

6 September 1850

[Letter from Simeon Locke Doggett to his suster [Lulia?]
Sept. 6th '50

Dear Sister

I take up my pen with the intention of filling out the rest of this sheet, and I will write such thoughts as will propose themselves, and convey such information as I suppose will be interesting to you.

I have ere this had an urgent desire to write you, not only to revive the recollections of the past, the scenes of other days, sunshine and shade; not only to mark the passing truths, and rumors of the day; to tell of labor and perplexity, to comfort the hour of trouble, and to gladden the brow of care; not only to speak a pleasant word and to give a useful hint; to propose a worthy question and to seek for certain facts; not only to appreciate enjoyments, and to advocate gratitude; to announce the blessing of health, or the deprivation of it; to cheer a lonely hour, or to urge the tear to start; to express the yearnings of the soul, and the wish for sweet repose; not only to speak of future prospects and of rising doubts; to contemplate mortality, and eternity beyond; to think of the transient life we live and the final abode of man; not only all these things, and more, -- but chiefly at this time, to congratulate you, for your new and honorable appellation of mother.

Although seriousness generally prevails over me when I write, yet I am incline to be merry on this subject, -- inclined to write a few remarks that may induce a sardonic smile. In the first place, when apprised of the advent of your infant boy, I suddenly felt old; -- can it be possible, thought I, that I am an Uncle! And to add to the Wonder Aunt Gertrude and Uncle Laurence!!

It seems to me I can see your risibility and Benjamin I can almost hear him laugh, yes laugh loud & hearty. Benhamin spoke of a certain "prize" some time ago, and then I marveled, but now I understand what the "prize" is.

Well to be sober, I ~~will~~ must observe, that the responsibilities of parent now devolve on you. You have this little helpless innocent babe intrusted to your guidance, and the tendency, and destiny of his future existence, will be governed by the impressions resulting from your management.

The education of a child is divided into three parts, -- namely, moral, mental, and physical. The early impressions which a child receives are the most durable; hence a mother should labor indefatigably to bring her child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. She is the one who first essays ~~and~~ to open the mysteries of Godliness, to the young and tender mind. If she is unfaithful and negligent in the performance of this great and paramount duty, she will thereby not only involve her own soul in ruin, both in this world and the world to come; but devote to the same ruin and doom to the same wrath, the now helpless and innocent soul of the offspring whom she loves.

2dly. His mental endowments are first discovered, and improved by his mother.

She must "teach the young idea how to shoot." As she has the most love, so she is expected to have the most patience, and perseverance, in persisting in the performance of those duties which tend to enhance the welfare of her child. When a child is young he has great curiosity to examine things, his mind is inquisitive, his memory is retentive, his feelings are tender, and he is capable of improvement in all mental acquirements.

3rdly. The health of the child. This also is under the control of the mother. In infancy a foundation for future health, or disease, is laid. Particular attention should be paid to food and clothing, air, and exercise. If a child is fed too much, the result will be distention in the passages, whence the stomach will acquire a habit of craving for food, which must be gratified, though the consequences will be evil.

This immoderate eating produces the most serious complaints; -- it retards the growth, and lessens the digestive ability of the stomach. In fine, excessive eating, not only produces disease in the body, but stupidity in the mind.

All these things are to be attended to with assiduity. Continual solicitude attends the mother's steps; she must strive, she must watch, she must pray.

"Look at the couch where infant beauty sleeps,
 "Her silent watch the mournful mother keeps;
 "She while the lovely babe unconscious lies,
 "Smiles on her ~~babe~~ slum'bring child with pensive eyes,
 "And weaves a song of melancholy joy."

You will be glad to learn that Malancthon has come back. It is my earnest desire to have you write a reply. Benjamin must write also. How is your Harvest? how does the business agree with you all? I should like to take a journey towards your region, and perhaps before time shall past away I will have an opportunity. Yours truly. S.L. Doggett