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Letter to Louise Guiney, 1876 December 5

Patrick Guiney

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This letter nearly broke my heart at the time it was written. At Edinburgh all our letters ^{incom-}
ing and outgoing were opened. I thought it, and think it, a wicked system, a destructive of con-
fidences & home life. L.S.C., 1900.

Proton, Dec. 5. 1896.

My dear Lillie -

Your postal card just received, and, previously, your letters of the
the third and prior dates. All right. The letter dated the third
inst, though, was the most delightful of all your messages
so far as I can now remember. Certainly, I never enjoyed
anything in that line quite so much as I did that. The
news - the local items which interest you, and, therefore, me,
were described in a style that pleased me beyond measure.
The smoothness, directness and simplicity of the sentences
show that you are making true progress in rhetoric.
The letter dated a week before, however, is the one that I
want to talk about particularly. For many a long year I've
been trying and wishing to provoke you into a degree of
candor with me in relation to the secret thoughts I
know to be quite common to all sprightly young people.
I suffered very much when I was about your age because
I had no one to tell the secrets of my soul to. I say
secrets, not sins, mark you, for we all know when, and
how and to whom to confess our sins; but I mean the
yearnings and aspirations of my heart. You are more hap-
pily situated, yet; you may whisper every note in the
whole gamut of your sensibility in the ear of papa and
be sure of his sympathy in every one. You can intensify
my love for you, if you will, by giving me your absolute confidence.

You speak of life as monotonous, especially to a girl. No doubt it seems so to you; it once seemed so to me; but I've found plenty to do since, and while I can understand and sympathize with you, at your present age, I do not wish the opportunity to pass without telling you just how I now feel about that matter. Perhaps you will think that it is easy for me to say that life is interesting to men, always, they have so many opportunities to take part in its turmoils; if they are so disposed; but, my pet, bear in mind that the overstrain to which men are thus subjected ever ends in disappointment or loss of health, or both. Women — you are a little woman — are far better off, they are never expected to take part in the turmoils of life; in the angry struggles of politics; in the making and unmaking of nations; in none of those gigantic crimes which blacken the pages of human history. Men, indeed, have glorious duties, if they perform them as they should; ~~and~~ ^{but} women have duties to perform requiring a far more permanent heroism, and, deserving, when well done, the applause of angels and the favors of Heaven. In a word, pet, to a catholic a monotonous life is impossible, whether man or woman, boy or girl. There are the ordinary of life; no small affair to attend to them. The practices of religion, never tiresome, always delightful to the soul; the boundless opportunities of charity. No, dear, life never can

be monotonous for you, if you will only take the right, the sensible view of it, keeping in mind, always, the fundamental idea that this life is the mere vestibule of the immortal life, where alone real happiness is to be attained. As Longfellow says, "Life is real, life is earnest," and our proper business is to get through it bravely without repining or flinching, however our lot be cast in it.

"Honor and shame from no condition rise;
Act well your part, there all the honor lies."
Let me come back to domestic subjects. Mamma was delighted with her recent visit to Elmhurst; but I must tell you about a little misfortune connected with it. You were in the infirmary, you know, but that was not it. I spent a dreadfully lonesome night, as you may imagine, but that was not it. The truth is Mamma lost the train at Providence, and spent the night at the house of our old friend Mr. Houston in that city. However, the next morning, bright and early, she came home all right. I got over my anxiety and the birds got over the dumps when Sunnyface arrived. Good bye, dear, for two weeks and three days, when I hope to meet you and eat you up, on the skirmish-line of Happy Christmas.

Papa.