

9-28-1878

Letter from L. Maria Child, 1878-09-28, Wayland, Mass., to Anne Whitney, Boston, Mass.

Lydia Maria Child

Wellesley College Archives

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.wellesley.edu/whitney_correspondence

Recommended Citation

Child, Lydia Maria and Wellesley College Archives, "Letter from L. Maria Child, 1878-09-28, Wayland, Mass., to Anne Whitney, Boston, Mass." (1878). *Papers of Anne Whitney (MSS.4): Correspondence*. 1522.
https://repository.wellesley.edu/whitney_correspondence/1522

This Correspondence is brought to you for free and open access by the Papers of Anne Whitney (MSS.4) at Wellesley College Digital Scholarship and Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Papers of Anne Whitney (MSS.4): Correspondence by an authorized administrator of Wellesley College Digital Scholarship and Archive. For more information, please contact ir@wellesley.edu.

[L. Maria Child]

Sept 29-78

spv

X
Anne Whitney,

92 Mount Vernon
- Boston.

Mass 'to



I was glad to see that Mrs. Street
 had so short a voyage.
 affectionate greetings to Miss Manning.

Wayland, Sep. 28th, 1878.

Dear Friend,

My jest about your
 want of faith in immortality was
 merely a little bubbling up of my
 girlish propensity to "twit & fling,"
 for fun. It would be very un-
 reasonable for me either to ridicule
 or rebuke want of faith on that
 subject. In the first place, I know
 very well that it is not in our own
 power either to believe, or disbe-
 lieve; and, in the second place,
 few have wandered farther
 into Doubt-land, than myself.
 Moreover, I have never cared so
 much for immortality, as most
 people do. The idea of going to
 sleep and waking no more is

not unpleasant to me, it simply presents itself to my mind as rest for the weary. Nevertheless, I have a strong impression that this is not the end of our conscious individual existence.

With regard to "spiritualism," its humbug and charlatanism can not be otherwise than disgusting to any sensible mind, but nothing will ever change my conviction that some of its alleged phenomena are real; and that they originate in some unknown but fixed laws of our mysterious being. I do not see how Scientists, even if more fair-minded than they generally are, can contrive to investigate the subject; for, like Archimedes, they can find no place to plant the lever. For facts within

my own personal knowledge I cannot account on any other ground, than by the supposition that minds somewhere, in forms regulated by laws different from our own, do, under some circumstances communicate with us. No known material laws can account for things that do occur. There is mind at work in the process, just as surely as mind dictates the message that electricity conveys by telegraphic wires. There is no use in reasoning with me about this; for I know it, just as certainly as I know that water, under given conditions becomes ice. But, though I have accepted what came to me, I shall not follow up the subject, because I have exceeding distaste and distrust for the ways

4

and means employed. Moreover,
I believe it is more healthy, both
for mind and body, to occupy
oneself with the duties of this
life. I deem frequent visits to
Cloud-land as injurious to the
mind, as the habitual use of
opium or gas is to the body. X

I did not
suppose that the kind plans you
were forming for me were
located in your own dwelling.
I thank you, most cordially.
If I were forty years old, the
partnership would be very
tempting. But when one is
old and weary, it does not do
so well to be an appendage to
another person's household,
however pleasant that household
may be. Old people peculiarly
need a home of their own,
where they can regulate things
according

to the habits they have formed. It is difficult, nay impossible, for you to conceive what a different aspect life will present to you, whenever you are 77 years old.

Then again my presence would be a very incongruous element in your artistic home. Possible paralysis, or other sickness, and the certainty of death not far off, is the heritage of old age. The task even of witnessing these liabilities you ought not to take upon yourself. An artist should have bright surroundings, and a mind free from care.

As for Aspasia, it is so many years since I have read "Philothea", that I don't remember what I did say of her. I dare say my mental and moral horizon was

- much more limited than it now is, though the small area it enclosed was wonderfully brightened with flowers and rainbows. The Grecians must certainly have had some ideas of a very high type of feminine character, or they never would have imagined such goddesses as took form in the statues of Juno, Minerva, and the Venus of Milo. The last, especially, seems to me

"A perfect woman, nobly planned
To warn, to comfort, and command."

My arrangements for the winter are all unsettled, excepting that my repugnance to lodging-house life is unconquerable.

My health has been unimpaired all summer, though the extreme heat wilted my strength to an unusual degree. God bless you!

Your affectionate old friend,
L. Maria Child.