

V. 59
[Letter from Simeon Locke Doggett to his sister, undated, but appearing on p. 59 of his ledger between letters dated Oct. 29, 1849 and Dec. 13th]

Dear Sister

I take up my pen to write you. Let me estimate, it is 3 yrs. since I wrote you last. This has happened not from any dereliction on my part but from the natural course of events, being more at home than abroad. But now the predicament in which circumstances are, makes it seem appropriate to again resort to this manner of communication, it being exceedingly well adapted to the case in present view, that is, being more abroad than at home, by which reason space intervenes, and mountains raise their lofty heads in defiance, and sometimes oceans interpose to stop the going of the thoughts of man.

But man is not a brute that he should be stopped by walls, or that roaring waters should forbid his advance; he is endowed with reason whereby he levels the mountains and rides in triumph his iron steed over the extension of earth. The great oceans are under his control, and he traverses them with speed and security.

This being the nature of things, it is very convenient to trace our thoughts on paper, and transmit them to those with whom we would commune. As I am writing, I shall convey such ideas to you as present themselves, only hoping they may be agreeable.

At first let me draw your attention to our common home, the family growing up together, when maturing separate. To what shall I liken this? Like unto the student, who having search long and deeply into a difficult problem, tracing its windings and finding each connecting link, who when about to rejoice in the accomplishment of its resolution, suddenly is distracted by worldly care, or an unwelcomed visitant, by which means, the connecting link is broken, and he feels sad that his labor is lost, and the prospect of the demonstration of its consummation uncertain; so I (or any of us) having past thro. all this ordeal, and being about to enjoy the comforts any of those near and dear to me, who having put away now their follies and heedlessness, find myself discomfitted and disappointed by the course of events.

2dly. To the letter written by you to me, from which she returned me the enclosed, for which I tender my thanks Ma also says that in the said letter, you request me to dictate a letter for you, tho' finding myself in a curious predicament to undertake such a task, I have performed it as you perceive but I bear not the responsibility for any incoherency of unsatisfactory statement, which may be found therein.

3dly. In Reference to things about town I can write you but little interesting. Cunorbal's work is done now by Adelaide and Harriet. His wife intends to keep the winter school, as she was want to do, the no small disaffection of the other aspirants I presume. Rumor and investigators have pronounced the Widow C. C. P Hastings nubile, and Grove the Blacksmith as having predilections for her. Colier and Isaac reside in town. The other Colier lately married the girl he accompanied hither on the 4th of July. -- I hope the cours of domestic and conjugal concerns go on smoothly up in your neighborhood; for without concord, union and sympathy in these affairs, I am persuaded, that prosperity and success are of but little avail. Much depends on the manner of conducting the relative duties, which devolve on the parties who enter the important state of marriage. These relative duties, which are now to be performed, are to be attempted by them, who are inexperienced and consequently difficult. Whence a forbearing spirit must be continually practiced and allowance acknowledged for the frailties and erring nature of human beings. These admonitions are appropriate for you to apply to those, whom it may happen to be your duty to advise, and and

as you have become nubile, you may accept them as preliminary instructions for yourself.

As we are very apt to be inquisitive about young persons who have become nubile, I would here propound several Ques., but as my interrogations on this subject would not be ~~difficult~~ answered I submit to the restraint.

I tender to you and the rest in the name of the family the regard and affection entertained, and hope that you are all concerned for the welfare of your souls. For what will it avail a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul. Therefore be not all intent, nor too intent to lay up treasures on earth, where moth doth corrupt and thieves do break through and steal, but rather lay up treasures in heaven where moth doth not corrupt, nor thieves break through, nor steal.

[The entry ends without the customary flourishing signature. It is difficult to tell what prompted this letter, but because of its place in the lexicon, it may be safe to say that it is a circuitous attempt to warn Julia to behave. On the other hand, their mother's comments, not here by him transcribed, may have occasioned the document. Of course the comment about moths and "theives" is an example of Simeon's compulsory quoting from the Gospel -- not to mention the poetry he admires -- but there are at least intimations, echoes of the financial ordeal the family is undergoing. I love Simeon's clumsy efforts to eschew gossip -- as to Cunobal, I'll check to see if that's a name out of Ossian which is what it sounds like, though it must be one of his heavily playful jokes. I have proof-read, but at some point, someone will have to check the lovely errors with the text. I am sure I have not always understood about commas, since the end flourishes of words often look like them. I should hate to have been one of Simeon's little rural scholars -- were there windows in the schoolhouse, through which they could catch a glimpse of freedom? On the other hand, his notes on grammar which appear on various loose sheets indicate that he worked hard at his declensions. The objections of parents to his methods surface occasionally. Was he a proponent of the gentler practices advocated especially in Concord and Boston, or did he not spare the rod? I wish one could tell -- certainly he is an irascible enough fellow, not only smug but frequently illogical. I am often touched, nevertheless, by his stoical wistfulness over his being stuck in the backwaters during an exciting period of his country's history. Small wonder he eventually took up and went west -- though not to find gold in California. I guess Mary Anne whom he married after the conclusion of this document must have been the stern disciplinarian who early in the next century chastised her granddaughter Ruth for exaggerating the number of birds that had appeared in the early spring outside their door. Perhaps Mary Anne had a right to be distressed by exaggeration . . .]