

Hawthorne Nathaniel

**Love Letters of Nathaniel
Hawthorne. Volume 1 of
2**



Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Hawthorne N.

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LOVE LETTERS OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

INTRODUCTORY

In "Hawthorne and His Wife" and "Memories of Hawthorne" both Julian Hawthorne and his sister, Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, have given citations from the letters written by Nathaniel Hawthorne to Miss Sophia Peabody during their years of courtship. These excerpts were free and irregular, often, and evidently with specific intent, taken out of order and run together as if for the purpose of illustrating a point or emphasizing a particular phase of character. While the extracts were sufficiently numerous for the object desired, and while they gave an agreeable glimpse of an interesting period of Hawthorne's life, they were necessarily too fragmentary, too lacking in continuity, to convey any adequate idea of the simplicity, beauty, humor and tenderness of the letters, even considered in the matter of a literary style.

The original letters were acquired by Mr. William K. Bixby of St. Louis, and, at the urgent request of the Society of the Dofobs, of which he is a highly esteemed and honored member, turned over to the society with the understanding that they should be published for presentation to members only. It was specified also that great care should be exercised in going over the letters, that no apparent confidences should be violated and that all private and personal references, which might wound the feelings of the living or seem to speak ill of the dead, should be eliminated. It is indeed remarkable that in the large number of letters presented there was practically nothing which called for elision, nothing in the lighter mood which breathed a spirit beyond the innocent limits of good-natured banter. The work of the editors was consequently easy and grateful, and the task one of delight.

It is not claimed that these love letters, so-called, comprise the entire correspondence on Hawthorne's part between Miss Peabody and himself during the three-and-one-half years of courtship. Naturally a series of letters begun sixty-eight years ago, with all the vicissitudes of a shifting life, would not be preserved intact. But while some letters have been lost or destroyed, and others may not have been permitted for one reason or another to leave the possession of the family, the continuity here preserved is practically as complete as could be desired and fully illustrative of the qualities which make them so worthy of publication. In giving these letters to its members the society has conformed strictly to the exactions of the manuscript save in a few cases perhaps where haste on the part of the writer omitted a word, slightly obscuring the sense. It has been deemed advisable also to omit all notes or paragraphs of explanation. Happily the letters are sufficiently intelligible without such notes, and the conclusion has been reached that no needed purpose can be served by minor explanatory details relating to individuals mentioned or incidents suggested. It has been thought best as well to add a few letters extending beyond the period of courtship. No defence is necessary, for to the last they are "love letters" in the purest and truest sense of the words. This will be vindicated in the perusal.

In selecting two letters for facsimile reproduction the choice has fallen upon the letter from Brook Farm under date of April 13, 1841, and that from Salem written in the following year. Both illustrate the quiet, quaint humor of Hawthorne. In the Brook Farm letter he sketches drily his thinly veiled impressions of the community, and herein will be found the famous reference to "Miss Fuller's

transcendental heifer" which has fallen little short of immortality. Writing from the old home in Salem he makes his letter conspicuous by the fact that he prophesies banteringly – doubtless he little knew how truly – his own coming fame and the public craze to inspect his belongings. This humorous tribute to himself, in its mock, self-satisfied strain, suggests not so much the mental state of Horace predicting his metamorphosis and immortality as the good-natured prophecy of Burns that "you may expect henceforth to see my birthday inscribed among the wonderful events in the Poor Robin and Aberdeen Almanacks, along with the Black Monday and the Battle of Bothwell Bridge." Horace, Burns, Hawthorne – how all exceeded their predictions, whether gravely or lightly made!

It is true that to many persons of sensibility the thought of publishing the love letters of men and women however distinguished or in the public mind is repugnant. It seems to them a violation of a sacred confidence, a wanton exposure of a tenderness not intended for the world as a part of its literary diversion. The objection in many instances is a fair one, and too often the obligation of delicacy has been violated and the dictates of gentle consideration have been unheeded. Of recent years more persons have been shocked than gratified by the exploitation of love letters of famous women or men, and by the ruthless tearing away of the veil which has concealed their happy love life, and this emotion of disapprobation has not been lessened by the apparent fact that a sordid motive inspired the publication. At the outset such impulse of disinclination possessed the gentleman who owns the Hawthorne manuscript and the members of the society with whom he conversed with reference to its appearance in type. It was only after the letters had been carefully read, the motive governing their publication seriously analyzed, and the respectful limits of their circulation considered, that this doubting impulse vanished.

That any one can read these letters without a warmer, closer feeling for the "shy, grave Hawthorne" seems impossible. To one who has perused them in manuscript, transcription and proof sheets there comes almost a conviction that he wrote them not merely for the woman waiting for the day when pledges should be sanctified, but with the half wish that all sympathetic spirits might see him and know him as he was. For gaily he speaks of his own bashfulness and reserve; hopefully he passes beyond the drudgery and disappointments of his position in life to the future which allures him; bravely he fights anxiety and care; with quaint humor and lightness of touch he pictures the scenes around that amuse and interest him. And when in loving remembrance he calls for the "Dove," or with mock seriousness chides the "naughty Sophie Hawthorne," a strong affection is breathed in gentleness, a manly tenderness delights in every line.

And whether toiling with the measurer in the vessel's hold, or chafing with him in the somberness of the custom house, sharing now his relief from distasteful tasks and now his dreams for a happier day, the reader feels the spirit of the past. And above all the shadowy ghostliness of the threescore years seems to come the perfume of the apple blossoms that fell around the Wayside, with the gentle graciousness of a time well known to all, when youth and love and hope are young.

Roswell Field.

TO MISS PEABODY

Wednesday Afternoon, March 6th, 1839

My dearest Sophie:

I had a parting glimpse of you, Monday forenoon, at your window – and that image abides by me, looking pale, and not so quiet as is your wont. I have reproached myself many times since, because I did not show my face, and then we should both have smiled; and so our reminiscences would have been sunny instead of shadowy. But I believe I was so intent on seeing you, that I forgot all about the desirableness of being myself seen. Perhaps, after all, you did see me – at least you

knew that I was there. I fear that you were not quite well that morning. Do grow better and better – physically, I mean, for I protest against any spiritual improvement, until I am better able to keep pace with you – but do be strong, and full of life – earthly life – and let there be a glow in your cheeks. And sleep soundly the whole night long, and get up every morning with a feeling as if you were newly created; and I pray you to lay up a stock of fresh energy every day till we meet again; so that we may walk miles and miles, without your once needing to lean upon my arm. Not but what you *shall* lean upon it, as much as you choose – indeed, whether you choose or not – but I would feel as if you did it to lighten my footsteps, not to support your own. Am I requiring you to work a miracle within yourself? Perhaps so – yet, not a greater one than I do really believe might be wrought by inward faith and outward aids. Try it, my Dove, and be as lightsome on earth as your sister doves are in the air.

Tomorrow I shall expect a letter from you; but I am almost in doubt whether to tell you that I expect it; because then your conscience will reproach you, if you should happen not to have written. I would leave you as free as you leave me. But I do wonder whether you were serious in your last letter, when you asked me whether you wrote too often, and seemed to think that you might thus interfere with my occupations. My dear Sophie, your letters are no small portion of my spiritual food, and help to keep my soul alive, when otherwise it might languish unto death, or else become hardened and earth-incrusted, as seems to be the case with almost all the souls with whom I am in daily intercourse. They never interfere with my worldly business – neither the reading nor the answering them – (I am speaking of your letters, not of those "earth-incrusted" souls) – for I keep them to be the treasure of my still and secret hours, such hours as pious people spend in prayer; and the communion which my spirit then holds with yours has something of religion in it. The charm of your letters does not depend upon their intellectual value, though that is great, but on the spirit of which they are the utterance, and which is a spirit of wonderful efficacy. No one, whom you would deem worthy of your friendship, could enjoy so large a share of it as I do, without feeling the influence of your character throughout his own – purifying his aims and desires, enabling him to realise that this is a truer world than the feverish one around us, and teaching him how to gain daily entrance into that better world. Such, so far as I have been able to profit by it, has been your ministration to me. Did you dream what an angelic guardianship was entrusted to you?

March 7th. Your letter did come. You had not the heart to disappoint me, as I did you, in not making a parting visit, and shall again, by keeping this letter to send by Mary. But I disappoint you in these two instances, only that you may consider it a decree of Fate (or of Providence, which you please) that we shall not meet on the mornings of my departure, and that my letters shall not come oftener than on the alternate Saturday. If you will but believe this, you will be quiet. Otherwise I know that the Dove will flutter her wings, and often, by necessity, will flutter them in vain. So forgive me, and let me have my own way, and believe (for it is true) that I never cause you the slightest disappointment without pain and remorse on my part. And yet, I know that when you wish me to do any particular thing you will always tell me so, and that if my sins of omission or commission should ever wound your heart, you will by no means conceal it.

I did enjoy that walk infinitely – for certainly the enjoyment was not all finite. And what a heavenly pleasure we might have enjoyed this very day; the air was so delicious, that it seemed as if the dismal old Custom House was situated in Paradise; and this afternoon, I sat with my window open, to temper the glow of a huge coal fire. It almost seems to me, now, as if beautiful days were wasted and thrown away, when we do not feel their beauty and heavenliness through one another.

Your own friend,
N. H.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, April 2d, 1839

Mine own Dove,

I have been sitting by my fireside ever since teatime, till now it is past eight o'clock; and have been musing and dreaming about a thousand things, with every one of which, I do believe, some nearer or remoter thought of you was intermingled. I should have begun this letter earlier in the evening, but was afraid that some intrusive idler would thrust himself between us, and so the sacredness of my letter would be partly lost; – for I feel as if my letters were sacred, because they are written from my spirit to your spirit. I wish it were possible to convey them to you by other than earthly messengers – to convey them directly into your heart, with the warmth of mine still lingering in them. When we shall be endowed with our spiritual bodies, I think they will be so constituted, that we may send thoughts and feelings any distance, in no time at all, and transfuse them warm and fresh into the consciousness of those whom we love. Oh what a bliss it would be, at this moment; if I could be conscious of some purer feeling, some more delicate sentiment, some lovelier fantasy, than could possibly have had its birth in my own nature, and therefore be aware that my Dove was thinking through my mind and feeling through my heart! Try – some evening when you are alone and happy, and when you are most conscious of loving me and being loved by me – and see if you do not possess this power already. But, after all, perhaps it is not wise to intermix fantastic ideas with the reality of our affection. Let us content ourselves to be earthly creatures, and hold communion of spirit in such modes as are ordained to us – by letters (dipping our pens as deep as may be into our hearts) by heartfelt words, when they can be audible; by glances – through which medium spirits do really seem to talk in their own language – and by holy kisses, which I do think have something supernatural in them.

And now good night, my beautiful Dove. I do not write any more at present, because there are three more whole days before this letter will visit you: and I desire to talk with you, each of those three days. Your letter did not come today. Even if it should not come tomorrow, I shall not imagine that you forget me or neglect me, but shall heave two or three sighs, and measure salt and coal so much the more diligently. Good night; and if I have any power, at this distance, over your spirit, it shall be exerted to make you sleep like a little baby, till the "Harper of the Golden Dawn" arouse you. Then you must finish that ode. But do, if you love me, sleep.

April 3d. No letter, my dearest; and if one comes tomorrow I shall not receive it till Friday, nor perhaps then; because I have a cargo of coal to measure in East Cambridge, and cannot go to the Custom House till the job is finished. If you had known this, I think you would have done your [best] possible to send me a letter today. Doubtless you have some good reason for omitting it. I was invited to dine at Mr. Hooper's; with your sister Mary; and the notion came into my head, that perhaps you would be there, – and though I knew that it could not be so, yet I felt as if it might. But just as I was going home from the Custom House to dress, came an abominable person to say that a measurer was wanted forthwith at East Cambridge; so over I hurried, and found that, after all, nothing would be done till tomorrow morning at sunrise. In the meantime, I had lost my dinner, and all other pleasures that had awaited me at Mr. Hooper's; so that I came back in very ill humor, and do not mean to be very good-natured again, till my Dove shall nestle upon my heart again, either in her own sweet person, or by her image in a letter. But your image will be with me, long before the letter comes. It will flit around me while I am measuring coal, and will peep over my shoulder to see whether I keep a correct account, and will smile to hear my bickerings with the black-faced demons in the vessel's hold, (they look like the forge-men in Retsch's Fridolin) and will soothe and mollify me amid all the pester and plague that is in store for me tomorrow. Not that I would avoid this pester and plague, even if it were in my power to do so. I need such training, and ought to have undergone it long ago.

It will give my character a healthy hardness as regards the world; while it will leave my heart as soft – as fit for a Dove to rest upon – as it is now, or ever was. Good night again, gentle Dove. I must leave a little space for tomorrow's record; and moreover, it is almost time that I were asleep, having to get up in the dusky dawn. Did you yield to my conjurations, and sleep well last night? Well then, I throw the same spell over you tonight.

April 4th. ½ past 9 P.M. I came home late in the afternoon, very tired, sunburnt and sea-flushed, having walked or sat on the deck of a schooner ever since sunrise. Nevertheless, I purified myself from the sable stains of my profession – stains which I share in common with chimney sweepers – and then hastened to the Custom House to get your letter – for I *knew* there was one there awaiting me, and now I thank you with my whole heart, and will straight way go to sleep. Do you the same.

April 5th. Your yesterday's letter is received, my beloved Sophie. I have no time to answer it: but, like all your communications, personal or written, it is the sunshine of my life. I have been busy all day, and am now going to see your sister Mary – and I hope, Elizabeth. Mr. Pickens is going with me.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Wednesday, April 17th, 1839 – 4 o'clock P.M.

My Dearest:

If it were not for your sake, I should really be glad of this pitiless east wind, and should especially bless the pelting rain and intermingled snowflakes. They have released me from the toils and cares of office, and given me license to betake myself to my own chamber; and here I sit by a good coal fire, with at least six or seven comfortable hours to spend before bed-time. I feel pretty secure against intruders; for the bad weather will defend me from foreign invasion; and as to Cousin Haley, he and I had a bitter political dispute last evening, at the close of which he went to bed in high dudgeon, and probably will not speak to me these three days. Thus you perceive that strife and wrangling, as well as east winds and rain, are the methods of a kind Providence to promote my comfort – which would not have been so well secured in any other way. Six or seven hours of cheerful solitude! But I will not be alone. I invite your spirit to be with me – at any hour and as many hours as you please – but especially at the twilight hour, before I light my lamp. Are you conscious of my invitation? I bid you at that particular time, because I can see visions more vividly in the dusky glow of fire light, than either by daylight or lamplight. Come – and let me renew my spell against headache and other direful effects of the east wind. How I wish I could give you a portion of my insensibility! – And yet I should be almost afraid of some radical transformation, were I to produce a change in that respect. God made you so delicately, that it is especially unsafe to interfere with His workmanship. If my little Sophie – mine own Dove – cannot grow plump and rosy and tough and vigorous without being changed into another nature then I do think that for this short life, she had better remain just what she is. Yes; but you will always be the same to me, because we have met in Eternity, and there our intimacy was formed. So get as well as you possibly can, and be as strong and rosy as you will; for I shall never doubt that you are the same Sophie who have so often leaned upon my arm, and needed its superfluous strength.

I *was* conscious, on those two evenings, of a peacefulness and contented repose such as I never enjoyed before. You could not have felt such quiet unless I had felt it too – nor could I, unless you had. If either of our spirits had been troubled, they were then in such close communion that both must have felt the same grief and turmoil. I never, till now, had a friend who could give me repose; – all have disturbed me; and whether for pleasure or pain, it was still disturbance, but peace overflows from your heart into mine. Then I feel that there is a Now – and that Now must be always calm and happy – and that sorrow and evil are but phantoms that seem to flit across it.

You must never expect to see my sister E. in the daytime, unless by previous appointment, or when she goes to walk. So unaccustomed am I to daylight interviews, that I never imagine her in sunshine; and I really doubt whether her faculties of life and intellect begin to be exercised till dusk – unless on extraordinary occasions. Their noon is at midnight. I wish you could walk with her; but you must not, because she is indefatigable, and always wants to walk half round the world, when once she is out of doors.

April 18th. My Dove – my hopes of a long evening of seclusion were not quite fulfilled; for, a little before nine o'clock John Forrester and Cousin Haley came in, both of whom I so fascinated with my delectable conversation, that they did not take leave till after eleven. Nevertheless, I had already secured no inconsiderable treasure of enjoyment, with all of which you were intermingled. There has been nothing to do at the Custom House today; so I came home at two o'clock, and – went to sleep! Pray Heaven you may have felt a sympathetic drowsiness, and have yielded to it. My nap has been a pretty long one, for – as nearly as I can judge by the position of the sun, it must be as much as five o'clock. I think there will be a beautiful sunset; and perhaps, if we could walk out together, the wind would change and the air grow balmy at once. The Spring is not acquainted with my Dove and me, as the Winter was; – how then can we expect her to be kindly to us? We really must continue to walk out and meet her, and make friends with her; then she will salute your cheek with her balmiest kiss, whenever she gets a chance. As to the east wind, if ever the imaginative portion of my brain recover from its torpor, I mean to personify it as a wicked, spiteful, blustering, treacherous – in short, altogether devilish sort of body, whose principle of life it is to make as much mischief as he can. The west wind – or whatever is the gentlest wind of heaven – shall assume your aspect, and be humanised and angelicised with your traits of character, and the sweet West shall finally triumph over the fiendlike East, and rescue the world from his miserable tyranny; and if I tell the story well, I am sure my loving and beloved West Wind will kiss me for it.

When this week's first letter came, I held it a long time in my hand, marvelling at the superscription. How did you contrive to write it? Several times since, I have pored over it, to discover how much of yourself was mingled with my share of it; and certainly there is a grace flung over the fac simile, which was never seen in my harsh, uncouth autograph – and yet none of the strength is lost. You are wonderful. Imitate this.

Nath. Hawthorne.

Friday, April 19th. Your Wednesday's letter has come, dearest. Your letters delight me more than anything, save the sound of your voice; and I love dearly to write to you – so be at peace on that score. You *are* beautiful, my own heart's Dove. Never doubt it again. I shall really and truly be very glad of the extracts; and they will have a charm for me that could not otherwise have been. I will imagine your voice repeating them, tremulously. The *spell* which you laid upon my brow will retain its power till we meet again – then it must be renewed.

What a beautiful day – and I had a double enjoyment of it, for your sake and my own. I have been to walk this afternoon, to Bunker's Hill and the Navy Yard, and am tired, because I had not your arm to support me.

God keep you from East winds and every other evil.

Mine own Dove's own Friend,
N. H.

½ past 5 P.M.
Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, April 30th, 6 P.M., 1839

My beloved,

Your sweetest of all letters found me at the Custom House, where I had almost just arrived, having been engaged all the forenoon in measuring twenty chaldrons of coal – which dull occupation was enlivened by frequent brawls and amicable discussions with a crew of funny little Frenchmen from Acadie. I know not whether your letter was a surprise to me – it seems to me that I had a prophetic faith that the Dove would visit me – but at any rate, it was a joy, as it always is; for my spirit turns to you from all trouble and all pleasure. This forenoon I could not wait as I generally do, to be in solitude before opening your letter; for I expected to be busy all the afternoon, and was already tired with working yesterday and today; and my heart longed to drink your thoughts and feelings, as a parched throat for cold water. So I pressed the Dove to my lips (turning my head away, so that nobody saw me) and then broke the seal. I do think it is the dearest letter you have written, but I think so of each successive one; so you need not imagine that you have outdone yourself in this instance. How did I live before I knew you – before I possessed your affection! I reckon upon your love as something that is to endure when everything that can perish has perished – though my trust is sometimes mingled with fear, because I feel myself unworthy of your love. But if I am worthy of if you will always love me; and if there be anything good and pure in me, it will be proved by my always loving you.

After dinner. I had to journey over to East Cambridge, expecting to measure a cargo of coal there; but the vessel had stuck in the mud on her way thither, so that nothing could be done till tomorrow morning. It must have been my guardian angel that steered her upon that mud-bank, for I really needed rest. Did you lead the vessel astray, my Dove? I did not stop to inquire into particulars, but returned home forthwith, and locked my door, and threw myself on the bed, with your letter in my hand. I read it over slowly and peacefully, and then folding it up, I rested my heart upon it, and fell fast asleep.

Friday, May 3d. 5 P.M. My dearest, ten million occupations and interruptions, and intrusions, have kept me from going on with my letter; but my spirit has visited you continually, and yours has come to me. I have had to be out a good deal in the east winds; but your spell has proved sovereign against all harm, though sometimes I have shuddered and shivered for your sake. How have you borne it, my poor dear little Dove? Have you been able to flit abroad on today's east wind, and go to Marblehead, as you designed? You will not have seen Mrs. Hooper, because she came up to Boston in the cars on Monday morning. I had a brief talk with her, and we made mutual inquiries, she about you, and I about little C. I will not attempt to tell you how it rejoices me that we are to spend a whole month together in the same city. Looking forward to it, it seems to me as if that month would never come to an end, because there will be so much of eternity in it. I wish you had read that dream-letter through, and could remember its contents. I am very sure that it could not have [been] written by me, however, because I should not think of addressing you as "My dear Sister" – nor should I like to have you call me brother – nor even should have liked it, from the very first of our acquaintance. We are, I trust, kindred spirits, but not brother and sister. And then what a cold and dry annunciation of that awful contingency – the "continuance or not of our acquaintance." Mine own Dove, you are to blame for dreaming such letters, or parts of letters, as coming from me. It was you that wrote it – not I. Yet I will not believe that it shows a want of faith in the steadfastness of my affection, but only in the continuance of circumstances prosperous to our earthly and external connection. Let us trust in GOD for that. Pray to GOD for it, my Dove – for you know how to pray better than I do. Pray, for my sake, that no shadows of earth may ever come between us, because my only hope of being a happy man depends upon the permanence of our union. I have great comfort in such thoughts as

those you suggest – that our hearts here draw towards one another so unusually – that we have not cultivated our friendship, but let it grow, – that we have thrown ourselves upon one another with such perfect trust; – and even the deficiency of worldly wisdom, that some people would ascribe to us in following the guidance of our hearts so implicitly, is proof to me that there is a deep wisdom within us. Oh, let us not think but that all will be well! And even if, to worldly eyes, it should appear that our lot is not a fortunate one, still we shall have glimpses, at least – and I trust a pervading sunshine – of a happiness that we could never have found, if we had unquietly struggled for it, and made our own selection of the means and species of it, instead of trusting all to something diviner than our reason.

My Dove, there were a good many things that I meant to have written in this letter; but I have continually lapsed into fits of musing, and when I have written, the soul of my thoughts has not readily assumed the earthly garments of language. It is now time to carry the letter to Mary. I kiss you, dearest – did you feel it? Your own friend,

Nath. Hawthorne, Esq.

(Dear me! What an effect that Esquire gives to the whole letter!)

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Salem, May 26th, 1839

Mine own Self,

I felt rather dismal yesterday – a sort of vague weight on my spirit – a sense that something was wanting to me here. What or who could it have been that I so missed? I thought it not best to go to your house last evening; so that I have not yet seen Elizabeth – but we shall probably attend the Hurley-Burley tonight. Would that my Dove might be there! It seems really monstrous that here, in her own home – or what was her home, till she found another in my arms – she should no longer be. Oh, my dearest, I yearn for you, and my heart heaves when I think of you – (and that is always, but sometimes a thought makes me know and feel you more vividly than at others, and *that* I call "thinking of you") – heaves and swells (my heart does) as sometimes you have felt it beneath you, when your head was resting on it. At such moments it is stirred up from its depths. Then our two ocean-hearts mingle their floods.

I do not believe that this letter will extend to three pages. My feelings do not, of their own accord, assume words – at least, not a continued flow of words. I write a few lines, and then I fall amusing about many things, which seem to have no connection among themselves, save that my Dove flits lightly through them all. I feel as if my being were dissolved and the idea of you were diffused throughout it. Am I writing nonsense? That is for you to decide. You know what is Truth – "what is what" – and I should not dare to say to you what I felt to be other than the Truth – other than the very "what." It is very singular (but I do not suppose I can express it) that, while I love you so dearly, and while I am so conscious of the deep embrace of our spirits, still I have an awe of you that I never felt for anybody else. Awe is not the word, either; because it might imply something stern in you – whereas – but you must make it out for yourself. I do wish that I could put this into words – not so much for your satisfaction (because I believe you will understand) as for my own. I suppose I should have pretty much the same feeling if an angel were to come from Heaven and be my dearest friend – only the angel could not have the tenderest of human natures too, the sense of which is mingled with this sentiment. Perhaps it is because in meeting you, I really meet a spirit, whereas the obstructions of earth have prevented such a meeting in every other place. But I leave the mystery here. Some time

or other, it may be made plainer to me. But methinks it converts my love into a religion. And then it is singular, too, that this awe (or whatever it be) does not prevent me from feeling that it is I who have the charge of you, and that my Dove is to follow my guidance and do my bidding. Am I not very bold to say this? And will not you rebel? Oh no; because I possess the power only so far as I love you. My love gives me the right, and your love consents to it.

Since writing the above I have been asleep; and I dreamed that I had been sleeping a whole year in the open air; and that while I slept, the grass grew around me. It seemed, in my dream, that the very bed-clothes which actually covered me were spread beneath me, and when I awoke (in my dream) I snatched them up, and the earth under them looked black, as if it had been burnt – one square place, exactly the size of the bedclothes. Yet there was grass and herbage scattered over this burnt space, looking as fresh, and bright, and dewy, as if the summer rain and the summer sun had been cherishing them all the time. Interpret this for me, my Dove – but do not draw any somber omens from it. What is signified [by] my nap of a whole year? (It made me grieve to think that I had lost so much of eternity) – and what was the fire that blasted the spot of earth which I occupied, while the grass flourished all around? – And what comfort am I to draw from the fresh herbage amid the burnt space? But it is a silly dream, and you cannot expound any sense out of it. Generally, I cannot remember what my dreams have been – only there is a confused sense of having passed through adventures, pleasurable or otherwise. I suspect that you mingle with my dreams, but take care to flit away just before I awake, leaving me but dimly and doubtfully conscious of your visits.

Do you never start so suddenly from a dream that you are afraid to look round the room, lest your dream-personages (so strong and distinct seemed their existence, a moment before) should have thrust themselves out of dream-land into the midst of realities? I do, sometimes.

I wish I were to see you this evening. How many times have you thought of me today? All the time? – Or not at all? Did you ever read such a foolish letter as this? (Here I was interrupted, and have taken a stroll down on the Neck – a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful sunshine, and air, and sea. Would that my Dove had been with me. I fear that we shall perforce lose some of our mutual intimacy with Nature – we walk together so seldom that she will seem more like a stranger. Would that I could write such sweet letters to mine own self, as mine own self writes to me. Good bye, dearest self. Direct yours to

*Nath. Hawthorne, Esq.
Custom-House, Boston.*

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
No. 4 Avon Place,
Boston.

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, July 3d, 1839

Most beloved Amelia,

I shall call you so sometimes in playfulness, and so may you; but it is not the name by which my soul recognizes you. It knows you as Sophie; but I doubt whether that is the inwardly and intensely dearest epithet either. I believe that "Dove" is the true word after all; and it never can be used amiss, whether in sunniest gaiety or shadiest seriousness. And yet it is a sacred word, and I should not love to have anybody hear me use it, nor know that GOD has baptised you so – the baptism being for yourself and me alone. By that name, I think, I shall greet you when we meet in Heaven. Other dear ones may call you "daughter," "sister," "Sophia," but when, at your entrance into Heaven, or after you have been a little while there, you hear a voice say "Dove!" then you will know that your kindred

spirit has been admitted (perhaps for your sake) to the mansions of rest. That word will express his yearning for you – then to be forever satisfied; for we will melt into one another, and be close, close together then. The name was inspired; it came without our being aware that you were thenceforth to be my Dove, now and through eternity. I do not remember, how nor when it alighted on you; the first I knew, it was in my heart to call you so.

Good night now, my Dove. It is not yet nine o'clock; but I am somewhat weary and prefer to muse about you till bedtime, rather than write.

July 5th, ½ past seven P.M. I must, somehow or other, finish this letter tonight, my dearest – or else it would not be sent tomorrow; and then I fear our head would ache, naughty head that it is. My heart yearns to communicate to you; but if it had any other means at hand, it certainly would not choose to communicate by the scratchings of an iron pen, which I am now compelled to use. This must and will inevitably be a dull letter. Oh how different from yours, which I received today. You are absolutely inspired, my Dove; and it is not my poor stupid self that inspires you; for how could I give what is not in me. I wish I could write to you in the morning, before my toils begin; but that is impossible, unless I were to write before daylight. At eventide, my mind has quite lost its elasticity – my heart, even, is weary – and all that I seem capable of doing is to rest my head on its pillow and there lay down the burthen of life. I do not mean to imply that I am unhappy or discontented; for this is not the case; my life is only a burthen, in the same way that it is so to every toilsome man, and mine is a healthy weariness, such as needs only a night's sleep to remove it. But from henceforth forever, I shall be entitled to call the sons of toil my brethren, and shall know how to sympathise with them, seeing that I, likewise, have risen at the dawn and borne the fervor of the mid-day sun, nor turned my heavy footsteps homeward till eventide. Years hence, perhaps, the experience that my heart is acquiring now will flow out in truth and wisdom.

You ask me a good many questions, my Dove, and I will answer such of them as now occur to me; and the rest you may ask me again, when we meet. First as to your letters. My beloved, you must write whenever you will – in all confidence that I can never be otherwise than joyful to receive your letters. Do not get into the habit of trying to find out, by any method save your own intuition, what is pleasing and what is displeasing to me. Whenever you need my counsel, or even my reproof, in any serious matter, you will not fail to receive it; but I wish my Dove to be as free as a Bird of Paradise. Now, as to this affair of the letters. I have sometimes been a little annoyed at the smiles of my brother measurers, who, notwithstanding the masculine fist of the direction, seem to know that such delicately sealed and folded epistles can come only from a lady's small and tender hand. But the annoyance is not on my own account; but because it seems as if the letters were prophaned by being smiled at – but this is, after all, a mere fantasy, since the smilers know nothing about my Dove, nor that I really have a Dove; nor can they be certain that the letters come from a lady, nor, especially, can they have the remotest imagination what heavenly letters they are. The sum and substance is, that they are smiling at nothing; and so it is no matter for their smiles. I would not give up one letter to avoid the "world's dread laugh," – much less to shun the good-natured raillery of three or four people who do not dream of giving pain. Why has my Dove made me waste so much of my letter in this talk about nothing?

My dearest, did you really think that I meant to express a doubt whether we should enjoy each other's society so much, if we could be together all the time. No, no; for I always feel, that our momentary and hurried interviews scarcely afford us time to taste the draught of affection that we drink from one another's hearts. There is a precious portion of our happiness wasted, because we are forced to enjoy it too greedily. But I thought, as you do, that there might be more communication of the intellect, as well as communion of heart, if we could be oftener together.

Your picture gallery of auxiliary verbs is an admirable fantasy. You are certainly the first mortal to whom it was given to behold a verb; though, it seems as if they ought to be visible, being creatures whose office it is (if I remember my grammar aright) "to be, to do, and to suffer." Therein

is comprehended all that we mortals are capable of. No; for, according to the definition, verbs do not feel, and cannot enjoy – they only exist, and act, and are miserable. My Dove and I are no verbs – or if so, we are passive verbs, and therefore happy ones.

(Rest of letter missing)

To Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Salem,
Massachusetts.

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, Monday Eveng July 15th [1839]

My blessed Dove,

Your letter was brought to me at East Cambridge this afternoon: – otherwise I know not when I should have received it; for I am so busy that I know not whether I shall have time to go to the Custom-House these two or three days. I put it in my pocket, and did not read it till just now, when I could be quiet in my own chamber – for I always feel as if your letters were too sacred to be read in the midst of people – and (you will smile) I never read them without first washing my hands!

And so my poor Dove is sick, and I cannot take her to my bosom. I do really feel as if I could cure her. [Portion of letter missing] Oh, my dearest, do let our love be powerful enough to make you well. I will have faith in its efficacy – not that it will work an immediate miracle – but it shall make you so well at heart that you cannot possibly be ill in the body. Partake of my health and strength, my beloved. Are they not your own, as well as mine? Yes – and your illness is mine as well as yours; and with all the pain it gives me, the whole world should not buy my right to share in it.

My dearest, I will not be much troubled, since you tell me (and your word is always truth) that there is no need. But, oh, be careful of yourself – remembering how much earthly happiness depends on your health. Be tranquil – let me be your Peace, as you are mine. Do not write to me, unless your heart be unquiet, and you think that you can quiet it by writing.

God bless mine own Dove. I have kissed those three last words. Do you kiss them too.
Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Wednesday eveng. July 17th [1839]

My Dearest,

I did not know but you would like another little note – and I think I feel a strange impulse to write, now that the whole correspondence devolves on me. And I wrote my other note in such a hurry, that I quite forgot to give you the praise which you so deserved, for bearing up so stoutly against the terrible misfortune of my non-appearance. Indeed, I do think my Dove is the strongest little dove that ever was created – never did any creature live, who could feel so acutely, and yet endure so well.

This note must be a mere word, my beloved – and I wish I could make it the very tenderest word that ever was spoken or written. Imagine all that I cannot write.

God bless you, mine own Dove, and make you quite well against I take you to your home – which shall be on Saturday eveg, without fail. Till then, dearest, spend your time in happy thoughts and happy dreams – and let my image be among them. Good bye, mine own Dove – I have kissed that holy word.

Your Own, Own, Ownest.

My Dove must not look for another note.
To Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, July 24th, 1839 – 8 o'clock P.M.

Mine own,

I am tired this evening, as usual, with my long day's toil; and my head wants its pillow – and my soul yearns for the friend whom God has given it – whose soul He has married to my soul. Oh, my dearest, how that thought thrills me! We *are* married! I felt it long ago; and sometimes, when I was seeking for some fondest word, it has been on my lips to call you – "Wife"! I hardly know what restrained me from speaking it – unless a dread (for *that* would have been an infinite pang to me) of feeling you shrink back, and thereby discovering that there was yet a deep place in your soul which did not know me. Mine own Dove, need I fear it now? Are we not married? God knows we are. Often, I have silently given myself to you, and received you for my portion of human love and happiness, and have prayed Him to consecrate and bless the union. Yes – we are married; and as God Himself has joined us, we may trust never to be separated, neither in Heaven nor on Earth. We will wait patiently and quietly, and He will lead us onward hand in hand (as He has done all along) like little children, and will guide us to our perfect happiness – and will teach us when our union is to be revealed to the world. My beloved, why should we be silent to one another – why should our lips be silent – any longer on this subject? The world might, as yet, misjudge us; and therefore we will not speak to the world; but why should we not commune together about all our hopes of earthly and external as well [as] our faith of inward and eternal union? Farewell for tonight, my dearest – my soul's bride!

July 25th. 8 o'clock, P.M. How does my Dove contrive to live and thrive, and keep her heart in cheerful trim, through a whole fortnight, with only one letter from me? It cannot be indifference; so it must be heroism – and how heroic! It does seem to me that my spirit would droop and wither like a plant that lacked rain and dew, if it were not for the frequent shower of your gentle and holy thoughts. But then there is such a difference in our situations. My Dove is at home – not, indeed, in her home of homes – but still in the midst of true affections; and she can live a spiritual life, spiritual and intellectual. Now, my intellect, and my heart and soul, have no share in my present mode of life – they find neither labor nor food in it; everything that I do here might be better done by a machine. I *am* a machine, and am surrounded by hundreds of similar machines; – or rather, all of the business people are so many wheels of one great machine – and we have no more love or sympathy for one another than if we were made of wood, brass, or iron, like the wheels of other pieces of complicated machinery. Perchance – but do not be frightened, dearest – the soul would wither and die within me, leaving nothing but the busy machine, no germ for immortality, nothing that could taste of heaven, if it were not for the consciousness of your deep, deep love, which is renewed to me with every letter. Oh, my Dove, I have really thought sometimes, that God gave you to me to be the salvation of my soul.

(Rest of letter missing)

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, July 30th, 8 (or thereabouts) P.M. [1839]

Beloved,

There was no letter from you to-day; and this circumstance, in connection with your mention of a headache on Sunday, made me apprehensive that my Dove is not well. Yet surely she would write, or cause to be written, intelligence of the fact (if fact it were) to the sharer of her well-being and ill-being. Do, dearest, give me the assurance that you will never be ill without letting me know, and then I shall always be at peace, and will not disquiet myself for the non-reception of a letter; for really, I would not have you crowd your other duties into too small a space, nor dispense with anything that it is desirable to do, for the sake of writing to me. If you were not to write for a whole year, I still should never doubt that you love me infinitely; and I doubt not that, in vision, dream, or reverie, our wedded souls would hold communion throughout all that time. Therefore I do not ask for letters while you are well, but leave all to your own heart and judgment; but if anything, bodily or mental, afflicts my Dove, her beloved *must* be told.

And why was my dearest wounded by that silly sentence of mine about "indifference"? It was not well that she should do anything but smile at it. I knew, just as certainly as your own heart knows, that my letters are very precious to you – had I been less certain of it, I never could have trifled upon the subject. Oh, my darling, let all your sensibilities be healthy – never, never, be wounded by what ought not to wound. Our tenderness should make us mutually susceptible of happiness from every act of each other, but of pain from none; our mighty love should scorn all little annoyances, even from the object of that love. What misery (and what ridiculous misery too) would it be, if, because we love one another better than all the universe besides, our only gain thereby were a more exquisite sensibility to pain for the beloved hand and a more terrible power of inflicting it! Dearest, it never shall be so with us. We will have such an infinity of mutual faith, that even real offenses (should they ever occur) shall not wound, because we know that something external from yourself or myself must be guilty of the wrong, and never our essential selves. My beloved wife, there is no need of all this preachment now; but let us both meditate upon it, and talk to each other about it; – so shall there never come any cloud across our inward bliss – so shall one of our hearts never wound the other, and itself fester with the sore that it inflicts. And I speak now, when my Dove is not wounded nor sore, because it is easier than it might be hereafter, when some careless and wayward act or word of mine may have rubbed too roughly against her tenderest of hearts. Dearest, I beseech you grant me freedom to be careless and wayward – for I have had such freedom all my life. Oh, let me feel that I may even do you a little wrong without your avenging it (oh how cruelly) by being wounded.

(Rest of letter missing)

TO MISS PEABODY

Custom House, August 8th, 1839

Your letter, my beloved wife, was duly received into your husband's heart yesterday. I found it impossible to keep it all day long, with unbroken seal, in my pocket; and so I opened and read it

on board of a salt vessel, where I was at work, amid all sorts of bustle, and gabble of Irishmen, and other incommodities. Nevertheless its effect was very blessed, even as if I had gazed upward from the deck of the vessel, and beheld my wife's sweet face looking down upon me from a sun-brightened cloud. Dearest, if your dove-wings will not carry you so far, I beseech you to alight upon such a cloud sometimes, and let it bear you to me. True it is, that I never look heavenward without thinking of you, and I doubt whether it would much surprise me to catch a glimpse of you among those upper regions. Then would all that is spiritual within me so yearn towards you, that I should leave my earthly incumbrances behind, and float upward and embrace you in the heavenly sunshine. Yet methinks I shall be more content to spend a lifetime of earthly and heavenly happiness intermixed. So human am I, my beloved, that I would not give up the hope of loving and cherishing you by a fireside of our own, not for any unimaginable bliss of higher spheres. Your influence shall purify me and fit me for a better world – but it shall be by means of our happiness here below.

Was such a rhapsody as the foregoing ever written in the Custom House before? I have almost felt it a sin to write to my Dove here, because her image comes before me so vividly – and the place is not worthy of it. Nevertheless, I cast aside my scruples, because, having been awake ever since four o'clock this morning (now thirteen hours) and abroad since sunrise, I shall feel more like holding intercourse in dreams than with my pen, when secluded in my room. I am not quite hopeless, now, of meeting you in dreams. Did you not know, beloved, that I dreamed of you, as it seemed to me, all night long, after that last blissful meeting? It is true, when I looked back upon the dream, it immediately became confused; but it had been vivid, and most happy, and left a sense of happiness in my heart. Come again, sweet wife! Force your way through the mists and vapors that envelope my slumbers – illumine me with a radiance that shall not vanish when I awake. I throw my heart as wide open to you as I can. Come and rest within it, Dove.

Oh, how happy you make me by calling me your husband – by subscribing yourself my wife. I kiss that word when I meet it in your letters; and I repeat over and over to myself, "she is my wife – I am her husband." Dearest, I could almost think that the institution of marriage was ordained, first of all, for you and me, and for you and me alone; it seems so fresh and new – so unlike anything that the people around us enjoy or are acquainted with. Nobody ever had a wife but me – nobody a husband, save my Dove. Would that the husband were worthier of his wife; but she loves him – and her wise and prophetic heart could never do so if he were utterly unworthy.

My own Room. August 9th – about 10 A.M. It is so rare a thing for your husband to find himself in his own room in the middle of the forenoon, that he cannot help advising his Dove of that remarkable fact. By some misunderstanding, I was sent on a fruitless errand to East Cambridge, and have stopped here, on my return to the Custom House, to rest and refresh myself – and what can so rest and refresh me as to hold intercourse with my darling wife? It must be but a word and a kiss, however – a written word and a shadowy kiss. Good bye, dearest. I must go now to hold controversy, I suppose, with some plaguy little Frenchman about a peck of coal more or less; but I will give my beloved another word and kiss, when the day's toil is over.

About 8 o'clock P.M. – I received your letter, your sweet, sweet letter, my sweetest wife, on reaching the Custom House. Now as to that swelled face of ours – it had begun to swell when we last met; but I did not tell you, because I knew that you would associate the idea of pain with it, whereas, it was attended with no pain at all. Very glad am I, that my Dove did not see me when one side of my face was swollen as big as two, for the image of such a monstrous one-sidedness, or double-sidedness, might have haunted her memory through the whole fortnight. Dearest, is it a weakness that your husband wishes to look tolerably comely always in your eyes? – and beautiful if he could!! My Dove is beautiful, and full of grace; she should not have an ugly mate. But to return to this "naughty swelling" – it began to subside on Tuesday, and has now, I think, entirely disappeared, leaving my visage in its former admirable proportion. Nothing is now the matter with me; save that my heart is as much swollen as my cheek was – swollen with love, with pent-up love, which I would

fain mingle with the heart-blood of mine own sweet wife. Oh, dearest, how much I have to say to you! – how many fond thoughts.

Dearest, I dare not give you permission to go out in the east winds. The west wind will come very often I am sure, if it were only for the sake of my Dove. Have nothing to do with that hateful east wind.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, August 21st, 1839

My dearest will be glad to know that her husband has not had to endure the heavy sunshine this afternoon; – he came home at three o'clock or thereabout, and locking the door, betook himself to sleep – first ensuring himself sweet slumber and blissful dreams (if any dreams should come) by reperusing his sweet wife's letter. His wife was with him at the moment of falling asleep, and at the moment of awaking; but she stole away from him during the interval. Naughty wife! Nevertheless, he has slept and is refreshed – slept how long he does not know; but the sun has made a far progress downward, since he closed his eyes.

Oh, my wife, if it were possible that you should vanish from me, I feel and know that my soul would be solitary forever and ever. I almost think that there would be no "forever" for me. I could not encounter such a desolate Eternity, were you to leave me. You are my first hope and my last. If you fail me (but there is no such if) I might toil onward through this life without much outward change, but I should sink down and die utterly upon the threshold of the dreary Future. Were *you* to find yourself deceived, you would betake yourself at once to God and Heaven, in the certainty of there finding a thousand-fold recompense for all earthly disappointment; but with me, it seems as if hope and happiness would be torn up by the roots, and could never bloom again, neither in this soil nor the soil of Paradise.

August 22d. Five or six o'clock P.M. I was interrupted by the supper bell, while writing the foregoing sentence; and much that I might have added has now passed out of my mind – or passed into its depths. My beloved wife, let us make no question about our love, whether it be true. Were it otherwise, God would not have left your heart to wreck itself utterly – His angels keep watch over you – they would have given you early and continued warning of the approach of Evil in any shape.

Two letters has my Dove blessed me with, since that of Monday – both beautiful – all three, indeed, most beautiful. There is a great deal in all of them that should be especially answered; but how may this be effected in one little sheet? – moreover, it is my pleasure to write in a more desultory fashion.

Nevertheless, propound as many questions as you see fit, in your letters, but, dearest, let it be without expectation of a set response.

When I first looked at that shadow of the Passing Hour, I thought her expression too sad; but the more I looked the sweeter and pleasanter it grew – and now I am inclined to think that few mortals are waited on by happier Hours than is my Dove, even in her pensive moods. My beloved, you make a Heaven round about you, and dwell in it continually; and as it is your Heaven, so is it mine. My heart has not been very heavy – not desperately heavy – any one time since I loved you; not even your illness and headaches, dearest wife, can make me desperately sad. My stock of sunshine is so infinitely increased by partaking of yours, that even when a cloud flits by, I incomparably prefer its gloom to the sullen, leaden tinge that used to overspread my sky. Were you to bring me, in outward appearance, nothing save a load of grief and pain, yet I do believe that happiness, in no stinted measure, would

somehow or other be smuggled into the dismal burthen. But you come to me with no grief – no pain – you come with flowers of Paradise; some in bloom, many in the bud, and all of them immortal.

August 23d – between 7 and 8 P.M. Dearest wife, when I think how soon this letter will greet you, it makes my heart yearn towards you so much the more. How much of life we waste! Oh, beloved, if we had but a cottage somewhere beyond the sway of the east wind, yet within the limits of New England, where we could be always together, and have a place to *be* in – what could we desire more? Nothing – save daily bread, (or rather bread and milk, for I think I should adopt your diet) and clean white apparel every day for mine unspotted Dove. Then how happy I would be – and how good! I could not be other than good and happy, when your kiss would sanctify me at all my outgoings and incomings. And you should draw, and paint, and sculpture, and make music, and poetry too, and your husband would admire and criticise; and I, being pervaded with your spirit, would write beautifully and make myself famous for your sake, because perhaps you would like to have the world acknowledge me – but if the whole world glorified me with one voice, it would be a meed of little value in comparison with my wife's smile and kiss. For I shall always read my manuscripts to you, in the summer afternoons or winter evenings; and if they please you I shall expect a smile and a kiss as my reward – and if they do not please, I must have a smile and kiss to comfort me.

Good bye – sweet, sweet, dear, dear, sweetest, dearest wife. I received the kiss you sent me and have treasured it up in my heart. Take one from your own husband.

Miss Sophia A. Peabody,
Care of Dr. N. Peabody,
Salem, Mass.

TO MISS PEABODY

Boston, August 25th, 1839

Dearest Wife,

I did not write you yesterday, for several reasons – partly because I was interrupted by company; and also I had a difficult letter to project and execute in behalf of an office-seeker; and in the afternoon I fell asleep amid thoughts of my own Dove; and when I awoke, I took up Miss Martineau's *Deerbrook*, and became interested in it – because, being myself a lover, nothing that treats earnestly of love can be indifferent to me. Some truth in the book I recognised – but there seems to be too much of dismal fantasy.

Thus, one way or another, the Sabbath passed away without my pouring out my heart to my sweet wife on paper; but I thought of you, dearest, all day long. Your letter came this forenoon, and I opened it on board of a salt-ship, and snatched portions of it in the intervals of keeping tally. Every letter of yours is as fresh and new as if you had never written a preceding one – each is like a strain of music unheard before, yet all are in sweet accordance – all of them introduce me deeper and deeper into your being, yet there is no sense of surprise at what I see, and feel, and know, therein. I am familiar with your inner heart, as with my home; but yet there is a sense of revelation – or perhaps of recovered intimacy with a dearest friend long hidden from me. Were you not my wife in some past eternity?

Dearest, perhaps these speculations are not wise. We will not cast dreamy glances too far behind us or before us, but live our present life in simplicity; for methinks that is the way to realise it most intensely. Good night, most beloved. Your husband is presently going to bed; for the bell has just rung (those bells are always interrupting us, whether for dinner, or supper, or bed-time) and he rose early this morning, and must be abroad at sunrise tomorrow. Good night, my wife. Receive your husband's kiss upon your eyelids.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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