

The Filson Historical Society

Mss. Menefee, Richard Hickman, 1809-  
A 1841.  
.M541A Letters, 1838.  
3

51x47

8 pieces.

Washington City, Ho: Reps.

4th Jan. 1838.

My dearest wife,

I have not written you a line for four days - the longest time without writing since I have been at Washington. But it is of no use for me to write to you, and I have had a serious notion of discontinuing the practice altogether. You know exactly what I feel, and what I would say if I were to write. It is all love - love - and nothing else. I cannot write to you about politics, or any thing that forms the subject of the correspondence of others; for the simple reason that I am jealous of such subjects. I could not endure that any subject except that of your husband should afford you the least pleasure. I must excuse it all; and sorry am I - devoutly grieved - that you should

unnaturally persist in the wish that I should  
write you an interesting letter - meaning what  
the cold-blooded world terms interesting; as  
if the absence of your husband's ~~the~~ love - de-  
votion - madings for you did not render a  
letter interesting to you impossible - I entreat  
you, Sally love, don't press me to do ~~me~~ vio-  
lence to my feelings and ~~what~~ man. is become  
my very inmost nature, by writing sensibly.

You can't conceive how the idea haunts  
me. It rings in my terrified ear as the har-  
bingers of discord and divorce! But you  
will desert, I know, when you receive this  
"solemn protest." -

O! Sal, come along to Washington,  
and don't be a little fool. I want to see  
you, and touch you. I have forgotten  
your face - your hair, and all of you.  
- Your letters give me no assurance

of your coming on before Spring — I would  
hope that you have left home for this  
city before now. Kiss my boy —

Most devotedly  
your husband,  
R. B. Menafee

S. B. Menafee —

The Filson Historical Society



Free  
W. A. Knapp

Mrs. R. A. Knapp  
Leaving ton  
Ky.

Jan 24<sup>th</sup> 1868

The Filson Historical Society

Mt. Sterling, Saturday evening,  
Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup> 1838.

My dearest wife,

I had made all my arrangements to leave home this evening, but was prevented by the rain. It is now four o'clock - raining - cold - muddy. Littering in my room, alone, my sensations are very peculiar. I am unfit for study or society or any thing else. My heart is sick; and you are its only physician. To you (even your absence the memory of you,) I betake myself for ~~refuge~~ - what a strange mortal I must be! I feel, (though overwhelmed with gloom darker than night,) that to see you for one moment; to lay my head in your lap for five minutes; to have my ear poked; any thing done by you, would at once restore me. Why is this? Is it natural; or morbid? Certain it is so - I am sensible that I possess resources in the way of reflection and otherwise which you do not; yet, in all that concerns the affections you are not half so dependent as myself. I have never taught myself to look to him as friends as you have. I cannot diffuse my love as you seem to. Mine is all concentrated; it fixes itself upon nobody and nothing but my wife - you - my own. Yet I am not selfish: I am kind. But I would sooner to ~~love~~ except as I do. I would scorn happiness purchased by other means. My heart should crack with anguish before it should dare look for alleviation, except to you. I actually

57x47

cauld in misery when cursed either by your faults or by accidents of years. My heart growls over its magnanimous wrongs with the sullen pleasure of the lion over ~~his~~ prey. It growls and growls; yet holds on to what it growls at — Heaven! What a mystery is love such as mine! I know not its ways. It baffles me as often as I try to analyze it. — Is love like this desirable — either to the object or the possessor? Does a smooth-currented love better suit the lot of mortals? or a love that's palpable? That such best befot, the map, I doubt not. Few have genius, by God's appointment; and by the same appointment few love: For, to love requires genius. The common gift of Heaven to man is common sense, which disowns love: it contents itself with what it pleases to term rational attachment — but an improvement on the brute instinct which brings and holds together the ram and the ewe; a thing which ensures a quiet cohabitation of the sexes, and serves to perpetuate the race; but which is no nearer love than is the bloody idolatry of the savage to the pure worship in Heaven.

— True, love is irregular — fierce very often. But in that quality lies its value. Why did you gaze with a sort of glad sadness on the mighty Niagara? Because ~~it~~ <sup>it</sup> was smooth, and quiet, and orderly, like the rational attachment of human brutes? or because rough, disturbed, ~~and~~ lawless? — Pray that you may love — to madness. It is a delusion, I know, an intonation; but in it lies a terrible pleasure —

Hampburg, Monday evening

Dear Sal,

In bar of tavern - Hundred  
people around me - Good bye - I miss  
your letter: the mail not coming in  
till to-morrow. I am very well -  
Kiss Jo into - Farewell

M. H. M.

The Filson Historical Society



Flournoy  
Sept 25 1878

Free  
R. H. Memphis

Mrs. J. Bell Memphis  
Lexington  
Ky.

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The Filson Historical Society

Wheeling, Wednesday night,

Nov - 1838.

My dearest wife,

We reached here without accident after a pleasant journey, in good health this evening at 4. It is now 7, when I find myself very impatient to write to my deserted wife and her fatherly father. - I had written this far before the servant could bring me pen and ink - an evidence I hope you will take it to be of the order of my passion. - I left home with a sad heart - sad for days before I parted from you. How dreadfully my nature changes under its influence! I curse and abhor myself; and seem almost to forget my love for you. I shall struggle against its future recurrence not for my own sake so particularly (though God knows it buries me deep in misery,) but for yours - I say this, my dearest, on the post opposite side; because I saw, for days before I set off, that my devoted and incomparable Sarah imagined herself suffering under my unkindness. It may have in truth seemed unkindness. But if it was, (but it was not,) it was a sin too deep to be atoned for by asking your forgiveness: I implore that of the Almighty! -

I now feel as if my sweetheart and myself were in bliss again. You shall be beautiful during my absence "the charming wife that fills my eye" - my Sally - Ducky - Doodle - Dimples again - Look pretty always for my sake - Love to all -  
- Miss Fipston - Most affectionately yours, H. H. Memphis.  
J. B. Shreve -

47 x 15



*R. A. Memphis*  
*H. & R.*

**FREE**

**FILE**

*Mrs. R. A. Memphis*  
*Lexington*  
*Ky.*

*Nov 1838*

Filson Historical Society

Washington, Dec. 6, 1838.

My dearest Gal,

Your detestable little model in the way of a letter reached me just when I most needed something of the kind. Consider yourself both thanked and repaid for it — You swore for several months before I left home that, wholly absorbed in the pursuits of Ambition, I had of late forgotten to love my wife: a hideous accusation! Well, I suppose your ideas are not unnatural. As I came up the Ohio, I met by chance the "Diary of a Physician," which you no doubt have seen, and probably read; and read, amongst others, the chapter entitled "The Statesman." Read it. Although I lay no claim to the talents ascribed to Mr. Stafford, nor acknowledge the Ambition which consumed him; yet you will find, in the feelings of Lady Emma, his wife, much that resembles what you imagine yourself to feel and suffer, under the assumption that your husband has fallen under the curse of Ambition — It is a capital production. —

I have just established myself, on Louisiana Avenue near the City Hall, very comfort-

ably. I eat at Poraw's Hotel. I find myself  
free from the crowd of visitors &c. by which I  
lost so much time at the last session; which  
affords me as ample opportunity as I could de-  
sire for both study and business.

I have been to see Miss Rebecca Hill.  
She has grown much fatter; but is yet very  
handsome, or rather very temptations to  
a hungry human of the masculine gender - She  
was denominated a married man far off from his  
wife. She received me with decided warmth;  
enquired if you were in the city; to which  
I replied, squeezing her hand and licking my  
lips, that I had found you an abridgement  
to my freedom and had therefore left you at home;  
adding that I was resolved to be a bear this  
winter &c. &c.; closing with a dying anxiety to  
get a room at her house - looking at her with one  
eye neither winking nor not winking. She said,  
No; and I decamped -

Talk to Jennie for me and dont let him for-  
get me - Love to all -

Most affectionately,  
yours,

S. B. M.

R. A. M.  
Dec 16 1858

Washington, Dec. 11th, 1838.

My dearest wife,

I have received all your charming letters. They almost make me dream with joy! How wonderful is the connexion between the moral and the intellectual powers! It was a maxim in Rome that no man could be a great orator who was not a good man. The principle of the maxim applies to letter writing; for now that (within the last year,) you have come properly to love your husband, your letters are written not only in a higher and purer spirit of devotion, but with incomparably greater talent. In fact, there were one or two sentences in your last which give me some alarm lest, if made public, they might show you to <sup>be</sup> more equal to your husband. However, so on; and when my jealousy shall be excited by your letters becoming insupportably ex-

certain, you shall be informed of it —

Oh! I saw Mrs. Bell the other day. She is as fat as you please! Only think of it! — She is in fine spirits; married with real earnestness after you; and, I think, is disposed to tempt me to blaguard her about her in-the-family-way-ness. But I do not; which, I believe, provokes her not a little — Mrs. Libby and Mrs. Grange beg to be presented to you —

I am in a secluded place; very much alone — industrious — reasonably virtuous — and as well satisfied as a man of taste can be who is able to reflect, as I can, upon having left at home so elegant a woman.

I have gone to no parties yet, and give you no gossip — Kiss my precious little mother, and put Magsy's love for me — Love to all.

Most devotedly,  
R. H. M.

J. B. M.

R. H. Memphis

FREE

Dec 11<sup>th</sup> 1859.

Mrs. J. B. Memphis  
Hampton  
Ky.

51X47

The Filson Historical Society



Washington, Dec. 13, 1838.

My dearest Sam,

I wrote you yesterday, but before I received your last letter, which was so excellent that I shall 'stop' from my high estate' so far as to write again today, merely to tell you how very, very happy I am made to hear from you, and Joie, and Maggie, in the way I do through such letters as that of yesterday.

John Southard is in the city - having arrived last night. Mr. & Mrs. Hoffman will be here on the day after to-morrow; which three will prove a nuisance. How distressing to Hoffman it will be to be forced to drink wine with his father! The fun-uling procp will have to be resorted to, I am sure! Do you think he will survive it?

Mrs. Catron, too, is in the city. I am just going to call on her. I do not know whether I was told you - in profound confidence of course - that there was that about her which never failed to convince me (from my own feelings) that "the casual mind is enemy against God." Yet such is the fact. I'll let you know the result of our interview.

Mrs. Graves and Mrs. Kennedy of Baltimore are in the same mfs. I have seen Mrs. K. but once. She is pretty, and has reputation for high accomplishments. She has no children, tho' (poor woman!) it seems to be no fault of hers. How very useful your husband might be made to her! -

I am living a life entirely monastic; seeing nobody; doing nothing to nobody - This is a letter extra - Good bye -

( J. B. Mc - Whom God hath joined  
let not man again  
part asunder. R. H. Mc. )

R. H. Memphis

Mrs. S. Belle Memphis  
Lexington Ky

Dec 13 1838

The Filson Historical Society

Washington, Dec. 21st, 1838.

My dearest wife,

I come again to the disagree-  
able duty of writing you a short letter (disagreeable  
because you require short letters;) but it must be  
performed: My memory is ~~so~~ bad that I cannot  
say whether in any of my late letters I have com-  
mented on the superior style and spirit of your late  
letters. Well, if I did not then, I do now declare  
that your genius seems really to have been  
for the first time in your life awakened. And a  
capital genius it is! You (if properly aided),  
will, as sure as you are born, become the root  
of a noble breed of men. I express this much of  
my sentiments to the exclusion of the deep rivers  
which could flow if hidden, because it involves  
the highest compliment that, in my opinion, could  
possibly be paid on a woman. The "mother of  
the Gracchi!" Whew!! — Good bye — Kiss, pat, &c.

J. B. M.

R. H. M.

R. H. Memphis

FREE

Mrs. J. Bell Memphis  
Livingston  
Ky.

Dec 28th 1858.



The Fessenden Historical Society

Washington, Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1838.

My dearest Sab,

At 6 o'clock in the evening I sit down, in my own room, alone, to hold a little converse with her whose enjoyment - in love - bounds my temporal horizon. I am not unskilled in the use of language; but I know that there is not some vehicle more direct and unincumbered, from heart to heart; that there is not some means of intermingling feelings like the mixing of pure streams - But language - poor language - must be employed; and I bow to the necessity - My affection for you - my dependence upon you, is, in its intensity, a thing to be felt - not written about -

I am, as yet, as silent in the hour as Achilles after his affront. But I shall explode ere long, with a wrath intense in proportion to the time it has been stifled.

I made no arrangement concerning Aunt Betty and Collins before I left home; nor do I now feel it necessary to make any. You may, in the whole matter, do as you please. Should you be unable to induce her to stay in Lexington with your Mother (and of course I could not require her to stay against her will,) send her to Oving's well, and write to Allen to hire her out, or make the best disposition of her he can —

I have not written to Mr. Stirling since I saw you. I expect you to write to them as often as may be agreeable. You must write, too, to George Ann and Mary — not omitting love to Harrison Gile & his mother's family.

I have not had a line from George. I wonder if the simpton is waiting for me to write to him first; which if I thought, I would dis-  
interest him — In your next give me "the present state and condition" of the Fair in general.

I still live as I described in my last; very retired and very comfortable. I am quite studious; and, I believe, growing thinner; health never better — Mrs. Sibley's love to you — & Mr. Sibley's.

I do not know that much has yet passed in the city  
that would interest you - (Politically speaking) Mr.  
Pierce has denounced the Administration and has,  
in turn, been denounced by the Globe - Little Shop-  
per of N. Carolina, whom you know, has turned  
Down Jones. He is a poor devil and always was.

- Mr. Crittenden made a capital speech on yesterday;  
but I suppose he will be too independent to have  
it reported in extents.

My dear boy! how is he? - And Peggy! how is  
she? - Oh! that I could be again with my family  
- Give my love to the Peggy and the folks in general  
- Continue to write to me as you have commenced,  
- only more so - Improve yourself -

With perfect devotion,  
yours,

J. B. M.

R. H. M.



R. H. Memphis

Mrs. J. Bell Memphis

Livingston Ky.

Dec. 22, 1858

22



The Filson Historical Society