

I received your letters of Jan. 6th and Feby. 25th – 1855. I did not correctly understand either of them at the time I rec^d it and did not understand the first until after I rec^d the second. When I finally ascertained their meaning, both letters seemed to me so insincere and unfeeling that I decided not to answer them and have often felt as if I could never write you again as you seemed to anticipate that I should be displeased. I hoped, for a long time, that you would see the propriety of your either making some explanation voluntarily or returning my daguerreotype. But as you have done neither, I have thought it likely that you wished me *

*to infer that your heart was mine, and that you intended nothing wrong by the letters. If that is your wish, you have probably no objections to telling me frankly what your motives were in writing the letters. I will tell you why I was displeased with the letters.

In both of them, you professed a great deal of love for me – yet in the first one you said, in a very peremptory manner as if you were in earnest, that gratifying as it would be to the both of us, I cannot consent” to “any renewal of our correspondence.” And in the second you said, “I cannot give you the least encouragement it may never be so,” (that you would ever be mine). And you wished the privilege of returning my daguerreotype and requested me to send you no more papers.

You can imagine how inconsistent, insincere and unfeeling such letters would seem to me for I knew, of course, that if you loved me as you professed, you would expect sometime to be mine, and would wish me to feel encouraged that such would be the result. It therefore seemed like a deliberate and unfeeling falsehood for you to profess so much love, and yet to say that you could neither write me nor give me the least encouragement that you would “ever” be mine.

If you had given me any good reason for writing such letters, I should doubtless have been satisfied, for your letter to Mrs. Hoyt had convinced me, for the time, that you loved me sincerely. But that letter only made the two letters written to me seem the more unaccountable, and I began to think that your caprice and duplicity was such that I could never confide in you again.

In your letter of Jan. 6, you did not state distinctly any reason for refusing to write me – but you said “My reasons for so doing you will readily infer from what I have already said.” As I saw nothing in the letter, that seemed to be any reason for refusing to write me, I concluded, at the time, that you referred to what you had said on previous occasions, and that your true reason was, that you were afraid, if you wrote me your mother would find it out, and be made unhappy or make you unhappy. Although I felt much disappointment and even hurt, that I could not hear from you, yet you had just given me so much proof of your love, (in your letter to Mrs. Hoyt), that I could not doubt the sincerity of your affection. And I also felt sure that you would not have refused to write me, unless you had been really afraid to write. Under these circumstances, I thought it my duty to excuse you from writing. So I sent my daguerreotype to let you know that I would continue to love you, although I should not hear from you. But I suppose all the while that you intended I should understand that you were ready to be mine at any time when I should be ready for you.

Such were my feelings from the time of receiving the first letter until I read the second. I could therefore hardly believe my eyes when I read, in the second, these words, “I cannot give you the least encouragement it may ever be so” (you be mine). And my astonishment was not diminished by these additional words, “and for the reason I have given,” for I said to myself that you had given no reason for any such thing as that, (but only for not writing me), and I could not imagine what you referred to. And I was perhaps as much offended as astonished at what seemed to me such duplicity and heartlessness. And all your professions of love had very little weight with me against this unfeeling declaration that you could not give me the least encouragement that you would be mine.

After puzzling(?) myself awhile as to the meaning of such conduct, I looked at the previous letter (of Jan. 6th) to find some explanation of it. I have found this paragraph.

“I now expect to return home in August, to remain with my parents, perhaps for life. My energies have become so exhausted, I cannot teach longer, and mother seems to need my assistance in her declining age.”*

*I now suppose you wished me to think that these words about your mother are your real reason for writing as you did, but I had no thought of such a thing at the time I received the letter's sustaining theme.

At that time neither these grounds about your mother nor the paragraph itself made any particular impression on my mind and it soon passed from my thoughts. And why should it not? It indicated that you were going home much more on your own account than your mother's. And as you had never said anything to me about staying at home to take care of your mother, and as you had no remaining sisters younger than yourself, and as you now spoke of your mother in so few words, and in such careless and indifferent words too, I did not imagine that that was the reason of your refusing to write me. I supposed that you only meant by it, that you were going home to stay until I should want you and that, both on your own account and on your mother's, you would like to be at home. You can judge therefore how much astonished I was, on receiving the letter of Feb 25, to find that you had intended these few careless and _____ unmeaning words as an excuse, and your only excuse, for refusing to write me, and for telling me that you could not give me "the least encouragement" that you would "ever" be mine. The idea that, after I had loved you devotedly for years, and after you had professed so *
*much love for me, you should suddenly refuse to write me and refuse me the least encouragement, and yet offer only ten indefinite words in explanation of such conduct seemed to me very heartless, and indeed very insulting.

And I could not believe the excuse a sincere one – but thought it most likely that your object was the same that it seemed to be the year before, viz, to keep me in love with you, and yet to get rid of writing to me, and to keep yourself free from all obligations to me until you should know certainly whether I should have a home for you. For I could think of no other motive that seemed likely to brought you to such contradictory conduct as that of professing so much love, and at the same time refusing to write me, or give me "the least encouragement." I therefore considered the letter an insincere _____ and unworthy of an answer. But although such has been my feeling much of the time, it has often seemed incredible to me that you could be capable of such duplicity(2)

(2) and heartlessness as to writing such letters from such a motive. And I have felt that it was wrong to suspect you _____. And if I could have thought of any other reasonable excuse, I should have believed it.

I thought that if there had been any real prospect of its being necessary for you to stay at home to take care of your mother, you would have told me so frankly and _____ (so that I should have understood it), and also stated the causes of it, (in order to save me from the suspicion of any coldness in your heart), instead of giving me only ten such indefinite words, mixed up with others, and then expecting me to "infer" that that was your reason for refusing for refusing to write me, without saying so distinctly. And I thought too, that if you had any apprehension that I should wish to be free, in consequence of your duties to your mother, you would have offered me my freedom, instead of thus peremptorily refusing to write me, or telling me you could not give me the least encouragement.

I have sometimes thought you would say – as your excuse for writing as you did – that there was a prospect that you would be kept at home by your mother's health, and that you were afraid that the that reason I might wish to be free, but that I might nevertheless think it dishonorable to accept my freedom under such circumstances, and that you, therefore, out of delicacy, wrote as you did, in order to set me free, if I wished to be – but that you expected, if I did not wish to be free, I should say so. If you had written me such letters in the early part of our courtship, before you had fully tested my fidelity, I should undoubtedly have thought that such was your motive. But after all the proof you had had of my love for you, I could not believe that you had the least fear that I should wish to be free, (and if you had had, I should have been offended at such a want of confidence). I therefore thought that for you to write as you did, under pretence of delicacy, would have been such an unfeeling and silly piece of affectation, as would never be guilty of. So I could not believe that such was your motive.

I know that you are very scrupulous against doing any thing that can look (as you once said to me) like urging yourself; and I appreciate such delicacy where it is sincere. But if it is affected when there is no occasion for it; or if it is carried so far as to deceive a lover, or to have the appearance of

coldness or duplicity, it is not to be endured.

I have tried a great deal to conjecture what your motives were for writing such letters – for I did not like to suspect you of any selfish or deceitful ones, but I have never been able to satisfy myself. I have sometimes thought of asking an explanation, but there have been many reasons against my doing so.

One reason was that I was so much offended at receiving such letters, that I could not write you kindly and did not wish to write you unkindly.

Another was that I doubted the answer I got the year before when I asked an explanation of a unfeeling letter, and I did not choose to expose myself to the receipt of another of the same kind. Besides, I had got sick and tired of asking explanations, It seemed as if *

* persons who really loved each other need not have so many occasions for explanation. And still further, as you seemed to expect I should be displeased, I thought it your duty to explain your conduct voluntarily instead of requiring me ask and explanation. You have before written me letters which you appeared to know would make me uneasy; and yet not give your reasons for them at the time. And I had been tired of such things.

Another reason was that it has sometimes seemed as if there was no use in our being reconciled. It seemed as if you were determined to behave badly until I should have a home for you and that if we should be reconciled, you would very soon do some heartless thing or other to make me uneasy again.

Another was that it seemed nearly impossible for use to come to an understanding by letter, and that any letters, if they would only make matters worse, that is, would make us more ill tempered and not explain things satisfactorily. That I sometimes thought if we could see each other, it was possible you might give such an explanation as I should be satisfied with.

Another reason was that, as you seemed determined to keep yourself free of all obligations to me, and do nothing for my happiness, until I should have a home for you, I sometimes thought I would leave you alone until that time, and then do as I should please about writing to you.

Another was that at times, I feared we should never be happy, if we were married. It seemed as if persons who had so much disagreement before marriage, could not reasonably expect to be happy after marriage.

Another reason was that I thought if your statements were true – (that you could not write to me, not give me the least encouragement) – it must be because you did not wish to do so, and if you did not wish to write me or give me encouragement, there was certainly no occasion for any further correspondence. On the other hand, if those statements were not true, (as I thought likely they were not) I thought you ought to be punished severely for saying such false and heartless things.

Another reason was that I did not wish ever to have but one more reconciliation, and I thought that one would be more likely to be effected, and to be sincere if it were postponed until you should have abundant time for reflection, and to make up your mind whether you would behave as you ought, or not, and also until you should be satisfied I could live without you, and that I would live without you, unless you would do right.

Another reason was, that I was determined never to have any more trouble with you – that I had done all I ever would do to gain your love, or insure your consistency – and that unless you would do as you ought, you might go.

Another reason was, that during much of last year, my health was very poor – so poor at times that Dr Hoyt thought it was going to fail altogether, and that I should not live long. My pecuniary prospects too, have, much of the time, been discouraging as to my getting a home for you. For these reasons I have sometimes, when feeling somewhat kindly towards you, doubted whether you would be any happier to hear from me, even if you did love me sincerely.

Another was that I could not afford to *

*have my mind occupied or perplexed by any further unpleasant correspondence with you. I was very much straitened in my pecuniary affairs, and somewhat disheartened as to my prospects, my health poor, made so, as Dr Hoyt thought, by too much mental labor and excitement, and he was continually telling

me that I must give up my books, and give my mind a rest, and yet I was obliged to write in order to live. Under these circumstances I had as much care and anxiety as I could endure and could not bear the thoughts of having any further difficulty with you. And I was afraid we should have nothing but difficulty, if the correspondence was continued.

I had still many other good reasons for not writing; but it is unnecessary to state them.

But I have been feeling somewhat kindly towards you of late, and have felt more confidence than formerly that you would give me some reasonable explanation of the letters. I have also been looking at some of your former letters, and have felt, in reading them, that it was nearly impossible to doubt that you once loved me sincerely. And it seemed to me that if you had always been frank, and spoken as you meant, we should never have had any trouble. But you have practiced so much coldness, and artifice, and duplicity, that you have puzzled me completely and I know not what to make of you. Before I went to Kousville(?), I thought you were a conscientious*

*and thoughtful person; and that I could judge your feelings by what you said, but since your letters have been so contradictory, that it has sometimes seemed as if you cared very little for the truth.

If you have loved me sincerely, it is a mystery to me that you could say and do such unfeeling things, or wish to practice any kind of deception, or that you could suppose I would submit to it. I should think you must have sense enough to know that a man can have no real confidence or love for a woman who practises duplicity towards him, however much love she may profess for him. I should not say so much about this, but for the letters I received two years ago. When I read the letters to Mrs Hoyt, I thought, if I should forgive you, you would never write me any of these foolish and wicked letters again. And I hope now you will give some explanation of them, that will show you did not intend any thing deceitful. If you love me sincerely, (as I often think you do), I could forgive almost any thing but intentional deceit.

As to your mother, I never wished or expected that you should neglect one real duty to her. I thought it wrong for you to tell her of our affairs, and afterwards to refuse, on her account, to give me such explanations as were necessary to get me at rest about you. But I never wished you to fail your duty to her in the least particular. And do not wish you to hereafter, whatever may be the result to me. But we should never have had the least trouble about that, if you were only frank, and had ___ constant, in other respects, and willing to do something for my happiness.

I fear, Mary, you may think this letter is an unkind one, but I do not intend it as such. I am only telling things plainly – not to accuse you – but to let you know how things have seemed to me, and why I have not written you – that you may know how to answer me, if you answer me at all, as I hope you will.

Now, Mary, if I have been misunderstanding and misjudging you, during all this time, and if you have been unhappy in consequence. I shall feel very badly. But I hope you will not think the fault has been wholly on my part. I do not wish to misunderstand or misjudge your happiness, if you have been and still mean to be, frank, true, and faithful to me. And if you give me any reasonable explanation of the last two letters, I presume I shall believe it at once.

My health has been poor for a year. I have not been sick, but feeble, and able to do little. I have been gaining for three or four months – but it is only recently that I have begun to feel really like myself. My _____ has greatly improved. I laid aside my crutch three months ago, and more-after having carried it for about six months. Still my foot is not extremely sound, and I cannot walk a great deal without injuring it.

I have no home for you yet. But my prospects have greatly improved, and it seems as if I should have a home for you in a year, or thereabouts, if no unforeseen thing should happen to prevent, but so many unforeseen things do happen, that I can give no positive assurance. The home too, too, if I should

have one, will be only neat and comfortable, not expensive.

I hope, Mary, you will answer this letter. If you do not, I fear I shall never have either love or confidence enough again to induce me to write you.

I have sometimes feared that I had done something, which you thought wrong or unreasonable, and which induced you to write the letters which displeased me so much two years ago, and I have tried to think what it might be, but could not satisfy myself that there had been any thing of the kind, but if there was, I hope you will not be afraid to tell me of it. It would give me great relief to find out that all our troubles had originated in some error of mine, instead of yours. I used to adore you, Mary, and I wish to do so again.

I wish we could see each other – and if you wish a reconciliation, we certainly must see each other, if there is any place we can meet, without your friends knowing it. I have much more confidence that we should be reconciled, if we could see each other, than that we can by letter.

I know that you are very scrupulous against doing any thing that can look (as you once said to me) like urging yourself; and I appreciate such delicacy where it is sincere. But if it is affected when there is no occasion for it; or if it is carried so far as to deceive a lover, or to have the appearance of coldness or duplicity, it is not to be endured.

What induced me to write you now is this.

Although I do not think that you had the least fear of my fidelity, it has quite recently occurred to me that, in consequence of the severe letters I had written you, you may have felt that it would be indelicate for you to do anything that could look like throwing yourself upon my honor – and that, therefore, as you were afraid you might be kept at home after I should want you, you wrote as you did, expecting I should have no doubt of your own constancy and that I should also assure you of mine, unless I should choose to be free. If this was really your motive, I think it was a somewhat natural one, and perhaps a sufficient one, for writing as you did – and I shall undoubtedly forgive you. Or if you had any other reasonable motive for writing in that manner, I wish to forgive you, for I love you, and love no one else and have no wish to love any one else, and nothing, that I likely ever to occur would tempt me for a moment to part with you, if you are a sincere and true woman, and love me as faithfully as I have sometimes thought you did. But if you do not love me enough to prevent your practising duplicity to get rid of writing to me, and yet to keep me in love with you until you know what my fortunes are to be, then I have no respect or affection for you. If you are unwilling to take the chance of my fortunes, you ought to say so frankly and part. If you are willing to take the risk of them, you should say so frankly, that I may have the happiness of it, while I am trying to get a home for you. As for my being kept in any doubt on that first, I will not submit to it and allow you to consider me a lover.

I have sometimes thought you would say – as your excuse for writing as you did – that there was a prospect that you would be kept at home by your mother's health, and that you were afraid that the reason I might wish to be free, but that I might nevertheless think it dishonorable to accept my freedom under such circumstances, and that you, therefore, out of delicacy, wrote as you did, in order to set me free, if I wished to be – but that you expected, if I did not wish to be free, I should say so. If you had written me such letters in the early part of our courtship, before you had fully tested my fidelity, I should undoubtedly have thought that such was your motive. But after all the proof you had had of my love for you, I could not believe that you had the least fear that I should wish to be free, (and if you had had, I should have been offended at such a want of confidence). I therefore thought that for you to write as you did, under pretence of delicacy, would have been such an unfeeling and silly piece of affectation, as would never be guilty of. So I could not believe that such was your motive.

Although I do not think that you had the least fear of my fidelity, it has quite recently occurred to me that, in consequence of the severe letters I had written you, you may have felt that it would be indelicate for you to do anything that could look like throwing yourself upon my honor – and that, therefore, as you were afraid you might be kept at home after I should want you, you wrote as you did, expecting I should be satisfied of your own constancy and that I should assure you of mine, unless I should choose to be free. If this was truly your motive for writing as you did, I shall forgive you, and shall deeply regret that I have misunderstood you for so long a time, if you have been unhappy in consequence.

I hope you will write me whether my present opinion of your motives is correct. And if it is, I hope you will forgive me of suspecting you of any other. I should not have done so, if I could have believed that you had any doubts of my fidelity (for then it would have been true delicacy for you to write as you did). But as I felt sure you had no such doubts, I could not, until recently, account for your conduct otherwise than by thinking that you intended to keep yourself free from obligation to me, until you should know whether I was to have a home for you. If this had been your motive, I did not wish to continue to correspondence.

Now, Mary, if you have loved me sincerely all this time, I fear you have been unhappy on account of my not answering your letters, Yet I cannot but think you knew me too well to have any fear that my feelings towards you would be changed by any thing which it might ever be really necessary for you to do for your mother. And if you had no such fear, you have probably attributed my silence to my misunderstanding your letters, and not to any want of love on my part, and have therefore expected we should sometime come to an understanding. And I hope this expectation had prevented you from being unhappy as you otherwise would have been.

When I read your letters to Mrs Hoyt, I inferred that if I should forgive you, you would be willing to take the risk of my fortunes, and to write me and do something for my happiness, while I was trying to get a home for you. It was on that ground and no other that I was disposed to forgive you. And when in the letter of Jan'y 6th you explained your happiness at being forgiven and said, "I have suffered enough to prevent me from ever giving you occasion to censure me again," I thought you meant that you would do right in future, and give me no more uneasiness. Of course I did not suppose that the few words in the same letter about your mother had any such meaning as the next letter showed you wished me give to them, for I could not imagine you capable of such duplicity. And it has often since seemed incredible to me that you can be so wanting in fairness(?) and integrity. At such times I have felt disposed to write you, and ask you what you did mean by writing as you did? But before carrying my intention into execution I would look again at your letters and when I looked at them, I always felt indignant that you should say such unfeeling things, and then I would give up the idea of writing. I felt that if I had not loved you long enough, and faithfully enough to be entitled to perhaps it was time for all acquaintance between us to cease. And I feel so now.