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John Brown to D.R. Tilden, 1859

THE GREAT bulk of mankind estimate each other's actions and motives by the measure of success or otherwise that attends them through life. By that rule, I have been one of the worst and one of the best of men. I do not claim to have been one of the latter, and I leave it to an impartial tribunal to decide whether the world has been the worse or the better for my living or dying in it. *My present great anxiety is to get as near in readiness for a different field of action as I well can, since being in a good measure relieved from the fear that my poor broken-hearted wife and children would come to immediate want.* May God reward a thousandfold all the kind efforts made in their behalf! I have enjoyed remarkable cheerfulness and composure of mind ever since my confinement; *and it is a great comfort to feel assured that I am permitted to die for a cause,—* not merely to pay the debt of nature, as all must. I feel myself to be most unworthy of so great distinction.

The particular manner of dying assigned to me gives me but very little uneasiness. I wish I had the time and the ability to give you, my dear friend, some little idea of what is daily, and I might almost say hourly, passing within my prison walls; and could my friends but witness only a few of these scenes, just as they occur, I think they would feel very well reconciled to my being here, just what I am, and just as I am.

My whole life before had not afforded me one half the opportunity to plead for the right. In this, also, I find much to reconcile me to both my present condition and my immediate prospect. *I may be very insane; and I am so, if insane at all.* But if that be so, insanity is like a very pleasant dream to me. I am not in the least degree conscious of my ravings, of my fears, or of any terrible visions whatever; but fancy myself entirely composed, and that my sleep, in particular, is as sweet as that of a healthy, joyous little infant.

I pray to God that He will grant me a continuance of the same calm but delightful dream, *until I come to know of those realities which eyes have not seen and which ears have not heard.* I have scarce realized that I am in prison or in irons at all. I certainly think I was never more cheerful in my life.

CHARLESTOWN, 28 November, 1859.

Anton Chekhov to Suvorin, April 7, 1897.

. . . You write that my ideal is laziness. No, it is not laziness. I despise laziness as I despise weakness and lack of mental and moral energy. *I was not talking of laziness but of leisure*, and I did not say leisure was an ideal but only one of the essential conditions of personal happiness.

If the experiments with the new serum give favourable results, I shall go of course to Berlin. Feeding is absolutely no use to me. Here for the last fortnight they have been feeding me zealously, but it's no use, I have not gained weight.

I ought to get married. Perhaps a cross wife would cut down the number of my visitors by at least a half. *Yesterday they were coming all day long, it was simply awful*. They came two at a time and each one begs me not to speak and at the same time asks me questions. . . .

Shepsi to his father Inkhenmet, written on his tomb, 2000 B.C.

This is a reminder of your journey to the dungeon, to the place where Sen's son Hetepu was, when you brought the foreleg of an ox, and when this your son came with Newaef, and when you said, Welcome, both of you. Sit and eat meat!

Am I to be injured *in your presence*, without this your son having done or said anything, *by my brother*? [And yet] I was the one who buried him, I brought him from the dungeon, I placed him among his desert tomb-dwellers, even though thirty measure of refined barley were due from him by a loan, and one bundle of garments, six measures of fine barley, one ball of flax, and a cup—even though I did for him what did not (need) to be done.

He has done this against your son – such evil. But, you had said to this your son, 'All my property is vested in my son Shepsi along with my fields.' *Now Sher's son Henu has been taken*. See, he is with you in the same city. You have to go to judgment with him now, since your scribes are with you in the same city. Can a man be joyful, when his spears are used [against his own son]?

My Dear Dr. Tobey:—

If it is a rule that tardiness in the acknowledgment of favors argues lack of appreciation of them, you may set it down that the rule has gone wrong in this case. *Your letter and its enclosure was a sunburst out of a very dark and unpromising cloud.* Let me tell you the circumstances and see if you do not think that you came to me somewhat in the role of a " special providence."

The time for the meeting of the Western Association of Writers was at hand. I am a member and thought that certain advantages might come to me by attending. All day Saturday and all day Sunday I tried every means to secure funds to go. I tried every known place, and at last gave up and went to bed Sunday night in despair. But strangely I could not sleep, so about half-past eleven I arose and between then and 2 A. M., wrote the paper which I was booked to read at the Association. Then, still with no suggestion of any possibility of attending the meeting, I returned to bed and went to sleep about four o'clock. *Three hours later came your letter with the check that took me to the desired place.* I do not think that I spent the money unwisely, for besides the pleasure of intercourse with kindred spirits which should have been sufficient motive, I believe that there were several practical advantages which I derived from the trip, whence I have just returned.

I wish I could thank you for the kindness that prompted your action ; I care not in whose name it was done, whether in Christ's, Mahomet's or Buddha's. *The thing that concerned me, the fact that made the act a good and noble one was that it was done.*

Yes, I am tied down and have been by menial labor, and any escape from it so far has only been a brief respite that made a return to the drudgery doubly hard. But I am glad to say that for the past two or three years I have been able to keep my mother from the hard toil by which she raised and educated me. *But it has been and is a struggle.*

Your informant was mistaken as to my aspirations. I did once want to be a lawyer, *but that ambition has long since died out before the all-absorbing desire to be a worthy singer of the songs of God and nature.* To be able to interpret my own people through song and story, and to prove to the many that after all we are more human than African. And to this end I have hoped year after

year to be able to go to Washington, New York, Boston and Philadelphia where I might see our northern negro at his best, before seeing his brother in the South : but it has been denied me.

I hope, if possible, to spend the coming year in college, chiefly to learn how and what to study in order to cultivate my vein. But I have my home responsibilities and unless I am able to make sufficient to meet them I shall be unable to accomplish my purpose. *To do this I have for some time been giving readings from my verses to audiences mostly of my own people. But as my work has been confined to the smaller towns generally the result has not been satisfactory.*

Perhaps I have laid my case too plainly and openly before you, but you seem to display a disposition to aid me, and I am so grateful that I cannot but be confidential. Then beside, a physician does not want to take a case when there is reticence in regard to the real phases of it. And so I have been plain.

Sincerely, Paul L. Dunbar.

Ben Franklin to Strahan, 1775

Mr. Strahan

You are a Member of Parliament, and one of that Majority which has doomed my Country to Destruction. You have begun to burn our Towns and murder our People. — *Look upon your hands! They are stained with the Blood of your Relations!* — You and I were long Friends:— You are now my Enemy, — and

I am,
Yours.

B. Franklin

Rilke to Kappus, November 4, 1904

My dear Mr. Kappus,

During this time that has passed without a letter, I have been partly traveling, partly so busy that I couldn't write. And even today writing is difficult for me, because I have already had to write so many letters that my hand is tired. If I could dictate, I would have much more to say to you, but as it is, please accept these few words as an answer to your long letter.

I think of you often, dear Mr. Kappus, and with such concentrated good wishes that somehow they ought to help you. Whether my letters really are a help, I often doubt. Don't say, "Yes, they are." Just accept them calmly and without many thanks, and let us wait for what's to come.

There is probably no point in my going into your questions now; for what I could say about your tendency to doubt or about your inability to bring your outer and inner lives into harmony or about all the other things that oppress you — : is just what I have already said: *just the wish that you may find in yourself enough patience to endure and enough simplicity to have faith; that you may gain more and more confidence in what is difficult and in your solitude among other people.* And as for the rest, let life happen to you. Believe me: *life is in the right, always.*

And about feelings: All feelings that concentrate you and lift you up are pure; only that feeling is impure which grasps just one side of your being and thus distorts you. Everything you can think of as you face your childhood, is good. Everything that makes more of you than you have ever been, even in your best hours, is right. Every intensification is good, if it is in your entire blood, if it isn't intoxication or muddiness, but joy which you can see into, clear to the bottom. Do you understand what I mean?

And your doubt can become a good quality if you train it. It must become knowing, it must become criticism. Ask it, whenever it wants to spoil something for you, why something is ugly, demand proofs from it, test it, and you will find it perhaps bewildered and embarrassed, perhaps also protesting. But don't give in, insist on arguments, and act in this way, attentive and persistent, every single time, *and the day will come when instead of being a destroyer, it will become one of your best workers* — perhaps the most intelligent of all the ones that are building your life.

That is all, dear Mr. Kappus, that I am able to tell you today. But I am sending you, along with this letter, the reprint of a small poem that has just appeared in the Prague German Labor. In it I speak to you further of life and death and of how both are great and glorious.

Yours,
Rainer Maria Rilke

Phyllis Wheatley to Samson Occum, 1765

Reverend and honored sir,

I have this day received your obliging kind epistle, and am greatly satisfied with your reasons respecting the negroes, and think highly reasonable what you offer in vindication of their natural rights: Those that invade them cannot be insensible that the divine light is chasing away the thick darkness which broods over the land of Africa; *and the chaos which has reigned so long, is converting into beautiful order*, and reveals more and more clearly the glorious dispensation of civil and religious liberty, which are so inseparably united, that there is little or no enjoyment of one without the other: Otherwise, perhaps, the Israelites had been less solicitous for their freedom from Egyptian slavery; I do not say they would have been contented without it, by no means; *for in every human breast God has implanted a principle, which we call love of freedom; it is impatient of oppression, and pants for deliverance; and by the leave of our modern Egyptians I will assert, that the same principle lives in us.* God grant deliverance in his own way and time, and get him honor upon all those whose avarice impels them to countenance and help forward the calamities of their fellow creatures. This I desire not for their hurt, but to convince them of the strange absurdity of their conduct, whose words and actions are so diametrically opposite. How well the cry for liberty, and the reverse disposition for the exercise of oppressive power over others agree—*I humbly think it does not require the penetration of a philosopher to determine.*—

Phyllis Wheatley

D.H. Lawrence to Bertrand Russell, 14 Sept 1915

Dear Russell,

I'm going to quarrel with you again. You simply don't speak the truth, you simply are not sincere. The article you send me is a plausible lie, and I hate it. *If it says some true things, that is not the point.* The fact is that you, in the Essay, are all the time a lie.

Your basic desire is the maximum of desire of war, you are really the super-war-spirit. What you want is to jab and strike, like the soldier with the bayonet, only you are sublimated into words. And you are like a soldier who might jab man after man with his bayonet, saying "this is for ultimate peace." *The soldier would be a liar.* And it isn't in the least true that you, your basic self, want ultimate peace. You are satisfying in an indirect, false way your lust to jab and strike. Either satisfy it in a direct and honorable way, saying "I hate you all, liars and swine, and am out to set upon you", or stick to mathematics, where you can be true— *But to come as the angel of peace – no, I prefer Tirpitz a thousand times in that role.*

You are simply full of repressed desires, which have become savage and anti-social. And they come out in this sheep's clothing of peace propaganda. *As a woman said to me, who had been to one of your meetings: 'It seemed so strange, with his face looking SO evil, to be talking about peace and love. He can't have meant what he said.'*

I believe in your inherent power for realising the truth. But I don't believe in your will, not for a second. Your will is false and cruel. You are too full of devilish repressions to be anything but lustful and cruel. I would rather have the German soldiers with rapine and cruelty, than you with your words of goodness. *It is the falsity I can't bear.* I wouldn't care if you were six times a murderer, so long as you said to yourself, "I am this." The enemy of all mankind, you are, full of the lust of enmity. It is not the hatred of falsehood which inspires you. It is the hatred of people, all people of flesh and blood. It is a perverted, mental blood-lust. *Why don't you own it.*

Let us become strangers again, I think it is better.

D.H. Lawrence

My Friends,

There is one great God and Power that hath made the world and all things therein, to whom you and I and all People owe their being and well-being, and to whom you and I must one Day give an account, for all that we do in this world: this great Power God hath written his law in our hearts, by which we are taught and commanded to love and help and do good to one another, and not to do harm and mischief unto one another. *Now this great God hath been pleased to make me concerned in those parts of the world,* and the king of the Country where I live, hath given unto me a great Province therein, but I desire to enjoy it with your Love and Consent, that we may always live together as Neighbors and friends, else what would the great God say to us, who hath made us not to devour and destroy one another but live Soberly and kindly together in the world. *Now I would have you well to observe, that I am very Sensible of the unkindness and Injustice that hath been too much exercised towards you by the People of these Parts of the world, who have sought themselves, and to make great Advantages by you, rather than be examples of Good & Goodness unto you.* I hear this hath been a matter of Trouble to you, and caused great Grudgings and Animosities, Sometimes to the Shedding of blood, which hath made the great God Angry. *But, I am not such a man, as is well known in my own Country:* I have great love and regard towards you, and I desire to gain your Love & friendship by a kind, just and peaceable life; and the People I send are of the same mind, & Shall in all things behave themselves accordingly; *and if in any thing Shall offend you or your People, you shall have a full and speedy Satisfaction for the same by an equal number on both sides, that by no means you may have just occasion of being offended against them;* I Shall Shortly come to you my Self. At what time, we may more largely and freely confer discourse of these matters; in the mean time, I have sent my commissioners to you about conferring to a league of the peace, lest We desire you to be kind to them my people, and to receive these Presents and Tokens which I have sent to you, as a Testimony of my Good will to you, and my resolution to live Justly peaceably and friendly with you,

I am your Friend.

William Penn

Gentlemen,

When you see this letter stained with the blood of my husband (the last drop of which is now spilt for the friendship he has shown for your people) *I know you will remember your pledge to us in behalf of your Nation, that in the worst of events, you would assist, and protect us:* and when I tell you that at day light on Saturday Morning last, hundreds of the hostiles surrounded our house, and instantly murdered General McIntosh and Tomas Tustunnuggee, by shooting near One hundred balls into them (Chilley and Moody Kennard making their escape through a Window) they then Commenced burning and plundering in the most unprincipled way, so that here I am driven from the Ashes of my smoking dwelling, left with nothing but my poor Naked hungry Children, who need some immediate aid from our white friends, and we lean upon you, while you lean on your Government;

About the same time of the Morning that they Committed the horrid act on the General, another party Caught Colonel Samuel Hawkins and kept him tied until about 3 o'clock, when the Chief returned from our house and gave orders for his execution in the same way, *and refused to leave his wife any implements to cover his body up with,* so that it was left exposed to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the Forest and Jinny and her child are here in the same Condition as we are.

This party consisted principally of Oakfusgies, Talledegas, and Muckfaws though there were others with them; The Chiefs that appeared to head the party were Intockchungo (of Muckfaw), Thloccocoscomicco (of Arpachoochee) and Munnawway (but I know not where he was from), *they said they were Ordered to do it by the Little Prince and Hopoeth Yoholo, and that they were supported and encouraged in it, by the Agent and the Chiefs that were left after the Big Warriors death in a Council at Broken Arrow, where they decreed that they would murder all the Chiefs, who had any hand in selling the Land, and burn and destroy and take away all that they had, and then send on to the President that he should not have the Land.*

I have not heard of the Murder of any Others, but expect all are dead that Could be Caught, but by reason of a great Freshet in the Chatahoochee they Could they not get Colonel

Miller and a few others which are gone to the Governor. Our Country is in a most ruined state so far as I have heard, (though by reason of the high waters word has not circulated fast) all have fled from their homes in our parts, and taken refuge among their White friends, and I learn there are now at General Ware's (near this place) about 150 to 200 of them, who are afraid to go to their homes to get a grain of what little corn they have to eat, much more to try to make any more, *and if you and your people do not assist us, God help us, we must die, either by the sword or the Famine.*

This Moment, General Ware has come in, and will in a few minutes start with a few men, and a few friendly Indians, to try to get a little something for us to eat.

I hope as soon as you read this, you will lay it before the Governor and the President, that they may know our Miserable Condition, and Afford us relief as soon as possible I followed them to their Camp about 1 1/2 Miles, to try to beg of them something to Cover the dead with, but it was denied me, I tried Also to get a horse to take my little Children, and some provision to last us to the white settlements, which was given up to me, and then taken back And had it not have been for some white men who assisted in burying the dead, and getting us to the settlements, we should have been worse off than we were if possible. Before I Close I must remark that the whole of the party so far as I knew them, were Hostile during the Late War.

Peggy and Susannah McIntosh

J.S. Bach to Georg Erdmann, 1730

Dear friend,j

You might excuse an old friend, who allows himself to bother you with this letter. Almost four years are gone, since you answered my last letter. I remember you asked me to report about my difficulties, which I would like to do now. Since our youth, you know my career, until my change as a band master in Koethen. There I found a human and competent sovereign as my employer and I felt my service as a future life position. But my sovereign married a princess and

had no interest or time for music any more – maybe because she didn't feel about music like he did – and there was a job as a music teacher at the Thomas High School in Leipzig.

Although I didn't want to step down from being a court composer to be a music teacher, that is why I hesitated for three months with a decision, *they made this position so exciting, that one day (because my sons wanted to study too), that in God's name I one day travelled to Leipzig and played to them, got that job and I still have it today.* However, on the one hand because this job doesn't pay by far as much as they told me before, and there are, on the other hand no extra pays, in addition the cost of living is immensely and my supervisor is almost not interested in music and I am bullied too, *I am now looking for – with the help of God – for a new job, I don't care where.*

If you might find an acceptable job close to where you live for an old friend, I ask you to recommend me, *I will provide no reason to complain about my willingness to work and I would struggle in the best way for acceptance.* My current payment is 700 Reichstaler in a month. And if more people die, there is more extra income with funerals, if the people are healthy, there is less money to earn, so I earned 100 Reichstaler per month less. In Thuringia, I could get accomplished more with 400 Reichstaler in a month than here, because the cost of life is so high here.

Now I want to report something personal too. Meanwhile I am married for the second time, after my first wife died in Koethen. From my first marriage, three sons and one daughter are still living, whom you saw in Weimar years ago. From my second marriage one son and two daughters are living. My oldest son is studying law, the two others still go to school, one in the prima, the other one in the secunda. The children from the second marriage are still little, the oldest is six years of age.

They are all future musicians – *I assure, that together with my family I already could perform a concert with choir and orchestra,* in particular my second wife sings a beautiful soprano and the oldest daughter is not bad too. I would be impolite, if I would tell more now, that is why I finish the letter with all respect and remain,

Your honored friend, in thankfulness,

Johann Sebastian Bach.

Jane Austen to Mr. Clarke, April 1, 1816.

MY DEAR SIR, --

I am honoured by the Prince's thanks and very much obliged to yourself for the kind manner in which you mention the work. I have also to acknowledge a former letter forwarded to me from Hans Place. *I assure you I felt very grateful for the friendly tenor of it, and hope my silence will have been considered, as it was truly meant, to proceed only from an unwillingness to tax your time with idle thanks.* Under every interesting circumstance which your own talents and literary labours have placed you in, or the favour of the Regent bestowed, you have my best wishes. Your recent appointments I hope are a step to something still better. In my opinion, the service of a court can hardly be too well paid, for immense must be the sacrifice of time and feeling required by it.

You are very kind in your hints as to the sort of composition which might recommend me at present, and I am fully sensible that an historical romance, founded on the House of Saxe-Cobourg, *might be much more to the purpose of profit or popularity than such pictures of domestic life in country villages as I deal in.* But I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. *I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life;* and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. *No, I must keep to my own style and go on in my own way;* and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Your very much obliged, and sincere friend,

J. AUSTEN.

Kemetic Love Poem

My loved one is unique, without a peer,
more perfect than the world,
see, she is like the star rising
at the dawn of an auspicious year.
She moves in a shimmer of perfection,
her complexion is superb,
glorious her eyes when she stares,
sweet her lips when she converses,
she says not a word too much.

High her neck and ample her breast,
of true lapis her hair,

her arms finer than gold,
her fingers like lotus flowers unfolding.

Her buttocks droop when her waist is girt,
her legs reveal her perfection;
her steps are pleasing when she walks the earth,
she takes my heart in her embrace.

She turns the head of every man,
all captivated at the sight of her;
everyone who embraces her rejoices,
for he has become the most successful of lovers.

When she comes forth, anyone can see
that there is none like that One.

Princess Nukada, 7th Century

When spring escapes
freed from being huddled in winter's sleep,
the birds that had been stilled burst into song.
The buds that had been hidden burst into flower.
The mountains are so thickly forested that we
cannot reach the flowers
and the flowers are so tangled with vines that we
cannot pick them.

When the maple leaves turn scarlet
on the autumn hills,
it is easy to gather them and enjoy them.
We sigh over the green leaves
but leave them as they are.
That is my only regret-
So I prefer the Autumn hills

Shakespeare, Sonnet 53

What is your substance, whereof are you made,
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
Since every one hath, every one, one shade,
And you but one, can every shadow lend.
Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit
Is poorly imitated after you;
On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,

And you in Grecian tires are painted new:
Speak of the spring, and foison of the year,
The one doth shadow of your beauty show,
The other as your bounty doth appear;
And you in every blessed shape we know.
In all external grace you have some part,
But you like none, none you, for constant heart.

Rabindranath Tagore, 'I'

I wonder if I know Him
In whose speech is my voice,
In whose movement is my being,
Whose skill is in my lines,
Whose melody is in my songs
In joy and sorrow.
I thought He was chained within me,
Contained by tears and laughter,
Work and play.
I thought He was my very self
Coming to an end with my death.
Why then in a flood of joy do I feel Him
In the sight and touch of my beloved?
This 'I' beyond self I found

On the shores of the shining sea.
Therefore I know
This 'I' is not imprisoned within my bounds.
Losing myself, I find Him
Beyond the borders of time and space.
Through the Ages
I come to know his Shining Self
In the life of the seeker,
In the voice of the poet.
From the dark clouds pour the rains.
I sit and think:
Bearing so many forms, so many names,
I come down, crossing the threshold
Of countless births and deaths.
The Supreme undivided, complete in Himself,
Embracing past and present,

Dwells in Man.

Thomas Love Peacock, Love & Age

I PLAY'D with you 'mid cowslips blowing,
When I was six and you were four;
When garlands weaving, flower-balls throwing,
Were pleasures soon to please no more.
Through groves and meads, o'er grass and heather,
With little playmates, to and fro,
We wander'd hand in hand together;
But that was sixty years ago.

You grew a lovely roseate maiden,
And still our early love was strong;
Still with no care our days were laden,
They glided joyously along;
And I did love you very dearly,
How dearly words want power to show;
I thought your heart was touch'd as nearly;
But that was fifty years ago.

Then other lovers came around you,
Your beauty grew from year to year,
And many a splendid circle found you
The centre of its glittering sphere.
I saw you then, first vows forsaking,
On rank and wealth your hand bestow;
O, then I thought my heart was breaking!—
But that was forty years ago.
And I lived on, to wed another:
No cause she gave me to repine;

Within Him I shall find myself -
The 'I' that reaches everywhere.

And when I heard you were a mother,
I did not wish the children mine.
My own young flock, in fair progression,
Made up a pleasant Christmas row:
My joy in them was past expression;
But that was thirty years ago.

You grew a matron plump and comely,
You dwelt in fashion's brightest blaze;
My earthly lot was far more homely;
But I too had my festal days.
No merrier eyes have ever glisten'd
Around the hearth-stone's wintry glow,
Than when my youngest child was christen'd;
But that was twenty years ago.

Time pass'd. My eldest girl was married,
And I am now a grandsire gray;
One pet of four years old I've carried
Among the wild-flower'd meads to play.
In our old fields of childish pleasure,
Where now, as then, the cowslips blow,
She fills her basket's ample measure;
And that is not ten years ago.

But though first love's impassion'd blindness
Has pass'd away in colder light,
I still have thought of you with kindness,
And shall do, till our last good-night.
The ever-rolling silent hours

Will bring a time we shall not know,
When our young days of gathering flowers

Will be an hundred years ago.