

Oberlin, April 21, 1881,

Dear People,

It is now 20^m past 8 P.M. and I have been studying Emerson and Gueb, and now open my pen to say a few desultory words of remark by way of paper, trusting in your clemency and the allusions of mental forces to speed their subjective insalubres in the manner of subjective conception to the end that the intellectual vapors of doubt and superstition may be eliminated from the moral atmosphere so that the great luminary of the intellectual heavens may shine in undisturbed splendor, lighting up the ears

of firmer views, ignorantly un-
shipped by the Preadomestic man
in the gross guise of Felichism.

I would say by way of
introduction that I am well
and happy, the thermometer
of my spirits marking about
67° in the shade. (I refer
to my spiritual thermometer,
not to an alcoholic thermometer
ha, ha!) I seldom fall
below 60°, though I have
been as low as 40°. I seldom
rise above 75°, though I have
been as high as 76°. I do not
remember a frost, nor a severe
stroke. I have sometimes
thought of putting the instrument
in the sun just to see how
high it would go up!

Your valuable letter W. in
which you told of the remarkable
spell of weather at home, I
read with avidity. Oh were
there ever such a crisis to

to gloat in the change of weather!

We have been having some
days of freedom, a semi-
spring weather. If it is clear
we have frosts at night, but
it is fair to middling warm
by day, so that we enjoy
standing in the sunshine.

The first flower of spring I
saw today. It looks like
rain again tonight. The soil
is an abominable Devonian
clay here, almost water tight.
Out in the woods ^{water} it stands
in puddles all around. I should
say brush, there are no woods
here, properly speaking; in the
Oregon sense. I do not think

there is as much languor in
the air here in spring as at
home, but there is not that
divine dappling magnificence of
gorgeous splendor that smites
all things with its unhearable

billions, reminding me of
Milton's thought that the Seraphim
had to cover their eyes with their
wings as they approached the
Throne of God —, that smiles
all things with its beauty, at
home. I believe that the

longueur that we feel on
these spring days is partly due
to the floods of exhilarating light
that like an overstimulus,
make us powerless. I think
that I should die for lack of
scenery if I had to live here
very long. So the heat
partels after a drink of water
so partels my heart after a
sight of the heaven-spitting
mountain, the ghoul-haunted
forests, the sandy thunderous
shores, and the pictures
valleys and tree-dotted hills,
the ash-oreed willow-shining

meadows, and all the other
soul-stirring scenes of Oregon ^{stud-} ^{ied} ^{me}
before the flutes of my memory.
To have seen them is well; to
see them again would be
better.

Your valuable letter Mary,
relating your experience at Mi-
nimville, the base ball
game, the triumph of
Jerry Meeber, and lastly but
^{not} leastly your speculations as to
your trip, puts me in an
answerable frame of mind.
As per your request I asked
Prof Chamberlain, of the
Conservatory, how much he thought
a year here would amount to
for you. As I ^{expected} ^{he} ^{replied} he
said it would depend quite
largely upon your native talents,
but thought that it would well
repay you. He thought that
if you spent a year here, you

would stand a pretty good chance
of going on with your studies
in music independently without
falling into bad habits. The
alluded to the general culture
etc etc, as a very valuable
result of training in a special
field, as I have often done
to you. I've said it over
and I say it over that any
one who wishes to get the
best out of culture must cul-
tivate and master some specialty.
What more valuable than music?
You think I have underestimat-
ed the expenses of coming here.
My expenses were \$20. to S. F.
\$55. to Chicago, \$9. here =
\$84, + about \$10. for incidentals.
There seems to be some prospect
of a R. R. war to S. F. between
the Southern and Union Pacific
& if so, fares will be low.
You would better buy your ticket

direct to Oberlin, that will
be cheapest. If however you should
think it too tiresome to come
all the way ~~to~~ right along,
buy to Kellogg. If you come
by the emigrant car, you can
certainly do so for \$100. You
do not want to be cramped
yourself of any comforts by
the way. It is just as
pleasant, and in some respects
pleasanter, on the emigrant car
as on the 2nd class car, saving
that it is slower, provided you
know whom you are going
with. How would Puff
Termin and Marsh and Pres. Herrick
go, by emigrant or by, 1st or
2nd class? When would they
go? If they start about the
first of June, as I suppose they
would, since the latter two
would wish to be back by Sept,
we could go East this summer
together. I think you would

be sufficient security to me for
your eddication, and if my
lord is woth anything I do
solemnly mean that I will
pay it over to whomever
furnishes the means for you to
come, as soon as I get the
deed. I presume that you
are tolerably sound, there is
no danger of your dying for
a while. I will risk you.
Death is always imminent, but
we cannot calculate very much
on it unless we see it square in
front of us coming at a distance,
to be less in such a case
time. It might come out
from a land suddenly, or
around a hill, or over a "mit";
but we can't make allowance
for it in that way. If the road
seems clear we must go ahead,
if W. takes his trip, he will
accompany you to S. P. I
will risk you being homerick

I think a great sorrow would probably only make him down like a lump of putty, and make him all the worse. I presume his is part being moved by an enthusiasm. He has never grown, I think, out of the boy's idea that were gained into him of right and wrong etc. His training spoiled him, just as Horner Griffin's did him, and we see a touch of the same thing in Edwin and Myron Eells, in the Walker boys, by and some, men who have not dared to come to perfect independence. The faith of the boy is beautiful, but like his clutter, is not big enough for the man. A man in boy's ideas and beliefs looks ridiculous.

To doubt is not well, but
never to arrive at a plane
where doubt is possible, is worse.

What a pity it is to spoil
a man so that he cannot
comprehend the great stirring
virile ideas of the age! To
put it plainly I think
cousin Francis has been
spoiled by too much training,
too much repression, so that
his ideas now are only pur-
ored simple, and he is con-
tent to rest away in a little
corner, without ambition,
without desire to accomplish
anything in particular, with
no desire to see the world.

The other Dunson boys seem
to have become very driving
stirring men. Perhaps the
policy that crushed Francis
was what was needed to
develop them.

Cousin Margaret is quiet
and sweet, very kind. She
has a great love of poetry,
but rather of the old
rhetoric poetry such as Bowser,
Scott, Campbell etc, such
as people fifty years ago read.
She is a home body, and
I think the work there is
the most badly arranged
of anywhere I ever saw it.
They will be having breakfast
all the way from 6 to 10
in the morning, one lined
man coming in and eating,
then another half an hour
afterwards, then Francis etc,
etc. It is just so at din-
ner and supper. So it happens
that she is in the kitchen
all day. There is nobody
there to see, however, except
an old widower about 65 yrs

old, who occasionally falls
drifts in and ~~see~~ talks spirit-
ism etc. It seems to me
that it would be intolerable
living there, all the year round.
Margaret has much more
imagination than Francis,
reads the papers and looks
more, and so has a larger
orbit.

Emily is exceedingly odd,
it is somehow impossible to
come at her. I do not
think I talked with her at all,
I couldn't. I aimed remarks
at her, but the remarks
dropped dead. I think she
has a strong mind however.
I did more talking with
her husband George Barnett
than with any of the rest.
He is a companionable,
pleasant, wide-awake fellow.
In the Duane's I saw that

retiring sensitive sensitive
stunk that I often see in
myself, as well as in the
other Derisons. Consecrations
of wit and poetry never
look so brilliant as over a
background of mystery and
melancholy. The Derisons
who have wit and poetry are
brilliant; those who have it
not are but dull and stupid.
although rather pathetic character.
Francis is a sensitive man,
and really a pathetic sort of a
fellow, viewed in one light.

I don't know whether
this is what you wanted
Father. I should like
to get Margaret and Francis
out to Oregon. I think such
a trip would furnish food for
thought which would make
the next 40 years of their lives

more pleasant. They are already
old, though but middle aged,
in leaving most up nearly all
their stock of mental food.
To be bright and cheerful, they
must get a fresh supply. You
Sarah or Willie or Mary,
write to Margaret setting forth
in the most agreeable light
possibly a trip to Oregon. I
will do so too, but we must
avoid the appearance of collusion
that might be the best
way to interest them in
our academy, though of
course I should ^{not} mean to
set a trap or snare, for
their feet. My real object
would be to have them
come for their own benefit.
I missed greatly Mary,
your letter of Oct 23, which
you did not write. Father

explained that you had been
to Portland to the fair. I
do not know but that
it ^{was} a good idea of Capt
W's to go, although you smiled
at it. The children proudly
now thing they will remember
all their lives, and thousands
of people saw the children,
whom seeing in god clothes,
in the midst of intelligent ex-
citement will ^{they will get} ~~produce~~ a favor-
able impression of the work
being done, ^{after} ~~will~~ not to
be gotten. I trust you
enjoyed it, I trust your life
is flowing like a river, all joy
peace and entertainment. I
wish I could put my two
pits into your face, and say
in a voice of thunder, "Sweet
Seth, 't's like to have a tin
all over me." while the rock

cross from the stack of straw.
Two years is a long time to
be separated from you.

I am much in doubt
whether you think as much
of me as formerly. You
don't writ as much.

I walk with my leg palties
on important occasions, but
when I will to ^{walk} go 6 or 8 miles,
we use my crutator.

I went down to Penn-
field last Sunday again, and
had a good time.

I have been reading the
last scene of the first part of
Faust in the German. It makes
one's hair rise. Let this suffice.

With many good-byes,

This letter of size

I supervise.

H. G. Bell (1771)