

Sontrolas House - Oct. 29th. 1855.

Dear father & mother, I am afraid I shall begin to grumble a little if the next mail does not give me the sight of the handwriting of at least one of you - I know you are both busy & have plenty to occupy all your time - But I am not always of a trusting disposition, & cannot be quite content with thinking that you love & remember me without seeing sometimes your written words - But I should be very ungrateful to complain, for I have received most kind & faithful letters from home, though Nancy & Lizzie Putnam are the only one out of my own immediate family who have written to me - John I count as one of you -

To continue the journal, which was dropped just after Mr. Crawford's accident - Saturday was a threatening day but still Mrs. Bentham & I ventured on a walk to the village (a mile is merely just a short run) And were honored by the shopman with a private view of "the fashions" up stairs, such as caps & bonnets, neck-ribbons & laces! But as they did not happen to be what we wanted, & we could not find what we did, we were obliged to satisfy him with exclamations on their brilliancy - But it was quite funny - Elizabeth's is the great shop for some miles round, & the farmers' wives & daughters come here to shop - Sunday was rather a blue day with Mrs. Gray - Unfortunately, in some clumsy manner, she entangled her foot in the bed curtains, & giving a sudden spring, down came the whole apparatus! The doing & confessing such a great piece of mischief is rather a damper on one's spirits! & I had a heavy cold & starved for it, & must confess I felt anything but lively - In the morning came our newspapers for some weeks past - Being sent to London originally, & then forwarded through the post, they were charged as letters, & we found it rather an expensive mode of conveyance, & a luxury which it were better to postpone - It is quite provoking that you may send a book, in a cover with the ends open, through the post for 6d. & we had to pay 16d. on 4 papers! They would not let me go to church, as they said it was cold sitting there, but in the afternoon we all had a long walk - It is quite striking to see how there are paths through woods, across fields, & in every direction, & still placed for the accommodation of foot passengers - No one seems to walk in the road if they can cross a field, whereas with us ^{the road} is the general path way - Then you come to a little cottage quite away in a lane by itself, with scarcely a horse-path leading to it, & embowered in trees & surrounded by shrubs, with an almost every house is quite on the road - And often only the back of the cottage is on the road & you must go round to the other side to find the door -

Monday we had quite a violent thunder shower accompanied by hail - It was
so dark that I could not read at 3 o'clock - And Mrs. Rankin announced
to me the sad fact that from the 20th. of November until some time
in January the sun set before 4 o'clock! And the shortest days, it does not rise
until after 8 - I think of that in London! They say that there go up
after ships & light candles at 3 o'clock - I am told since we are - the
the curate at Northchurch, & has another little thing to help out his salary -
Is that at almost all the churches round here they have service but once
a day. - Tuesday we had a fine walk again. The leaves are almost
gone, much sooner than came, but they are not so dull looking as I expected.
We miss the brilliant hues of our woods, but these clouds are soft & red -
We may well have it be like these places, softer colours but the scandalous
one by being so English about everything - I advise him to stay in England -
As for me, though there are things one admires very much, & many ways
in which their countries surpass us, for nothing is quite perfect, & much
prefer home - And I want to go to the fatherland but - I say and not
travelling about, & be constantly drawing comparisons in favor of other countries, that
so many Americans foolishly do, which is both in bad taste & sensible, nor
another need they be always running home down & admiring & superfluously,
as do these, everything foreign - I like a quiet life & respect for their land,
which is so deep that it can bear & even join in a better ridicule of politics,
I get more & admire it so well that he knows it as our own - And I
think in that way the English have the advantage, for they are so perfectly
convinced of the superior excellence of England & everything English, that any
doubt or misgiving is laid down to their ignorance & stupidity of the subject, &
they remain quite untouched - Our walk was up the gate house lane, &
we met Mrs. B. & saw much of Mrs. B. & her family, with him - Mrs.
B. is very sociable & agreeable - Wednesday we dined with Mrs.
& Mrs. B. & met there Mrs. & Mrs. Weston - It is something quite dif-
ferent from our state of things to see the same place, like the stony, walled
all over the country & in such remote places, & during a long time
in about the same style as in the cities - It is quite the custom too of every
day life & not extra for company - With us when people are quite back in the
country life is so simple - And then too the very marked distinction of class
which each seems justly to agree to - It is rather striking to meet an old man
or a woman who has been for a little while in the city, & they are so young & so in
familiar dress, & the same track their life - And it is very hard to make the
English understand how the distinctions are lost with us, & the state of our society
in which almost every man is generally busy at work, all day, for the benefit
of himself & family -

Thursday & Friday I did not go out, trying to mend up one old & little,
& so thread it up - It is very quiet & cold, only leaving me with a little relief
when it rains which seems always ready to try, I return from old & impudant
There are not much amusement - It is not either, for Friday it was quite strong,
I have plenty of sewing & keep me busy - Generally our walking has been well
done, but the last time they were wanted in Geneva they must have been
founded in the lake, & in London founded in a washing machine, for
the buttons were almost entirely gone from every article, & the porcelain
buttons break in half that they cut like glass, & I have spent hours in
darning the little cuts which had nipped new things & so on & so forth -
I have longed sometimes for help from your dear old paper, but, as for
many Remond's father work - And with writing & reading so, I am as
busy as a bee - Saturday I went with Mrs. Rankin for a little walk and
foundly enough it was! The soil & clay, & made when not a perfect picture -
Sunday General St. John's left off in good season, as there was no morning
until at 10 o'clock, & made to Abbey Inn, a fine old church about 2 1/2
miles off - But the name implies it was an old story which was ended &
survived ~~about~~ the time of Henry VII. & left it to ruin - In the time
of Charles the 1st the choir & transept were repaired & roofed in, & a
tower built, & it was plentifully endowed as a parish church - but it was
in good time, & that had done before service, & walk round the church,
& see the ruins of the old abbey, adjoining the church at one end, & two
pillars with their connecting arches, which mark where the nave was,
& by a ruined wall we could trace its length - It must have been very
large, & the low round Gothic arch points to a very early time for its building.
Only a small part, where choir & transept join, & pillars up for the organ, &
with old oak pews, some nicely carved, & in oak screen dividing the choir
also covered, & ornamented with the Royal arms, & gilt screen, & white line
monstrance, & three standing statues, & a small table backed with white
paving yellow &c. When the service was over, the pews were carried straight
across in the wide west oak screen, & in some half-burned time, some
ornamented churchwardens' most mistaken notions of neatness, white rails
at the inside of the pews, & the effect of the beautiful chancel, pillars
of the arches, & the carved carvings - And the most miserable pity is that
it is almost impossible to get off - the second best we saw attempting a fine
deal at his own expense, but at request hard, & some singing & some
much after the service we walked round the church - There were two parties of
of its height in arriving, they have been recently cracked for they had the under-
gone the cleaning process - The red seen below of at the light, the other, which had

once had fine bold features, had with time & hard usage lost its nose, so that its face had a queer look - It was a solemn thing though to see those old stone monuments, come down through so many generations & through such changes in the scenes around them, & one can only guess who were the old warriors they commemorate - There was also a stone coffin, the hollow for the body rudely cut so as to form a case for the body with a round place for the head - And a portion of the lid was left, with a large head carved in bas-relief on it - There were old gravestones in the floor quite worn smooth, & in the wall a tablet commemorating a Troland Pendamore who had restored, repaired & endowed the church in Charles' time - It was a solemn & interesting thought in evening to think how many centuries people had come on Sunday to worship God in that place - The old mailed knights, & in later times the cavaliers, & so on year after year - And it must have a reverent feeling that one's ancestors had worshipped there for years - How many many associations must cling around these old English parish churches! - As we walked home & admired the beautiful situation, we could not but agree the old monks knew where pleasant views & lovely sites were - Such a sweet valley below, & such soft hills stretching away, & so snugly sheltered by the hill top behind - Dr. Gray walked again in the afternoon to Ely's Hamlet, but I let the morning suffice - You cannot tell what pleasure it is to me to be able to walk so again - It is like getting free from prison! I can walk 2 or 3 miles & think it nothing - Yesterday morning (Monday) after writing all the morning, we received at lunch a message saying Mr. Noble would call in a few minutes to drive us to Kilpeck - Though the sky looked rather threatening, well armed with cloaks & shawls, we set off, Mr. Noble, Dr. Gray & I in his little carriage - Kilpeck is a most singular little church, even even than Abbey Dore, & in a tolerably good state of preservation - It is much carved & ornamented, & it seems strange to find such a good specimen of early Norman in this little out of the way place - They account for it that it is close to the ruins of Kilpeck castle, & was probably built as a sort of chapel to the castle - There is a fine window towards the castle, the columns carved as if of braided cord; & ^{around} most grotesque heads round around close under the eaves as if supporting the roof - The inside is sadly out of repair, though the chancel has been restored; there is a double chancel, the farther one semicircular & with its arches toothed, as they call it, (that is surrounded with pointed work in that fashion) the effect was quite original - But it is a shame these little churches are not kept in better order, & all have been barbarously white-washed inside & out! They have begun to attempt to scrape it off Kilpeck & part has been done - There were fine old yew trees around the church - In

was so wet that we did not try to go to the ruins of the castle, but there is very little left of them - It rained hard before we got back to Ventanas, but we escaped getting wet - Mr. & Mrs. Weston dined with us - I must say I don't like this English fashion of wearing a warm dress high in the throat & with long sleeves all day, & then at night to dress up in short sleeves & low neck, & at most a light shawl over one's shoulders - Thin shoes & stockings too - There is no use in wearing warm the first part of the day, it only adds to the exposure - I find the climate exceedingly chilly - Mr. Frole described Mr. Weston as a "fossil man" meaning one who brought all the feelings, opinions & conditions of the last two or three hundred years to the present time, that is thinks everything good as it was, & changes only ruin & degenerate - Don't fancy though he is an old man, he is quite young still & pleasant & agreeable, but has a theory & facts for everything, neither of which, facts or theory is it worth while to dispute, because it is only breath & time thrown away - His wife is most quiet in manner, & has many handsome things in her face - Fine eyes, fine hair, good complexion &c - But there always seems a want of harmony in an English face - the parts are not well proportioned & well matched - Like their dress, often handsome in each article, but such want of taste in the combination! - Even Mrs. Bentham who generally dresses very handsomely, sometimes puts such strange colours together - We had a very pleasant evening -

Wednesday The mail today brought me a letter from Sue, with a line from Patrick - She gives me some particulars about grandfather - Dear grand-father: how much I think of him! - I am glad to hear that little Charlie is well again - Many thanks Patrick for the little note - How I enjoy the little fellows' speeches! - And I would give a good deal to let eyes on them - Sue says, father, you are in town - I sometimes try to picture you all - But the very change of being without the Wednesday meeting seems to make such a difference that I can hardly tell when & how to fancy you together - If you have a regular day of meeting, pray let me know - I say all the extravagances about Jenny Lind, wh. truly do sound ridiculously across the water, on to Barnum's shoulders - He has many sins to bear in my account - But though I can well imagine her superlatives, I wish people would manifest their delight decorously - I am very glad Sue heard her thought - I am afraid it is more than I shall; or much music either, for the opera season does not begin in London until March,

& the tellers are so numerous that I do not know that I can afford to go - They say the Italian peasants, that is, so lately, are very poor - and that that is now in this -

Yesterday we dined at Mr. B's. Riding thither, being duly arrayed, in a fly to get there, at 5. The road there is none of the best, leading between very high banks, very narrow, & hence a stream is fed, for there is no bridge - It is the place where I told you we walked over & is so full of old-fashioned furniture - It is a fine house, having been originally a little of your kind of the General's estate, & attached to the little church next - The rooms are quite small & steep up & steep down - 1/2 p from one to the other - I then went to High Wycombe.

I do not know where there - Mrs. Langford is a sociable, chatty, pleasant, lively person & in manners & look put me in mind of Miss's cousin, Joseph Dandridge, from whom - Only there was not so much flourish - Mrs. L. was a lady in spectacles, dressed in a marvellously fine pink satin brocade, with plenty of gold bangles & chains, had a pretty hand & an easy neck, & talked quite blue, unassuming & enchanted, turning upon me with sudden bursts, & waving hand, & throwing aside her head most strikingly. Give what a wicked description! She was pleasant though, though I got tired of sitting by her - Mrs. L., a sister of Mrs. B, was quite a comfort, most friendly & cheerful, sweet, & very gentle in her manners & tone - Mrs. Weston's face shone upon me, she has a beautiful hand and arm - He untripped in the hall an awkward fashion, I think, & were ushered into the little sitting room - Beside the fireplace I have enumerated, Mrs. Weston's little girl, 12 years old, rather - They are in mourning for Mrs. Weston's mother, the child was dressed in a white dress, with broad black sash, & one sleeve tied up with black ribbon - A little taller & young, being one ahead to the child, there to take it to himself, I made her to come out independently - There are some fine chairs in this room, antique in shape, & polished, flower patterns, with various colored broods - You may be sure they were all real, for Mrs. B. is a great connoisseur in such articles, but neither does he like to have them repaired, so that there is often a strange mixture, the elegant chair with such shabby seats, and paper walls & Kew Gardens glass looked queerly with old carvings & quaint tiles. The walls were unadorned quite up with dark red panels, & so was the dining room - Mrs. Langford handed me in to dinner - The dining room would be very fine were it a little larger, but it is too full with red & handsome carved pieces - A very fine fire place, & old auditions & a

new wood fire - Fine carved tables against the walls, each chair was quite a treasure & high-backed & carved elaborately, & the arm chair was quite pictures - The dining table was of massive, beautiful polished oak - The curtains were gotten, & the chandelier was, it is that the shades & drew the curtains quite across the windows, which was a very comfortable look, & the yellow curtains in this room finely set off & belov'd the dark oak - The fire on the table was quite antique, long narrow, stony, a fine little cutlery, & the silver was of an old pattern - There were two draught cases had silver cups - Herefordshire is a great silver country - When coffee was handed round, as was ladies after we had retired, I was introduced into the supper room, it was like little antique cabinet nicely carved - Mrs. Weston looked everything sweet quietly - And when the dinner is gotten up with things, such as vegetables, Mrs. Weston looked - After a chatting, & a comfortable evening we were safe home by 11 -

Today we go to Black Brook, Mr. Crawford's place, to dinner & pass the night, & I do not think we shall be home in time for me to write any more tomorrow - The day which has been threatening, seems to promise a little brighter, but it is almost dark and by 5 o'clock - Mrs. B. & Mr. B. & Mr. Gray walk, 7 miles - Mrs. B. is the maid to in the fly in time to arrive when we get there -

To dear father & mother, I cannot say good bye - I need not say how much love to all, it there cannot be any feeling

Of your daughter, Jane -

Thursday Morn. Oct. 31st -

I am back in time, dear father & mother to give a short account of our visit to Black Brook - We had a pleasant ride & got there about dusk - Lady Cornwall & Miss Cornwall arrived just before us, & Sir Robert Cornwall & Miss Cornwall came just as we had gone up stairs to Kew - And when we came down we found a Mr. Stanhope, a young clergyman, also there - Mrs. Crawford appeared with her son in a shag, he is a tall, good looking man with gray hair, & a very decided Scotch accent, showing plainly his origin - Mrs. Crawford must have been very pretty, & is still handsome, though very stout - Miss Crawford has an intelligent face, & is very agreeable, with a good deal of self-control - Mrs. Eleanor Crawford, the

younger daughter, about 10 is the prettiest person I have seen in England -
She is quite plump, with a lovely neck & shoulders, & dark hair & eyes & a
sweet childlike face - There is also a son whom we saw, quite a youth &
just going into the army - ~~The~~ Lady Cornwall is very deaf & I did not try to
speak to her - The Miss Cornwalls are not handsome, but good looking, with
pretty necks & arms - The young Sir better is nothing remarkable in appear-
ance - Mrs. Stanhope is very pleasant & agreeable - I first opened my eyes
as to the rules of precedence here, when I saw the young Baronet hand
in Mrs. Crawford, I had quite forgotten about it before - My lot fell to young
Walter Crawford - The dinner service was real India China & very
handsome - I have been generally surprised that their dinner & break-
fast sets were so ordinary, the tea & dessert are generally French - The plate
was very handsome also - The coffee & tea services were very handsome
also, ~~the~~ & the cups were a lovely blue - But the furniture I do not
think is generally as handsome as with us - There are more mixtures, some
very handsome & some ordinary - And they do not have everything to match,
or, I fancy, renew it so often - The carpets remain though a good deal worn
& faded - The furniture is not recovered even should it be faded; & they
cover very much with patch - But there were beautiful inlaid India
cabinets, tables, &c at Mrs. Crawford's, the curtains were of very handsome
red damask, &c - I think this ~~still~~ gives more an air of comfort, & as if
things were used - And they do not seem to be turned aside because they go
out of fashion - The first part of the evening was passed in talking & in look-
ing over Punch &c - I could not but notice what good English, & without the exag-
geration so common with us, the young ladies spoke - And so much command
of words too - And yet I should not think them wonderfully well educated
or well-informed - Miss Crawford though, is very intelligent - I think though,
that the style of conversation is more for effect than with us, much reply
& smart remark seems to be the thing, & to be what attracts the gentlemen,
you do not hear so much of long conversation - Ergo I shall never succeed
in English society, for smartness is not my forte - This morning we
went after breakfast to see Miss Crawford's little jernery - The ladies here
do a great deal of garden-work themselves - Another advantage of their
damp climate, for they can work out doors so much better - Then we went
to the green-house, & then into the stable to see her pony "Lady-bird" -
Then returning to the house the fly was ordered, the gentlemen set
off to walk back, & we, ^{driving} ~~riding~~, arrived about an hour or more ago -
Mrs. Bentham found a letter from her brother announcing his arrival
by the last steamer with a Canadian bride - It seems it has been a long
affair, & that she is much younger than Sir Harford Trydges - They went at
once to his place, wh. is in Wales, & Mrs. B. hopes they may soon come to make a visit -



Gray, Jane Loring. 1850. "Gray, Jane Oct. 29, 1850 [to Loring]." *Asa and Jane Gray travel correspondence*

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