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July 29, 1896 - - - - - At last I am on my way! I had no idea it would be so hard to leave mother, not only mother, – everything – the girl I love and hold so dearly. I surely thought my heart would break, which, of course, it did not; neither did I lose my sanity, as I thought for a long time, I was on the point of doing.

I am going out into the world, to seek my fortune and happiness, though happiness can only be found where my girl lives - - - - I'm not even sure if I can call her my girl. She is a flirt; but at any rate she was mine before I left. Ah, how many a time, of late, has she not told me...

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...that I am her own boy. That she is faithful, I hope will be apparent, for if I learn that she is not I'm afraid I'll do something bad. I hope that my God who rules over all, holds his protecting hand over me, a poor and miserable person.....

July 31, '96

Have now arrived in Trondhjem, one of Norway's larger cities. Oh, dear Lord, how I long to be at home again! This strange yearning that has made me ill many a time has again overpowered me. I suppose every human being can have such longings - except that it can be stronger or weaker according to the nature and character of the individual. How I wish...

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...it were time to leave this place! If I could travel constantly, - that would be better....."Forward, forward is the wild cry that dies away on the strength of the soul." Konrad Dahl must have felt something similar when he wrote the above words.

This evening I attended a meeting of the "Salvation Army" for the first time. The impression left was favorable, could have been better had their fanaticism been less violent. One woman, especially, spoke well and at length. That a pity that such gifts should be misused....I truly wish I had her talents...

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...and abilities. It is strange that, such qualities, when found in a woman, appeared to be great, that can be found in any man....

August 1, 1896

It is Saturday evening. I happened to meet an old childhood friend. (here in Trondhjem, where I am at present on my way to America) Since life here has been quite dreary, this was a wonderful good luck for me. As he is well acquainted he could take me around and furnish considerable diversion. We first visited the Cathedral, this great work of art from the ancient

period as well as from modern times. It is one of the great sights of the country I had often wished to see...

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...and certainly felt well re-paid for the two hours spend there. Then we went on to several other places, which would have been pleasant enough but for that intense nagging longing for home. —ah, could I have come home to mother this evening, then, yes then, I would surely be happy. - - - - No, I suppose, even then something would be lacking. I might be content for a while, but that would surely be only for a short time. The great demands the soul makes on its mortal frame, which we call the human body, can never be satisfied so long as man does not belong to God...

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...or is a child of God, for so long will there remain a yearning in us poor and wretched beings, the noblest of all God's creatures, yet but mere pitiful, miserable, human beings. Yes, it is peculiar how strong this yearning for something better may become. My God in His infinite mercy, make me one of His, through the love of Jesus Christ. Then, yes then, shall I attain true happiness and peace. Grant that I may repent my sins - -

After spending six days in Trondhjem, I am not ready to leave this place. How it will go with me, the dear Lord, alone, knows, for I am entirely out of money. Nothing else for me to do but to go...

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...to the pawn shop and there borrow a few "kroner" on my watch. - - - - God knows it will be sad to part with my dear watch that carries with it so many precious memories, but necessity drives me to it.

Tønset, Aug. 4 - - I have no reached this place (with no more money) after traveling an entire day by train/ How I will fare hereafter, I do not know. I have lodging here at Tønset and share a room with a Jew and a Lofotvaering, both jolly men who will be my companions all the way to Christiania. I lack nothing - - and I should have been well content, could I only have had a talk with Mother.

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God alone knows if I shall ever see her again.

Now I have arrived in Christiania and the S.S. Norge leaves here tomorrow at one o'clock in the afternoon. Everything has gone well so far. Only the dear Lord, who rules and guides all for the best for us poor mortals, can know how it will be with me over there in another part of the world.

The worst of all is that I have only one and a half dollars in money, and whether or not I can get along on that I do not know.

Oh, that I might have reached home this evening to be with Mother, and then with another...

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...but I love them too dearly and for that I may be denied the joy of every seeing them again, but God willing, I hope to meet them once more in this life and be happy. However, that will depend upon her, my sweetheart, whether or not she can endure the test to remain faithful, and wait for me. I am too tired to write more this evening and with this, I close my notes from Norway. Next time I write I shall be in New York. Good night then, my dear old Fatherland! It may be the last time I rest my weary body in your loving arms. But I...

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...shall say with Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson: "Engang jeg tror skals jeg række frem over de høie fjelde." (Someday I believe, I shall reach the goal, far, far beyond the high mountains.)

S.S. Norge, Aug. 10 - - After traveling four days and four nights, I shall again try to write a few words, imperfect though they may be. The weather up to now has been fine, but there seems to be a change from clear sky to fog and rain, with signs of a rising wind and storm, and some are beginning to be seasick. If this develops into a real storm, I'm afraid there will be excitement on board (a bad time), especially in the women's cabins. The weather was really fine when we passed the Shetland Islands, with only a slight wind and rough sea, yet many became very...

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...sick. I can well imagine what it will be in case of a real storm. There are two Danish ladies in the cabin farthest and another Norwegian fellow, coming all the way from Tromsø, whom I had met, were to visit some acquaintances, but when we got there, one of them began to abuse and insult us, in English, and for her sake, do I wish for a raging storm!

Aug. 12 - - My wish was not granted. There was no storm which was doubtless best for the many...

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...but how I should have enjoyed seeing the great ocean in a mighty uproar! As a Norwegian fisherman, I have many a time been at sea in a storm, but to see this great Atlantic Ocean in a raging upheaval, that I should like to experience. However, it doesn't appear as if I shall have that wish granted, but we haven't reached our destination yet, we shall see.

The Atlantic Ocean, night of August 17-18

This has been a real festive day for me. I have namely met a young lady from Telemark. She was congenial and sympathetic, one who understood me perfectly. She spoke...

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...to me and immediately won my confidence. What a satisfaction it was to discuss with her the soul life and its developments and to tell her about my troublesome problems. It did me a world of good to be with her. We finally had to part, and I haven't heard from her since. Would there were many people in the world like that....

New York, Aug. 20

We have finally arrived in New York, the metropolis of the world. To describe the impressions the city made upon me is quite impossible. Here one can see man's true nature, and also view his accomplishments. I felt like a fly that someone had put...

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...into a tightly corked bottle. At least so it seemed to me. Of the many immigrants on board ship, only three of us continued our journey together when we left New York in the evening for the Promised Land. It was a magnificent sight for me, coming from the land of the midnight sun, to see the clear, blue starlit haven with a full moon now in the month of August! But all countries have their own peculiar characteristics with which to impress the traveler. The landscape was very monotonous, I thought, almost nothing but prairie. After three days and three nights of continuous travel I finally reached my destination...

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...Elk Point, South Dakota. By then I was both tired and bored with travel.

Elk Point, Nov. 8

Finally, after this long wait I had a letter from her, but I didn't quite like the tone in it. It seems cold - - and although she did make the same promise of faithfulness, I was not satisfied. I sensed a shadow had come between us. I answered her letter however, and await her reply with dread, but also with happy anticipation, the hope that my misgivings are only the result of a suspicious imagination.

Elk Point, June 12, 1897

A long time has now passed since I wrote in my diary; all because I am quite indifferent to what is...

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...going on around me. I have received a letter from her brother, my faithful friend in the Old Country, and he tells me about her. My misgivings, alas, all together too true! I had no sooner

left the country that she had another. Oh, those women! Alexander Dumas is right, when he says that woman is like a wave of the sea, that strikes against the sand, leave its mark, and then rolls back. So it is with the women. They begin to flirt with a man, to make him love them, only to throw him aside. They have then left their mark that will be impossible to erase; no matter how long he lives...

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...the scar will remain. It is true as Kristoffer Jensen says: "The best on earth is to love a woman, the worst is never to find a faithful one." Perhaps he has experienced this himself! And so they all are. There is no woman on earth who is not a flirt. If there is any justice in the life hereafter, it will surely strike those who have driven so many men down into the depths of despair, – yes, driven many of the weaker ones to suicide. I have even contemplated that myself. But it is unworthy of a man to do this, for such a one is a coward, and...

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...only a coward will refuse to fight the world's battles just because he has lost the dearest he had on earth. Man is destined to live as long as God gives him life.

South Dakota, March 14, 1898

After so long a period has passed, I shall try again to write a little. The learned philosophers say that ideas are developed through expression and also that writing is supposed to cheer ones mind. That is exactly what I need right now.

The gnawing unsettled feeling within me is terrible. I fear it will drive me mad, and the worst of it is that I know where peace may be found could I but force myself...

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...to seek it. Yes, I know, the honorable theologians in their imposing dignity stand there in the pulpits and tell us that peace will be ours if only we will it. I say that is a life. At least, though I will to have peace, I lack the determination to wish consistently for the same thing. I really have no will power at all! Today I may want one thing, tomorrow something entirely different, and that can't be called will power. No, I am like a ship, drifting rudderless on the roaring sea after a storm. Though the crew should desire to sail in a certain direction, what could they accomplish with their wills? Nothing. They are absolutely in the clutches of the elements. So it is with me: I am abandoned to the mercy of my feelings. I cannot...

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...stand this continual drifting about the sea of feeling. The ship will finally spring a leak and - - then - - then - - then - - I sink. The honorable theologians say that there is no peace for the

unconverted after death. This I cannot believe; anyway, during the period between a person's death and the judgment, even an ungodly person must find rest.

How glorious for all restless and anxious being to find peace, just to lie there and rest. Wonder if we shall then dream. No, that would be impossible - - for then there would be no peace - - because there are so many disturbing dreams. No, we will not dream, but the spirit (soul) must sleep, for if it...

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...did not, it would know what its fate would be after judgment. So long as a person is tortured with this anxiety, he is unhappy. If one could be a child again with that pure strong (firm) childlike faith - then- yes then-. My happiest times were when I sat on my mother's lap; she folded my hands and we prayed to God; of when she sang some of her beautiful hymns for me. Then I had peace - - I was happy. Joys like these are found no more, unless I include my first love...

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...for "her," but now that sort of pleasure was mixed with too much passion, which could never replace the quiet peace I enjoyed on my mother's lap.

20 a.a. (Same year?)

I should like to know what is to become of me. Shall I continue with the life I am now leading, or will I ever amount to something more? - Not much likelihood for the latter. Struggle while in the conflict, only to give up in despair? No, it's the weak spirits who fall - the ones who conquer. Do I belong to the weak spirits? Well, it would be interesting to know if those so-called "Mighty spirits"...

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...could have endured what I have the past year. Though naturally they would not have broken, they might have bent under the iron-clad demands. I am not broken either, only bent. Strange indeed, if I shall not someday be permitted to accomplish something. I feel within me the stirring of mighty forces, but it is difficult to say whether any of these ambitions will ever be realized. Perhaps what I call forces is nothing but a desire for recognition (power), an ambition that has been acquired through the reading of many romantic and poor novels. I am not so sure of this. It is difficult to judge oneself on such matters. This I do know...

Page 26a

...if I shall ever amount to anything, it will have to be some other place than here in Union County, South Dakota; however this could be a wonderful field for labor for one who understood how to tackle the problem (conditions) in the best way. Yes, in truth, could be a great pioneer work, if one were but able to remake the spiritless creatures living here, into thinking human

beings. But that requires genius and much learning, also a strong will power, and it is the last named that I lack. It is terrible to be such an emotional creature that lets himself be swayed by...

Page 26b

...his feelings (emotions) – today here – tomorrow there. A find tossing about, is it not?

What in the world can be the reason that I do not hear from “her”? There must surely have been something in my last letter that offended her or frightened her right away, though that is strange. I didn’t think she was that sensitive – but who can understand that mysterious creature called woman? This woman I could love, I might as well confess the truth to myself – I do love her already with my whole soul. Would that she had the same feelings for me, then, I believe...

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...I would have the courage to take up the struggle with life anew – but she is so cold. Is that her true nature, or is it a mask merely? Who can, however, understand these women? They are like the impenetrable deep sea – no one can say what is hidden under the waters, But enough of this. I shall leave the all and let both Blondes and Brunettes “fare thee well” – and then go off to school.

About Thanksgiving time, 1898

(this is after entering Augustana beginning of winter term)

At last, I’m at the foot of my ambition’s ladder! Will I live long enough to ever reach the top? If one could but take a peek...

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...behind that curious curtain and look into the future; I’m certain it is better as it is or there would be ever more suicides that there are at present. I do know however, that this is the wisest move I’ve ever made. How glorious it is to mingle with a hundred students. That alone develops and sharpens one mind. A young man, surrounded by a hundred companions will naturally try to be the best one. As Longfellow says “where there is a will there is a way,” and any one with some pride will want to be the best one. It is a hard struggle but it develops.

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Augustana, January 2, 1899

God bless her for the encouraging words in her letters. To think that I, as unworth as anyone can be, have gained her friendship! She says she respects me! That gives me the confidence in myself, I though I had lost! What and who she is, I do not know, but I do know she is my ideal woman. She is the most perfect of any I have met, and having the respect of such...

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...a person, more than anything else will drive me on towards my goal. How wonderful it will be to write her in my free moments and then to receive her reply. I study her letters by the hour, as the modern wise men do with the old classics. She writes well, her thoughts are poems. She has had a rich experience, has thought much, and is well versed in the literary field. I cannot...

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...understand how she can be satisfied with her occupation as a dressmaker. But what does that matter. All I want is to retain her precious friendship. She shall be the fountain from which I drink when I am very tired. That clear, put fountain shall be the nectar to cool my fevered brow, and give my weary spirit renewed strength. If I only may keep her!

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Eight days later

Another of her soulful letters. Each sentence expresses an idea. But poor, poor woman. What spiritual agonies she must have suffered; judging by her last letter a fearful storm must have passed over her; it could hardly be otherwise. A woman of her beauty and intelligence, one who mingles in the better social circles can scarcely escape storms. Judging from her letter, she is like...

Page 32b

...a spent volcano, with only an occasional faint outburst. It is my hope that the years will heal the heartache.

Wednesday, Sept. 1, 1899

Today I shall see her, and talk with her. My heart beats with renewed strength at the mere thought. I must control myself lest she gets the slightest inkling of my passionate love; for if she did...

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...it would mean "goodbye." To her, I am only a friend, not a lover. I shall try to master my emotions. May that love for her, someday be returned, is my hope. It can't be possible that providence would lead such a person into my life only to ruin me...

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...for if I can't have her love, I shall certainly languish and die, as a flower bud will wither and die if it doesn't get enough sunshine. She is for me what the sunbeam is for the flower bud – my light, my life, my all – but let me now continue these thoughts further, or I shall be too nervous

when I meet her. I shall write more tonight, after I've been with her and listened to her pleasant...

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...conversation.

Three o'clock, morning

A wonderful night, surely the most enjoyable I've ever experienced. We talked and laughed about many things. She seems to be well posted on everything. Only the theme "love" was discussed but very little. She seemed to evade that subject whenever I tried to bring it up. And of course that is because she does not love me. What will happen when she tells me the truth, I do not know. The mere thought of it...

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...frightens me. God give me strength to bear this blow. She has once loved deeply – whether she will ever be able to love again like that is a question. I am inclined to believe that a person loves only once. Life is a gift from God, and so is love. It is not likely that the Maker will allow such love to be awakened twice in a person. Since love is eternal there cannot be two such eternal feelings...

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...in the one and same person. This does not seem possible. If my reasoning is correct, then I certainly have a final hope! There is no doubt that she loved her deceased lover, and then it will be impossible for her to love me or anyone else. On the contrary, if my other theory concerning love is a higher degree of sympathy. This idea seems to be the most plausible, possibly because it fits the best into my present...

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...circumstances. At any rate, looked at from an unbiased point of view, this undoubtedly is the most logical since mutual aims, mutual endeavors, and mutual interests are the qualities that unite man to man, then why should not the same qualities bind man and woman?

Many claim, and with good reasons, that every love has its origin in this idea. One can scarcely imagine or believe that such a feeling comes to one suddenly...

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...for no reason; if that were the case, there would be the danger of its dying as suddenly as it was born.

Which of these two superstitions is the right one? I do not believe the next two centuries will see this problem solved, probably it never will be, which does not matter to me, if only God will permit the feeling to rise in her. Well, if I can't be a man with her I shall at least try to be one without her. I know for certain I shall never feel toward other...

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...woman as I have felt towards her, which is well, for my mind couldn't stand more pressure than it has had recently.

Richland, Sept. 20

I received her photograph last evening. It is the most perfect photograph I have ever seen. I have studied it inch by inch, line by line. Her character is plainly stamped in every line. There is a characteristic melancholy expression in her eyes. She must have suffered deep spiritual agony to have left such expressive lines...

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...in her beautiful face. Under her photograph, I shall inscribe "Pallas Athena," which to the old Greeks meant "Goddess of Wisdom and Beauty." _ am in a terrible state of suspense. In my last letter I asked her; I could stand it no longer, now it must break or endure. Even the sad truth is better than this painful uncertainty. With the photograph were only a few words with no reference to my question. I can feel how my nerves...

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...tingle, my blood rushes through the veins at a fearful rate and my whole soul is aglow. I don't know why, but I've never been able to think more clearly. My brain works like a locomotive. The reaction will be terrible when it comes, for it will come. If that I am certain, but until then, I have hope. O thou, mankind's best comforter, do not leave me. Let me have hope as long as possible. When the last ember of...

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...hope is lost I must die, but I shall sing with Bulwer Lytton:

"When I leave thee, oh! Ask not the world what the heart which Adores thee, to others may be!
I know that I sin when from thee I depart, but my guild shall not light upon thee
My life is a river which glasses a ray that hath deign'd to descend from above;
Whatever the banks that o'ershadows its way, it mirrors the light of thy love.
Though the waves may run high when the night wind awakes, and hurries the stream to its fall

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Though broken and wild be the billows it makes, thine image still trembles on all!"

Augustana, April 1900

Many months have passed since I put anything down on paper, at least to be preserved. I believe I must again try to note some of my emotions. She who is so dear to me has just gone through a severe illness and God alone knows if I shall ever see her again in this life. But in the beyond may we not be permitted to meet and talk with one another?

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But suppose she then belongs to another? God, who is good, yes the source of all goodness, knows that my love for her has been, and is as pure as a man's love for a woman can ever be. He could never permit me to bear this unfulfilled feeling through all eternity.

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I should likely love her with a love more like a brother has for a sister. Suppose she and were permitted to inhabit one of the new heavenly spheres and were given the power to populate that sphere according to our ideas of that period – this may seem strange that she and I should live alone on a sphere. Suppose all the people conceived such crazy ideas. There would, presumably, be too few globes.

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No, I don't believe so. The new heaven and the new earth would be no less perfect than the present one, which is surely ample even if two beings of all that have live, would be sent to each his globe. Let us suppose the world has existed – say a million years – in likelihood much longer than that, and from the first moment the Lord of Hosts spoke the words: "Let there be light" from that moment has...

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...the twilight that broke through eternity's night traveled at the rate of 190,000 miles per second and yet not found a boundary in this unfathomable atmosphere full of worlds and solar systems much like our own, there would in truth, be no shortage of worlds. As has been said before, there is no reason to believe that the new heaven would be less perfect than the present one. O dizzy thought! What am I writing. She shall not die.

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She is almost well and out of danger.

Moen, June 10, 1900 (should be Moe)

I met a friend yesterday who told me Bertha has quick consumption, so she must go, leave before I can meet her, before I can tell her I am converted, that I am a child of God. Ah, if I were assured that she is also, we might have the hope of meeting again. I shall try to be resigned – God will comfort...

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...me in the loss of a friend. He has also given me another friend in her stead, namely she who brought about that wonderful change in me. She is a better friend than all the others. She will never fail me. In her I have found a safe haven. Then too, she has that trusting childlike faith that I have regained.

It's a strange coincidence in my life that I should meet her at this time when I was most confused (discouraged, restless).

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She was surely sent by God to comfort and guide me on my lonely wanderings. I can never thank thee enough, O God, for directing her to my path. She knows how to comfort when everything is dark and gloomy (seems against me). She can tune the harp of nerves and get every fiber to vibrate. There is something about her – half old-fashioned and half childish which together has a peculiar influence on such a person as I. I hope to see...

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...her this evening. Wonder what she will say when she sees me. She'll tip her head slightly to one side and I'll get a momentary glimpse of her large questioning eyes. Let me control my emotions until I see her.

Lars Tormorsgaard, June 12 (10?)

A peculiar (strange) family I've come to. The man and wife are true Christians if there ever were such on earth. And she? She sat there on a chair exactly as I had expected to find her...

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...and the same surprised "Oh, is that you?" met me, as I had expected, when I stepped into the room/.

A gentle thrill passed through me at the touch of her strong, honest handclasp. One sense that here is an open-hearted, reliable person. On her I will and shall depend for she has everything that is worth relying upon.

Morning June 11

It is morning after a quiet peaceful night's sleep. I felt so secure when I went to bed last night.

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How good is it to be in this home of praying spirits. I know that no one in that large family slept before an evening prayer had been prayed. I am also sure that all prayed for me, who also prayed. I felt as if I had come into a sheltered and safe haven, after a fierce storm. Everything seemed to breathe of a great goodness. Lord, bless them for their genuine kindness to me.

June 13

Again I have tramped about another day and have met with none but crippled souls.

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They are dead, dead, living dead! Their highest interests are hogs, cattle, and horses As worms they dig in the dust and satisfy themselves with filth. When shall these dirt lovers ever get enough? Isn't it appalling that a human being created by God to be an intelligent person, and given an immortal soul, can say nothing but "give me this day our daily bread!" What will become of such earth worms when they die?

The spiritual life, received by God as the most precious...

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...gift is dead. The sense of beauty, with which they might perceive the wonders and glories of nature and the beauty in life, has been killed by the cold hand of materialism. Hunch-backed, with furtive glance and dragging footsteps they trudge forward. Toward what goal? Yes, to die as they have lived. And when death comes, they grab the bedstead with their crippled fingers and try by force to hold it back. Slowly it comes, the inevitable.

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Slowly but surely it nears. As in a nightmare they sense its approach and vainly try to escape. A last struggle for life and the dwarfed soul gives up its equally dwarfed dwelling. What becomes of such a soul? What can it answer that Judgement Day, when the Judge asks: "What have you done with that intellect I gave you?" "With that I have raised hogs and cattle." "Is that all?" "No, I have also used it to...

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...deceive others as much as I could." "Is that all?" "No, I have also used it to conceive some means whereby I might be able to prevent all needy persons from enjoying the bounties of life." A beautiful document to bring forth! Thank God, there also are other people!

June 15

Another day is over. This day has been good. I have sold three books and been amongst kind people. I met an old man, who is a sincere Christian. I sensed...

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...the spiritual look in his eyes. There is something special about God's children that sets them apart from others. A keen observer can at almost the first glance tell whether a person is a Christian or not. As a rule there is a singular radiant look in the eye, as if that heavenly peace shines out and overshadows all else. I could clearly see there was something special about this old man, something the majority do not have, but which all ought to have. He looked at me...

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...with his questioning eyes, as if to ask if I, too, were a Christian. I believe he got the same impression of me as I did for him, namely that he is a Christian. It is a peculiar oh; neither clamorous nor gushing, nor the sort of joy I would feel as if I got 100 in this or that study. No, it is rather a quiet, serene peace that has settled over me, like the cool evening after a hot day.

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How good it is! I feel so clearly God's presence and I am secure and satisfied as a little child at its mother's breast. I would not exchange this for all the world's millions. Strange, too, I had always thought there would be an exaltation without end, a rejoicing that had to be expressed in some way or other; I do not feel that kind of joy. I am more silent than ever before. I am not conscious of any boisterous exultation, rather of a calm and holy peace. I am like a weary traveler who finds comfort and rest in a warm, comfortable bed. His feelings...

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...cannot be expressed in words. The world with its griefs and trials disappear and he enjoys his rest. So it is with me. All that has trouble me before, concerns me little now. I rest. Wonderful, refreshing rest!

"Rest my soul
In Jesus name and drink
Of love's refreshing fountain.
Now you have received
What you so sincerely wanted."

Canton, June 19

The days are terribly hot. The weather affects my brain...

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...I can't think as clearly, as when it is cooler. I'm very tired today. Have walked many miles and not sold many books. My thoughts have been with Bessie all day. If I should express my feelings of the past day into verse, it would be something like this:

"I've trampled about the entire day, the feet are tired and sore;
My courage is low, the mood distressed and sad,
What that I, this hour, a glimpse of her might have;
A smile she'd give to me, a friendly hand, she'd wave.

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She is the pure creation, my tired heart desires,
My thoughts are often with her, as on my way I wander."

Later evening

I meet her in the regions of thought; in high regions on a crusade, our spirits wander
There we meet those glorious multitudes, as up they rise, from the life's daily filth, to a pure and better atmosphere.

There is ever sun and summer;
There is a joyous ring.
There our thoughts rise lightly
On Rays of the stars' wings.

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The breezes murmur in the summer night,
The rose's mild nodding to its friend,
Are the thoughts that she possesses —
Hers are also mine.

Life is worth the living
If one has it's harmony;
The problem is to find
The soul's parody.

He, who finds his own soulmate,
He lives a double life,
First in her dear smile,
Then in his own soul-life.

Be thou, O God, a gardener,
This double tree to tend.
In the shadow may it stand,

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Yet thou doest whatsoever is best.

Later in the evening

This is a strange place. A friendly old man lives here with his daughter, who is a lover of music. She could no doubt make something of herself as a musician, if she only had more feeling, but her emotional life is undeveloped. At least so it seems to me. She played for me this evening, which I enjoyed, though I did sense it lacked feeling. In this connection I wrote a little verse:

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Tones from the strings crept quietly forth,
Slipped into the heart of a despondent youth.
The wanderer's spirit was lifted
And he sang till the tones re-echoed
In the summer evening's soft air.

Bed time.

Morning (6:05 o'clock)

This is a beautiful morning. I awoke as the sun's first rays crept in through the windows in my room. I folded my hands in prayer and felt refreshed and strengthened. Life seemed glorious at this moment, but then my thoughts...

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...were with her. Strange how she dominated my thoughts. I must be careful lest I place the creature above the creator, but then she has done so much for me. She came to me in my most difficult hour. As a mother cares for her sick child, she cared for me. Tenderly and surely she showed me where peace was to be found, where I might find relief and rest. It was her friendliness and concern that finally melted my hardened...

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...heart and forced me to see God. Such a person is surely worthy of one's thoughts. She is much interested in Nordic literature, loves Ibsen and Garbog and understands them quite well. She has high ideals and lofty, pure thoughts. She is the finest gifted woman I have yet met. She even exceeds Miss Helseth, not in her "grasp of intellect" but in that delicate spiritual sense. Then too she has that genuine modesty...

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...which makes her a true womanly woman; the kind we men are attracted to. Would that all women were like that!

Iowa, June 18, Evening

What cozy, hospitable people I have met today! I have never met their like since I came to this country and scarcely in old Norway either. It seemed they just couldn't do enough for me – and most of them bought books. No doubt...

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...but that God moved their hearts to treat me as they did. I feel so clearly that Thou art now with me, dear Lord! I feel so free, so happy and cheerful. A new life throbs within me, and spurs me on to work. Lord watch over this life. Never before have I felt so satisfied and happy as at this moment. Lord, protect this joy. Thou, O Lord, knows and sees my weakness, give me...

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...strength to overcome them. Help me to treat all kindly, even though they may mistrust me. If possible, Lord, give me wisdom and humility, and a true knowledge, that I may teach others to live a better life. Give me grace to lead them to something nobler and higher in this life, but most of all the eternal glory. Lord, hear my humble prayer. Hold thy protecting hand over all those who have been so good to...

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...me this day.

South Dakota, June 19

It is too hot to walk. I shall therefore lie down for a while. I'm now lying under a tree, reading and dreaming. All is green around me, the soft murmur of the wind in the tree tops speak to me. This language my soul can appreciate.

With a hut and some books, I could live on this green spot for an entire life time – I would read and write to develop my mind. Nearby runs a river...

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...there I could fish and swim, and dream in the moonlit nights. What beautiful dreams I then should have. I would whisper my dearest, deepest and purest feelings to the green grass, and the blue anemone. The gentle evening breeze would carry this message far out towards the west.

Beautiful moonbeam bear thou my lament to my friend,
Ask her, oh beg her, soon to her friend return again.

To him, whose heart with such longing is throbbing,
While he, far and wide is wand'ring.
Come. oh come...

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...my sadly missed friends!

The moonbeams carry God's voice to me. They bring me peace. A tranquil calm comes over me, as I sit here alone out in the open nature on such a moonlit night. The sound finds rest. This come in contact with something as pure and singles as its own origin, namely God. Before this great change in me I always felt ill when I came in contact with nature. The greater the natural surroundings, the greater my illness became. This illness...

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...was nothing but the soul's longing for its own origin, God. By coming in contact with nature, the sound also came in contact with something pure and guiltless and this great difference between my sinful self and the pure and guiltless nature caused a disharmony between me and the nature, which for my sensitive soul was much worse that any other physical illness.

The city cemetery of Canton, June 23

What a strange feeling over powers one as he walks about this consecrated place...

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...surrounded by so many departed souls. Upon entering a cemetery one stands in a double meaning, on the crossroad between death and life. Under the earth rests the bodies of the departed, above is all life; the grass sprouts, flowers grow so luxuriously. All of life, richer than outside while below all is dead, dead, icy cold and wasted away. This is the first significance. The second is this: Here rest the bodies of so many while perhaps their spirits surround us as we wander...

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...about amongst the graves; for who can say with assurance where the spirits have their abode. It might as well be here as elsewhere. Yes, a peculiar feeling does come over one in such a place. More than an ordinary atmosphere surrounds me. I feel far removed from the ordinary daily existence.

A cemetery is a source of history. Here, on the tombstones one can find a variety of inscriptions that reveal the people's thinking. After reading the various inscriptions...

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...I have come to the conclusion that here are many saved souls, rather here like the bodies of many saved souls. At one place, I found the inscription "Nearer My God to thee," and truly none could be simpler nor more profound than this. It seems to note the feeling of joy this person had as he neared his death; as if, with a song of praise...

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...he murmured "Nearer My God to thee." What unspeakable joy this must be. "Nearer my God to Thee" was his or her song of victory over death.

To come nearer the Father, had been all he had struggled for, and now as he neared the end of this struggle, he could no longer control his feelings. Though bodily weak, the spirit, with all its strength, bursts out...

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...in the triumphant words: "Nearer my God to Thee!" Of all the inscriptions I read, this is the simplest, yet is all its simplicity, the greatest! No sentence could, in a shorter or more forceful way, express the spirit's joy over the victory now won. There are some people, who always have a fear of death. Such persons are either void...

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...of all deeper thinking, or they are full-blooded materialists. The latter possibly more often, the case I have always considered it a joy to die, even when outside communion with God. To be honest, even more so then, than now, for now there is more harmony in life, a harmony that did not exist then; life is now more beautiful. Before the great change came about in me, I longed for death...

Page 83

...for even if I should be eternally damned, I felt it better to die. However, that theory of eternal torture can hardly be possible. To burn can scarcely be the worst torture. The soul may have tortures far greater than any the body may have. So much finer and more delicate the soul is than the body, so much more must the soul suffer.

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It is, however, difficult to imagine an eternal bodily suffering but not so with the soul's tortures. But back to death. There is no doubt, but that when a person dies, whether saved or not, the soul enters upon a larger and more perfect existence, that it ever had any idea of, while here on earth. Grundtvig expresses this well in his hymn "Taenk når engang –" ("O blessed day, when solved are all the earthly problems, that here we pondered on–)

No, the sun is already far down to the West. I must...

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...leave this sheltered resting place and go to some farmer to see if I can get something to eat. Continue your rest, you tired departed spirits!

Augustana, Nov. 30, 1900

My previous day book, how you have been neglected. You, my dearest friend, who knows all my secrets; but thus we are, we mortals, so apt to forget. She is here! It was my sincerest wish that she might come; but now I wish she had not been here. It is awful! She loves another! Yes, she loves another...

Page 86

...and I must live my life without her! Never, since I became a child of God, have the words, "They will be done," been so difficult to say. Again, and again do I ask myself, can this possibly be His will? But so it seems to be.

The first night, after I learned this, I was in a fearful state of mind. I felt like an innocent man, doomed to die a slow, lingering death. What will life be like without her? For more than a year, I have thought of her as the reward for all my struggles...

Page 87

...the one to stand by in times of adversity, whose cool hand would sooth my brow, when my head ached from mental work. For her, who was to inspire me with new thoughts and ideas, I meant to work. We two then were to devote ourselves for the good of others who are tired and heavy-laden. What a glorious life it might have become! Suddenly, like a soap bubble, did my dreams burst. She began to suspect my secret, and gently and thoughtfully she told me all. I listened quietly. Little did she understand how every word...

Page 88

...cut my heart like a two-edged sword. I felt cold, stunned! Not until then, did I fully realize how dear to me she is. I did not fully understand it then, but now I know. If God would but let me die! She says we shall love each other in heaven. Her faith is as simple as that. But here again I have my doubts. I'm unable to write more.

It is difficult to tell about one's own death. I feel as if...

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...I cannot breathe. Lord, give me strength to bear this burden. I cannot be away from her. I must be near here. I must take her home every Saturday evening, for our conversation is so

pleasant. She can teach me much. Last Saturday evening, she told me I was proud, imagine! She believes I am proud. That amused me so much I had to laugh, but maybe she is right. I am not as I should be in that respect either. I believe she is right, after all.

Later

Light! Light! Blessed light! Heaven's bridegroom, how glorious are you not as you...

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...peek out from your hiding place and arise from thy bed. How good it is to drink new strength from thee. As I see her sitting there surrounded by a sea of glory, I am lost in the Creator's love, that I, a mere worm, may be permitted to see her in such glory!

(Tuesday)

Farewell to my last faint of hope, you are then out of my life entirely. I am so strangely calm, almost as if life might vanish and rush away at any moment. Did I not know it is a sin, I should ask God to take it. I don't know how I shall be able to endure seeing her and being with her, knowing that I can never possess...

Page 91

...her. "They will be done!" Thou, who hast been dwelling from generation to generation be with me also now. It is dreadful. I can neither see nor hear, as if a fearful spasm has come over me. I cannot bear that she, she who I love so passionately, belongs to another, not to me. This knowledge is like a slow torture in a glowing flame.

At times I can become quite displeased with her. She may utter such expressions as: "You must not love me," ... "I shall meet him during the Christmas vacation." She can have no idea...

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...what a person feels or she could never have done this – she does not want me to love her. That means my love for her is troublesome.

Well, she shall never have reason for complaint in this respect. This my most precious possession, but also my most painful experience, I shall take with me to the grave. I shall not bother her and she shall never have reason to complain of me. However, I don't believe she really loves this man. She has, more likely, in an emotional moment given a hasty promise.

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If that is the case, she is to be pitied—

Augustana, Jan. 2, 1901

A new century has emerged from the night and shoved the preceding one into eternity. A great thrill surged through me as I listened to the bells ringing in the clear moonlight night. What will they, who wait for the year's entry on the next century's New Year's Eve, know, that we cannot even anticipate. Will they perchance have developed electricity so far that with it they can take away all grief and bring the entire existence back to normal; so well regulated that with its...

Page 94

...help all types of machinery can be driven. If that be the case, then the 20th century inhabitant will have done more for mankind, than has accomplished from the time of Adam up to the present. Perfect would have been reached; which can never happen, so this is an impossibility. No matter how much the intellect is developed, it will never be able to create.

But as stated, a mighty force overpowered me in that moment, we passed from one century into the next. Such a moment has something special, a magnitude that cannot be explained.

Page 95

One feels nearer, than usual to the World's soul. The mere thought of how many atoms of time there may be in a century is staggering. To think about it is useless, for it is impossible to understand "what unit of time is." The only standard that will satisfy our idea is that it must be something larger than a zero. But if it were larger or smaller, than we should be able to understand it. No, even if I wrote a number large enough to circle the entire globe, the fraction would still be larger than nothing. But enough of this.

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Strange that she should enter my thoughts at the moment I was most overwhelmed by this sublime occasion, and immediately my thoughts were out of balance. How often will those blue dreaming eyes enter to disturb my thinking? Peculiarly enough, I have been very calm throughout the entire vacation. Only occasionally has she entered my thoughts, always unexpected and unannounced, slowly and silently, again to vanish. It is going to be awkward to meet her again.

(In the German Class, Saturday, Jan. 5)

Here I sit by her side.

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Strange indeed, to sit like this by the side of one's own ruin. No, I shall not be defeated. I want to live, I want to work! How will I ever be able to do so. I feel as if I were being suffocated. There's a dark shadow over my eyes, and I cannot breathe.

What would she do if she knew how I suffer? She would throw herself into my arms, out of pure sympathy if for no other reason. It is well she doesn't understand human psychology better than she does. She has changed. She has surely told him about me, and probably said I was being troublesome. He has...

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...perhaps advised her to avoid me as much as possible. Well, that would be like us men folks. We are so egoistic, that we would not grant, not even a dying person, a drop of water. Yet, I hadn't expected her to follow that sort of advice. No, this will never do. The teacher sees me writing. He certainly believes I'm writing nonsense, or that I'm up to some trick or other.

10 S.M. (Same Month) I do become so very tired. I shall give up everything and go home. No, leave this earth. I have lost the courage to live. She deigns not to look at me. Yes, yes, let her do what she...

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...wants, I shall not trouble her, my conscience is clear, I have done her no harm. She treats me heartlessly, as if I had been – I don't know what – a worn out garment. Let her treat me as she wishes: Some day we shall part.....

End

Written on a shaky train

Chicago, Aug. 21, 1896...We have now safely come this far, and now it will not be long until I reach my destination.