

Here is an exact word-for-word transcription of the 1857 letter from mother (Rebecca Wetmore) to her daughter Lucy W. Gray in California:

Middletown Oct 1st 1857

My dear daughter

I have been looking for letters these two days & hope Mary will bring some when she comes from school. It seems a long time since we heard from you & I am anxious to know the state of your health since your return from the springs & whether they have proved any way beneficial to you.

Your letters by the Central America shared the fate of that ill-fated Steamer & were lost with four hundred precious lives, it is dreadful to think of, I feel thankful that none of my friends, that I know of, were on board of her, but they are somebody's friends that will look for them in vain (alas) for the uncertainty of human life!

I hope the Dr has arrived safe & well, we were much disappointed that he did not make us a second visit but I am thankful that he made us even one. When he was here I told him I should like to send a bundle by him but would promise him that it should be a small one. I wonder what he thought of me when he saw that big bundle, but I did not send half the things I wanted to, I had some nice dried raspberries I would have sent & some walnuts & if it ripens well we shall have a lot of pop corn & I shall think of the children every time we pop any & wish they could have a pack of it.

I have been making Catsup to day & have put up a gallon of tomatoes air tight. I put up last summer one can of raspberries, & intended to put up some currants also, but with all my company and work people I neglected it.

Apples are very scarce in this region & I believe every where. The scarcity is thought to be caused by the cold damp & chilly weather for some length of time when the trees were in blossom. Dried apples have sold at 14 cts a pound & I presume they will not be less this year, every thing is high, beef steak has been 14 & 15 cts lb all summer.

The Milnands left the 10th of Sept much to my relief; I had a great deal of cooking to do while they were here. They all had good appetites & grew fat.

I hope you will like the Shalls they are very fashionable now. Mr. & Mrs. Taylor called here last week & she had on one almost exactly like yours & I thought it looked very pretty. Green Shalls are all the rage here, — today Nell Mary did not come home last night, the Steamer has been due four days & has not yet been heard from; great apprehensions are being felt for her safety. It would be a most appalling occurrence if two successive Steamers should be lost, I am sure I shall feel pretty deeply the loss of my letters, as I am anxious especially to hear of your health as indeed I am also of you all.

I have been helping Kate to cut & delane dress, she has been down to help your father set up his buck wheat to day which the wind had blown over, we have had two weeks of beautiful weather which ended off with two pretty severe frosts, which evinces the fact that the glory of the summer is departed.

I feel troubled about ??? being out of business as I suppose he is. What will become of his family, couldn't some of you take Edith and let her go to school. I have had the Treadwells & Dodges both when they were young and now some of them are much better off than I am. I wish Edith was here and Nellie too.

Saturday I have waited in vain for my letters & I shall have to send this, this afternoon without hearing from you. I am anxiously looking for letters but Alas! How many are anxiously looking for friends. I hope we shall soon be relieved by the arrival of the Steamers.

Yours affectionately,

Mother

R.W.

I thought I should write to Cornelia & Harriet but I feel so disheartened at hearing from you in four long weeks that I can't write with much pleasure.

I thought I would write a long letter to H. (Harriet?) this mail but Kate wants her dress for Sunday. It has taken up her time & mine too.

Mrs. Lucy W Gray