

N. Y. May 23rd

Thanks for your letter, dear Jack, which arrived today, & which I must at last begin to answer tonight lest tomorrow morning should be hurried. I dare say you will have expected this before Wednesday when you will get it, but I really cannot find or take time to write more than twice a week now at least when I have got a regular sleepy fit & cannot write as late as usual. You will not, I know, think yourself neglected or forgotten because I don't write every day, so I keep myself easy on the subject, write when I can, & think of you – always. How I wanted you last evening & the one before. Such glorious moonlight & the park looked so cool & quiet with the deep shadows checkered by the bright light. It really stirred up the romance in my heart, & I wished you were here that we might, just for variety, have a quiet walk there. Yesterday was very warm & Mother having taken medicine consented to lie in bed & keep quiet which she did until 6 o'clock when she dressed & came downstairs. The boys & went to church in the morning & I quite rejoiced in your absence, as Dr. A. preached a regular Scotch Presbyterian doctrinal sermon on sanctification. Eph. 3:26 & such I think you dislike. I am so sorry that while you were here we did not go to see Dr. A. He so pleasant as a companion that I think you would have liked him very much. On Saturday, we were all going to Morgan's & the Acad. we met him on his way to see us, so he turned with us & accompanied us to the door of the Acad. Morgan was delighted to see me & improved the picture much, I went again this morning, but he was not there so tomorrow or Wednesday. I shall go again Sunday afternoon. The boys & I were going to church but the cars were too crowded, we were too late in sending for the carriage & it was too warm to walk, so we all staid quietly at home.

Vernon was here in the evening as usual. His father is expected home by the end of June. I thought he was to be absent longer. This Mother felt so feeble & so troubled with her enemy, palpitations of the heart that she sent to Dr. N. to come tomorrow. She kept herself very quiet all day & after dinner, she & I went riding about looking for cooks. She feels much better this evening but so weak! Agnes sat an hour with us before dinner. I went to the Abbey this morning & saw them all. Laura took better than she has for some time, but is rather weak & tottery yet. I sat some time chatting with her, & with Margaret. Anna came in while I was there; she really looks better. Did you really suppose I cared to know what her small-talk was about? I would imagine what it was, & only wanted a laugh at you for so carelessly saying "nothing particular," when she evidently thought she had been very smart & witty. We have had a visitor this evening whom I was really glad to see; for during the past year in fact ever since he extinguished himself by becoming engaged, we have rarely seen him, Frank Hopkins, a brother of the one who was at Prattsville. He is another of my agreeable gentlemen friends, tho' I deny entirely your accusation of being in love with 9 out of ten of my admirers if you choose to call them so. The fact is, Jack, I have been peculiarly fortunate in finding pleasant gentlemen friends; I don't mean lovers always for my vanity won't carry me the length of classing them all under that title.

Dear Grandmother who was very anxious on the subject of Laura's & my gentlemen acquaintances used to console herself by saying, "Well if Laura has an admirer with a broken nose, Jeanie has one with nose enough for two, so the family respectfully nose will be kept up."

Poor Frank H. I don't suppose he had an idea of the way his name & nose were used. He has been engaged for more than a year to a young lady who was not out of school at the time. Whether her education is finished was a question I wanted to ask tonight, but I did not like to. He congratulates me on joining "the fraternity," "like all the rest of us," as Shippen says. How I am wandering into nonsense. By way of return to (sense?) I will take a look at your letter; & the first thing I light upon is a grave subject Sibbald's [sic] matters. I thought it would end so, from you said here. I am sorry, if in this too, you are disappointed, dear Jack, but the delay may be temporary & you may still go. If not the most important thing for you to do, is to hurry on your Father's work to completion. It does seem rather hard to give up your own affairs to his, but for a time it is right & you will never regret it I am sure. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." I know these uncertainties & disappointment must trouble you somewhat, but don't let them worry or annoy you too much. It can do no good to disturb ones' self about the future, & in such a world of change & uncertainty it is best not to take too much thought for the tomorrow, at the same time, we may be ready to take advantage of the opportunities thrown in our way without wearying ourselves with longing & thinking of them. The alternative of you going to sea is a hard one. The talk about your resigning has unsettled my mind about that, which I thought I was prepared to encounter, & besides Jack, when I thought that, I did not know how hard it would be; how dearly I love you. Still if it must be, it shall be done cheerfully, & I will not be a hindrance to whatever may be your duty. Enough of this; it has made me serious enough in all respects. It is best you did not say anything to your Father about annulling the sale of that Carolina property. Tho' on some accounts, it seems a pity. Something equally good will arise I am sure, & so let us be content. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage & He shall strengthen thine heart. (Psa 27) What a beautiful psalm it is, is it not? One of my favorites. I could not help a laugh at your pleasure in hearing me praised by those who know me so slightly. It was susceptible of being taken as a hint that if they knew me better their opinion might changed. Did you intend it to be such an interpretation? A nice time you must have had at the Tayloes. I wonder if Mrs. T. remembers some hard raps she gave me in the shape of grave cautions not to fall in love with my cousin. I took it all very coolly, tho' once, the night you were ill, when your father was sitting by me, I was afraid my face was not exactly as expressionless as I wanted I to be. I might have told her to spare her advice, for in the first place falling in love with you is something I have not done to this day; it was altogether too gradual & silent a process to deserve such a sudden energetic word; & in the second place the mischief was done. I am much obliged to her for her designs in Thornton's favor tho' I have heard that it takes two to make a bargain. I will try to remember your message for Dr. Murray You ought to have returned his visit. Don't for mercy's sake, say it was my fault. If I had not forgotten it too, I would have put you in mind. How come on the brewery building. I am so glad to hear of your intercourse with your Father having resumed its former character. I do know what a great comfort

& happiness it is to you, & I pray often & earnestly that nothing may interrupt it. Take care, dear Jack, to do nothing to break it. Shall I quote another rule for you; & will you try to remember it? "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; & he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." Prov. 16:32. How often Isabella Jeffrey used to quote that to me, with the solemn expostulation, "Doest thou well to be angry," & oh, how little effect it has had. After the storm has past, I can thin with bitter grief & shame on these things, but the whirl round of passion rises so suddenly! May you succeed better than I have done, dear Jack. My thoughts have strayed, & it is too late to try to recall them. Our Heavenly Father bless & watch over you always, & grant you His peace which passeth understanding.

24th The above was not intended as a lecture for you, dear Jack, for such a subject I have little right to say anything; it was brought to my mind, more in reference to myself, & to my own troublesome tempers. Dr. Neilson has just been here & says Mother only wants strength, so has ordered her iron, & I shall try to get her out of town even if only for a ride. I am afraid she will not consent to go away from home for a few days, which I know would do her good. Is to giving up Devasego that she will not tho' from what John has said, & from sundry remarks of hers on it, I think next year, she will be willing to let the farm, & only retain the house & garden as a resort for a few months. Renwick, I think will go up with us this summer & remain till Oct. 1st when he & Oscar must both come down to College. Mother is to see Mr. Drisler to make this arrangement. Oh Mother, Mother; if I could only be the comfort to her. I ought to be, instead of so often increasing her trouble. Since she has been sick, I almost feel as if I ought never to leave her, so lonely & desolate as she will be with no one to watch her & relieve her of care, for Agnes cannot be with her constantly. Some expressions too which she let fall, made me consider seriously whether you & I should not endeavor to remain in N.Y. instead of seeking a home elsewhere, as we both prefer. She spoke of her being so unwell & the probability of her living many years, & tho' she did not allude to her own comfort in having us near her she spoke of the boys & her wish that they might have a home with their sisters, instead of being scattered among strangers & exposed to the temptations & trials of life without a home. She used few words as her habit is, but they made me think much of these things; & how can I leave her! Ought I to do so? I think & hope her feelings of life being without one was induced by the weakness & depression of spirits under which she has labored, but she is no longer healthy & strong as she was some years ago, & is growing older & less able to bear these illnesses & troubles; & my heart aches to think of her being left to a lonely old age. I ought not to write thus to you, dear Jack. You have troubles enough of your own, but my habit of writing to you as I think is gaining strength so you must take the grave with the gay. Now I feel better, & will try to "rest in the Lord & wait patiently." It is a great blessing to have a book at hand where one finds such sweet counsel & comfort; we cannot always remember it without reference to the words of our God but who ever sought there without finding a message applicable. Half a dozen rise to rebuke me for my making myself unhappy. Shall I tell you then or will you tell me not to bother you with references. No, you won't & so I'll put them down. Ps. 17:5 – 55:22, 1 Pet. 5:7. I won't go on or you may think me more foolish than wise, but it is pleasant dear Jack to feel that I may this

write this everything to you that if much is tiresome or foolish you will not be too critical. I have been lately re-reading a book which I wish you could read too, for I think you would find much in it to help you in some of your perplexities; & I am not theologian enough always to give you the assistance you say you want & which I pray may be given you from a purer source by the “Holy Spirit who helpeth our our infirmities.” The book is *Henry’s Communicant’s Companion*. When I was wishing yet afraid to make a public profession of faith joining in the Communion, I received help & comfort from the book & it bears yet many of my old pencil marks. Some have been added lately & with God’s blessing upon it, I think it might relieve you in some things. Some times I will send it or give it to you if you wish it.

What a solemn mood I have fallen into this morning; it is time to turn to something else or you will be telling me I am sick or unhappy, & I am neither. I wonder if the weather can have any reference on my spirits. I used to think them perfectly independent of such influences but a comparison between the showery dull days, & my letter makes me think there maybe some such cause for my gravity. Tell Janey I really do envy her garden & its roses, I don’t think it is a bit wrong to do so. If I could get them I’d steal half of them from her if I could obtain them honestly. Tell her also that if she really wants any of the muslins or barge dresses she talked of to send me her order as to price, color & quantity soon as in a short time packing for Devasego will occupy me & I cannot devote much time to shopping. Good bye now; Give much love to all the family from Mother as well as myself. I shall not close this till near 2 this I do not expect a letter yet it is as well to leave it as it is till then. I am always,

Your own Jeanie

- ***“Dear Grandmother” refers to Jane Jeffrey Renwick (May 29, 1774 - October 6, 1850). Jeanie and Jack were first cousins, and she was their grandmother.***
- ***“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, whither thou goest.” (Ecclesiastes 9:10.)***
- ***“Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.” (Psalms 27:14); “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. (Psalms 55:22); and “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” (1 Peter 5:&)***

- *Although Jeanie is probably referring to one of their mutual Jeffries cousins, there are a number of women named Isabella.*
- *“And Jehovah said, ‘Doest thou well to be angry?’” (Jonah 4:4.)*
- *Hold up my goings in thy paths, [that] my footsteps slip not. Psalms 17:5.*
- *Jeanie’s reference is to the Reverend Matthew Henry’s Communicant’s Companion that was published in Boston by Crockett and Brewster in 1828.*
- *Barège is a lightweight fabric of a mixture of fibers including silk and wool. It was popular for summer dresses during the nineteenth century. Anita Stamper and Jill Condra, Clothing Through America History: The Civil War Through the Gilded Age (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood Press, 2011), pg. 148.*