

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

Letter to George D. Ticknor

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864), though now one of America's most respected authors of novels and short stories, was not a best-selling author in his lifetime. Much to his chagrin, his writing never provided him with a comfortable income, and he was therefore forced to work in government jobs. Hawthorne wrote this letter, which is preoccupied with official duties and private finances, while serving as U.S. Consul at Liverpool, England (1853–1857). It contains his now-notorious denunciation of women writers, whose work was selling many more copies in the United States than his own.

The text is from *The Letters, 1853–1856*, in *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. XVII (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1987), 303–05.

Liverpool, Jan^y 19th 1855

Dear Ticknor,

I am sorry to have given a false alarm; but as it turns out, I shall have no occasion to draw on you at present — having a good portion of the requisite amount on hand, and supplying the rest by drafts on the State Department for advances made. I shall lose nothing by this investment; and as to your advice not to lend any more money, I acknowledge it to be good, and shall follow it so far as I can and ought. But when the friend of half my lifetime asks me to assist him, and when I have perfect confidence in his honor, what is to be done?¹ Shall I prove myself to be one of those persons who have every quality desirable in friendship, except that they invariably fail you at the pinch? I don't think I can do that; but, luckily, I have fewer friends than most men, and there are not a great many who can claim anything of me on that score. As regards such cases as those of Rogers and Gibson,² my official position makes it necessary that I should

¹ *the friend . . . done*: John Lewis O'Sullivan (1813–1895), editor of *The Democratic Review*, published many of Hawthorne's writings and was a close friend of the Hawthorne family, who affectionately referred to him as "the Count." Hawthorne had borrowed money to buy real estate in New York for O'Sullivan.

² *Rogers and Gibson*: Henry A. Rogers was a traveler to whom Hawthorne, in his official capacity as U.S. consul, loaned money, noting in an earlier letter, "I think there can be no doubt of Mr. Rogers being an honest and honorable fellow." Walter Murray Gibson (1823–1888) was an American adventurer to whom Hawthorne also loaned money.

sometimes risk money in that way; but I can assure you I exercise a great deal of discretion in the responsibilities which I assume. I have not been a year and a half in this office, without learning to say "No" as peremptorily as most men.

I enclose a letter to Rogers, which you will please to send to his direction, unless he has already deposited funds for your draft and that of Mr. Cunard.³ I also transmit the latter, which has been returned by Cunard, and paid by me. If Mr. Rogers neglects to refund, he is the meanest scoundrel that ever pretended to be a gentleman; for without my interference and assistance, he could have had no resource but starvation, or possibly a Liverpool workhouse. If he refuses to pay, himself, the fact of my aiding him, and of his extreme necessity at the time, should be stated to his brother or nearest relative, who, in the merest decency, cannot but pay the amount. But I still believe that he has a sense of honor in him.

It seems to be a general opinion that the Consular bill will not pass. If it should, I shall (according to your statement) be at least a good deal better off than when I took the office. Reckoning O'Sullivan's three thousand dollars, I shall have bagged about \$15000; and I shall estimate the Concord place and my copyrights together at \$5000 more; — so that you see I have the twenty thousand, after all! I shall spend a year on the Continent, and then decide whether to go back to the Way Side, or to stay abroad and write books. But I had rather hold this office two years longer; for I have not seen half enough of England, and there is the germ of a new Romance⁴ in my mind, which will be all the better for ripening slowly. Besides, America is now wholly given over to a d — d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash — and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed. What is the mystery of these innumerable editions of the *Lamp-lighter*,⁵ and other books neither better nor worse? — worse they could not be, and better they need not be, when they sell by the 100.000.

³ *Mr. Cunard*: In 1839, Sir Samuel Cunard (1787–1865) founded the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company.

⁴ *new Romance*: "The Ancestral Footstep" (1861).

⁵ *the Lamplighter*: (1854) The first novel of Maria Susanna Cummins (1827–1866), which sold 40,000 copies in two months and 70,000 during the first year.

A gentleman here wishes for the Unitarian newspaper (the Enquirer I think it is called) published by Mr. Bellows in New York.⁶ You can subscribe for it in my name, pay in advance, and send the numbers in your regular package.

The children are delighted with the books you sent them.

I meant to write to Fields by this steamer, but fear I shall not have time. Please to convey to him my thanks for his slice of cake, and warmest congratulations on his marriage.

Your friend,
Nath^l Hawthorne.

⁶ *Mr. Bellows in New York*: Henry Whitney Bellows (1814–1882) was minister of the Church of All Souls in New York and, since 1847, editor of the *Christian Inquirer*.

MARGARET FULLER

From "*The Great Lawsuit*"¹

Margaret Fuller (1810–1850) was one of the early nineteenth century's most important activists for women's rights. She held a prominent role in the community of transcendentalist authors and thinkers, which included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Orestes Brownson, Jones Very, Lydia Maria Child, and Bronson Alcott. "*The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men: Woman versus Women*," published in the transcendentalist journal *The Dial* in 1843, argues passionately for women's independence and for the interdependence of men and women. In this selection, Fuller calls for women's right to speak, for equality in marriage and other male-female relations, and for the education of women to prepare them to embark on independent investigations of the truth. Fuller revised and expanded this essay into the book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), which has become a classic of American feminism.

¹ "*The Great Lawsuit*": In 1844 Fuller expanded this essay under the title *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*; in this later edition she explains her earlier title as follows: "I meant . . . to intimate the fact that, while it is the destiny of Man, in the course of the ages, to ascertain and fulfill the law of his being, so that his life shall be seen, as a whole, to be that of an angel or messenger, the action of prejudices and passions which attend, in the day, the growth of the individual, is continually obstructing the holy work that is to make earth a part of heaven. By Men I mean both man and woman; these are the two halves of one thought. I lay no especial stress on the welfare of either. I believe that the development of the one cannot be effected without that of the other. My highest wish is that this truth should be distinctly and rationally apprehended, and the conditions of life and freedom recognized as the same for the daughters and sons of time; twin exponents of a divine thought."