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LETTERS  
OF  
JOHN KEATS  
TO  
FANNY BRAWNE

1901

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**LETTERS  
OF JOHN KEATS TO  
FANNY BRAWNE**



L E T T E R S o f  
J O H N K E A T S  
to F A N N Y B R A W N E



WRITTEN IN THE YEARS  
MDCCCXIX AND MDCCCXX



GEORGE BROUGHTON *and*  
BARCLAY DUNHAM  
*NEW YORK*  
M C M I

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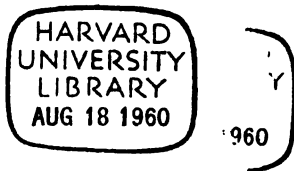
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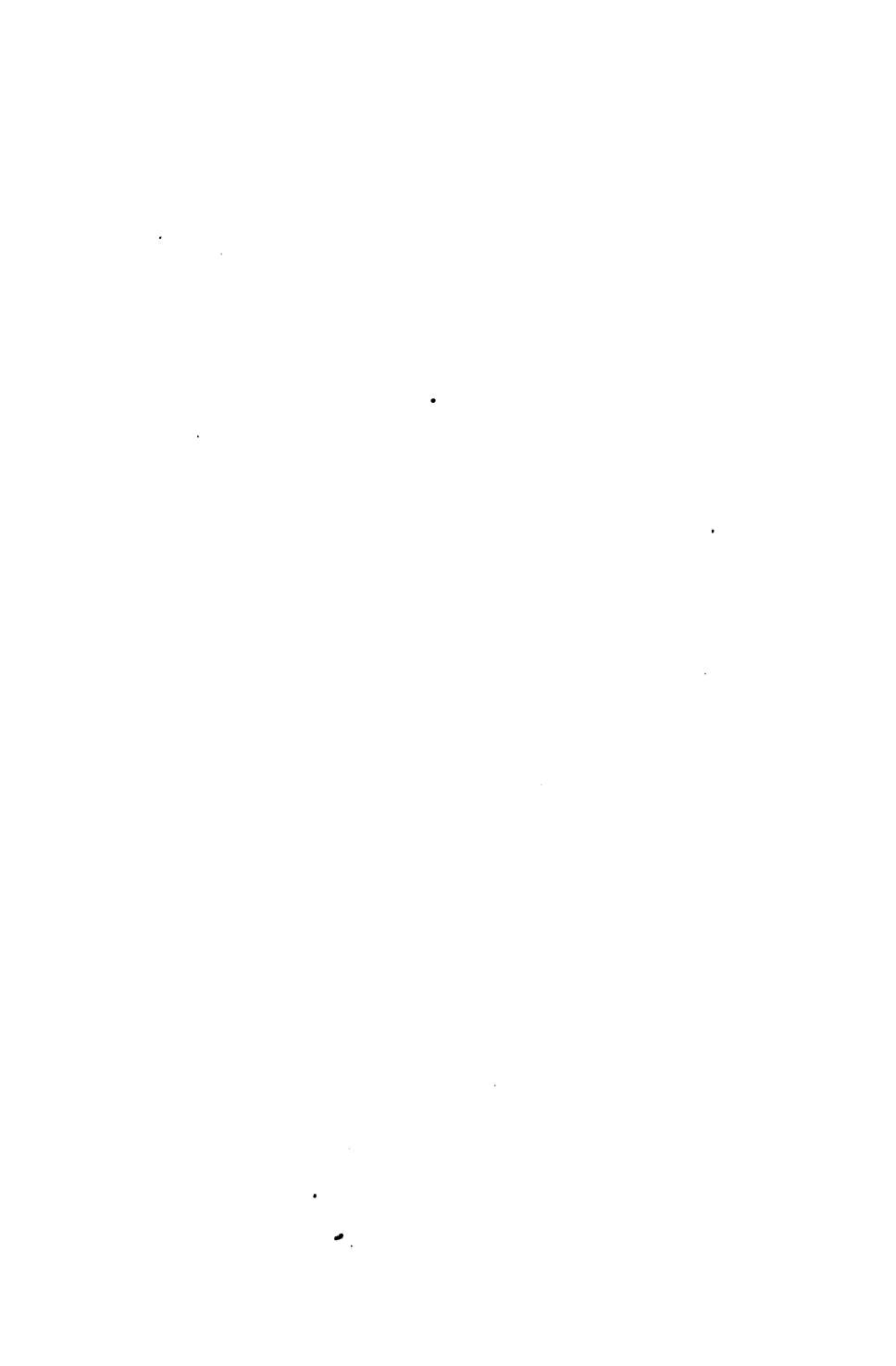
*In republishing the wonderful letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne it is unnecessary to make any apologies. Mr. Buxton-Forman who first published them for private circulation in 1878 has reflected the consensus of moderate opinion in his preface to the complete letters of Keats put out in 1895. He says, "There is nothing for anyone to be afraid of—nothing that any man or woman need blush to have overheard through that good hap which preserved these records. Above all, the letters are irrevocably with us and, being with us, they complete the picture of the true Keats."*

*The book now published is intended to be a fitting shrine for the gems it contains. The preface and the notes (with one or two exceptions) are Buxton-Forman's. The arrangement of letters is the revised arrangement of 1895 with two letters added which were not given in the 1878 edition.*

*The illustrations are a portrait of Keats, after the picture by Severn in the National Portrait Gallery, and a silhouette portrait of Fanny Brawne.*

B. D.





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## ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRAIT OF KEATS BY SEVERN AFTER THE PAINT- ING IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
SILHOUETTE OF FANNY BRAWNE, CUT BY EDOUARD AND REPRODUCED . . . . .	<i>Opposite page 1</i>



## INTRODUCTION

*The three final years of Keats's life are in all respects the fullest of vivid interest for those who, admiring the poet and loving the memory of the man, would fain form some conception of the working of those forces within him which went to the shaping of his greatest works and his greatest woes. In those three years were produced most of the compositions wherein the lover of poetry can discern the supreme hand of a master, the ultimate and sovereign perfection, beyond which in point of quality, the poet could never have gone had he lived a hundred years, whatever he might have done in magnitude and variety; and in those years sprang up and grew the one passion of his life, sweet to him as honey in the intervals of brightness and unimpeded vigour which he enjoyed, bitter as wormwood*

## INTRODUCTION

*in those times of sickness and poverty and the deepening shadow of death which we have learned to associate almost constantly with our thoughts of him. The letters fall naturally into three groups; namely; 1, those written during Keats's sojourn with Charles Armitage Brown in the Isle of Wight, and his brief stay in lodgings in Westminster in the Summer and Autumn of 1819; 2, those written from Brown's house in Wentworth Place during Keats's illness in the early part of 1820, and sent by hand to Mrs. Brawne's house, next door, and 3, those written after he was able to leave Wentworth Place to stay with Leigh Hunt at Kentish Town, and before his departure for Italy in September, 1820.*

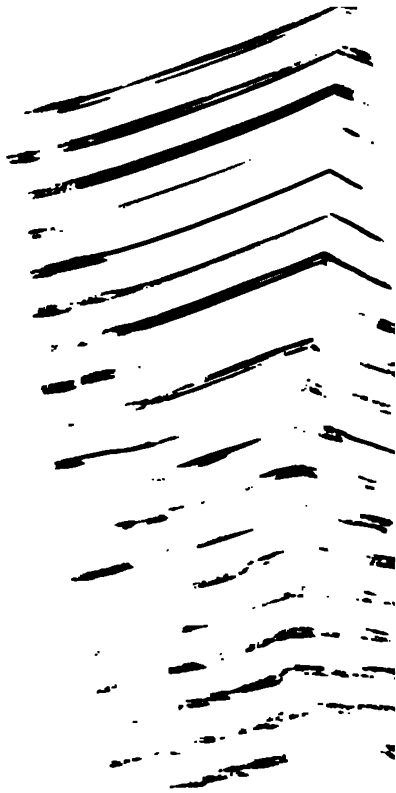
*The lady to whom these letters were addressed was born on the 9th of August, in the year 1800, and baptized "Frances," though, as usual with bearers of that name, she was habitually called*

#### INTRODUCTION

*"Fanny." Her father, Mr. Samuel Brawne, a gentleman of independent means, died while she was still a child; and Mrs. Brawne then went to reside at Hampstead, with her three children, Fanny, Samuel, and Margaret. Samuel, being next in age to Fanny, was a youth going to school in 1819, and Margaret was many years younger than her sister, being in fact a child at the time of the engagement to Keats, which event took place between the Autumn of 1818 and the Summer of 1819. The poet's idea of Fanny Brawne is best shown in a letter to George and Georgiana Keats, written probably in December, 1818. Keats says:*

*"Shall I give you Miss Brawne? She is about my height—with a fine style of countenance of the lengthened sort—she wants sentiment in every feature—she manages to make her hair look well—her nostrils are fine—though a little painful—her mouth is bad and good—*

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**LETTERS**  
**TO**  
**FANNY BRAWNE**

**I TO X**

**SHANKLIN, WINCHESTER,**  
**WESTMINSTER**



## INTRODUCTION

*her Profile is better than her full-face which indeed is not full but pale and thin without showing any bone. Her shape is very graceful and so are her movements—her Arms are good, her hands bad-ish—her feet tolerable—she is not seventeen—but she is ignorant—monstrous in her behaviour, flying out in all directions, calling people such names—that I was forced lately to make use of the term Minx—this is I think not from any innate vice but from a penchant she has for acting stylishly.”*

*That his passion for Fanny was the cause of Keats's death is an assumption which should be looked at with reserve.*

*Miss Brawne married afterwards and lived to a good old age, preserving always her self-sufficingness to a high degree.*

LETTERS  
TO  
FANNY BRAWNE

I TO X

SHANKLIN, WINCHESTER,  
WESTMINSTER

## INTRODUCTION

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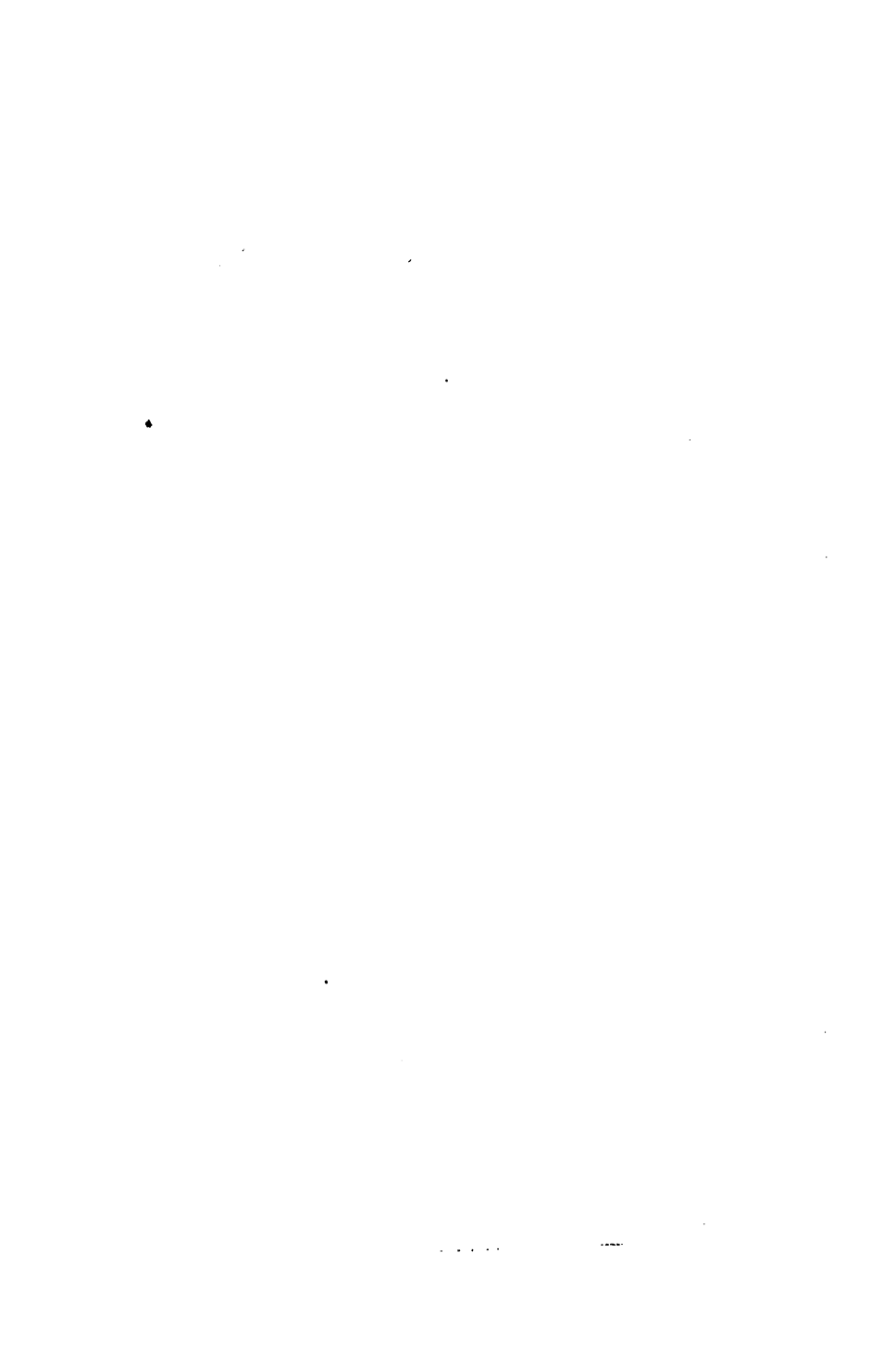
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LETTERS  
TO  
FANNY BRAWNE

I to X

SHANKLIN, WINCHESTER,  
WESTMINSTER



I.

Shanklin, Isle of Wight,  
Thursday [July 1, 1819].

[*Postmark*, Newport, July 3, 1819.]

My dearest Lady,

I am glad I had not an opportunity of sending off a letter which I wrote for you on Tuesday night—'twas too much like one out of Rousseau's Heloise. I am more reasonable this morning. The morning is the only proper time for me to write to a beautiful Girl whom I love so much: for at night, when the lonely day has closed, and the lonely, silent, unmusical Chamber is waiting to receive me as into a Sepulchre, then believe me my passion gets entirely the sway, then I would not have you see

#### LETTER I.

those Rhapsodies which I once thought it impossible I should ever give way to, and which I have often laughed at in another, for fear you should [think me] either too unhappy or perhaps a little mad. I am now at a very pleasant Cottage window, looking onto a beautiful hilly country, with a glimpse of the sea; the morning is very fine. I do not know how elastic my spirit might be, what pleasure I might have in living here and breathing and wandering as free as a stag about this beautiful Coast if the remembrance of you did not so weigh upon me. I have never known any unalloy'd Happiness for many days together: the death or sickness of some one has always spoilt my hours—and now when none such troubles oppress me, it is you must confess very hard that another sort of pain should haunt me. Ask yourself my love whether you are not very

LETTER I.

cruel to have so entrammelled me, so destroyed my freedom. Will you confess this in the Letter you must write immediately, and do all you can to console me in it—make it rich as a draught of poppies to intoxicate me—write the softest words and kiss them that I may at least touch my lips where yours have been. For myself I know not how to express my devotion to so fair a form; I want a brighter word than bright, a fairer word than fair. I almost wish we were butterflies and liv'd but three summer days—(three such days with you I could fill with more delight than fifty common years could ever contain. But however selfish I may feel, I am sure I could never act selfishly: as I told you a day or two before I left Hampstead, I will never return to London if my Fate does not turn up Pam<sup>1</sup> or at least a Court-card.

<sup>1</sup> The Knave of Clubs, the high card in Loo.



LETTER I.

Though I could centre my Happiness  
in you, I cannot expect to engross  
your heart so entirely—indeed if I  
thought you felt as much for me as I  
do for you at this moment I do not  
think I could restrain myself from  
seeing you again to-morrow for the  
delight of one embrace. But no—I  
must live upon hope and Chance. In  
case of the worst that can happen, I  
shall still love you—but what hatred  
shall I have for another! Some lines  
I read the other day are continually  
ringing a peal in my ears:

To see those eyes I prize above mine own  
Darts favors on another—  
And those sweet lips (yielding immortal nectar)  
Be gently press'd by any but myself—  
Think, think Francesca, what a cursed thing  
It were beyond expression!

J.

Do write immediately. There is no  
Post from this Place, so you must  
address Post Office, Newport, Isle of

LETTER I.

Wight. I know before night I shall  
curse myself for having sent you so  
cold a Letter; yet it is better to do it  
as much in my senses as possible. Be  
as kind as the distance will permit to  
your

J. Keats.

Present my Compliments to your  
mother, my love to Margaret<sup>1</sup> and  
best remembrances to your Brother  
—if you please so.

---

<sup>1</sup>Fanny's youngest sister.

## II.

July 8th.

[*Postmark*, Newport, 10 July, 1819.]

My sweet Girl,

Your Letter gave me more delight than any thing in the world but yourself could do; indeed I am almost astonished that any absent one should have that luxurious power over my senses which I feel. Even when I am not thinking of you I receive your influence and a tenderer nature stealing upon me. All my thoughts, my unhappiest days and nights, have I find not at all cured me of my love of Beauty, but made it so intense that I am miserable that you are not with me: or rather breathe in that dull sort of patience that cannot be called Life. I never knew before,

LETTER II.

what such a love as you have made me feel, was; I did not believe in it; my Fancy was afraid of it, lest it should burn me up. But if you will fully love me, though there may be some fire, 'twill not be more than we can bear when moistened and bedewed with Pleasures. You mention "horrid people" and ask me whether it depend upon them whether I see you again. Do understand me, my love, in this. I have so much of you in my heart that I must turn Mentor when I see a chance of harm befalling you. I would never see any thing but Pleasure in your eyes, love on your lips, and Happiness in your steps. I would wish to see you among those amusements suitable to your inclinations and spirits; so that our loves might be a delight in the midst of Pleasures agreeable enough, rather than a resource from vexations and cares. But I doubt much, in case

LETTER II.

of the worst, whether I shall be philosopher enough to follow my own Lessons: if I saw my resolution give you a pain I could not. Why may I not speak of your Beauty, since without that I could never have lov'd you? —I cannot conceive any beginning of such love as I have for you but Beauty. There may be a sort of love for which, without the least sneer at it, I have the highest respect and can admire it in others: but it has not the richness, the bloom, the full form, the enchantment of love after my own heart. So let me speak of your Beauty, though to my own endangering; if you could be so cruel to me as to try elsewhere its Power. You say you are afraid I shall think you do not love me—in saying this you make me ache the more to be near you. I am at the diligent use of my faculties here, I do not pass a day without sprawling some blank verse or tag-

LETTER II.

ging some rhymes; and here I must confess, that (since I am on that subject) I love you the more in that I believe you have liked me for my own sake and for nothing else. I have met with women whom I really think would like to be married to a Poem and to be given away by a Novel. I have seen your Comet, and only wish it was a sign that poor Rice would get well whose illness makes him rather a melancholy companion: and the more so as to conquer his feelings and hide them from me, with a forc'd Pun. I kiss'd your writing over in the hope you had indulg'd me by leaving a trace of honey. What was your dream? Tell it me and I will tell you the interpretation thereof.

Ever yours, my love!

John Keats

Do not accuse me of delay—we have not here an opportunity of sending letters every day. Write speedily.

### III.

Shanklin, Thursday Evening

[15 July, 1819?]

My love,

I have been in so irritable a state of health these two or three last days, that I did not think I should be able to write this week. Not that I was so ill, but so much so as only to be capable of an unhealthy teasing letter. To night I am greatly recovered only to feel the languor I have felt after you touched with ardency. You say you perhaps might have made me better: you would then have made me worse: now you could quite effect a cure: What fee my sweet Physician would I not give you to do so. Do not call it folly, when I tell you I took your letter last night to bed with

### LETTER III.

me. In the morning I found your name on the sealing wax obliterated. I was startled at the bad omen till I recollected that it must have happened in my dreams, and they you know fall out by contraries. You must have found out by this time I am a little given to bode ill like the raven; it is my misfortune not my fault; it has proceeded from the general tenor of the circumstances of my life, and rendered every event suspicious. However I will no more trouble either you or myself with sad Prophecies; though so far I am pleased at it as it has given me opportunity to love your disinterestedness towards me. I can be a raven no more; you and pleasure take possession of me at the same moment. I am afraid you have been unwell. If through me illness have touched you (but it must be with a very gentle hand) I must be selfish enough to feel a little glad at it.



### LETTER III.

Will you forgive me this? I have been reading lately an oriental tale of a very beautiful color—It is of a city of melancholy men, all made so by this circumstance. Through a series of adventures each one of them by turns reach some gardens of Paradise where they meet with a most enchanting Lady; and just as they are going to embrace her, she bids them shut their eyes—they shut them—and on opening their eyes again find themselves descending to the earth in a magic basket. The remembrance of this Lady and their delights lost beyond all recovery render them melancholy ever after. How I applied this to you, my dear; how I palpitated at it; how the certainty that you were in the same world with myself, and though as beautiful, not so talismanic as that Lady; how I could not bear you should be so you must believe because I swear it by yourself. I cannot say

### LETTER III.

when I shall get a volume ready. I have three or four stories half done, but as I cannot write for the mere sake of the press, I am obliged to let them progress or lie still as my fancy chooses. By Christmas perhaps they may appear, but I am not yet sure they ever will. 'Twill be no matter, for Poems are as common as newspapers and I do not see why it is a greater crime in me than in another to let the verses of an half-fledged brain tumble into the reading-rooms and drawing room windows. Rice has been better lately than usual: he is not suffering from any neglect of his parents who have for some years been able to appreciate him better than they did in his first youth, and are now devoted to his comfort. Tomorrow I shall, if my health continues to improve during the night, take a look farther about the country, and spy at the parties about here who

### LETTER III.

come hunting after the picturesque like beagles. It is astonishing how they raven down scenery like children do sweetmeats. The wondrous Chine here is a very great Lion: I wish I had as many guineas as there have been spy-glasses in it. I have been, I cannot tell why, in capital spirits this last hour. What reason? When I have to take my candle and retire to a lonely room, without the thought as I fall asleep, of seeing you to-morrow morning? or the next day, or the next—it takes on the appearance of impossibility and eternity—I will say a month—I will say I will see you in a month at most, though no one but yourself should see me; if it be but for an hour. I should not like to be so near you as London without being continually with you: after having once more kissed you Sweet I would rather be here alone at my task than in the bustle and hateful literary

LETTER III.

chitchat. Meantime you must write to me—as I will every week—for your letters keep me alive. My sweet Girl I cannot speak my love for you. Good night! and

Ever yours

John Keats

#### IV.

Sunday Night [25 July, 1819].

[*Postmark*, 27 July, 1819.] . . .

My sweet Girl,

I hope you did not blame me much for not obeying your request of a Letter on Saturday: we have had four in our small room playing at cards night and morning leaving me no undisturb'd opportunity to write. Now Rice and Martin are gone I am at liberty. Brown to my sorrow confirms the account you give of your ill health. You cannot conceive how I ache to be with you: how I would die for one hour——for what is in the world? I say you cannot conceive; it is impossible you should look with such eyes upon me as I

#### LETTER IV.

have upon you: it cannot be. Forgive me if I wander a little this evening, for I have been all day employ'd in a very abstract Poem and I am in deep love with you—two things which must excuse me. I have, believe me, not been an age in letting you take possession of me; the very first week I knew you I wrote myself your vassal; but burnt the Letter as the very next time I saw you I thought you manifested some dislike to me. If you should ever feel for Man at the first sight what I did for you, I am lost. Yet I should not quarrel with you, but hate myself if such a thing were to happen—only I should burst if the thing were not as fine as a Man as you are as a Woman. Perhaps I am too vehement, then fancy me on my knees, especially when I mention a part of your Letter which hurt me; you say speaking of Mr. Severn “but you must be satisfied in knowing that

LETTER IV.

I admired you much more than your friend." My dear love, I cannot believe there ever was or ever could be any thing to admire in me especially as far as sight goes—I cannot be admired, I am not a thing to be admired. You are, I love you; all I can bring you is a swooning admiration of your Beauty. I hold that place among Men which snub-nos'd brunettes with meeting eyebrows do among women—they are trash to me—unless I should find one among them with a fire in her heart like the one that burns in mine. You absorb me in spite of myself—you alone: for I look not forward with any pleasure to what is call'd being settled in the world; I tremble at domestic cares—yet for you I would meet them, though if it would leave you the happier I would rather die than do so. I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your Loveliness and the

LETTER IV.

hour of my death. O that I could have possession of them both in the same minute. I hate the world: it batters too much the wings of my self-will, and would I could take a sweet poison from your lips to send me out of it. From no others would I take it. I am indeed astonish'd to find myself so careless of all charms but yours—remembering as I do the time when even a bit of ribband was a matter of interest with me. What softer words can I find for you after this—what it is I will not read. Nor will I say more here, but in a Post-script answer any thing else you may have mentioned in your Letter in so many words—for I am distracted with a thousand thoughts. I will imagine you Venus to-night and pray, pray, pray to your star like a Heathen.

Your's ever, fair Star,

John Keats



LETTER IV.

My seal is mark'd like a family table cloth with my Mother's initial F for Fanny<sup>1</sup>: put between my Father's initials. You will soon hear from me again. My respectful Comp[limen]ts to your Mother. Tell Margaret I'll send her a reef of best rocks and tell Sam<sup>2</sup> I will give him my light bay hunter if he will tie the Bishop hand and foot and pack him in a hamper and send him down for me to bathe him for his health with a Necklace of good snubby stones about his Neck.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>I am not aware of any other published record that this name belonged to Keats's mother, as well as his sister and his betrothed.

<sup>2</sup>Fanny Brawne's brother and young sister.

<sup>3</sup>I am unable to obtain or suggest any explanation of the allusion made in this strange sentence. It is not, however, impossible that "the Bishop" was merely a nickname of some one in the Hampstead circle.

V.

Shanklin, Thursday Night

[5 August, 1819].

[*Postmark*, Newport, 9 August, 1819.]

My dear Girl,

You say you must not have any more such Letters as the last: I'll try that you shall not by running obstinate the other way. Indeed I have not fair play—I am not idle enough for proper downright love-letters—I leave this minute a scene in our Tragedy<sup>1</sup> and see you (think it not blasphemy) through the mist of Plots, speeches, counterplots and

---

<sup>1</sup>The tragedy referred to is, of course, *Otho the Great*, which was composed jointly by Keats and his friend Charles Armitage Brown. For the first four acts Brown provided the characters, plot, etc., and Keats found the language; but the fifth act is wholly Keats's.

LETTER V.

counterspeeches. The Lover is madder than I am—I am nothing to him—he has a figure like the Statue of Meleager and double distilled fire in his heart. ~~Thank God for my diligence!~~ were it not for that I should be miserable, I encourage it, and strive not to think of you—but when I have succeeded in doing so all day and as far as midnight, you return, as soon as this artificial excitement goes off, more severely, from the fever I am left in. Upon my soul I cannot say what you could like me for. I do not think myself a fright any more than I do Mr. A., Mr. B., and Mr. C.—yet if I were a woman I should not like A. B. C. But enough of this. So you intend to hold me to my promise of seeing you in a short time. I shall keep it with as much sorrow as gladness: for I am not one of the Paladins of old who liv'd upon water grass and smiles for years together.

LETTER V.

What thought would I not give to-night for the gratification of my eyes alone? This day week we shall move to Winchester; for I feel the want of a Library. Brown will leave me there to pay a visit to Mr. Snook at Bedhampton: in his absence I will flit to you and back. I will stay very little while, for as I am in a train of writing now I fear to disturb it—let it have its course bad or good—in it I shall try my own strength and the public pulse. At Winchester I shall get your Letters more readily; and it being a cathedral City I shall have a pleasure always a great one to me when near a Cathedral, of reading them during the service up and down the Aisle.

*Friday Morning* [6 August, 1819].  
—Just as I had written thus far last night, Brown came down in his morning coat and nightcap, saying he had

LETTER V.

been refresh'd by a good sleep and was very hungry. I left him eating and went to bed, being too tired to enter into any discussions. You would delight very greatly in the walks about here; the Cliffs, woods, hills, sands, rocks &c. about here. They are however not so fine but I shall give them a hearty good bye to exchange them for my Cathedral.— Yet again I am not so tired of Scenery as to hate Switzerland. We might spend a pleasant year at Berne or Zurich—if it should please Venus to hear my “Beseech thee to hear us O Goddess.” And if she should hear, God forbid we should what people call, *settle*—turn into a pond, a stagnant Lethe—a vile crescent, row or buildings. Better be imprudent moveables than prudent fixtures. Open my Mouth at the Street door like the Lion's head at Venice to receive hateful cards, letters, messages.

LETTER V.

Go out and wither at tea parties; freeze at dinners; bake at dances; simmer at routs. No my love, trust yourself to me and I will find you nobler amusements, fortune favouring. I fear you will not receive this till Sunday or Monday: as the Irishman would write do not in the mean while hate me. I long to be off for Winchester, for I begin to dislike the very door-posts here—the names, the pebbles. You ask after my health, not telling me whether you are better. I am quite well. You going out is no proof that you are: how is it? Late hours will do you great harm. What fairing is it? I was alone for a couple of days while Brown went gadding over the country with his ancient knapsack. Now I like his society as well as any Man's, yet regretted his return—it broke in upon me like a Thunderbolt. I had got in a dream among my Books—really

LETTER V.

luxuriating in a solitude and silence  
you alone should have disturb'd.

Your ever affectionate

John Keats.

## VI.

Winchester, August 17th.

[*Postmark*, 16 August, 1819.]

My dear Girl—what shall I say for myself? I have been here four days and not yet written you—'tis true I have had many teasing letters of business to dismiss—and I have been in the Claws, like a serpent in an Eagle's, of the last act of our Tragedy. This is no excuse; I know it; I do not presume to offer it. I have no right either to ask a speedy answer to let me know how lenient you are—I must remain some days in a Mist—I see you through a Mist: as I daresay you do me by this time. Believe in the first Letters I wrote you: I assure you I felt as I wrote—I could not



LETTER VI.

write so now. The thousand images I have had pass through my brain—my uneasy spirits—my unguess'd fate—all spread as a veil between me and you. Remember I have had no idle leisure to brood over you—'tis well perhaps I have not. I could not have endured the throng of jealousies that used to haunt me before I had plunged so deeply into imaginary interests. I would fain, as my sails are set, sail on without an interruption for a Brace of Months longer—I am in complete cue—in the fever; and shall in these four Months do an immense deal. This Page as my eye skims over it I see is excessively unloverlike and un-gallant—I cannot help it—I am no officer in yawning quarters; no Parson-Romeo. My Mind is heap'd to the full; stuff'd like a cricket ball—if I strive to fill it more it would burst. I know the generality of women would hate me for this; that I should have

LETTER VI.

so unsoften'd, so hard a Mind as to forget them; forget the brightest realities for the dull imaginations of my own Brain. But I conjure you to give it a fair thinking; and ask yourself whether 'tis not better to explain my feelings to you, than write artificial Passion.—Besides, you would see through it. It would be vain to strive to deceive you. 'Tis harsh, harsh, I know it. My heart seems now made of iron—I could not write a proper answer to an invitation to Idalia. You are my Judge: my forehead is on the ground. You seem offended at a little simple innocent childish playfulness in my last. I did not seriously mean to say that you were endeavouring to make me keep my promise. I beg your pardon for it. 'Tis but *just* your Pride should take the alarm—*seriously*. You say I may do as I please—I do not think with any conscience I can; my cash resources are for the present

LETTER VI.

stopp'd; I fear for some time. I spend no money, but it increases my debts. I have all my life thought very little of these matters—they seem not to belong to me. It may be a proud sentence; but by Heaven I am as entirely above all matters of interest as the Sun is above the Earth—and though of my own money I should be careless; of my Friends' I must be spare. You see how I go on—like so many strokes of a hammer. I cannot help it—I am impell'd, driven to it. I am not happy enough for silken Phrases, and silver sentences. I can no more use soothing words to you than if I were at this moment engaged in a charge of Cavalry. Then you will say I should not write at all.—Should I not? This Winchester is a fine place: a beautiful Cathedral and many other ancient buildings in the Environs. The little coffin of a room at Shanklin is changed for a large room, where I can





#### LETTER VI.

promenade at my pleasure—looks out onto a beautiful—blank side of a house. It is strange I should like it better than the view of the sea from our window at Shanklin. I began to hate the very posts there—the voice of the old Lady over the way was getting a great Plague. The Fisherman's face never altered any more than our black teapot—the knob however was knock'd off to my little relief. I am getting a great dislike of the picturesque; and can only relish it over again by seeing you enjoy it. One of the pleasantest things I have seen lately was at Cowes. The Regent in his Yatch<sup>1</sup> (I think they spell it) was anchored opposite—a beautiful vessel—and all the Yatches and boats on the coast were passing and repassing it; and circuiting and tacking about it in every di-

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<sup>1</sup>This word is of course left as found in the original letter; an editor who would spell it Yacht would be guilty of misrepresenting Keats as thinking what he did not think.

LETTER VI.

rection—I never beheld' anything so silent, light, and graceful.—As we pass'd over to Southampton, there was nearly an accident. There came by a Boat, well mann'd, with two naval officers at the stern. Our Bow-lines took the top of their little mast and snapped it off close by the board. Had the mast been a little stouter they would have been upset. In so trifling an event I could not help admiring our seamen—neither officer nor man in the whole Boat mov'd a muscle—they scarcely notic'd it even with words. Forgive me for this flint-worded Letter, and believe and see that I cannot think of you without some sort of energy—though mal à propos. Even as I leave off it seems to me that a few more moments' thought of you would ~~uncrystallize and dissolve me.~~ I must not give way to it—but turn to my writing again—if I fail I shall die hard. O

LETTER VI.

my love, your lips are growing sweet  
again to my fancy—I must forget  
them.

Ever your affectionate

Keats.



## VII.

Fleet Street, Monday Morn  
[13 September, 1819].

[*Postmark*, Lombard Street,  
14 September, 1819.]

My dear Girl,

I have been hurried to town by a Letter from my brother George; it is not of the brightest intelligence. Am I mad or not? I came by the Friday night coach and have not yet been to Hampstead. Upon my soul it is not my fault. I cannot resolve to mix any pleasure with my days: they go one like another, undistinguishable. If I were to see you to-day it would destroy the half comfortable sullenness I enjoy at present into downright perplexities. I love you too much to venture to Hamp-

LETTER VII.

(stead, I feel it is not paying a visit,  
~~but venturing into a fire. Que fais-je?~~  
as the French novel writers say in fun,  
and I in earnest: really what can I  
do? Knowing well that my life must  
be passed in fatigue and trouble, I  
have been endeavouring to wean my-  
self from you: for to myself alone  
what can be much of a misery? As  
far as they regard myself I can despise  
all events: but I cannot cease to love  
you. This morning I scarcely know  
what I am doing. I am going to  
Walthamstow. I shall return to  
Winchester to-morrow; whence you  
shall hear from me in a few days. I  
am a Coward, I cannot bear the pain  
of being happy: 'tis out of the ques-  
tion: I must admit no thought of it.

Yours ever affectionately

John Keats

## VIII.

College Street.

[*Postmark*, 11 October, 1819.]

My sweet Girl,

I am living today in yesterday: I was in a complete fascination all day. I feel myself at your mercy. Write me ever so few lines and tell me you will never for ever be less kind to me than yesterday.—You dazzled me. There is nothing in the world so bright and delicate. When Brown came out with that seemingly true story against me last night, I felt it would be death to me if you ever had believed it—though against any one else I could muster up my obstinacy. Before I knew Brown could disprove it I was for the moment more miserable. When shall we pass

LETTER VIII.

a day alone? I have had a thousand kisses, for which with my whole soul I thank love—but if you should deny me the thousand and first—'twould put me to the proof how great a misery I could live through. If you should ever carry your threat yesterday into execution—believe me 'tis not my pride, my vanity or any petty passion would torment me—really 'twould hurt my heart—I could not bear it. I have seen Mrs. Dilke this morning; she says she will come with me any fine day.

Ever yours

John Keats.

Ah hertè mine!

## IX.

25 College Street.

[*Postmark*, 13 October, 1819.]

My dearest Girl,

This moment I have set myself to copy some verses out fair. I cannot proceed with any degree of content. I must write you a line or two and see if that will assist in dismissing you from my Mind for ever so short a time. Upon my Soul I can think of nothing else. The time is passed when I had power to advise and warn you against the unpromising morning of my Life. My love has made me selfish. I cannot exist without you. I am forgetful of everything but seeing you again—my Life seems to stop there—I see no further. You have absorb'd me. I

LETTER IX.

have a sensation at the present moment as though I was dissolving—I should be exquisitely miserable without the hope of soon seeing you. I should be afraid to separate myself far from you. My sweet Fanny, will your heart never change? My love, will it? I have no limit now to my love..... Your note came in just here. I cannot be happier away from you. 'Tis richer than an Argosy of Pearles. Do not threat me even in jest. I have been astonished that Men could die Martyrs for religion—I have shudder'd at it. I shudder no more—I could be martyr'd for my Religion—Love is my religion—I could die for that. I could die for you. My Creed is Love and you are its only tenet. You have ravish'd me away by a Power I cannot resist; and yet I could resist till I saw you; and ever since I have seen you I have endeavoured often “to reason against the reasons of my

LETTER IX.

Love." I can do that no more—the  
pain would be too great. My love is  
selfish. I cannot breathe without you.

Yours for ever

John Keats.

X.

Great Smith Street,  
Tuesday Morn.

[*Postmark*, College Street,  
19 October, 1819.]

My sweet Fanny,

On awakening from my three days dream ("I cry to dream again") I find one and another astonish'd at my idleness and thoughtlessness. I was miserable last night—the morning is always restorative. I must be busy, or try to be so. I have several things to speak to you of tomorrow morning. Mrs. Dilke I should think will tell you that I purpose living at Hampstead. I must impose chains upon myself. I shall be able to do nothing. I should like to cast the die for Love or death. I have no



LETTER X.

Patience with any thing else—if you ever intend to be cruel to me as you say in jest now but perhaps may sometimes be in earnest, be so now—and I will—my mind is in a tremble, I cannot tell what I am writing.

Ever my love yours

John Keats.

**XI TO XXXIII**



**WENTWORTH PLACE**



## XI.

[Wentworth Place  
4 February, 1820?]

Dearest Fanny, I shall send this the moment you return. They say I must remain confined to this room for some time. The consciousness that you love me will make a pleasant prison of the house next to yours. You must come and see me frequently: this evening, without fail—when you must not mind about my speaking in a low tone for I am ordered to do so though I *can* speak out.

Yours ever

sweetest love.—

*turn over*

J. Keats.

Perhaps your Mother is not at home and so you must wait till she comes.

LETTER XI.

**You must see me to-night and let me hear you promise to come to-morrow.**

**Brown told me you were all out. I have been looking for the stage the whole afternoon. Had I known this I could not have remain'd so silent all day.**

## XII.

[Wentworth Place  
February, 1820?]

My dearest Girl,

If illness makes such an agreeable variety in the manner of your eyes I should wish you sometimes to be ill. I wish I had read your note before you went last night that I might have assured you how far I was from suspecting any coldness. You had a just right to be a little silent to one who speaks so plainly to you. You must believe—you shall, you will—that I can do nothing, say nothing, think nothing of you but what has its spring in the Love which has so long been my pleasure and torment. On the night I was taken ill—when so violent a rush of blood came to my Lungs that I felt nearly suffocated—

LETTER XII.

I assure you I felt it possible I might not survive, and at that moment thought of nothing but you. When I said to Brown "this is unfortunate" I thought of you. 'Tis true that since the first two or three days other subjects have entered my head. I shall be looking forward to Health and the Spring and a regular routine of our old Walks.

Your affectionate

J. K.

### XIII.

[Wentworth Place  
February, 1820?]

My sweet love, I shall wait patiently till to-morrow before I see you, and in the mean time, if there is any need of such a thing, assure you by your Beauty, that whenever I have at any time written on a certain unpleasant subject, it has been with your welfare impress'd upon my mind. How hurt I should have been had you ever acceded to what is, notwithstanding, very reasonable! How much the more do I love you from the general result! In my present state of Health I feel too much separated from you and could almost speak to you in the words of Lorenzo's Ghost to Isabella

Your Beauty grows upon me and I feel  
A greater love through all my essence steal.



LETTER XIII.

My greatest torment since I have known you has been the fear of you being a little inclined to the Cressid; but that suspicion I dismiss utterly and remain happy in the surety of your Love, which I assure you is as much a wonder to me as a delight. Send me the words "Good night" to put under my pillow.

Dearest Fanny,

Your affectionate

J. K.

## XIV.

[Wentworth Place,  
February, 1820?]

My dearest Girl,

According to all appearances I am to be separated from you as much as possible. How I shall be able to bear it, or whether it will not be worse than your presence now and then, I cannot tell. I must be patient, and in the mean time you must think of it as little as possible. Let me not longer detain you from going to Town—there may be no end to this imprisoning of you. Perhaps you had better not come before to-morrow evening: send me however without fail a good night.

You know our situation—what hope is there if I should be recovered

LETTER XIV.

ever so soon—my very health will not suffer me to make any great exertion. I am recommended not even to read poetry, much less write it. I wish I had even a little hope. I cannot say forget me—but I would mention that there are impossibilities in the world. No more of this. I am not strong enough to be weaned—take no notice of it in your good night.

Happen what may I shall ever be my dearest Love

Your affectionate

J. K.

## XV.

[Wentworth Place,  
February, 1820?]

My dearest Girl, how could it ever have been my wish to forget you? how could I have said such a thing? The utmost stretch my mind has been capable of was to endeavour to forget you for your own sake seeing what a chance there was of my remaining in a precarious state of health. I would have borne it as I would bear death if fate was in that humour: but I should as soon think of choosing to die as to part from you. Believe too my Love that our friends think and speak for the best, and if their best is not our best it is not their fault. When I am better I will speak with you at large on these subjects, if there is any occasion—I think there is

LETTER XV.

none. I am rather nervous to-day perhaps from being a little recovered and suffering my mind to take little excursions beyond the doors and windows. I take it for a good sign, but as it must not be encouraged you had better delay seeing me till to-morrow. Do not take the trouble of writing much: merely send me my good night.

Remember me to your Mother and Margaret.

Your affectionate

J. K.

## XVI.

[Wentworth Place,  
February, 1820?]

My dearest Fanny,

Then all we have to do is to be patient. Whatever violence I may sometimes do myself by hinting at what would appear to any one but ourselves a matter of necessity, I do not think I could bear any approach of a thought of losing you. I slept well last night, but cannot say that I improve very fast. I shall expect you to-morrow, for it is certainly better that I should see you seldom. Let me have your good night.

Your affectionate

J. K.

## XVII.

[Wentworth Place,  
February, 1820?]

My dearest Fanny,

I read your note in bed last night, and that might be the reason of my sleeping so much better. I think Mr. Brown<sup>1</sup> is right in supposing you may stop too long with me, so very nervous as I am. Send me every evening a written Good night. If you come for a few minutes about six it may be the best time. Should you ever fancy me too low-spirited I must warn you to ascribe it to the medicine I am at present taking which is of a nerve-shaking nature. I shall impute any depression I may experience to this cause. I have been writing with a vile old pen the whole week, which is

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<sup>1</sup>This coupling of Brown's name with ideas of Fanny's absence or presence seems to be a curiously faint indication of a painful phase of feeling more fully developed in the sequel.

LETTER XVII.

excessively ungallant. The fault is in the Quill: I have mended it and still it is very much inclin'd to make blind es. However these last lines are in a much better style of penmanship, thof a little disfigured by the smear of black currant jelly; which has made a little mark on one of the Pages of Brown's Ben Jonson, the very best book he has. I have lick'd it but it remains very purple. I did not know whether to say purple or blue so in the mixture of the thought wrote purple which may be an excellent name for a colour made up of those two, and would suit well to start next spring. Be very careful of open doors and windows and going without your duffle grey. God bless you Love!

J. Keats.

P.S. I am sitting in the back room. Remember me to your Mother.



## XVIII.

[Wentworth Place,  
February, 1820?]

My dear Fanny,

Do not let your mother suppose that you hurt me by writing at night. For some reason or other your last night's note was not so treasurable as former ones. I would fain that you call me *Love* still. To see you happy and in high spirits is a great consolation to me—still let me believe that you are not half so happy as my restoration would make you. I am nervous, I own, and may think myself worse than I really am; if so you must indulge me, and pamper with that sort of tenderness you have manifested towards me in different Letters. My sweet creature when I look back upon the pains and tor-

LETTER XVIII.

ments I have suffer'd for you from the day I left you to go to the isle of Wight; the ecstasies in which I have pass'd some days and the miseries in their turn, I wonder the more at the Beauty which has kept up the spell so fervently. When I send this round I shall be in the front parlour watching to see you show yourself for a minute in the garden. How illness stands as a barrier betwixt me and you! Even if I was well—I must make myself as good a Philosopher as possible. Now I have had opportunities of passing nights anxious and awake I have found other thoughts intrude upon me. "If I should die," said I to myself, "I have left no immortal work behind me—nothing to make my friends proud of my memory—but I have lov'd the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time I would have made myself remember'd." Thoughts like these

LETTER XVIII.

came very feebly whilst I was in health  
and every pulse beat for you—now  
you divide with this (may *I* say it?)  
“last infirmity of noble minds” all  
my reflection.

God bless you, Love.

J. Keats.

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XIX.

[Wentworth Place,  
February, 1820?]

My dearest Girl,

You spoke of having been unwell in your last note: have you recover'd? That note has been a great delight to me. I am stronger than I was: the Doctors say there is very little the matter with me, but I cannot believe them till the weight and tightness of my Chest is mitigated. I will not indulge or pain myself by complaining of my long separation from you. God alone knows whether I am destined to taste of happiness with you: at all events I myself know thus much, that I consider it no mean Happiness to have lov'd you thus far—if it is to be no further I shall not be unthankful—if I am to re-

LETTER XIX.

cover, the day of my recovery shall see me by your side from which nothing shall separate me. If well you are the only medicine that can keep me so. Perhaps, aye surely, I am writing in too depress'd a state of mind—ask your Mother to come and see me—she will bring you a better account than mine.

Ever your affectionate

John Keats.

XX.

[Wentworth Place,  
24 February, 1820?]

My dearest Girl,

Indeed I will not deceive you with respect to my Health. This is the fact as far as I know. I have been confined three weeks and am not yet well—this proves that there is something wrong about me which my constitution will either conquer or give way to. Let us hope for the best. Do you hear the Thrush singing over the field? I think it is a sign of mild weather—so much the better for me. Like all Sinners now I am ill I philosophize, aye out of my attachment to every thing, Trees, flowers, Thrushes, Spring, Summer, Claret, &c. &c.—aye every thing but you.—My sister would be glad of my

LETTER XX.

company a little longer. That Thrush is a fine fellow. I hope he was fortunate in his choice this year. Do not send any more of my Books home. I have a great pleasure in the thought of you looking on them.

Ever yours

my sweet Fanny

J. K.

XXI.

[Wentworth Place,  
25 February, 1820?]

My dearest Fanny,

I had a better night last night than I have had since my attack, and this morning I am the same as when you saw me. I have been turning over two volumes of Letters written between Rousseau and two Ladies in the perplexed strain of mingled finesse and sentiment in which the Ladies and gentlemen of those days were so clever, and which is still prevalent among Ladies of this Country who live in a state of reasoning romance. The likeness however only extends to the mannerism, not to the dexterity. What would Rousseau have said at seeing our little correspondence!



LETTER XXI.

What would his Ladies have said! I don't care much—I would sooner have Shakespeare's opinion about the matter. The common gossiping of washerwomen must be less disgusting than the continual and eternal fence and attack of Rousseau and these sublime Petticoats. One calls herself Clara and her friend Julia, two of Rousseau's heroines—they all the same time christen poor Jean Jacques St. Preux—who is the pure cavalier of his famous novel. Thank God I am born in England with our own great Men before my eyes. Thank God that you are fair and can love me without being Letter-written and sentimentaliz'd into it.—Mr. Barry Cornwall has sent me another Book, his first, with a polite note. I must do what I can to make him sensible of the esteem I have for his kindness. If this north east would take a turn it would be so much the better for me.

LETTER XXI.

Good bye, my love, my dear love,  
my beauty—

love me for ever.

J. K.

XXII.

[Wentworth Place,  
February, 1820 ?]

My dearest Girl,

I continue much the same as usual, I think a little better. My spirits are better also, and consequently I am more resign'd to my confinement. I dare not think of you much or write much to you. Remember me to all.

Ever your affectionate

John Keats.

·XXIII.

[Wentworth Place,  
February, 1820 ?]

My dear Fanny,

I think you had better not make any long stay with me when Mr. Brown is at home. Whenever he goes out you may bring your work. You will have a pleasant walk to-day. I shall see you pass. I shall follow you with my eyes over the Heath. Will you come towards evening instead of before dinner? When you are gone, 'tis past—if you do not come till the evening I have something to look forward to all day. Come round to my window for a moment when you have read this. Thank your Mother, for the preserves, for me. The raspberry will

LETTER XXIII.

be too sweet not having any acid;  
therefore as you are so good a girl I  
shall make you a present of it. Good  
bye

My sweet Love!

J. Keats.

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XXIV.

[Wentworth Place,  
February, 1820?]

My dearest Fanny,

The power of your benediction is of not so weak a nature as to pass from the ring in four and twenty hours—it is like a sacred Chalice once consecrated and ever consecrate. I shall kiss your name and mine where your Lips have been—Lips! why should a poor prisoner as I am talk about such things? Thank God, though I hold them the dearest pleasures in the universe, I have a consolation independent of them in the certainty of your affection. I could write a song in the style of Tom Moore's Pathetic about Memory if that would be any relief to me. No

LETTER XXIV.

'twould not. I will be as obstinate as a Robin, I will not sing in a cage. Health is my expected heaven and you are the Houri—this word I believe is both singular and plural—if only plural, never mind—you are a thousand of them.

Ever yours affectionately

my dearest,

J. K.

You had better not come to-day.

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XXV.

[Wentworth Place,  
March, 1820?]

My dearest Love,

You must not stop so long in the cold—I have been suspecting that window to be open.—Your note half-cured me. When I want some more oranges I will tell you—these are just à propos. I am kept from food so feel rather weak—otherwise very well. Pray do not stop so long upstairs—it makes me uneasy—come every now and then and stop a half minute. Remember me to your Mother.

Your ever affectionate

J. Keats.



## XXVI.

[Wentworth Place,  
March, 1820 !]

Sweetest Fanny,

You fear, sometimes, I do not love you so much as you wish? My dear Girl I love you ever and ever and without reserve. The more I have known you the more have I lov'd. In every way—even my jealousies have been agonies of Love, in the hottest fit I ever had I would have died for you. I have vex'd you too much. But for Love! Can I help it? You are always new. The last of your kisses was ever the sweetest; the last smile the brightest; the last movement the gracefulest. When you pass'd my window home yesterday, I was fill'd with as much admiration as if I had then seen you for the

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LETTER XXVI.

first time. You uttered a half complaint once that I only lov'd your Beauty. Have I nothing else then to love in you but that? Do not I see a heart naturally furnish'd with wings imprison itself with me? No ill prospect has been able to turn your thoughts a moment from me. This perhaps should be as much a subject of sorrow as joy—but I will not talk of that. Even if you did not love me I could not help an entire devotion to you: how much more deeply then must I feel for you knowing you love me. My Mind has been the most discontented and restless one that ever was put into a body too small for it. I never felt my Mind repose upon anything with complete and undistracted enjoyment—upon no person but you. When you are in the room my thoughts never fly out of window: you always concentrate my whole senses. The anxiety shown about

LETTER XXVI.

our Loves in your last note is an immense pleasure to me: however you must not suffer such speculations to molest you any more: nor will I any more believe you can have the least pique against me. Brown is gone out—but here is Mrs. Wylie<sup>1</sup>—when she is gone I shall be awake for you.—Remembrances to your Mother.

Your affectionate

J. Keats.

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<sup>1</sup> George Keats's mother-in-law. The significant *but* indicates that the absence of Brown was still, as was natural, more or less a condition of the presence of Miss Brawne. That Keats had, however, or thought he had, some reason for this condition, beyond the mere delicacy of lovers, is clearly shadowed by the cold "My dear Fanny," which in Letter XXIII the condition was first expressly prescribed, and more than shadowed by the agonized expression of a morbid sensibility in Letters XXXVII and XXXIX. Probably a man in sound health would have found the cause trivial enough.

## XXVII.

[Wentworth Place,  
March, 1820.]

My dear Fanny,

I am much better this morning than I was a week ago: indeed I improve a little every day. I rely upon taking a walk with you upon the first of May: in the mean time undergoing a Babylonish captivity I shall not be jew enough to hang up my harp upon a willow, but rather endeavour to clear up my arrears in versifying, and with returning health begin upon something new: pursuant to which resolution it will be necessary to have my or rather Taylor's manuscript,<sup>1</sup> which you, if you please,

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<sup>1</sup> Presumably the manuscript of *Lamia, Isabella, &c.* then about to be sent to press.

LETTER XXVII.

will send by my Messenger either to-day or to-morrow. Is Mr. D. with you to-day: You appeared very much fatigued last night: you must look a little brighter this morning. I shall not suffer my little girl ever to be obscured like glass breath'd upon, but always bright as it is her *nature*. Feeding upon sham victuals and sitting by the fire will completely annul me. I have no need of an enchanted wax figure to duplicate me, for I am melting in my proper person before the fire. If you meet with anything better (worse) than common in your Magazines let me see it.

Good bye my sweetest Girl.

J. K.

## XXVIII.

[Wentworth Place,  
March, 1820?]

My dearest Fanny, whe[ne]ver you know me to be alone, come, no matter what day. Why will you go out this weather? I shall not fatigue myself with writing too much I promise you. Brown says I am getting stouter. I rest well and from last night do not remember any thing horrid in my dream, which is a capital symptom, for any organic derangement always occasions a Phantasmagoria. It will be a nice idle amusement to hunt after a motto for my Book which I will have if lucky enough to hit upon a fit one—not intending to write a preface. I fear I am too late with my note—you are

LETTER XXVIII.

gone out—you will be as cold as a topsail in a north latitude—I advise you to furl yourself and come in a doors.

Good bye Love.

J. K.

## XXIX.

[Wentworth Place,  
March, 1820?]

My dearest Fanny, I slept well last night and am no worse this morning for it. Day by day if I am not deceived I get a more unrestrain'd use of my Chest. The nearer a racer gets to the Goal the more his anxiety becomes; so I lingering upon the borders of health feel my impatience increase. Perhaps on your account I have imagined my illness more serious than it is: how horrid was the chance of slipping into the ground instead of into your arms—the difference is amazing Love. Death must come at last; Man must die, as Shallow says; but before that is my fate I fain would try what more pleasures



LETTER XXIX.

than you have given, so sweet a creature as you can give. Let me have another opportunity of years before me and I will not die without being remember'd. Take care of yourself dear that we may both be well in the Summer. I do not at all fatigue myself with writing, having merely to put a line or two here and there, a Task which would worry a stout state of the body and mind, but which just suits me as I can do no more.

Your affectionate

J. K.

XXX.

[Wentworth Place,  
March, 1820?]

My dearest Fanny,

Though I shall see you in so short a time I cannot forbear sending you a few lines. You say I did not give you yesterday a minute account of my health. To-day I have left off the Medicine which I took to keep the pulse down and I find I can do very well without it, which is a very favourable sign, as it shows that there is no inflammation remaining. You think I may be wearied at night you say: it is my best time; I am at my best about eight o'Clock. I received a Note from Mr. Procter to-day. He says he cannot pay me a visit this weather as he is fearful of

LETTER XXX. .

an inflammation in the Chest. What a horrid climate this is? or what careless inhabitants it has? You are one of them. My dear girl do not make a joke of it: do not expose yourself to the cold. There's the Thrush again—I can't afford it—he'll run me up a pretty Bill for Music—besides he ought to know I deal at Clementi's. How can you bear so long an imprisonment at Hampstead? I shall always remember it with all the gusto that a monopolizing carle should. I could build an Altar to you for it.

Your affectionate

J. K.

XXXI.

[Wentworth Place,  
March, 1820?]

My dearest Girl,

As, from the last part of my note you must see how gratified I have been by your remaining at home, you might perhaps conceive that I was equally bias'd the other way by your going to Town, I cannot be easy to-night without telling you you would be wrong to suppose so. Though I am pleased with the one, I am not displeas'd with the other. How do I dare to write in this manner about my pleasures and displeasures? I will tho' whilst I am an invalid, in spite of you. Good night, Love!

J. K.

## XXXII.

[Wentworth Place,  
March, 1820?]

My dearest Girl,

In consequence of our company I suppose I shall not see you before to-morrow. I am much better to-day—indeed all I have to complain of is want of strength and a little tightness in the Chest. I envied Sam's walk with you to-day; which I will not do again as I may get very tired of envying. I imagine you now sitting in your new black dress which I like so much and if I were a little less selfish and more enthusiastic I should run round and surprise you with a knock at the door. I fear I am too prudent for a dying kind of Lover. Yet, there is a great differ-

LETTER XXXII.

ence between going off in warm blood like Romeo, and making one's exit like a frog in a frost. I had nothing particular to say to-day, but not intending that there shall be any interruption to our correspondence (which at some future time I propose offering to Murray) I write something. God bless you my sweet Love! Illness is a long lane, but I see you at the end of it, and shall mend my pace as well as possible.

J. K.

XXXIII.

[Wentworth Place,  
March, 1820?]

Dear Girl,

Yesterday you must have thought me worse than I really was. I assure you there was nothing but regret at being obliged to forego an embrace which has so many times been the highest gust of my Life. I would not care for health without it. Sam would not come in—I wanted merely to ask him how you were this morning. When one is not quite well we turn for relief to those we love: this is no weakness of spirit in me: you know when in health I thought of nothing but you; when I shall again be so it will be the same. Brown has been mentioning to me

LETTER XXXIII.

that some hint from Sam, last night, occasions him some uneasiness. He whispered something to you concerning Brown and old Mr. Dilke which had the complexion of being something derogatory to the former. It was connected with an anxiety about Mr. D. Sr's death and an anxiety to set out for Chichester. These sort of hints point out their own solution: one cannot pretend to a delicate ignorance on the subject: you understand the whole matter. If any one, my sweet Love, has misrepresented, to you, to your Mother or Sam, any circumstances which are at all likely, at a tenth remove, to create suspicions among people who from their own interested notions slander others, pray tell me: for I feel the least attain on the disinterested character of Brown very deeply. Perhaps Reynolds or some other of my friends may come towards evening, therefore you may



LETTER XXXIII.

choose whether you will come to see me early to-day before or after dinner as you may think fit. Remember me to your Mother and tell her to drag you to me if you show the least reluctance—

[Signature missing.]

**XXXIV TO XXXIX**



**KENTISH TOWN—  
PREPARING FOR ITALY**



XXXIV.

[Kentish Town,  
May, 1820.]

My dearest Girl,

I endeavour to make myself as patient as possible. Hunt amuses me very kindly—besides I have your ring on my finger and your flowers on the table. I shall not expect to see you yet because it would be so much pain to part with you again. When the Books you want come you shall have them. I am very well this afternoon. My dearest . . .

[Signature cut off.<sup>1</sup>]

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<sup>1</sup>The piece cut off the original letter is in this instance so small that nothing can be wanting except the signature, —probably given to an autograph-collector.

XXXV.

Tuesday Afternoon.  
[Kentish Town, May, 1820?]

My dearest Fanny,

For this Week past I have been employed in marking the most beautiful passages in Spenser, intending it for you, and comforting myself in being somehow occupied to give you however small a pleasure. It has lightened my time very much. I am much better. God bless you.

Your affectionate

J. Keats.

XXXVI.

Tuesday Morn.  
[Kentish Town, May, 1820.]

My dearest Girl,

I wrote a letter<sup>1</sup> for you yesterday expecting to have seen your Mother. I shall be selfish enough to send it though I know it may give you a little pain, because I wish you to see how unhappy I am for love of you, and endeavour as much as I can to entice you to give up your whole heart to me whose whole existence hangs upon you. You could not step or move an eyelid but it would shoot to my heart—I am greedy of you. Do not think of anything but me. Do not live as if I was not existing. Do not forget me—But have I any

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<sup>1</sup> Probably not extant.

LETTER XXXVI.

right to say you forget me? Perhaps you think of me all day. Have I any right to wish you to be unhappy for me? You would forgive me for wishing it if you knew the extreme passion I have that you should love me—and for you to love me as I do you, you must think of no one but me, much less write that sentence. Yesterday and this morning I have been haunted with a sweet vision—I have seen you the whole time in your shepherdess dress. How my senses have ached at it! How my heart has been devoted to it! How my eyes have been full of tears at it! Indeed I think a real love is enough to occupy the widest heart. Your going to town alone when I heard of it was a shock to me—yet I expected it—*promise me you will not for some time till I get better*. Promise me this and fill the paper full of the most endearing names. If you cannot do so with

LETTER XXXVI.

good will, do my love tell me—say what you think—confess if your heart is too much fasten'd on the world. Perhaps then I may see you at a greater distance, I may not be able to appropriate you so closely to myself. Were you to lose a favorite bird from the cage, how would your eyes ache after it as long as it was in sight; when out of sight you would recover a little. Perhaps if you would, if so it is, confess to me how many things are necessary to you besides me, I might be happier; by being less tantaliz'd. Well may you exclaim, how selfish, how cruel not to let me enjoy my youth! to wish me to be unhappy. You must be so if you love me. Upon my soul I can be contented with nothing else. If you would really what is call'd enjoy yourself at a Party—if you can smile in people's faces, and wish them to admire you *now*—you never have nor ever will love me. I



LETTER XXXVI.

see *life* in nothing but the certainty of your Love—convince me of it my sweetest. If I am not somehow convinced I shall die of agony. If we love we must not live as other men and women do—I cannot brook the wolfsbane of fashion and foppery and tattle—you must be mine to die upon the rack if I want you. I do not pretend to say that I have more feeling than my fellows, but I wish you seriously to look over my letters kind and unkind and consider whether the Person who wrote them can be able to endure much longer the agonies and uncertainties which you are so peculiarly made to create. My recovery of bodily health will be of no benefit to me if you are not mine when I am well. For God's sake save me—or tell me my passion is of too awful a nature for you. Again God bless you.

J. K.

LETTER XXXVI.

No — my sweet Fanny — I am wrong—I do not wish you to be unhappy—and yet I do, I must while there is so sweet a Beauty—my loveliest, my darling! good bye! I kiss you—O the torments!

## XXXVII.

Wednesday Morn[in]g.

[Kentish Town, 5 July, 1820?]

My dearest Girl,

I have been a walk this morning with a book in my hand, but as usual I have been occupied with nothing but you: I wish I could say in an agreeable manner. I am tormented day and night. They talk of my going to Italy. 'Tis certain I shall never recover if I am to be so long separate from you: yet with all this devotion to you I cannot persuade myself into any confidence of you. Past experience connected with the fact of my long separation from you gives me agonies which are scarcely

LETTER XXXVII.

to be talked of. When your mother comes I shall be very sudden and expert in asking her whether you have been to Mrs. Dilke's, for she might say no to make me easy. I am literally worn to death, which seems my only recourse. I cannot forget what has pass'd. What? nothing with a man of the world, but to me deathful. I will get rid of this as much as possible. When you were in the habit of flirting with Brown you would have left off, could your own heart have felt one half of one pang mine did. Brown is a good sort of Man—he did not know he was doing me to death by inches. I feel the effect of every one of those hours in my side now; and for that cause, though he has done me many services, though I know his love and friendship for me, though at this moment I should be without pence were it not for his assistance, I will never

LETTER XXXVII.

see or speak to him until we are both old men, if we are to be. I *will* resent my heart having been made a football. You will call this madness. I have heard you say that it was not unpleasant to wait a few years—you have amusements — your mind is away—you have not brooded over one idea as I have, and how should you? You are to me an object intensely desirable—the air I breathe in a room empty of you is unhealthy. I am not the same to you—no—you can wait—you have a thousand activities—you can be happy without me. Any party, anything to fill up the day has been enough. How have you pass'd this month? Who have you smil'd with? All this may seem savage in me. You do not feel as I do—you do not know what it is to love—one day you may—your time is not come. Ask yourself how many unhappy hours Keats has caused you in

LETTER XXXVII.

Loneliness. For myself I have been a Martyr the whole time, and for this reason I speak; the confession is forc'd from me by the torture. I appeal to you by the blood of that Christ you believe in: Do not write to me if you have done anything this month which it would have pained me to have seen. You may have altered—if you have not—if you still behave in dancing rooms and other societies as I have seen you—I do not want to live—if you have done so I wish this coming night may be my last. I cannot live without you, and not only you but *chaste you; virtuous you*. The Sun rises and sets, the day passes, and you follow the bent of your inclination to a certain extent—you have no conception of the quantity of miserable feeling that passes through me in a day.—Be serious! Love is not a plaything—and again do not write unless you can do

LETTER XXXVII.

It with a crystal conscience. I would  
sooner die for want of you than——

Yours for ever

J. Keats.

## XXXVIII.

[Kentish Town,  
July, 1820?]

My dearest Fanny,

My head is puzzled this morning, and I scarce know what I shall say though I am full of a hundred things. 'Tis certain I would rather be writing to you this morning, notwithstanding the alloy of grief in such an occupation, than enjoy any other pleasure, with health to boot, unconnected with you. Upon my soul I have loved you to the extreme. I wish you could know the Tenderness with which I continually brood over your different aspects of countenance, action and dress. I see you come down in the morning: I see you meet me at the Window—I see



LETTER XXXVIII.

every thing over again eternally that I ever have seen. If I get on the pleasant clue I live in a sort of happy misery, if on the unpleasant 'tis miserable misery. You complain of my illtreating you in word, thought and deed—I am sorry,—at times I feel bitterly sorry that I ever made you unhappy—my excuse is that those words have been wrung from me by the sharpness of my feelings. At all events and in any case I have been wrong; could I believe that I did it without any cause, I should be the most sincere of Penitents. I could give way to my repentant feelings now, I could recant all my suspicions, I could mingle with you heart and Soul though absent, were it not for some parts of your Letters. Do you suppose it possible I could ever leave you? You know what I think of myself and what of you. You know that I should feel how much it was

LETTER XXXVIII.

my loss and how little yours. My friends laugh at you! I know some of them—when I know them all I shall never think of them again as friends or even acquaintance. My friends have behaved well to me in every instance but one, and there they have become tattlers, and inquisitors into my conduct: spying upon a secret I would rather die than share it with any body's confidence. For this I cannot wish them well, I care not to see any of them again. If I am the Theme, I will not be the Friend of idle Gossips. Good gods what a shame it is our Loves should be so put into the microscope of a Coterie. Their laughs should not affect you (I may perhaps give you reasons some day for these laughs, for I suspect a few people to hate me well enough, *for reasons I know of*, who have pretended a great friendship for me) when in competition with one, who

LETTER XXXVIII.

if he never should see you again would make you the Saint of his memory. These Laughers, who do not like you, who envy you for your Beauty, who would have God-bless'd me from you for ever: who were plying me with discouragements with respect to you eternally. People are revengeful—do not mind them—do nothing but love me—if I knew that for certain life and health will in such event be a heaven, and death itself will be less painful. I long to believe in immortality. I shall never be able to bid you an entire farewell. If I am destined to be happy with you here—how short is the longest Life. I wish to believe in immortality—I wish to live with you for ever. Do not let my name ever pass between you and those laughers; if I have no other merit than the great Love for you, that were sufficient to keep me sacred and unmentioned in such so-

LETTER XXXVII

ciety. If I have been cruel and unjust I swear my love has ever been greater than my cruelty which lasts but a minute whereas my Love come what will shall last for ever. If concession to me has hurt your Pride god knows I have had little pride in my heart when thinking of you. Your name never passes my Lips—do not let mine pass yours. Those People do not like me. After reading my Letter you even then wish to see me. I am strong enough to walk over—but I dare not. I shall feel so much pain in parting with you again. My dearest love, I am afraid to see you; I am strong, but not strong enough to see you. Will my arm be ever round you again, and if so shall I be obliged to leave you again? My sweet Love! I am happy whilst I believe your first Letter. Let me be but certain that you are mine heart and soul, and I could die

LETTER XXXVIII.

more happily than I could otherwise live. If you think me cruel—if you think I have sleighted you—do muse it over again and see into my heart. My love to you is “true as truth’s simplicity and simpler than the infancy of truth” as I think I once said before. How could I sleight you? How threaten to leave you? not in the spirit of a Threat to you—no—but in the spirit of Wretchedness in myself. My fairest, my delicious, my angel Fanny! do not believe me such a vulgar fellow. I will be as patient in illness and as believing in Love as I am able.

Yours for ever my dearest

John Keats.

## XXXIX.

[Kentish Town,  
August, 1820?]

I do not write this till the last  
that no eye may catch it.<sup>1</sup>

My dearest Girl,

I wish you could invent some means to make me at all happy without you. Every hour I am more and more concentrated in you; every thing else tastes like chaff in my Mouth. I feel it almost impossible to go to Italy—the fact is I cannot leave you, and shall never taste one minute's content until it pleases chance to let me live with you for good. But I will not go on at this rate. A per-

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<sup>1</sup>This seems to mean that he wrote the letter to the end, and then filled in the words *My dearest Girl*, left out lest any one coming near him should chance to see them.

LETTER XXXIX.

son in health as you are can have no conception of the horrors that nerves and a temper like mine go through. What Island do your friends propose retiring to? I should be happy to go with you there alone, but in company I should object to it; the backbitings and jealousies of new colonists who have nothing else to amuse themselves, is unbearable. Mr. Dilke came to see me yesterday, and gave me a very great deal more pain than pleasure. I shall never be able any more to endure the society of any of those who used to meet at Elm Cottage and Wentworth Place. The last two years taste like brass upon my Palate. If I cannot live with you I will live alone. I do not think my health will improve much while I am separated from you. For all this I am averse to seeing you—I cannot bear flashes of light and return into my glooms again. I am not so un-

LETTER XXXIX.

happy now as I should be if I had seen you yesterday. To be happy with you seems such an impossibility! it requires a luckier Star than mine! it will never be. I enclose a passage from one of your letters which I want you to alter a little—I want (if you will have it so) the matter express'd less coldly to me. If my health would bear it, I could write a Poem which I have in my head, which would be a consolation for people in such a situation as mine. I would show some one in Love as I am, with a person living in such Liberty as you do. Shakespeare always sums up matters in the most sovereign manner. Hamlet's heart was full of such Misery as mine is when he said to Ophelia "Go to a Nunnery, go, go!" Indeed I should like to give up the matter at once—I should like to die. I am sickened at the brute world which you are smiling with. I hate men, and



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women more. I see nothing but thorns for the future—wherever I may be next winter, in Italy or nowhere, Brown will be living near you with his indecencies. I see no prospect of any rest. Suppose me in Rome—well, I should there see you as in a magic glass going to and from town at all hours,———I wish you could infuse a little confidence of human nature into my heart. I cannot muster any—the world is too brutal for me—I am glad there is such a thing as the grave—I am sure I shall never have any rest till I get there. At any rate I will indulge myself by never seeing any more Dilke or Brown or any of their Friends. I wish I was either in your arms full of faith or that a Thunder bolt would strike me.

God bless you.

J. K.





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