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## Letter to Louise Guiney, 1876 November 7

Patrick Guiney

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Boston Nov. 7. 1876.

My darling child:

Your note dated the fifth inst. made the best part of my breakfast this morning. It was very nice, and, as you may expect, we all took part in devouring it. Mamma, aunt, Hal, the great Triumvir, "Tony", and gentle "blee", the sorceress of the Nile, all had a share of the pleasure addressed to me. As I write, though, the long letter dated the twenty ninth of October, is before me, and, in what I have to say this morning, I must pay respects to that official and formidable looking document.

Well, I'm glad that you and I have one subject on which we disagree. I think well of cigars, and you don't, and I'll never give up the solace if you twit and scold me till the memory of Washington ceases to be blessed! Perhaps you will surrender your hostility when you grow up, and then how dreadfully monotonous our lives will be! I hope you will stick, though, so that we may have something to pepper existence with when you come home. By the way, I have a cigar case, given me by Father Egan who received it from a Southern officer who was dying in the Wilderness, and to whom he gave the viaticum. As



to the "grass widows" about whom you inquire, I certainly have no special knowledge. I understand what a war-widow is, and what a California widow is, and what a real widow is, but a grass widow is, to use the language of Lord Dundreary, "one of those things that no fellow can find out." But pray tell me, dear, what caused you to regard me as an expert in the science of widows? I'm not guilty - I protest my innocence, even that I am unsophisticated, and would scarcely know a widow if I saw her in a graveyard. You had better ask Father Sullivan, for the question may be one of faith or morals, and so more in his line. I give it up.

That dream of yours was indeed strange; but stranger still was it that I had the same identical dream about you that very night, with the pillow left out; I thought I rescued you from drowning in that pond at Elmhurst. "What a strange coincidence", as one rogue said when he met another. However, I'm much obliged to you, darling, for your heroic rescue of poor papa - no doubt it was just what you would have done if the occasion had been real.

Yes, no doubt, Scott's "Abbot" and "Monastery" are bad. I never read them through, but read just enough

to see what an ill bred and lying fellow a great man can be when the ink is protestant and the subject catholic. But suppose all he says were true, what of it? If lawyers are sinners, is the law changed? If Sir Isaac Newton drank too much wine, would that circumstance alter the laws by which the universe is held in harmony? If Socrates ill used his sweet Xantippe, must it therefore cease to be true that one body cannot occupy different places at the same time? If all the logicians in Boston should cut up shins, does not the truth still remain the same, that two and two make four? etc, my pet, these all truths in no way dependent on the behavior of men or women. And while it's well to shun books like those mentioned and forbidden by the church, if you should be so unfortunate as to find yourself reading the like unwittingly, remember the church founded by our Lord rests upon ~~&~~ eternal truth that men cannot jar or vitiate. Whatever men do, God remains the same, and His church will stand forever. Heaven help me, pet, if I had not in my youth, found that the holiness and infallibility of the church were <sup>not</sup> dependent on the conduct of those who profess our faith. Nor can you learn the lesson too soon. It may serve you well, even in reading bigotted books like the "Monastery" and the "Abbot," and especially in your future



contact with the rough world. Here I find myself in the humor for a prolonged sermon, yet I spare you, pet, for I do not like to talk solemnly to you unless you coax me to do so. I had rather play or chat with you about what you call "funny" things. And this brings me to politics. Today is the fatal one for — well, say the republicans, though fate may strike the democrats. It will ~~a day~~ take a day or two to find out just who is elected. My opinion is that Mr. Tilden will be elected President and Charles Francis Adams, Governor of this state. I am an independent with democratic proclivities, and as soon as this letter is mailed I am going to cast my vote for Tilden and Adams. I do not say that Mr. Tilden is a better man than your soldier-friend General Hayes; but we want peace and prosperity in our country, and I think Mr. Tilden's election will secure these things.

Ah, when you do come home, won't we have a raid on the pantry and such odd places, where mamma hides her nice things in security? There'll be "music in the air" as well as in the parlor when you come home Christmas, I'm thinking. I'll turn the crank and blow, if you will attend to the Keys!

Papa.