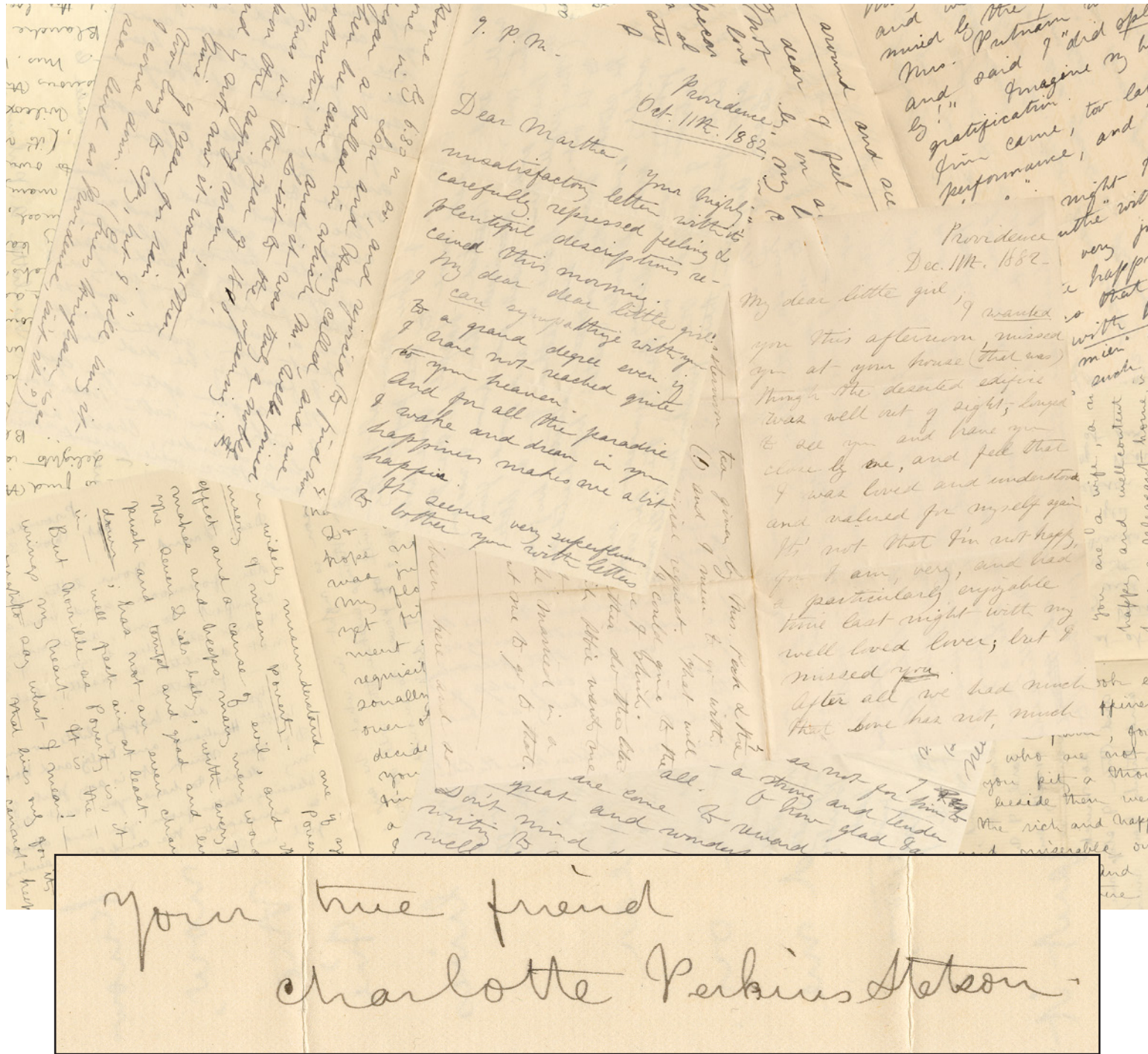


Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Lost Letters to Martha Luther Lane



A large cache of handwritten letters from Charlotte Perkins Gilman to Martha Luther Lane, Charlotte's dearest friend and confidante. The correspondence, thought to have been destroyed or lost, consists of 47 complete letters and 5 incomplete letters, 52 letters together totaling 323 manuscript pages, along with a separately signed and illustrated four-page insert, and a humorous autograph poem. The letters date from the most important, adversarial period in Gilman's life: beginning in October 1882 through 1889, they document her youthful happiness, ambition, and flourishing love for Martha; and her subsequent struggle to overcome post-partem depression and mental illness.

It was during this seven-year period that Gilman became engaged and married Charles Walter Stetson, gave birth to their daughter Katherine, and wrote passionate letters to Martha as a means to break-out of her ensuing “wild” post-partum depression and an unhappy marriage. Many critics consider this period the crucible which forged Gilman’s uniquely modern voice and directly informed her masterwork: *The Yellow Wallpaper*. The letters reveal the extent to which Charlotte adhered to her pact of “mutual understanding” with Martha, in which the two bound themselves to complete honesty in “word and deed”. The depth of Charlotte’s despair and anger is thus revealed in all of her intimate correspondence with Martha: in one letter (Sept. 30th, 1885), she admits to striking her baby; and one gets a glimmer of Martha’s reactions in subsequent letters the distraught Gilman references.

Charlotte’s relationship with Martha is recognized as the most important in Gilman’s life, beginning while both were adolescents in Providence, Rhode Island, and continuing throughout their lives. In many letters Charlotte employs tongue-in-cheek baby talk and humorous rhymes directed at Martha, along with numerous terms of endearments. One letter from August 1885 includes a Limerick Gilman wrote for Eddie Jackson, a child she served as governess. There are also examples of word games and other forms of levity, but it is Gilman’s often brutal honesty that stands out in all of her letters. She did not soften her words for the sake of Martha’s more gentle nature and conservative views, nor did she shrink from the implications of her most radical views.

The letters are illustrated with pen & ink drawings by Gilman, including some with ironical and humorous drawings of Martha, of Martha and her husband, and also of herself and Martha. One depicts a sapling bent and tethered to the ground, drawn to illustrate the depth of her depression. In total there are about 20 individual drawings, both large and small, most drawn within the body of the text.

A remarkable collection of letters that will render all existing biographies of Gilman obsolete, and fully deserving of publication. Excerpts from each letter follows:

1. ALS. Octavo. 8pp. Providence / Oct. 11th 1882

“I wake and dream in your happiness.”

“Dear Martha, / Your highly unsatisfactory letter with its carefully repressed feeling and plentiful descriptions received this morning. / My dear dear little girl! I can sympathize with you to a grand degree even if I have not reached quite to your heaven. And for all the paradise I wake and dream in your happiness ...”

Charlotte continues to jest with Martha about her newly married state (Martha married Charles A. Lane on October 5th 1882), and goes on to describe her relations with Walter and Walter’s family, and her time with friends who have called in on her. Near the end of the letter she writes:

“Don’t mind dear if you don’t feel like writing to me; I shan’t fuss a bit as you well know. You and I can live and trust in silence, waiting for occasion to draw on the reserve ...”

2. ALS. Octavo. 8pp. Providence / Dec. 11th 1882

“Work presses ... I have got to where I have ideas ... now I want to originate.”

“My dear little girl; / I wanted you this afternoon, missed you at your house (that was) though the deserted edifice was well out of sight, longed to see you and have you close to me, and feel that I was loved and understood and valued for myself again. It’s not that I’m not happy, for I am, very, and had a particularly enjoyable time last night with my well loved lover; but I missed you. / After all we had much that love has not, much that few people ever find in all their lives,

much that I shall remember in my deepest heart for years and years. / There was such a perfection of undoubting peace in our companionship; such wordless deep reliance on each other's truth; such utter absence of and of the pressing fears and questions which love brings ...”

[p. 3:] “My dear girl I am coming to see you on Tuesday the 26th of Dec. 1882. Just you write to me ... I will obey ...”

[pp. 5-6:] “... Work presses, of course. It grows rather tiresome too. You see I have got to where I have ideas, and think of lots of pretty things that I might be making now instead of this ceaseless copying of little studies. Last year it was well enough, but now I want to originate. I'm getting real handy with oils too.”

[pp. 7-8:] “... Now my dear I'm really too sleepy to write any more. Please be sure and send the most plain and explicit directions as to just where I shall go to when arriving ... I'm going to bring down some cloth and do some sewing, bring down Shelly & Browning & read to you, and just bring myself. Please don't expect me to go out or to see folks any more than is necessary. I do want to see you ...”

3. ALS (illustrated). Octavo. 8pp. (part in rhyme) Providence / Jan. 3rd 1883

“I begin to see light ahead in many ways”

“Dear Martha, / I am well aware, that all your grief begun, when I myself away did tear on Saturday at 1. That I'm forlorn, of you bereft I need not indicate; But my adventures since I left I will proceed to state ...”

Charlotte continues her account in rhyme and in high spirits. She then recounts meeting up with Walter, and discusses her ongoing work. She is optimistic about her continuing relations with Walter, who believes that he is on the threshold of a promising career.

[p. 6:] “... Tuesday night I went to see “Iolanthe” [Gilbert and Sullivan] with Walter. It was very jolly & pleasant, and the happiest part of it was that I so enjoyed being with him. I like the “mien” with which he enters such places. I like to look around and see him there. My dear I feel happy ... I begin to see light ahead in many ways ...”

4. ALS. Octavo. 8pp. Providence / April 9th 1883

“I should want ... a room of my own”

“My dear little girl that was, / I am just home, and have read your letter. I'm always glad to hear from you dear. / And I'm always glad you're happy. / So happy, little girl! I wish I could have done it for you dear – or had some part in it. But that's a mean feeling, clear selfishness, you see. It ought to be enough to know that you have the joy, what difference does the other make? ...”

[p. 2:] “... How high one has to get to be beyond the pain of all these other pains and one's own too. / Oh, I am so glad for you!”

Charlotte goes on to reflect on her work: “I couldn't do the Harper thing, dear. I can't draw yet” and on mutual friends (including their engagements), and tells of her own marriage plans:

[pp. 5-6:] “... Indeed I do remember when we picked the sweet-grain seed. One of our last walks I think, if not the last. / Nothing makes up for you. / / / You ask when I am going to be married. Not for a year at least. I am going away. Going to work as some sort of teacher or companion as far off as possible for the coming fall & winter. / Beyond that my plans will depend on circumstances. / Trust me, love me, pity me, and don't talk about it!”

[p. 7:] "... I should want 4 or 5 dollars a week, a room of my own, and not over 9 hour's work a day. Intelligent family preferred."

5. ALS. Octavo. 3pp. Providence / May 20th 1883

"... Dear, I am coming to Boston Monday June 4th ... I want to call on Dr. Keller ... and I want to see Mary Channing ... and besides these various matters I would like if I can find time for so trivial a matter to make a passing call on you ..."

Charlotte here mentions Dr. Keller, a physician she later sees during her depression who tells her that it is all nerves, an unsatisfactory response as far as Charlotte is concerned. This shows Keller was an acquaintance of some sort, more social.

6. ALS (illustrated). Octavo. 4pp. 207 Angell St. Prov. Thurs. Aug. 16th 1883

"My little Marfa wants anover letter, and she shall have it ... I received rather a blue letter from your spouse the other day (as to paper.) Otherwise it was gay ... he informed me that the babe is nourished from the maternal fount and did not feed upon the cow. / I am glad, and hope the fount will hold out; proving to be a perennial spring as it were. / Wherefore will the infant [?] become plump in the extreme so that his like shall not be seen in the land ..."

This letter features two illustrations of Martha's new baby boy: the first shows him "plump in the extreme" with a mace in hand; the other shows him enthroned upon a pedestal and alter, with an endless line of worshipers lying prostrate before him. After being critical (with jest) of society's and parents' conventions about newborn children, Charlotte writes above her second illustration: "Now I feel like a hateful and invidious Christian monarch smashing up the idols of the misguided heathen."

7. ALS (illustrated). Octavo. 4pp. Aug. 17th 1883. Friday / 207 Angell St. Providence

"Good morning shigen, / Did you ever play that game beginning 'A good fat hen. Two ducks and a good fat hen? Three screaming wild geese, two ducks, and a good fat hen.' etc etc. ..."

Charlotte jests throughout, including a description of "a most stupid tea party" in which she and friends played word games. She includes her own, with sentences beginning with numbers that contain the same number of words sharing the same first letter. The last page features an illustration of a modern female angel wearing a monocle.

8. ALS. Octavo. 11pp. Sat. Oct. 27th 1883

"And something must be done, and something can be done, even by one woman."

"Dear Martha / If I write to you but little now it is not because I care less for you – that my eyes showed yesterday; but because I hardly care to talk to you of the things I think of most ..."

Charlotte acknowledges Martha's satisfaction as a wife, a mother, etc., and gives a detailed and frank account of the driving forces in her life:

[pp. 1-2:] "The pain and wrong and trouble of life are to you, real doubtless in a way; and yet unreal, unknown, unburdensome. Now my life personally is sad and unfulfilled in many ways; and more than that and worse is my ever growing sense of the wrong and wild unhappiness in the world about me ... Suppose you read of thousands of young girls

in New York making shirts at six cents a (day, an) piece, and find the thread ... I read it with broken voice and tear filled eyes – feeling what it means ...”

[p. 5:] “You know how widespread is business dishonesty, political dishonesty, marital dishonesty, literary dishonesty, and so on and on. And, speaking of dishonesty, you know what Society is. You know all this, but you say – ‘I cannot help it, one can do nothing, there is much good here also; and you think of pleasanter things and nothing is done. / (I’m not blaming you dear, please don’t think it; I only want to show where I am -)

[p. 6:] “I come home and out of my window see a hatters unkempt girl piching cinders on her knees, and hear one child cry to another ‘God damn you to hell!’ ...”

[pp. 7-8:] “Some there are – some still who live, who work, who try to grow and help others grow. / And God is. And sometime all will be well. But meanwhile all this is true, written in hot letters ... And something must be done, and something can be done, even by one woman ... And what do I mean to do? / Simply this. Live honest and pure and firm and upright among those who are not – not giving an inch to the worlds demands. Is starvation a necessary concomitant of business honesty? Starve then. Does my living as I feel to be right cost me my friends? Let such ‘friends’ go. And if losing them loses money and advancement? No matter ...”

9. ALS. Octavo. 10pp. Providence / Sat. Nov. 3rd 1883

“Emerson is right in what he says.”

“Dear Friend, / Your letter came yesterday forenoon; and was a joy and comfort to me, as showing that I am still dear to you ... You dear happy little woman! With Husband and Baby and Home! Do you think it is any part of my desire to have you cast these blessing-duties from you and attempt to ameliorate the conditions of sewing girls in New York? ...”

Charlotte continues to reflect on the issues raised in her previous letter, and Martha’s replies:

[p. 3:] “You widely misunderstand me if you think by misery I mean poverty. Poverty is both an effect and a cause of evil, and it is poverty that makes and keeps many men worse than beasts ... But horrible as Poverty is, it is not that that wrings my heart. It is the – O for words strong enough to say what I mean! – the hideous folly, the selfishness that lives only for its own delight ... Emerson is right in what he says ...”

10. ALS. Octavo. 8pp. Dec. 11th 1883 / Providence

“I mean to write only hot truths bravely spoken; to write for the sake of saying something worth while ... And some time far away maybe I shall be heard.”

“Mine dear little Marfa ...”

Charlotte describes herself in the moment: “cozily ensconced in the middle room; with a lamp on one side and a stove on the other whereby to keep warm,” and goes into detail about the current state of her house and what she is wearing. She tells Martha that: “I think I’ll drop the social reform question ... for the present ...” but that she intends to talk to her on the subject, and that she will: “write more bye and bye. A kind of Learned Female Argument by correspondence ...” She then abruptly changes the subject:

[p. 6:] “Say! Do you remember a small poem of mine beginning / “In duty, bound. A life hemmed in whichever way the spirit turns to look, etc. etc. ? ... I wrote one of that description in the fall of ’81 – or winter; and finding that two years had not hurt it I sent it gaily about to divers periodicals which amicably refused it, until *The Woman’s Journal* took pity on

me and accepted the offering ... It's a good paper, organ of a cause I believe in; and appropriate setting to the verses. / No pay, but that's no matter; I'm glad to begin to find a voice ... I do not hope ever to make much by writing, for I shan't write 'saleable articles'. I mean to write only hot truths bravely spoken; to write for the sake of saying something worth while ... And some time far away maybe I shall be heard."

11. ALS. Octavo. 4pp. Thurs. Jan. 24th 1884 / Providence

"Dear Martha; / The substance of this is mostly printed above ..." [Letterpress:] "I hope you have your health, and are enjoying yourself" *Our Mutual Friend*.

Charlotte is happy about her upcoming marriage to Walter in May, and that her: "various 'pomes' are printed ... if you want to buy a Woman's Journal ... you may have the proud joy of seeing my illustrious name therein."

12. ALS (illustrated). Octavo. 8pp. Mon. Feb. 11th 1884

"Dear Martha, I am settled down as I am almost every night, at the long school table ..."

Charlotte announces the planned date for her marriage and the possibility of obtaining a small apartment overlooking the water. She draws a map of the proposed house along with a second small illustration of the storage attic. She further includes a suggestion for a wedding present that is affordable, "such as a Japanese match box - (10 cts!)"

13. ALS (illustrated). Octavo. 7pp. Fri. March 21st 1884 / Providence

"Dear little Martha, August and venerated Housewife, severe Matron, careworn Mother, and Friend of My Youth, Hail! ..."

This letter features a small illustration of a newly purchased butter pot. Charlotte explains that her new home is being completed before her marriage to Walter, who recently had an exhibition which was warmly received but less lucrative than he would have liked. They accepted China as payment for one of his paintings, which Charlotte takes delight in describing. Charlotte then turns her attention to Martha:

[p. 5]: "... neffer you mind not writing, I know you love me. My 'affairs matrimonial' as I have intimated in the first part of this letter; progress finely ..."

[p. 7]: "... You dear little pussy, I'd like to see you this minute, and C. A. Lane might protest as he would, I would kiss you. / 'Course you love me! Why so do I; love you I mean. Didn't we use to? ..."

14. ALS. Octavo. 3pp. April 11th 1884

A short note wherein Charlotte chides Martha for not being able to visit her. She concludes:

"When you say 'you come and see me' do you mean alone? Merhaps my dear, merhaps? I am going to be married and have no time to spend chattering with little girls like you who don't know anything about it. Goodbye ... / I love you dear."

15. ALS (illustrated). Octavo. 8pp. Home. Mon. May 5th 1884

"This is my first letter under the ... signature ... Charlotte Anna Perkins Stetson!"

“My dear Martha, This is my first letter under the following signature, I am happy ... I love and am loved; need I say more to you?”

Charlotte gives a detailed description of her new home and of her feelings being there for the first time after her marriage. She writes about the wedding, the details of her dress and the material she used to make it (along with an illustration of what it looked like). She outlines the cost of the wedding party and refers to family and friends who attended, including the groom's parents, her mother and her aunt. She also illustrates a couple who “stuck their heads out of the bay window and congratulated us warmly as we passed” She encloses a poem [not here present] “from one of my new books,” and signs her new name in a bold cursive script: “Charlotte Anna Perkins Stetson!”

16. ALS. Octavo. 7pp. Wayland St. Providence / Sun. June 8th 1884

“My dear little Martha, I sit serenely at my lovely desk. My lord slumbers ...”

Charlotte replies to several of Martha's questions: giving more details about her house and new domestic relations with Walter, including what she can see outside: “I can ... look out of the south window ... and see a wide stretch of dark wrinkled water and all down the middle of it a great glory of moonlight ...” and she takes pride in being able to “receive” guests, serving them lemonade on hot nights.

17. ALS. Octavo. 4pp. Mon. July 21st 1884

“Dear Martha; I can date this letter with approximate correctness as you see; but the address is another matter altogether. I don't know where I am, but within an hour's from Red Bridge ... comfortably ensconced among the roots of a great chestnut ...”

Charlotte is still enjoying married life, telling Martha that: “Housekeeping flourishes, and I kin cook” and that she can now afford (with her own money) subscriptions to: “the Century, Nation, and Harper's Weekly.”

18. ALS. Octavo. 3pp. Wayland St. Providence Thurs. Aug. 7th 1884

Charlotte inquires about seeing Dr. Keller, and if Martha can put her up:

“... Could you bed & board me for one night, possibly two, next week? Or better later? I may put it off till September. But I'm coming sometime, and I love you ...”

19. ALS. Octavo. 4pp. Wayland St. Providence / Tues. Aug. 12th 1884

“Dear little Marfa, I dreamed about you last night”

“... and it made me happy, We were rowing together and sleeping together and having delightful times ...”

Another spirited letter, Charlotte writes about her upcoming visit: “Expect me like an avalanche from Mon. to Sat.”, and talks about a painting Walter is working hard to complete for the Mechanics Fair.

20. ALS. Octavo. 4pp. Wayland St. Providence R.I. Mon. Nov. 17th 1884 – (To “Miss Alden”).

“My once boasted physical energy I conclude to have been mainly dependent on mental force ... it proved fatally inefficient in the task of building a baby.”

Written to one “Miss Alden” (a pet name for Martha?), Charlotte discusses her pregnancy and her current reading:

[pp. 1-3:] My once boasted physical energy I conclude to have been mainly dependent on mental force ... it proved fatally inefficient in the task of building a baby and doing anything whatever beside. And lo! the demon Nausea laid hold upon me ... Therefore waxed I thin and cadaverous ... and whatsoever action I engaged in, mental or physical, truly it laid me by the heels in no time ...”

[p. 3:] “But now I’m better ... and am at present reading just for an appetizer, divers works on Free Trade and Political Economy ...”

21. ALS (illustrated). Octavo. 11pp. Wayland St. Providence R.I. / Thurs. Nov. 20th 1884

“When this is all over and I realize myself again, then I will work.”

“Am getting quite learned in the technical terms of Political Economy.”

Charlotte laments her friend Harry Manchester’s mental condition that landed him in an asylum; she describes “Alphas” (long Johns) which she illustrates; she makes frequent references to how the pregnancy is effecting her; and she discusses her current studies in Political Economy:

[p. 5:] “Bye and bye, I hope direly; when this is all over and I realize myself again, then I will work ...”

[pp. 6-8:] “My principle study lately has been Free Trade ... with my usual process I am diligently ‘reading up’ on the subject. I want now to find the best book for Protection, as the other side grows wearisome ... I used to talk about it long ago ... I settled the question then, as one of right, of universal justice; but lately I’ve had new incitement; and am becoming convinced that like most things that are right it is wisest – pays best. Am getting quite learned in the technical terms of Political Economy ...”

She also discusses a lecture series she attended on the subject at Brown, and praises her family friend Rowland G. Hazard: “Mr. Hazard, wealthy woolen manufacturer that he is, has come out strongly against the tariff; and it rejoices me to find one man in this position who can see beyond his nose.”

22. ALS. Octavo. 15pp. Wayland St. Providence R.I. Tues. Jan. 13th 1885

“Please little girl don’t call me names ‘cause I haven’t written before!”

Another long letter written over a few days, in which Charlotte addresses a wide range of topics: Walter’s trip to New York, Martha’s efforts to help her get what she needs for the coming child: “I don’t believe babies need all that is spent on them” and her ongoing work:

“I’ve got lots of ideas cooking, but dreary me! The time to write them is not yet. There was a friend of Walter’s here not long ago, with whom I conversed to such effect that he sent me a letter in hot speed to explain certain of his positions and opinions he feared I had misunderstood. I answered so clearly and conclusively that Walter praised the letter highly, just as a ‘work’. The man sent back a most superfluous and irrelevant reply ... if I had time I’d like to really ‘correspond’ with him.”

She also discusses the election of 1884: “By the late national disgrace I mean the world spectacle of a nation like this – Men – Christian, Civilized, Intelligent Men by the million; being reduced to the helpless and pitiful alternative of ‘a choice between two evils’ as an instance of popular government.”

And she recommends several poems and ballads suitable for a course on English poetry that Martha is teaching for younger readers: “ ‘Memorabilia’ [Robert Browning] is short and it would do them good to understand it if they could ... I think the mental jump required to reach a not overplain meaning is very enjoyable, especially to a young person. And Browning is so almost wholly that way ... I suppose those damsels are hardly up to the music of verse or the depths of glorious passion ... ‘Gold Hair, A Story of Pornic’ might pass ... Yea, I’ll lend you the ‘Snark’ [Lewis Carroll] with much joy, and ‘Phantasmagoria’ too ...”

23. ALS. Octavo. 4pp. No. 1 Wayland St. Providence R.I. Thurs. March 19th 1885

“Martha Luther Lane! / You have been and gone and done and had a photograph of that baby and haven’t sent me one !!! Poor me, what hasn’t got no baby at all ...”

Charlotte continues to jest with Martha about the impending birth of her child (March 23rd):

“Spend my whole time in eager expectation of a ‘pain’. Don’t have any. Am mad. Meanwhile the tender infant ... comports himself in a manner so rude and unseemly that my anger is kindled against him. Huge bony creature! I suppose he will look as soft and innocent as a caterpillar when once in my avenging clutches ...”

24. ALS. Octavo. 7pp. No. 1 Wayland St. Prov. R.I. Sun. April 26th 1885

“She ... glows with content for an hour or so; but then ... she moaneth and doubleth up with an ancient melody of our inward agony.”

“Dear Martha, I believe I owe you three letters more or less; but then you and I scorn such paltry insinuations ...”

Written about a month after the birth of her daughter Katherine, Charlotte’s impending post-partum depression (and psychosis) formed the basis of *The Yellow Wallpaper*:

“... Walter and I have found the baby – well, engrossing. And she’s a good baby and a well baby too. Seems to me there ought to be a ‘course’ for all girls meaning to marry, whereby they might gain some knowledge of how to treat wee infants. At this late day I begin to feel that there are some things I don’t know ... She eats like a – Charlotte and glows with content for an hour or so; but then, if awake, she moaneth and doubleth up with ‘an ancient melody of our inward agony’ ... Baby cried and I had to fly. She is not very well I’m afraid. Merhaps my milk is too rich. Merhaps she eats too much ...”

25. ALS. Octavo. 8pp. No. 1 Wayland St. Providence R.I. July Wed. 8th 1885 / Wed. July 15th 1885

“I feel as though I were drifting open eyed into insanity ... The moral sense slumbers.”

“Dear friend, / I am so long out of writing that it is not easy now. Hardly a letter have I written in this past year ... How I would like to have you with me for a while! Then we could talk. / The more I think of what our union once was, the more lovely and perfect it seems to me. A happiness wholly unalloyed ...”

[pp. 2-3:] “Perhaps I can tell you a little more coherently now what is the matter with me; or rather what the danger is ... After a day or two of the blind misery in which I wrote you last, or less time if it is intense, something seems to give way and I feel as though I were drifting open eyed into insanity ... The moral sense slumbers; there is a curious inconsequence of ideas; I can feel them running around loose in my head ...”

[pp. 4-5:] “What seems most suspicious to me is that I no longer care much about whether I live or die, do much or little, cause pain or pleasure ... But there seems to be a bit of solid brain left from which I feel the growing disintegration and see that something must be done ...”

[pp. 6-7:] “Wed. July 15th 1885. / I feel sure the brain is somewhat affected. My memory is nothing to what it was ... I am now reading novels and stories steadily, and Walter reads to me; under which treatment I at least begin to want to recover ...”

26. ALS (illustrated). Octavo. 6pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Prov. R.I. Tues. Aug. 11th 1885

“I hold him or her who makes those happier who are already here more valuable by far than a mere producer of more life.”

“The baby is well and happy. I endeavored to smash her by slipping on the back steps the other day; but only succeeded in bumping her nose.”

“Dear Martha ... It must be immensely peaceful and comforting to feel that one is living the right life. I know it is, for I felt so once.”

Charlotte responds in detail (and pointedly) to Martha’s attempts to help her overcome her depression:

[p. 1:] “I wish you would explain how you ‘know’ that the consciousness of similar weakness, perhaps failure, is capable of more good ...” [p. 2:] “What do you mean by ‘good’ ...” [p. 3:] “... and I question if charity with such foundation does good. It is the grand love of an unstained soul that is really charitable ... / “Am superior in some respects, and you say I have been forced to own myself inferior in others – and vital ones. / If you mean by ‘vital’ merely necessary to life you are right. Ability to live and produce young is nature’s first demand of course. But if you mean most beneficial to the world at large and so most worth desiring, I deny it outright.”

[p. 4:] “What! Would you place the dying childless Christ below any flourishing paterfamilias? Was George Elliott a failure? If Florence Nightingale had died in childbirth would the world have gained? Why my dear girl any oyster can perpetuate itself; and if I cannot, but could perhaps help some few people already alive to live better and bring up their children better – is that less valuable work? Do you say with Napoleon that the greatest woman in France is the one with the most children? It cannot be that you have come to this ...”

[p. 5:] “There are plenty of people alive God knows; and more than plenty miserable; and I hold him or her who makes those happier who are already here more valuable by far than a mere producer of more life. / If it is inferior to be unable to bear children with undisturbed health, I am inferior. / When I said I had gotten over the shame I meant the first, the worst, the agony of shame. Ah! Let me forget it! Some remains of course.”

“Tues. Aug. 18th / A week gone. The course of which I grew so much worse that Dr. Knight, a homeopath and man of sense has been summoned and is now in charge ... We have a serving maid; and she worketh as much good as the Dr. I foresee. I feel better. / The baby is well and happy. I endeavored to smash her by slipping on the back steps the other day; but only succeeded in bumping her nose. / I discover the first part of this letter to be argumentative. Come on!” [illustration of a boxer].

27. ALS. Octavo. 6pp. Sat. Aug. 22nd 1885

“I believe myself able to write things worthy the world should hear.”

“Dear Martha ... I am rather pained to see from this last letter how you misunderstand me ... the amount of misery I have passed through before I said a word was more I hope than you will ever see. / I am not in the least ashamed of my discontent ...”

[pp. 2-3:] “ ‘Folly and impotence’ you call it. / I believe myself able to write things worthy the world should hear. Time will show whether that be true or not. But believing that it is right that I should feel hampered by home cares. If I find I can write the better for this life then God be thanked for the experience! ... I am glad marriage is to you all you tell me. Truly glad, dear. But it is not to me. I am glad you love me. I am glad my husband loves me. But no amount of love can keep me happy while I am hindered from my work.”

[p. 4:] “When Dr. Knight spoke in the same way about my present duties ... I admitted all that he said and simply asked him if he would like to give up his business, his education, his ambition, etc. and do the same thing? Being an honest man he laughed and said no. Being a reasonable being (!) he did not say that as I was a woman the case was different ...”

28. ALS (illustrated). Octavo. 13pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Providence R.I. Fri. Aug. 28th 1885

“There was a young man in high boots / Who gave all his attention to fruits. / He tried to raise pears / In triangles and squares, / And make apple trees grow / without roots.”

“Dear Martha, / In your opinion Can a person be well who is miserably unhappy? Can a person be happy who is miserably unwell? I am perhaps unnecessarily anxious that you should understand me. I should like before I die to have some one look into my eyes and say ‘I know’. / You were once so near me, so wholly dear to me that my heart cries for you ...”

[pp. 4-6:] “What were my first feelings when I found [Walter] loved me? You remember. Triumph; joy that I was not unlovely after all, but no thought of yielding. What was it all but being drawn and pulled against my will, against my reason, against most of my desires ... I never deceived him ... I told him love was not enough for me ...”

[p. 6:] “Well you say, why didn’t you stick to it then in the name of reason! ... You’ve nobody to blame but yourself! / Do I not know this? ... It falls on me in heavy blows that bruise and break, and I bear it till I cannot bear it but grope frenziedly for some exculpation, some defense ...”

[p. 7:] “... still the blows fall, heavy crushing blows – You knew! You knew! You were sure! You were strong! You foresaw! You were sure! You had the choice! You had the choice! Bear it now! There’s no way out! There’s no way out!”

[p. 8:] “... still the blows fall ... till I cannot bear it and start up shrieking “It was his fault! How dared he! I told him, I warned him! ... How dared he think he knew me better than I knew myself! How dared he risk my happiness when I showed so plainly what I cared for most! ... He got hold of my heart and my conscience and my poor little weak femininity and pulled and pulled! ... And then ... come knives ... think how he loved you – loves you now ... You have a daughter ... The most, the noble most that you can do, is to rake up a grey memory of what you once were and hoped to be for her edification.”

[p. 11:] [Walter] used to laugh at my similes ... I compared his efforts and my compliance ... to some one pulling a straight young sapling slowly down down down and holding it till the young thing got free and snapped back, every leaf and twig shaking. It didn’t get any stronger by persevering pressure. It is down now, fastened down. Either it snaps back tearing

everything that held it, learns to grow as it is, or – dies. [illustration of a sapling fastened down].

[p. 13:] “I am reminded of a nonsense rhyme I wrote for Eddie Jackson / There was a young man in high boots / Who gave all his attention to fruits. / He tried to raise pears / In triangles and squares, / And make apple trees grow / without roots.”

29. ALS. 10pp. Aug. Sun. 30th 1885

“I feel that soon I shall lose this keen sense of what I have lost and what I must bear, and settle for very life’s sake into the same half-life most people live.”

“Martha I struck my baby”

[p. 5:] “You say: ‘I don’t understand. I don’t see what work you can have in mind that can be hindered to its detriment.’ It makes me groan. That is what [Walter] used to say, ‘What is it that you talk so much about! What do you want to do.’ ... How can I say? I do not know what books I might have written, what schools I might have taught, what words I might have spoken, what pictures I might have painted ... Do not you dare, as you believe in any good and truth of human life, to say that the power and pleasure were all I wanted! ...”

[p. 9:] “You say: ‘Do be patient ... you must wait ...’ ... But always ... a great rebellious misery. A whining cringing misery. A numb unthinking misery. Always a misery ... I used to be patient. Now the least things drive me wild. Really wild, so that I could scream and rave and tear myself. Why this morning I ---- I ---- Martha I struck my baby / It was not a blow really, just a quick pat at the little clawing hand ... hardly touched her, but it was the same thing! ...”

[p. 10:] I enclose something [not here present] I wrote last Monday, drop by drop out of my heart. It is a little easier to bear pain when one can scream than gaged ...”

30. ALS. Octavo. 4pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Prov. R.I. Sat. Sept. 5th 1885

“Dear Martha, Yours of yesterday received ... Be assured that as health and strength return I shall endure and work as of old. Be assured that when next power and control fade from me and I suffer again as I so foolishly tried to show you, that you will not hear of it ...”

[p. 3:] “... I wrote to you in most unbearable pain; and I have my answer. / That you love me and mean me well I do not doubt. / My mother always loved and meant me well. ---- So does my husband. / With strange and imbecile perversity I am unhappy. Excuse my mentioning the fact again. But I would like you to remember it always, when you remember me.”

31. ALS. Octavo. 8pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Providence R.I. Sat. Sept. 12th 1885

“Right or wrong, normal or abnormal, my work is not at home.”

“Dear Martha, / ... I am so glad of your letter. It is what I wanted. I’ve nothing to blame you for but an error of judgement ... Outsiders simply know that I am sick, a ‘nervous invalid’ and treat me according to their lights ... Of the few who know I am unhappy, most think it is simply part of the sickness ... Of the two with whom I am constantly thrown ---- well! Mother is not silent as to her former prognostications, is not hopeful for the future, enhances every discrepancy between my husband and myself, is just what she used to be. And I am not what I used to be to bear it. I cannot live without her, owing to the baby ...”

[p. 3:] “Mother constantly blames me ... that’s all I get from mother. The same love and care she always gave me ... a constant reminder of my own folly and my husband’s defects. And Walter? ... He freely offers to let me go ... He loves me dearly ... He suffers miserably because I do ... And I – I disapprove of him. In small things and great, the underlying principles of our lives are dissimilar – opposed ... I love him, as far as that goes ... I feel like reversing Madame de Stael – Love with woman is an episode, with man a history. His sympathy fails to comfort because it lacks understanding ...”

[p. 6:] “... the only course of action which could make our union a source of happiness to me – he couldn’t take it. (I mean united action for the good of others.) ... Right or wrong, normal or abnormal, my work is not at home ...”

32. ALS (illustrated). Octavo. 9pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Providence R.I. Thurs. Oct. 8th 1885

“In desperation, or rather in emotionless discouragement, I am going West.”

“For the ‘obligation pre-imposed, unsought’ I have added one self-imposed and so still more an obligation.”

“Dear Martha, / That you go long unanswered is owing to my eighteen months excuse – ill health ... Now I can neither write nor read easily ...”

[p. 2:] “I am having to wean the baby – Dr. Knight, Dr. Keller and common sense ... In desperation, or rather in emotionless discouragement, I am going West ...”

[p. 3:] “It’s expensive; but I don’t want to die. Walter’s willing ... I love my husband – as a husband – dearly. And yet ---- / It would have been strange indeed for me to be so wholly miserable if he was to me what I think no one ever will be, Admirable. I know no man anywhere who is what I would have. And Walter is so much, so very much better than most. / I mean to stay; and not repeat my father’s sin. I mean to do my duty, to keep my word. For the ‘obligation pre-imposed, unsought’ I have added one self-imposed and so still more an obligation.”

[p. 6:] “It is hard – for a well person to love two people [her mother and Walter] who do not love each other and have to be between them all the time and joined to each ...” [an illustration of the three follows]

33. ALS. Octavo. 8pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Providence R.I. Sat. Apr. 17th 1886

“I’ve lost my idea of my own importance. I no longer feel it as any loss to the world.”

“Dear Martha, / ... Your constant affection, loving words and gifts, shame me as well as please ... I am at home as you see ... I feel as if this place was haunted. To come out of my beautiful winter of health and freedom and comparative usefulness and plunge straight back into the slough of despond! ...”

[pp. 4-6:] “I’ve lost my idea of my own importance. I no longer feel it as any loss to the world. Only one well-meaning but ineffectual person the less. / Did you know her? Yes, very well ... She married and her health broke down and she never accomplished anything for all her talk ... it doesn’t pay to be too superior in this world ...”

[p. 7:] “Without any fooling Martha if I should die would you take my baby ... I know you’d love her. I doubt if I do. Seems to me I never loved anybody but you.”

[p. 8:] “You want to know what is the matter with me? Why in plain words I cannot be happy without my free outdoor hard

working ambitious life; and I can't have it. / It's my father's story over again. Only a trifle more pathetic perhaps. / I hate a fool."

34. ALS. Octavo. 4pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Providence R.I. Fri. Apr. 30th 1886

"Dear Martha, I herewith send what perhaps you have already; the Alpha circular ... Mother has left us and gone to housekeeping again ... a good thing all around ... Katherine has cut two upper teeth, and glories in her new gnashing powers ..."

35. ALS. Octavo. 14pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Providence R.I. Tues. May 4th 1886

"By the time I have forgotten what life was once and might have been I shall be as happy as ----- most people."

"Dear Martha, / "... You do well to wish me courage dear. I need it sorely. Courage to look down life with all its hope and glory gone; pleasure and pride and strength all gone. / I think I see why my father ran away. I can not ..."

[pp. 4-6:] "You do not all realize now the horrible crumbing and disintegration of the character I worked so hard and long to build ... I've past the agony stage by months, past the wild weeping and the immediate danger of insanity; its just a flat dry waste of hopeless melancholy now ... Live I must ... By the time I have forgotten what life was once and might have been I shall be as happy as ----- most people."

[p. 7:] "If [Walter] would only love someone else how gladly would I take the pieces of my life and go away where I could at least breathe. But he won't. He will love me, always; and be always grieved and miserable that I am what I am."

[p. 12:] "I feel as if I could kill him sometimes. But he'd just look at me with those blue loving eyes, and let me. And then when I drag through a day of pain-lit gloom and go to bed too miserable for tears; he goes and gets me some warm drink 'to make my stomach feel better' ! And this is love ..."

36. ALS. Octavo. 12pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Providence R.I. Sun. Sept. 26th 1886

"I am keeping my journal again ... in a kind of dreary imitation, I am myself again."

"My dear Martha, / "... that little blue coat you made for Kate has been a year's comfort and delight ... Miss Katherine is flourishing in all ways; waxing in wisdom and stature daily ..."

[p. 3:] "... I am better, much better. There came a time ... that I was so near crazy (I thought) that I fled to Boston to find Dr. Keller and ascertain the facts. It struck me that while duty certainly required me to stay with child and husband so long as I could bear it, duty did not require me to wait for death or insanity ... I got little satisfaction. Dr. Keller is human; and dared not implicate herself in such a case. She said the trouble was not mental, but nervous ... Then my dear Walter said that I should go and live my life, that it was right ... but first I must take courage and work and help get some money to make the change ... I braced up, and set to work. Wrote a ghost story and divers poems ..."

[p. 10:] "I have had one poem accepted by the Prov. Journal, price three dollars ... have had one poem almost accepted by the Atlantic; quite a long letter from the editor ... and have had one poem accepted by the Woman's Journal ... [p. 12:] Also I am keeping my journal again ... in a kind of dreary imitation, I am myself again."

37. ALS. Octavo. 5pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Providence R.I. Thurs. Oct. 28th 1886

“Mr. Gillette was here to tea last night; and afterward I read him the play; and he seems to think well of it ... I have hopes.”

“Dear Martha, I have been too busy this last week to write you ...”

[p. 2:] “I’ve been painting dinner cards for dear life of late; and have plenty more orders ahead. Just got some gorgeous satin this morning; on which I am to paint designs for a fan and a sofa cushion. / Have you seen my great poem printed in the Woman’s Journal and copied by the Boston Sunday Herald? Truly this is fame!”

[p. 3:] “Mr. Gillette [William Hooker Gillette] was here to tea last night; and afterward I read him the play; and he seems to think well of it ... I have hopes. What is more ... he gave me a pass to see his play, now in town. He is six feet-two, and bumped his head on our gas fixture. Won’t it be grand if the play does sell!

38. ALS. Octavo. 6pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Providence R.I. Thurs. Dec. 16th 1886

“He knows that the loving wife who sleeps so happily between husband and child had no further connection with that ‘helpless she died’ female.”

Charlotte discusses her poem *The Answer* at length (published in *Woman’s Journal*, October 2, 1886):

[pp. 3-4]: “I don’t suppose I shall ever write about any unhappy person whatever but what all who knew my two years misery will think I mean myself. Bless your heart my dear, just read that verse over. There ought to be conviction in the fact that that over worked and ill-used woman – (I had in mind that one you told me of who married her ‘preserver’) died; and that she was the necessary factor of my trio of ideas, and only that is apparent to any one who don’t happen to know me. Why I haven’t died, and don’t mean to for a long time yet. And as to Walter, he likes that poem very much; has remembered it and quoted it at times; which he don’t often honor me by doing. He says it is a good poem, with real thought in it. He knows that the loving wife who sleeps so happily between husband and child had no further connection with that ‘helpless she died’ female ...”

39. ALS. Octavo. 4pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Providence R.I. Thurs. March 10th 1887

“Dear Martha, / Your letter causes me a grim satisfaction in spite of my sorrow. Yes, I’m sorry you’ve had a cold, and more sorry for wee Margaret, but that’s no reason I should have it, and my baby too! ... Poor me! ... I am now trying to keep up on ‘elixir coca’ ...”

40. ALS. Octavo. 2pp. Providence Nov. 25th 1887

“Pleasing young Person, / I’m coming to Boston ... Now why can’t you (and he of course) meet me ‘some’ers’ and guide my faltering steps ...”

This is the first letter in which Charlotte signs her given name since her marriage: “Your loving friend / Charlotte A. Perkins”

41. ALS (illustrated). Octavo. 4pp. 4:45 p.m. Providence Dec. 18th 1887

“My dear Martha, Your nice comfortable little letter received this morning, and consequent joy in my heart ...”

[p. 3:] “I want to see you lots, you pet. I really miss you dear – miss you out of my life. No one ever can be to me again what you were ...”

42. ALS. Octavo. 3pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Providence R.I. Tues. Apr. 17th 1888

“Dear Martha, / ... I am so pleased that Mr. Lane liked Kate ... I must send this off – expect Elizer this morning ...”

43. ALS. Octavo. 4pp. Bristol R.I. Fri. Aug. 3rd 1888

“Grace and I have written over our play, and are to have a hearing from Gillette ... I anticipate success myself – but then I usually do.”

“Well my dear, I am spending the summer very profitably here with Grace, and shall go back [California] with her in the fall unless some catastrophe prevents ... I will let you know and you must come and say goodbye before I migrate. Walter is reconciled to the plan ... As long as I stay with him he will never leave me; and I will not go back. This summer has proved for the fourth time that I get well when away from him ...”

[p. 4:] “Let me tell you as a great secret that Grace and I have written over our play, and are to have a hearing from Gillette the last of August. Whereof more anon. I anticipate success myself – but then I usually do ... Aren't you glad?”

44. ALS. Octavo. 3pp. 26 Humboldt Ave. Fri. Sept. 21st 1888

“Came home Aug. 31st. Close the house tomorrow ... Have begun a hack book ‘Gems of Art for the Home & Fireside’ at request of J. A. & R. A. Reid, printer – to be done a week from today – 150 pages ... only 18 pages done ...”

45. ALS. Octavo. 4pp. Bristol R.I. Mon. Aug. 27th 1888

“My audacious and sinful home-breaking and departure for Pasadena ... you and I know that it is more than a question of life and death to me, that if means all the difference between goodness, strength, intellect, and life; and wickedness, weakness, insanity, or death.”

“Dear Martha, / You remember the play I read you last spring? ... Mr. Gillette has taken it, conditionally. That means he is to bring it out – if he can (he does not run a theatre himself now, or there would be no trouble), and if it succeeds we will share the proceeds. Also he has listened to divers casts and plots we had for other plays, and told us to go ahead on one of them ...”

“... you should mention all this in as strong colors as you care to, to cover my retreat. I mean my emigration you know, my audacious and sinful home-breaking and departure for Pasadena. You see it is really a home of another color if I go as a matter of real business, to write plays with my collabrateur! [Grace]. I intend to hide behind this glittering veil all that is possible ... you and I know that it is more than a question of life and death to me, that if means all the difference between

goodness, strength, intellect, and life; and wickedness, weakness, insanity, or death ...”

46. ALS. Octavo. 8pp. Box 1844. Pasadena Cal. Wed. Sept. 4th 1889

“Katharine is well as always, sturdy and large and brown. She is more than half boy, to my ever increasing delight.”

“Dear Martha, / ... When you move move out here. Splendid openings in the canning line ...”

[p. 4:] “Katharine is well as always, sturdy and large and brown. She is more than half boy, to my ever increasing delight ...”

[p. 5:] “I write on a broader basis than my own heart now. / The faint occasional recurrence of its ... throbs of agony are all that remind me I have one. I am slowly, very slowly, regaining my health ... Once well --- ! We shall see ...”

[p. 6:] “Did I tell you of the verses ‘Girls of Today’ in the Woman’s Journal ... Here I have become a sub- or co-editor, on an incipient magazine called The Pacific Monthly ... I have now sole charge of the book reviewing department ... Walter is to do some illustrating for them; and I am in a fair way to run the whole machine ... Send me something good and I’ll publish it ...”

Undated Letters to Martha

47. ALS (illustrated). Insert, circa 1887? Octavo. [4pp.] [n.d.]

Most likely an enclosed insert in a letter to Martha from 1887 (“your friendship of nine years standing”): being a four-page jest illustrated with two large pen & ink drawings: the letter begins with a caption above the first drawing of a young woman reading on a cliff above the sea with a man reclining behind her:

“Afternoons with M’s D. R. in woods & cliffs, ye ideal listener behind.” / “You see, this letter is the illustrated edition. It might seem apparent to a mind less broad & deep, that I regarded your various swains with derision. This however is far from the fact, my sentiments are those of awe and enmity. Let them skip, their day is but short, while our lofty companionship endureth forever – so long. / I am much amused by your friendship of nine years standing: pray were your sentiments of a lasting character at that age? ...”

The second drawing of the same woman being transported aloft by two identical men appears in-text at the top of the last page: “Here you go over those ponds. Oh, I forgot the shawls; never mind, you can imagine’em ...”

The jest concludes: “Yours derisively, / C. A. Perkins.”

48. ALS. Octavo. [3pp.] [n.d.]

“Dear Marfa! Your two boxes with their lovely contents arrived yesterday ... I’m sorry it’s no more [a longer letter] but I have two families now, and we sent a box to another. Am well, real well. Your own loving friend / Charlotte / Merry Christmas! / Walter sends regards / love to baby.”

49. Autograph Poem. Octavo. One sheet. [n.d.]

“I stop to add, dear Mrs. Lane / That we next week set off for Maine / And if you do not write again / Before that time it’s very plain / That the production of your brain / Composed for me with toil and pain / Would not arrive, and I be fain / My head to twist and eyes to strain / To search for it, and search in vain / If I in sooth to search would deign / So write with all your might & main / The letter I desire to gain; / And write it without blot or stain / And loaded like a groaning wain / With literary fruit & grain / And loving words as thick as rain / Unless it be too great a drain / Upon your strength dear Mrs. Lane!

Undated/Incomplete Letters to Martha

50. Autograph Letter (illustrated). Octavo. pp. 3, 4. [n.d., 1883?]

“There was a Young Girl of Majorca”

A loose sheet from a letter to Martha illustrated with two large pen & ink drawings. The first drawing appears in-text at the bottom of page 3: it shows Martha being led up a mountain by several men. The letter commences thus, with a nonsense rhyme by Edward Lear:

“It reminds me of this tale / “There was a Young Girl of Majorca / Whose aunt was a very fast Walker, / She walked 70 miles / And leaped 15 stiles / Which astonished that girl of Majorca.” / Climbed the mountain, did you? Gallantry and devotion key? Can you discern all this?”

The second drawing of a veiled woman appears in-text at the middle of the next page, which commences thus:

“Over the ride home I will mercifully draw a veil. The only part I could draw, I fear ...”

51. Autograph Letter (illustrated). Octavo. pp. 5, 6. [n.d., 1883?]

“When my pictures are not pretty you musn’t show’em to folks. When they are such as to redound to my fame, you may.”

A loose sheet from a letter to Martha illustrated with two large pen & ink drawings. The first drawing appears in-text at the middle of page 5: it shows Martha peering out of a window as Charlotte runs by on the street below:

“... And won’t we have nice times. It’s very artful of you; you can catch me as I go to Ada’s. I shall have to sneak along like this [illustration:] Now I am not supposed to be coming out up a hole but sticking to the house. That is my shadder. When my pictures are not pretty you musn’t show’em to folks. When they are such as to redound to my fame, you may.”

The second drawing appears in-text at the middle of page 6: it shows Martha fleeing from an open closet door with various critters emerging forth:

“Aren’t you rather rash to take a house you haven’t seen? Suppose you open your closet door and Lo! ...”

52. Autograph Letter (illustrated). Octavo. pp 5, 6. [n.d., 1883?]

“Nice country couple you’ll make!”

A loose sheet from a letter to Martha illustrated with one large pen & ink drawing appearing in-text at the middle of page 5: it shows Martha and her husband seated side by side:

“It is the right-spirit, and one which I cultivated in myself. Little Chester [Martha’s child] seems to do very well as a substitute. Nice country couple you’ll make! ...”

53. ALS. Octavo. pp. [9], 10, 11, 12. [n.d., circa 1887-88?]

“My novel is as yet untouched.”

“Dear girl! How wholly fair and sweet our years of friendship were!”

The last four pages, commencing thus: “7:30 a.m. 19th / Here are a few moments before breakfast dear, and I’ll try to talk a little sense and finish off this letter. / Having recovered from my ‘blues’ I may state that I am well ... The same may be said of Walter; both of our heavens being much clouded by lack of means ...”

[p. 12:] “My novel is as yet untouched. / Now good bye dear. / I miss you ----- again and again. No one fills your place. The thing hurts like an old wound, other things bring up the pain after intervals of quiet. Dear girl! How wholly fair and sweet our years of friendship were! Though we ourselves no more should meet That memory cannot stir. / Charlotte A. Perkins”

54. ALS. Incomplete. Octavo. pp. 9, 10, 11, 12 [n.d., Pasadena, circa 1889?]

“Chick up, and come out here!”

The last four pages of a letter to Martha send from California:

[p. 9]: “It is a coöperative dress-making and sewing establishment. But once our unparelled early rains set in and it the lecture was postponed. There are to be six, our dress, cooperative work for women, etc etc. Also I mean to give some lectures in Los Angeles if it can be managed. By these various devices shall I keep the wolves from the door; and add mightily to my fame in these parts ... I am much interested in the Nationalist. Have joined their ... club here, and expect to speak before long ...”

[p. 10:] “As to Platonism – I believe in it – always shall. But most men are mainly sexual toward women. Natural enough, when you consider the ages! I shan’t try to talk about this – takes too long ...”

[p. 11:] “I am getting quite well acquainted with my father lately, our purely literary lives. He is very friendly and obliging; answering all my questions at length ... Chick up, and come out here! ...”

Charles Walter Stetson to Martha

ALS. Octavo. 3pp. 1 Maryland St. Providence R.I. March 23rd 1885

“My dear Mrs. Lane: / My first letter shall be to you, her dearest friend, to tell you that Charlotte has passed safely through her trial. A girl was born this morning at five minutes of nine, - as healthy and every-way-well conditioned a little piece of humanity as one could possibly see. / The pain was severe but by no means protracted ...”

[Letter from Charles Walter Stetson to Martha on 3/23/1885, announcing the birth of his daughter and reporting on

Charlotte's condition. A small post-script--baby weighed 8 1/2 lbs.]

Miscellaneous

1. [Martha's wedding invitation]:

"Martha A. Luther to Charles A. Lane, Thursday October fifth ... Providence, R.I. 1882."

2. Holograph

Octavo. 3pp. Two densely written notes in two very small neat hands on white paper with an embossed border. The first note appears to be addressed to: "Dear Brother R - "; the second note, very likely a reply or riposte to the first, is written in a smaller hand contrariwise on the first page, and in the margins of the second and third pages: "I do not like it at all to send this hastily written note with El - [?] as it will seem so ..."

3. ALS (illustrated). Octavo. 4pp. Chicago. Sept. 1st, 1893

"Dear Gladys / Papa & I left Aunt Laura's house ..."

[A letter written by a child after visiting Chicago's Columbian Exposition in 1893, illustrated with a hold-to-light drawing.]

4. Eaton, Maria S.

(Professor of Mineralogy, Wellesley College). ALS. Octavo. 1 page (March 6, 1879).

5. Manuscript Note

Octavo. 1 page. "First Society". A short chronological history of the first through fifth Meeting House buildings.

[BTC# 403896]