

Rebecca W. Lukens
1849
Brandywine

Brandywine August 10, 1849-

Five months have passed since I have lost my dear daughter - and in that time how much of real sorrow have I seen. The days have dragged wearily along. At the first the blow was stunning - I could scarce think of it as real. Then my anxiety for Isabella was so great and the necessity seemed so urgent and restraining my own feelings in order not to excite hers, that I would struggle to banish it from my mind when with her - this I could not do. Anne, bright and lovely in all her fresh young beauty, was ever before me pale and suffering on her bed of death as I had last beheld her. The image was always before me - I slept in her room in the very corner where her bed had stood. I sat by her window and looked out on the green landscape of the scene before it in all the beauty of early morning. I read her dear name traced by her own loved hand on the glass before me. Memories of the past would crowd on my mind, till my aching head and weary heart would find relief in the uneasy slumber which would sometimes visit or rather lull me for a short time into forgetfulness. This parting by death is a sorrowful thing to those who are left to mourn the loss of what alone made life a pleasure to them. I dare not ???? I fear to reprieve lest I offend Him who gave her to me but for a season and then took her, young and unspotted from her contact with Earth to her home in heaven. Yet the strong feelings of maternal love which the great and good creator has implanted in my heart will not I hope and trust offend him by this indulgence. He wept himself over the dead he loved. The divine nature sympathizes with human sorrow, and makes them the medium by which he purveys eternal happiness to his creatures here. My days all pass in a monotonous and dreary manner. I try to interest myself in books, but my thoughts will stray from the pages before me. I take my pen but my ideas are confused and all tend to the same thing - my great, my immeasurable loss. Oh, that I could better reconcile myself to this, that I could dwell more on the glorious death, the triumphant close of the life of my beloved child. The minister who had less than a short year before had registered her vows which made her a wife was now near to attend her in those in those fleeting hours of life, and her fete, and said that he believed in

truth the presence of the Blessed One was around her, supporting her parting days with his Blessed and glorious Spirit. Her faith was so strong,

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her hopes so bright, she had in truth a future given her by the rays of heaven.

She gave to my care the darling babe whose life was purchased by her own and dearly do I prize my little treasure. I love this child more than I can express - its beautiful intelligence - its sweet smile - go directly to my heart - then it is the child of my Annie - of her who was nourished in my bosom and laid in my arms many a long night - who was the object of solicitous, of thoughtful tender care. But why need I dwell on this? Who can tell unless they have seen in all the gushing tender love of a mother's heart - all the anguish of a mother's feelings when she loses the child she has brought into the world and loved with doting fondness. The grave covers my sweet, my beautiful one, then let me weep.

(Page 2) I think I will keep a diary from this time of the events of each day. My time hangs leisurely in my hands - drearily it drags along. Sorrow has pressed so heavily on my heart, that my mind bends to the pressure. The elastic? spirits, the bright and gay creatures which once could interest and amuse by their naive and fanciful forms now no longer engage my attention, or engross my thoughts - I do not like to visit. Each familiar scene recalls painful recollections as associated with her who can gladden Earth no more. I wish I had active duties to claim my attention. I must rouse myself from this lethargy. This prostration? of the power of mind - I will begin this day - with this day.

9 mo 14 - Awoke this morning with a bad headache after a disturbed and weary night - felt un??? and bad - Isabella sent me up a cup of coffee into my sitting room, felt better and walked in the garden. Gathered a few roses and sat down to think and write. I fear I am not thankful enough to my Heavenly Father for his great and continued mercy. Oh that I could serve him more and more. I am now deeply interested in scripture history. Dr. Huston has presented me a new and interesting book Lieutenant Lynch's Expedition to the Jordan and the Dead Sea whither he had been sent by government to explore this, to

us almost unknown and deeply interesting country. His account is of thrilling interest. He was the first man who navigated the water of this sea and the American flag was the first one which had ever floated over its surface. this was described as a plain of beauty and fertility which was "even as the garden of the Lord" is now a waste of fetid? water - the type of

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desolation bearing evident marks of the curse of Almighty wrath. Low beneath its surface lie the guilty city of "Sodom" and Gomorrah - with other sunk for their terrible sins beneath its water - Each day as I read I will remark what has struck me of deeper interest when all is interesting - I will faithfully narrate every feeling of my heart - My dear little girl - I must now visit her and strive to lose my gloomy thoughts in caressing the dear little pet. The other children - I love them also. They are my dear Martha's little ones. I have watched them from infancy and they are very dear to my heart. The day is cloudy - though the morning opened bright and beautiful. Thus it is with life - Few see the brightness of the midday sun which opened so gladly in their precious and happy life. The reign of summer is nearly over. Autumn is approaching. The wind already has a moaning, a dirge like sound - This time one year ago my beloved Anna was with me. Oh how the recollection comes on my heart with a cold chilling weight. Oh my God will thou not rob memory of this terrible thing - and give me strength to bear my allotted portion. I can do nothing without thy aid.

15th- I did not go up to Abraham's as I had intended. I busied myself about a few things I wished to do when it began to rain and I was obliged to remain in the house. Martha came down in the evening after the rain was over and spent a short time with me - I tried to interest myself in some sewing for little Anny and retired early to bed. the night was a long one to me being not very well and I was disturbed with unpleasant dreams. This morning opened bright and beautiful, everything looked refreshed after the rain. Isabella took a walk to the village while I remained in the library rocking the babe's cradle which was there. Amy Bernard called and spent an hour with us. She is a timid gentle woman whom I like very much, so quiet in her manner. Rachel (my little Annie's nurse) carried her down to see me. The dear

little pet was glad to see me and I spent an hour talking to her and nursing her. This afternoon, the day continuing delightful, the doctor took Isabella and her little girl to Downingtown for a ride. Poor Isabella she has never been there since our great loss. I know it will be a trial to her to meet her friends the first time in their own house, since her dear sister's death. Alas - this time one bitter year ago and that dear sister herself was to see those very friends - I have felt very bad today and have earnestly besought my Heavenly Father to support and strengthen me - I am a poor weak creature - I feel I can of myself do nothing. - Oh that I might indeed receive Almighty

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aid - Sometimes I fear my petitions can never reach the Only one who can help. Oh that He would teach me the language of prayer.

(Page 3) I propose going up this evening to spend a few days with my dear Martha - She wishes me to come - and then I should see more of my little babe for whom my heart is ever yearning. I am sitting now in my own bedroom that dear old nursery - associated in my mind with so many interesting scenes. I love this room. It once contained husband and children and rang with the glad and merry laugh of happy childhood. Now all is still, still as the hearts, the cold, clad? presses on, once warm with life, once buoyant with hope - the willow? with its unfaded? green draperies the window, blended with the plants and shrubs of the garden below - the song of the bird still comes in though not so joyous nor so melodious as in early spring. While the chirp of the cricket tells of the approach of Autumn - the sun is shining very brightly without producing that intense heat it did a month ago - in even a few days back - my mind goes back to those happy times when my three daughters were around me and I can once enjoy the beauties I see - Oh would this dark pall were withdrawn from before me - Would I could turn from the sorcerer of earth and fix my thoughts in heaven. I fear I am not resigned, not submissive though I struggle for this state of feelings.

1st day morning 18th - I have been spending several days at AG [AG = Martha's husband Abraham Gibbons.] I always loved to be with Martha, and I had a nice, large, quiet room assigned me where I could

sit and think at leisure. I love her dear little children very much and then I could see and amuse my own little darling when I please - She is fond of being with me, knows me well, and goes to sleep quietly in my arms after I have caressed and talked with her till she is sleepy. Sweet child, I fear I should have trouble about her. Though given to me by her dying mother - to whom I promised that to me she she should be as my own child - to protect, cherish and love while I live - still I fear her father will interfere with me in this. Though he solemnly guaranteed that my dearest Annie had given me - yet I can see even now he feels jealous of the love she receives from the aunt who has perfumed a mother's heart by her sister's child - Martha was noble and magnanimous in the part she acted for she truly and fondly loved the dear sister whom the Almighty Father had called from earth. She took the little orphan to her bosom and gave her the

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nourishment her own boy had drawn till then, and fondly did she cherish it. Clearly did she love this little claimant on her maternal affection. I never heard her murmur nor express a regret when she gave to the little Annie the nourishment her own Charlie was to have drawn for months to come - and the dear little fellow ?????????? he seemed to love her. - No other child could he bear to see his mother take in her arms, but sister Annie as the children all call her was never molested - and never will she cry loudly if she does - his mama as we all call her take little Charlie in her arms. He has suffered poor little fellow - during this warm weather a good deal and looks thin and poorly - though he is now better. I feared for a time that we would lose him and that his mother might grieve in the heart that she had taken him at too early an age from her bosom. This cool weather I hope will brace him up and this his second summer, once surely over - we shall have less dread of his suffering - from his early weaning - During my stay at Martha's I began to read "Stephen's Travels" which I find very interesting. his journey through Petraea- ??? and the Holy Land to the Dead Sea = I am deeply interested in - So many - indeed all the country we see through Scriptures, familiar with - Cities it is true have crumbled into dust - in many places - once so great and populous, yet the "Everlasting hills" point to this location and in many places a few miserable dwellings even

(Page 4) the space once occupied by others, once mighty in their strength, and filled with a population of thousands who have all passed away - Traditions - still points to their remains - And Stephen's visit to Petraea, the city of Edermites, whose very locality was lost for ages to the Christian world and jealously preserved by the wandering Arab - and to the tomb of Aunen, on Mount Han? was such as to call up every faculty of the mind and concentrate it all on the wanders then opened to its view. This ancient City of the Dead is encarvated from the solid rocks which still frames high above when the skill of the architect has wrought it into palaces and temples of surprising grandeur - The entrance, narrow and closed up by a barrier of lofty rocks, shut it out from the view of travelers, and a wild and impetuous torrent now pours rabidly along this very causeway. No one in viewing it could suppose to what it lead.

19th 2nd day, morning - I am suffering much from a rheumatic affliction, which nearly disables me from walking. Time seems to drag along wearily - Yesterday afternoon I read in the "Life of William Allen" - He was indeed a bright example of Christian humility, piety and active benevolence. Oh

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would I could follow in the steps of this truly great good man. In the evening, I read in the New Testament, one of the Epistles of Paul - what a brave and fearless Apostle, was Paul, how courageous in preaching the word and doing the will of his Holy Master, neither danger, nor difficulties deterred him. through strifes, nor the dungeon check him in his cause of duty, Firm, steadfast and immovable he stood until even his persecutors were awestruck in his indomitable firmness in promulgating, the truths of the Gospel. This afternoon is beautiful, the sun is shining so bright, the air is so delightful, the azure of the sky so calm, so serenely blue, not a cloud to obscure on man its beauty - all this is calculated to soothe the feelings and while away the mind from sad or bitter thoughts. But there are sorrows which such a scene cannot soothe, feelings which cannot bear to gaze on such tranquil beauty. that dear young and lovely face is ever before me, those mild but softly beaming eyes I can see them ever now in all their sweetness they rested on my face. Oh tis sad, terrible to have them so dear to my heart - that every nerve,

every fiber will thrill with agony until my very heart strings seem ready to burst - OH Father in Heaven have mercy on me and soften this grievous affliction I think if I had some active duties to engage my attentions, some engrossing subject for my mind to dwell on, business to attend to, my mind might regain a more healthy tone - but a kind of numbness has crept over my faculties, a mental paralysis, which I am unable to shake off - I have suffered so many losses that my mind is weakened by what it has had to bear. there is very little stirring that can interest me. The terrible cholera is we hope disappearing in Phila.

9 mo 16th - I make out but poorly writing in my diary. So few are the events which break in on the monotony of my life. My little Annie's grandma and aunt have been to see her, and seem very fond of the sweet little pet. Her father also has been here, but his presence is disturbing to me. It brings the image of my dear Annie ever before me and the thought will come "but for him my child might still be here to bless me with her sweet presence.

12 Mo 1850 - After a lengthy space of time I again resume my pen. More than a year has passed [since] I last wrote on these pages. And what have I gained in that time - alas nothing -the same struggle after better things, the same sad image is ever before me - my dead child with her sweet mild loving face, is the constant companion of my daydreams, as well as my

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night thoughts - Time has not softened my grief. I think it will remain while the fevered life dreams shall continue. Father let me not be rebellious to thy will - Thou alone know what is best.

(Page 5) The cold of winter the heat of summer has passed away and now again comes the cold blast of the storm king. I look over the last year with little pleasure and I weary of the useless life I am leading. So little there seems for me to do, with ample means to assist the pain and with a heart which can feel for distress. I am far from satisfied with what I have been able to accomplish. I must try to do more, be more active, energetic in the causes of humanity. There are positive duties incumbent on all. I must seek them out now weary in the work. There

have been many changes and some of them sad ones in my family during the last twelve months. My daughter Martha early last spring lost her only boy her darling little son by that terrible scourge scarlet fever. Many were the tears shed over our darling Charlie. Deep the sorrow we all felt. I did not know I loved him with so fond an affection until the cold hand of death was laid upon him, and I saw the vital spark return to its fitting home - its resting place in heaven. But the poor mother, who shall tell of her agony and grief. She clung to the suffering little form of her child with a tenacity of anxious care which nothing could divert from its object and when that suffering was ended in death - She hung over his loved remains with all a mother's grief. His father also felt the loss keenly. He is a man of feeling and strong mind. While his boy was suffering he never left him. the little sleep he got was on a sofa in the sick chamber. He nursed him, watched over him, gave him the remedies prescribed and would walk the room with him in his arms ???? several hours to relieve him by his motion ???? his terribly restless feelings - and when death closed his eyes, he turned to console his poor stricken wife, and watched again with her over the sick beds of the darling little girls who were seized with the same fearful malady on the same day on which their brother expired. they were very ill, but were mercifully spared to us. The care they required seemed to keep up their mother's mind and strength for a time, but after their danger was over both body and mind seemed to be prostrate, with the blow - there seemed no carry on for the poor sufferer. She tried to be reconciled and to submit to her "Father's Will." but alas, her grief was too powerful and her health bent under the conflict. And it was not until the birth of a dear little girl that Providence mercifully gave her that the light of other days served to chase

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away the dark shadow which had clouded her face in gloom. Martha said in speaking one day to me of the little pet she was so fondly nursing and which they had named after me, "This is my little heart's ease." I was a wretched miserable being till this little cherub was given me. Her strong maternal impulses were all enlisted for the little helpless being given to her arms and she mourned her Charlie with a true but a more ???? sorrow. My dear Isabella has also another dear little girl -

only a few weeks old, a beautiful fine healthy child. the new house is now nearly completed, which has been built

(Page 6) up for Dr. Huston and her. And in a month from this they expect to remove into it and leave the old walls of Brandywine to the comparative solitude of my small family, though for me the prospect is dull. through my own act and seriously thinking - this plan the wisest and best for all, I have my own sad thoughts on the subject - I recommence the cares of housekeeping, with no child of my own to share them with me or cheer me in my hours of desponding gloom. the light step and the glad laugh from child of mine will never sound through the old home again - The grave has claimed them in their young beauty all but the two dear daughters, which my Father in Heaven has yet spared me. and ???? will all affections and felt them are mine own. Now though I know they love me as well as ever they have new claimants on their time, their care and their affections. Their families demand their time and their duties must not be neglected. My dear little Annie will now be the one to cheer me when I am sad and while away the dark spirit from my mind. How very lovely she is growing. the dark lustrous eyes of her mother are ever beaming on me from her dear little face. She is a fine healthy child and I feel the love I bore her mother cover her as with a mantle so pure holy? and absorbing - it rests on her child and seems to shed a halo around her, the little darling pet. How I love to mark any fresh spray? of her intelligence, She is very bright and graceful in her movements - and just aiming to talk. Her disposition is very affectionate, her memory ???? and her affections very tenacious. I look over my life with regret - so many opportunities of being useful, of doing much good utterly neglected and now at this late period of time it seems almost a hopeless task to redeem the errors of the past or strike out a new path fo the future - yet with an earnest desire to amend where i clearly see I was wrong and with earnest prayers for strength and help from on high - may I not hope to

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succeed. I will try each day to keep a diary of passing events and will candidly narrate all that may transpire. Today I did not attend meeting which I regret. I was nearly ready when I found that there was no convenient way for me to go. I think when I

have a driver of my own I shall feel more independent particularly in this respect - besides I sometimes long for quiet. That I may have time unharnessed by noise or confusion for serious reflection - I may find much to annoy me - I am aware - yet still I think I shall eventually be more comfortable. Besides my ? are so nigh me - that a walk of a minute can bring them down. I can speak to them from my own door and see them from the window by which I sit - My brother-in-law Solomon Lukens and his wife who reside on the reservation over in ????? - to be of use to the Indians there, came

(Page 7) a few weeks since to see their friends in Chester County and have returned to their wild home. Their account of the habits of the Native wild men of the forest was full of interest. A strong feeling of duty led them to give up the comforts of civilized life to be useful to this un??? and persecuted race. May the mission

1 Mo. 7th 1852 It is a long time since I wrote in this book, and indeed it seemed as though I had lost all interest in my diary. Let me now at the commencement of a new year resume a habit which may be useful for me to continue. I am still at the old house living with my small family as I have done for nearly a year. My dear little Anne has improved much at this time and is now the "Light of my home" the bright sunbeam of my dreary life. She calls me Mama and how my heart ????? to her with irrepressible? love as she so ????? me. Sweet child of my own dear Anne. Nothing could be nearer my heart than she is. Spring, summer and autumn have come and gone and now stern winter reigns of all around. My little darling has gone to Philadelphia to visit her grandfather's family and I am left solitary and sad, my heart is at all times leery- I do not care to go beyond the precincts of my home, my own fireside, feels better and more comfortable to me, than any other spot can do. I go back to days which have fled - and memory pictures persons and scenes - around me which have long passed away. I live in a world of my own - and though the tears will flow at the pictures which my fancy recalls - of the pleasures long since passed - yet I love to linger even

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amid the wreck of my buried joys - I fear I am leading a useless life - I want energy - I want moral courage! For more

than three weeks I have been much alone - my little Annie was on a visit to Philadelphia and I seized on the opportunity good sleighing afforded me of doing several errands - and it ended by my doing too much - I took cold and had quite a severe attack of illness - Besides this I was very lonely, and very miserable. This living in the past will never do - I wish I could shake it off - the flowers are funeral and the fruit oh how bitter. I am weighed down with apathy - Nothing interest me sufficient to arouse me. My little Annie has returned - and I hope I shall feel better - Besides the severity of the very cold weather I hope is now happily over - and I can go move about and thru the house - I believe having passed so many years in constant excitement - has had a very deleterious effect on me - it was a stimulant to my existence and now- I feel the want of something to give an impetus - a spur to the routine of every day life - and not finding this I become apathetic - and indifferent to all around me. It is an incubus I greatly desire to shake off - Would that my Heavenly Father would give me aid in doing this. I feel so weak - that without His aid I can do nothing - Lord wilt thou not help

(Page 8) thy poor unworthy servant? There have been some cases of severe suffering and great poverty around us. I have tried all I could to relieve the poor - this much I am always glad to do - to relieve distress when it becomes known to me . My heart feels for the wants of the needy - This is the 30th day of the 1st mo. 1852 - a little more than a year since I came here stripped of all my children - to recommence housekeeping, alone, with only servants and my little grandchild. George Coates was for a year an inmate of my family, my good and my

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