

Wilkinsburg March 27.

Wednesday 1867

1.

Dear Elizabeth, Little [?], Jeannie's letter brining news of Halsey's death came a few hours ago & was quite a shock. It is so long since she & will wrote of his illness & he added a post-receipt to say his symptoms were more favorable, that we had concluded he was recovering. For some days are anxiously expected news of him & when none came, thought no news was good news. & little dreamed the death was marching on to victory. I had not [tho't?] ever again to shed so many tears for Death, I who love so [?] looked, with dry eyes, on the young & brave & beautiful & the strong man in the noon of life, struggling in the last agony, or cold & still with no one to weep their exit. Then, when tears would have blurred my vision, & made my hand uncertain in touching a wound, I learned to look through dry eyes on Death & never again expected to weep for anything he could do; but that time of horror past, & nature resumed her [sway?]. These children of yours have so nestled in my bosom, in infancy. That in the first few weeks of their lives, they were so [?] to me as my own was at that age & had I had an equal care of them, after, I should have known no difference, & now Halsey appears my own. I tremble for all of you. Will that frightful death stop with one victim? It appears strange & unnatural that me or you could die & I not there, that the last little struggle should pass & I be unconscious of all the pain. I seem to see it all & yet what is it, that painful passage of the swelling Jordan & it bring up a fair longish face looking up into mine – as the waves rolled into upon his soul & I pillowed his mangled limbs & fainting head with muddy bricks & tried to drink away the death chill with the one coarse blanket – thinking of the loving mother waiting for him in the home he should see no more – Again I see the long sows

2.

of the dying, or soon to be dying, without the comfort of an arm full of straw & hear their calls of "Mother" as envy me addressed me by that name & my heart responded with, I think, as deep a love as you could have felt when you raised yours from the bed to which skill & wealth & love could add no comfort. God appeared then to have given me all a mother's love, for those to whom I filled a mother place & is it any wonder I kept my post until I am a wreck for life. If you weep for the loss which leaves a vacant place in heart & home, how is it for those vacancies made by cruel unnatural neglect? Halsey's life was a very happy one. His work was soon done. He was the "Little preacher" & God made him a "fisher of men". He has cast his net into the sea of life & caught strong affections, entangled all your hearts with his & now he has gone to the shining shore to draw you all hitherward. Heaven will not be a strange place to any of you now, & I hope you will not think it a reproof if I say that you all needed something to make you realize the littleness of Earth, the vesture of Heaven – god has given you my little chastisement, & just now it appears as if I had required a new rod, & as if I could not be quite reconciled to this. I never get done learning & forgetting, & after all my lessons of the uncertainty of life, & the secondary nature of all it's interests, I build & build & build on

3.

my old foundations of sand. All the thousands of generations that have gone before have nothing left of all the wealth & horror & love & happiness of this world, but that which made then preparation for the life which is to come. All other labor, all other care, all other possessions were straw & stubble. I do not know why I should weep that Halsey is home before me. It is a weary journey at first, & that unusual sensitiveness which made him weep so readily in childhood would have made it a thorny passage to him. Of all your children it is well that he should be spared the rough contacts of a rough world. It is well the good shepherd should have taken that lamb to the fold from the wilderness in which he was so little suited to struggle.

4.

Since I began writing Denny Herbach came with the Pittsburgh Commercial & the news of his death in it. I am to move day after tomorrow into the house in which they have been living, with the old lady, since they came from Fredericksburg Va. Harry went there in Dec. '65 to keep a shoe store but the [?] would not patronize a yankee, so he lost heavily & came back. His property is all gone but two back lots of his mother has released a good part of her dower. Old Mrs Dennison died & left Amanda 7 ½ acres of rocks on the face of the river hill – left it to Grace Mills & Rose as trustees to be, she to get the interest & the principal to go to Denny. They tried to break the will but failed. The house they are in is a one story cottage of two rooms belonging to Dan Donble & is back between the [Cortanter?] church & the station. It will be convenient for me, as Netlie goes to the city to school. I saw Uncle John two weeks ago but you will hear from him. Harry Herbach is not drinking now, I think & has rented a home on 7th street between Liberty & Smith field – to keep a store there. Alick Milegan is dead about three weeks ago, of typhoid fever down in Indiana. He was keeping store some place out West. I suppose Hawkins will get the children but I have seen none of them since.

5.

This week appears eventful to us. In it the three months will expire since I filed my bill against Mr. [S?] – the purchases at [Durissvale?] for the third of the property. They have not yet filed their answer, & if it is not filed in three months, we enter judgment, when it is filed we will know what defence they intend making, & for what to prepare. Their lawyers appear at a loss to know what defence to set up, but they will, no doubt, contest every inch of the ground, &, apart from the face of my needing a support that it is so hard for you to read my writing – much love to you both & to all the children & may God's love sanctify this bereavement to you all –

Jane G. Swisshelm

6.

March 31,

We did not get our letters finished on Wednesday night & Netlie did not feel like going to town, so we have had no way of mailing them. We moved on Friday & are pretty well fixed. We like our new house very much. It faces South, is quite near the station has a little yard in the front & a

well of nice [?] water. I am very much afraid you have too many trees about your house. That rich soil requires plenty of sunshine to prevent malaria. Typhera glims prevail in that state only in very rich-damp soil. The trees keep the soil damp. So have some of them cleared away, if either my book or suit succeed, I think I will take Netlie to Paris to go to school one year - Could you not let Jeannie go. I should rent a room or two furnished & board outside – Tuition is less there than here & living no higher - & James is troubling Netlie very much. He has got that Hannah & her mother in one of the Mill houses & has made a public scandal [?] after her his mother drove her out of the house. When my [?] will let me if I will take her out of this. There is no school in St. Cloud.

This has been a beautiful day & is about dark now. May God bless you all with heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord & sanctify every joy & every sorrow to the purifying of your souls is the fervent prayer of your sister.

J G Swisshelm –

Have you any photographs of Halsey – we want one – Halsey was a son of H. Z. Mitchell

7 (8).

In old age, I have no right to leave such a property un used any more than to bury any other talent, in a napkin. See, Stanton paid to me “The property is legally & morally yours & you have no right to neglect it. You can make a good deal better use of that property than giving it away to rich men around Pittsburg.”

So I must fight-fight-fight. The bottle from which Halsey has escaped is still, in part, before the rest of us. & when it is all fought & finished, what is it, if we are not “raised-raised to the sky” All other success – all other promotion will only make our fall the deeper, & reaching that goal, late or early, we have won all – I pity Netlie. She has cried constantly, & says “Death never came so near to me before.” In the plans for going to Minnesota, the first thing always was “to see Halsey & Charley.” Everything else came after seeing Halsey & Charley.” If she could always have known just what Halsey & Charley were doing, & saying & looking like, & had had their opinion on lach & every occurrence. I think she could have got along quite comfortably, but she has really mourned for them, especially Halsie. She always fancied he was not used just as well as he should have been; & appreciated all the troubles which to others appeared of small moment. She is much more like him than we need to know, easily wounded, & the wounds hard to heal; but she did not show it as he did. Life will be a hard passage to her, as it would have been to him. Oh, the heart aches from which he has been taken away the foxes, The “little foxes” would have spoiled his vines. It would not have required

9.

A whirlwind to spoil his time of life & desolate his vineyard. How good it was of God to take him from the evil to come, & to take him as he did – for all the suffering was but a little moment in the cycles of eternity, & it bound you all closer to him, so that he is nearer to you now has a stronger hold upon your love, while it has made you willing in the day of God’s power.

We are greatly mistaken in thinking that Christ's is the only atonement for sin. His is the only vicarious atonement, but the principle of the righteous suffering for the wicked runs through all God's moral government.

Our friends – often infants & their suffering is the punishment of our sin – By it we are made ready to submit to God's will & we are made to suffer in & through their suffering, that we may be cleansed from our sin. Is Halsey suffered, so thousands & thousands of God's chosen children suffer, and are, like Christ, made perfect through suffering. If we do not learn the lesson brought by that suffering, then, to us it has been in vain, even as Christ died in vain to those who fail to come to him –

10.

I do not know why I write as long. But I write to Henry as much as to you, perhaps more. He is as much my brother as even you were my sister & I have often felt that I should have talked to him more of our father's house in which there are many mansions. He & you have both been unduly anxious about the temporal welfare of your children, but you never can provide for any of them, as Christ, the dear Lord, has provided for this one – you can give them no inheritance like that which is in corruptible, & which [?] not away. I sometimes wonder that I ever did or do or can care for anything else – this world has always appeared mean to me, ever since the nights I worked through the Old Theatre in Fredericksburg & by the light of two tallow candles, peered through it's cavernous gloom, and guided my steps around the mangled limbs which lay, [?] beds, on the filthy floors. God owned all the world & would not give me bundle of straw, for these, his heroes & his martyrs. While thousands of [?], cowardly rebels to God & men were nothing in luxury like maggots in a pan of grease. He sets a very low estimate of on the wealth & honors of the world & this is best shown in the way in which he distribute them. Dives in this life had his good things, Lazarus his evil things. If this one bereavement teaches you to think less of the Earth & more of the skies it will accomplish where to it is sent I forgot.