

Lambert Island
Wednesday afternoon, July 15, 1925

Dear Harry:

We went to town yesterday and I got your three letters—three envelopes, I mean! I managed to get to the P.O. alone so no damage was done.

I had the most awful time waiting till we got out home to read the letters. And then I couldn't get a chance to read them for an hour or so. You see we live so in a heap here—not like home where you can shut the whole world out when you go to your room. Of course, I have a room and I can go to it and be alone but it is right next to the porch where we sit and I don't find it easy to sit in there and read your letters when Orv is sitting just outside the door waiting for me to come and talk!

Well, I finally got them read once—the second and third and fourth readings came later. I feel so guilty, dear, to be doing something I can't tell Orv about. But the letters were worth having some perturbation of spirit over!

To begin with, I am worried over your being in the house so alone at night. And I am worried over your being in that terrible heat. I shall be so glad when you get away from it. It seems to me that it has been cooler in proportion here this year than usual. We haven't had any hot weather until today. The mercury stands at about eighty five now with the sun shining on the edge of the porch. But it is cool in here where I am sitting—a delicious breeze blows through the house. The thermometer in here stands at eighty one. I can see a wonderful possibility for my genius for worrying if I take you on. I simply couldn't be contented for a minute to have Orv living as you do. It is all right now to laugh about your narrow escape from being taken in charge by nurses and such last week but I have so often thought how wretched it would be for you not to be feeling well and no one to do anything for you. I wish Ollie staid in the house at night. Of course, I know she can't but just the same I wish some one did stay. You are tired and over wrought, dear. It is no wonder that you have indigestion. And that heat is hard to bear, I am sure.

I have been thinking about the letters you say your mother kept. I was thinking how foolish it was of you to be afraid I was “mothering” you! Don't you know that is the most lasting and the most genuine of all kinds of love? I have never forgotten a statement I saw once about the constancy of love in the case of patients at insane asylums, for instance. Mothers hold out longest, of course. Sisters come in long before wives and husbands! Statistics can be made to show anything but I don't doubt these particular showings because it is just what I would expect.

As a matter of fact, I was “mothering” you at least some, at first. That feeling was natural and genuine and I was sure of it. I was so upset and so afraid of everything but I was sure of wanting to comfort you and it seemed natural enough to feel very tender toward you. I wouldn't trust the feeling we have of wanting to hold each other so very close nearly as

far as I would the feeling that I mustn't let anything hurt you if I can do anything to help it.

Thursday morning. It rained and blew a gale in the night and the wind is still high this morning. It is one of the days when you feel very energetic. I rushed around to get some extra work done this morning, and so I could get to my letter, for you have been so much in my thoughts. You see, dear, I am beginning to worry again, I am so unreasonable. I tell you that I think of what a wonderful home we could have together and then when you come back agreeing with me, I am scared to death! I don't see how I can ever be with you. Did ever anyone have such a dreadful time over what ought to be the most exquisitely happy time? But you see dear, my obligations are so set now. Maybe, we can manage it. You are so good to me and have so much understanding and sympathy. Oh, Harry dear, I am so grateful for that. I don't know what I'd do if you were impatient with me for what must seem a little unreasonable to you. Orv is so sensitive and has been so delicate since his long sieges of sciatica. He never thinks of not sharing everything with me always. And he depends so much on me, in a certain way. Since Will has been gone I have been his main dependence. He is like a boy in some ways, like all men, I think. For one thing, he always depends on me to see him through with all his visitors. He gets awfully tired and the one thing he wants to do is to bring people out to the house where he feels I will take charge and he can relax a little. He appeals to me so, Harry. He has worked so hard, risked so much, accomplished so much, and now he is not strong, has a wearing, hard fight on his hands and needs me more than he ever did. I understand so much without being told and I have so much sympathy with his weaknesses. Dodging writing that book is one of them. I know it but I also know that patience and steadiness is the only way to put him at his best so he can do it. You spoke of "Pink" being sensitive and how disturbances at home unfitted him for work. I know exactly how that is. If ever any one needed and deserved having happy circumstances under which to work it is Orv now. It was not always so much so but his accident, the "profound shock," as the doctors used to say, and the long attacks of sciatica have weakened his nervous system very decidedly. His mind is just as good as it ever was—but he must have favorable circumstances to have it at its best.

But you know all that and you are always so generous about it. On my side, I feel that obligation so strongly and still I feel an obligation to you, dear, now. It nearly breaks my heart to have you alone, wanting me with you so much, feeling that I could help you (which I fear I couldn't but I'd try), waiting so indefinitely. Well, it does just nearly break my heart. It does seem as if I did something awfully wrong to let this new obligation come in when I can't see how to fulfil it. There I am, you see, my dear, my very, very dear. I am not sorry I let you know how much I cared for you if you didn't already know. But I can't see you alone out there indefinitely. It won't do. I can't have any peace of mind as long as I have an obligation to you and don't meet it.

I don't know myself, dear, all that is mixed up in my feeling toward you. There is so much motherliness, sisterliness, all along with another feeling which I didn't have six weeks ago. I suppose we all have that care and concern for those we love that we call the mother instinct. All women seem naturally to add that to whatever other feelings they

have. We all worry and are anxious—never easy. It is a part of us. And if we have any feeling purely unselfish, it is a part of that, too. Before you told me you loved me and before I thought of loving you, I was full of concern about your comfort, wishing I could do something to make you happy and contented and at peace so you could be at your best for your work. I know so well that for five or six years you have had everything against you—all willingly accepted but against you just the same. I used to wonder how you kept going. I didn't have to know that you loved me and I didn't have to love you to want very much to do something to make things easier for you.

Thursday afternoon.

I have finished my work, have the orange marmalade working and now I am sitting down again to write to you. What an afternoon this would be to be together. It is storming, raining and blowing. Orv is at the boat house. I fear we should be silly but not all silly. We could talk and talk.

Yes, by all means, bring your writing. I really don't suppose I can help you at all. I am afraid that is the way it will turn out but I am interested enough—no trouble on that score—and I'd like to see what you are doing. I'm glad the new publishing firm has sense enough to appreciate some genuine, sincere, able writing. I think well of them already! I'll be interested to see the chapter on K.C.

Friday afternoon

Lunch is over—shredded wheat biscuit and a banana. Orv is off doing some work and I am alone again. It is awfully cold today, around 55° this morning when I got up, after eight. I like cool weather but this is going it a little strong.

I was thinking yesterday about your writing and so on. I doubt very much if you could be more useful than where you are now. The only thing about that that has never quite satisfied me is that your work is mostly without a name. Of course many, many people do know you and your work but I have always wished your name could be connected more with your work for the general public. Editorial work is just in your line, it seems to me. Maybe magazine work might be even better. I wish sometimes that you might be less isolated from your "kind"—though a lot of writers are just as well avoided—*n'est ce pas?*

Syndicate writing is the way to make money, I suppose. But what awfully poor writing most of it is. I respect and admire Mark Sullivan, but he is not improving. He does so much space killing and so much balancing around to keep from having any opinions out-and-out. Of course, expressing frank opinions is dangerous business, with things changing so fast and predictions are always unsafe but Mark Sullivan can irritate me about as much as any one I know when he sets out to make what he pretends is going to be a political forecast. Still, he is a real man with a good deal of character, which is more than can be said for most of those writers. I don't suppose I ever had occasion to tell you that he is a special friend of my cousin Emma's stepson ("son", she always calls him). Mr. Sullivan was best man at William's wedding. He stayed with Emma in Richmond

when he was lecturing there. I want you to meet Emma and I want you to meet William Dennis, who lives in Washington now. You will like them and they will like you. But I think David Lawrence's stuff is drivel—no independence and not much of anything. If it is a Democratic administration, silly praise; if a Republican one, silly criticism. I can't understand McIntyre's hold. All his ideas are so trivial, so purely gossipy. Well, Louis Lord and I agreed that we have outlived our time. We can't seem to fall in with present-day ideas. I cannot understand this great craze for personal gossip.

However, I was just thinking there is an almost clear field for some really able, thoughtful comment on current political happenings. Not quite a "clear field," perhaps, but still lots of room there. But I suppose stuff that was too good wouldn't sell! You have to appeal to the market. Roy Roberts' stuff certainly is good—almost none of the silly gossip that annoys me so.

I have kind of a hard time, too, staying off of silly subjects. Wouldn't you like to have your love letters published some time? Wouldn't you like to be judged by them? Well, I would not. And I have been thinking you write good love letters, too! They aren't silly to me at all, but I can put myself in the past just enough to know that the things that are so dear and interesting to us now wouldn't have been very interesting to me six months ago, especially if I hadn't been one of the participants in the "madness." Harry, dear, you don't see me at all as I am. You persist in idealizing me—you the realistic, hard-boiled one! Such an awakening as is coming to you if you ever get what you think you want! Where did you get all that feeling, dear? It would scare me worse than it does—and it does scare me—if I hadn't discovered some of it in these later years. Now you are all feeling about me. That isn't like you. I know it can't last. That will happen after this intense feeling has passed? But there is just this one thing in which I have absolute confidence. I know you'd fulfil every obligation and more. Oh, Harry, I'm not afraid you wouldn't be good to me—much, much better to me than I ever could deserve. I'm much more afraid of myself, afraid of an untried experience, afraid I couldn't match your unselfishness and everything. But I'd risk it if I were free to do it.

I have been realizing that I love you now so much more surely than I did at first. If we have to wait—if it is only waiting!—it will all be made up. I can imagine lots of things that I don't say much about, all we could be to each other if we could have a lovely home together. But I can't talk about it, until we can see some clearer prospect of realizing such a dream. I have a terrible fear, dear, that I am doing wrong and being selfish, as well as very unwise, to drift along this way, not seeing any way out and not having the courage or wisdom to do anything but drift. Oh Harry, Harry, dear. If you only could put your arms around me and tell me that you know I am trying to do the right thing, right for you and for Orv and for myself. I want to be awfully silly and just love you and feel that you are loving me. You will help me, won't you, and you won't blame me for what I am doing now. But sometimes I feel as if no one could help me. For so long dear, I have never thought of leaving Orv and I have let him make his plans expecting me to share them. But just now I want to shut out all the perplexities and love you and have you love me, be within the little circle we drew and agreed upon on our porch. You won't blame me, will you, dear? I know you'll be tender and gentle with me when I am so troubled.

The more I love you the more afraid I am of making you unhappy. You've been so good and have had such a long strain and such a long time without peace, it nearly breaks my heart not to be able to come right to you and see if I can't love away all the strain and give you rest and peace.

How curious it is now to look back on the thirty years. So much has happened to us both and here we are together again. I can't tell now what my feelings were then but I don't know what could be really dearer than to have the love of an old friend. In a way, it makes me feel young again. How interested Margaret would be. How interested Mella will be and Cora Dell. I haven't told any one one little thing—unless what I said to Louis Lord gave him some idea. I don't see how it really could, though. I wasn't sleeping and Louis was asking me to come down to their house where it was cool and quiet. I knew I couldn't do anything to sleep and I finally told him that I couldn't come—that no one could help me, that I just couldn't sleep. It was after Frannie had said what she did about you and Orv and me “belonging together somehow.” I don't know what Louis thought. He looked at me with so much sympathy and some keenness, I thought. I wondered if Mr. Stetson had ever said anything at all to them. But I said nothing to Frannie about the letters that were coming.

“Old friends are best,” aren't they, dear, dear Harry? They know us for what we are and make allowances for our faults because they have been keen enough to see some redeeming traits. And they aren't friends for what they think they are going to get, either—no “cashing in.” It is dear to think of you as one of my very earliest good friends in Oberlin. Oh, how happy I was, dear, when you walked home from Chapel with me to Mrs. Miller's to tell me how glad you were I got that Monroe Doctrine prize in “Poly Con.”

That reminds me. Mella didn't think you were a bore (“impossible” you said). She just has such an exalted idea of your intellect that she imagines you could only be interested in some abstruse and deep subject. She really was rather in awe of me because she knew we had been such good friends and that we wrote to each other a good deal. We must tell her some time about what you wrote your mother about her. It will please her.

And now, dear, I'll close this letter. Tomorrow we will either go to town early or will send mail and get mail. Would you rather have a little room in Orv's little house or lots of room—two big ones in a house by yourself? We are not far apart but if you would rather you can be right by the main house, next to Orv. I am in the main house. I'll be glad when you come, dear.

Your

Katharine