

Open Me

Carefully

EMILY DICKINSON'S
INTIMATE LETTERS TO
SUSAN HUNTINGTON
DICKINSON

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PARIS
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- February 8, 1882 Susan introduces Mabel Loomis Todd to Emily's poetry.
- November 14, 1882 Emily Norcross Dickinson, Emily's mother, dies.
- October 5, 1883 Gib Dickinson, Susan and Austin's youngest child, dies of typhoid fever; Susan and Emily go into seclusion.
- May 15, 1886 Emily Elizabeth Dickinson dies from Bright's disease. Susan prepares Emily's body for burial and writes the obituary that appears in the *Springfield Republican*.
- December 31, 1886 Susan submits "A Poem of Miss Emily Dickinson's on the 'Wind'" to *The Century*.
- November 1890 *Poems by Emily Dickinson*, edited by Mabel Loomis Todd and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, published by Roberts Brothers.
- August 16, 1895 Austin Dickinson dies.
- May 3, 1898 Ned Dickinson dies of angina.
- August 31, 1899 Lavinia Dickinson dies.
- May 12, 1913 Susan Huntington Dickinson dies.
- 1914 *The Single Hound: Poems of a Lifetime*, edited by Martha Dickinson Bianchi, published by Little, Brown and Company.

S E C T I O N O N E

Why Susie!

EARLY WRITINGS, 1850 TO MID-1850S

DURING THE EARLY AND MID-1850s, Emily's correspondence to Susan is effusive and filled with puns and references to the act of writing. The first letter that is preserved from Emily to Susan is dated 1850. While it is not certain how Emily and Susan met, it is likely that they were friends by 1847 or 1848. In an 1850 letter to Susan, Emily's brother Austin remarks on the previous Thanksgiving and expresses his happiness when Emily and their sister Lavinia (Vinnie) asked Susan's "family into the circle which had for two or three years been gradually forming."¹ The letters from Emily to Susan and drafts of letters from Austin indicate that Susan is the object of passionate attachment for both brother and sister.

The boundaries of the correspondence from Emily to Susan are defined by what Susan saves rather than by what Emily writes, and it is likely that Emily sends letters to Susan that have not survived. Perhaps Susan begins to keep letters from Emily following the 1850 death of her sister Mary, in childbirth. Or Susan may save Emily's letters when she begins to keep letters from Austin.

In the early years of the correspondence, between 1851 and 1852, Susan moves to Baltimore to teach at Robert Archer's school for girls. Her decision to go away is sudden, and she writes to her brother Dwight, declaring that she has left her "good friends in Amherst actually staring with astonishment."² Susan is independent, outspoken, deeply engaged with spiritual concerns, and like Emily, she is committed to pursuing intellectual growth without benefit of continuing education.

Emily's and Susan's impatience and resentment of household duties are nearly identical. In a letter to her friend Samuel Bartlett, Susan says: "I've fairly commenced the Spring siege of sewing, and such quantities of garments and furbelows, to be made, lie stretching away before my crooked needles, I am quite in despair, and continually wondering and fretting, that we are not clothed like the lilies, without any spinning and toiling — I find no time to read or think, and but little to walk — but just go revolving round a spool of 'Coat's cotton' as if it were the grand centre of mental and moral life —"³

While Emily sends Susan passionate and playful letters, Austin formally courts Susan, and Emily secretly delivers his letters to her "Darling Sue." In 1853, humor suffuses an edge of envy for Austin's heightened status in the family as an ambitious and "learned" person; having graduated from Amherst College, he now attends Harvard Law School. Although Emily "loves the opportunity to serve those who are mine," she writes to Susan in markedly shaky handwriting, identifying with Miss Julia Mills in *David Copperfield*, whom Dickens describes as "interested in others' loves, herself withdrawn."

The intellectual intimacy between Emily and Susan begins in the early years of their relationship. In her letters to Susan, Emily frequently refers to the novels she is reading and uses various characters as metaphors or codes to relate her feelings about herself and Susan, and comment about friends, relatives, and literary and political luminaries and events.

In early 1853, Susan travels to Manchester, New Hampshire, to visit Mary and Samuel Bartlett, her sister Mary's in-laws. On the return rail trip from Manchester on Wednesday, March 23, Susan arrives in Boston for a tryst with Austin at the Revere Hotel, and the couple becomes engaged. When Susan returns to Amherst, she shares the news with Emily who then writes to Austin: "Oh my dear 'Oliver,' how chipper you must be since any of us have seen you?" and "I hope you have been made happy."⁴ In this letter, she blames Austin because Susan seems distracted and absent, and Emily devises punishment: "You deserve, let me see; you deserve hot irons, and Chinese Tartary. . ." She

then reminds him how often she is seeing Susan while he is away at law school and closes with: "Dear Austin, I am keen, but you are a good deal keener, I am something of a fox, but you are more of a hound! I guess we are very good friends tho', and I guess we both love [S]us[ie] just as well as we can."⁵ As the brackets indicate, Emily's references to "Susie" have been altered or erased. In another letter written several weeks later beginning, "Do you want to hear from me, Austin?" affectionate references to Susan are erased as well, though kindly references to Lavinia remain untouched. Emily asks Austin, "How long it is since you've been in this state of complacency towards God and our fellow men?" She then follows with, "I think it must be sudden."⁶ Facetiously she recommends religious texts to guide Austin in meditating on self-discipline and submission of his will. She hopes that he has "enjoyed" "sanctuary privileges."

In April 1854, Austin, Lavinia, and their mother visit Washington, D.C., where Edward Dickinson is serving as a member of Congress. They arrive on April 7, and stay for several weeks. At this time, Susan lives with Emily, in the company of John Graves, a cousin from nearby Sunderland, who is attending Amherst College. In mid-April, Susan writes to Mary Bartlett saying, "I am keeping house with Emily, while the family are in Washington — We frighten each other to death nearly every night — with that exception, we have very independent times."⁷

Three months later, Susan becomes seriously ill with "nervous fever." Describing Susan's condition to a friend, Emily writes that "every hour possible I have taken away to her." Susan recovers in August and travels to Geneva and Aurora, New York, where she stays with family for nearly three months. Austin, now graduated from Harvard Law School and admitted to the bar, prepares to seek his fortune in the West.

From Aurora, New York, Susan travels to Grand Haven, Michigan, where she stays with her brother Dwight through the early winter. In a letter mapping out her travel plans Susan tells her brother, "I have always felt so like a child the idea of really being married seems absurd

enough and if the event ever occurs I think I shall experience a feeling of odd surprise — ”⁸

When Susan accuses Austin of interfering with her correspondence with Emily, Austin writes: “As to your deprivation of ‘Spiritual converse’ with my sister — I Know Nothing — I was aware that you had been in correspondence for some time, but had never had an intimation that the correspondence was at an end — . . . So you will not suspect me of having interfered with your epistolary intercourse with her.”⁹

In the letters that follow, Emily and Susan are in their early twenties. Though Emily’s feelings of love, desire, and longing for Susan have often been dismissed as a “school-girl crush,” the letters resonate with intelligence, humor, and intimacy that cannot be reduced to adolescent flurry.



1

Thursday noon.

Were it not for the weather Susie – my little, unwelcome face would come peering in today – I should steal a kiss from the sister – the darling Rover returned – Thank the wintry wind my dear one – that spares such daring intrusion! Dear Susie – happy Susie – I rejoice in all your Joy – sustained by that dear sister you will never again be lonely. Dont forget all the little friends who have tried so hard to be sisters, when indeed you were alone!

You do not hear the wind blow on this inclement day, when the world is shrugging it’s shoulders – your little “Columbarium is lined with warmth and softness,” there is no “silence” there – so you differ from bonnie “Alice.” I miss one angel face in the little world of sisters – dear Mary – sainted Mary – Remember lonely one – tho, she comes not to us, we shall return to her! My love to both your sisters – and I want so much to see Matty.

Very aff yours, Emily

autumn/winter 1850

In this letter Emily refers to Susan’s sister Mary, who died on July 14, 1850. In December, Susan’s sister Martha (“Matty”) came from Michigan, and the Gilbert family was temporarily reconstituted in the Amherst home of their eldest sister Harriet. The allusion to “Alice” is to Alice Archer of Longfellow’s

Kavanaugh (1849) whose room is “that columbarium lined with warmth, and softness, and silence.” Throughout the correspondence, and long before Susan is actually her sister-in-law, Emily addresses Susan as “Sister.”



2

Thursday evening

I wept a tear here, Susie – on purpose for you – because this “sweet silver moon” smiles in on me and Vinnie, and then it goes so far before it gets to you – and then you never told me if there was any moon in Baltimore – and how do I know Susie – that you see her sweet face at all? She looks like a fairy tonight, sailing around the sky in a little silver gondola with stars for gondoliers. I asked her to let me ride a little while ago – and told her I would get out when she got as far as Baltimore, but she only smiled to herself and went sailing on.

I think she was quite ungenerous – but I have learned the lesson and shant ever ask her again. To day it rained at home – sometimes it rained so hard that I fancied you could hear it’s patter – patter, patter, as it fell upon the leaves – and the fancy pleased me so, that I sat and listened to it – and watched it earnestly. Did you hear it Susie – or was it only fancy? Bye and bye the sun came out – just in time to bid us goodnight, and as I told you sometime, the moon is shining now.

It is such an evening Susie, as you and I would walk and have such pleasant musings, if you were only here – perhaps we would have a “Reverie” after the form of “Ik Marvel,” indeed I do not know why it would’nt be just as charming as of that lonely Bachelor, smoking his cigar – and it would be far more profitable as “Marvel” only marvelled, and you and I would try to make a little destiny to have for our own. Do you know

that charming man is dreaming again, and will wake pretty soon – so the papers say, with another Reverie – more beautiful than the first?

Dont you hope he will live as long as you and I do – and keep on having dreams and writing them to us – what a charming old man he’ll be, and how I envy his grandchildren, little “Bella” and “Paul”! We will be willing to die Susie – when such as he have gone, for there will be none left to interpret these lives of our’s.

Longfellow’s “golden Legend” has come to town I hear – and may be seen in state on Mr. Adams’ bookshelves. It always makes me think of “Pegasus in the pound –” when I find a gracious author sitting side by side with “Murray” and “Wells” and “Walker” in that renowned store – and like him I half expect to hear they have “flown” some morning and in their native ether revel all the day – but for our sakes dear Susie, who please ourselves with the fancy that we are the only poets – and every one else is prose, let us hope they will yet be willing to share our humble world and feed upon such aliment as we consent to do!

You thank me for the Rice cake – you tell me Susie, you have just been tasting it – and how happy I am to send you anything you love – how hungry you must grow before it is noon there – and then you must be faint from teaching those stupid scholars. I fancy you very often descending to the schoolroom with a plump Binomial Theorem struggling in your hand which you must dissect and exhibit to your incomprehending ones – I hope you whip them Susie – for my sake – whip them hard whenever they dont behave just as you want to have them! I know they are very dull – sometimes – from what Mattie says – but I presume you encourage them and forgive all their mistakes. It will teach you

patience Susie – you may be sure of that. And Mattie tells me too of your evening carousals – and the funny frights you give in personating the Master – just like you Susie – like you for all the world – how Mr Payson would laugh if I could only tell him, and then those great dark eyes – how they would glance and sparkle! Susie – have all the fun wh’ you possibly can – and laugh as often and sing, for tears are plentier than smiles in this little world of our’s – only dont be so happy as to let Mattie and me grow dimmer and dimmer and finally fade away, and merrier maids than we smile in our vacant places!

Susie, did you think that I would never write you when you were gone away – what made you? I am sure you know my promise far too well for that – and had I never said so – I should be constrained to write – for what shall separate us from any whom we love – not “[hight nor depth]” . . .

October 9, 1851

Susan is now teaching in Baltimore and Emily writes to her frequently. Ik Marvel’s (Donald G. Mitchell) *Reveries of a Bachelor* (1850) was a bestseller and enjoyed by Emily, Susan, and Austin, as was Longfellow’s *Golden Legend* (1851). Both books celebrate romantic passion and emotional attachment. Lindley Murray, William Harvey Wells, and John Walker were lexicographers and grammarians. In an October 1 letter to Austin, every allusion to “Susie” is erased.



3

Friday forenoon –

Will you let me come dear Susie – looking just as I do, my dress soiled and worn, my grand old apron, and my hair – Oh Susie, time would fail me to enumerate my appearance, yet I love you just as dearly as if I was e’er so fine, so you wont

care, will you? I am so glad dear Susie – that our hearts are always clean, and always neat and lovely, so not to be ashamed. I have been hard at work this morning, and I ought to be working now – but I cannot deny myself the luxury of a minute or two with you.

The dishes may wait dear Susie – and the uncleared table stand, them I have always with me, but you, I have “not always,” why Susie, Christ hath saints manie – and I have few, but thee – the angels shant have Susie – no – no no!

Vinnie is sewing away like a fictitious seamstress, and I half expect some knight will arrive at the door, confess himself a nothing in presence of her loveliness, and present his heart and hand as the only vestige of him worthy to be refused.

Vinnie and I have been talking about growing old, today. Vinnie thinks twenty must be a fearful position for one to occupy – I tell her I dont care if I am young or not, had as lief be thirty, and you, as most anything else. Vinnie expresses her sympathy at my “sere and yellow leaf” and resumes her work, dear Susie, tell me how you feel – ar’nt there days in one’s life when to be old dont seem a thing so sad –

I do feel gray and grim, this morning, and I feel it would be a comfort to have a piping voice, and a broken back, and scare little children.

Dont you run, Susie dear, for I wont do any harm, and I do love you dearly tho’ I do feel so frightful.

Oh my darling one, how long you wander from me, how weary I grow of waiting and looking, and calling for you; sometimes I shut my eyes, and shut my heart towards you, and try hard to forget you because you grieve me so, but you’ll never go away, Oh you never will – say, Susie, promise me again, and I will smile faintly – and take up my little cross

again of sad – sad separation. How vain it seems to write, when one knows how to feel – how much more near and dear to sit beside you, talk with you, hear the tones of your voice – so hard to “deny thyself, and take up thy cross, and follow me –” give me strength, Susie, write me of hope and love, and of hearts that endured, and great was their reward of “Our Father who art in Heaven.” I dont know how I shall bear it, when the gentle spring comes; if she should come and see me and talk to me of you, Oh it would surely kill me! While the frost clings to the windows, and the World is stern and drear; this absence is easier – the Earth mourns too, for all her little birds; but when they all come back again, and she sings and is so merry – pray, what will become of me? Susie, forgive me, forget all what I say, get some sweet little scholar to read a gentle hymn, about Bethlehem and Mary, and you will sleep on sweetly and have as peaceful dreams, as if I had never written you all these ugly things. Never mind the letter Susie, I wont be angry with you if you dont give me any at all – for I know how busy you are, and how little of that dear strength remains when it is evening, with which to think and write. Only want to write me, only sometimes sigh that you are far from me, and that will do, Susie! Dont you think we are good and patient, to let you go so long; and dont we think you’re a darling, a real beautiful hero, to toil for people, and teach them, and leave your own dear home? Because we pine and repine, dont think we forget the precious patriot at war in other lands! Never be mournful, Susie – be happy and have cheer, for how many of the long days have gone away since I wrote you – and it is almost noon, and soon the night will come, and then there is one less day of the long pilgrimage. Mattie is very smart, talks of you much, my darling; I must leave you now – “one little hour of Heaven,” thank who did

give it me, and will he also grant me one longer and more when it shall please his love – bring Susie home, ic! Love always, and ever, and true! Emily –

February 1852

Throughout Emily’s letters to Susan, she combines a language of courtly love with terms of spiritual devotion. In 1915, Susan’s daughter Martha Dickinson Bianchi described her Aunt Emily in the *Atlantic Monthly*, saying: “Her devotion to those she loved was that of a knight for his lady.”



4

Wednesday morn

It’s a sorrowful morning Susie – the wind blows and it rains; “into each life some rain must fall,” and I hardly know which falls fastest, the rain without, or within – Oh Susie, I would nestle close to your warm heart, and never hear the wind blow, or the storm beat, again. Is there any room there for me, or shall I wander away all homeless and alone? Thank you for loving me, darling, and will you “love me more if ever you come home” ! it is enough, dear Susie, I know I shall be satisfied. But what can I do towards you? – dearer you cannot be, for I love you so already, that it almost breaks my heart – perhaps I can love you anew, every day of my life, every morning and evening – Oh if you will let me, how happy I shall be!

The precious billet, Susie, I am wearing the paper out, reading it over and o’er, but the dear thoughts cant wear out if they try, Thanks to Our Father, Susie! Vinnie and I talked of you all last evening long, and went to sleep mourning for you, and

pretty soon I waked up saying “Precious treasure, thou art mine,” and there you were all right, my Susie, and I hardly dared to sleep lest some one steal you away. Never mind the letter, Susie; you have so much to do; just write me every week one line, and let it be, “Emily, I love you,” and I will be satisfied! Your own Emily

Upside down on first page

Vinnie’s love – Mother’s –

In margin on third page

Love to Hattie from us all. Dear Mattie is almost well.

about February 1852

The quote “into each life some rain must fall” is from Longfellow’s “The Rainy Day,” a poem that Emily and Susan shared with their friends.



5

Sunday morning –

Thank the dear little snow flakes, because they fall today rather than some vain weekday, when the world and the cares of the world would try so hard to keep me from my departed friend – and thank you, too, dear Susie, that you never weary of me, or never tell me so, and that when the world is cold, and the storm sighs e’er so piteously, I am sure of one sweet shelter, one covert from the storm! The bells are ringing, Susie, north, and east, and south, and your own village bell, and the people who love God, are expecting to go to meeting; dont you go Susie, not to their meeting, but come with me this morning to

the church within our hearts, where the bells are always ringing, and the preacher whose name is Love – shall intercede there for us!

They will all go but me, to the usual meetinghouse, to hear the usual sermon; the inclemency of the storm so kindly detaining me; and as I sit here Susie, alone with the winds and you – I have the old king feeling even more than before, for I know not even the cracker man will invade this solitude, this sweet Sabbath of our’s. And thank you for my dear letter, which came on Saturday night, when all the world was still; thank you for the love it bore me, and for it’s golden thoughts, and feelings so like gems, that I was sure I gathered them in whole baskets of pearls! I mourn this morning, Susie, that I have no sweet sunset to gild a page for you, nor any bay so blue – not even a little chamber way up in the sky, as your’s is, to give me thoughts of heaven, which I would give to you. You know how I must write you, down, down, in the terrestrial – no sunset here, no stars; not even a bit of twilight which I may poetize – and send you! Yet Susie, there will be romance in the letter’s ride to you – think of the hills and the dales, and the rivers it will pass over, and the drivers and conductors who will hurry it on to you; and wont that make a poem such as can ne’er be written? I think of you dear Susie, now, I dont know how or why, but more dearly as every day goes by, and that sweet month of promise draws nearer and nearer; and I view July so differently from what I used to – once it seemed parched, and dry – and I hardly loved it any on account of it’s heat and dust; but now Susie, month of all the year the best; I skip the violets – and the dew, and the early Rose and the Robins; I will exchange them all for that angry and hot noonday, when I can count the hours and the minutes before you come – Oh Susie, I often think that I will try to tell you how very dear you are, and how I’m watching for

you, but the words wont come, tho' the tears will, and I sit down disappointed – yet darling, you know it all – then why do I seek to tell you? I do not know; in thinking of those I love, my reason is all gone from me, and I do fear sometimes that I must make a hospital for the hopelessly insane, and chain me up there such times, so I wont injure you.

Always when the sun shines, and always when it storms, and always always, Susie, we are remembering you, and what else besides remembering; I shall not tell you, because you know!

Were it not for dear Mattie, I dont know what we would do, but she loves you so dearly, and is never tired of talking about you, and we all get together and talk it oer and oer – and it makes us more resigned, than to mourn for you alone.

It was only yesterday, that I went to see dear Mattie, intending in my heart to stay a little while, only a very little one, because of a good many errands which I was going to do, and will you believe it, Susie, I was there an hour – and an hour, and half an hour besides, and would'nt have supposed it had been minutes so many – and what do you guess we talked about, all those hours long – what would you give to know – give me one little glimpse of your sweet face, dear Susie, and I will tell you all – we didn't talk of statesmen, and we didn't talk of kings – but the time was filled full, and when the latch was lifted and the oaken door was closed, why, Susie, I realized as never I did before, how much a single cottage held that was dear to me. It is sweet – and like home, at Mattie's, but it's sad too – and up comes little memory, and paints – and paints – and paints – and the strangest thing of all, her canvass is never full, and I find her where I left her, every time that I come – and who is she painting – Ah, Susie, “dinna choose to tell” – but it is'nt Mr Cutler, and it is'nt Daniel Boon, and I shant tell you any more – Susie, what will you say if I tell you that

Henry Root is coming to see me, some evening of this week, and I have promised to read him some parts of all your letters; now you wont care, dear Susie, for he wants so much to hear, and I shant read him anything which I know you would not be willing – just some little places, which will please him so – I have seen him several times lately, and I admire him, Susie, because he talks of you so frequently and beautifully; and I know he is so true to you, when you are far away – We talk more of you, dear Susie, than of any other thing – he tells me how wonderful you are, and I tell him how true you are, and his big eyes beam, and he seems so delighted – I know you would'nt care, Susie, if you knew how much joy it made – As I told him the other evening of all your letters to me, he looked up very longingly, and I knew what he would say, were he enough acquainted – so I answered the question his heart wanted to ask, and when some pleasant evening, before this week is gone, you remember home and Amherst, then know, Loved One – that they are remembering you, and that “two or three” are gathered in your name, loving, and speaking of you – and will you be there in the midst of them? Then I've found a beautiful, new, friend, and I've told him about dear Susie, and promised to let him know you so soon as you shall come. Dear Susie, in all your letters there are things sweet and many about which I would speak, but the time says no – yet dont think I forget them – Oh no – they are safe in the little chest which tells no secrets – nor the moth, nor the rust can reach them – but when the time we dream of – comes, then Susie, I shall bring them, and we will spend hours chatting and chatting of them – those precious thoughts of friends – how I loved them, and how I love them now nothing but Susie herself is half so dear. Susie, I have not asked you if you were cheerful and well – and I cant think why, except that there's something perrenial in those we dearly love, immortal life and vigor; why it seems as if any sickness,

or harm, would flee away, would not dare do them wrong, and Susie, while you are taken from me, I class you with the angels, and you know the Bible tells us – “there is no sickness there.” But, dear Susie, are you well, and peaceful, for I wont make you cry by saying are you happy? Dont see the blot, Susie. It’s because I broke the Sabbath!

Upside down on first page

Susie, what shall I do – there is’nt room enough; not half enough, to hold what I was going to say. Wont you tell the man who makes sheets of paper, that I hav’nt the slightest respect for him!

In margin on first page

And when shall I have a letter – when it’s convenient, Susie, not when tired and faint – ever!

In margin on second page

Emeline gets well so slowly; poor Henry; I guess he thinks true love’s course does’nt run very smooth –

In margin on third page

Much love from Mother and Vinnie, and then there are some others who do not dare to send –

In margin on fourth page

Who loves you most, and loves you best, and thinks of you when others rest? T’is Emilie –

about February 1852

Precious stones and gold, love’s riches, and Susan herself as a jewel become a pattern of imagery that continues throughout Emily’s poetry. Her lamentation that she has no “sweet sunset to gild a page for you” may refer to Emily’s inability to use gilt-edged stationery to make a gift of her writing. Mr. Cutler is the Amherst merchant, William Cutler, who married Susan’s sister Harriet in 1842. In the margin on the second page, Emily refers to Emeline Kellogg and her future husband, Henry Nash. A letter to Austin written at the same time is mutilated when referring to “Susie.”



6

Monday morning –

Will you be kind to me, Susie? I am naughty and cross, this morning, and nobody loves me here; nor would you love me, if you should see me frown, and hear how loud the door bangs whenever I go through; and yet it is’nt anger – I dont believe it is, for when nobody sees, I brush away big tears with the corner of my apron, and then go working on – bitter tears, Susie – so hot that they burn my cheeks, and almost scorch my eyeballs, but you have wept such, and you know they are less of anger than sorrow.

And I do love to run fast – and hide away from them all; here in dear Susie’s bosom, I know is love and rest, and I never would go away, did not the big world call me, and beat me for not working.

Little Emerald Mack is washing, I can hear the warm suds, splash. I just gave her my pocket handkerchief – so I cannot cry any more. And Vinnie sweeps – sweeps, upon the chamber stairs; and Mother is hurrying round with her hair in a silk pocket handkerchief, on account of dust. Oh Susie, it is dismal, sad and drear eno’ – and the sun dont shine, and the clouds look cold and gray, and the wind dont blow, but it

pipes the shrillest roundelay, and the birds dont sing, but twitter – and there’s nobody to smile! Do I paint it natural – Susie, so you think how it looks? Yet dont you care – for it wont last so always, and we love you just as well – and think of you, as dearly, as if it were not so. Your precious letter, Susie, it sits here now, and smiles so kindly at me, and gives me such sweet thoughts of the dear writer. When you come home, darling, I shant have your letters, shall I, but I shall have yourself, which is more – Oh more, and better, than I can even think! I sit here with my little whip, cracking the time away, till not an hour is left of it – then you are here! And Joy is here – joy now and forevermore!

Tis only a few days, Susie, it will soon go away, yet I say, go now, this very moment, for I need her – I must have her, Oh give her to me!

Mattie is dear and true, I love her very dearly – and Emily Fowler, too, is very dear to me – and Tempe – and Abby, and Eme’, I am sure – I love them all – and I hope they love me, but, Susie, there’s a great corner still; I fill it with that is gone, I hover round and round it, and call it darling names, and bid it speak to me, and ask it if it’s Susie, and it answers, Nay, Ladie, Susie is stolen away!

Do I repine, is it all murmuring, or am I sad and lone, and cannot, cannot help it? Sometimes when I do feel so, I think it may be wrong, and that God will punish me by taking you away; for he is very kind to let me write to you, and to give me your sweet letters, but my heart wants more.

Have you ever thought of it Susie, and yet I know you have, how much these hearts claim; why I dont believe in the whole, wide world, are such hard little creditors – such real little misers, as you and I carry with us, in our bosoms

everyday. I cant help thinking sometimes, when I hear about the ungenerous, Heart, keep very still – or someone will find you out!

I am going out on the doorstep, to get you some new – green grass – I shall pick it down in the corner, where you and I used to sit, and have long fancies. And perhaps the dear little grasses were growing all the while – and perhaps they heard what we said, but they cant tell! I have come in now, dear Susie, and here is what I found – not quite so glad and green as when we used to sit there, but a sad and pensive grassie – mourning o’er hopes. No doubt some spruce, young Plantain leaf won its young heart away, and then proved false – and dont you wish none proved so, but little Plantains?

I do think it’s wonderful, Susie, that our hearts dont break, every day, when I think of all the whiskers, and all the gallant men, but I guess I’m made with nothing but a hard heart of stone, for it dont break any, and dear Susie, if mine is stony, your’s is stone, upon stone, for you never yield any, where I seem quite beflown. Are we going to ossify always, say, Susie – how will it be? When I see the Popes and the Polloks, and the John-Milton Browns, I think we are liable, but I dont know! I am glad there’s a big future waiting for me and you. You would love to know what I read – I hardly know what to tell you, my catalogue is so small.

I have just read three little books, not great, not thrilling – but sweet and true. “The Light in the Valley,” “Only,” and a “House upon a Rock” – I know you would love them all – yet they dont bewitch me any. There are no walks in the wood – no low and earnest voices, no moonlight, nor stolen love, but pure little lives, loving God, and their parents, and obeying the laws of the land; yet read, if you meet them, Susie, for they will do one good.

I have the promise of “Alton Lock” – a certain book, called “Olive,” and the “Head of a Family,” which was what Mattie named to you. Vinnie and I had “Bleak House” sent to us the other day – it is like him who wrote it – that is all I can say. Dear Susie, you were so happy when you wrote to me last – I am so glad, and you will be happy now for all my sadness, wont you? I cant forgive me ever, if I have made you sad, or dimmed your eye for me. I write from the Land of Violets, and from the Land of Spring, and it would ill become me to carry you nought but sorrows. I remember you, Susie, always – I keep you ever here, and when you are gone, then I’m gone – and we’re ’neath one willow tree. I can only thank “the Father” for giving me such as you, I can only pray unceasingly, that he will bless my Loved One, and bring her back to me, to “go no more out forever. “ Herein is Love.” But that was Heaven – this is but Earth, yet Earth so like to heaven, that I would hesitate, should the true one call away. Dear Susie – adieu! Emilie –

Upside down on first page

Father’s sister is dead, and Mother wears black on her bonnet, and has a collar of crape.

In margin on first page

A great deal of love from Vinnie, and she wants that little note.

In margin on second page

Austin comes home on Wednesday, but he’ll only stay two days, so I fancy we shant

In margin on third page

go sugaring, as “we did last year.” Last year is gone, Susie – did you ever think of that?

In margin on fourth page

Joseph is out south somewhere, a very great way off, yet we hear from him.

April 5, 1852

The reference to “Emerald” distinguishes Mrs. Mack, an Irish woman who works in the Dickinson household, from members of the family of Deacon David Mack. Emily mentions her friend Emily Fowler, and in the margin, she refers to Joseph Lyman, a friend of Emily’s and Lavinia’s. In Emily’s caricatures of friends as literary celebrities, she seems to pun on the names of Alexander Pope and a near-contemporary Scottish divine. The books that are mentioned refer to *The Light in the Valley*, a memorial of Mary Elizabeth Stirling, *Only* and *A House Upon a Rock* by Matilda Anne Mackarness, *Alton Locke* by Charles Kingsley, *Head of a Family* and *Olive* by Dinah Maria Craik, and *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens. In the margins of this letter, Emily also refers to the March 30, 1852, death of her aunt Mary Newman, Edward Dickinson’s sister.



Sunday afternoon

So sweet and still, and Thee, Oh Susie, what need I more, to make my heaven whole?

Sweet Hour, blessed Hour, to carry me to you, and to bring you back to me, long enough to snatch one kiss, and whisper Good bye, again.

I have thought of it all day, Susie, and I fear of but little else, and when I was gone to meeting it filled my mind so full, I could not find a chink to put the worthy pastor; when he said “Our Heavenly Father,” I said “Oh Darling Sue”; when he read the 100th Psalm, I kept saying your precious letter all over to myself, and Susie, when they sang – it would have made you laugh to hear one little voice, piping to the departed. I made up words and kept singing how I loved you, and you had gone, while all the rest of the choir were singing Hallelujahs. I presume nobody heard me, because I sang so small, but it was a kind of a comfort to think I might put them out, singing of you. I a’nt there this afternoon, tho’, because I am here, writing a little letter to my dear Sue, and I am very happy. I think of ten weeks – Dear One, and I think of love, and you, and my heart grows full and warm, and my breath stands still. The sun does’nt shine at all, but I can feel a sunshine stealing into my soul and making it all summer, and every thorn, a rose. And I pray that such summer’s sun shine on my Absent One, and cause her bird to sing!

You have been happy, Susie, and now are sad – and the whole world seems lone; but it wont be so always, “some days must be dark and dreary”! You wont cry any more, will you, Susie, for my father will be your father, and my home will be your home, and where you go, I will go, and we will lie side by side in the kirkyard.

I have parents on earth, dear Susie, but your’s are in the skies, and I have an earthly fireside, but you have one above, and you have a “Father in Heaven,” where I have none – and a sister in heaven, and I know they love you dearly, and think of you every day.

Oh I wish I had half so many dear friends as you in heaven – I could’nt spare them now – but to know they had got there safely, and should suffer nevermore – Dear Susie!

I know I was very naughty to write such fretful things, and I know I could have helped it, if I had tried hard enough, but I thought my heart would break, and I knew of nobody here that cared anything about it – so I said to myself, “We will tell Susie about it.” You dont know what a comfort it was, and you wont know, till the big cup of bitterness is filled brimfull, and they say, “Susie, drink it!” Then Darling, let me be there, and let me drink the half, and you will feel it all!

I am glad you have rested, Susie. I wish the week had been more, a whole score of days and joys for you, yet again, had it lasted longer, then had you not come so soon and I had been lonelier, it is right as it is! Ten weeks, they will seem short to you – for care will fill them, but to Mattie and me, long. We shall grow tired, waiting, and our eyes will ache with looking for you, and with now and then a tear. And yet we have hope left, and we shall keep her busy, cheering away the time. Only think Susie, it is vacation now – there shall be no more vacation until ten weeks have gone, and no more snow; and how very little while it will be now, before you and I are sitting out on the broad stone step, mingling our lives together! I cant talk of it now tho’, for it makes me long and yearn so, that I cannot sleep tonight, for thinking of it, and you.

Yes, we did go sugaring, and remembered who was gone – and who was there last year, and love and recollection brought with them Little Regret, and set her in the midst of us.

Dear Susie, Dear Joseph; why take the best and dearest, and leave our hearts behind? While the Lovers sighed; and twined oak leaves, and the anti enamored ate sugar, and crackers, in the house, I went to see what I could find. Only think of it, Susie; I had’nt any appetite, nor any Lover, either, so I made the best of fate, and gathered antique stones, and your little flowers of moss opened their lips and spoke to me, so I was

not alone, and bye and bye Mattie and me might have been seen sitting together upon a high – gray rock, and we might have been heard talking, were anyone very near! And did thoughts of that dear Susie go with us on the rock, and sit there 'tween us twain? Loved One, thou knowest!

I gathered something for you, because you were not there, an acorn, and some moss blossoms, and a little shell of a snail, so whitened by the snow you would think 'twas a cunning artist had carved it from alabaster – then I tied them all up in a leaf with some last summer's grass I found by a brookside, and I'm keeping them all for you.

I saw Mattie at church today, tho' could not speak to her. Friday evening I saw her, and talked with her besides. Oh I do love her – and when you come if we all live till then, it will be precious, Susie. You speak to me of sorrow, of what you have “lost and loved,” say rather, of what you have loved and won, for it is much, dear Susie; I can count the big, true hearts by clusters, full of bloom, and bloom amaranthine, because eternal! Emilie –

In margin on first page

I have heard all about the journal, Oh Susie, that you should come to this! I want you to get it bound – at my expense – Susie – so when he takes you from me, to live in his new home, I may have some of you. I am sincere.

In margin on second page

Mother sends her best love to you. It makes her look so happy when I give your's to her. Send it always, Susie, and send your respects to father!

In margin on third page

And much from Vinnie. She was so happy at her note. After she finished reading it, she said, “I dont know but it's wrong, but I love Sue better –

In margin on fourth page

than Jane, and I love her and Mattie better than all the friends I ever had in my life.” Vinnie hopes to be like you, and to do as you do.

Upside down, near “Loved One, thou knowest!” on fourth page

Hattie!

late April 1852

Susan is spending ten days of her spring vacation with her friend Harriet Hinsdale, and they are visiting Harriet's sister in Havre de Grace, Maryland. “Dear Joseph” again refers to Joseph Lyman, who recently left Amherst to seek his fortune in the South. Emily links Susan with Joseph because they are both far away. She also refers to her friend Jane Humphrey. As she has done in a previous letter, Emily once again quotes Longfellow's “The Rainy Day”: “Some days must be dark and dreary.” In offering to share all she owns with Susan, Emily echoes Ruth's words to Naomi from the *Book of Ruth*, a pledge that was frequently included in wedding ceremonies: “Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whether thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also *if ought* but death part thee and me.” (Ruth 1:16–17)



8

Wednesday –

Precious Sue – Precious Mattie!

All I desire in this life – all I pray for, or hope for in that long life to come!

Dear Mattie just left me, and I stand just where we stood smiling and chatting together a moment ago. Our last words were of you, and as we said Dear Susie, the sunshine grew so warm, and out peeped prisoned leaves, and the Robins answered Susie, and the big hills left their work, and echoed Susie, and from the smiling fields, and from the fragrant meadows came troops of fairy Susies, and asked “Is it me”? No, Little One, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can the heart conceive” my Susie, whom I love.

These days of heaven bring you nearer and nearer, and every bird that sings, and every bud that blooms, does but remind me more of that garden unseen, awaiting the hand that tills it. Dear Susie, when you come, how many boundless blossoms among those silent beds! How I do count the days – how I do long for the time when I may count the hours without incurring the charge of *Femina insania*! I made up the Latin – Susie, for I could’nt think how it went, according to Stoddard and Andrew!

I want to send you joy, I have half a mind to put up one of these dear little Robin’s, and send him singing to you. I know I would, Susie, did I think he would live to get there and sing his little songs.

I shall keep everything singing tho’, until Dear Child gets home – and I shant let anything blossom till then – either.

I have got to go out in the garden now, and whip a Crown-Imperial for presuming to hold it’s head up, until you have come home, so farewell, Susie – I shall think of you at sunset, and at sunrise, again; and at noon, and forenoon, and afternoon, and always, and evermore, till this little heart stops beating and is still. Emilie

about May 1852

Emily refers to the New Testament: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” (I Corinthians 2.9) “Stoddard and Andrew” are Solomon Stoddard and Ethan Allen Andrews, the authors of *A Grammar of the Latin Language for Schools and Colleges*.



9

Friday morning –

They are cleaning house today, Susie, and I’ve made a flying retreat to my own little chamber, where with affection, and you, I will spend this my precious hour, most precious of all the hours which dot my flying days, and the one so dear, that for it I barter everything, and as soon as it is gone, I am sighing for it again.

I cannot believe, dear Susie, that I have stayed without you almost a whole year long; sometimes the time seems short, and the thought of you as warm as if you had gone but yesterday, and again if years and years had trod their silent pathway, the time would seem less long.

And now how soon I shall have you, shall hold you in my arms; you will forgive the tears, Susie, they are so glad to come that it is not in my heart to reprove them and send them home. I don't know why it is – but there's something in your name, now you are taken from me, which fills my heart so full, and my eye, too. It is not that the mention grieves me, no, Susie, but I think of each "sunnyside" where we have sat together, and lest there be no more, I guess is what makes the tears come. Mattie was here last evening, and we sat on the front door stone, and talked about life and love, and whispered our childish fancies about such blissful things – the evening was gone so soon, and I walked home with Mattie beneath the silent moon, and wished for you, and Heaven. You did not come, Darling, but a bit of Heaven did, or so it seemed to us, as we walked side by side and wondered of that great blessedness which may be our's sometime, is granted now, to some. This union, my dear Susie, by which two lives are one, this sweet and strange adoption wherein we can but look, and are not yet admitted, how it can fill the heart, and make it gang wildly beating, how it will take us one day, and make us all it's own, and we shall not run away from it, but lie still and be happy!

You and I have been strangely silent upon this subject, Susie, we have often touched upon it, and as quickly fled away, as children shut their eyes when the sun is too bright for them. I have always hoped to know if you had no dear fancy, illumining all your life, no one of whom you murmured in the faithful ear of night – and at whose side in fancy, you walked the livelong day; and when you come home, Susie, we must speak of these things.

How dull our lives must seem to the bride, and the plighted maiden, whose days are fed with gold, and who gather pearls every evening; but to the wife, Susie, sometimes the wife

forgotten, our lives perhaps seem dearer than all others in the world; you have seen flowers at morning, satisfied with the dew, and those same sweet flowers at noon with their heads bowed in anguish before the mighty sun; think you these thirsty blossoms will now need naught but – dew? No, they will cry for sunlight, and pine for the burning noon, tho' it scorches them, scathes them; they have got through with peace – they know that the man of noon, is mightier than the morning and their life is henceforth to him. Oh, Susie, it is dangerous, and it is all too dear, these simple trusting spirits, and the spirits mightier, which we cannot resist! It does so rend me, Susie, the thought of it when it comes, that I tremble lest at sometime I, too, am yielded up.

Susie, you will forgive me my amatory strain – it has been a very long one, and if this saucy page did not here bind and fetter me, I might have had no end.

I have got the letter, Susie, dear little bud – and all – and the tears came again, that alone in this big world, I am not quite alone. Such tears are showers friend, thro' which when smiles appear, the angels call them rainbows, and mimic them in Heaven.

And now in four weeks more – you are mine, all mine, except I lend you a little occasionally to Hattie and Mattie, if they promise me not to lose you, and to bring you back very soon. I shall not count the days. I shall not fill my cups with this expected happiness, for perhaps if I do, the angels being thirsty, will drink them up – I shall only hope, my Susie, and that tremblingly, for havnt barques the fullest, stranded upon the shore?

God is good, Susie, I trust he will save you, I pray that in his good time we once more meet each other, but if this life holds not another meeting for us, remember also, Susie, that it has

no parting more, wherever that hour finds us, for which we have hoped so long, we shall not be separated, neither death, nor the grave can part us, so that we only love! Your Emilie –

In margin on first page

Austin has come and gone; life is so still again; why must the storm have calms?

In margin on second page

I hav'nt seen Root this term, I guess Mattie and I, are not sufficient for him!

In margin on third page

When will you come again, in a week? Let it be a swift week!

In margin on fourth page

Vinnie sends much love, and Mother; and might I be so bold as to enclose a remembrance?

early June 1852

Emily's tone in this letter suggests that she was not aware of the intimacy Susan already shared with Austin. Just four months earlier, Susan had sent Austin a Valentine that included a private joke referring to another young man's gift of chestnuts to Susan, a gift that Susan and Austin ate together. Soon the word in Amherst was that "Austin D. and Susan Gilbert are constant, and the gossips say constantly together."



10

Friday afternoon –

I have but one thought, Susie, this afternoon of June, and that of you, and I have one prayer, only; dear Susie, that is for you. That you and I in hand as we e'en do in heart, might ramble away as children, among the woods and fields, and forget these many fears, and these sorrowing cares, and each become a child again – I would it were so, Susie, and when I look around me and find myself alone, I sigh for you again; little sigh, and vain sigh, which will not bring you home.

I need you more and more, and the great world grows wider, and dear ones fewer and fewer, every day that you stay away – I miss my biggest heart; my own goes wandering round, and calls for Susie – Friends are too dear to sunder, Oh they are far too few, and how soon they will go away where you and I cannot find them, don't let us forget these things, for their remembrance now will save us many an anguish when it is too late to love them! Susie, forgive me Darling, for every word I say – my heart is full of you, none other than you in my thoughts, yet when I seek to say to you something not for the world, words fail me; If you were here, and Oh that you were, my Susie, we need not talk at all, our eyes would whisper for us, and your hand fast in mine, we would not ask for language – I try to bring you nearer, I chase the weeks away till they are quite departed, and fancy you have come, and I am on my way through the green lane to meet you, and my heart goes scampering so, that I have much ado to bring it back again, and learn it to be patient, till that dear Susie comes. Three weeks – they cant last always, for surely they must go with their little brothers and sisters to their long home in the west!

I shall grow more and more impatient until that dear day comes, for till now, I have only mourned for you; now I begin to hope for you.

Dear Susie, I have tried hard to think what you would love, of something I might send you – I at last saw my little Violets, they begged me to let them go, so here they are – and with them as Instructor, a bit of knightly grass, who also begged the favor to accompany them – they are but small, Susie, and I fear not fragrant now, but they will speak to you of warm hearts at home, and of the something faithful, which “never slumbers nor sleeps” – Keep them ’neath your pillow, Susie, they will make you dream of blue-skies, and home, and the “blessed countrie”! You and I will have an hour with “Edward” and “Ellen Middleton”, sometime when you get home – we must find out if somethings contained therein are true, and if they are, what you and me are coming to!

Now farewell, Susie, and Vinnie sends her love, and mother her’s, and I add a kiss, shyly, lest there is somebody there!! Dont let them see, will you Susie? Emilie –

On fourth page

Why cant I be a Delegate to the great Whig Convention? – dont I know all about Daniel Webster, and the Tariff, and the Law? Then, Susie, I could see you, during a pause in the session – but I dont like this country at all, and I shant stay here any longer! “Delenda est” America, Massachusetts and all!

open me carefully –

June 11, 1852

Emily’s father Edward Dickinson was a delegate to the national Whig convention, which met in Baltimore on June 16, 1852, and he delivered this letter to Susan. “Delenda est” is Latin for “blot out” or “obliterate” or “erase.” Emily fantasizes about returning to childhood, then complains about woman’s lower political and social status in nineteenth-century New England.



11

Sunday afternoon –

My Susie’s last request; yes, darling, I grant it, tho’ few, and fleet the days which separate us now – but six more weary days, but six more twilight evens, and my lone little fireside, my silent fireside is once more full.

“We are seven, and one in heaven,” we are three next Saturday, if I have mine and heaven has none.

Do not mistake, my Susie, and rather than the car, ride on the golden wings where you will ne’er come back again – do not forget the lane, and the little cot that stands by it, when people from the clouds will beckon you, and smile at you, to have you go with them – Oh Susie, my child, I sit here by my window, and look each little while down towards that golden gateway beneath the western trees, and I fancy I see you coming, you trip upon the green grass, and I hear the crackling leaf under your little shoe; I hide behind the chair, I think I will surprise you, I grow too eager to see you. I hasten to the door, and start to find me that you are not there. And very, very often when I have waked from sleep, not quite waked, I have been sure I saw you, and your dark eye beamed on me with such a look of tenderness that I could only weep, and bless God for you.

Susie, will you indeed come home next Saturday, and be my own again, and kiss me as you used to?

Shall I indeed behold you, not “darkly, but face to face” or am I fancying so, and dreaming blessed dreams from which the day will wake me? I hope for you so much, and feel so eager for you, feel that I cannot wait, feel that now I must have you – that the expectation once more to see your face again, makes me feel hot and feverish, and my heart beats so fast – I go to sleep at night, and the first thing I know, I am sitting there wide awake, and clasping my hands tightly, and thinking of next Saturday, and “never a bit” of you.

Sometimes I must have Saturday before tomorrow comes, and I wonder if it w’d make any difference with God, to give it to me today, and I’ll let him have Monday, to make him a Saturday; and then I feel so funnily, and wish the precious day would’nt come quite so soon, till I could know how to feel, and get my thoughts ready for it.

Why, Susie, it seems to me as if my absent Lover was coming home so soon – and my heart must be so busy, making ready for him.

While the minister this morning was giving an account of the Roman Catholic system, and announcing several facts which were usually startling, I was trying to make up my mind w’h of the two was prettiest to go and welcome you in, my fawn colored dress, or my blue dress. Just as I had decided by all means to wear the blue, down came the minister’s fist with a terrible rap on the counter, and Susie, it scared me so, I hav’nt got over it yet, but I’m glad I reached a conclusion! I walked home from meeting with Mattie, and incidentally quite, something was said of you – and I think one of us remarked that you would be here next Sunday; well – Susie – what it was I dont presume to know, but my gaiters seemed to leave me, and I seemed to move on wings – and I move on wings

now, Susie, on wings as white as snow, and as bright as the summer sunshine – because I am with you, and so few short days, you are with me at home. Be patient then, my Sister, for the hours will haste away, and Oh so soon!

Susie, I write most hastily, and very carelessly too, for it is time for me to get the supper, and my mother is gone and besides, my darling, so near I seem to you, that I disdain this pen, and wait for a warmer language. With Vinnie’s love, and my love, I am once more

Your Emilie –

June 27, 1852

Emily refers to her mother, who is in Boston visiting Austin and probably staying with her sister’s family, the Norcrosses. Susan is expected to arrive in Amherst in early July, and Austin is to return at the month’s end. Emily refers to Wordsworth’s poem “We Are Seven” in the second paragraph, changing two children in heaven to one. The “three next Saturday” will be Susan, Emily, and Vinnie. No written record has been preserved of Susan’s homecoming from Baltimore on July 3, nor of Emily’s feelings concerning the reunion and Austin’s return to Amherst on July 26. How Emily experienced the events of that summer and fall, with Austin and Susan “constantly together” is unclear.



12

Friday noon.

Dear Friend.

I regret to inform you that at 3. o'clock yesterday, my mind came to a stand, and has since then been stationary.

Ere this intelligence reaches you, I shall probably be a snail. By this untoward providence a mental and moral being has been swept ruthlessly from her sphere. Yet we should not repine – “God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform, he

plants his foot upon the sea, and rides upon the storm," and if it be his will that I become a bear and bite my fellow men, it will be for the highest good of this fallen and perishing world.

If the gentleman in the air, will please to stop throwing snowballs, I may meet you again, otherwise it is uncertain. My parents are pretty well – Gen Wolfe is here – we're looking for Major Pitcairn in the afternoon stage.

We were much afflicted yesterday, by the supposed removal of our Cat from time to Eternity.

She returned, however, last evening, having been detained by the storm, beyond her expectations.

I see by the Boston papers that Giddings is up again – hope you'll arrange with Corwin, and have the North all straight.

Fine weather for sledding – have spoken for 52 cord black walnut. We need some paths our way, shant you come out with the team?

Yours till death – Judah

early December 1852

In the second paragraph, Emily quotes William Cowper's "Light Shining Out of Darkness" from memory, altering one line. Edward Dickinson has just been elected to Congress as the Whig candidate, and Emily nicknames his visitors after General Wolfe, who died victorious at Quebec, and Major Pitcairn, who was fatally wounded at Bunker Hill. In 1848, Joshua Reed Giddings broke with the Whigs because the party endorsed the Fugitive Slave Law, which Thomas Corwin, Fillmore's Secretary of the Treasury, also opposed.



13

Thursday afternoon –

The sun shines warm, dear Susie, but the sweetest sunshine's gone, and in that far off Manchester, all my blue sky is straying this winter's afternoon. Vinnie and I are here – just where you always find us when you come in the afternoon to sit a little while – We miss your face today, and a tear fell on my work a little while ago, so I put up my sewing, and tried to write to you. I had rather have talked, dear Susie – it seems to me a long while since I have seen you much – it is a long while Susie, since we have been together – so long since we've spent a twilight, and spoken of what we loved, but you will come back again, and there's all the future Susie, which is as yet untouched! It is the brightest star in the firmament of God, and I look in it's face the oftenest.

I ran to the door, dear Susie – I ran out in the rain, with nothing but my slippers on, I called "Susie, Susie," but you didn't look at me; then I ran to the dining room window and rapped with all my might upon the pane, but you rode right on and never heeded me.

It made me feel so lonely, that I could'nt help the tears, when I came back to the table, to think I was eating breakfast, and you were riding away – but bye and bye I thought that the same ugly coach which carried you away, would have to bring you back again in but a little while, and the spite pleased me so that I did'nt cry any more till the tear fell of which I told you. And now, my absent One, I am hoping the days away, till I shall see you home – I am sewing as fast as I can, I am training the stems to my flowers, I am working with all my might, so as to pause and love you, as soon as you get home.

How fast we will have to talk then – there will be those farewell gaieties – and all the days before, of which I have had no fact, and there will be your absence, and your presence, my Susie dear, sweetest, and brightest, and best of every and all the themes. It is sweet to talk, dear Susie, with those whom God has given us, lest we should be alone – and you and I have tasted it, and found it very sweet; even as fragrant flowers, o’er which the bee hums and lingers, and hums more for the lingering.

I find it very lonely, to part with one of mine, with mine especially, and the days will have more hours while you are gone away.

They played the trick yesterday – they dupe me again today.

Twelve hours make one indeed – Call it twice twelve, three times twelve, and add, and add, and add, then multiply again, and we will talk about it.

“At Dover dwells George Brown Esq – Good Carlos Finch and David Fryer” – Oh Susie! How much escapes me, mine; whether you reached there safely, whether you are a stranger – or have only just gone home – Whether you find the friends as you fancied you should find them, or dearer than you expected?

All this, and more, Susie, I am eager to know, and I shall know soon, shant I? I love to think I shall.

Oh Susie, Susie, I must call out to you in the old, old way – I must say how it seems to me to hear the clock so silently tick all the hours away, and bring me not my gift – my own, my own!

Perhaps you cant read it, Darling, it is incoherent and blind; but the recollection that prompts it, is very distinct and clear, and reads easily. Susie, they send their love – my mother and my sister – thy mother and thy sister, and the Youth, the Lone Youth, Susie, you know the rest!

Emilie –

Tell me when you write Susie, if I shall send my love to the Lady where you stay!

February 24, 1853

Emily quotes a calendar game included in Longfellow’s *Kavanaugh*: “At Dover dwells George Brown, Esquire, / Good Christopher Finch, and Daniel Friar.” In this game, one could determine on which day the first of every month of the year fell.



14

Saturday morning –

I know dear Susie is busy, or she would not forget her lone little Emilie, who wrote her just as soon as she’d gone to Manchester, and has waited so patiently till she can wait no more, and the credulous little heart, fond even tho’ forsaken, will get it’s big black inkstand, and tell her once again how well it loves her.

Dear Susie, I have tried so hard to act patiently, not to think unkind thoughts, or cherish unkind doubt concerning one not here, I have watched the stages come in, I have tried to look indifferent, and hum a snatch of tune when I heard Father and Austin coming, and knew how soon they’d bring me a dear

letter from you, or I should look in the hat, and find it all empty – and here comes Saturday, and tomorrow the world stands still, and I shall have no message from my dear Susie!

Why dont you write me, Darling? Did I in that quick letter say anything which grieved you, or made it hard for you to take your usual pen and trace affection for your bad, sad Emilie?

Then Susie, you must forgive me before you sleep tonight, for I will not shut my eyes until you have kissed my cheek, and told me you would love me.

Oh it has been so still, since when you went away, nothing but just the ticking of the two ceaseless clocks – swiftly the “Little mystic one, no human eye hath seen,” but slowly and solemnly the tall clock upon the mantel – you remember that clock, Susie. It has the oddest way of striking twelve in the morning, and six in the afternoon, just as soon as you come. I am trying to teach it a few of the proprieties of life, now you are gone away, and the poor thing does indeed seem quite obedient, and goes slowly eno’, but as soon as you’re back again, Susie, it will be the same graceless one it ever used to be, and only gallop with accelerated speed, to make up for resting now.

Dear Susie, it is harder to live alone than it was when you were in Baltimore, and the days went slowly, then – they go e’en slower than they did while you were in the school – or else I grow impatient, and cannot brook as easily absence from those I love. I dont know which it is – I only know that when you shall come back again, the Earth will seem more beautiful, and bigger than it does now, and the blue sky from the window will be all dotted with gold – though it may not be evening, or time for the stars to come.

It is pleasant to talk of you with Austin – and Vinnie and to find how you are living in every one of their hearts, and making it warm and bright there – as if it were a sky, and a sweet summer’s noon. Austin has gone this morning – the last little thing I did for him was while they were at breakfast, to write on four envelopes for him to send to you –

It made me smile, Susie, to think how Little Argus was cheated after all – and I smiled again, at thinking of something holier, of something from the skies, come Earthward.

Dear Susie, I dont forget you a moment of the hour, and when my work is finished, and I have got the tea, I slip thro’ the little entry, and out at the front door, and stand and watch the West, and remember all of mine – yes, Susie – the golden West, and the great, silent Eternity, forever folded there, and bye and bye it will open it’s everlasting arms, and gather us all – all – Good bye, dear Susie – they all send you their love – Emilie –

Susie – will you give my love to Mrs Bartlett, and tell her the fortnight is out next Wednesday, and I thought she m’t like to know!

March 5, 1853

Susan’s courtship with Austin is intensifying at this time, and Susan is sending him letters. Emily writes to Susan frequently. On March 5, Austin arrived in Cambridge to attend Harvard Law School, and Emily addressed four envelopes for him to send to Susan. “Little mystic one” may be an allusion to “The Life Clock,” translated from German and printed in both the *Hampshire Gazette* and *Northampton Courier* in the late 1840s: “There is a little mystic clock, / No human eye hath seen, / That beateth on and beateth on / From morning until e’en.”



15

Write! Comrade – write!
 On this wondrous sea
 Sailing silently,
 Ho! Pilot, ho!
 Knowest thou the shore
 Where no breakers roar –
 Where the storm is oer?

—————
 In the peaceful west
 Many the sails at rest –
 The anchors fast –
 Thither I pilot thee –
 Land Ho! Eternity!
 Ashore at last!
 Emilie –

March 1853

This is the first poem that Emily is known to have sent to Susan.



16

Dear Susie –

I'm so amused at my own ubiquity that I hardly know what to say, or how to relate the story of the wonderful correspondent. First, I arrive from Amherst, then comes a ponderous tome from the learned Halls of Cambridge, and again by strange metamorphosis I'm just from Michigan, and am Mattie and Minnie and Lizzie in one wondering breath –

Why, dear Susie, it must'nt scare you if I loom up from Hindoostan, or drop from an Appenine, or peer at you suddenly from the hollow of a tree, calling myself King Charles, Sancho Panza, or Herod, King of the Jews – I suppose it is all the same.

“Miss Mills,” that is, Miss Julia, never dreamed of the depths of my clandestiny, and if I stopped to think of the figure I was cutting, it would be the last of me, and you'd never hear again from your poor Jeremy Bentham –

But I say to my mind, “tut, tut,” “Rock a bye baby” conscience, and so I keep them still!

And as for the pulling of wool over the eyes of Manchester, I trust to the courtesy of the Recording Angel, to say nothing of that. One thing is true, Darling, the world will be none the wiser, for Emilie's omnipresence, and two big hearts will beat stouter, as tidings from me come in. I love the opportunity to serve those who are mine, and to soften the least asperity in the path which ne'er “ran smooth,” is a delight to me. So Susie, I set the trap and catch the little mouse, and love to catch him dearly, for I think of you and Austin – and know it pleases you to have my tiny services. Dear Susie, you are gone – One would hardly think I had lost you to hear this revelry, but your absence insanes me so – I do not feel so peaceful, when you are gone from me –

All life looks differently, and the faces of my fellows are not the same they wear when you are with me. I think it is this, dear Susie; you sketch my pictures for me, and 'tis at their sweet colorings, rather than this dim real that I am used, so you see when you go away, the world looks staringly, and I find I need more vail – Frank Peirce thinks I mean berage vail, and makes a sprightly plan to import the “article,” but dear

Susie knows what I mean. Do you ever look homeward,
Susie, and count the lonely hours Vinnie and I are spending,
because that you are gone?

Yes, Susie, very lonely, and yet is it very sweet too to know
that you are happy, and to think of you in the morning, and at
eventide, and noon, and always as smiling and looking up for
joy – I could not spare you else, dear Sister, but to be sure
your life is warm with such a sunshine, helps me to chase the
shadow fast stealing upon mine – I knew you would be happy,
and you know now of something I had told you.

There are lives, sometimes, Susie – Bless God that we catch
faint glimpses of his brighter Paradise from occasional Heavens
here!

Stay, Susie; yet not stay! I cannot spare your sweet face another
hour more, and yet I want to have you gather more sheaves of
joy – for bleak, and waste, and barren, are most of the fields
found here, and I want you to fill the garner. Then you may
come, dear Susie, and from our silent home, Vinnie and I shall
meet you. There is much to tell you, Susie, but I cannot bring
the deeds of the rough and jostling world into that sweet
inclosure; they are fitter fonder, here – but Susie, I do bring
you a Sister's fondest love – and gentlest tenderness; little
indeed, but "a'," and I know you will not refuse them. Please
remember me to your friend, and write soon to your lonely –
Emilie –

Upside down on first page

Vinnie sends you her love – She would write, but has hurt her
hand – Mother's love too – Oh Susie!

March 12, 1853

Emily refers to Austin as the philosopher and jurist Jeremy Bentham. Julia Mills is the close friend of Dora Spenslow in *David Copperfield*. Erasures of affectionate references to "Susie" continue in Emily's letters to Austin of this period. On March 23, Susan and Austin become engaged.



17

It's hard to wait, dear Susie, though my heart is there, and has
been since the sunset, and I knew you'd come – I'd should
have gone right down, but Mother had been at work hard, as
it was Saturday, and Austin had promised to take her to Mrs
Cobb's, as soon as he got home from Palmer – then she
wanted to go, and see two or three of the neighbors, and I
wanted to go to you, but I thought it would be unkind – so
not till tomorrow, Darling – and all the stories Monday –
except short sketches of them at meeting tomorrow night. I
have stories to tell – very unusual for me – a good many things
have happened – Love for you Darling – How can I sleep
tonight? Ever Emilie –

So precious, my own Sister, to have you here again.
Somebody loves you more – or I were there this evening –

Mother sends her love – She spoke of it this morning, what a
day Susie would have –

about October 1853

There are few existing letters from Emily to Susan for the next eight months. During this time Emily writes frequently to Austin in Cambridge, sending him news from home and often elaborating on time spent with Susan. Her tone is generally cheerful as she and all of the Dickinsons welcome Susan into the family as Austin's future wife, and Emily and Susan see each other nearly every day.



Sabbath Day –

I'm just from meeting, Susie, and as I sorely feared, my "life" was made a "victim." I walked – I ran – I flew – I turned precarious corners – One moment I was not – then soared aloft like Phoenix, soon as the foe was by – and then anticipating an enemy again, my soiled and drooping plumage might have been seen emerging from just behind a fence, vainly endeavoring to fly once more from hence. I reached the steps, dear Susie – I smiled to think of me, and my geometry, during the journey there – It would have puzzled Euclid, and it's doubtful result, have solemnized a Day.

How big and broad the aisle seemed, full huge enough before, as I quaked slowly up – and reached my usual seat!

In vain I sought to hide behind your feathers – Susie – feathers and Bird had flown, and there I sat, and sighed, and wondered I was scared so, for surely in the whole world was nothing I need to fear – Yet there the Phantom was, and though I kept resolving to be as brave as Turks, and bold as Polar Bears, it didn't help me any. After the opening prayer I ventured to turn around. Mr Carter immediately looked at me – Mr Sweetser attempted to do so, but I discovered nothing, up in the sky somewhere, and gazed intently at it, for quite a half an hour. During the exercises I became more calm, and got out of church quite comfortably. Several roared around, and, sought to devour me, but I fell an easy prey to Miss Lovina Dickinson, being too much exhausted to make any farther resistance.

She entertained me with much sprightly remark, until our gate was reached, and I need'nt tell you Susie, just how I clutched the latch, and whirled the merry key, and fairly danced for joy, to find myself at home! How I did wish for you – how – for my own dear Vinnie – how for Goliah, or Samson – to pull the whole church down, requesting Mr Dwight to step into Miss Kingsbury's, until the dust was past!

Prof Aarop Warner, late propounder of Rhetoric to youth of Amherst College, gave us the morning sermon. Now Susie, you and I, admire Mr Warner, so my felicity, when he arose to preach, I need not say to you. I will merely remark that I shall be much disappointed if the Rev Horace Walpole does'nt address us this evening.

You can see how things go, dear Susie, when you are not at home. If you stay another Sunday I hav'nt any doubt that the "Secretary of War" will take charge of the Sabbath School – yet I would not alarm you!

The singing reminded me of the Legend of "Jack and Gill," allowing the Bass Viol to be typified by Gill, who literally tumbled after, while Jack – i e the choir, galloped insanely on, "nor recked, nor heeded" him.

Dear Sister, it is passed away, and you and I may speak of dear things, and little things – some of our trifles Susie – There's Austin – he's a trifle – and trifling as it is that he is coming Monday, it makes my heart [*ink blot covers "beat"*] faster – Vinnie's a trifle too – Oh how I love such trifles. Susie, under that black spot, technically termed a blot, the word beat may be found – My pen fell from the handle – occasioning the same, but life is too short to transcribe or apologize – I dont doubt Daniel Webster made many a blot, and I think you said,

you made one, under circumstances quite aggravating! But of Austin and Vinnie – One is with me tomorrow noon, and I shall be so happy –

The one that returns, Susie, is dearer than “ninety and nine” that did not go away.

To get you all once more, seems vague and doubtful to me, for it would be so dear. Did you ever think, Susie, that there had been no grave here? To me there are three, now. The longest one is Austin’s – I must plant brave trees there, for Austin was so brave – and Susie, for you and Vinnie I shall plant each a rose, and that will make the birds come.

Sister, I hav’nt asked if you got to Manchester safely, if all is happy, and well, and yet I’m sure it is – if it were not, you would have told me. Susie, the days and hours are very long to me, but you must not come back until it is best and willing.

Please remember me to your friends, with respect and affection, leaving only affection for you –

from your own Emily –

In margin on first page

Remember the hint, Susie!

In margin on third page

Mother asks if I’ve given her love.

January 15, 1854

Susan is away visiting her sister’s in-laws, Mary and Samuel Bartlett, in Manchester, New Hampshire, and Austin is due home almost immediately for a six week stay. Professor Aaron Warner resigned from Amherst College because the trustees did not give him the opportunity to rebut criticisms of his work.



19

Monday evening.

Susie – it is a little thing to say how lone it is – anyone can do it, but to wear the liveness next your heart for weeks, when you sleep, and when you wake, ever missing something, this, all cannot say, and it baffles me.

I could paint a portrait which would bring the tears, had I canvass for it, and the scene should be solitude, and the figures – solitude – and the lights and shades, each a solitude.

I could fill a chamber with landscapes so lone, men should pause and weep there; then haste grateful home, for a loved one left. Today has been a fair day, very still and blue. Tonight, the crimson children are playing in the West, and tomorrow will be colder.

In all I number you. I want to think of you each hour in the day. What you are saying – doing – I want to walk with you, as seeing yet unseen. You say you walk and sew alone. I walk and sew alone. I dont see much of Vinnie – she’s mostly, dusting stairs!

We go out very little – once in a month or two, we both set sail in silks – touch at the principal points, and then put into port again – Vinnie cruises about some to transact the commerce, but coming to anchor, is most that I can do. Mr and Mrs Dwight are a sunlight to me, which no night can shade, and I still perform weekly journeys there, much to Austin’s dudgeon, and my sister’s rage.

I have heard it said “persecution kindles” – think it kindled me! They are sweet and loving, and one thing, dear Susie, always ask for you. Sunday Afternoon – I left you a long while

Susie, that is, in pen and ink – my heart kept on. I was called down from you to entertain some company – went with a sorry grace, I fear, and trust I acted with one. There is a tall – pale snow storm stalking through the fields, and bowing here, at my window – shant let the fellow in!

I went to church all day in second dress, and boots. We had such precious sermons from Mr Dwight. One about unbelief, and another Esau. Sermons on unbelief ever did attract me. Thanksgiving was observed throughout the state last week! Believe we had a Turkey, and two kinds of Pie. Otherwise, no change. Father went Thanksgiving night. Austin goes tomorrow, unless kept by storm. He will see you, Darling! What I cannot do. Oh could I! We did not attend the Thanksgiving “Soiree” – owing to our sadness at just parting with father –

Your sister will give particulars.

Abby is much better – rode horseback every day until the snow came, and goes down street now just like other girls – Abby seems more gentle, more affectionate, than she has.

Eme Kellogg wonders she does not hear from you. I gave your message to her, and bring you back the same. Eme is still with Henry, tho’ no outward bond has as yet encircled them. Edward Hitchcock and baby – and Mary, spent Thanksgiving here. I called upon Mary – she appears very sweetly, and the baby is quite becoming to her. They all adore the baby. Mary inquired for you with a great deal of warmth, and wanted to send her love when I wrote.

Susie – had that been you – well – well! I must stop, Sister. Things have wagged, dear Susie, and they’re wagging still. “Little Children, love one another.” Not all of life to live, is it, nor all of death to die.

In margin on first page

Susie – we all love you – Mother – Vinnie – me. Dearly!

Upside down on first page

I have not heard from Mat for months. “They say that absence conquers.” It has vanquished me.

In margin on second page

Your Sister Harriet is our most intimate friend.

In margin on third page

Mother and Vinnie send their love. Austin must carry his.

In margin on fourth page

The last night of the term, John sent his love to you.

November 27 to December 3, 1854

Thanksgiving night, Edward Dickinson returns to Washington for the second session of the thirty-third Congress. On December 4, Austin departs for Chicago and Grand Haven, Michigan to visit his future brothers-in-law. He returns to Amherst at the beginning of the new year, 1855, and Susan stays in Michigan until late February. John is Emily’s cousin, John Graves, an Amherst College student. The letter’s last line refers to the last two lines of a stanza from James Montgomery’s hymn, “O where shall rest be found”: “’Tis not the whole of life to live; Nor all of death to die.”



Sabbath Day.

I am sick today, dear Susie, and have not been to church. There has been a pleasant quiet, in which to think of you, and I have not been sick eno' that I cannot write to you. I love you as dearly, Susie, as when love first began, on the step at the front door, and under the Evergreens, and it breaks my heart sometimes, because I do not hear from you. I wrote you many days ago – I wont say many weeks, because it will look sadder so, and then I cannot write – but Susie, it troubles me.

I miss you, mourn for you, and walk the Streets alone – often at night, beside, I fall asleep in tears, for your dear face, yet not one word comes back to me from that silent West. If it is finished, tell me, and I will raise the lid to my box of Phantoms, and lay one more love in; but if it lives and beats still, still lives and beats for me, then say me so, and I will strike the strings to one more strain of happiness before I die. Why Susie – think of it – you are my precious Sister, and will be till you die, and will be still, when Austin and Vinnie and Mat, and you and I are marble – and life has forgotten us!

Vinnie and I are going soon – either this week or next – father has not determined. I'm sure I cannot go, when I think that you are coming, and I would give the whole world if I could stay, instead.

I cant believe you are coming – but when I think of it, and tell myself it's so, a wondrous joy comes over me, and my old fashioned life capers as in a dream. Sue – I take the words of that Sweet Kate Scott, I have never seen – and say “it is too

blissful.” I never will be “so busy” when you get back to me, as I used to be. I'll get “my spinning done,” for Susie, it steals over me once in a little while, that as fingers fly and I am so busy, a far more wondrous Shuttle shifts the subtler thread, and when that's web is spun, indeed my spinning will be done. I think with you, dear Susie, and Mat by me again, I shall be still for joy. I shall not fret or murmur – shall not care when the wind blows, shall not observe the storm – “Such, and so precious” are you.

Austin told me about you when he came from the West – though many little things I wanted most to know, he “had not noticed.” I asked him how you looked, and what you wore, and how your hair was fixed, and what you said of me – his answers were quite limited – “you looked as you always did – he did'nt know what you wore – never did know what people wore – you said he must tell me everything,” which by the way dear Child, he has not done to this day, and any portion of which, I would savor with joy, might I but obtain it. Vinnie inquired with promptness “if you wore a Basque” – “it seemed to him,” he said, “you did have on a black thing.”

Ah Susie – you must train him 'twill take full many a lesson in the fashion plate, before he will respect, and speak with proper deference of this majestic garment. I have some new clothes, Susie – presume I shall appear like an embarrassed Peacock, quite unused to its plumes. Dear Susie – you will write to me when I am gone from home – Affy, Emilie –

Upside down on first page

Mother and Vinnie send much love – they will be delighted to see you. My dearest love to Mat.

In margin on first page

I asked Austin if he had any messages – he replied he –

In margin on second page

had not! The good for nothing fellow! I presume he will

In margin on third page

fill a fools Cap with protestations to you, as soon

In margin on fourth page

as I leave the room! Bats think Foxes have no eyes – Ha Ha!!

late January 1855

Emily's early 1855 letter makes clear how all-consuming her love for Susan is, and how enamored Emily is of Susan's appearance. Emily's frustration is obvious, since Austin has "sanctuary privileges" and can see Susan when he wishes, yet he appears to be oblivious of his good fortune. The "step at the front door" where "love first began" is a reference to the house on South Pleasant Street in which the Dickinsons lived from 1840 to 1855. Sometimes called the "Mansion," this house is no longer standing.



21

Wednesday morning.

Sweet and soft as summer, Darlings, maple trees in bloom and grass green in the sunny places hardly seems it possible this is winter still; and it makes the grass spring in this heart of mine and each linnet sing, to think that you have come.

Dear Children – Mattie – Sue for one look at you, for your gentle voices, I'd exchange it all. The pomp – the court – the etiquette – they are of the earth – will not enter Heaven.

Will you write to me – why hav'nt you before? I feel so tired looking for you, and still you do not come. And you love me, come soon – this is not forever, you know, this mortal life of our's. Which had you rather I wrote you – what I am doing here, or who I am loving there?

Perhaps I'll tell you both, but the "last shall be first, and the first last." I'm loving you at home – I'm coming every hour to your chamber door. I'm thinking when awake, how sweet if you were with me, and to talk with you as I fall asleep, would be sweeter still.

I think I cannot wait, when I remember you, and that is always, Children. I shall love you more for this sacrifice.

Last night I heard from Austin – and I think he fancies we are losing sight of the things at home – Tell him "not so," Children – Austin is mistaken. He says we forget "the Horse, the Cats, and the geraniums" – have not remembered Pat – proposes to sell the farm and move west with mother – to make bouquets of my plants, and send them to his friends – to come to Washington in his Dressing gown and mortify me and Vinnie.

Should be delighted to see him, even in "dishabille," and will promise to notice him whenever he will come. The cats I will confess, have not so absorbed my attention as they are apt at home, yet do I still remember them with tender emotion; and as for my sweet flowers, I shall know each leaf and every bud that bursts, while I am from home. Tell Austin, never fear! My thoughts are far from idle, concerning e'en the trifles of the world at home, but all is jostle, here – scramble and confusion,

and sometimes in writing home I cant stop for detail, much as I would love. Vinnie met the other evening, in the parlor here a certain Mr Saxton, who inquired of her for his Amherst cousins. Vinnie told him joyfully, all she knew of you, and another evening, took me down to him.

We walked in the hall a long while, talking of you, my Children, vying with each other in compliment to those we loved so well. I told him of you both, he seemed very happy to hear so much of you. He left Washington yesterday morning. I have not been well since I came here, and that has excused me from some gaieties, tho' at that, I'm gayer than I was before. Vinnie is asleep this morning – she has been out walking with some ladies here and is very tired. She says much of you – wants so much to see you. Give my love to your sister – Kiss Dwightie for me – my love for Abbie and Eme, when you see them, and for dear Mr & Mrs Dwight.

On top of first page

Tell Mother and Austin they need'nt flatter themselves we are forgetting them – they'll find themselves much mistaken before long. We think we shall go to Philadelphia next week, tho' father has'nt decided. Eliza writes most every day, and seems

In margin on second page

impatient for us. I dont know how long we shall

In margin on third page

stay there, nor how long in New York. Father has not de[ci]

In margin on fourth page

ded. Shant you write, when this gets to you? Affy – E –

Washington, February 28, 1855

Susan received this letter when she returned to Amherst from Michigan. Emily and Lavinia are in Washington for three weeks, from mid-February until early March. From there they travel to Philadelphia to visit their cousins the Colemans. Eliza Coleman, two years younger than Emily, became a close friend when the girls were in their midteens. "Dwightie," to whom Emily sends a kiss, is the youngest child of Susan's sister Harriet Cutler, with whom Susan and Martha are living.

By 1855, Susan and Austin had been engaged for more than a year. Yet it would be another sixteen months before they married and settled in the Evergreens. There Susan would live next door to Emily for the next thirty years.

SECTION ONE NOTES

- 1 YH L 183.
 - 2 YH L 212.
 - 3 YH L 267.
 - 4 A 596, L 109.
 - 5 A 597, L 110.
 - 6 A 608, L 128, A 597, L 119.
 - 7 YH L 302-303.
 - 8 YH L 315.
 - 9 YH L 316.
1. Ink, gilt-edged, embossed "PARIS" (I). "Susie Gilbert" on verso, and "Read - No" penciled in Susan's handwriting, probably much later. That notation may indicate a decision not to read this letter to friends at a gathering in her home or not to include this letter in her book of Emily's writings. [H B131, L 38. *FF* 186-187.]
 2. Ink, one sheet, four pages, end of letter may be missing. Coffee stains (rings of mug) are on manuscript, perhaps from Susan. Text of every paragraph has faint penciled lines, as if someone (presumably Susan) were reading and marking passages for editorial purposes. A calligraphic "g" in "high" underlines the first part of the word in the "last" sentence (last of the surviving holograph). Ellipsis indicates end of letter may be missing. Thomas Johnson omits "left" from the line, "for there will be none left to interpret . . ." [H L5, L 56. *FF* 205-208.]
 3. Ink, one sheet, four pages, multiple folds, faint lines across text. "G's" in "ugly things" dramatically underline letters preceding them. Johnson omits the article "a" before "a broken back." [H L10, L 73. *FF* 182-184, in part.]
 4. Ink, one sheet, four pages, folded in half. "Susie" on verso, and "No" in Susan's handwriting. Johnson creates a final paragraph from the marginalia. [H L22, L 74.]
 5. Ink, blue paper, embossed "J Prout / Stationer / Worcester" (JFJ), multiple folds. "Chuck" or "Church" penciled in Susan's handwriting across the last page. Here and on other letters "Chuck" may mean that Susan has not selected a letter or a section to read or to include in her book of Emily's writings. There is a blot of ink where Emily writes, "Dont see the blot." Exclamation mark after "him" after upside-down marginalia is inverted. A letter written to Austin Dickinson at the same time, beginning, "I will write while they've gone to meeting," erases or cuts away all references to Susan. Johnson omits "would" in the first sentence: "when the world and the cares of the world would try so hard . . ." and he records "did'nt" rather than "didn't." He forms a paragraph from the

- marginalia and places it after the signature. [H L9, L 77. *FF* 177-181, in part.]
6. Ink, embossed "Paris" (SFHBP), faint pencil marks across paragraphs, folded in half, then in thirds, very worn. In the first paragraph, last sentence, Johnson mistakenly transcribes "much" instead of "such," and at the end of the letter he regularizes Dickinson's one quotation mark for two quotations in: ". . . forever . . . Herein . . ." [H L13, L 85. *FF* 197-200, in part.]
 7. Ink, embossed "Superfine" (SFHBP), folded in half, then in thirds, and worn. Faint pencil lines in Susan's handwriting cross the body of text; "Baltimore" at end of first sentence; and "Chuck" or "Church" across the text of the first two sentences. Johnson omits the article "a" from "where I have none - and a sister . . ." [H L18, L 88. *LL* 20, three sentences in part; *FF* 213-215, in part.]
 8. Ink, small sheet, folded in thirds, bottom third torn away. Johnson omits "little" from the last sentence, "till this little heart . . ." [H B173, L 92. *LL* 27, in small part, and altered.]
 9. Ink, embossed "Paris" (SFHBP), one sheet, four pages, folded in half, then in thirds. "Dont" and "CFS" or "CPS" are scribbled across paragraph beginning "God is good, Susie." Emily's handwriting is noticeably different. Underlinings are very wavy, calling attention to themselves. Johnson mistranscribes Dickinson's "This union, my dear Susie, by which two lives are one" as "These unions"; he prints "if that great blessedness" instead of Emily's "of that great blessedness"; in the last paragraph before the signature Johnson prints "it had no parting," rather than "it has no parting more"; he transcribes "gather" as "gathers" and omits the word "me" from "if they promise me not to lose you." [H L20, L 93. *LL* 43, in part.]
 10. Ink, no embossment, one sheet, four pages, lightly ruled, folded in thirds, pinholes, holes on each third similar to some of those made on the fascicles for binding. Addressed "Miss Susan H. Gilbert./40-Lexington St./Baltimore./Md-" "May want again," in Susan's or Martha Dickinson Bianchi's handwriting just above the address. A pencil line down the left side of text on the third leaf marks the passage from "Dear Susie, I have tried hard" to "never slumbers nor sleeps"; and a heavier line on the left side of the postscript marks "Why cant I be a Delegate." Johnson transcribes "fears" as "years" in the first paragraph. [H L2, L 94. *FF* 215-217, in part.]
 11. Ink, no embossment, one sheet, four pages, folded into rectangles. Penciled lines across the final three paragraphs. Dashes dramatically point down. Johnson mistranscribes "I'd" for "I'll" in the sixth paragraph. [H L7, L 96. *FF* 217-219, in part.]

12. Ink, gilt-edged, no embossment, two sheets torn precisely down left side, making small leaves, multiple folds, pinholes, and rust marks from paper clips. [H B176, L 97. *LL* 55, in part, with changes.]
13. Ink, embossed XSTR, multiple folds, quite worn. Lines penciled across paragraphs from "It made me feel so lonely" to "At Dover"; "Manchester" (where Susan was visiting) penciled above the date. "T's" in this letter have an extraordinary flair, and most of the dashes are noticeably longer than in previous missives. "X" on verso in Susan's handwriting. [H L16, L 102. *FF* 220-223, in part, with changes.]
14. Ink, no embossment, one sheet, four pages, folded in rectangles. Lines penciled across second, fifth, sixth, and eighth paragraph. In the first paragraph, Emily uses "it" to refer to her emotional "heart" in a way that recalls her use of "it" in the "Master" letter Johnson calls the third and Franklin designates as the second. [H L8, L 103. *FF* 188-189, in part.]
15. Pencil, no embossment, a torn half sheet, folded in fourths, paste marks. Line between stanzas drawn by Emily, which parallels Susan's practice of putting lines between stanzas in her own poems. The dash after "Comrade" points up to the right, heightening the excited, exclamatory tone of the heading's command. Susan transcribed this poem twice. There is another version of this poem in the fascicles. [H B73, H ST 23e, H ST 24, P 4. *Poems* (1896) 200, titled "Eternity"; *LL* 78-79.]
16. Ink, embossed, one sheet, four pages, folded in half, then in thirds. Handwriting is markedly shaky. Lines penciled through all paragraphs. Johnson mistranscribes "shadow" in the sixth paragraph as "shadows." [H L4, L 107. *FF* 190-192, in part.]
17. Pencil, embossed with capitol building (CNGRSS), "Congress" printed, folded in thirds, very worn, paste marks. "Susie" on verso. [H B152, L 135. *FF* 220, in part.]
18. Ink, embossed (BTH), folded in thirds, penciled lines across last five paragraphs. Over paragraph beginning "To get you all once more," "Shyness" penciled in Susan's handwriting. Emily's handwriting is noticeably shaky, and an ink blot appears over the word "beat" in the seventh paragraph. Johnson omits the clause "I flew -" from the second sentence. [H L19, L 154. *LL* 31, in part, with changes.]
19. Ink, embossed (SLP), blue-ruled, one sheet, two leaves, folded in rectangles. Lines penciled across most paragraphs; "Chuck" or "Church" penciled across the fifth paragraph. Johnson transcribes "good" instead of "great" in the next to last paragraph. [H L6, L 176. *FF* 211-213, in part.]
20. Ink, embossed (SLP), one sheet, two leaves, blue-ruled, rust marks from paper clips. Illegible note in Susan's handwriting, perhaps "Last" (?), penciled in the upper margin of first page, and penciled lines cross

- paragraphs. Johnson forms final paragraph with the marginalia following the signature. [H L1, L 177. *LL* 33-34, in small part; *FF* 200-202 in part.]
21. Ink, embossed (SLP), one sheet, two leaves, blue-ruled, folded in rectangles, lines penciled through paragraphs. "Washington" in Susan's handwriting on top of the first page and across lines in sixth paragraph beginning "Vinnie met the other evening." The envelope, addressed by Edward Dickinson "Miss Susan H. Gilbert. / Amherst. / Mass.," has been torn open, sealing wax is still attached, and bears paste marks on the verso, indicating preservation in a scrapbook. [H L14, L 178. *FF* 202-205, in part.]

SECTION TWO NOTES

1. H Lowell Autograph, 14 March 1891 to William Hayes Ward, *Writings by Susan Dickinson*, ed. Smith et al.
22. Ink, gilt-edged, embossed coat of arms (SMLY), one sheet, four pages, multiple folds, poem on pages 3 and 4, with corners turned to be inserted into scrapbook. Handwriting appears shaky. "Young" is penciled in Susan's handwriting on fourth page, "X" on verso. [H L17, P 5, L 173. *FF* 181-182, poem but not the letter; *Letters* (1894) 162; (1931) 159, *LL* 188, prose variant of the second stanza serves as the concluding paragraph in a "Late Autumn, 1853" letter to Josiah and Elizabeth Holland (dated "early 1854" in *LH* 38).]
23. Pencil, gilt, embossed "Paris" (A), writing on first of four pages, folded in thirds. "Sue" erased from verso. Another version of the poem is in the fascicles. [A 663, P 204. *UP* 46.]
24. Pencil, no embossment, neatly torn (8 x 13.5 cm), folded in quarters, paste marks. "Susie" on verso. "Send this back to me" in pen in Susan's handwriting of the 1860s, suggesting that she and Emily passed this note back and forth. [H B75, L 134. *FF* 185.]
25. Pencil, gilt, lightly blue-ruled, embossed (FNP), writing on first of four pages, folded in thirds. Address erased from verso. Two other versions of this poem were written; one is included in the fascicles. [A 654, P 130 (handwriting like that of "A poor - torn Heart"). Printed as "October" in *Drum Beat* (11 March 1864); as "Indian Summer" in *Poems* (1890) 100-101.]
26. Pencil, gilt, embossed (FNP), blue-ruled, writing on first of four pages, folded in thirds. "Sue" erased from verso. Another version of this poem is in the fascicles. [A 655, P 131. First and third stanzas in Frederick H.