

Pontreilas House. Oct. 17th - 1850 -

Many thanks, dear Sue, for your letter received yesterday, & for Charlie's which came at the same time, as did also one from John - How proud I am to hear of dear grandfather's continued failing - Pray write to me every particular you can about him - Does he ever ask about me or take any interest in our doings? - Oh how I long to fly home & see you all for a little while, & especially to look on his dear face once more! - And then comes the sad feeling that when you get my letters telling of pleasant meetings & agreeable company it may come & sadly failing - I dread yet so long for every week's mail! -

I left my journal having just given you a peep at the outside of Pontreilas House - Walk in & see the agreeable people who make it their home - Mr. Bentham is not very English in appearance being tall & thin with keen grey eyes & hair & whiskers as much white as black - He is very quick the most indefatigable & patient & persevering worker, surpassing Dr. Gray in continued, unceasing labour - He is very agreeable though when he does talk, though he never wastes words in anything he says - And his smile is very pleasing & his laugh quite contagious - Mrs. Bentham is tall, & when I first saw her put me in mind of Mrs. Selton, especially when she smiles - But she has not the large lip - She is not handsome, but one cannot help liking her face, it is so gentle & refined in expression, & so good, and it flows on me very much - She has a fine figure though rather thin - And she dresses very quietly - But everything she puts on has a good air, & sets well, & looks lady-like, though you may not think it always pretty - Her hair is light & quite grey, so nice! - I should think she was about 40 - And when one knows her you cannot help loving her - She is so very kind, so perfectly simple & sincere, & yet so well-informed & intelligent - You might be with her a long time before you found out how many languages she could speak, &c - I don't know what our people who think "amusement" so necessary would say to her quiet life! - The nearest neighbours are the clergy men & his wife who are a good mile off - And Mr. & Mrs. Bentham have but a small income & so do not keep a carriage & therefore can only visit those within walking distance - Her sister is married to a gentleman owning a large estate - But Kentchurch is three miles away, & Miss Scudamore, the daughter, being now a young lady in company, likes London & Paris, & finds the country dull for any length of time, & so they are away the greater part of the year - When they are here, Mr. & Mrs. Bentham go to pass with them two or three days at a time; & so occasionally with some other neighbours, but they go but

little into the company which is found only by going to parties or some
7 or 8 or 10 or 12 miles off, & do not care for the country society - here a few
generally, Mrs. Bentham goes with her husband to London, & then they
make visits among their friends in distant counties - the rest of the
time they are here - Mrs. Bentham devoted in her botanical studies & labors,
in which she sometimes recedes, she passes herself in her garden in summer,
& seems always contented & happy in quiet indoor pursuits & employment -
and housekeeping is not half the occupation that it is with us for she has
only to direct occasionally as far as I can see, and that she has no children -
That I have come to the conclusion the English ladies & young ladies, unless
perhaps in the great cities in the gay season, think much less of amusement
than we do. I sat in Mr. Wink's or a little visiting seems quite suffi-
cient, & to have just once to the house & heard young ladies once quite enough
for a life -

Our days pass in quiet routine. Mrs. Bentham is always down before ten
the morning, & stays down after - Mrs. Bentham I believe gets down about 11
past, & I come about 12 to 1 - generally find her in her little room,
where we soon ourselves until breakfast which is at 9. After breakfast
the gentlemen return to their labors in the study, Mrs. B. & I employ our-
selves in sewing or reading or writing letters. Sometimes I go into the study
to write labels for the day - Sunday is at 8. There is always meat & a modest
plate - generally some great left from dinner. Dinner is in some nice little
room - After dinner we walk - Sometimes the gentlemen decline accompanying
us to prefer to work in - the drawing room says at 8, & we dine at 12 - Then
Mrs. Bentham & I generally see or wait, & the gentlemen look over duplicates or
my sewing work which sends them - A notice is brought in at 4 with the
tea service & put on a table in the corner, Mrs. Bentham makes tea, & a cup of
tea & a biscuit, makes one tea - the 6 to bed at 11 1/2 - Post succeeds & usually
8 makes of course the style of dressing quite different from ours - They rise
for the morning & all day as we should dress singly for the afternoon - And then
gentlemen & ladies make a walk to the river - the first night of our
arrival, Mrs. Bentham came, & for we were shown to our rooms to say that as
we were only ourselves, I would dress as little as I pleased - I innocently took
it quite literally, & being quite tired, came down in my travelling dress, though
I thought a change would do me - I fancy since I know better that it was a kindly
word of comfort, & now, when we are alone, I wish my own wardrobe, with
pretty muscadelandchief & clover, but that is quite needless, & only because there is
no company - The dayman & my friend with us the first day after we came,
& I thought my stayed side with high neck given in front & long skirt would be smart

enough, but I found the other ladies in low necks & short sleeves & lace petticoats -
and it was in summer dress -

The walking was terribly muddy when we first came, & I found my
feet clumping, but more to that that we reached as satisfactorily through
mud & wet as the smoothest of pavements, & held up potatoes in compliment
since then it has been very hot - But for a walk in short skirts & high waists or
lance men - the girls & boys go parts whenever we can - But across stile - And
what think you is a stile - That we should call boys only they are immovable
about half the width, & you must climb or stride over, painfully or put as it were
nature - But for our things since here - We walked tomorrow & I had to call
on a Mrs. Winton & Mrs. Bentham wanted me to see the old house - The house
is small & very old, & walls I should think at least 1 foot thick - The kitchen
has the greatest piece in the wood carving & antiquities - The house is quite
filled with such quaint old things! The fireplace is the story of Adam and
in the most picturesque & quaint figures - the expert wood joints shewn with a
great apple in his hand - But there were some fine old chairs, once much
table & so on. The house has quite magnificent - And would fill quite any old
imagination some of the old furniture painters - And as we went to church in
the little old church of St. George's, it has a tower, a great tower, built down
after the Norman conquest & I find my 1000th it - The church has been recently
filled up within a few years, with what is, but is very simple & plain & quiet - And
Monday we went to call on Mrs. & Mrs. Winton, the Luggan, & other friends who
we then & then we found the wood carving in the church, & an old stone effigy
of some old fellow of very early date - Sunday Mrs. Winton was to send her carriage
for us to take us to Whitfield. It is present at the Archdeacon's meeting - Mrs. Winton
kindly proposed her maid should put my dresses with her & so we are now com-
ing to her - (Jules, Frank) - (By the way the boys quite determined that I came
without any maid, & quite unaided, that I will dress myself. But I am
my independence - And she supposed at first that it was only to save trouble
in travelling that I was without such an attendant - At 10 the carriage came
a sort of barouche with 4 wheels behind for the driver, & a coachman & a groom on the
box - And such a superb pair of horses - I smile eloquent some brought us to the
gate of Mrs. Winton's house, & then two miles more through different grounds &
parke, into the park round the house, & to the house - They call the house very
ugly, but I do not think it so, for it is so important a comfortable & agreeable, &
certainly most comfortable & comfortable inside - It is of brick, & has no front
with broad windows in the recess above them, look out on a pretty flower garden
beyond which down the valley & up on the hill beyond should with wood
strut the park - A flower garden is not fair but with gravel walks & trees
bordered as with no but in the exquisite form that are not entirely shaped but round
a center & each bed filled with some pretty gay flowers all contrasting harmoniously,
& so set in from the, having a charmingly pretty house - An ornamental kind of stone
work brick, round the garden & the house, & in with side are beautiful trees & a good

them a wire fence on the side next the avenue covered with a hedge of laurels.
just coming into full flower, green holly, Portuguese Laurel &c - The door of
entrance is on the other side of the house in the bow, & coming up a flight
of steps plants in pots ranged on each side you enter an anteroom & through
that another where is the staircase, & the door leading into the library into
which we entered - It is a fine large room, embracing the recess between the
bows & one bow & looking out so charmingly! Quite surrounded with books -
Plenty of tables large writing tables & little stands & work tables & tables with books
on them & stand with flowers & easy chairs & couches - There is nothing formal
nor in the least showy many of the things we should call very simple even
plain but all is so comfortable & home like - At the further end is a very handsome
carved marble fire-place, & a cherry wood fire was blazing, & by the side was
Mrs. Elton to whom I must introduce you for I consider her a most remarkable
woman - She is short small & very lame she lost the use of her hips when a child
from some fever & cannot stir without a cane & great effort - It is quite painful
at first to see her walk - Yet she goes everywhere, & does every thing, I believe, but
dance, rides on horseback, drives, visits a great deal, & has a great deal of company; is
always well & strong, bright & agreeable & entertaining - With a great deal of literary ac-
quirement & talent - Her manner is short & abrupt, & quite startles one at first, for
she jerks out her sentences at you - But when you know her you must like her,
she is so entirely free from all formality & ceremony - Miss Marchmont, who with
her father were the only other guests that evening, was also sitting by the fire & we were
introduced & sat talking by the fire-light - Presently Mr. Elton came in - A tall
large splendid-looking Englishman - He was in a rough jacket (as they call the little
short coats) & had been out punning, & soon Mrs. Bentham & Dr. Gray arrived
having walked, & we sat talking, the servants having brought in candles, until the
dressing bell rang at 6 1/2, for their dinner hour is 7 - Then Mrs. Elton having shown
Mrs. Bentham the number of our rooms, for owing to her lameness she does not
go up stairs, she bidden Mrs. Bentham to show me the way, & we retired to our toilettes.
Such a fine large room - With such a gigantic bedstead; & most truly great toilet-
table before the bow at the end so as to command all the light in the day time.
Easy chairs & table with writing materials, & a washstand which certainly was
most abundantly furnished with great basin & little basin, & great pitchers & little
pitchers &c. &c. And then a large dressing-room all as complete down to writing table
with books on it for Dr. Gray - Then I saw the toilet table with the wax candles
lighted, brush & comb laid ready, dress laid out on the bed back, & shoes put for
one's hand I began to think it would be a nice thing for to have a maid especially
when she came in to fasten my dress put in pins & neatly &c. & more especially when
I came up to bed & found everything trod off in a hurry put neatly away, night cap
ready, & slippers put at one side, & everything arranged so nicely! - And all the time
we were there Mrs. Bentham's maid came in the same way, helped dress, put away
my bonnet if I had left it out, &c. &c. You may be sure I put on the low neck this time.

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And haddening down to dinner, had the honour of being handed in by Mr. Olive - The butler who hands the wine & takes the lead; was dressed in plain black with ^{white} neck-cloth - The two footmen in light shorts & long stockings: And the dishes were all handsome plate - After dinner the ladies went back to the library, passing through the drawing-room or rather music-room, a smaller room than the library, adjoining, & hung round with pictures - Coffee was served a tall footman handing the cups on a silver waiter, into which you put sugar & cream, & the butler following filled up from the silver coffee-pot which he carried. He drew round one of the tables, & presently were employed in ^{the} little fancy-work - Oh, we found the children when we came in - A fine looking boy of 10, dressed Highland fashion, with a petticoat of grey stuff falling straight in heavy plaits, a little coat of the same opening far enough in the throat just to show a very little of the shirt & white collar, turned over a dark rather loose fitting jacket - bare legs with ^{white} silk socks, & patent leather strapped slippers - Master Maundy Olive - Miss Alice Olive, a pretty little creature with the brightest blue eyes, & in a little tucked muslin skirt over blue silk, & blue silk polka waist trimmed with ribbon, also bare legs & silk socks - There was also a little cousin from London, a little boy rejoicing in the huge sack with fantastically broad belt & enormous buckle so common there - They were nice, pretty, & unaffected children, & the little boys felt to playing chess with great purity & earnestness - After they were gone to bed, the gentlemen came in - Coffee was served to them, & soon after tea was handed round, and in pleasant talk we wiled away the time till bed time - In the morning I was anxiously looking out to see if it were fair - Fortunately the sun shone bright, & arrayed in the simple morning costume of my striped silk with high-necked waist & belt half collar, & lace cap, quite smart enough for state at home, I descended to breakfast at 9 1/2 - The dining room looks out on again quite a different view - a little lake quite embowered in trees, some fine cedars & noble trees, distant hills in the back ground - After breakfast I found my letters by that week's mail in the library, (already acknowledged) & after enjoying them with Dr. Gray upstairs, put on my bonnet & coat to go out & see the green-houses &c - They lay at a little distance, quite concealed by trees & shrubbery from the house - Mr. & Mrs. Bentham joined us, & as we were going through the conservatory to our dining it began to rain - Fortunately it proved only a short shower, & satisfied itself for the day; which after that was most prosperous - Mr. Olive & Mr. Moreweather came soon after, & we went through the hot house, & the kitchen garden, & paperies, &c. - When we returned to the house the people were arriving for the Archery - There were Lady Gordon & the Misses Gordons & Mr. Cosmo Gordon - And Lady Cornwall & the Misses Cornwall, & Mr. & Mrs. Griffiths, Mrs. Crawford & the Misses Crawford, &c. &c. - The shooting ground was on the

lawn opposite the front door - where a beautiful turf stretched smoothly away bordered by fine trees - Here the targets were set up, & Mrs. Mowweather, master of ceremonies, having a list of the fair shooters & also of the gentlemen archers, each shot in turn 3 arrows at one target, & then crossing to that target & an account taken there they shot back to the other - Seats were placed at a safe distance where the lookers on sat - It was a very pretty sight! Some were quite graceful & shot very well, & being generally dressed in poke jackets & hats for the convenience of shooting it was quite picturesque -

After we got tired of looking some of us strolled away for a walk - Dr. Gray escorted the stout dowager Lady Gordon, & I went in an opposite direction with Mr. & Mrs. Griffiths & Mr. & Mrs. Kenham - Following the path up over the hills & through the woods, where we had some fine views, we were gone about an hour - On getting back we found them about going in to lunch - And Mrs. Olive warned us she should give us no more dinner that day - It was a very handsome collation with cold meats, pastries, jellies, &c. And handsome papers & fruit - And very sociable & pleasant.

The eldest Miss Gordon was a very lively amusing person, & I was quite surprised to find how easy & sociable all were - Lady Gordon & Mrs. Crawford seemed both to take quite a fancy to talking with me - After lunch they went out again to the shooting, & we went out some of the time & stand in the house part of the time as it grew cool - They all came in about 5 1/2, & at 6 a tea table ^{kind} spread in the stair-case hall, we stood round & took tea - And the prizes were distributed - Miss Mowweather the best shooter ^(lady) rec'd a pretty little miniature cup in gold, the foot a seal - Then the best gentleman shooter, the best shot of all, & the worst shooter all received. Then taking their carriages they departed, & left us the same party as the evening before - We had a very social evening, for I undertook to teach the children "Tommy come tickle me" - And that led to tricks at cards, & with figures, &c. &c. - Owing to the early dinner, cold meat was brought in for a little supper, & all being pretty well tired retired in good time - Think we passed a day without dressing! -

But having got to the end of my paper & my time I must say
Goodbye, dear Sue, pray give so much love to all from
Your ever affectionate Jeanie -



Gray, Jane Loring. 1850. "Gray, Jane Oct. 17, 1850 [to Loring]." *Asa and Jane Gray travel correspondence*

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