Letter from June 8, 1889

Lavinia Coombs

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Indianapolis June 8th 1889

My dear Delia Whittmore,

I am just overwhelmed with "shame and confusion of face" at the discovery I've just made that I haven't written to you since those boxes came and the new missionaries and the cookies! I don't know how it has happened, for I was so anxious to send a letter to every one of those who sent me any thing and now it seems to me I must have written you but my letter book doesn't indicate it. I find that I wrote you a few days before Mr. and Mrs. Stiles arrived and a letter came from you about a month after they arrived. I knew I hadn't answered that letter but I thought I had written about the things you sent. Haven't I not really? I'm not what have you thought of me! I most humbly ask your forgiveness, and
proud to do what should have been done & what I thought was done months ago, and now it’s got to be a whole month before you can get this. Seven months behindhand! Disgraceful! I didn’t open the cookies for some time after they came so I think it was about five months after you put them up that they were opened and they were as fresh as ever. It seems the tighter they are closed the better they keep. Letters were not quite so fresh this time. That was quite a story you told of three two you had kept in a trunk for two years and more and still looked as fresh as ever. I suspect they wouldn’t have lasted as well as they looked. The cards you sent were especially acceptable for I was nearly out and most those and others sent are nearly all gone again and I’m wishing for more. The dolls were given out at Christmas time—just the things. Good size & not too fine. I’ve got the life of very interesting & everyone too. It came not long ago and I thanked the writing on the wrapper it was sent by Mary Bachelor and I wondered how she knew I wanted it, and wrote at once thanking her for it and telling her to send the bill to me. Del Morrice and she would pay it and deduct it from my remittance but now on reading your letter I think I am probably indebted to you for you say that Miss Bachelor thought she could find it in New York, so I suppose you had told her to find it if she could send it. It is a very interesting book and I have enjoyed reading it and so have several others. Many thanks for it. I found my brother’s picture among the cards which was a pleasant surprise but she has grown so since I saw her. I haven’t had a letter from them for a long time. I was greatly pleased and encouraged to hear that two of my brother’s boys are in the service during the winter at Cape Elizabeth. I have prayed for them for a long time. I hope they will not
neglect duty and fall back. I haven't heard whether they and Daisy were baptized or not. There are other boys in that family that have now become men grown, for whom my faith almost wavers.

In one of your notes you spoke of an excursion to the White Mountains. How many times have I looked longingly at those white peaks that could be seen from our old home and long wished I could ever get a closer view. Little did I think then that I should climb the Himalayas before I could climb Mt. Washington, or at least before I could claim it. There were three places in the home land that I had always wanted to see and do well: the White Mountains, Niagara Falls, and the Yosemite Valley. I believe if I ever go home, it will be by the way of California and I'll take in all three of these on my way across. As a child I always had great delight in high hills and I remember of visiting my brother Elbridge when he lived at Augusta. His house then was on the bank of a wide stream running at
the foot of the highest hill I had then seen. That hill filled me with delight and awe, even more so than those fearful heights we were climbing all day as we went up among the hills to Darjeeling. One needs to stand at the foot of a mountain and look to its top to get an idea of its full grandeur, but we were wriggling along the sides and around bluffs only to see more heights till one got used to it all and would shiver when looking down the valleys between. I haven't taken any trips away this summer except to run out to Mrs. Burkholder for a week. My journey to Valley of the last October exhausted my resources and more too, and now I've got to make up for it. However, I don't regret it. It did me a lot of good both to soul and body.

Our last papers tell of a terrible disaster in Pennsylvania—the fulminating of a reservoir—and of fearful floods in Maryland and Virginia with an unprecedented loss of life from eight to ten thousand lives.
We have been leaving vacation for the last weather since May 15th and are to begin work again next Monday. This has been for the Mission, teachers and Bible Women. The schools only last half as long for the children are hard to gather again after a long vacation. The Bible School has a vacation of two weeks which is by the way next week. I went out to Blingford for a week and Miss Booths plans to go this week for the same length of time. Dr. & Auntie Bacheless have gone to Jellison for a short visit to Dr. Young Bacheless. Auntie B. was very ill with fever and dysentery a short time ago and Dr. thought a change would be good for her. I do hope Mary will come as soon as possible after she finishes her studies. I often tremble for fear she may not find her mother here she comes. Miss Bacheless is subject to attacks of illness and she is getting old. Dr. B. too has been wonderfully well. We had it intensely
Not this reason and the same held off till the farmers were getting very anxious, but they have begun now and if there is as much as usual I think the rice crop will be all right.

Perhaps you will have heard before you get this of the new Miss Stiles that has come to town from her. She was a month old yesterday (the 12th) and is getting somewhat accustomed to her new home. At first she didn't seem contented and lifted up her voice often and wept, but she is evidently deciding it is best to submit to the inevitable and is quieter now. Mrs. Stiles is quite anxious again and has begun her study of Bengali that was interrupted for a while. They are both sensible, practical people and we are glad we have them here. Mr. Stiles is especially alive to every chance for work. He has been starting an A. C. F. in our Church and has been quite successful. We have quite a number but they seem to be afraid of the pledge. I think that pledge is just the thing and if one doesn't want
sign it, it shows a lack in their faith and an unwillingness to do their reasonable duty. The Christian religion does mean so much more than the religion of the gods that I suppose it is not to be wondered at that the nominal Christians many of them do not realize how much heart-work is required to be a true Christian. To so many, Religion has simply meant certain rites and ceremonies and outward offerings and acts, so that to become a Christian or to accept the Christian religion meant to them the leaving their own rites and taking up something a little different—going to meeting, being baptized, taking communion, eating with Christians, observing the Sabbath and such like. Of course these rites have been a long time with us and have been growing up among Christians, and receiving Christian instruction knows better, but those that come in from among the heathen do need line upon line and that
continually to make them understand the principles of Christianity. The work is discouraging at times, but the promises—the promises are sure: “The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ.” We must keep clipping, clipping steadily at it. The hidden influences and powers that are at work will make them realize mightfully felt some day. They are being felt now as old hindrances are broken and trying to stem the oncoming current. They have formed societies for promoting and scattering tracts expenses in upholding their own systems, warding their countrymen against the encroachment of Christianity and urging them to withstand all these new influences. They tell bare-faced lies about missionaries and their work and there has been quite strong opposition attempted in southern India but the work goes on and must. I'm glad the interest at home keeps so good. The young people have the courage and vigor and talent to do a great work if they will only keep at it. This will reach you soon. Time in July when you will probably be...
Miss Hettie Whittenmore
Portland
Maine
19 Ellsworth St.
U.S.A.