months. I am tempted to ask him many questions that are neither fair nor modest, particularly as he is devoted to you, and quite willing to talk of "Misther Towers."

"Does he ever sing, Jack?" I began last evening, as we sat alone before the library fire.

"Nope,"—Jack is laconic, but wise far beyond his years in silent sympathy.

"Did he often talk to you?"

"Yes, when we went for a walk."

"Tell me what about, Jackie."

"I don't know!" was the ungrateful revelation.

"You mean you have forgotten!" I insinuated.

"Never did know. He talks queer!"—I tittered and Jack wrinkled up his face into a funny little grimace. We both knew the joke was on you.

"Did he ever mention any of his friends," I persevered.

"Nope. Once he give me your love and some things you sent,"—the little scamp knew the direction of my curiosity!

"But did he never tell you anything about me, Jackie?"

"Never did!"—I was wounded.

"What does he like best?"—for I had made up my mind to know the worst.

"His pipe," he affirmed without hesitation.

"And when he smoked he'd lay back in his chair and stare at the rings he made like they was somebody, and once I saw him look jolly and kiss his hand to 'em."

"Oh! did you, Jack? then what did he do?"

"Caught me looking at him, and told me to go to bed."

"Mean thing!" I comforted. "But run along now and put the puppy to bed; Mr. Towers was very rude to you!"

I was so happy I wished to be alone, for no man, I am persuaded, ever smiled and kissed his hand to Brahma. Dear Philip, if you only knew how jealous I am sometimes of your Indian reveries, you would understand how I could consider Jack's treacherous little revelation almost as an answer to a prayer.

XLI

PHILIP TO JESSICA

Dear Jessica, you must not let the sins of my youth find me out now and cast me from Paradise. You alarm me for what your father may think of that book of mine on Oriental philosophy; I would not have him take it with him into his prayer-closet and there in that Star Chamber use it against us in his determination of our suit. Tell him, my Love, that I too have come to see the folly of what I there wrote. Not that anything in the book is false or that I have discarded my opinion of the spiritual supremacy of those old forest philosophers of India, but I have come to see how unsuited their principles of life must be for our western world. They beheld a great gap between the body and the spirit, and their remedy was, not to construct a bridge between the two, but by some tremendous and dizzy leap to pass over the yawning gulf. We, to whom the life of the body is so real, we who have devoted the whole ingenuity of our mechanical civilisation to the building up of a comfortable home for that body, turn away from such spiritual legerdemain with distrust, almost with terror. A man among us to-day who would take the religion of India as his guide is in danger of losing this world without gaining the other. No, our salvation, if it

comes, must come from Greece rather than from India. Some day I shall write my recantation and point out the way of salvation according to the Gospel of Plato. Indeed, since love has become a reality to me, I have learned to read a new meaning in this philosophy of reconciliation instead of renunciation. Tell your father all this. Some way we must bring this uncertainty to an end. I must know that you are to be my wife.

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And so Jack thinks a fuliginous pipe holds the first place in my affections. The little rascal! And why don't you make that precocious imp write to me? Do I not stand to him *in loco parentis*? But, joking aside, he does not know and you can scarcely guess the full companionship of my pipe these days. As the grey smoke curls up about me in my abandonment, (for I never even read during this sacramental act,) there arises before my eyes in that marvellous cloudland the image of many wind-tossed trees down whose murmuring avenue treads the vision of a dryad, a woman; and as she moves the waving boughs bend down and whisper: "Jessica, sweet Jessica, he loves you; and when our leaves appear and all things awake into life, he will come to gather your sweetness unto himself."

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.ce begin XLII

JESSICA TO PHILIP .ce end

MY DEAR MR. TOWERS:

It seems unnatural for me to address you in this manner—as if I had cast off the dearer part of myself by the formality. But no other course is open to me after what has happened.

After praying and fasting till I really feared for his reason, father thinks he received a direct answer from Heaven concerning his duty toward us. He declares it has been made absolutely clear to him that if he deliberately gives his daughter in marriage to one who will corrupt and destroy her soul with "heathen mysticism," his own must pay the forfeit, and not only is his personal damnation imminent, but his ministry will become as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals of insincerity. He is entirely convinced of the divine inspiration of this revelation, and I am sure madness would follow any resistance I might make. I have therefore been obliged to promise him that I will break our engagement and end this correspondence, and I beg that you will not make it harder for me by any protest, either in person or letter. No appeal can ever be made against a fanatic's decision, because it is based not upon reason, but upon superstition, a sort of spiritual insanity that becomes violent when opposed.

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And father insists upon keeping Jack for the same reason he preserves me from your corrupting influence. He thinks the boy is another little brand he has snatched from your burning. And I hope you will consent to his remaining with us, for he is a great comfort now to my sad heart. He will write to you, of course, for father cannot but recognise that you have in a way a prior authority over him.

Nothing more is to be said now that I have the right to say. I have tried to take refuge in the biologist's definition of love,—that it is essentially a fleeting emotion, a phantom experience. It is like the blossoms in May; to-day they are all about us, making the whole earth an epic in colours, to-morrow they are scattered in the dust, lost in the gale. Just so I try to wish that I may lose some memories, some tenderness out of my heart. But I have not the strength yet to take leave of all my glory and happiness, nor can I say that I wish you to forget,—only that it is best for us both to forget now if we can.

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XLIII

PHILIP TO JESSICA

MY DEAR JESSICA:

My first impulse on reading your letter was to come immediately to Morningtown and carry you away by storm; but second thoughts have prevailed and I am writing merely to bid you good-bye. For, after all, if I came, what could I do? I would not see you clandestinely and so mingle deceit with our love, and I could not see you in your father's house while he feels as he does. It would be fruitless too; you have come to the meeting of ways and have chosen. I think you have chosen wrong, for the world belongs to the young and not to the old. Life is ours with all the prophecy and hopes of the future. Ah, what mockery lurked in those words we read together in the shadow of your beloved trees, while your heart lay in my hands fluttering like a captive bird:

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So let us live and love till life be out,
And let the greybeards wag and flout.

And now dear Love, only one phrase of all that poem shall ring in my ears,—that solemn *nox perpetua*, that long unending night, for every joy you promised. Ah, would you have thrust me away so easily if I had not seemed to you wrapt up in a strange shadow life into which no reality of passion could enter? And was your love, too, only a shadow? God help me then! Yet I would not reproach you, for, after all, the choice must have cost you a weary pain. I have brought only misery to you, and you have brought only misery to me—and this is the fruit of love's battle with religion. Do you remember the story of Iphigenia in Lucretius and that resounding line, "So much of ill religion could persuade"? Do you know Landor's telling of that story, "O father! I am young and very happy"? And so, our story has been made one with the long tragedy of life and of the poets; and the bitterness of all this evil wrought by religion has troubled my brain till I know not what to say. Only this, sweet girl, that no tears of separation and long waiting can

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wash away the love I bear you. And, yes, I will not believe that you can forget me. Come to me when you will, now or many years hence, and the chamber of my heart shall be garnished and ready to receive you, the latch hanging from the door, and within, on the hearth, the fire burning unquenched and unquenchable. Will you remember this? There is no woman in the whole earth to me, but Jessica. It will be so easy for me to shut myself off from all the world, and wait—wait, I say, and work. No, I think you will not forget. There has grown within me with love a mystic power to which I can give no name. But I know that in the long silences of the night while I sit reflecting after the day's toil is done—that something shall go forth from me to you, and you shall turn restlessly in your sleep and remember my kisses. And now good-bye. Do not interpret anything I have said as a rebuke. You are altogether fair in my eyes, without spot or blemish, and I would not exchange the pain you have given me for the joys of a thousand fleeting loves. And once again, good-bye.

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(Enclosed with the foregoing)

DEAR SIR:

My daughter has read your letter (I have not) and asked me to return it to you, together with those you had previously sent her. Let me assure you, sir, that it is only after much earnest prayer that I have dared to step in where my daughter's happiness was concerned and have commanded her to cease from this correspondence. I trust I may retain your respect and esteem.

Faithfully yours,
EZRA DOANE.

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XLIV

EXTRACT FROM PHILIP'S DIARY

I have been looking over her letters and mine, steeping my soul in the bitterness of its destiny; and what has impressed me most is a note of anxiety in them from the first, "some consequence yet hanging in the stars," which gave warning of their futile issue. As I read them one after another, the feeling that they were mine, a real part of my life, written to me and by me, became inexplicably remote. I could not assure myself that they were anything more than some broken memory of "old, unhappy, far-off things," a single, sobbing note of love's tragic song that has been singing in the world from the beginning. Our tale has been made one with the ancient theme of the poets. I ask myself why love, the one sweet reality of life, should have been turned for men into the well-spring of sorrows—for out of it, in one way or another, whether through gratification or disappointment, sorrow does inevitably flow. Has some jealous power of fate or the gods willed that man shall live in eternal deceptions, and so fenced about with cares and dumb griefs and many madneses this great reality and dispeller of illusion?

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And thus from a brief dream of love I slip back into encircling shadows. I move among men once more with no certainty that I am not absolutely alone. Even the passion I have felt becomes unreal as if enacted in the dim past. And that is the torture of it,—the torture of a man in a wide sea who beholds the one spar that was to rescue him drifting beyond his reach, beyond his vision. Ah, sweet Jessica, if only I could understand your grief so that in sympathy I might forget my own! But it all seems to me so unnecessary—that we should be sacrificed for the religious caprice of a frantic old man. From the first there was a foreboding of evil in my heart, but I did not look to see it from this source. I feared always that the remoteness of my character, which seemed to terrify you with a sense of unapproachable strangeness, might keep you from responding to my passion. But that passed away. Then came your opposition to my crusade against the sentimentalism of the day. That I knew was merely a new phase of the earlier antipathy, a feeling that there was no room in my breast for the ordinary affections and familiarities of life, a suspicion that my true interests were set apart from human intercourse. This, too, passed away, and in its place came love. And now love is shut out by the religious caprice of one who dwells in an intellectual atmosphere which I supposed had vanished from the world twenty years ago. I had not imagined that the institutes of Calvin were still a serious matter. I have at least learned something; and while writing against the lack of faith in the present religion of humanity, I shall at least remember that my own calamity has come from one inured in the old dogma. It is the irony of Fate that warns us to be humble.

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And so it is ended. I fold away the little packet of letters with their foolish outcry of emotion, and on their wrapper inscribe the words that have been oftenest on my lips since I grew up to years of reflection: *Dabit deus his quoque finem*—God will give an end to these things also.

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XLV

FROM PHILIP'S DIARY

May the Weird Sisters preserve me from another such experience! I was walking in the Park in the evening, and the first warm odours of spring floating up from the earth troubled me with a feeling of vague unrest. Some jarring dissonance between the death in my heart and the new promise of life all about me ran along my nerves and set them palpitating harshly. Then I came upon a pair of lovers lingering in the shadow of a tree, holding to each other with outstretched

hands. As I approached them I saw the woman was weeping quietly. There was no outcry; no kiss even passed between them; only a long gaze, a quivering of the hands, and he was gone. I saw the woman stand a moment looking hungrily after him and then walk away still weeping. And the sight stung me with madness. What is the meaning of these endless meetings and partings—meeting and parting till the last great separation comes and then no more? Are our lives no better than glinting pebbles that are tossed on the beach and never rest? Suddenly the blood surged up into my head. It was as if all the forces of my physical being had concentrated into one frenzied desire to possess the thing I loved. For a moment I reeled as if smitten with a stroke, and then without reasoning, scarcely knowing what I did, started into a stumbling run. Only the evident amazement of the strollers on the Avenue when I left the Park brought me back partially to my senses, yet the madness still surged through my veins. All my philosophy was gone, all my remoteness from life; I was stung by that fury that comes to beast and man alike; I was bewildered by the feeling that my emotions were no longer my own, but were shared by the mob of strangers in the street. It was the passion of love, pure and simple, unsophisticated by questioning; and it had turned my brain. Withal there ran through me an insane desire to commit some atrocious crime, to waylay and strike, to speak words of outrageous insult. I do verily believe that only the opportunity was wanting, some chance conflict of the street or temptation of solitude, to have changed these demoniac impulses to action—I whose most violent physical achievement has been to cross over Broadway. It is good that I am home and the blood has left my brain. What shall I think of this if I read it ten years hence?

XLVI

JACK TO PHILIP

DEAR SIR:

I have not wrote you before. This is a beautiful place. I like it, especially the young lady. The old man have been acting wild, like a cop when he can't find out who done it. The difference is that it is the bible in the old man and the devil in the cop. He says you have hoodooed the young lady, and he says let you be enathermered. This is a religious cuss word. The young lady don't cry. She is dead game, and have lost her colour.

So good by,

Yours trewly,

JACK O'MEARA.

P.S.—The young lady have quit the family prayers, but me and the old man have to say ours just the same, only more so.

XLVII

FROM PHILIP'S DIARY

A wise man of the sect of Simon Magus has replied to an assault of mine on humanitarianism by trying to show that in this one faith of modern days are summed up all the varying ideals of past ages,—renunciation, self-development, religion, chivalry, humanism, pantheistic return to nature, liberty. Ah, my dear sir, I envy you your easy, kindly vision. Indeed, all these do persist in a dim groping way, empty echoes of great words that have been, bare shadows without substance. What made them something more than graceful acts of materialism was that each and all ended not in themselves or in worldly accommodation, but in some purpose outside of human nature as our humanitarians comprehend that nature. Renunciation was practised, not that my neighbour might have a morsel more of bread, but that one hungry soul might turn from the desires of the flesh to its own purer longings. Self-development looked to the purging and making perfect of the bodily faculties, that within the chamber of a man's own breast might dwell in sweet serenity the eternal spirit of beauty and joy. Even humanism, which by its name would seem to be brother to its present-day parody, perceived an ideal far above the vicious circle in which humanitarianism gyrates. My dear foe might read Castiglione's book of *The Courtier* and learn how high the Platonic ideal of the better humanists floated above the charitable mockery of its name to-day. As for religion—go to almost any church in the land and hear what exhortations flow from the pulpit. The intellectual contention of dogmas is forgotten—and better so, possibly. But more than that: for one word on the spirit or on the way and necessity of the soul's individual growth, you will hear a thousand on the means of bettering the condition of the poor; for one word on the personal relation of man to his God, you will hear a thousand on the duties of man to man. Woe unto you, preachers of a base creed, hypocrites! These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone! You have betrayed the faith and forgotten your high charge; you have made of religion a mingling for this world's use of materialism and altruism, while the spirit hungers and is not fed. Like your father of old, that Simon Magus, you have sought to buy the gift of God with a price; like Judas Iscariot you have betrayed the Lord with a kiss of brotherhood! Now might the Keeper of the Keys cry out to-day with other meaning:

“How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enow of such, as for their bellies' sake

Creep and intrude and climb into the fold!
Of other care they little reckoning make
Than how to scramble at the shearer's feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths!"

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XLVIII

FROM PHILIP'S DIARY

Reading a foolish book on the Literature of Indiana (!) and find this sentence on the first page: "It is not of so great importance that a few individuals within a State shall, from time to time, show talent or genius, as that the general level of cultivation in the community shall be continually raised." Whereupon the author proceeds to glorify the "general level" through a whole volume. Now the noteworthy thing about this particular sentence is the fact that it was set down as a mere truism needing no proof, and that it was no doubt so accepted by most readers of the book. In reality the sentiment is so far from a truism that it would have excited ridicule in any previous age; it might almost be said to contain the fundamental error which is responsible for the low state of culture in the country. Unfortunately the point cannot be profitably argued out, for it resolves itself at last into a question of taste. There are those who are chiefly interested in the life of the intellect and the imagination. They measure the value of a civilisation by the kind of imaginative and intellectual energy it displays, by its top growth in other words. They crave to see life express itself thus, *sub specie æternitatis*, and apart from this conversion of human energy and emotion into enduring forms they perceive in the weltering procession of transient human lives no more significance or value than in the endless fluctuation of the waves of the sea. For them, therefore, the creation of one masterpiece of genius has more meaning than the physical or mental welfare of a whole generation; they can, indeed, discern no genuine intellectual welfare of a people except in so far as the people look up reverently to the products of the higher imagination. There are others for whom this life of the imagination has only a lukewarm interest, for the reason that their own faculties are weak and stunted. Naturally they think it a slight matter whether genius appear to create what they and their kind can only dimly enjoy; on the contrary, they hold it of prime importance that material welfare and the form of mental cunning which subdues material forces should be widely diffused among the people.

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Now no one would say a word against raising "the general level of cultivation"; the higher it is raised the better. Only the cherishing of this ideal becomes pernicious when it is made more sacred than the appearance of individual genius. Nor is it proper to say that the appearance of genius is itself contingent on the level of cultivation. There is much confusion of thought here. The influence of the people on literature is invariably attended with danger. It has its element of good, for the people cherish those instinctive passions and notions of morality which keep art from falling into artificiality. But refinement, distinction, form, spirituality—all that makes of art a transcript of life *sub specie æternitatis*—are commonly opposed to the popular interest and are even distrusted by the people. The attitude of the Elizabethan playwrights toward their audiences gives food for reflection on this head. Just so sure as the ideal of general cultivation is made paramount, just so sure will the higher culture become degraded to this consideration, and with its degradation the general cultivation itself will grow base and material.

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XLIX

FROM PHILIP'S DIARY

I lead a strange dual existence, the intensity of whose contrast is almost uncanny. After sitting for hours at my desk working on my History of Humanitarianism, I throw myself wearily on the sofa and smoke. And as the grey fumes float above my face, slowly they lay a spell upon me like the waving of mesmeric hands. I lose consciousness of the objects about me, the very walls dissolve away in a mist, and I am lifted as it were on softly beating pinions and borne swift and far like a bird. The sensation is curiously familiar and unfamiliar at the same time, yet it never causes me surprise. Sometimes I am carried out into the wide sky and soar as it seems for hours without ever alighting, until I am brought to myself with a sense of rapid falling. At other times I am borne to the blessed forest where my love walks, and always then the same thing happens. I know not whether it is my spirit or some emanation of my body, but, however it is, I am there always pursuing her as once I did in reality, until at last I lay hold of her and draw her into my arms beneath that ancient oak. I kiss her once and twice and a third time, gazing the while into her startled eyes. Then an inexpressible sweetness takes possession of me, a shudder runs through my veins, and of a sudden all is dark; I am sinking down, down, in unfathomable abysses, until abruptly I awake. No words can convey the mingled reality and remoteness of these sensations. Jessica, Jessica, you have troubled the very sources of my being; you have abandoned me to contend with shadows and the fear of shadows.

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L

JACK TO PHILIP

DEAR MR. TOWERS:

You have not wrote to me yet. The weather is fine and things come up here and bloom out doors. But the old gentleman says we are out of the ark of safety. He have made up his mind to be damned any how. He says the Lord have turned his face against us. But I guess really it is the young lady that is showing off. She stands on her hind legs 'most all the time now. She have back slid out of nearly everything and have quit going to church. She does the same kind of meanness I do now, and don't care. She is jolly all the time, but she aint really glad none. She have got a familiar spirit in the forest that you can't see with your eyes. But she meets him under a big tree, and sometimes she cries. She don't let me come, but I creep after her and hide, so as to be there if he changes her into something else. The old gentleman have quit his religious cussing now and have took to fussing. But he can do either one according to the bible. He knows all the abusing scripture by heart. But the young lady have hardened her heart. She is dead game, and she aint skert of him, nor of the bible, nor nothing. And she aint sweet to nobody now but me. If you answer this, I will show it to her.

Your trew friend,

JACK O'MEARA.

P.S.—She wore your letter all one day inside her things before she give it to the old man.

LI

FROM PHILIP'S DIARY

Humanitarians are divided into two classes—those who have no imagination, and those who have a perverted imagination. The first are the sentimentalists; their brains are flaccid, lumpish like dough, and without grip on reality. They are haunted by the vague pathos of humanity, and, being unable to visualise human life as it is actually or ideally, they surrender themselves to indiscriminate pity, doing a little good thereby and a vast deal of harm. The second class includes the theoretical socialists and other regenerators of society whose imagination has been perverted by crude vapours and false visions. They are ignorant of the real springs of human action; they have wilfully turned their faces away from the truth as it exists, and their punishment is to dwell in a fantastic dream of their own creating which works a madness in the brain. They are to-day what the religious fanatics were in the Middle Ages, having merely substituted a paradise on this earth for the old paradise in the heavens. They are as cruel and intolerant as the inquisitors, though they mask themselves in formulæ of universal brotherhood.

LII

FROM PHILIP'S DIARY

I have been reading too much in this tattered old note-book of O'Meara's. It is my constant companion these widowed days, and the mystic vapour that exhales from his thought has gone to my head like opium. I must get rid of the obsession by publishing the book as a psychological document or by destroying it once for all. With its quotations and original reflections it alternates from page to page between the sullen despair of a man who has hoped too often in vain and a rare form of inverted exaltation. As with me, it was apparently his custom, when the loneliness of fate oppressed him, to go out and wander up and down Broadway, seeking the regions by night or day where the people thronged most busily and steeping his fancy in the turmoil of its illusion. I can see his ill-clad figure with bowed head moving slowly amid the jostling multitude, and I smile to think how surprised the brave folk would be, who passed him as he shuffled along and who no doubt drew their skirts away lest they should be polluted by rubbing against him, if they could hear some of the meditations in his book and learn the pride of this despised tramp. Many times he repeats the proverb: *Rem carendo non fruendo cognoscimus*—By losing not by enjoying the world we make it ours. Out of the utter ruin and abandonment of his life he seems to have won for himself a spiritual possession akin to that of the saints, only inverted as it were. The impersonal detachment they gained by rising above human affairs, he found by sinking below them. He looked upon the world as one absolutely set apart from it, and through that isolation attained a strange insight into its significance, and even a kind of intoxicating joy. On me in my state of bewildered loneliness his mood exerts an alarming fascination. It is dangerous to surrender one's self too submissively to this perception of universal illusion unless a strong will is present or some master passion as a guide; for without these the brain is dizzied, and barely does a man escape the temptation to throw away all effort and sink gradually into the stupor of indifference or something worse. I have felt the madness creep upon me too often of late and I am afraid. Ah, Jessica, in withdrawing the hope of your blessing from me you know not into what perils of blank indifference you have cast my soul. Shall I drift away into the hideous nightmare that pursued O'Meara? I will seal up his book, and make strong my determination to work and in work achieve my own destiny.

LIII

PHILIP TO JACK

It seems very lonesome in the big city without you, little Jack, and often I wish that some of this pile of books around me were carried away and you were brought back to me in their place. But it is better for you where you are.

You must listen to everything Miss Jessica tells you about the trees and birds, and learn to love all the beautiful things growing around you. I remember there were four or five great trees in my father's garden when I was a boy living in the country, and I loved them, each in a different way, and had names for them and talked to them. One was an oak tree that grew up almost to the clouds, and its boughs stood out stiff and square as if nothing could bend them. That was the tree I went to when I had some hard task to do and wanted strength. Another was an elm that always whispered comfort to me when I was in trouble. I used to go to it as some boys run to their mother, for I grew up like you without a mother's love, and I did not even have any sweet lady like Miss Jessica to be fond of me. You must ask Miss Jessica to teach you all she knows about the trees in Morningtown, and you must listen to what she says to them. Perhaps she will tell you about the famous oaks that grew in a place called Dodona, and were wiser than any man or woman in the world. People used to talk with them as Miss Jessica does with her favourite tree.

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And now, dear Jack, I am going to tell you a story which I have made up just for you. It isn't about trees exactly, but it all took place in a deep forest that spread around a wonderful city. From the high white walls of the town one could look out over the green tops of the trees as you look down on the grass, and that was a marvellous sight. There was a single road that ran through the forest right up to the gate of the city; but it was a hard road to travel, dark most of the time because the sun could not shine through the leaves, and very lonely, and so still that you could hear your heart beat except when the winds blew, and then sometimes the boughs clashed together overhead and roared and moaned until you longed for the silence again. It was a long road too, and the men who walked through the forest to the city all had great packs on their shoulders. And what do you suppose was in their packs? Why, every traveller carried with him a gorgeous suit of clothes heavy with velvet and gold and silver; for so the people dressed in the beautiful city, and no one could enter the gate unless he too bore with him the royal robes. But you see, while they were walking in the rough forest, they wore their old clothes of course.

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Now in one place a wonderful woman sat by the roadside. She was a maga, or witch, named Simona. She was beautiful if you did not see her too close, with large round eyes that looked very gentle and kind. And when any traveller came by, the big tears would begin to roll down her cheeks and she would cry out to him as if she pitied him and wanted to help him.

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"Dear traveller," she would say, "why do you trudge along this gloomy road, and why do you carry that bundle which bends your shoulders and tires your back? Don't you know that it is all a lie about the city you are seeking? There is no city of palaces at your journey's end. Indeed, you will never get to the end of the woods, but will walk on and on, stumbling and falling, and growing weaker and weaker, until at last you fall and never rise. And the wild beasts that you hear at night howling in the bushes will rend and gnaw your body until only your bones are left."

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At this the travellers would stop and say: "But what shall we do, wise witch, and whither shall we go?"

Then she would say to them: "Turn aside by this pleasant path, and in a little while you will come to my beautiful garden which is named Philanthropia. There you will find many others whom I have wept for and saved as I do you; and there amid the open glades you may live with them in everlasting peace and love. Houses are there which you need only to enter and call your own. And when you are hungry you have only to speak, and immediately all that you desire to eat will appear on the tables. And when you are tired, soft beds will rise up to receive you. And clothes will be spread before you—not stiff and uncomfortable robes like those you carry in your pack, but soft garments suited to that land of comfort."

Most of the travellers believed the witch and turned into the by-path. But, alas! it was soon worse for them than it had been on the road; for they were led, not to a garden, but into a great sandy desert, where nothing grew and no rain or dew ever fell. And somehow they could find no way out of the desert, but wandered to and fro in the endless fields of dust, while the hot sun beat upon their heads and their hearts failed them for hunger and thirst.

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But now and then a wary traveller did not believe the witch and laughed at her tears and soft voice. And then, unless he got away very quick, something dreadful happened to him. The witch suddenly changed into a huge monster with a hundred flaming eyes, and a hundred mouths with which she raved and bellowed, and a hundred long arms that coiled about like serpents. She was so terrible that most men who saw her in her true form fell down fainting at her feet; and these she lifted up and threw into deep dark holes, hidden from the road, where the poor wretches soon died of sheer loneliness.

And now comes the heart of the story, dear Jack, if you are not too tired to read to the end.

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One day a knight and a lady came riding up the road. The knight was not very strong, nor was his armour much to look at,—just an ordinary knight, but he was brave, and there was a mighty determination in his heart to slay the false, wicked witch whose deeds he had heard of. And as he rode he turned often to look into his lady's eyes, and always he seemed to drink new courage from those clear pools, as a thirsty man drinks refreshment from a well of cool water, for the lady was young and passing fair—as fair as Miss Jessica, and she, you know, is the loveliest woman in all the world. And so at last they came to where the witch was sitting and weeping.

Without a word the knight drew his sword and rushed upon her. Of course she changed instantly to the monster with the hundred eyes and mouths and arms. The air was filled with the fire from her eyes and with the dreadful bellowing from her mouths, and her arms swung frantically about on every side to seize the knight and crush him. But this was the strange thing about the battle: as often as the knight looked at the lady, who stood near him, he gained new strength and the witch could not harm him. 276

He was cutting off her arms one by one and victory was almost his, when down the road came an old man wagging his grey beard dolefully and muttering into his breast. And when he reached the three there at the roadside, he stood for a moment watching the battle and still muttering in his beard. Then without a word he beckoned to the lady. She hesitated, sighed, and turned away, leaving the poor knight to struggle alone without the blessing of her eyes. And immediately his strength seemed to abandon him and his sword dropped at his side. You may be sure the witch shouted with triumph at this, and the noise of her bellowing sounded like the clanging of a hundred discordant bells. It was almost over with the knight. But suddenly he too uttered a great cry. Despair came to give him strength where hope had been before. "For love and the world!" he cried out and drove at the monster once again with his uplifted sword. 277

And, dear Jack, do you wish to know how the battle ended? I am very, very sorry, but I can't tell you, for when I came through the forest the knight and the witch were still fighting. There was a look of desperate determination in the knight's eyes, but, to tell you the truth, I think his heart was with the lady who had left him, and it is not easy to fight without a heart in this world, you know.

Write to me soon, a long, long letter and tell me about the trees of Morningtown. Some day when you are grown up and live with men, you will be glad to remember the friendship and the wise conversation of those brothers of the forest. Good-bye for a time, my boy.

Affectionately, PHILIP TOWERS. 278

LIV

FROM PHILIP'S DIARY

A wan beggar, seated on the coping that surrounds St. Paul's and exploiting his misery before the world. A strange scene calculated to give one pause,—the poor waif crying his distress on the curb, within the iron fence the ancient sleeping dead, and along the thoroughfare of Broadway the ceaseless unheeding stream of humanity. As I walked up the street with this image in my mind, the lines of an old Oriental poem kept time with my steps until I had converted them into English:

I heard a poor man in the grave-yard cry:
"Arise, oh friend! a little hour assume
My weight of cares, whilst I,
Long weary, learn thy respite in the tomb."
I listened that the corpse should make reply;
Who, knowing sweeter death than penury,
Broke not his silent doom.

I am reminded of that joke, rather grim forsooth, which Lowell thought the best ever made. It is in *The Frogs* of Aristophanes. The god Dionysus and his slave Xanthias are travelling the road to Hades, the slave as a matter of course carrying the pack for the two. They meet a procession bearing a corpse to the tomb. Xanthias begs the dead man to take the pack with him as he is borne so comfortably on the same road to the nether world. Whereupon they dicker over the portage. "Two shillings for the job," says the corpse, sitting up on his bier. "Too much," says Xanthias. "Two shillings," insists the corpse. "One and sixpence," cries Xanthias. "*I'd see myself alive first!*" says the corpse, sinking down on the bier. 279

LV

JACK TO PHILIP

DEAR MR. TOWERS:

The young lady have the letter you wrote me and I cant get it. But you needent bother about writing any more tales. I guess you done the best you could, but we dont neither one like what you told about the witch and them young people in the forest. Why do the knight stand there fighting the witch when the old man have run off with his girl? Why dont he take out after them and leave the witch to bleed to death? And the young lady thinks of it worse than I do. She went on awful when she read it, and cried. I guess she was sorry about the way the knight kept on cutting off that woman's legs and arms even if she was bad. She don't say nothing else nice about you now, nor let me. But she says you are the crewelest man she have known. And she cries a heap when there aint nothing the matter, and blames at every thing. The old gentleman feels bad about it but he dont know what to do. I guess now he wishes he hadent fooled with the young lady's salvation none. Because she have told him one day when he was trying to talk pious at her, not to say nothing, that she didnt believe in nothing now but damnation. And he say "Dont talk that way before the child." But I aint come to neither one of them things yet. 281

P.S.—She goes to see her tree spirit every day. But she dont talk to him no more. She just lays down on her face and cries.

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LVI

PHILIP TO JACK

I am afraid, little Jack, that my long story about the lady and the knight in the woods did not interest you very much; and that is a pity, for, if I cannot amuse you, how shall I do when I come to write stories for grown-up folk? Well, anyway, I am going to tell you what happened after the lady and the old man went away into the forest.

For awhile they walked side by side in silence. But the road was long and it was already late, and by and by the night fell and wrapped all the trees in solemn shadows. It was not easy to keep the path in the darkness, and pretty soon they were quite lost and found themselves wandering helplessly in the black tangled aisles of the forest. That was bad, for the lady was tired in body and discomfited in heart. But worse happened when the old man left her to seek out the path alone, for he only lost himself more completely in the treacherous shadows and could not get back to her. Ah, Jack, if the lady was beautiful when the sunlight shone upon her, how lovely do you suppose she was here in the night with the white beams of the moon sifting down through the swaying boughs upon her blanched face? But her beauty merely frightened her the more in her terrible loneliness, where the only sound she heard was the stealthy whisperings of the breeze among the leaves, as if all the shadows up yonder were weaving some plot against her, while at times a low inarticulate moan or some sudden crackling of dry twigs floated to her out of the impenetrable gloom of the forest. At last she threw herself on her face under a great tree, and wept and wept for very terror and loneliness.

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Now wonderful things may happen in the night, dear Jack. The trees then have a life of their own, and sometimes when the sun, which belongs to man only, is gone they have power to do what they please to foolish people who come into their circle. And so this tree that stood leaning over the prostrate lady whispered and whispered to itself in a strange language. Then out of the boughs there came creeping a dark cold shadow. It dropped down noiselessly to the ground and covered the lady all about. It moved and swayed in the faint moonlight like a column of wind-blown smoke. You will hardly believe the rest, but it seemed slowly to take the very shape of the lady herself, as if it were her own shadow that had found her; and so it began to creep into her body. And as it melted into her flesh, she grew cold and ever colder as if her blood were turning to ice. Pretty soon it would have reached her heart and then—I shudder to think what would have become of her. But when the first chill touched her heart, she uttered a loud cry of fear: "Dear knight, dear knight," she called out, "where are you? Save me! save me!"

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Then another wonderful thing happened in the darkness, for at such times our spoken words may take on a life of their own just as the trees and shadows do. And so these words of the lady, instead of scattering in the air, were changed into a marvellous little fairy elf that went stealing away through the forest. And as the elf ran swiftly under the trees and over the long grass, so lightly indeed that the flowers and weeds only bowed under his feet as when a gentle breeze passes over them,—as the elf sped on, I say, everywhere the earth sent up a lispng whisper, "Save me, dear knight! save me!"

Now the knight was far away, resting from his battle with the old witch. He had wounded her in many places, and might perhaps have killed her, had not the sly wicked creature suddenly slipt away from him into some hiding place of hers in the desert. And so, as he could not reach her, he was resting, very tired and very sad. Then suddenly, as he sat with his head hanging down, the little elf came tripping over the grass and plucked him by the arm, and the faint whisper stole into his ear, "Save me, dear knight! save me!"

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Do you suppose he was long in rising and following the clever little elf back to their mistress? Ah, Jack, there was a happy hour and a happy year and a blissful life for the lady and her knight then, was there not?

And now, Jack, I will not bother you with any more stories after this. Write to me and tell me all you are doing. Be good, little Jack, and listen to the wise words of the trees and other growing things; and, above all, love that sweet lady, Miss Jessica.

Affectionately,

PHILIP TOWERS.

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LVII

FROM PHILIP'S DIARY

There are two paths of consolation and we have strayed from both. There is the way of the *Imitation* trod by those who have perceived the illusion of this life and the reality of the spirit,—the way over whose entrance stand written the words: "The more nearly a man approacheth

unto God, the further doth he recede from all earthly solace." And truly he who hath boldly entered on this path shall be free in heart, neither shall shadows trample him down—*tenebræ non conculcabunt te*. There is also that other way pointed out by Pindar to the Greek world in his Hymns of Victory,—the way of honour and glory, of seeking the sweet things of the day without grasping after the impossible, of joys temperate withal yet gilded with the golden light of song; the way of the strong will and clear judgment and purged imagination, with reverence for the destiny that is hereafter to be; of the man who is proudly sufficient unto himself yet modest before the gods; the way summed up by a rival of Pindar's in the phrase: "Doing righteousness, make glad your heart!" There is not much room for pity here or in the *Imitation*, for compassion after all is a perilous guest, and only too often drags down a man to the level of that which he pities.

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And now instead of these twin paths of responsibility to God and to a man's own self, we have sought out another way—the way of all-levelling human sympathy, the way celebrated by Edwin Markham! Oh, if it were possible to cry out on the street corners where all men might hear and know that there is no salvation for literature and art, no hope for the harvest of the higher life, no joy or meaning in our civilisation, until we learn to distinguish between the manly sentiment of such work as Millet's painting and the mawkishness of such a poem as *The Man with the Hoe*! The one is the vigorous creation of a craftsman who builded his art with noble restraint on the great achievements of the past, and who respected himself and the material he worked in; the other is the disturbing cry of one who is intellectually an hysterical parvenu.

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LVIII

FROM PHILIP'S DIARY

The new volumes of Letters have carried me back to Carlyle, who has always rather repelled me by his noisy voluminousness. But one message at least he had to proclaim to the world,—the ancient imperishable truth that man lives, not by surrender of himself to his kind, but by following the stern call of duty to his own soul. Do thy work and be at peace. Make thyself right and the world will take care of itself. There lies the everlasting verity we are rapidly forgetting. And he saw, too, as no one to-day seems to perceive, the intimate connection between the preaching of false reform and the gripe of a sordid plutocracy. He saw that most reformers, by presenting materialism to the world in the disguise of a sham ideal, were really playing into the hands of those who find in the accumulation of riches the only aim of life, that they are in fact one of the chief obstacles in the path of any genuine reformation. The humanitarianism that attains its utterance in Mr. Markham's rhapsodic verse loses sight of judgment in its cry for justice. It ceases to judge in accordance with the virtue and efficiency of character, and seeks to relieve mankind by a false sympathy. Such pity merely degrades by obscuring the sense of personal responsibility. From it can grow only weakness and in the end certain decay.

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LIX

FROM PHILIP'S DIARY

Finivi. The last word of my *History of Humanitarianism* is written, and it only remains now to see this labour of months—of years, rather—through the press. I know not what your fate will be, little book, in this heedless, multitudinous-hurried world; I know but this, that I have spoken a true word as it has been given me to see the truth. That any great result will come of it, I dare not expect. Only I pray that, if the message falls unregarded, it will be because, as she said, my bells ring too high, and not for want of veracity and courage in the utterance. After all it is good to remember the brave words of William Penn to his friend Sydney: "Thou hast embarked thyself with them that seek, and love, and choose the best things; and number is not weight with thee." I have tried to show how from one ideal to another mankind has passed to this present sham ideal, or no-ideal, wherein it welters as in a sea of boundless sentimentalism. I have tried to show that because men to-day have no vision beyond material comfort and the science of material things—that for this reason their aims and actions are divided between the sickly sympathies of Hull House and the sordid cruelties of Wall Street. And I have written that the only true service to mankind in this hour is to rid one's self once for all of the canting unreason of "equality and brotherhood," to rise above the coils of material getting, and to make noble and beautiful and free one's own life. Sodom would have been saved had the angel of the Lord found therein only ten righteous men, and our hope to-day depends primarily, not on the elevation of the masses (though this too were desirable), but on the ability of a few men to hold fast the ancient truth and hand it down to those who come after. So shall beauty and high thought not perish from the earth—"Doing righteousness, make glad your heart!"

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And for my own sake it is good that the work is finished. It has overmastered my understanding too long and caused me to judge all things by their relation to this one truth or untruth. It has debarred me from that *sereine contemplation de l'univers*, wherein my peace and better growth were found. I am free once again to look upon things as they are in themselves.

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LX

FROM PHILIP'S DIARY

I went yesterday afternoon to see the Warren collection of pictures which has been sent here for sale at auction, and one little landscape impressed me so deeply that all last night in my dreams I seemed to be walking unaccompanied in the waste places of the artist's vision. It was a picture by Rousseau; a *Sunset* it was called, though something in the wide look of expectancy and the purity of the light reminded me more of early dawn than of evening; one waited before it for the unfolding of a great event. A flat, marshy land stretched back to the horizon, where it blended almost indistinguishably into the grey curtain of the sky. A deserted road wound into the distance, passing at one spot a low boulder and farther on a little expanse of dark water, and vanishing then into the far-off heavens. Overhead, through the level clouds, the light pierced at intervals, wan and cold, save near the horizon where a single spot of crimson gave hint of the rising or the setting sun. There lay over the whole a sense of inexpressible desertion, as if it were almost a trespass for the human eye to intrude upon the scene—as if some sacred powers of the hidden world had withdrawn hither for the accomplishment of a solemn mystery. As I stood before it, a great emotion broke over me, a feeling of extraordinary expansion, like that which comes to one in a close room when a broad window is thrown suddenly open to the fresh air and to far-vanishing vistas. I know little or nothing of the artist's life, but I am sure that he had looked upon this desert scene with the same emotion of enlargement as mine, only far greater and purer. And I know that his heart in its loneliness had comprehended the infinite solitudes of nature and through that act of comprehension was lifted up with a strange and austere exultation. For, gazing upon these wide silences, he learned that the indignities and conflicts and weary ambitions of life meant little to him, as the storms and tumultuous forces of the earth mean nothing to the heart of Nature, and in that lesson was his peace. One concern only was his,—to wrest from the impenetrable mystery of the world an image of everlasting beauty, and to set forth this image to others whose vision was not yet purged of trouble.

LXI

FROM PHILIP'S DIARY

I can rest no more to-night, for I have been visited by strange dreams. It seemed to me in my sleep that I wandered desolate in a desolate land—not in wide waste places as I dreamed after seeing Rousseau's picture, but in some wilderness of trees where the light from a thin moon drifted rarely through the slow-waving boughs. And always as I wandered, I knew that somewhere afar off in that dim forest my beloved whom I had deserted lay in an agony of suspense, waiting for me and calling to me through the night. It seemed almost as if the years of a lifetime passed, and still I sought and could not find her—only shadows met me and fantastic shapes out of the darkness greeted me with staring eyes. And, oh, I thought, if this long agony of solitude troubles her heart as it troubles mine and she perish in fear because I have forsaken her! My distress grew to be more than I could bear. And then in a loud voice I cried to her: "Fear not, beloved; be at peace until I come!" I think I must actually have called out in my sleep, for I awoke suddenly and started up with the sound still ringing in my ears. Ah, Jessica, Jessica, what have I done! My own misery has lain so heavily upon me that it has not occurred to me to imagine what you too must have suffered. Indeed, the wonder of your love has been to me so incomprehensibly sweet that the notion of any actual suffering on your part has never really entered my thought. My own need I understood—can it be that our separation has caused the same weary emptiness in your days that has made the word peace a mockery to me? Can it even be that while I have sought refuge and a kind of forgetfulness in the domination of my work, you have been left a prey to unrelieved despondency? You accused me once of conscientious selfishness—have I made you a victim of that sin? Idle questions all, for I have come to a great awakening and a sure determination. Dear Jessica, it was this very day one year ago that you walked into my office, bringing with you hope and joy like the scent of fresh flowers on the breath of summer—making as it were a dayspring within my sombre life more filled with glorious promise than the dawn that even now begins to break against my windows. It was doubtless the half-conscious recollection of this anniversary that troubled my dream—dream I call it, and yet there is a conviction strong upon me that somehow my spirit, or some emanation of my spirit, was actually abroad this night seeking yours, that somehow, when I cried aloud, the sound of my voice penetrated to you through the darkness and distance. Be at peace, beloved; for this rising sun shall not set until I am with you; and no power of fanaticism, nor any brooding phantasy of mine, shall ever draw us apart. Fear not, beloved; be at peace till I come.

LXII

JESSICA TO PHILIP

I need not tell you that I read the letters to me which you wrote to Jack. But the sequel of your story is wrong, dear knight. After a long famine, out of a very wilderness of sorrows, it is I who return to you. And I wonder if you will recognise in the poor little bedraggled vixen that I now am, the gay lady dryad with whom you walked that day in the forest when we met the witch. You may be shocked to learn, however, that I hold you more than half accountable for the misfortunes that have befallen me since! You should have saved *me* instead of attempting to slay the witch. But you allowed me to depart, a dejected fiction of filial piety, to become the victim of a fanatical father's ethics. Why did you consent to this sacrilege? For, indeed, I hold it as much a sacrilege to change a Jessica into a deaconess as it would be to turn a Christian into a

Hottentot,—provided either were possible.

I admit that it was I who ended our engagement and forbade you to come here; but that was only a part of *my* delusion, not *yours*! But why did you not rescue me from these delusions? Are they not more terrible than the beasts at Ephesus? Really I know not which of us has showed less wisdom,—you who stayed to slay a metaphorical witch created of your own heated imagination, or I, with all my hopes unfulfilled, turning aside to follow one whose prophecies carry him out of the world rather than into it. And I do not know what has been the result of your mistake, but with me it has been war. I have been like a small province in rebellion, burning and slaying all within my borders. I am a heathen Hittite in father's vineyard. I have profaned all his scriptures and confounded all his doctrines, until I think now the only boon he prays for is deliverance.

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But one thing I have learned, dear knight of my heart,—submitting to a paternal edict does not change the course of nature, although true love often runs less smoothly on that account. You cannot make a wren out of a redbird, even if you are the God of both. And not all the prayers in heaven can save a little white moth from her candle, once she has felt it shining upon her wings. Just so, some charm of light in you, some clear illumination of things that reaches far beyond all the doctrines I know, draws me like a destiny. It does not appear whether I shall live in a gay rhythm around it or drop dead in the flame, and it no longer matters. Like the poor moth, all I know is that I can neither live nor die apart from it.

And this brings me to the point of telling you why I have the courage to break my promise and to write again. I have had what father calls a "revelation," when he is about to construe life for me according to the prayers he has said. But in no sense does my revelation resemble the Christian shrewdness of his. It has all the grace of a heathen oracle, and, father would say, all the earthly fallacies of one! For, indeed, my life is so near and kin to Pan's that my vision never goes far beyond the green edges of this present world. So! draw near, then, while I tell your fortune according to the shadows of my own destiny!—as near as you were that day when we read the old Latin poet together under the trees in our forest,—for in some ways your fortune resembles the scriptures of Catullus. They are dual, and the ethics they prove are romantic, too, rather than ascetic.

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I have a mind to begin at the beginning and to run again over the long fairy trail of our love, so that we may see more clearly where our good stars agree. And oh, dear Philip, my heart craves to talk with you. Silence to you is the rare atmosphere where your wings expand and bear you swiftly upward and ever upward. But I—I cannot soar, I cannot breathe in that silence. I am writing, writing, to save my heart from the madness of this long restraint. I am comforting myself with this story of our love—until you come, for you will come, Philip. Well, the beginning was when a certain poor little Eve escaped from her garden in the South, which was not according to the record in such matters, and brazened her way into the office of a certain literary editor in New York. As well as I can remember she was in search of fame, and she found,—ah, dear Heart,—she found both love and knowledge. But do you know how terrifying you are to a primitive original woman such as I was then? I had nothing in my whole experience by which to interpret the broad white silence of the brow you lifted to greet me, nor the grave knowledge of your eyes that comprehended me altogether without once sharpening into a penetrating gaze. I had a judgment-day sensation, through which I did not know if I should endure! I was divided between one impulse to flee for my life and the more natural one to stand and contend for my secrets. Did you know, dear Philip, that every woman is born with a secret? I did not until that revealing day when first you encompassed me about with the wisdom of your eyes. Then, all in a moment, I longed to clasp both hands over my heart to hide it from you. You talked by rote of literature, but I could not tell of what you were really thinking. And I answered in little frightened chirups, like a small winged thing that is blown far out of its course by the gale.

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All this happened to me one year ago to-day, dear Philip. But this year with you I have come a longer distance than in all the years of my life before. After that desperate visit to New York, I returned to Morningtown, a delightful mystery to myself, made rich with an unaccountable joy, and with an inexplicable rainbow arched in my heart's heavens. I did not know for what I hoped, but suddenly I understood that life's dearest fulfilment was before me.

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After that I do not know how the charm of love worked within my heart, only that I had always the happy animation of some one newly blessed. And I had the divine sensation of being recreated, fashioned for some happier destiny. I lost father's boundary lines of prayer and creed. Some limitation of my own mind passed away and I entered into a sort of heathen fellowship with the very spirits of the air. And always I thought only of you. The very reviews I wrote were, in a sense, remote love letters, foreign prayers to your strange soul. I even banished distance by some miracle of love and often sat in spirit upon the perilous ledge of your window sill.

This feat was not so easy to do at first, for I was much afraid of you. Your mind seemed alien to me in the anti-humanitarian attitude which you assumed to life. Yet it was this very power in you to surpass in philosophy all mere mortal conditions that fascinated my attention, compelled my allegiance. And for a long while I stood in jealous awe of your "upper chamber." I resented that cold expression of your spirituality. Then suddenly I was like a white moth beating my wings against your high windows.

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In those days, Philip, I felt that I could be forever contented if only I *knew* that you loved me, and that your loving included all the strange altitudes of your mind. Nor can I ever forget the

happiness I felt in the first assurances of your tenderness. They seemed to justify and set me free. I danced many a pagan rhythm through my forest, and dared every bird with a song. I had that liberty of being which comes of perfect peace,—the same I have heard father's repentant sinners profess. And I was resolved, oh, so firmly! never to compromise it with any sacrifice of romance to reality.

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But, alas! now I know that if a man loves a woman, this is only the beginning of a long negotiation, carried forward in poetic terms; and that his love is a sort of *fi. fa.*, which he will some day serve upon her heart.

Upon your first visit to Morningtown it was easy to hold out against you, for you were such a distant, dignified admirer then. Your apparent diffidence, your natural reserve, seemed to give me a coquettish advantage over the situation, and I was not slow to avail myself of it. How was I to know there was such a mad lover lying concealed behind your classic pose? Thus it was that I compromised all the armies of my heart. Henceforth I marched madly, dizzily to my final surrender. I could not have saved myself if a thousand Blüchers had hurried to my defence. And there even came a time when I desired my own capitulation; a thing which, owing to some perversity of nature, I was unable to accomplish of my own will.

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But you will remember how that finally came about, and it might have come so much earlier if you had made your first visit with the same brigand determination as your second. And you brought Jack with you! How droll you two looked that day as you stood upon our narrow door-sill awaiting your welcome! There was no accent of paternity in your expression to justify poor little Jack's presence. The relationship between you seemed so ludicrously artificial,—as if you had somehow got an undeserved iota subscript to your callous, scholarly heart. The situation put you at such a humorous disadvantage, made you appear so at variance with your hard, uncharitable theories of life, and with your superlative dignity of mien, that the terror I had felt in anticipation of your visit vanished away. I think the awkward helplessness with which you seemed always to be trying to domesticate yourself to Jack appealed to my sense of humour so keenly that your romantic proportions were suddenly reduced. You were less formidable to deal with as a lover. That is how I came to consent to the walk we took in the forest. Ah me! I should have taken warning from your enigmatical silence. And indeed I did tremble with vivacity in my effort to break it. But you only looked mysteriously confident about something and kept your own counsel, giving me a nod or a quizzical smile now and then, as if what I was saying really had no bearing whatever upon the issue at hand.... Then suddenly the grey wood shadows fell about us. The world changed back a thousand ages and we were the only man and woman in it. I felt the sudden compulsion of your arms about me. And, Philip, I could have rested in them if I had not caught in your face the expression of a new, undisguised man; but the strange white intensity of it startled me so that I must have died or made my escape. Ah! you do not know how sincere was my flight from you the next moment. I knew that I should be captured at last; but after the divine madness I had seen in your eyes, I could not be *willing*. And when at last you overtook me under that old Merlin oak, you showed no mercy at all, my lord. You were not even sorry for me, and you did not understand as I lay with my face covered in terror and shame against your breast. Philip, why does a woman always weep when the first man kisses her the first time, no matter how glad she is? I hope you do not know enough to answer this question. But I am sure every woman does weep; and I think it is because she feels even in the midst of her great happiness, an irremediable loss, for which nothing ever fully atones.

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But another question is, How could I, after being lost to you in this dear way, turn my face from you at the command of a religious enthusiast? A regard for father and not for his righteousness is the explanation; for I felt more nearly right following my heart to you. But now, dear knight, I am ready to forgive you the fault of assenting to such an unnatural sacrifice, if only you will come and take me once more. At present I am a sorry little vagabond, very much the worse for wear, owing to father's efforts to sanctify me. But if you will only love me enough, I think I could be Jessica again. And perhaps you have some more natural way of sanctifying me yourself; for I doubt now if I shall ever see heaven unless I may ascend through your portals.

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Every day since our bereavement of each other, I have kept a tryst under our big tree in the forest. At first this was a tender formality, a memorial of a happiness that had passed. But after a time I began to have a power of mental vision that was akin to communication. I came out of myself to meet you somewhere in that mysterious world of silence to which you seem to belong. There were hours when I felt absolutely certain of your nearness, a tender peace enfolded me as warm as your arms are. And I had the supreme satisfaction of having outwitted all father's powers and principalities. Then came days when by no sweet incantation could I bring myself near you. I wept upon my sod like one forsaken, and grieved the more because I conceived that you must be far out of my regions in one of your "upper chamber" moods, where all your faculties were concentrated upon some merely philosophical proposition. I wonder now if you are laughing! If you knew how I have suffered, you would not even smile. If you knew how I have *needed* to be kissed, you would make haste to come to me.

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I had been making these excursions into the forest for a long time before I discovered that Jack was playing the part of eavesdropping guardian angel. Do you know, by the way, what a quaint little ragamuffin philosopher that child is? He has a shrewd sobriety, a steady watchfulness over all about him, and he is endowed with a power of silent devotion that is absolutely compelling. He has been such a comfort to me! and there is no way of keeping him out of your confidence. He knows things by some occult science of loving. Thus I was not offended one day when I looked up from the shadows under my oak and saw him regarding me gravely, almost compassionately, from behind a neighbouring tree. After this we had a tacit understanding that

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he might play sentinel there when I came into the forest.

See how much I have said, and still I have not told you the strangest part of my story—the moonlit revelation of you to me. I am writing, writing, to ease my heart until you come. And always as I write I listen for the sound of your dear footsteps. For many successive days I had found our trysting place a veritable desert. I seemed to have lost my heart's way to you; and in proportion to my bewilderment, life became more and more intolerable. I had the desperate sensation of one who is about to be lost in a waste land, and I felt that I could not live through the frightful loneliness of such an experience. Yesterday again I failed to find the comfort of your occult presence when I went into the wood. I was filled with consternation, and when the night came I lay tossing in a sleepless fever. Unless I knew once more in my heart that you loved me, I felt that I could no longer endure life. So I lay far into the night. At last in desperation I arose from my bed, slipped on my shoes and the big cloak that you will remember, and fled away to our tree in the forest, pursued by a thousand shadows. For indeed I am usually afraid of the dark; it is like a silence to me—your silence, Philip—and I fear it because I do not know what it contains. But I had got one of father's wrestling-Jacob's moods upon me by this time, and if Mahomet's mountain had come booming by I should not have been deterred from my purpose. But do you know that there is more life in a little forest when darkness falls than in a big town? and that every living thing there recognises you as an intruder with warning calls from tree to tree? I had not more than cast myself upon the ground to sob out all my griefs to whatever gods would listen, when a sleepy little robin just overhead called up to his mistress the tone of my trouble. The young leaves whispered it, the boughs swept low about me, and the winds carried messages of it away into the heavens, so that suddenly the whole night knew of my woe and pitied me.

I know not how long I lay there staring up at the blue abyss of stars through the grizzly shades of night. I only know that my face was wet with tears and that I seemed to tremble upon the brink of a long life's despair. And oh! Philip I never *loved* you so,—not only with my heart and lips, but with my soul. And it was my soul that went out in a prayer to you to come. I remembered not only the dear ways you have of folding me into your arms and making me surpassingly happy, so against my own will, but I remembered the silent young sage in his upper chamber, and I felt that indeed it was to this esoteric personality that I must pray for help.

And so I gave my soul away to the sweet silence, and waited. The moonlight falling down through an open space made a cataract of tremulous brightness. It edged all the shadows with a silver whiteness, as of wings hidden.

And then suddenly there came to me out of the far abyss above my trees a message, a sweet assurance. Oh, I know not how to call to it, only I felt the nearness of my love. And I was afraid, my darling, and closed my eyes lest I should *see* you. And then, oh, Philip, I felt, I am sure I felt your face close to mine, and in my ears a low whisper breathed like the passing of the breeze, a voice saying: "Fear not, beloved; be at peace until I come!" And I knew then that you loved me and had not forsaken me altogether.

And when at last I raised my eyes, I became aware of the fact that I was still not alone; and peering through the dim spaces about me I beheld *Jack* sitting hunched up on the root of his tree like a small toad of fidelity! The little owl sprite in him never quite slumbers, I think; and seeing me leave the parsonage, he had crept out and followed bravely after through the shadows. But the picture he made now startled me into a peal of laughter.

"You are the lady in the story that was lost," said Jack, with the solemn intonation of one who has himself received a revelation.

"Yes," I confessed softly.

"But will the knight come to find you?"

"I hope so; I think he is coming now, dear Jack."

"Well damn him if he don't!" was the little wretch's impious comment. I always suspected him capable of using strong language, but this was the first time we had met upon a sufficiently intimate basis of friendship for him to exploit it.

And now, Philip, that is all until you come. But hasten, my beloved! I am already aged with this long waiting for you. Do not ask me about father. He is a good shepherd, but I am a small black sheep determined not to be made white according to his plan. And he has come to that place where he would be ready to take even you as an under-shepherd of this factious ewe lamb. Besides, could we not make a providential offering of Jack, as Abraham did of the goat when he was about to slay Isaac? Jack, I think, has a heavenly wit withal, and could adjust the little prayer light of his soul even to father's high altar mind. As for me, I cannot conceive of life alone without you one whole day longer. Indeed, so strong is my premonition of your approach, that even now I listen for the sound of your footsteps upon the gravel outside.

THE END

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