

Home, May 3rd 1859

Dear Sister Kate

What would I give if you were here this evening— it would be so much easier to tell you all I want to say, and all you are waiting so anxiously to hear, than to write it, but as that cannot be and I know you are counting the days which must pass until you can receive another letter from home, I will devote this evening to communion and sympathy with you, though my time and strength are hardly adequate to the task of writing so much as is crowding on my mind, all of interest to you.

Your two last letters are before me— the first came to hand some time since and was read with deep interest by us all— but it made me sad to think how unconscious you were while writing of the thick cloud which was gathering over you. You saw not the deepening shadow, though there was a slight, for[e]boding in your heart, for you had heard he was more feeble— but you little dreamed that on that day, perhaps at the very hour that you were penning so cheerfully a sketch of your every day life, your dear honored father was breathing his last on earth. April 8th is the date of your letter— and about ½ past three P.M. of the same day, our loved one entered into rest. Your last letter was received three days since— and was read with still deeper interest than the first, for we had been longing to hear from you, that the circle of our sympathy might be complete. But its touching sadness opened anew the fountains of our grief and we wept afresh with you and mourned our common loss. I knew your warm affectionate heart would feel most deeply this great bereavement, and gladly would I have whispered words of consolation in your ear. Perhaps I did what was better, of more avail— “I prayed for thee that thy strength fail not.” Oh my sister how thankful I am that you know where to look for the only Source of comfort— that before this trial came upon you, you had been taught something of the worth, the power of heavenly grace. What would we poor, helpless mortals do, without the support, the consolation which cometh from above when we are weakest, most bowed down, then do we feel most the sustaining love of our compassionate Saviour [*sic*]. When our burden seems too heavy to be borne and we feel that we must sink the everlasting arms are placed beneath us, and the Comforter whispers to us sweet words of promise— “My grace shall be sufficient for thee”— “All things shall work together for good to them that love God”— “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth”— “Let not your heart be troubled”— “These light afflictions shall work out for you a far more exceeding & eternal weight of glory.” Are not these promises of a faithful God enough to fill our souls with trusting resignation, if not with joyful peace? Oh let us try to look up through the clouds and darkness that surrounds us and say with childlike confidence— “Not my will, my Father, but thine be done.”

I believe I wrote you the particulars of Pa’s sickness and death, but think I did not mention what was the hardest part of my affliction, or rather what deepened my sorrow— it was that I was not present to hear his last sigh, to catch his last parting glance. I had gone out for a few moments thinking he was better. We had been expecting our friend Miss Smith from Brooklyn to spend the Sabbath with us, and as she was to pass through Newark Friday afternoon, on her way to Elizabethtown, we were anxious to see her at the

cars, to know more certainly when to expect her on Saturday. I left home for the depot a little before three o'clock, that being the hour we had appointed to meet. I had hesitated about going as there had been a little shower, which I thought might prevent her starting, and because I felt I was needed at home, but Lottie urged me to go, thinking it would be better to see Miss S and tell her of Pa's sickness. I went, did not see her, on my way home called at the doctor's as Ma wished me to do, and stopped at the Dutch Church a few moments to see a funeral pass out, as unconscious as you were of what was passing at home, it was about four o'clock when I reached home and you can imagine, better than I can describe, the overwhelming scene [?] which awaited me. The sudden shock completely overpowered me and the deep regret that I had left him added to my bitter anguish. But after a while I was enabled to think it all over more calmly and then I felt that it was right, though so hard to bear- it was a part of the discipline I needed. But oh if we had only known he was so soon to leave how, how differently we should have done. If we had only talked more with him those last few days, and been more attentive to his comfort. Such were the thoughts that oppressed us all, as we were weeping over his lifeless form, but we felt rebuked by the almost heavenly smile which rested on his features- it seemed to say "weep not for me, I am happy! Happy!" Oh it was a triumphant expression— so changed from the anxious, troubled look they had worn a few moments before. With him the conflict was over— the victory won— our loss, was his gain— we were sure of it.

Those were sad days to us all. Many friends called to offer their sympathy and services, and to each we had to repeat the same sad story. Dr. Rowland called soon after breakfast Saturday and Dr. Stearns in the afternoon. Both spoke words of comfort to us, and prayed so earnestly for us— "the widow and fatherless." The absent children were not forgotten- they prayed that they might be prepared for the sad tidings, and strengthened under this heavy trial. Dr. R. also remembered you at the funeral, and in church the first Sabbath we were out. He has been very kind.

Aunty came down Saturday afternoon and remained until Tuesday. It was a great comfort to have her with us, she seemed to fill Pa's place in a measure— when she left us it seemed like a second burial. She seems dearer to us now than ever. Monday, the day appointed for the last sad services, was very stormy. It rained hard all the morning and if we could have done so, we would gladly have postponed the funeral but it was too late to after the notice. The rain ceased however, before two o'clock ~~and~~ so there was quite a large attendance— though we have heard since of several who were much disappointed in not being able to be present.

Every one who was here, remarked how beautifully natural Pa looked— no one would have dreamed he was a man of seventy— his face was so fresh and full and that calm, sweet smile was so like he had worn in life. How we wished as we were looking for the last time that you and the other absent ones were with us— that you might see his loved face once more. Oh it was hard, very hard to think of leaving him in the deep cold grave. Ma said, it was too beautiful to bury— and after we had bid it farewell, as persons were coming in, she went back to take one more look. He was dressed in white merino, with a black cravat, his own shirt and collar. The coffin was covered with black cloth with

silver mountings and plate. It was placed in the centre of the front parlor, near his favorite seat, which you know was on the sofa by the front window. Dr. Stearns made a short but appropriate address from the words of Jesus— “Because I live, ye shall live also.” Dr. Rowland made the prayer and conducted the service at the grave. Some of the choir of our church were present and sung a hymn Ma had selected— if I can I will send you a copy. The tune was “Martyn” or “Mary to the Savior’s tomb” [by Simeon Butler Marsh.] The services at the house ended, then came the slow, mournful ride to the cemetery and the most trying part of all, to see the precious remains lowered to its last resting place and to hear the damp heavy earth falling upon them. But there was consolation in the words, “in hope of a blessed resurrection”— and we tried to turn our thoughts away from the gloomy grave to the bright home, where the spirit of our beloved one was rejoicing. Dear little Julie [?] said, “Grandpa was talking with God now”— “not all of him was buried”— “he has wings and is an angel”— Sweet little comforter! Going to the cemetery [*sic*] she told her mother she heard something the minister said— it was that Grandpa had gone to be with Jesus. The children both love him and he loved them dearly and loved to have them with him. It has been a great pleasure to him to have Charlie and his family with us and Auntie says he has frequently spoken to her of his children and his satisfaction in them. I know it has comforted him to see them all trying to walk in the narrow way, and you dear Kate, ought to find comfort in the thought that you were led to enter the strait gate, before this day of sorrow. He has always listened to your letters with deep interest, and I doubt not, with a rejoicing heart. I believe it has been the secret language of his soul, “Lord now, let thy servant depart in peace.” He has long been ready to go, and wondered why he was kept here. We think too he has had a presentiment he would die suddenly. Only the day before he left us, at dinner we were talking and making our arrangements for company, when he said, “you don’t make any calculations of my being sick and dying.” I tried to cheer him up, by telling him he might live years yet— he was usually well and had a good appetite &c [etcetera]— but he shook his head— strange! Strange that we should not have realized how feeble he was. After tea, I sat down to the piano to play a little, and he soon came in the parlor and stood near me waiting till I had finished the piece I was playing. I then turned & looked at him and he said with a smile, “I want you to play ‘Days of Absence.’” He had been trying to make Ida find it in the afternoon, thinking as it was a simple air, she might learn it. I played it over carelessly two or three times, then thinking he might like to hear it sung, I turned to Greenville in the “Temple Melodies” and sang the hymn there set to it, “Jesus I my cross have taken.” Turning over the leaves I came to “Rock of Age” and “Jesus lover of my soul,” and sang them through. He had taken his accustomed seat and though he said nothing I know he enjoyed them. He was so fond of sacred music— it is a source of unspeakable pleasure that I was led, I am sure by a higher power, to select and sing these hymns that last evening of his life. He sat up until nine o’clock apparently well and cheerful, and then went upstairs for the last time.

I cannot tell you how much we miss him— how lonely we are when we three sit down at the table and find his seat vacant— how desolate the parlors seem— how still and empty the house. We cannot yet realize that he has gone forever. We wait and listen for his feeble footstep and think we hear his voice and must go and look for him— but the sad truth is pressed upon us as day after day passes and he is still absent from us. The events

of the past three weeks seem like a mournful dream. We have been very busy with the necessary sewing consequent upon a change of dress, and so have been enabled to draw off our thoughts in a measure from the sorrow. I hope by this time, dear Kate, you have become more reconciled and willing to receive this chastisement as from the hand of a loving Father who “does not willingly afflict.” The stroke was sent in mercy not in wrath— let us try to be thankful.

We have another cause for thanksgiving in the kind providence which has spared our Mother to us. A little more than a week ago, she had a severe fall which might have resulted seriously. I cannot stop to explain now— but it was from the stairs that lead to the scuttle. She bruised her arm and back badly, but they are much better though she still feels weak from the jar her whole system received. I can assure you we were all sadly frightened and hardly knew how to be thankful enough that it was no worse. I could fill another sheet but am too tired and it is too late. Lottie and Ma are waiting for me to go to bed. I have written you a long letter and have been particular because I knew I should wish it, if I were in your place.

Write very soon in return to your ever affection sister

Em

If I can find time I will try to send Ossian a few lines while he is at K[ey] W[est] if I should not please thank him for his part of your letter. We have bought some seeds for you and will send soon. Charlie, Delia, and the dear children are pretty well. Mary took Ida home with her when she returned. We have received letters from Abe, Abby & cousin Lucy- also from Cousin Annie of the South. Our dear Brooklyn friends have also remembered us & sent little messages of comfort & sympathy to us. I wish I could transcribe them for your benefit.

David Ball was buried a week ago yesterday— he died suddenly— was just Pa’s age. Mrs. Benedict was one of the first to call on us, in our bereavement we have already returned the call to sympathize with her in hers. Good night.

Transcribed by Nicole J. Milano, University of Florida, 2009