

Letters of Emily Dickinson

(excerpts)

Ed. Thomas Johnson (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, Harvard University Press)

1. Late march 1862: the Norcross sisters

Tis least that I can do, to tell you of brave Frazer—"killed at Newbern," darlings. His big heart shot away by a "minie ball."

I had read of those—I didn't think that Frazer would carry one to Eden with him. Just as he fell, in his soldier's cap, with his sword at his side, Frazer rode through Amherst. Classmates to the right of him, and classmates to the left of him, to guard his narrow face!They tell that Colonel Clark cried like a child when he missed his pet, and could hardly resume his post. [#255, pp. 398-99]

2. Cambridge, early June 1864: To TW Higginson, who was wounded in the war; he was commander of one of the first black Union army regiments.

Dear friend,

Are you in danger—

I did not know that you were hurt. Will you tell me more? Mr. Hawthorne died.

I was ill since September, and since April, in Boston, for a Physician's care—He does not let me go, yet I work in my Prison, and make Guests for myself—

Carlo did not come, because that he would die, in Jail, and the Mountains, I could not hold now, so I brought but the Gods—

I wish to see you more than before I failed—Will you tell me your health?

I am surprised and anxious, since receiving your note—

The only News I know

Is Bulletins all day

From Immortality.

Can you render my Pencil?

The Physician has taken away my Pen.

I enclose the address from a letter, lest my figures fail—Knowledge of your recovery—would excel my own—

E-Dickinson

[#290, p. 431]

3. 1864?: to the Norcross sisters

...Sorrow seems more general than it did, and not the estate of a few persons, since the war began; and if the anguish of others helped one with one's own, now would be many medicines. Tis dangerous to value, for only the precious can alarm. I notice that Robert Browning had made another poem, and was astonished—till I remembered that I, myself, in my smaller way, sang off chanel steps. Every day life feels mightier, and what we have the power to be, more stupendous. [#298, p. 436]