

Aug. 17th 1860

7 St Agnes Villa Aug. 18th

Friday night

AL/2903

My dear Emily:

Thanks for your letter. I am very glad to know that you feel quite clear about your home claims, it always seems comparatively easy to do what is clearly the right thing, I think. Since I wrote to you, I have been a good deal perplexed by receiving most melancholy letters from home, & about my mother. Agnes sent me a letter she had received from her, which was most extraordinarily gloomy. It appears as if she had suddenly made up her mind that I had acted in a most wilful manner, & in opposition to her earnest request, which is, of course, a purely

imaginary state of things. In her letter to Agnes she speaks of my step being a source of life-long pain to her, that it is a living death &c, indeed her tone was alarmingly morbid throughout. By the same post I had several letters from anxious relatives, telling me that it was my duty to come home & thus ease my mother's anxiety. I think this is quite stupid advice, at present, as it is very evident, both from what has passed, & from the exaggerated grief felt now, that my mother is in a very nervous, morbid state. I think this has been caused by the great shock of Mr. Bell's death, & by other things,

coming at a time when many women suffer from nervous weakness. If I went home, it would not remove the morbid tendency which might immediately find vent in some more distressing direction. At any rate, I think every other means should be used before this be tried, & if after all the depression should become chronic, I should go home more for the sake of relieving Alice than with the hope of doing Mother any real good. However I am very much in hopes that this is but a temporary thing, & that a very much more cheerful view will be taken of me in a few weeks. I am sorry that it should have happened so, as it will prejudice the unwise

of our acquaintance against the cause.

I should like to know if you agree with me in thinking it not my duty to go home at present. Neither of my parents have directly asked me to do so, and I feel sure that this is a temporary & morbid feeling on my mother's part. I am getting on very well professionally - does not that sound sweet? - Just now I am learning more pathology than nursing. For there has not been much to do in the surgical wards this week, so that as soon as the morning work was done there, I have gone to the medical wards and practised hearing the chest & heart sounds in healthy & unhealthy cases, with the stethoscope. Mr. Willis, the house doctor, is very cordial, & gives me a great deal of

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instruction, I have ^{cont} been with him for an
hour $1\frac{1}{2}$ several days lately, as he has
had fresh cases to examine. I think
he is a very good first instructor for me
as his speciality appears to be minute
carefulness in finding out what is really
the matter with a new case. I was
told that he had an excellent character
with the physicians, on this ground.
He has a cool manner too, and seems
to think it quite natural for me to
see & hear anything professionally, which
I feel is a great comfort. The pupils
too seem inclined to treat me as a
student, several of them have volun-
-teered scraps of information & as long

They merely speak to me of the matter
in hand. I think it is wiser not to
appear too rigid & stiff with them.

If they will forget my sex & treat me
as a fellow student, it is just the right
kind of feeling. It does seem to be wrong
in theory to treat them all as one's natural
enemies. Though I know that in practice
an absence of stiffness might be miscon-
-strued. James is better, and has gone
down to Aldeburgh for a few days.
He has some important business to attend
to next week & he thought 4 or 5 day
change might help to fit him for it.
He went yesterday & will return on Tuesday.
The house in Orchard St did not do