

New York, November 17th, 1807.

My Good Little Girl:

In one of your late family epistles you have wronged me most cruelly by the old proverb of "Out of sight, out of mind", which was about as well applied as old proverbs generally are. Now I do assure you in sober sadness and on the indifferent word of an honest gentleman, that I have been thinking of writing to you these three months past, which I take it is a pretty tolerable proof of constant recollection. How long I might have lived in the daily indulgence of this intention and the daily neglect of its performance I cannot say, had I not beheld you last night in my dreams not in all the smiling radiance of Venus when she beamed upon the visions of pious-----, but with an expression of bitter wrath and indignation, or to use a Scriptural quotation, with a countenance "fair as the sun, clear as the moon and terrible as an army with banners." I awoke in all the horrors of a quandary. I raised myself in my bed and solemnly taking off my night cap with my right hand and waving it gallantly in the air, swore never to put it on again or to comb the feathers out of ^{my} hair until I had written you an epistle.

Now, we are still in a manner in the introduction. I cannot help hinting that I do not perceive any right you have to expect a letter, seeing that you have never had the kindness to answer the one I wrote some time since, and which if I recollect right abounded with interesting information. You can offer no reasonable excuse for this neglect

New York, November 17th, 1867.

My dear little girl:

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surely you cannot be so indifferent of your abilities as
to stand in fear of criticism. This would be doing injus-
tice both to your own talents and my friendship, for surely
you who can write with so little hesitation to your own
family, should at least have kindness enough to believe
that your letters would be received with equal pleasure
and equal indulgence by one who regards you with the sincere
affection of a brother. At any rate a letter should ever
be exempt from critical examination, being not the studied
production of the head, but the free will offering of the
heart, and I would sooner one scrawl that had the genuine
stamp of native feeling, than a thousand elegant epistles
abounding in effected sentiment and well turned periods.
But I am confident, my dear Anne, your letters would
never stand in need of apology, just write what you feel,
or rather, feel what you write, for the first would be
too great a demand and trust me I never shall complain,
though your letters should be as unintelligible as the
literary lore on a tea-chest. The substance of all this
preamble is simply "I wish you to write me", and since
I am not to have the pleasure of seeing you for so long
a time, at least let me have the indemnification of hear-
ing from you occasionally. This will be an additional in-
ducement for me to write often for, though the mere idea
that my letters could yield you the least pleasure ought
to be sufficient, yet the prospect of being repaid in kind
would render me a much more attentive correspondent. Thus,
you see, I am selfish even in these little offices of

of friendship and must be induced to perform them by the hope of reward.

Your singular determination to pass the winter in the country has occasioned me great regret and surprise. Not that I thereby mean to insinuate anything derogating to Coldenham, or its inhabitants, or its woods, or its vales, or the mountains, or the little negroes, or the kittens, or the old horse that travels sometimes sideways like a crab, and sometimes backwards like a bear and sometimes has to be led by his rider like an obedient and discreet saddle horse; far be it from me to offend any being animate or inanimate, but surely you are paying New York and its citizens a very sorry compliment to absent yourself all summer and all winter into the bargain. Well, well, there's no accounting for the whims of a young gentlewoman in her teens, so I'll say no more on the subject; not but what there's a little of the bitterness of disappointment fermenting at the bottom of all this, in honest truth I had calculated on another sociable jog trot through the mountains with you and had as much hinted to my friend Larry in an airing I took with him sometime since, the poor beast was so over-joyed at the thought that he pricked up his ears and frisked after such a fashion that he had well nigh flung my companion, the Doctor, out of the seat. Surely the brute is a good brute a very well disposed brute of most civil and excellent demeanor.

You have heard no doubt of Maggie Ashton's having married a little limping, round shouldered, bleary eyed, fat sided foreigner - a corpulent oily little knave who looks for

as selfish as your selfishness and as indifferent to your selfishness as to the world. This would be doing injury to the world to your own detriment and my detriment, for surely you who can write with so little hesitation to your own family, should at least have kindness enough to believe that your letters would be received with equal pleasure and equal indulgence by one who regards you with the same affection of a brother. At any rate a letter should ever be exempt from critical examination, being not the student production of the house, but the free will offering of the heart, and I would sooner one saw a letter that had the genuine stamp of native feeling, than a thousand elegant epistles abounding in affected sentiment and well turned periods. But I am confident, my dear Anne, your letters would never stand in need of apology, just write what you feel, or rather, feel what you write, for the first would be too great a demand and I never shall complain, though your letters should be as unimpeachable as the literary love on a tobacco chest. The substance of all this I am not to have the pleasure of seeing you for so long a time, at least let me have the indemnification of hearing from you occasionally. This will be an additional inducement for me to write often for, though the mere idea that my letters could yield you the least pleasure ought to be sufficient, yet the prospect of being repaid in kind would render me a much more attentive correspondent. Thus, you see, I am selfish even in these little offices of

all the world like a pumpkin on stilts. The marriage has caused the women of all that portion of the world, who have nothing to do, to wonder at the follies at each other. For my part I can see nothing suprising in it. I never yet knew a young gentlewoman who had jilted some half score of honest lovers, but what she was either condemned to lead apes like the Duanes, or was brought to a melancholly and untimely matrimonial end like Maggy Ashton.

Take warning, all you flinty damsels, who make a business of breaking the hearts of simple, brainless and soft headed young gentlemen, who reduce so many brilliant youths, the hopes of their families, the darling of their mothers, to a state of absolute stupidity, and insignificance; who turn so many blockheads into poets, poets into mad men, and mad men into idiots; who cause so many aspiring agents and gallant young merchants to dash about and then drive them by your frowns to despair and the limits. Take warning, I repeat ye, most flinty hearted young women, by the melancholy marriage of Maggy Ashton, and beware of the innocent though hazardous amusement of jilting.

last
On Sunday there was somewhat of a family dinner at your father's; at which your Uncle and Aunt were present. Bass, as usual was very much at home, and together with his brother Martin was rather hard upon Uncle David. You know Uncle David is a little of a witch, and has long controversies at times with George upon various abstract subjects, such as whether a spade is really a spade, or a shovel.

of friendship and must be induced to perform them by the hope of reward.
Your singular determination to pass the winter in the country has occasioned no great regret and surprise. Not that I thereby mean to insinuate anything derogating to Goldenham, or the inhabitants, or the woods, or the valleys, or the mountains, or the little rivers, or the history, or the old stories that travel sometimes sideways like a crab, and sometimes backwards like a bear and sometimes has to be led by his tail like an obedient and dishonest saddle horse; for he is from me so often any being unkind or inanimate, but surely you are paying New York and its citizens a very sorry compliment to absent yourself all summer and all winter into the bargain. Well, well, there's no accounting for the whims of a young gentlewoman in her teens, so I'll say no more on the subject; not but what there's a little of the bitterness of disappointment fermenting at the bottom of all this, in honest truth I had calculated on another sociable jog trot through the mountains with you and had as much hinted to my friend Larry in an airing I took with him sometime since, the poor beast was so over-joyed at the thought that he pricked up his ears and tripped after such a fashion that he had well nigh flung my companion, the Doctor, out of the seat. Surely the brute is a good brute - a very well disposed brute of most civil and excellent demean-
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Take warning, all you flimsy damozels, who make
a business of breaking the hearts of simple, trusting and
soft headed young gentlemen, who reduce so many brilliant
youths, the hopes of their families, the darling of their
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brother Martin was rather hard upon Uncle David. You know
Uncle David is a little of a wit, and has long contro-
verted at times with George upon various abstract subjects,
such as whether a spade is really a spade, or a shovel.

George maintains the former position, and between ourselves
I am inclined to think he has the best of the argument.
Kemble (meaning Gouvy) was of the party, but rather out of
spirits, not having recovered from the horrors of an inva-
sion which was made on his territory, about five weeks ago,
by the lads of Kilkarney, who made a sudden descent upon
his empire at Newark where they remained two or three days,
committed great devastation and absolutely ate him out of doors.

Pehonius is absent at Philadelphia, where he lives
in clover at the expense of an uncle, who had the weakness, p
poor man, to take him along. We understand he suffers great
extremity, his face having been complete^{ly} conflagrated by drink-
ing burgundy and eating tarapins and canvass backs. We sent
orders in case his nose should catch fire, to have it ex-
tinguished in the Delaware. The lads of Kilkarney are
thrown into a wonderful turmoil by the uncommon deportment
of Jim Paulding. I know you will think I am romancing when
I assure you that he was absolutely detected in handing a
young lady out of the coffee room in the theatre, and that
he even saw her quite down stairs into the box! A meeting
of the club has been notified for this evening, when we
are to take into consideration and properly investigate
this astonishing piece of gallantry in our honorable fellow
member. Paulding is a fine boy, as Bass says, but this
unparalleled instance of attention in him has excited the
strongest suspicions. He has just entered my office, and

I am interrupted. Farewell for the present, I will continue this letter to-morrow. Write to me I entreat you, and believe me ever your affectionate friend

Washington Irving.

To Miss Alice Anne Hoffman,
Care of Thomas Colden, Esq.,
Coldenham.

These letters as you will see are addressed to the ~~other~~ sister of Matilda, who, as has been stated, was on a visit to her uncle in Coldenham, and I also have in my possession letters from Matilda written to her sister at this same time, and place. I give facsimiles of these, they being in a better state of preservation than Irvings. I give two in which she speaks of "Washington".

Facsimile of Matilda Hoffman's letters in this space.

*Please send originals please later
The greatest care of them & return to
me*

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