

12-2-1852

Letter from Thomas Wentworth Higginson,
Worcester, Massachusetts, to Anne Whitney, 1852
December 2

Thomas Wentworth Higginson

Wellesley College Archives

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

Recommended Citation

Higginson, Thomas Wentworth and Wellesley College Archives, "Letter from Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Worcester, Massachusetts, to Anne Whitney, 1852 December 2" (1852). *Papers of Anne Whitney (MSS.4): Correspondence*. 835.
https://repository.wellesley.edu/whitney_correspondence/835

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.

Not knowing your address, I must send this to my friend Miss Augusta King of Salem, & not her to

discuss your
theorists.

This may
make delay,
but I shall
hope to hear
from you
at some
time.

Worcester, Mass. Dec. 2. 1852.

Dear Madam, (A few letters saved in some instances ^{out of} a correspondence of some years -)

Though I am strictly a stranger to you - (perhaps I should not have been so, had Miss Mariana Pater told me earlier of your stay at Newburyport) - still my object must plead my excuse for addressing you.

In connection with my friend Rev. Samuel Longfellow of Portland, Me., I have for some time had a project of a small book to be called "Thalatta, a Book of Poetry for the Sea-side" or the harbors. At least we have got so far as the first word of the title, which if written in Aztec would be more intelligible to Miss Elizabeth Bancroft Brantley - & perhaps to you also.

Our object is simply to make such a collection of ballad & other poetry as will give most sympathy & suggestion to persons dwelling by the sea, or wishing that they were by it. Among

these we naturally wish to include your
poem of Bertha, or "we still can wait." And
I write therefore first to ask your consent to
print this; - I having said this, to say something
yet more daring.

Will it injure the last verse of this poem
if it be printed as follows, or have I mistaken
its meaning?

"Was it well, you ask - (Nay, was it ill?)

Who sat last year by the old man's hearth;

- The sun had past below the earth

And the first star looked his western gate" &c
Am I right in supposing that the who in the second
line refers to the you in the first - & that the
"Nay, was it ill?" is a little under-though of
the teller of the story, inserted impulsively between
the two clauses? If otherwise, there is a little mist
over the passage ~~of~~ or over my mind. But if I
am right, I think the parenthesis, ⁱⁿ which ^{I have} enclosed
the inserted word will help explain them.

I know how sensitive one is to any
such perplexities or digressions as those on which

I have ventured; but I know that I
have earned a right to criticize both this & your
other poem of Susanna, not so much by my own
high appreciation of their rare quality, but
by many readings & recitations of them to others.

May I hope that the admiration with
which these songs of yours have been greeted
will not (as in the case of Grace Greenwood's
remarkable "Triadme") forever prevent the pro-
-duction of anything equally valuable for the
same cause?

Our "Thalatta" is to be published by
Ticknor & Co in the Spring & will go to press
in February. We hope to add a very few original
verses to our collection, & I need hardly say
that we should be much gratified by any appro-
-priate contribution from you.

Asking your pardon if I have taken
too great a liberty in thus writing, I am

Yours respectfully

J. W. Higginson.

Miss Anne Whitney.