

Hollis April 11 1853 -  
My Dear Annie,

Your letters have been very welcome and I hardly know how to express my gratitude, since you are so improved a correspondent, and almost threaten to eclipse me in frequency of writing. But I am not without strong fears of a lull in your epistolary fervor, but hope the change may prove permanent -- For myself, I have had a strange disinclination to writing thro' the Winter, but the Spring sunshine makes me genial and forces the feeling into some sort of expression, and so if not forced into too absorbing Spring avocations my friends may occasionally be deluged with ink.

I wish to tell you something of my Portland visit, yet so many intervening weeks will make it seem in the accounting, like a 'twice told tale'.

I went with Mira who was obliged to have an operation performed for local dropsy - She was very sick at first but improved very rapidly and was always cheerful and disinterested. We were only three weeks, yet I found

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The high aspirations of the ideal heart - baffled or realized shall they not pale the face with a yearning regret - or the intensiveness of an exalted glory? But then Annie - an old-fashioned constitution may perchance outwear even heart dreams of some intencness. I hope so, for I would like to think that beauty might without a miracle outlast even seventy years of life - not vegetation - but real - earnest life.

I was over-persuaded to attend the Inauguration Ball - which was decidedly a democratic affair and not at all enthusiastic - Jeannie Anderson looked beautiful and brilliant - and was to my thinking the brightest star in the heaven of democracy. Lizzy Chase - Maria and Jenny Usher were there. - More than anything in Portland I enjoyed an evening at Dr. Nichol's - only Akers and Dr. Bacons family were invited, but the dear old Dr. is so fascinating in his own house - I always

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Date: April 11, 1853  
Description: Martha Usher Osgood, who had been widowed for about four years, described in a letter to "Annie" a three-week visit to Portland to accompany a sick friend.

*believe he talks like Coleridge and looks like Goethe. I read nothing but a pleasant German book - 'Norica' - resembling the 'Artist's Married Life' in style and in having the same hero - Durer the German Painter, and Goethe's essays on Art - both*

time for several dissipation. Portland has been very gay this Winter - a succession of splendid parties, where each hostess outdid every preceding one. I did not like the parties - they were too expensive and showy and to my thinking not ordered by a true taste - the rooms too crowded - the gas light too powerful - the dancing too jerky - the tables too loaded with french fixings - candy temples and cornucopias of bon-bons - reminding one of the show window of a confectionary shop - Methinks the sweet freshness of flowers would be more grateful to the eye - and the luscious glow of fruits more tempting to a refined taste.

Let me see what from the groaning tables I liked. I think always I ate a few oysters - sometimes a little chicken salad - a bit of candied orange or an ice-cream. Bon-bons are too childish - and to see grown up people really feasting on candy temples - tho' Grecian - is too heathenish and perverted a taste. Then I do not like the modern fashion of making the eating the most prominent part of an even a festal entertainment. everybody goes into ecstasies over the appointments of a supper table - how magnificent! what exquisite taste! superb! etc. I confess it seems ludicrous to me tho' I admit the showy brilliancy of the thing. It is too Hotel or 'Caffe' like - the compliments are all due to some shining black-confectionaire Caterer. Flowers there were in profusion - only not perfumed and not smiling out from antique vases. Every lady wore a whole conservatory of them on her hair and dress.

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Ben's Nature of Benjamin is very beautiful - I hope you may see it some time. I do not speak of it critically of course - I only feel it is beautiful. Ben often passes a day or two with us and makes happy mention of you - days he is very glad to have known you and hopes to

The tasteful brilliancy of the ladies costume made pleasant pictures for the eye, tho' perhaps the lavish profusion of flowers gave a theatrical effect, <sup>yet</sup> they were exquisite imitations of remembered garden treasures, and generally wore becomingly. Dresses were pink - blue or white silks - white flounced tassetons - with <sup>an</sup> occasional velvet and an occasional train. You might see a fresh blooming girl with a wealth of trembling apple-blossoms looping her dress and trembling in her hair - reminding you with the sweet breath of Spring - another more stately - sports large clusters of rich geranium, that would seem too gorgeous - only they are so beautifully veined and blended - then comes a brunette with only knots of pansies starring her white dress and wreathed in her hair - how well they suit her oriental complexion! That - too was forced to wear flowers that she might not be conspicuous, so she chose half blown moss rose-buds - not crimson-hearted - but nearly so - a deep pink - and made a heavy wreath for her hair - but wore no others.

I attended the excellent party of the season and make that an exception - It was at C. Q. Clapp's, and seemed to me the only one that quite seized its pretensions. The house is old-fashioned - with very spacious - lofty rooms elaborately carved in the ceilings - A broad hall quite divides the house - having a wide staircase in the middle - leaving a nice waltzing or promenading court all round - while above hang family and ancestral portraits with a few old landscapes. The most interesting

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picture to me was the elder hostess - Mrs. Gen. Wingate (Mrs. Clapp's Mother). You have heard me speak of her - she <sup>was</sup> a friend and cotemporary of Mrs. Pres. Maddison's and must be seventy years old, yet you will hardly imagine how beautiful. She has finely cut features and a bloom that many a young lady might well barter the blood dancing in youthful veins, for. She was dressed in black velvet with a stately train - black lace drapery falling from her shoulders - low corsage in front with white lace drapery confined at the throat with a brooch - one diamond set round with pearls - and below that a large pearl brooch - a little cap on the back of the head with white feathers curling to the cheek - between the cap and brow a broad band of black velvet clasped with a magnificent branch of pearls - Long pearl ear-rings with exquisite drapery under sleeves and white kid gloves - complete the costume - I could only think of some magnificent court-lady of the olden time - her manners and her wonderful beauty are just in that style. Her daughter Mrs. Clapp is a fine stately lady with a far more discriminating depth of heart and character - but not so romance-like. She was dressed in black velvet with magnificent diamonds and a head-dress of pink feathers - her daughter Mrs. Carrol, also very handsome - wore a white watered silk - covered with boquets of pink roses - and pearl ornaments - I wish you could see Madame Wingate - but an unpleasant thought would intrusively haunt me when I looked admiringly upon her - (she is charming) - something would whisper - under that perennial bloom

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