

Washington July 21 / 1858

My darling Mary.

Here I am again quietly seated in my room at the Soldiers' Home just as if I had not been on one of the nicest five days frolics that I have ever participated in – it now only seems a pleasant little episode in my daily routine & I must once more betake myself to confinement & duty. My pleasure has been so very much heightened by my having with me my good friend Scharff & it reached its climax when I not only saw my dear pet but could introduce to her one in whom she will always find a brother.

Mr Scharff made me quite disconsolate by taking his departure for Baltimore this afternoon, whence he proceeds in the H Lane by sea to New York. He did not leave however dearest Mary 'till after we had a long & full talk about our future plans & arrangements – we consulted with that freedom which our long & affectionate intimacy warranted in the schemes & prospects which, under the blessing & guidance of Him who alone can prosper our handiwork, must greatly affect the honor & usefulness of our future lives in an earnest & manly struggle with the great world around us. I cannot therefore in justice to yourself dearest Mary, consent longer to delay communicating them to you. Hence forward in the journey of life I am to regard you not as a mere toy but as a loving & intelligent companion – my equal in everything & one to whom I shall confide all my joys & sorrows; looking to you for the ready wit of woman to suggest what I might overlook & the true & affectionate heart to cheer & encourage when battling with the realities of life" life is real life is earnest" & we must make up our mind to meet it as such – A true woman can in this way better fulfill the high destiny God intended for her & dignifying & ennobling her appropriate sphere.

I lost my parents dear Mary at a very early day – my mother was a favorite sister of the President & my father was a Presbyterian Minister & are of Gods best & purest men – they were both called away early & not very far apart – As their deaths they left me – not wealthy – but with a comfortable little income of a couple thousand a year – after graduating at college I began the study of the law as my chosen profession & after three years application was admitted to the Bar of Philadelphia – I then went on a tour to Europe for a year & on my return opened my office to go to work at my profession in earnest – this however was not then destined to be (& how I must bless the hand of Providence since it has been this cause of throwing us in contact) for after opening my office for a couple of months & commencing quite an encouraging business for so young a man, I was called by the President to Wheatland to act as his secretary & subsequently to Washington – I left my profession with reluctance, even in exchange for the pleasures & gaieties of this metropolis & the momentary destination which my position confers

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upon its holder so flattering to a young man. But the tenure of public office in this country is so precarious – today in, tomorrow out – the self abasement which it often requires to obtain it amid the hungry horde of applicants begging for the same place, all this & much else that in my position I have been obliged to see has given me such a disrelish for public office that I long ago determined to rely upon my profession alone for an honorable & independent livelihood. With this determination I would however have gone through my four years here, had not God in his wisdom again shifted the scene & by introduction of new elements into the calculation & requiring a new arrangement – Under the sense of the new & interesting responsibilities I have assumed by our engagement I feel it my duty to return as soon as practicable to my regular business & profession which gives a permanent occupation – steady discipline to the mind constantly accumulating prosperity (pecuniary) for the future, independent of popular favor or fickleness.

Long before we were engaged, Mr. Scharff & myself [sic] had determined that the scene of our future professional labors would be New York City. It is the great commercial Metropolis in America & with our friends for several years yet to come in power – with the six modern languages which we have at command between us, the value of which you can hardly estimate in a large city like NY where most of the commercial world is made up of foreign merchants & importers, with the other general advantages we possess offer the fairest prospects for our speedy & at least certain success there. After a long conversation & review of the whole matter on our late trip on the H. L. we concluded that Mr Scharff should at once or as soon as possible open our office in NY under the name the firm, he to be the active member of the firm there till such time when I shall join him – our cards & circulars are to be issued & distributed among the right persons & that I should lay my plans here to control as much business from Washington – so as to give the firm as good & reputable a start & character as possible – I then intend to resign my office here sometime between March & June of next year, unless circumstances should render it expedient to do it sooner – I will then go on join Mr. Scharff who will probably be married in October of this year & will go to housekeeping in the Spring & I shall live with him till September of next year & then my darling pet if all things go right I shall come to claim my own dear Mary & after a nice trip to Niagara Montreal via Lake Ontario & the St Lawrence & in company with Scharff et se femme [and his wife] we will spend the month of September with Gods permission at my delightful Lake George & their return to a nice little modest home in some one of the pretty little towns (either Brooklyn, Hoboken or Newark) in the environs of New York, when you dearest pet will be the light & joy – We will have Mr. & Mrs. Scharff our next door neighbors -----Oh this seems almost too happy for me to think of!! a bright dream from which I fear to wake - & yet it is real & with Gods blessing is not so far off from accomplishment.

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I have only given you a resumé dear Mary of these matters – we can talk of the details more freely here after – particularly when we see each other – I have not felt myself at ease till I would tell you all these things – in the close and affectionate relatives which we now hear towards each other – it is our duty to talk over these doings & consult & advise each other – the timid shrinking girl ought to yield to the dignity of womanhood that has a right to know & advise on these things which so intimately concern her.

And now dearest pet that our first business letter is over let us pass to perhaps more agreeable chat – the President & Miss Harriet go to Bedford next Monday for a couple of weeks so that I shall be able to get down to see you every Friday Evg & stay till Monday morning – won't that be nice – Did you tell your father how much disappointed we were to find him absent.

I am so happy to think that I shall have your dear letter to-morrow – With a hundred kisses I remain my sweet Mary

Yours as ever

JBH

[along side of page]

P.S. I don't often make excuses for my writing (bad) but I really must to day [sic].

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