Diary of Ellen Birdseye Wheaton, December, 1850

--Having filled up my old journal book, I tho't it best, to get another of more convenient size and shape, for the purpose of making an occasional record of my thoughts, and of passing events. Not that I suppose what is here written, will ever be of much value, either to myself, or any one else,--but I find the habit of writing is one I do not like to dispense with,—I feel lost without it,—and I hope it may be a benefit to me, in the way of acquiring a certain ease and fluency of style, and more clearness & accuracy of thought.--Last Friday Evening [November 29] I attended the first of the winter course of Lectures, before the Franklin Institute, by Wm. Tracy, Esq. of Utica. It was upon "The Mechanical Inventions of the eighteenth century and their influence on Civilization." It embodied [sic] a mass of interesting facts, and evinced much research & discrimination,—though there was not much of what is usually called eloquence. He seemed to have made writing and delivery, a labour, rather than a mere recreation, and went at it [in] good earnest, as if he were not to be diverted from his purpose. After the close of the Lecture, notice was given of the list of speakers who had been engaged for the winter, and I anticipate a rich treat, in attending the course. How much the youth of this day are privileged, if they could realize it,—with opportunities of improving both mind & heart--
called at the Asylum, to see Mrs. Farman. She has failed much since I saw her, & looks wan and wasted, but she enjoys the society of her friends very much, and conversed with considerable ease. I think she realizes her situation perfectly, and knows that her life is short.--She sits up, almost all the time, and told me, she did not expect ever to be confined long to her bed.--
Diary of Ellen Birdseye Wheaton, December, 1850

heard a curious sermon from Mr Snow, which was not very clear to my mind, and what I did understand, I did not assent to. It was a sort of old fashioned Election doctrine, dressed up a little, but not calculated for this meridian. I thought he made out God, to be the author, of Sin, and that sin was of some use, though those that commit it, are horribly wicked, and must just as certainly be punished, if they repent not, as God lives. What is the use of distorting the character of God thus.--It seems that such doctrines are the result of narrow & unworthy views of God,--and that they ought to be combatted or opposed. *

Sunday Eve. [December 1]

had an interesting conversation,

-- 24 --

with the children on the subject of thinking & writing, and found that new ideas, were suggested to my own mind while advising them.--"How delightful that state of mind will be, when I shall write because I must, because my thoughts will be so abundant, and so varied that they will flow out on paper,"--may that time soon come, and to that end, I would constantly train my mind--get clear & definite views of things & of principles,--and a plain & forcible method of expressing myself.

I hope I did not wrongly, in speaking so freely as I did the other night at Dr. C. *--at any rate I said what I thought and when I meet a kindred mind, I sometimes in the enthusiasm of the moment, forget myself.-- --

[Sunday] Dec. 8th.

Have not had much time to, write the past week, though a little to think, and I have felt every night as if I must write, a little, even if it were but a few words. But something would interfere, till I was too tired to make the effort, and so I gave it up. All the week, was much occupied in household cares, and felt, harassed & wearied.--Thursday [December 5] broke away and went to society at Dr. Loomis and staid all the evening--It was quite pleasant, and all seemed to enjoy themselves much. Had some conversation with the ladies,

-- 25 --

about making a Donation to Fred. Douglass, for the North Star, * to help it out of debt.--The general opinion seems to be, that we ought to do something for Ward, & the Impartial Citizen, if we are able to help either.--Friday P. M. [December 6] came down, to the school, to hear the children's composition[s], was much pleased--There really was considerable talent revealed--in some of those effusions.

In the evening, came down to hear the Lecture before the Franklin Institute, by Rev Mr. Doherty of Rochester, an Irishman[,] on the condition of the working classes in Great Britain. It was interesting in a high degree,--developing some of the hidden mysteries, of iniquity, that have been at work there for centuries, and that are crushing millions in hopeless degradation. He described the difference between the Saxon & the Celt, though he would not own that there was any natural superiority of the former over the latter race. The wrongs and miseries of ages of oppression, must be ameliorated or overcome, and how to do that, is the great question. There are so few who are capable of understanding these things who care anything about it,--there is so much rank intolerance & bigotry, in the way,--and so
many giant evils to be met,—that reform and relief, seem to the thoughtful, anxious, observer, almost hopeless. But may we not hope, & pray for the better day coming, of which the poet sings

-- 26 --

--and may we not, each, in his own humble way do some little thing to help the good cause along? Yes, we can pray, God speed the right, and I fervently believe and trust in his own good time he will--


was the day appointed for Thanksgiving, and we had a load of friends from Pompey, to spend it with us Mother, Emma, Frank, Julia & Eunice. I hoped to see Father & Aunt H. with them, but they were not well enough to come. We went to the First Baptist Church to hear Mr. Raymond, and I was agreeably surprised in the sermon. It was really impassioned and eloquent, abounding with noble & appropriate sentiments. I trust that both minister & people there, are making progress. Came home to the Thanksgiving Dinner, and after that our friends went home, taking Cornelia with them, to stay until Monday.--

Friday & Saturday [December 13 & 14],

days, such as I usually have, when all the children are out of school,—and in addition to that, Brother Victory, wife & child arrived Friday A. M. and were here most of the time till today.

[Monday] 14 [December 16],

I love to see my friends as well as anyone, but I think there are few that enjoy quiet--silence, as well as I do--It comes to my poor weary head, after one of these seasons of confusion, like a sweet and refreshing sleep, after a tossing and restlessness. I really do not know, whether, this longing after quiet is a natural trait of mine, or induced by an overtasked state of the nervous system, at any rate, I feel it like an intense

-- 27 --
desire. "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away, and be at rest"--

14th [Monday, December 16].

I should like to write out my feelings much more fully in these pages, but I do not seem likely ever to get the opportunity. For the children are around me, with their noise, and bustle, till about nine, and then I am too weary to know what I feel. The snow is falling heavily, and will at this rate, soon cover up the mud and broken ground, which we saw to-day. The bitter wind, "idly raves round our dwelling," sounding sadly enough to one whose ears are open, and his heart in tune, with the monotonous melody. How many thoughts come rushing from the busy past, conjured up by [sic] those wailing sounds. I seem to look through the long vista of years, * to my childish days, when cherished and caressed, by all around me, I fancied myself, an important personage--and in the winter evenings, once in a while, got the privilege of sitting up, an extra hour, to see the others crack nuts & eat apples. Oh those happy days, when the wild tumult of the storm without, only enhanced the sense of comfort within, and when at last, myself & sister, * sleepy and tired, were put to bed, how pleasant, it was to see the face of Father or mother, come peeping over us, to see if we were comfortable.--I used to think at such times, that I surely, must be the happiest child on earth, and I don't know, but I was, in good earnest.

Saturday Eve. Dec. 21st.

-- 28 --
Thursday Evening [December 19], went to the society a little while, at Mr. C. Bates. They were most of them, leaving, as Mary J. was taken very sick, and the excitement was unfavourable for her. Cornelia and Edward were with me, but had rather a dull time. Had some conversation with Mr. & Mrs A. Bates, on various matters. It was brought up, by my asking the ladies to sign a petition for granting the Elective Franchise, to Women. Mrs. Maltbie, said she was decidedly in favour of woman's rights, but could not conscientiously sign that petition. Others thought as I did, that it was little matter, whether, that particular right were granted them, if in others, of more vital interest, to themselves, they were given equal privileges with the masculine gender. Mr. Bates, seemed to think, that our views of duty in such cases, should be decided by the example of the early Christian church, if they granted women an active part, in political arrangements, it would be safe in us to follow her example, & vice versa. Now it seems to me, that the precepts of Christ, ought to be our guide, in these things, rather than the example of the church, for the church was, as it were, an experiment,--at least it was a novelty, in the midst of the heathen, and I cannot think, that it had yet perfected all the arrangements of Society and the church, sufficiently to be a perfect model for later generations.--Society had not begun to be influenced by Christian principles to any great extent, but it seemed to be taken for granted, by the Apostles, and early Christians, that these principles, were to spread everywhere, to be developed in new forms and relations of life, and to influence all the arrangements of society. True, it must take time, to accomplish these great objects, but even to the eye of faith, there could hardly have been any correct appreciation of the long succession of ages that must roll away, and leave these gigantic evils untouched, and now here in the midst of the 19th century, we have just as much, if not more need of strong faith, than they had, who stood, as it were just upon the threshold of time. After so long a lapse of time, in which the Christian religion, has been promulgated, to see the world still teeming with misery and wrong, and the bright and golden age of universal peace & happiness just as far off, as ever--is enough to make one feel, that there is a great failure somewhere, or our ideas and opinions of things have been vastly in error.

[Sunday] Dec. 29th, 1850.

It is the last week of the old year, as it rapidly speeds to its close. Storms and clouds attend its closing hours, and mournful winds, howl its dirge. The pure white snow, lies in cold heaps, all over the earths surface, as far as the eye can reach,--and the happy ones who cluster around warm fires, and in the midst of pleasant home circles, to-night, feel that the cheerless aspect of nature without, but enhances the pleasure and comfort within. Ah! little, do such think of the lonely and sad, among us, to whom the anniversary of our Saviour's birth, brings no such joys.

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Note : *. The Wheatons were at this time members of the old Congregational Church. Mr. Wheaton was leader of its choir, and Cornelia Wheaton, at sixteen, became its organist. Later on, as Mr. Wheaton grew interested in the writings of Swedenborg, he sometimes used to shock the orthodox by airing his views at prayer-meeting. On one occasion a worried member of the congregation prayed fervently for Mr. Wheaton's removal from earth, but a woman whom he had befriended cried out: "Not so, Lord, not so!" On Aug. 22, 1851, the diarist wrote to Charlotte Amelia Birdseye: "As for Charles and I [sic] we have been so long, Independents, in our Mode of belief that it makes but little difference to us by what name people are called, if they only live a christian life." In the diarist's funeral sermon the suggestion is made that she ultimately became a Swedenborgian. There are reasons to doubt this.

Note : *. Dr. Lyman Clary (?).

Note : *. Frederick Douglass, a mulatto journalist and orator, escaped from slavery in 1838, and from 1847 to 1860 conducted an anti-slavery weekly paper at Rochester, N. Y.

Note : *. The diarist was thirty-four.

Note : *. Emma Rawson Birdseye.
Well, the old year has taken its flight, and is now among the records of the past. And for myself, I am thankful, to enter it upon my journal as a year of uninterrupted prosperity, and signal blessings. While others, all about us, have endured sickness & privation, we as a family, have enjoyed excellent health, and the advantages of a comfortable & happy home,--and now we enter upon the last half of the 19th century, which will doubtless witness greater changes in human society, than even the first half has done. It is indeed an era of momentous importance in the world's history, and I believe we ought to consider it a great favour, that we are permitted to live now.

The holiday week has passed off, with the usual amount of bustle & noise, parties, and Fairs, Donations & rides have filled up the time, and, I am heartily glad the time is over. There has been no holiday for me, but a week or two of excitement, & fatigue. Now, I hope, the children, will settle down into a quiet way and as soon as the Anti-Slavery convention is over, I hope to do the same. I dread these excitements, they are distressing, and wearing to me, and I wish we could get along without them.

The clergymen have been preaching new Years sermons today, and to many doubtless, it has been a season of solemn interest.--But I have not been privileged to hear any of them, and so cannot report upon them. I think it is a fine opportunity, to display learning & eloquence, when called to pause & look back, from the commencement of the New Year, upon the course of the one just past, before it disappears from our view, by the intervening events, that constantly rise to intercept our view. One circumstance that is suggestive of reflection, is the standing custom of our city--That the city sexton goes with the yearly report of deaths, within the limits of the corporation, to every clergyman in town, at the end of every year, and he is at liberty, to make what use of it he pleases.

January thaw is upon us, and dreary enough, it seems, after the lively bustling ways of last week, when the pure white snow, which lay in such a mass upon the ground, was constantly crossed, by multitudes of vehicles of all descriptions Every one, who could command any kind of a conveyance, was on the alert,--improving the sleighing, which they knew to be so precarious. But it is gone, indeed, and with but little prospect of a fresh supply.

The Anti-Slavery Convention, took place, last week, and was densely crowded during the whole session. In many respects, it was a good meeting, but I fear its results, were not very satisfactory. The meeting was called, to consider, & take measures, to resist the odious Fugitive Bill, but that idea seemed to be lost sight of, in the various extraneous matters, which were called up, on the occasion.--It was sad to see so good an opportunity of impressing [the] community aright, on this subject, almost thrown away, from the obstinancy, of some prominent Anti Slavery leaders. It was a good opportunity, to study human nature, and a close observer, could not come away, without some valuable thoughts, and new ideas. To see one man, calm, in his overweening selfcomplacency, bearing down all opposition, to his favorite measures, while others, just as honest, but with one tithe of his obstinacy, gave way before his iron will,--to see the supercilious, and vain, engrossing valuable time, which should have been given to the modest, sensible man, who draws into a retired corner.--One man, having heard about all he is capable of digesting, settles back, into a comfortable doze, while that eager, young face, stretches forward as if asking for more.--The speech, most to the purpose, which I heard, was C. B. Sedgwick on the Fugitive Bill, and I
thought it excellent. He seems to have thought deeply on the subject, and to be at home there, and has undoubtedly gained much credit, by the stand he has taken upon it.

The meeting called to welcome Chaplin home again, was perhaps the most deeply interesting, as well as satisfactory of any of the proceedings connected with the Convention. It was held on Monday Evening at the Congregational Church, which was crowded to excess, and hundreds went away, that could not get in. His simple earnest manner of telling his story, was very touching, and must have set at rest the doubts of many in the audience as to the part he had taken, in the matter of running off slaves to the North. I cannot but hope that his incarceration, and the circumstances attending it, will be productive of great benefit, to the poor slave, as well as to the cause of freedom at large.

I have little opportunity to record thought or feelings, for want of opportunity to think.--I am always surrounded with a flock of noisy children, and my head resounds with their noise like an empty barrel. -- I find an immense difference in the ease with which I write, in consequence of being out of practice, for sometimes, I do not handle a pen for weeks.


I have forced myself, much against my inclination, to open my journal, to-night, for I am growing greatly averse to writing. Why do I feel this terrible languor, which hangs upon me like a night mare, only varied by fits of irritability, that I feel entirely unable to control, and still am greatly ashamed of myself, for giving way to them. Is this all owing to ill health, which acts upon a nervous system, naturally very sensitive to every untoward influence? This heavy weight upon my brain, cannot be imaginary--This dull & lifeless state of the intellectual faculties, must have some cause. I have never suffered so much, from such causes, * and I am not likely, to find comfort, very soon. If I look forward [sic] to the future, I can see nothing but misery there, and I dread to look. I shudder at the thought of the suffering, I know [I] must certainly endure, if I live, and I am ready to sink, in utter despair. I should be glad to find some human being, to whom, I might unburden my grief, but there is none, who understands my case but would censure my feelings, or the cause of them. When I see friends and acquaintances, about me, to all human appearance, so free from care, or anxiety, so situated, that they may be just as happy as they please, I cannot but contrast my circumstances, with theirs, and ask, why is it so? I love society, and its pleasures, tho' not to excess I am sure, but I am deprived of them, or if I mix in them at all, it is at very great cost of labor, & effort. Never since, I have been a married woman, have I known, what it was, to be free from a heavy burden of care, and every year, it has grown heavier; till I am ready to sink. Why it is so, I hardly know, whether my own peculiarities of disposition, or those around me, but so it is, and when I look back upon the last few years of my life, they seem like a weary, dreary, space, gloomy, and desolate. Oh for patience. If I could acquire, something of that blessed virtue, I think I would, must be content, & not long for other and more dazzling treasures.

[Saturday] Jany 25th

The week just ended, has been spent, more in going out and visiting than is usual for me,--and I probably feel the ill effects of it, in these dull headaches, and sleepless nights, but I have indulged myself more willingly, because I knew, the season for visiting would soon be past,--and the other extreme, would most likely, succeed. Saturday, I spent the day
with Mrs. Miner at Geddes, and found it very pleasant there. Mrs. Dr. Loomis & Mrs. Abbott, joined our circle, in the P. M. and made the time pass swiftly, in quiet converse. It is a great attraction to their house, to see the fine prospect, which lies, spread out like an amphitheatre, before you. All of the city is seen, almost at a glance, and in addition are the suburban villages of this salt valley, which look so near the main crowd of buildings, that one can hardly perceive any separation. Off to the North lies the lake, its clear waters on the northern shore, skirted by blue hills, which, at this season seem to mingle with the floating clouds above them. Turn your eye again to the south, and east and far away lie hills of greater apparent height, than those we have been looking at, with spots of snow scattered over the brown surface, glistening in the bright rays of the sun—“Distance does indeed, lend enchantment to the view,” as we look abroad over this fair scene, and rejoice in the wonderful works of God. And how much more stirring and exciting, as well as more beautiful the scene, when summer has robed it, in her profusion of foliage, and her soft warm hues, have succeeded to the chilling brightness of Winter. Then human life, will have resumed its activity, and these great arteries of the State, will send once more, thro’ their mighty channels the life current of humanity and all these hills, will resound to their the [sic] wondrous pulsations. As we cast our eyes over the scene, here we shall see railroad trains coming from opposite directions, and passing each other with the swiftness of the wind, and

there the canal boat, drags its slow length along. Every where the busy hand of man is at work, every where the results of his busy, teeming, brain, are manifest—

Among circumstances of less interest, this past week, I have to record one, which was quite novel, as well as pleasing in its results. I mean the Donation visit at the Asylum. It was well attended, and went off pleasantly, after having received gifts in money, to the amount of about $400. and many other things of value.

In the evening, heard Park Benjamin, Esq. read his celebrated satirical poem, The Age of Gold.—It was a charming mixture of wit, satire, and truth, and was enthusiastically applauded by a delighted audience. I really think, that no one, who had sense, to understand the poem, at all, could have heard it, without being better for it, and feeling himself, moved to good resolutions, and better deeds.

And now, night draws her shadowy mantle o’er us, and dropping this idle gossiping pen, I must go to bed, for if I live to see the morrow, I shall find my employments as numerous and pressing, my cares as great, and my own deficiencies as many as ever,—and I want a night of undisturbed sleep, which has not been my lot lately ——

Sunday Eve. Jany 26th.

Often as I sit musing by the quiet fire, do my eyes seek the map which hangs upon the wall before me,—and as they rove over each familiar coast, they like many another adventurer of the times, suddenly dart away, down the long reach of coast, along the eastern side of South America, and around the boisterous neighborhood of the Horn, up the other side into smoother seas and milder climes towards the world-famed El-Dorado, of the west. But perchance, (if too impatient for this long voyage) they fix themselves upon the shore of the “Isthmus,” and making a sudden leap, at once they are at Panama. But here we cannot stop! for if there were nothing else to prevent, we are seeking a friend, yes a dear brother, * who has gone before us to this golden shore, and we may not tarry by the way. Here we go, up on the bosom of the broad Pacific, and ere long without any of the usual mischances of travellers,
we pass the Golden Gate, and land upon one of the new & beautiful docks of this wonderful city, long ago christened by the dull and lazy Spaniard, San Francisco, but now the ever active and calculating Yankee nation, is pouring into it, it has met with a wondrous change, it has had breathed into it, the breath of a new life, and see how it stretches its young giant limbs over all these swelling hills, and thro' these winding vales.--Just beginning to feel its new-born strength, and trying rather awkwardly perhaps, at first, to act upon the example of its newly adopted parent--Surely this old, conservative title, although more euphonious certainly, is not now half so appropriate to the young rising city, as would be the characteristic one of San. Jonathan, and doubtless the change will soon, be made, for the yankee is not diffident of his own merits,--and what he considers worth knowing it is not his fault, if the world knows it not also.

-- 38 --

But where is the brother, of whom we are in search? Ah! we hear of him, up among the mountains, & we are off to find him. Down by steamboat to Sacramento then by mule over the plains and among the hills till we come to the range of Sierra Nevada. Here may we hope to find him of whom we are in search, tho perhaps with a little trouble, for this little town called Nevada City, tho of recent growth, already numbers thousands of inhabitants. But we find him, and right joyful is the meeting, and unexpected too, as joyful. Oh how many questions there are to answer, how many adventures to relate, how many tales of home & friends to listen too [sic]. Ah when for us, "shall such a blissful meeting be?"--I shudder to think, Never, Oh! Never.

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Note : *. Her daughter, Mary Hascall Wheaton, afterwards wife of Francis William Kittredge, of Boston, was born the following June.

Note : *. John Clarence Birdseye.
Letter from Ellen Birdseye Wheaton, February 17, 1851

"Died, on Monday A. M. Feb. 17, 1851, Mrs. Julia A. wife of Courtland Bates, aged 40 years."

Thus reads the notice in to days paper, startling many, who knew not till this announcement, even of her sickness. How short a time it seems since I saw her, in apparent health, mingling with her friends,--anticipating length of days, with as much confidence as any of us. But stern death, regards not our wishes or convenience and often summons those, who have the fairest prospect of life.

Last week on Tuesday [February 11], sister Emma left me (after a visit of two weeks or more) to attend Fanny Bakers wedding. Aunt Hepsey still stays in town,

but yesterday, we took her to John Beebee's near Mysina Springs to spend a few days. But to fill the vacancy, there is a woman here repairing shirts, & so I do not miss any. My house is full to overflowing and tho' I love the society of my friends as well as others, yet I do so long for quiet. How often is that sigh breathed over these pages!

[Tuesday] 18.th Feb.--51.

Went down town, & made two or three calls--sat a while with Mrs. Wicks. How strangely contrasted are our situations, & yet sometimes, I almost envy, her, the quiet & ease she seems to enjoy. The leisure, and opportunity for mental improvement, which I so ardently long for, but cannot have, that is hers.--but I will try not to murmur.--perhaps, I do not realize the many blessings of my lot. Afterwards, went to Mr. C. Bates, a sorrowful house indeed, and it is always so sad, to look upon motherless children. There seems to be many sincere mourners for her.

Came home, feeling very tired but after tea, I must help Edward with his composition, & Emma with her letter, and Florence must read to me, till, ere long my head was in a complete whirl. Now they are gone to bed, and for the space of half an hour, it has been still here. Have I not enjoyed it?

Wednesday [February] 19th,

attended Mrs. B. funeral. The house was crowded, and the exercises, very solemn. Sermon by Mr. Snow, but I do not like excessive laudation, in funeral discourses. If my my [sic] friends & acquaintances, do not discover my good qualities, and loveable

traits during life, I think it will be too late to give them much information on the subject, at my death, but if they have already perceived such qualities, in my character, they will not surely need any such information. This was a bright beautiful day, with a magnificent sunset--and a glorious golden atmosphere, which made the eastern sky, superbly brilliant, as the evening came on.--Spent the evening sociably at Mrs. Cooks, & found it quite pleasant.

Thursday, [February] 20th

Oh! what a contrast to yesterday. The rain pours in torrents. Not a crevice in this thick leaden covering of cloud, but dark gray gloom, and despondency, settle on every thing. The Mayors party came off at the Empire, to-night, and in spite of the storm we went, Emma too unwell to go. It was elegantly arranged, very large, & very pleasant. As little, that was objectionable as at any party, I have attended in years. His Honor, looked and must have felt very lonely, with his little orphan daughter, by the hand,

and assisted in doing the honors, by some friends. -- It is not a year, since his wife died.

**Friday [February] 21st.**

Rain, rain. Father came along about tea, on his way home. Aunt H. concluded to go with him, and so we fixed her off -- I fear they got quite wet.

**Sat. [February] 22nd.**

Very much such a day as yesterday. -- tho. I think it don't rain, quite so steadily. -- Very busy all the forenoon. In the P. M. went over to the Asylum, a little while, then to Mother Austins, found her better, tho still feeble, called a few minutes at

-- 41 --

Mr. Barkers, then to Mrs. Myers, found Sister E. there, and were persuaded to stay the Afternoon & Evening. Had quite an animated discussion, upon the management of the Asylum, found it will not do, to find fault, or to look with any but a favourable eye, upon matters & things there. Came home in the rain. Charles did not come, home till 10'o'clock -- then to bed--

**Sunday [February] 23rd.**

Sent Mother A. a good warm breakfast, which I dont doubt, she will relish. Sent a good load of young people, to meeting, and sat down quietly, to read & write. I would be glad to prolong this precious hour, but No! that cannot be. It does not rain today! Went up to the grove, at 2 o'clock, to attend the funeral of Mrs. Mosely. --Funeral exercises by Revd Mr. Maltbie. Poor woman, she has been a great sufferer, and I think Death, must have been a welcome messenger to her, indeed. She has borne her long and painful sickness, with the greatest patience, & Christian fortitude, and those tried & faithful ones, who have stood by her to the last, must have learned many a valuable lesson, from her example, as well as from her lips. I was glad to see so many at the funeral. It was but a just tribute of respect, to one so lovely.

**Monday [February] 24th.**

Another of these dreary, dark, dismal, days. It rains, and rains, and rains, and is never weary, but we, thankless mortals do get weary, and wish, & wish, Oh! how vainly that it would stop. The streets are great channels of mud, liquid, brown mud, and the few who move about, go slowly, & heavily

-- 42 --

along. The sky above, but four short days ago, so beautifully gloriously bright, now reflects again, the sombre aspect of the sad earth, and one can hardly say, which wears the most cheerless appearance. have been sewing or reading most of the day, also did a little writing. Charles did not come home to dinner, but to a late tea. Then out again this dark evening. The children were full of their wants, all day & in the evening -- Oh! how much wisdom, & patience I need! If I only had that steadiness of nerve, that could be called on, by 3 or 4 at once, and each one, with a different want, that could be teased, without getting out of patience, that could have all its favorite plans obtruded upon, without a murmur. Oh if I only could, what a victory, it would be

These startling tidings too from Boston, cast a gloomy shadow over my mind. The arrest & rescue of a fugitive in that goodly city. The presidents proclamation calling on all good citizens to help execute this infernal law, & a second message sending a large body of the military, to aid in enforcing the law -- all these things trouble me. How long will it be ere we shall be partakers in such scenes? When equal excitements, & risks will be met with here. Have I courage and firmness equal to the crisis? I tremble and fear, at the prospect. I fear for my husband, whose ardent fearless temper I so well know, -- and that
he will be in the midst of the danger, when it comes. Oh I find it is a hard lesson, to learn to labor and
to wait, to wait Gods own good time,—and to have Faith in God & in truth.

Tuesday [February 25],

-- 43 --
a very fine day, and sister E. spent the most of it, with Mrs. Wicks, as she says—enjoying it much. I was
at home all day, & night finds me weary enough.

Wednesday [February 26],

busy, sewing all the morning, & in the the [sic] P. M. prepared to go out, for a few calls with sister E.--
but were detained till late by company, so we only went down to H. Ws * & took tea and then home
found Harriet * there, &, had quite a pleasant little visit. How proud they are, of their youngest hope!
but to me, he seems dull, and uninteresting. But parental partiality, is a blinding thing to the judgment.

Now, I suppose, they look upon our little H. ** with very much the same opinion, that we have of
theirs.—Perhaps we love ours, too well—for his future happiness, & ours, also. But I am continually
thinking on this wise. *He is purer & more lovely, than he can ever be again, in this mortal state, and
the hearts of his parents, may with good reason, dote upon him, and he with all his guileless soul,
returns that love. But this cannot always be, some cloud will spring up in our horizon. Then why not,
enjoy this mutual love of our children

-- 44 --

& ourselves while we may, and make as much of it, as we reasonably may.['']

Thursday [February 27],

my hours of rising, are very irregular, and depend mainly upon my bodily feelings, was not very early
this A. M. However discharged a good deal of business for me. Looked over, & put away the weeks
ironing,—mended & sewed on buttons, for two or three hours, and then went into the kitchen, and made
cake for some time longer.—found myself quite willing to rest, after all this, but had not much chance
while finishing Clara's drawers, Charles came home unexpectedly early, and had quite a pleasant chat
together. He read me a letter, he had been writing to his brother H. * & rather called out by the
exigencies of the times, in connection, with a pro-slavery sermon, preached in Hartford lately by our
Revd. coz. N. S. Wheaton, D. D. * C. s indignation was roused by the sentiments of the sermon, & I
thought he expressed himself becomingly & forcibly, in this letter. I hope it will make some
impression, but I fear not. It is a stony soil, on which to sow Anti-Slavery truth.

Friday [February] 28th

Last day of February. This short month, has nearly closed, and to look back upon it, seems as if it had
never been.

Rose early for me, this morning, bathed ** & dressed,

-- 45 --

before my husband and Lucia were awake. Lucie likes to leave her crib, and crawl in by the side of her
father towards morning, and take a nap on his arm. She is devotedly fond of him, and I think he
reciprocates her affection, as warmly. Have been reading in the Life of Madame Roland by J. S. C.
Abbott, and am charmed not only with her character, but with the book. It is written in a clear &
interesting style, and is full of fine thoughts, and noble passages.--She was a very remarkable woman, and seemed made expressly for the stormy times in which she lived. In looking back over her history to her childhood, one notices her great energy of purpose, her systematic arrangement of her time. Her enthusiastic admiration of the great & noble of other times--But I hardly know how to account for the peaceful happy, & even triumphant state of mind in which she met a cruel & ignominious death,--never seeming to harbor feelings of hatred or revenge, towards those, who had most deeply injured her.-- Although she knew nothing of Religion,

-- 46 --

except as it was misrepresented by the Roman C. Church of that period, which was degraded & corrupt, to a great degree. Mrs. L. came to sew on shirts this noon, and I helpt her. This evening had a stranger at Tea, Mr. W. R. Smith who seems to be an excellent man, quite a philanthropist. I was much interested in his conversation.

Notes

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Note : *. Horace Wheaton (?).

Note : *. Harriet Wheaton, a sister of Charles Augustus Wheaton, married George B. Walter and was the last survivor of her generation. Her grandson, Ainslie W. Walter, of Brooklyn, gave Louise Ayer Gordon some china cups, etc., from a dinner-set which had belonged to Hannah Givens Wheaton (mother of Charles Augustus and Harriet Wheaton), who died in 1825. Louise Ayer Gordon also owns the "Givens towel," made by her.

Note : **. Henry Birdseye Wheaton.

Note : *. Homer Wheaton.

Note : *. Rev. Nathaniel Sheldon Wheaton (1793-1863), an Episcopal clergyman, associated with the early days of Trinity College, Hartford, and afterwards President of that institution. He wrote an interesting Journal, etc., while abroad in 1823 and 1824, published at Hartford in 1830.

Note : **. The diarist's habit of daily bathing--unusual in those days--was presumably learned from her father, with whom it was a hobby. On Mch. 11, 1849, he wrote to Charlotte Amelia Birdseye: "We have had a very cold winter & my office you know is old & quite dilapidated . . . yet thanks to cold water--I have been more free from colds this winter than for some winters before." Again on June 11 of that year he wrote her: "I hope you will be careful of your health observe your ablutions as if an essential part of your religion--" And still again on Nov. 18 of that year he wrote her: "I hope you will be careful to wash your head & throat & Lungs every morning with cold water & a sponge & rub off with a coarse towel--& continue the friction with that till you get up a thorough Glow." On Feb. 27, 1851, she wrote him: "I have made diligent and regular use of cold water every day this winter, and have experienced from it a good deal of comfort . . . I jump the rope some--"
Diary of Ellen Birdseye Wheaton, March, 1851

Rose rather early and kept very busy, for several hours. All the children at home, and to be kept employed. For a while I succeeded tolerably, but when occupation failed, then it was tiresome enough. Heard at tea-time of Mrs. Farmans death, and went over there, for a little while, found them in deep affliction, at the loss of one of the best of mothers & wives.--Her death was calm & peaceful and she left behind her a testimony to her faith in Christ which is a great comfort to her mourning family. After the evening was pretty much spent, Charles came home, bringing W. R. Smith with him.--Also came a letter from Mrs. Miller, of Peterboro, on the subject of a certain letter of hers, enclosing some petitions for circulation--I am very much ashamed of my seeming negligence, but I must write and give her to understand what it means. Emma left for home with Father.

Today is the Sabbath [March 2].

Most of the family are gone to meeting and I am here alone with the children, trying to read & write a little. The weather is raw & disagreeable, the roads quite muddy, and it is quite unpleasant getting about. Little Henry has gone up to take his nap, under Edwards care, and E. is reading [a]loud to him. I hope it will prove an opiate to him. Have not been out all day.--Mr. S. returned & staid the P. M. expecting Chaplin all the time, but he did not come. What a time of restless activity in the mind of man is the present! How many new channels for the expenditures of the ever overflowing energy of the race. To what are we all tending?--to a renovation of the race and a state of complete but still progressive felicity, or to the horrors of the final consummation of all things, about which so many delight to think & talk. I cannot answer these questions but this much I know, that the world never saw a time like the present, and I think every one may study the signs of the times with profit to himself.

Monday [March 3].

Mrs. L. came up at noon to sew--Mrs Smith & Mrs Burt called in the afternoon to give us an invitation to dine there on Wednesday [March 5] and meet Geo. Thompson.

Tuesday [March 4]

very busy all day, went to the Asylum in the afternoon. Quite a full meeting, & rather an interesting one. After it, walked down to the village, and rode back.

Wednesday [March 5]

commenced the great Anti Slavery meeting, and it was opened by a reception to George Thompson, Esq. which was said to be very fine. We went to Mr. Smiths, and met a very pleasant party at dinner, Tho' the Lion of the day, did not dine, but took a light lunch in his own room.

one of the *candid* and *witty* editors of the political papers of the time, those whose business, it is to abuse, all who do not serve their purposes, & they do not usually hear him, but slander him, entirely upon the reports of others. We are gratified to hear, very good reports of his meetings at Auburn Rochester, & other places west. He next goes into Canada, to examine into the state of the fugitives there.

**Friday 7th, March,**

felt much exhausted after the excitement of the meeting, but was able to keep well occupied all day.

In the evening, went down again to, hear E. P. Whipple, before the Franklin Institute, was interested, but somewhat disappointed. He is an odd looking man,--not very prepossessing.

**Saturday [March] 8th.**

much as usual. Snow fell quite plentifully in the P. M. & evening.

**Sunday [March 9]**

went to meeting half a day, did not  

--- 49 ---

remain to Sunday School, find I must give it up it is so fatiguing. I shall try and have the children form a class at home, and think they will like it. We have had one, and it was quite pleasant.

**Tuesday [March] 11th.**

Father came down to-day, and called bro't me, a great many commissions to execute, & I tried to set about them at once.

**Next day [Wednesday, March 12],**

tho't it necessary to go down town, and do some shopping. Had no way to ride, & so walked down, all about & back, was dreadfully tired, headache, &c, got no time to rest, of any consequence, for Henry was so glad to see me, he could leave me for but a little while. In the P. M. Mrs. M. came over, & sat two or three hours. Children very uneasy, not well I think. Lucie gets very fretful, and passionate. I am sensible I dont manage her very discreetly, but I feel quite at a loss, many times what course to take. There are so many to find fault with & vex her so many to be harsh & unkind to her, that she is kept much of the time in an unhappy temper. It will never do, for things to go on so. Mind & body, dreadfully wearied tonight.

**Thursday [March 13],**

was happy to find myself so much refreshed.--"Tired natures sweet restorer," does indeed work wonders for us, does it not. All the morning engaged with the weeks ironing. About 3. went to the Society, at Mr. Abbotts, where I found a large number, about 40, took tea. My husband was there, and with me to hear Park. Benjamin, lecture on music. It was witty, amusing, and rather satirical. The next night

**[Friday, March 14]**

--- 50 ---

we heard a poem on Fashion at the same place by the same speaker. It was funny but not profound. There was a very large audience present.
Saturday [March 15].

Rose pretty early, having considerable to accomplish--Bathed, dressed, &c and breakfasted. Edward came home in rather better spirits, than last night, tho' still determined, to give up his situation in the Bank. I fear it is too confining, and trying to a boy of his activity. Children all got out the glass doors on the piazza, and made for the garden, and had a glorious time. I got hold of them long enough to put hoods & mittens on them. The ground was somewhat wet, and I was afraid of colds. The air has been mild, all day, and it was hard to keep them in. The older girls all went visiting this P. M. and I was left with my hands full. Lucie got her book, after tea for me to learn her the names of the pictures, and I did so, for a while but was much tried, and could not teach her, long, at which she was very much grieved.

Wrote some this evening, but with nerves unstrung it was a hard task. Shall not wait for my husband any longer, but go to bed.

Sunday [March 16]

heard Mr. Snow in the afternoon, but did not go out, either morning or evening--Mr. Burleigh lectured on Temperance in the evening to a thin house, as the weather was very stormy. Had an intimation of company on Tuesday [March 18].--

Monday [March 17]

Miss C. came & commenced work.--It is an irksome task for me this dress-making, for so many children, but it must be done.--

Tuesday [March 18]

sent the carriage early in the afternoon, for the Burleighs, and the Snows.--Our circle was augmented by the addition of at least half a dozen extras, so that at last, we made out quite a respectable sized circle. The number of children, amounted to fifteen. Of course there was no quiet or sociality for me,--and felt relieved when it was, over.

Wednesday [March 19],

was obliged to go down town to get materials for the dressmaker, walked down, and rode back. Have been quite busy all day.--and felt too tired to hear Dr Cox lecture as I hoped to have done. Charles gave quite a favourable account of the affair, tho' there was a thin house.

Thursday [March 20].

Household cares as usual occupy much of my time--was quite busy at the needle a good part of the day--The little ones were very uneasy all day, and made it quite difficult for me to accomplish much. I sometimes feel that every such confinement of my energies to sewing or anything of the kind is really unjust to them, and I think I wont be guilty of it any more. I really feel at a loss many times, to know, what is duty, there seem to be so many conflicting claims, upon me. This evening disengaged myself, and went to spend the time at Dr. Loomis, with a few friends--It was quite pleasant.

Friday [March 21]

After a busy morning about the house, I got the children's lunch for noon put up, only however for four, the little domestic matters straitened and ready again for sewing--It was a dull day. Dear little Henry, was anxious to be out all the time, but I was
compelled to restrain him, for I am afraid of these harsh winds--The Influenza prevails to a great extent, and is in many cases very serious. H. is an active child full of life & fun, and a sad thing it would be for us all, to see his vigorous little frame, prostrated by disease.--

Saturday A. M. [March 22]

was stirring pretty early--and a beautiful morning it was.--The robins, sweet harbingers of Spring, now begin to make themselves heard--a truly cheering sound. And it imparts a thrill of delight to every child on the premises. They have been out a great deal to day. Miss C. who has been here all the week, was obliged to leave on account of sickness, an hour or so after she left, came Father & Mother.--They will spend the Sabbath with us, bring rather a sad account of Emmas health, her cough is very obstinate. Have had many interruptions to day, in my plans, enough to try my patience severely, yet, I have accomplished all I calculated.--How much better it would have been for me, if I could have been more patient, more gentle and quiet under, these petty vexations. Father came up from town this evening but Charles did not get home till late.--

Sunday [March 23]

another charming day. Went to meeting all day.--and in the evening--In the A. M. heard Mr. Raymond at our church, in the P. M. Mr. Finney at the first church, and in the evening Mr Burleigh at the Unitarian church. Was much pleased with Mr. Raymond's discourse. It was in my judgment an eloquent & convincing discourse. I would like to hear such preaching oftener.--Mr. Burleigh gave an excellent temperance

address as he always does, I believe, to a very good house.--

Monday, March 24,

found myself excessively tired this morning, but my cold bath, somewhat refreshed me, still I have been very languid all day--and quite unable to occupy myself to much account. Lute & Henry spent much time in the open air, and were very happy--Father & Mother left for home, about ½ past three, and afterwards I rode downtown taking Henry with me.--Dear little fellow how much he enjoyed it-- -- and came back as hungry as possible. He was thoroughly tired, and glad to have his supper & go to bed.--Sat at the table surrounded with the children for some time tonight, all very happy & sociable--Edward came home with a new stock of fowls--and is very proud of them, and full of plans to make them profitable.--But I must stop, as it is getting late.

Tuesday [March] 25th

Harriet came up to spend the day with us, and her husband to dinner. I was much occupied all the morning--George * having gone into the garden to work, makes it very laborious for me. However,

this fine weather must be improved. To-day was very bright,--but a raw March wind, made it very disagreeable to be out. The little ones had a walk in the forenoon, but came back with their faces, almost blistered. Dear little bodies, I am sure I shall rejoice for their sakes, at the return of mild weather. Had a good visit from H. and bade her goodbye, about eight this evening. Then all the children went to--bed,--and quiet settled down upon me, like a dove brooding over its nest. I took up Longfellow, and his sublime & touching strain found an echo in my heart.--His voices of the night, and
many of his ballads, express precisely, what I feel, but have not power to clothe in language. I can truly say, of his songs, in his own words,—

"Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer."

"Then the night shall be filled with music
And the cares that infest the Day,
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away."

What a wonderful thing, this gift of poetry is! It is I, truly believe an inspiration,—something mysterious and awful. But time flies, faster, faster, and I must retire, and give to sleep, & rest these precious hours, that I would gladly, give to thought, & meditation, if my strength could be warranted to last. It was very late, before Charles

-- 55 --

& Cornelia came home from the Institute, and I was fast asleep.

**Wednesday [March 26].**

After the children were off to school I found it very quiet, and pleasant here most of the day. Lucia & Henry, are out of doors so much this pleasant weather, that they are quite tired when they do come in—and keep much stiller, than has been their habit. Henry seems like another child, since the fine bright days of last week & this—We were invited to tea at Mr. Wallaces this evening & I persuaded Charles to go, but fear he will not enjoy it as he seldom goes in such a way, without me. My head has been very painful all day. Brother V. was here at dinner & tea.—He was out at an agricultural meeting. This evening Lute begged me to learn her some of her letters, in a little new primer, she has, and explain the pictures. She was much pleased when I consented and listened with profound attention. She has a great taste for knowledge, for so young a child, scarcely 4 years old—& I am often startled at the intelligence and gravity of her questions. Then Emma & Florence were to be attended to, & C’s. composition, revised, and E. to be questioned in her history—She has commenced reading Frost's History of the United States, today, and I hope to strengthen her memory, and awaken her interest in it, by frequent questions, as she goes along.—It is a clear well written history, and illustrated with numerous engravings—At last they all disperse, and I snatch a few moments, to inscribe these few lines, in my diary. I have few events of importance to

-- 56 --

record, for my life is a monotonous one, and very barren of incident, but I dont write for the general eye or even for those nearest & dearest to me, but for my own improvement, & that these pages may serve in some sort, as landmarks, to refer to, in my future course. That I may be reminded of past failings and errors, and see better how to avoid them and now & then find some cheering incident, or remark that may prove "a ray of hope divine," to brighten my future pathway.

**Thursday [March 27],**

spent the morning in active employment about the house, and found myself much tried at noon. The air very hot & dry, and causes one, to feel very languid. Society to meet at W. M. Clarks, this P. M. but I could not leave the children till after five. Ellen & Emma however, went early. When I arrived, I found

them running & romping, all over the square, with a flock of other little girls. There was not much
doing there, and not many in attendance. Immediately after tea, I left with the children for the concert
of the Musical Institute. It was well attended, and the music very good. However, our Syracuse
audiences dont seem to appreciate, the more lofty styles of choruses, but prefer songs, & ballads--

Friday [March 28],

made an effort to get on my much talked of quilt,—but with no assistance, it was very laborious, and I
was almost sorry, I undertook it,—The children not quite so happy as yesterday, and troubled me much,—
did not quite finish it, excessively tired; too much so to sleep well.

Saturday [March 29].

Oh what a constant round of sweeping & dusting, sweeping & dusting, the year round! I get weary of
it, & wish I might never see another broom, sometimes. And many little cares, almost distract me. I
tried to finish the quilt, but was prevented, first—Henry was much unwell, and I must give my whole
attention to him. Then Mrs. H. W. * came up, about eleven, and staid until the middle of the afternoon.
Then my plans, being all changed I concluded to go down with her to the city, & look about a little.
Took Henry, and decided about his hat, which I am glad to have off my mind. Then went with her to
Nortons & looked in at his goods. It being his shewday. His store, was filled with elegantly dressed
ladies, and beautiful goods—and I was happy to meet some old friends.—Did not stay long, and after
going into two or three other places, found the horse & waggon, & came home. I have just this same
depression on my feelings, that I expected & feared when I left home. Why did I go?

It is past ten o'clock Saturday evening [March 29].

Edward & Cornelia are at Mr. Wilkinsons on James Street, and it is high time they were at home.—Ah
they are just here. The wind is rising rapidly, and I think and hope that we shall have rain soon. We
have been destitute of rain-water for several days, and tonight our well-water pump failed, so that we
are in a sad condition, enough.—All these little events, conspire to trouble & harass me, and I am ready
to sink down, in despondency—But

of what use is it, for me to sit here, & utter my complaints to these dumb sheets, that cannot feel for me,
or sympathise in my griefs. I know not, that it is of any use, unless, that in pouring out my troubles, my
heart seems lighter. I wish I could overcome these gloomy fits,—for I am sensible that they are not well
for me, at this time.

Sunday, 30 March,

I arose this morning feeling miserably, having had a restless wakeful night. After my cold bath, felt
more refreshed, and prepared for church, but when I got there, I was so exhausted and faint, I was
almost terrified, not knowing but some serious illness, was about to come upon me. However, this
extreme languor, passed off, somewhat, after a while,—but I did not go out this afternoon. Have not
read much today, as my eyes are in a very weak state.

I see constantly in the papers, notices of the great preparations, making for the worlds fair, to be held in
London in May. * Many of our own citizens are thinking of attending it, and doubtless crowds will
swarm there from all parts of the world. What strange contrasts will present themselves, not only of
sight, but of sound. The polished Frenchman, the calculating Yankee, the turbaned Turk, the phlegmatic
German, will jostle each other on the pave, the lowborn & needy, will look with envious eyes, upon the
titled and the wealthy, and the extremes of society will meet, in their most vivid contrasts. The crystal
palace, filled with wondrous specimens

-- 59 --

of the arts & sciences, from all lands, will dazzle the eyes of the beholders, like the Fairy creations of
Aladdins magic Lamp. It would seem too that the authorities of the city, have made every possible
arrangement, that the most perfect order may reign, that all rights may be protected, and the great
public, sufficiently cared for. Doubtless there will be many things, unpleasant, & to be regretted when it
is over,--many persons will feel unhappy & dissatisfied, with their share of the profits & pleasures of
the Exhibition.--

But with all these contingencies, I cannot but think, that it will prove a world wide benefit.--The
bringing together in one common centre of so many & such worldwide diversities of nation &
language, will impart general intelligence, and soften asperities of habits & manners, more than the
natural progress of civilization would do in many years. The "Natural bond of brotherhood," will be
strengthened by such contact, as will then become even necessary, and men will go away, surprised at
finding so much that is admirable, and wonderful, in men of other climes, and the fruits of the patience
& ingenuity of those whom they had hitherto regarded as barbarians, will stimulate their own inventive
faculties, and excite a praiseworthy emulation. May Heaven grant smiling skies, and favoring gales to
those who venture upon the great deep, to visit, the World's Fair.--That no disastrous accident and
fearful shipwreck, may be associated in our recollections of this most novel and most famous of
spectacles, The Great Exhibition of May, 1851-- --

Monday [March 31],

-- 60 --

felt very unwell all day, but tried to finish my quilt, begun last week. A poor woman brought me some
work, she had to do, and it was easy to see the marks of want & sorrow on her face--I was very glad to
have something to make her comfortable, as well as work to give her. She has a family of six children,
and neither herself nor husband could get any work, for a long time past.

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Note : *. George Johnson, "Black George," a faithful indoor servant in the Wheaton family for fourteen
years. When the family broke up the household in 1860, George went into the Longstreet family, where
he stayed till his death some years later. He was buried in their family lot in Syracuse. When Mr. &
Mrs. Wheaton were away, Black George used to ring the breakfast-bell in the morning and shout: "All
hands on deck! Cap'n's fell overboard!" At this time the only other servant the Wheatons had was a
kitchen maid; later on they had a nurse and a boy to drive and care for the horses as well. There were
also seamstresses in the house very frequently.

Note : *. Mrs. Horace Wheaton.

Note : *. The Crystal Palace.
Diary of Ellen Birdseye Wheaton, April, 1851

Went down town, to do up a variety of errands--Got some cash from my husband and paid up a number of little bills. Miss Wolcott's Mrs. Cook's, Mrs. Lathrop, Miss Van Norman, &c.--Was very glad to have these things off my mind. In the afternoon attended the board meeting, at the Asylum, which was quite full and animated. Mrs. Leavenworth presided for the first time in several months.

After getting thro' there, I came home & took the horse & waggon for Mr. Abbotts. Found Mrs. Loomis & Mrs. Miner, there, & enjoyed a quiet pleasant visit with them, very much. Had some conversation on the affairs of the C.* church, and our losing so many--in various ways. I believe there is a general feeling of regret at losing Mrs Loomis from our circle, for we just begin to appreciate her worth. But we learn by degrees, that nothing is permanent here but change, and these separations of friends, hard as they are, are inevitable. She is a treasure, let her be where she may--to any society.

Wednesday [April 2],

another of those languid, exhausting days, and as nothing special occurred to call out my energies, I have yielded to it--

Thursday [April 3],

expecting Mr. & Mrs. Miner up here to spend the afternoon, I send for Mrs. A. Bates & Dr. & Mrs. Loomis, tho' none of them came as early, as I had hoped. We had a very pleasant visit from them. I enjoyed it more than usual, for E. staid home from school to help me.

Friday [April 4],

Ellen was quite earnest in her industry and accomplished a good deal. I spent most of the day in mending and putting away clothes--It seems to me that I should like to get through with my work, once, and see how it would seem--E. went down to the lecture by Park Benjamin and was very much pleased.--

Saturday [April 5].

After attending to my numerous avocations, this morning--about ten o'clock, I sat down quietly to my needle, found enough, to do in this line--About 4 o'clock, took Henry and walked down to Mr. Snow's--He enjoyed the walk much, and also his play with little Howard--Mrs S. is going into quite a reform in dress--but I am not sure that I like it,--at any rate for the minister's wife to set the fashion--It probably is easier and lighter--to walk in--

Sunday [April 6].

Did not go out till P. M. service, and then heard Dr. Bogue, on the restoration of the Jews, a very interesting subject, and pretty well handled, but the Audience was very small.

After tea, heard the children say their Bible lesson,--

and then they sung awhile-- --and went to rest early. I read awhile, all alone, & just got ready to commence writing, as Charles came home from meeting,--so now with talking writing & reading, it has

got to be ½ past 10,--and I think I must lay aside my pen & myself--for tonight.

**Monday [April 7].**

Much engaged in sewing, did not get any time to rest, till 3 o'clock--then laid down for an hour. This little time for rest, does me much good, but I ought to take it earlier. Afterwards, I paid my washerwoman, and then took my work, over to Mrs. Myers, for a little while. However she *constrained* me to stay to tea, & finally to spend the evening--Mr. M. is absent, and she seems quite lonely--Mrs. B. came in & sat an hour in the evening--Ellen came over & got my permission, to go down with Lilla Burleigh, to stay all night. Consented reluctantly, came home before nine--

**Tuesday [April 8th].**

Clara's birthday, 8 years old. It is a great day with her. Charles decided to go out to Vienna to attend a musical convention & take Ellen with him, so we had to send for her, before 7 o'clock. Of course she was delighted. I hope they will enjoy it, tho' the weather is unfavourable. About 11, I went down town & took the children, to do a few errands--Mrs. M. *accompanied me, did not accomplish as much as I -- 63 -- wished on account of the hurry--there seemed to [be] a storm coming on.

Children very uneasy. Bought Clara a new book, for birthday--It made her very happy--Also bough[t] Florence one--

It seems lonely tonight without Charles--for he seldom stays away all night--Now the house is still, I have hastily scribbled down a few thoughts--and incidents, and now for bed--May a kind Providence watch over us--

**Thursday [April 10].**

Received an unexpected call from Susan Williams & Mrs. J. Beebee. Staid to dinner Charles & Ellen arrived, just at dinner time also Miss C. came to sew, and we managed to have a table full.

All the week since Miss C. came, have been very busy--sewing, and expect to be so next week. It seems, like a tremendous task to get my children fixed up for warm weather.

**Sunday A. M. [April 13]**

helped to fix off a load for Church and remain here with Clara, Florence, & Henry--C. is fond of reading--and likes the little pieces I have selected for her, very much.

My eyes are very weak, and trouble me much about reading. During last week, I subscribed for Harper's New Monthly--for I think we ought to have some thing of the kind for a variety, in the way of reading, there are many excellent selections in it, and much that is solid & sensible.

The spring opens but slowly, and the cold easterly -- 64 --

blasts, seem to retard every thing. We have had no very warm or April like showers, and the earth is dry & cold. However clouds are gathering in the sky, and I trust they will bring warm & refreshing rains--

The sudden death of an old and well known citizen of this place last week, Mr. P. N. R. *has been the the [sic] theme of a great many remarks, and reflections--some of them of not a very flattering nature to the deceased--Considerable parade & show, took place at the funeral, and much adulation was lavished upon his character. But oh how hollow & heartless must much of this be. Why will the world praise and
admire the character of a man, after death, whose life has been one unbroken tissue of profligacy--
whose utmost influence, has been exerted, to lead the young & unwary in the way of ruin, in multitudes
of cases, O, too successfully--who has not scrupled to trample upon all obligations of order and
decency, in his pursuit of indulgence--True, he had some good qualities, this we readily admit, and who
has not? He was kind and generous, to the poor at times, though he undoubtedly gave from the impulse
of the moment, rather than from any settled principle, on the subject and other

-- 65 --
good traits he may have had, but they were obscured & almost lost, in the profusion, of vices, which
had been nourished & strengthened, in his character, for years gone by. But he is gone, and we leave
him, in the hands of an all wise, and merciful God,--who doeth all things well.

The change taking place in some quarters, in the mode of female attire excites much severe remark and
censure from some good people. I was a little amused the other day at a conversation at which I was
present, on the subject. One Lady got absolutely angry in talking about it, but there was a good reason
for that, in the fact, that she has a sister, who is in danger of imbibing the new notions. Another,
"thought it perfectly ridiculous, shameful" &c.--Now, I dont see why it is any more ridiculous or
shameful to adopt a turkish costume, than a parisian, if it is more convenient, or more rational. These
very persons, are just as much interested in following every new fashion as fast as it appears, as if their
very lives depended on it--

Monday Evening April 14th.

Went tonight with C to hear Horace Mann, lecture before the Teachers Institute, & it was indeed a rich
treat. His subject Teachers Motives. He specified those motives, that should animate Teachers in the
discharge of their duties, beginning with the lowest & ascending in the scale,--First, that they should
have respect unto the recompense of reward, that is that they should desire to be well paid,--because
they cannot live & discharge their duties faithfully, without

-- 66 --

means.--He spoke of the ennobling and elevating nature of the Teachers occupation, and, how happy a
rightminded person would be in following it. The extensive influence he has for good or evil, over his
pupils, which lasts as long as Time shall last. The misery his efforts may save them, the good they shall
accomplish thro' his instruction,--were beautifully enlarged upon.--They were urged to study & observe
the characters of their pupils with especial reference to the right modes of training, and guidance,--and
the importance of discrimination in government so forcibly shown, as to make one feel more deeply
than ever, the responsibility that rests upon parents & Teachers-- --He spoke of visiting a prison in a
neighbouring State, when he was much interested in conversing with the convicts, upon the nature of
the crime which bro't them there, and their previous training, or want of it. But more than all, did he
feel an inexpressibly mournful interest, in reading over the book in which were kept the prison records.
Here was a name, of somebody's son, & brother, sentenced for 5 years, or ten as the case might be, and
there in another column, Robbery, Burglary, Arson, &c. according to the crime for which they were
sentenced--& then, as he looked upon the yet unsullied pages, he thought of those whose names should
yet be there, with a feeling almost of terror. He urged upon Teachers, by every high & holy motive, to
endeavor to form their pupils characters for high & holy purposes--to feel that the teacher is under God,
to renovate the world--That they are not to extinguish

-- 67 --

the faculties, which God has given, but to direct--That every boy is not destined to be a president, or a
governor, but still may fill an honorable station in his native town, even in the humbler position of

--68--

trustee,—and in his own domestic circle, may be as important and beloved a character as many a one, more widely known.

His remarks, throughout, were just as applicable to parents, particularly to mothers, as to Teachers, and I took them all to myself meaning most earnestly & truly to profit by them. I could not but look back on my own shortcomings in duty with a feeling of shame, that was anything but pleasant, but I trust I am determined to start with a new resolution with respect to my children. It is really & truly a noble work, to train & educate the young, and I have a large field to cultivate. But Oh! how unreasonable and captious, have I been, in my treatment of my children, what a want of moral courage—how often governed by weak & unworthy motives, and then so shamefully impatient with their little failings—I feel ashamed of myself, when I think over these things, and sorry that I have so given way to bad passions.—I do most deeply feel the want of a better disciplined mind & temper & now, at my age, & with a family around me, I have got that work to do, which should have been done by my parents in my childhood. But am I training my children any better? Ah no! I fear not—but there must be a change, may it be for the better! God grant, that if my life is spared till to-morrow, I may be enabled to keep a watch upon my tongue & temper,—and constantly

—69—

to feel my responsibility, to him, in the management of my children—May it be, that my waywardness and wrong-doing, have as yet, inflicted no incurable evils on my little flock! Amen—

All the week much occupied, as usual, with little or no time for thought or reading. If I had time to be unhappy, I believe I should be so, for want of more time to myself.

Friday Eve. [April 18],

found time to go & hear H. Mann on the condition, & resources of Great Britain, a magnificent subject truly, and finely treated. I would like to write out, at least a short sketch of it, but time is limited and my memory so imperfect, I must desist.

Suffice it to say, That his opening description of the power and wealth of England, was finely depicted—& then the contrasts exhibited in her manufactories & collieries—her crowded cities and her destitute farming districts, were dark dark as night—Surely there is scarcely any earthly condition, so utterly hopeless & helpless, as that of the English operative, completely, as he is, the slave of a proud aristocracy, & doomed to toil & wretchedness, that others, mere drones upon the earth may live in splendour.

Saturday [April 19],
a dark and rainy day, children busy & uneasy as a hive of bees. Glad when night came, and with it quiet & rest.

Sunday April 20th.

To-day Lucie, is four years old. How rapidly time passes.—It is a few days over four years, since we moved to this house * to live—and how

—69—
much has transpired since then. Little did I think then, that by this time, we should be contemplating the transfer of this place into other hands, but so it is. Strangers came yesterday, and viewed the premises, with a critical eye, with a view to purchase. The thought strikes a chill to my heart,—but may it be for the best, whatever happens. Heard Mr. S. to-day morning was not greatly interested—

How I should love to have one hour every day to write, my thoughts out, in a tangible shape. It seems, as if I might think with more clearness on paper.--I have so many interruptions to a connected train of thought, or merely mental effort--It seems to be impossible, to pursue any system in the matter. I am very glad to see, that C. & E!'s fondness for writing is daily, increasing. They both keep a diary, which is certainly of great benefit, if carefully done. C. s taste for composition, is improving greatly--as well as her style & language.

Julia, came from home last week, and is with us, over the Sabbath--She grows rapidly--

I am delighted with Mary Irving's sketches in the Era, particularly, those entitled "Life on Prairie de Fleur."--They are so fresh & natural, so simple, & yet so truthful, that I cannot but feel that they must have an excellent moral influence.--

**Wednesday 25th [April 23].**

This evening, W. H. Burleigh, recited his poem, called the Golden Age, to a large audience at the City Hall. It was a very fine poem, and I only feared, that many of those present, were not capable of appreciating it--It was written several years ago,--for delivery before a Literary Society, in one of the Eastern Colleges,--and had been repeated once before in this State. Both, in regard to poetry, and sense, it, in my judgment, surpasses, greatly the poem by P. Benjamin, called the Age of Gold, which has been so much lauded here.--

**Thursday A. M. [April 24]**

Rode down town, with a load of children, and did several errands, came to the conclusion, that it is rather wearisome, to do errands, make calls, & take care of children, at the same time--In the P. M. The other girls, who did not go in the AM, went out to ride & and [sic] invited Mrs. M, * their teacher, to accompany them. She did so, and seemed delighted with the opportunity.--All my scattering moments, are taken up, with my needle--

**Friday [April 25].**

Made arrangements, to go out to Dr Loomis', at Orvill, in company with the Burleighs, And after considerable coaxing & planning, got the whole expedition started, it was rather late, before we set off, but we were not long on the road. Mrs. L. was absent when we arrived, but soon returned, and in the mean time, we had a hearty welcome from the Dr. himself, which of course, set us completely at our ease. They are as truly hospitable a family as I know, and I always enjoy a visit highly, at their house.--They are preparing for a visit to their daughter, Mrs. North, who lives in Minnesota and will probably go in about two weeks.

We arrived safe at home at, about 9 o'clock, and found everything pleasant & comfortable.

**Saturday [April 26].**

Elizabeth & I spent most of the day, in sewing, and accomplished quite a satisfactory days work. What a busy set of heads, and hands to direct & control. Sometimes, I think I shall faint and, fall down by the way.

Sunday April 27th.

This was a charming morning, tho' there were some low lying clouds, on the verge of the horizon, which seems to indicate, that the weather was not entirely settled yet. I went to Meeting in the A. M. with a load of children--The air seemed ere long, to grow very sultry, & oppressive, so that I felt exceedingly distressed by it. As we rode home I felt somewhat relieved by the free circulation of air around me, but was glad to lie down for a while, as this distressing langour, completely overpowered me. Soon I heard the flapping of blinds, & slamming of doors,--and indications that the wind was rapidly rising. Ere long came a heavy peal of thunder, & another, accompanied by sharp flashes of lightening, that startled me, quickly from my drowsiness. In a few minutes more, the rain was pouring down in torrents, and the air seemed greatly cooled. Tho' it continued to rain, very hard, for several hours we went to meeting, as it was Mr. Snows last sermon here. Very few were there, & I was compelled to help about the singing in the gallery. There was nothing particularly like a farewell in the sermon, nor very affecting. Soon after we got home, the clouds lifted, the sun shone out

-- 72 --

brightly, giving most delightful views to the landscape. The grass assumes a greener tinge, the trees seem, all revived, and all nature rejoices. The bright & happy spring is hurrying on with rapid strides, and everybody is getting ready for its welcome. Oh! I cannot choose but sigh, for these heavy cares settle down upon my spirits, with such a weight, how can I look for, or expect relief--At this season, particularly, I am oftenest led to look back to my childhoods days, and a pang of regret, will sometimes thrill thro' me, when I remember, that they are gone, really & truly forever. Those springtime rambles in the woods, by some meandering rivulets banks, where with one cherished companion, I gathered spring violets, and built moss Islands in the water. Those days of calm & tranquil delight I shall never see again, except in the dim perspective, of Memory's glass.--How differently the world looked to me then, from now--I seemed to be just taking my first glimpse of its busy turmoil, from some far calm retreat, where indeed I could just hear its murmurs, softened by the distance--but its agitated waves broke and spent themselves long before they reached my feet.--

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Note : *. Congregational.

Note : *. "Mrs. Mack" (Mrs. MacManus), a seamstress(?). It was she who told the census-taker, in response to inquiries about Mr. Wheaton's business, that she wasn't sure, but thought he was President of the "Underground Railroad."

Note : *. Philo N. Rust, proprietor of the Syracuse House, and a well-known winebibber. At the age of about sixty he had a shock and one day, after he had sufficiently recovered to be out in the sun on the sidewalk in front of the hotel, Deacon Dana, a Presbyterian celebrated for his long-faced piety, came along. "Mr. Rust," he said, "you've had a very narrow call--a very close call, Mr. Rust." Rust looked up in Dana's face and said: "Deacon Dana, what if I had died? I've had more fun in my sixty years than you'll have if you live to be one hundred and sixty." Statement of Frederick Ayer.

Note : *. The Burt place, on Asylum Hill.

Note : *. Montgomery.
Since I wrote last, I have been much occupied, with a dressmaker, for the children and when night came, was too tired to write. On [Wednesday] the 7th of May, commenced the convention of the American Anti-slavery society, which was held in the Market Hall, and attended by a large collection of people, many of them, from a distance. Mr Garrison presided, and the three days passed off, without disturbance, present Geo. Thompson, E. Quincy--and Fred. Douglass, as well as others of note,--and many very good speeches were made.--We had no company of consequence, till Saturday [May 10] when Mr. Goodell, wife & daughter, came and spent the Sabbath with us, he preaching in our pulpit--Elvira,* was here Saturday, and the children had several visitors--In the evening, the singers had a rehearsal here. Last Sabbath [May 11], was a terribly oppressive day, and continued very hot till Wednesday--when the change came in earnest.

Had Miss C. two days mantua making, and have been cleaning house all the week.--Now, we are nearly done.

---Saturday [May 17],---

Charles was going into the country, about 12 miles, and proposed taking some children along, & I consented, 5 of ours, went & two of Horace's--It left us quite still and at liberty to work,--and we all improved it. When night came, we were very tired, and then came visitors, & singers--and I was glad when it was 9 o'clock--

---73---

**Saturday May 18th.**

Did not go out this AM. and don't feel much like going this afternoon. Mr. M. preaches--and I ought to go--

The weather begins to look quite springlike, or rather summerlike, the birds fill the air with their songs--and the flowers are quite abundant--The apple blossoms,

---74---

particularly are very fragrant,--and delightful. Cornelia is quite unwell, and not able to go out.

---72---

Saturday night [May 24],

has come, and I sit down to review the proceedings of the week, with rather a confused idea of the whole matter, however perhaps, I can recall it. Monday [May 19] quite unexpectedly, took a start for Pompey, took Ellen Emma & Henry. It was very pleasant, they were very glad to see us, the only drawback being, that we must return the same day. It was late when we got home--but I was not as much fatigued as I expected. * Tuesday [May 20] spent much of the day in shopping, preparatory to another siege at dress making--Oh how tiresome, hired E's wife to come & iron today, expecting confidently, that she would finish it all off, but judge of my surprise, when night came, and not near all the plain clothes, were ironed, & she demanded 4-- * I of course could not hire her another day, at such a rate,--and think I shall not get caught in such a way again--Since then, we have been worrying along ourselves, at the housecleaning and finally finished off, pretty well,--some trouble with the soap--George made a great mistake, & I fear it will never come,--I felt too unwell to take any care of it--and

had to leave it to him, otherwise I think the trouble might have been prevented.

**Friday [May 23].**

President Fillmore & suite passed thro town, & an attempt was made at a demonstration, but I imagine it was not very triumphant--There is

-- 75 --

not much enthusiasm felt here in his behalf--except by his own particular partisans--and they are not very numerous--

**Saturday [May 24].**

Last night, I had a very uncomfortable night--was obliged to be up some, but feel better this morning. Went down this A. M. to see about childrens hats, some difficulty in getting suited--came home at noon, but obliged to go down again this afternoon--and it seemed as if we should never accomplish anything--however I hope we shall get some of the hats tonight--or the children will be greatly disappointed--I fear I have been a little extravagant, in getting them new hats,--but their old, did really look too bad--& I could not get along with them peacably without.--I sometimes fear that my having so many to do for, and the confusion attendant upon it, may draw me into extravagances, ere I am aware. I must keep on the lookout, for our expenses are very heavy--Here I sit writing & waiting for Charles, who is late as usual--He looks very much jaded & careworn, this week, and I cannot help feeling anxious about him.--

Since I last wrote in my diary, Sister Charlotte has been here, and made a stay of 3 or 4 days on her way east again.--It was not much to see of her, but I enjoyed the visit, very much, short as it was--She goes back to stay till Sept. only, and then she hopes thro’ Lute’s influence to get a situation in some Seminary. I hope she will be fortunate enough to do so--for she has quite an enthusiasm for teaching. Since she left, I have

-- 76 --

been as usual much taken up with household matters, and company, and found no time to write. Mr. A. * and lady have been here a good deal, lately, singing with Cornelia & Ellen, preparatory to a floral festival to, come off the last of this month. They practise quite faithfully, and really do sing very well, considering the instruction they have had,--particularly E. *--she has a magnificent voice.

**Notes**

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Note : *. Elvira Wheaton, a sister of Charles Augustus Wheaton, and second wife of John Fleming.

Note : *. The day's drive was twenty-four miles.

Note : *. "Shillings."

Note : *. Allen.

Note : *. Ellen Louisa Wheaton. She was at one time soprano soloist in St. John's Catholic Church. Her compensation was $3.00 a Sunday. On Mch. 29, 1857, the diarist wrote to Cornelia Wheaton: "I don't feel very well reconciled to it but if they don't draw her into their net I shall be satisfied."
Diary of Ellen Birdseye Wheaton, June, 1851

Elizabeth, Cornelia, Edward and James, ** fixed off in the carriage for Pompey, with E. for driver to attend Delia Wheaton's wedding, * which takes place tomorrow at 9 o'clock. They will have a late ride, tho it is a beautiful moonlight evening.

June 5th [Friday, June 6].

Children returned this evening just in time for tea, and feeling very tired, the Wedding passed off, pleasantly,--and they enjoyed it much,--after it was over, they called to see Louise Jerome, who was very low, and very soon after they left, she breathed her last, poor girl, she had been a great sufferer,--for many days--The girls seem very much affected

by it-- --So closely does grief tread on the heels of Joy--

We are having pleasant days, but very cold nights,--so that the frosts will I fear, do serious injury to many vegetables, and also to the fruit. But there are many brilliant flowers in bloom and the garden looks bright and cheerful--

Am reading with much pleasure an article of considerable length, in Harpers Magazine, purporting to be a sort of diary kept by a daughter of Sir Thomas More, the learned and pious Englishman. I do not remember the date of his life, nor do I find it here. It is, I suppose fictitious, but if so it is charmingly natural, artless, and simple, and withal contains very much of wisdom and profound research. I am delighted with this style of writing, and should rejoice to find that it were becoming more a characteristic of my own manner. The fair writer, sets down the most common, and trivial events, and ordinary conversations and under the touch of that magic pen, they are converted into the rarest gems of thought. One thought I must transcribe. "It is not even necessarie or good, for us to live entirelie, with congregial spirits. The vigorous tempers the inert, the passionate is evened by the cool-tempered, the prosaic balances the visionary." Is not this the truth? I am inclined to feel that it is, and experience confirms it.

On Saturday [June 7]

Mr. & Mrs. Gridley, came here on their way home to Wisconsin, after an absence of 5 or 6 weeks. Time has changed them somewhat, but not greatly. I was very glad to see them and enjoyed the visit as much, as possible, under existing circumstances. They left us on monday noon [June 9], on their way west.--Charles was obliged to go to Morrisville on Tuesday [June 10], to court. The same day Harriet W. & Mary D. came & spent the day. M. was quite sick with the sick headache, and did not enjoy herself very much. She spent the night.--There was some company in the evening, and they were all in the garden, and on the piazza, till a late hour. The night was charming with a superb moon, but quite cold, and today [Wednesday, June 11] we are nearly all of us, sick with colds. This A. M. Charles has started again, with Cornelia & two other ladies, for Glen Haven, to return tomorrow--They have had a favourable day--I have been very busy, repairing & doing up muslins, and have accomplished quite an amount of labour.

How many singular characters we meet with, in our ordinary intercourse with society. Some with marked peculiarities, and strong traits, & others with such perfect placidity of character, that one would
not imagine, they thought or felt at all. There is Mrs. B. for instance, I have tried to study her character, for my own improvement, and I find it very difficult to understand, and yet she is one of the most openhearted, & apparently artless of mortals. She has a certain sort of energy, about her, but not of that description, which is suited to the mother of a large family in our own country. It rather lies in the direction of literature for which she has quite a fondness,

-- 79 --

tho' it cannot be called a taste. I think she would do better to let literary pursuits alone entirely.--for all her productions are evidently forced.--and do not evince that rich measure of talent, that rare gift of genius, which alone can justify a woman in her circumstances, for devoting her time in that way. Her skill as a housekeeper, is not more remarkable than as an authoress, but let matters go as they will, in the domestic sphere, it troubles not her, her mind is on higher things, and not even the cry of a sick child, waiting for his tardy breakfast, of a cold winter morning, has power to quicken her movements, or disturb her equanimity--

Charles & Cornelia returned Friday Eve [June 13] after two days absence, and seems to have enjoyed themselves very much.--I am quite in love with Glen Haven, from their account of it, and if I could leave home, I would certainly go & spend a week there.--I should so love those shady quiet rambles, all alone, in the green woods--but there is little probability of my doing so.--

Saturday [June 14],

all the A. M. engaged in cutting out work, for a seamstress, &c.--It was a beautiful day, and I made up my mind for a ride to Onondaga Hill--in the afternoon--Started about two, took Henry, Ellen & Emma--

The country looks beautifully now--and as we rode leisurely along, had fine opportunity to enjoy it-- Vegetation seems unusually luxuriant, this season, and a great many flowers in bloom. The roses are very beautiful,

-- 80 --

and of a great variety of colors. Many houses on Onondaga St. are very much ornamented with choice kinds and I am sure they are the loveliest ornaments, that can be found for grounds, or piazzas-- Found Mrs Ellis very miserable indeed, looking much more unwell than when I last saw her, and I do fear greatly, that she is never destined to be any better. I could not help casting about in my mind, the various modes of cure that are resorted to, in these days of expedients, and suggested this & that, and the other, to her, but without effect. She has neither faith nor hope in anything.--and I do not know, what encouragement there is for her.

Mrs. E. gave me one of Mrs. Bloomer's papers, the Lily, a small but spicy affair, devoted principally I should think to womans rights.--Much of the present number, turned upon the innovation in dress, which is making such a stir, just now--also an article upon sewing I thought, had some sensible things-- I am sure I ought to be thankful for any change in the constant practise of sewing, which has almost become the bane of my life. And yet how can I avoid it. My numerous family, require a great many stitches to make them comfortable to, say nothing of anything further, and it is a great expense, to hire every article made. I know it is a wearying, and wearing employment, when closely followed--followed in my case, by great depression both bodily & mental. I believe at any rate I can make a slight reform, in this respect. Every day take some exercise in the open air either by walking riding, doing something in the garden,

-- 81 --

--resolve not to confine myself closely to sewing for more than an hour at a time.

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Note: **. Son of Mr. Wheaton's brother, Horace Wheaton (?).**

Note: *. Daughter of Mr. Wheaton's brother, Jarvis Wheaton. She married George B. Senter, of Cleveland, Ohio.
Diary of Ellen Birdseye Wheaton, July, 1851

It is about 4 weeks since I last took my pen in hand, to write in these pages,--and since that time some events of importance, to me at least, have occurred----some things worth recording for my own benefit at least--

On Saturday the 21st of June,

3 weeks ago today our family was increased by the addition of another daughter [Mary Hascall], making the seventh. My sickness was not very severe in comparison with most of the former ones, and since that time I have gained health & strength, almost without interruption. The little stranger seems very healthy and quiet--and her arrival was greeted by many warm friends.

About ten days after the birth of my baby, we were disturbed in the night about one o'clock, by an alarm of fire, and soon found that our store was on fire. * Charles and Edward got ready & went down immediately, and found the building very far gone and those surrounding it, also in flames. Our folks succeeded in saving their books & papers, and much valuable property, and much more was destroyed, or greatly injured. Since that time, Charles has been in a great deal of confusion, and uncertainty about his business, but is hoping after a little time to worry thro' it, and get out, without any very heavy loss.--I was not as well, after the fire, in consequence of the agitation, and excitement, I suppose & was obliged to send for the Dr. for the first time since my confinement. However I soon got better, and at the end of three weeks, came down stairs, and at the end of four, dismissed my nurse, and commenced business on my own account. Now Elizabeth, has gone to Pompey, and I have a new girl,--and an awkward one too. However I am going to P. this week and take baby & girl along, for a visit.--I expect it will tire me completely out.

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Note : *. Named for her mother's old friend, who is several times alluded to in the diary.

Note : *. July 8, 1851.
Diary of Ellen Birdseye Wheaton, August, 1851

Well! I have made the contemplated jaunt to Pompey.--I went up Thursday [August] the 7th, & returned Friday [August] the 15th, had a very good visit. Father & Lute went up Saturday [August 9 or 16] on their return from Hammondsport. L. intends staying a week to recruit.--I was rejoiced to see him.--Today is Sunday, but I have not been out at all. The weather was unfavourable, with a dull leaden sky, & a chilling wind, so I tho't best to let, my girl go in the morning, thinking it might be better in the afternoon. About 1, Victory & family came from church, spent the P. M. and went again at 6, to hear Theo. Parker,--& Charles went with them. I seized the first leisure moment after they were gone to write to Charlotte, and with occasional interruptions, finally made out a long letter. Poor girl! I fear she is not very happy. What a disgusting spirit, is that of a purse-proud aristocracy, exhibiting itself, in acts of overbearance and a complete want of the common decencies of life.

This was the longest visit I have made at home, for many years, and tho' I found it, in many respects pleasant, yet there were many sad recollections thronging around me, during my stay. But a few years since I was one of a joyous band of brothers & sisters, that were growing up together around our parents knee. We knew little of care & sorrow, only by the name, and from our quiet corner we looked abroad upon the world, with impatient longings, to be more busily engaged, in its turmoil, and occupations. Soon we began to scatter, in various directions, some married & left the paternal roof, some went to finish their course of study at college, or at school. Then Death, that fell destroyer came among us, and in less than one short year, took two of our dear ones from us, * under peculiarly trying circumstances--and left an aching void, in all our hearts. That was the first breach in our family circle, and it fell with a painful force upon our parents, now growing old, and needing more than ever the support and aid of these children of their youth. But they sleep their last sleep, they have done with earthly cares, and the moonlight glistens upon the white stones, that love has placed over their mortal remains. Then Distance separates us from another and another, and yet another, and when I find myself once more at home, I can scarcely recognize the place the family circle is so much smaller than I was wont to see. The seat in church, once filled with dear faces, now nearly vacant, and every thing around seemed to remind me, of the transitory nature, of all earthly ties. I look around the church, and a large majority are utter strangers to me, where once every face was familiar. All these things saddened my heart,--and I said to myself, Alas this Earth is not our home, There is nothing permanent here--Therefore let affections be placed upon things eternal, and secure.--Then we may look forward to an eternal union with the loved & lost of this world, when the cares & changes of life are over.

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Note : *. Ebenezer Birdseye from smallpox in 1846, and Henry Clay Birdseye from typhoid fever in 1847.
Diary of Ellen Birdseye Wheaton, September, 1851

I find but little time to write in my journal now, for all my moments are occupied, with the many demands made by this numerous flock upon my time. My little one is very healthy, and pretty quiet, but with all that, she requires very much done for her, and I am constantly confined with her. Henry is very fretful, about these days, and I sometimes fear, that there is some complaint, hanging about him, which we do not understand, he cries so much. However, it may be nothing after all, but fatigue,--arising from his incessant activity. Lucia was reproved by her Father, for playing & making a noise on Sunday P. M.--and she replied, with a very serious look, "Why, we are not playing on Sunday, we're only make believin playing"--a very ingenious way I thought of getting out of the difficulty. She is a natural Sophist, I believe, at any rate she is very keen in an argument.

[Monday] Sept. 1st. I am grieved to be obliged to record the death of Aunt Bostwick, at Pompey on Tuesday, the 26th of Aug. aged 74 years, and 8 months, to a day. Thus has passed from among us, one of a former generation, and one of a race of matrons, such as I fear we shall not see many of, when the present generation begins to grow old. She was a woman of sterling good sense, great energy and untiring perseverance, combined with real benevolence, qualities, which made her invaluable as a friend, & counsellor.--She loved to do good, to help the afflicted, and the needy, and there are many whose hearts will be desolate, at the sorrowful news, of her death. She was a consistent Christian in all her life and conversation,--and was greatly attached to the Holy Scriptures, with which she was familiar to an uncommon degree. I think it was in one of her last conversations, before her sickness, that she said, she had read the Old Testament thro' 14 times, and the New Testament at least 30 times, and still she was not tired of it.--How I used to love to talk with her, and listen to the expression of her just views of men & things. Particularly would she encourage me on the subject of the care of children. She would tell me, "You think you have many cares, and so you have. They seem very burdensome to you, but in a few years, this numerous little circle, will be grown up, and scattered far & wide over the earth, and you will be left alone, perhaps feeble, & gray, & old,--and you will look back to these busy, toiling years, and wonder that you ever could have felt, that these were wearisome days.--for they will now seem to have been the happiest of your life. And the interval, though it may number long years, will seem to you like a dream, when one awaketh--Ah!" said she, "if mothers only could know it, they are never so happy as when they are surrounded by their little ones, and have them under their own eye, where they can exert an influence, such as mothers alone can do."

[Wednesday] Sept. 3rd.

Night! beautiful Night, glorious with thy pale Moon, and twinkling stars! how gladly I welcome thee. After this weary day, of toil, and unrest, thy soothing influence comes over my spirit, calming all agitation, and filling my soul, with thine own sweet peace. Here let me sit, in this soft light, and watch the shadows as they tremble and flicker over the grass. A gentle breeze, just sways the tops of the trees, while it brings to my ear, faint murmurs, from the town below, softened and mingled by the distance, into a monotonous hum, "musical, yet melancholy"--What a mystical charm, is in this hour! How soothing, yet how mournful! All Nature sinks gradually to repose, while yon bright moon, rises higher and higher, in the sky, keeping her pensive, solemn watch on all below. Ah! sweet orb, thou art to me, a friend and solace, and as I gaze into thy face, I seem to find a companionship most precious to my
heart, and in thy solemn silence, a response to my deepest emotions.

-- 87 --

As thou lookest down upon me in my sadness, dost thou look with that same benignant light, upon my dear ones far away!—and do they in return, look up to thee, with tender, yearnings for home and friends—Ah! yes it must be so, and in this soft and peaceful hour, beneath, thy bright rays, our spirits meet, and hold sweet communion.—May the ever present, ever loving Father in Heaven, watch over them & bless them! How I love the scenes of nature, spread out, in such glowing beauty, and such rich profusion before me. Bryant, in the opening lines, of his Thanatopsis, expresses this thought so beautifully. Just hear him:—

"To him who in the love of nature, holds  
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks  
A various language; for his gayer hours,  
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile  
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides  
Into his darker musings, with a mild  
And healing sympathy, that steals away,  
Their sharpness, ere he is aware."

[Wednesday] Sept. 3rd.

Musical Convention commences to-day, but I, was not able to go.—We have one guest, to stay thro' the meeting,—Mr. Hawley from Vienna,—a singer. Also, this P. M. The McDougall's & Mrs. Loomis, have spent the afternoon, and taken tea, with us. Had a pleasant visit from them. Martha expects to leave this week for the west—to stay a year or so—. It seems very pleasant, to see Mrs. L. among us again. She is a good woman.

[Monday September] 22nd.

-- 88 --

Since I last wrote, matters have been going on, pretty much as usual, quite a constant accession of comers & goers, sufficient to keep us in a whirl of excitement—have been most of the time at home.

After various vexations & delays, Charles & Cornelia finally started for the East, on Monday [September] the 15th—and Mrs. Walter accompanied them. I hope Cornelia will stay long enough, to compensate for the anxiety she felt about going, as the celebrated Irish Swan, Catharine Hayes, is now in New York, I really hope she may hear her, as well as some other celebrated singers. Clara was sick all last week, with a severe attack of dysentery, which caused me to be closely confined to the house. However she was so much better that on Saturday [September 20], I ventured out, and made some calls, &c, city was very dusty. Friday Eve. [September 19] met a few friends at a sociable at Mr. May's, * who were invited to spend a little time, with the teachers of the Bradbury School, just opening. Sister Charlotte is engaged in it, and I sincerely hope she will like it—This week the children who go to school, are all in their places again, and seem to quite enjoy it. For my part I am much relieved, and feel happy, at the thought of quiet. However, Autumn is stealing slowly along, the leaves begin to fall, the flowers are faded, The winds sigh mournfully among the trees, the days shorten perceptibly, and the evenings are once more of a sociable length, all admonishing me, of new deman[ds] upon my energies,—and activities.

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Note : *. Rev. Samuel J. May, a distinguished Unitarian clergyman and Abolitionist. He was the brother of Mrs. Bronson Alcott, of Concord, Mass.
Several Weeks have passed away, since time & inclination, favoured me with an opportunity for writing anything in these pages, but a leisure hour is in prospect this evening, and I hasten to improve it. For the last fortnight, our little city, has been the scene of great excitement and agitation, resulting from an attempt to carry into effect the Odious Fugitive Slave Law. It took place on [Wednesday] the first day of Oct. and at the time when the County Agricultural Fair, was in session, also the Liberty party convention, and a great multitude of people were present. The man was arrested in the morning, brought to the police office, and the commissioner being present the examination commenced. There was a good deal of excitement among the people outside, particularly after getting a view of the slave in his manacles. About two P. M. there was an attempt at a rescue, or rather of escape on the part of the slave. He succeeded in getting into the street, and ran some distance, but was finally overtaken, recaptured, and thrown upon a cart in a very rough manner, so that he was much bruised and wounded. He was again placed in the police Office, and the examination continued, till about 7 o'clock, when it was tho't best to adjourn till eight the next morning. A great part of the time, stones were thrown in at the windows, much to the inconvenience of

the court, and the crowd grew more and more angry.--About eight o'clock as I was told, the final rescue
* was made, by a multitude of persons attacking the office, and by means of planks, bars of iron and other missiles, they succeeded, in getting possession of the man, and carried him off.--The marshalls who were present to assist in the affair, were very inefficient, and their courage all oozed out at their finger ends, at the beginning of the contest. The man was borne along by the crowd, and finally was put into a waggon, and carried along to a place of safety. As soon as it was known that he was out of the way, the crowd dispersed, and the streets were quiet and peaceful. Charles got home a little after ten, very much fatigued, and yet quite happy.

Of course, this affair, has been the exciting topic of conversation, in every circle, for days past, and many rumours are afloat. Many fugitives are taking the chance, and fleeing to Canada. It is thought that other arrests will soon be made. Our house has been thronged with visitors for several days,--and I have had to be constantly moving. For a week or ten days after the affair nothing transpired as to the course of the Government officials, but then it leaked out, by little and little, that they were trying hard to get testimony in which to get

a number of persons indicted. Treason has been talked of, also misdemeanor, what it will end in nobody knows. Charles confidently expected to be arrested, but has not been as yet. What they can prove against him will be of no account, unless they get purjured witnesses--and it will not be difficult to do that. The proceedings of the U. S. District attorney, are as secret as possible--and every thing wears the appearance of injustice and knavery.

[October] 15th [Wednesday?].

At last they have commenced arresting persons suspected, and have taken four, Ira H. Cobb, Jas D. Davis, Moses Summers, and two or three cold men. They have taken them to Auburn, before Judge Conkling, and the examination has commenced. From what we hear, there has been a great deal of false testimony produced.--Strange that the very lowest rowdies that can be found, are the men brought to break down the reputation, of some of the best of our citizens. Mr. W. L. Crandall has been in tonight,

to ask me to go up to Auburn tomorrow, and hear the evidence, but I cannot go. I wish I could.

From my limited opportunities of judging, it seems that the whole community are agitated concerning this matter,--and a large number, if not the majority are on the side of right. It was thought, that the affair was very badly managed, and by some that the intention was to insult the feelings of the people, at any rate it did so,--most wantonly. There is a strong determination, to stand by those arrested, on the part of Anti-Slavery men, and to help them to bear their heavy liabilities, consequent

-- 92 --

upon this affair. It is cheering to see how these trials draw nearer together, the hearts that have felt for years on this subject, and how much they comfort one another. Another circumstance too gives comfort and strength, and it is this, Numbers of persons, who never felt any interest in the cause of the slave, before, now seem to have all their feelings roused, and their sympathies awakened, in his behalf,--and this feeling is not manifested alone in words, but in deeds of a more substantial character--

*Sunday Evening [October 26]*. Mr. Miner's discourse this AM. was quite animated & interesting, from these words, "The time has come, when judgment must begin at the house of God." 1st Peter, 4th, 21. I was much pleased with his application of his subject. Indeed I think, Our pastor, was never so eloquent or interesting as of late, for the trials of the time, seem to act upon him, with a sort of inspiration. Mr. C. was at meeting looking very unwell.--I shall rejoice if this affair comes to a quiet termination and we can once more settle down into a peaceful way of life. I don't see much of my husband, and when he is present in body, he is most of the time, absent in spirit,--which is very trying to me. I hope I shall have patience to endure, and so may we all, the trials put upon us, and conduct ourselves with cheerfulness and fortitude.--I sometimes think, it is fortunate for me, that I have so many domestic matters to attend to, so that my mind is constantly occupied, and there is no opportunity to dwell upon these vexatious matters.

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Note : *. This was the well-known "Jerry Rescue." The file with which Jerry's fetters were removed came from the Wheaton house. Mr. Wheaton did not personally take part in the rescue, as while it occurred he was in Hon. Charles B. Sedgwick's office, looking up law for the next day's court proceedings. After Jerry got to Canada he sent Mr. Wheaton a loaded cane of his own manufacture.