

John Appleton Esq.

Lenox, Mass., July 14 [1876 added]

My Dear Cousin,

I have looked for this letter from you with intense nervous anxiety, as you may well believe, for I cannot but feel deeply the disappointment which a fatal necessity seems to have providence to inflict upon you - but I think if you could know how really ill I am, - am unfit to contend with excitements and anxieties of any kind - and how many of them I have to contend with - you would not be surprised at my action - so long as I could feel any hope of a return of strength and ability to carry this matter through worthily - no one could have felt more joy and satisfaction in the thought of it - but I have been running down steadily ever since I saw you in N. Y. - all my powers seem to be going away - and I am totally unfit to meet the issue which lies before me - your promise not to add anything of me for two months, could not lift any of the sense of responsibility from me - if the matter went on - I should feel myself committed all the same - and the burthen would weigh upon me all the same. You will say I should have thought of all this before - yes - I should - and I did feel a great deal of it - but I was not so ill then - and I hoped to be better - and with a little health I should have felt equal to a labour of love so earnestly desired to fulfill - Ah - you don't know what a disappointment it has been to me also!

I am weak and full of fears - all the awful business part of it frightened me - the figures and the cost - I dread pecuniary responsibility, as I do the devil - and you must console that I stand alone now - for the first time in many years - without my stay and my sheet anchor who never suffered me to be troubled by matters which she knew I was not able to contend with. I am not a business woman, and cannot weigh the value of my words - as if they were to be tried in a court of justice - the extract you send me from my letter - certainly would bear the interpretation you put upon it - and yet I never meant to apply to making a contract with any publisher - as you must have seen by my letter to you in N. Y. begging you not to conclude until I should communicate with the Cushmans - I have tried to explain to you what I meant about keeping Mr. C. out of the matter. I did write to keep him out - I did fear his brusquerie and inexperience - but it was a thing to be managed - not declared openly - for my relations with him did not permit him to be ignored - he is my trustee - as well as the trustee of the Cushman estate, and has been extremely kind to me ever since his Aunt's death - so your letter to him frightened me - for several reasons - in the first place you put the responsibility of having concluded the contract upon me - in the next you informed him very bluntly indeed, that I intended he should be kept outside, and lastly you say that you go

upon my information with regard to materials - when I have tried
my best to make you understand - that I don't even know what materials
these are - I have never yet seen them and what I possess is very meagre
indeed. - I send you back this letter and I think you will see in
reading it over - that it was rash - and ill-adviced - for in this
matter of the book you could not disconnect yourself from Miss
Cushman's nearest relative, or give him occasions of offence -
without finding you had placed a great obstacle in your own way.

If I had waited a day or two before writing, to ask you to
annul the contract - I should probably have begged you to postpone
rather than annul it; and to allow myself a little more time to
see my way, a little time to feel better - and to lift from my
shoulders some heavy pressures which weigh me down just
now - but from yours just received - I suppose it is too late for
that - However I have myself written to-day to Mr. Osgood
asking him for a brief delay - perhaps you will not feel inclined
you to accept any sort of compromise.

If you have any true comprehension of me - and my motives,
you will have no such feeling - you will only believe that
my strongest desire had been to be just toward the publishers
and true to myself -

Pardon this bad scrawl - I am writing on my back, &
hurriedly - to catch the mail, I have gone over our
various points of difference again - as I would if I
saw your face to face - because it is needful for me to
make you understand my position entirely - I am
unwilling to rest under the imputation of having
acted weakly or capriciously.

I asked Osgood to write to you, if he was willing to
grant my request for more time.

Yours ever faithfully
E.S.

Envelope →

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