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Letter from Harriet Prescott Spofford, Deer Island, Massachusetts, to Anne Whitney, 1911

Harriet Prescott Spofford

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That so much force cannot be wasted and
some to naught but must be used in still
higher activities beyond. For I believe in
the inviolable unconquerable soul. I feel
even that Adeline's beautiful being has found
new fields for wonderful work. I know that
the great flame of my husband's soul can
never be blown out.

But, to return. Don't it too bad that I
haven't a mountain in my picture? - I have
just a high rounded hill. And there have
been two hundred and more earthquakes here
that opened the earth in places, that threw
down bridges, rans doors, and one night
shook all the walls on Grandfather Plains
so that not a drop of water has been found
there since, and made a deep pond of a
huckleberry swamp in the heart of the town
three miles away, - that is still there and
they might just as well have thrown me
up a great purple mountain as not!

Deer Island
near [1911]
Newburyport, Massachusetts.

Dear and Josiah: I remember dearing
you and Susan Adeline ever say for loved
- or liked - to write the word Massachusetts.
And I at once thought I ought to. But
I said. Deeply and particularly as I love
Massachusetts land, I find it difficult
and unpleasant to write the word.

I was wondering where you were when
your letter came, and interested with all
my heart. And I did hope, and was hoping,
that you were in England. And I am so
disappointed to find that you are not.
It would have tried you no more to sit
on the Deck of the steamship, since you
are not a strict, than to sit on the
piazza at the Knoll, - and in England

2 you would not have needed to go everywhere that others would, if you thought best not. But you would have seen this, in the new and different atmosphere, and would have taken in joy at every breath. It wouldn't have tired or tried you so

much as the all-day ride to Shelburne's heavenly region. Well next to Europe is Shelburne.

I didn't dream of its being ^{as} hot in Shelburne as it was here. My sister Kate faints & has vertigo with the heat, and had to be helped to bed and kept there for a time. But it is cool enough nowadays, and yesterday afternoon such a beautiful drifter is and wrapped us that we were cut off from the rest of the world. This morning from this piazza, vines and leaves and trees and rivers and wood and the great blue sky with its thin white clouds make

3 ^{one} ^{mountain.} question of Paradise ^{it only wants a} ^{mountain.} ^{levelled.}
I often wonder concerning the uses of beauty, — certainly the next life can give us no greater beauty than we have here, — in the Lake of Thun, for instance, — or in a Spanish Vega, in the Shelburne view, in any breaking sea. And so, as some one has suggested that material discovery has been carried so far in the last century, there would seem to be nothing left for this century to do, and the new discoveries must be in the ^{then} spiritual realm, — ^{and} the beauty there must be spiritual beauty.

Thank you, dearest heart and soul, for all you write. We had a very sad and hard winter. My sister was prostrated by the sight and thought of her husband's suffering and approaching death, and Katharine felt the strain very bitterly. And I think with you

Katharine and I passed a couple of days with Annie Fildes last week, going Monday and returning Wednesday. It was lovely there as now, sheets of sea seen between the tossing branches, the pink and white hollyhocks against it in the foreground, and still the birds flying under you as you stood on the back piazza above the tops of the trees, and looked over that view which always makes me think of "Mingai's Dream". Annie herself seems very well, for her, - white and frail, but with an indomitable spirit. She has to lean help in getting about, or guides herself along by furniture and wall, but attends to everything as of old. People come to her all the time, and flowers to. arrive like tributes. She is interested in everything, - the other day gave up her house to a great suffrage meeting. When we arrived, we found Miss Sweet Adams

H. Spofford -
 Summer - 1911

6 There, with Mrs. Beal, the sister de omnia,
having motored over from Nahant. Miss
Adams is really feeble, and it is a work
to get her in and out of the motor-car,
but once in, she never wants to get out,
and would apparently go to the end of the earth
in comfort and safety. She was only calling.

I have been busy with my little pot-boilers,
and have read nothing worth while. When I
get a spare half hour I go back to Thackeray
or Eyre. Did you know, the
first Mont's Fair is described in Eyre!
27th. Chapter. And there is a psalm
which in one verse anticipates Darwin
and evolution! I have just looked it up,

139th. 15th. & 16th verses. "My substance
was not hid from thee, when I was made in
secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest
parts of the earth.

"Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being
unperfect, and in thy book all my members

7 were written, which in continuance were
fashioned, when as yet there was none of
them," Italic's mine. I suppose you will
think that is very far-fetched. But it is
interesting, isn't it?

Now it is high noon, and perfectly
glorious. I am going to give you surcease
of my handwriting, and then shall look over
some Diaries and burn them in the kitchen
stove. I have kept them for many years,
but have already made good provision for
their destruction, for I am resolved there
shall be no bones to throw to the dogs when
I am gone.

and honor, too,
Justly, great-heart. I love for always,
and am always your own fond and faithful
Hal.