

DOCUMENTS

LETTERS OF JEROME CARSKADDAN, 1853-1854

Compiled by J. C. Bishop

Jerome Carskaddan, who wrote these letters when he was 24, came from a family which had lived in New York State since the 1850's. Both grandfathers and at least two of his great-grandfathers had served in the Revolutionary forces. He was raised on the family farm near Durhamville, Oneida County, and as a boy worked on the farm and stripped bark for use in his father's tannery. He attended school at Oneida, then entered Hamilton College at Clinton, New York, from which he was graduated in July, 1851. Among his classmates and fraternity brothers there was Charles Dudley Warner, who later became a well-known author, and who is frequently referred to in these letters.

After leaving school Jerome studied in the office of a law firm in Oneida, usually walking the four miles daily from his father's farm. After being admitted to the practice of law in New York State he started for Iowa in the spring of 1853, to locate a likely spot in which to settle and practice his profession. These letters form a complete series from the time he started west until he returned a year later to marry the girl to whom they were written.

Marilla Brown also came from a farm family, from an adjoining county. During the period covered by their correspondence she lived part of the time with her parents near Morrisville, but mainly with a married sister, Adelia Wells, at Oneida Castle, a few miles south of Oneida.

The marriage of Jerome and Marilla took place at Oneida Castle on May 1, 1854, and they moved west to Muscatine, where they remained together until his death in 1912, hers following less than a year later.

These letters to "Rilla" are those of a lonesome young man to his lady love, telling of his life in a strange, new, and still rough settlement. Many of the early pioneer characters were still there, and those who were later to become its leading citizens were then arriving. The boom was on — the population of the county nearly doubled between 1852 and 1856. That his

start was a sound one is shown by the fact that for nearly sixty years he was one of the leaders of the Muscatine bar, and was among the organizers of many of the city's early business firms. In 1857 he was elected prosecuting attorney of Muscatine County; in 1862 he became county judge, an office which he held until 1864. He served as local attorney for the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway for almost fifty years and for ten years was on the board of directors of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railway. In 1907 he was president of the First Trust and Savings Bank of Muscatine and also a director of the First National Bank of that city.¹

No doubt Marilla's letters to Jerome would be equally interesting, but sometime during her married life she carefully destroyed them all.

Chicago, May 5, 1853

Here I am thus far on my journey safe & sound though a day behind time. We were detained some five hours by a smash up of the train ahead of us a few miles east of Buffalo. We should have reached B. at 6 & did not untill eleven. The Steamer left at 2 A. M. & landed us in Detroit tuesday night at 8 — the train for this place had left so we had to stay over untill yesterday morning — that too was behind time, but finally brought [us] in at 8 last eve.

I haven't a single accident to tell of — only delays. Old lake Erie was as smooth as glass, but the fog was so thick that nothing could be seen. Before we landed in Detroit it began raining & has kept at the business ever since with remarkable pertinacity. The sky is as tearful as your eyes were when we parted, or as mine were the minute after.

I wish you were here to see this place — though I fear it would make you sick of the west. Away off on the Atlantic shore of this great land lies the Empire City — on the gulf of Mexico rises & shines the Crescent City — & this of all towns in the world is entitled to the appellation of Mud City. There is mud, mud, everywhere. Nothing to be seen but mud except Dutch women, & there is not much of them visible but mud. It seems as if all the gutters & sewers of the earth emptied here. But it is a great rich & growing place — though I think not the place for me.

I have found three old college friends, lawyers — & am now writing to

¹ Edward H. Stiles, *Recollections and Sketches of Notable Lawyers and Public Men of Early Iowa* (Des Moines, 1916), 402.

you in the office of Anthony & Miller. The first is a *sig* & classmate of Kinneys — the last a *psi* *upsilon*. They say that every week they meet with young New Yorkers pouring into this region, & wonder if there are to be any left behind to take care of the old fogies.

All creation does seem to be moving west. They give me rather favorable reports of Davenport — better than I expected to hear.

I shall start out on the Chicago and Rock Island railroad tonight or tomorrow morning — but when I shall reach Davenport I can not tell. I may go down to St Louis — instead of taking a stage across. I can't tell which I shall do untill I get to the end of the railroad.² As soon as I do get to D. I will write again.

I wonder, my dear girl, if you have wished me back at Oneida, since I left you, as often as I have wished that you were journeying along with me. You must keep your courage up. We will have a home in some place on the earth yet. . . .

Good bye untill I speak to you from the other side of the Mississippi.

Davenport, Ia. May 12./53

After many windings & turnings, my crooked path has at last brought me to Davenport. At the urgent solicitation of Miller (I spoke of him in my note to you from Chicago) I remained at C. untill saturday morning — then took the cars for Peru where I arrived at one P. M. & learning that the roads across the country were almost impassible from some travellers who had just reached P from Rock Island I went on board the steamer "Garden City," & took passage for St Louis. I got there Monday morning & remained there untill nearly night & then started for this place in the "New St Paul." St Louis is a grand city. I liked it very much, a great deal better than I did Chicago. I think it merits the appellation old Tom Benton gave it in one of his best speeches — "the towering City of St Louis."

I landed here at five o'clock yesterday & not untill I had brushed & washed off some of the stains of travel, & drank a cup of *tea* instead of coffee, not because I liked it but simply out of regard for your taste, & had walked upon the bluff back of the town — not till then did I have a realising sense of the fact that I had left home & friends far behind me, &

² The Rock Island had built westward from Chicago as far as Peru, Illinois, on the Illinois River, by April of 1853. See F. J. Nevins, "Seventy Years of Service," *Rock Island Magazine*, 17:13 (October, 1922).

had placed myself, whether for good or ill the future alone can tell, a stranger in a strange land. But it was a beautiful scene I looked upon — let me picture it to you as well as I can with this poor pencil. The ground I stood on has an elevation of fifty or sixty feet, directly in front at its foot lies Davenport, a little way upstream is Rock Island with two or three pretty looking residences upon it — On the opposite shore is Rock Island City, about as large as D. — beyond R. I. City scattered up & down the bluff are a number of beautiful residences & between Rock Island City & Davenport the father of waters rolls his flood along towards the gulf of Mexico — in himself a richer mine of wealth to America than California with all her gold. The eye can follow the course of the river for miles down. Seeing all this as I saw it for the first time, & with a clear sunset lighting up the scene, it was beautiful.

The City of Davenport, there are nothing but cities in this country, is scattered along between the bluff & the river & has already begun climbing the bluff — it of course looks new. The buildings with but few exceptions are small, but it is rapidly improving & its business increasing.

I like the place well, but it is filled to the brim with young lawyers. Yet I do not much fear to settle here and battle with them.

I have not yet determined upon staying here, but I think I shall do so — this is the shire town of the County, Scott Co. & there is to be a term of District Court here next week. I shall attend that & get acquainted with all the lawyers I can, & find out as much as possible about the country & its good points, & also get admitted to the bar of the State of Iowa. I may possibly learn of a better opening, but I know that it will be impossible to find a more beautiful location in the whole state. You would love it I know. You couldn't help it. . . .

Muscatine, June 2d /53

I found your kind & welcome letter waiting for me at Davenport last saturday evening, on my return from a foot-tramp back in the country — and you will have to be a stranger in a strange land, & receive a letter from me, before you can understand the eagerness & delight with which I read & re-read it. Now for a short history of my doings since I wrote you. I remained at D. some ten days, in order to get acquainted with the locality, its people & its prospects, & to attend the Dist. Court, & I came to the con-

clusion that it was not the place for me. Its location is beautiful, & when you have said that, you have said about all — like most beautiful places, there is an air of laziness hanging over it & a lack of energy in it. And more than half its population is composed of raw dutchmen who can not speak a word of english.

Its business is inconsiderable — its law business might possibly support four lawyers well — there are eighteen to share it, rather a blank prospect for a newcomer. I thought I would see what the back country was made of, so I swung my carpet bag over my shoulder & started, & at the end of two days found myself seventy five miles inland. I went through three counties, & I saw a land wild enough to suit an Indian — sometimes I would walk for miles with nothing to be seen on either hand but the wavelike rolling of the prairie — no tree no shrub, & no living thing but birds, save here & there a rattle snake who would raise his head dart out his tongue & shake his rattle to warn me that I was infringing on his domain & must step aside or get bit. The inhabitants are settled mostly by patches of timber & small streams, but this prairie land is as rich a soil as can be found in the world, & will ere many years be brought under the rule of the plough. I found no villages except the county seats, & those were small, but they are growing. I was urged very strongly to settle at Anamosa in Jones Co. a little place fifty miles from Dubuque, & was almost persuaded to do so, but it would be too much like going beyond the reach of civilization, & I could not bear the thought of ever taking you to such a place.

So I turned my face towards Davenport & got there saturday night, none the worse for a week's tramp. Last monday I put myself & my luggage on board a steamer & came down to this place, & here I shall remain. I like it the best of any place I have seen in Iowa.

It is a somewhat larger place than D. has a great deal more capital, & at least five times as much business. Muscatine is a real western town — full of true western life & energy — its inhabitants are nearly all Americans, I should think not more than one fifth of them foreigners — & that is a very small proportion for a town on the river. There are not so many lawyers here as at Davenport & there is a great deal more law business, so the Judge and the bar tell me. The Dist. Court was in session here when I came. I went to the Court House immediately & as soon as the lawyers found out I was a brother in the trade they invited me to a seat within the

bar, & altogether treated me as courteously as a stranger could be treated. They showed none of that jealousy which is so often found in the east, but on the contrary urged me to look no further, & to settle down among them, be one of them, & go in for a share of the rapidly increasing business.

I have accepted their invitation — do you not think I have done well to accept it, to stop among such lawyers, & in such a town as I have described? I have this morning engaged an office, the room in which I am now writing — it is a very pleasant second story room, over a banking house, on the best business street of the city.

I suppose you would like to know how Muscatine looks. In point of beauty its *location* is inferior to that of Davenport. The bluff here runs down almost to the rivers edge, not very steep, but there is very little flat, or bottom as they term it here, between the bluff & the river, & then it is cut up in every shape & direction by deep ravines, but these ravines are fast being filled up, & if the place goes on growing, it will in a few years present a gradual & well graded slope from the bluffs to the river. At the downstream end of the town the bluff rises abruptly from the river thirty or forty feet & on its level top there are a large number of as fine residences as one could wish to see — commanding a fine view of the river & the city.

There is no place on the opposite shore & that I think is a great advantage to the business of this place. As far as buildings are concerned there are forty fine ones here to one at D.

Such is the place I have pitched upon as my home.

I like the west — it is so full of energy, so full of life. The business in this country is done by young men, the posts of honor & profit are filled by young men. The Judge of this District, & his position corresponds with that of a N. Y. Supreme Ct. Judge when holding a circuit, is not yet thirty. If such a thing should be in N. York it would drive the old fogies crazy.

I am glad I have come to the west. If patient industry & a firm resolve can bring me success, *I will succeed.*

They say that eastern men are apt to get lazy in this country — you need not fear for me in that respect, for I am so impatient to fold you to my heart, & call you by the blessed name of “wife,” to have a little home cheered by your smiles, and made dear by your love, that I could not sink into sloth if I would. . . .

But I must close this long letter, & indeed this pen, feeble in the begin-

ning, cannot endure much longer. Remember me to our mutual friends, love me always, and write me soon. . . .

P. S. You will find Muscatine laid down on most of the maps as Bloomington — the name was changed a few years ago to Muscatine.

Muscatine, June 23d, 1853.

I have just got through the heat, dust & struggle of my first law suit in Iowa. It was a two days trial — three of the best lawyers of this place were engaged upon it — it was a case that occasioned considerable excitement & the court room was crowded — we used up half a day in summing up. My friends here tell me that my speech has placed me ahead of all the younger members of the bar in the estimation of community — & will ensure me business.

This is a little matter in itself Dearest, but then I know that any good fortune that has happened to me will not be unwelcome news to you. This suit was a hard one to try — no power on earth could have saved me from being beaten, but one *such defeat* is worth a dozen common victories. Tell Doolittle that I have defended an action of slander, that my client was clearly guilty, and that the jury found for the plaintiff *ten dollars*.

So Adelia has taken the responsibility of introducing another little stranger into this vale of tears. . . . She would do to come west. The women of Iowa are certainly the most prolific I have ever had the pleasure of seeing — ten is the very least number of children one can expect to find in a house in this country. A fresh healthy looking lady at Davenport, with whom I became slightly acquainted, showed me her youngest treasure, a wee thing, & very frankly told me it was her fifteenth — "My God, Madam" said I, "how old are you." "Thirty six" said she.

I think, Rilla, you will have to discard some of your peculiar notions if you ever expect to cope with these western mothers in Israel. . . .

Send my most dutiful love to our dear old Grandmother, & tell her that her grandson is very well pleased with the west, but he thinks that her antiquated, seventy-years-ago notions would be terribly shocked if her venerable and palsy-shaken form should venture this side of the great father of floods. Men do shoot each other here sometimes & walk "unwhipped of justice." . . .

Ah, here comes my chum, tripping nimbly along, looking happy as can

be — who & what do you suppose he is — he is as fine a little mouse as ever flourished a tail, and he trots up to me and around me as fearless as if he was monarch of all he surveyed. We are on the best terms imaginable — there is a covenant between us. He is never to make his appearance when there is any one in the office with me, and when he does enter I am to keep perfectly still. He sometimes walks slowly over my lawbooks, as if conscious of the deep and learned gravity of their contents. I think of presenting him for admission to the bar at the next term of Court. . . .

July 10th 1853

My mail bag was full yesterday morning — besides your letter, there was one from Clarence, one from James Stewart, & one from Charlie Warner. . . . Jim writes that he is digging gold steadily & successfully — he sent me a sample of the *dust* that leads so many thousands from the Atlantic to the Pacific shore. Charlie's letter was long and glorious. . . . He makes many inquiries, such as "Why did you come west — & where is Marilla — & where is the wedding — & where are your manners." . . . He and Henry Dakin are tramping along the line of the contemplated railroad from Hannibal to Josephs [St. Joseph], Missouri — through a country that has but little to boast of in the way of civilization. . . .

I have but little news to tell you of myself & my doings — this is a dull time of year in law business every where — east & west — but I am getting some business, & am very busily extending my acquaintance as rapidly & as widely as possible in this place & the adjoining country. My proffession is the slowest & the hardest one in the world to start in — but I have done more since I have been here than I could reasonably have expected & have nothing to complain of. The fourth passed off very quietly in Muscatine. There were a couple of Sabbath school celebrations, & the usual burning of powder & firing of crackers by the younger portion of young America — and a ball in the evening — at the latter some dispute about a girl arose between a couple of prairie bloods, & one of them drew a revolver, but it was snatched from his hand, and their wrath vented itself in harmless curses — both of them *tight* — the girl must have felt herself honored. . . .

[July 30, 1853]

I have not much news to write you this time. The life of a man who

lives in his office has but little incident in it. The City Council a short time ago appointed me Recorder of the City. The office will bring me some money — will not take much of my time to attend to it, & will get me acquainted more rapidly than any other means. I think it will be of material benefit to me. I think I can look upon myself as having been very fortunate since my arrival here. I have taken a better stand & already gained more confidence in the minds of [the] community than some young lawyers who have been here a year or two. One of these latter gentlemen is about pulling up stakes & going to Iowa City, he despairs of ever doing anything here. I should think he ought to despair of succeeding anywhere in the law.

But the best assurance I have of the good opinion the Muscatine people have formed of me, is the fact that two of the old lawyers have been persuading me to leave this place & go to Dubuque or Burlington — rather a significant move I call that. I answered them very quietly "I think I shall try it here a while longer."

But I must confess that their cool impudence surprised me. However, one must not be surprised at anything in the impudent line in this country. I very much fear you will not like the west very well — refinement, courtesy, gentlemanly & ladylike manner & breeding, are but little known or cared for here. I fear you will miss the Oneidas, Rilla — men come to the west to make money, & not to cultivate the social graces, & they pay little attention to anything but making money.

But I hope you and I will be satisfied with each other's society — so that we shall not need to call upon our neighbors to help us be happy.

August 13, 1853

Now do you want to hear what I did on the eve of commencement day: and about the Iowa girls

I dont know as I am acting very wisely in telling you, one of the girls advised me not to — and perhaps she was right. Howsomever — here goes. You see I had an invitation to a party given by Miss Washburn on that night & here note down the fact that I had never seen Miss Washburn, but I supposed it was the western way of doing things, so I went. I, being a total stranger, took no active part, but quietly made the acquaintance of a few who seemed to be the most sensible of the company, & watched the

manners & doings of those who *went* it. And they did *went* it. The company there consider themselves the "elite" of this town. And judging from what I saw there, I should say that the western girls do not lack courage, or coarseness. That Miss Gilruth . . . seemed to me to be [the] best girl in the crowd. Well, nothing particular happened at the party — the devil (excuse me) is to come yet.

Now there is a young lawyer here from Maine.³ I first met him at Davenport, he is a droll fellow, but I like him. He boards opposite Washburn's, knew Miss W. before the party, & Miss G. also. Miss G. is a Davenport lady & was visiting Miss W. Monday night after the party, Thayer, this lawyer, brought an invitation from the two Misses for me to call, so we brushed our hair & went, & passed away an hour or so very pleasantly; but I found out to my satisfaction, in this interview, that Miss W. was pretty much a goose, continually squawking, though she is quite good looking. Thayer, just as we were leaving, proposed that we should all go up on the lower bluff to a swing on the next Wednesday eve. I could not very well decline — Wednesday came & we went. Thayer with Miss W. & I with Miss G. While returning from the swing, Thayer, the rascal, proposed that on the next Saturday afternoon we all take a ride. Miss W. of course clapped her hands and jumped at the offer, and urged Miss G. to go. Well, what could I do under the circumstances, but say, "I should be very happy, &c" — and what could Miss G. do, (though somewhat taken aback, & blushing to the tip of her nose) but consent.

Saturday we all took a ride — Miss G. & myself being together as before. We drove to a tavern out on the prairie, a very pleasant place about ten miles from town. Staid there a couple of hours, took tea, & drove home again — like to have had a runaway & break down, but didn't. Last Monday Miss G. went home. Now, would you like to know what sort of a girl this Miss G. is? She is not handsome, but has a kind & intelligent eye, & good natured & sensible look generally. She is the daughter of a Methodist clergyman, & religious all over. She is modest & evidently sincere: I think half of our conversation was on religious topics. She talked to me like a little saint. During the latter part of our ride I made some laughing allusion to our intimacy on so short an acquaintance, & said that I didn't know

³ Edward H. Thayer and Jerome Carskaddan formed a law partnership in 1856, which was dissolved the following year when Thayer was elected County Judge, and Carskaddan the Prosecuting Attorney.

how it would be taken by a little blue eyed damsel in the Empire State. Said she, "I guess you had better not say anything about it to her" "No, no" said I, "I shall tell her all I know about you the next time I write." She vowed revenge by describing me the next time *she wrote*. And so we parted — how do you like her. You may know her one of these days, & I think you will like her then. . . .

It is hot here as a fiery furnace — the thermometer standing at a hundred & two in the shade. Coats, vests and cravats are discarded alike by the ton⁴ and the rowdies; & the men of Muscatine walk listlessly to and fro, exhibiting a striking & scanty equality in the quantity of clothing worn by them. I follow the fashion & go dressed as I would in a hayfield. And the women go dressed — oh, la — half of them do not seem to wear anything but those loose dresses, that is, at home. You can go barefoot as much as you please in this country & there will be none to molest or make you afraid. . . . People here do just as they have a mind to in all respects, & knock anybody down who presumes to interfere. But still they are adepts in the art of scandal. There seems to be nothing too high or too holy for them to ridicule or cast slurs upon.

August 29, 1853

I have not been out amongst 'em but once since I wrote you. Last Wednesday I recd a pressing invitation to spend the day at the residence of Judge Williams, the Chief Justice of the State.⁵ He lives five miles from town. I went & had a very pleasant time. The two Misses Mason, nieces of the Judge, were there. I spoke of one of them, Kate, in a former letter, and the Judge has a daughter, a very good girl, & a very good singer. Anna Mason rode home in town, with me, & I wound up the day's work by spending the evening in company with one of the Williams boys at Mason's.

Every other day for nearly two weeks I have been busy at the Court House, hunting up old musty land titles, preparatory to commencing about forty suits in the District Court.

Business is coming to me pretty fast. A young lawyer has recently been elected prosecuting attorney for this county, & as he is rather inexperienced

⁴ "Bon ton" or elite.

⁵ Joseph Williams, appointed to the Supreme Court of the territory of Iowa in 1838 by President Martin Van Buren, served on the Court as Associate and Chief Justice, until 1855. Stiles, *Recollections and Sketches* . . ., 37-45.

he wants some help, & has agreed to employ me to assist him in the criminal business. If I can make a few good strikes at the next term of court, in October, in the way of speech making, I shall be up in the world at once, & stand a very good chance to get the office of Prosecuting Atty myself next year. But this is counting chickens before they are hatched. . . .

Sept. 10, 1853

You know when we parted, that we fixed no time for meeting again & joining our fates together. . . . I could not then tell whether success or failure would be the fruit of my going forth into a new & strange country, and you generously and trustingly said that you would patiently wait untill I could so far establish myself in business as to be reasonably sure of ample support for us both. . . . I can not yet say when the day of its fulfillment will be. Much depends upon the fortune I meet with at our next term in October. If I do well then, I shall have attained a certain & sure position, though can not in any event make much money then. It is impossible for a young lawyer and a stranger, to get business of much importance, business that will pay well, within the first year of his residence in a location new to him.

Charlie [Warner] is being bitten by the mosquitos of western Missouri. It is no small credit to him, that amid the roughness of prairie life & camping out, he finds time to work some with his pen — and write articles that find admission into the pages of "Putnam" — the first magazine in America — If you see the September no. read "Salt Lake & the New Saratoga" — that is his — though it is not as good as he can write, and I mean to tell him so. . . . Lester is now superintending the building of a railroad bridge across the Fox river, near Geneva, Ill. — his salary is \$650. per year. . . . Pope is doing well — gets \$1000 per year. He has charge of a company — is now in New Brunswick — I will send this in his envelope, & you will see what I never saw before, an english postage stamp. . . .

Oct. 4, 1853

I will tell you just how business is here — law business — all through the summer it is dull — in the fall, about this time it begins to be more brisk & continues so untill spring again. So if I should be absent in the fall or winter, I should lose business. That is one reason why I can not

very well see you this fall — Another reason is that I have a debt to pay next spring, of three hundred dollars. And it would cost at least 150, or 200 dollars for us to get established here housekeeping — And if I should lay out as much money as that I am afraid I could not meet that liability in the spring. . . .

Oct. 18, 1853

. . . Rilla, *do, do* be careful of your health, do not expose yourself to danger from the cold & storms unnecessarily — for in coming west you will come into a new climate, different from what you have always been accustomed to, & you will need all the physical strength you can muster to meet it without danger. The saddest things I have seen in the west, are the graveyards, so full of the graves of young wives. Now do give some heed to what I say, & not laugh at it as you used to, and go on your wild way as carelessly & recklessly as ever. . . .

[Nov. 7, 1853]

Although I wrote you so lately, I can not resist the impulse to address you a few lines tonight. I am all alone in my office, & likely to be the entire evening, for out of doors the wind howls, & the cold sleety rain drives down with a vengeance. A client's case must indeed be a bad one to make him visit an Attorney's office this night. I wonder what you are doing now. . . .

Yesterday, the sixth, the clock of my life struck twenty four. I wonder if I shall see the coming & going of twenty four more years in this world — I 'spect not. . . .

P. S. You ask me how far it is from Oneida to Muscatine. I'll put on my overcoat & go down to the bookstore & find out; — Back again, dark out of doors, muddy, oh!! bookstore closed, — from an atlas in Uncle Joe's store I set down the said distance to be about 970 miles, might as well call it a thousand.

Nov. 18, 1853

I will not be behind hand in answering your kind letter that has this morning reached me, — but you have run a narrow risk of not hearing from me for a month to come. Day before yesterday I *almost* started for Coun-

cil Bluff on the Missouri river, about four hundred and fifty miles from here. I would have been obliged to make the journey on horseback. But the men upon whose business I thought of going, refused to pay me my price for the trip, so I refused to go. . . .

How I do like interruptions when writing letters. For the last half hour I have been obliged to play the agreeable to a Pennsylvanian just landed on our shores, and it has interfered with the thread of my discourse terribly, knocked several witty conceits out of my head, & otherwise disturbed my equanimity. . . .

Tell little Mary that uncle Rome would be glad to accept her invitation to a feast on pumpkin pie, for he is getting very tired of the tavern tables in this country, & is fearful of starving before spring. If, when I am at the table, I had the power of forgetting the greasy, dirty, petticoated things who rule the kitchen, I think my appetite would increase amazingly. I am afraid I shall eat myself to death when I can sit down every day to a meal of your cooking. In that case the coroner's jury will have to return a queer verdict — "died of the excellency of his wife's cooking." . . .

Rill, don't you believe it would be a good idea for us to leave our correspondence to our children to be published, one of these days? . . .

Nov. 25, 1853

. . . I must do a little *pencilling* this time, for my last grey goose quill expired yesterday with a scratch & a blot, as I was writing a legal notice. . . . Last night Mr. Thayer delivered a lecture before the Franklin Library Association, & I felt obliged to attend that. I don't know that I was exactly obliged to accompany Kate Mason to the lecture & home again — but I did. I would like to see you & Kate together, I am thinking you would kick up fun, for she is about as lively as you are when you feel like jumping over the bro[o]mstick. . . .

I am glad to learn even the little you tell me about your health — tell me what you weigh, but be careful and do not weigh more than I, for such a proceeding would be altogether wrong, you know. The last time I stepped on a scale I believe I came up to the enormous mark of 123. Pretty good that, for a full grown young gentleman five feet ten in height. . . .

Nov. 30, 1853

. . . Why can not you help me, since I have tried to help you. I have

to deliver an address to the Library Association the 21st of next month. The subject I have taken is "The east & the west" — a pretty wide subject. And I have written just one page, & not a word about east or west either. Suppose you help me — I may not have time to do as well as I can, which is but poorly, at the best. . . .

Dec. 7, 1853

. . . I was engaged all day [yesterday] in trying a suit; & last evening the city council had a meeting, where my presence was needed as recorder; & after that was over I had to make out some papers for a railroad company. I tumbled into bed at half past two this morning — wasn't that a full day's work? . . .

How much have you written on my lecture? If you should happen to forget to send me your composition, let this jog your memory, & make you post along sans delay. If you don't I shall — well, I'll consult Kate & see what she thinks is best to be done with so refractory & altogether unreasonable a girl. And give me a woman to punish a woman — they always know when & where to strike.

. . . just hear me, Cupid, my gentle mistress tells me I am in love with a kitchen girl of the American House!!! Horrible!

Let me reckon up & see what I should be in love with, if the American House girl was my adored Dulcinea. I had a glympse of one of the sweet birds, just before dinner yesterday. Here is the sum total of the charms, unto her, appendant & appurtenant. A head of hair, of indescribable color, that has not seen a brush for three months — a pug nose — a brick complexion — two ankles as thick as my knee, resembling in shape & hue two huge potatoes, & not by any means guilty of stockings — As near as I can guess, without actual examination, one petticoat, the rags & tatters of which hang in graceful festoons around the aforesaid potatoe ankles — and one very old & very dirty calico dress, that is torn in front where the cotton ought to be, and that doesn't meet in the back by an inch, an inch & a half, or two inches, thereby showing to spectators in the rear a portion of an unnameable garment, which for sweet charity's sake, I will believe was once white & clean, & also showing to the said spectators a strip of the *native & natural* dress, that evidently would not be injured by a smart application of soap & water. . . .

You couldn't surely have been in earnest when you supposed me capable of such a *fall* in love. . . .

Dec. 15, 1853

. . . I accompanied her [Kate Mason] to the lecture last night, a lecture by Mr. Richman,⁶ the keenest lawyer in Muscatine.

My turn comes next, but I am not yet prepared. The time has been put off a week & I shall not display my rhetoric until the 28th, and then, wake snakes, O, but wont I blow! . . .

Somebody's coming up stairs, a dutchman — as I live — he lays a card on my table, grunts, jabbers, & retires. The card reads "A[d]mittance to the German Theatre — Thursday, Dec. 15/53 — Complimentary ticket" Let's take a peep at the other side "Mr J. Carskaddan & family" — Good. Mr J. Carskaddan & family will go for a little while & hear them sputter dutch, stage fashion. There is life to be seen everywhere — though I have my suspicions, this will be a specimen of low life, & below stairs at that. Never mind, pearls are got out of dyspeptic oysters; & I may catch the tail of some idea, that will furnish a page or so for my lecture, even in a small dutch theatre. . . .

Dec. 21, 1853

You must be contented with an apology for a letter this time — I am so busy with my lecture & half a dozen other things, that I cannot give you such an answer as your letter deserves. . . . I have sent for the Home Journal to be continued to you — and I enclose to you two dollars to buy Magazines with — get just such ones as you want. Warner writes more for Old Knick than anything else — but Putnam is, I think, the best magazine in America.

I thought it would be less trouble for you to get them of an agent perhaps, than to have them sent by mail; for we should be obliged to have the address changed bye & bye — Our bookstore in town here, has all the magazines, & for the same price as in the East.

I would send you more money, but I can't spare any more just now — I will send you more soon.

⁶Dewitt Clinton Richman. In 1863 Carskaddan went into a partnership with Richman which lasted until the latter was appointed Circuit Judge in 1878. Stiles, *Recollections and Sketches* . . ., 403.

Now Rilla, if there is anything you want, & that I can help you to, don't fail to ask me.

Goodnight, darling, — & pleasant dreams of the west & the future.

Dec. 31, 1853

Office of the "Democratic Enquirer" — Editor's chair.

Here's a go — sure as you live. I think you will be a trifle surprised at a piece of news I am about to tell you — but you will not be any more surprised than I am — I look back at the last week's doings with as much astonishment as a man would who had started for the "Bay of Biscay, O" & landed where the guinea pigs grow.

Yea, verily — wonderful are the changes of this world — would you believe it? I am an editor — editor of a weekly newspaper — the very last position I should have dreamed of finding myself in, two weeks ago.

About a week ago the Editor of the "Enquirer" received an appointment to a clerkship in Washington which he accepted (he would have done better to have staid in his chair editorial) & then offered his office and paper for sale. Well, for various reasons, some of them political & some pecuniary, (and it would take an hour's talk to let you into the whole thing) a Mr Williams, a young lawyer — a son of the Chief Justice of the State, and a complete western character, and myself, formed a partnership; & bought the newspaper, and are now duly installed as editors of a Democratic Journal in the great State of Iowa.⁷

Our partnership extends to our law business as well as to the paper.

It is a bold move but I think a good one. The paper is and always has been a paying one; and we can conduct it and carry on our law business at the same time, with ease.

It will be a ready means of getting myself known all over the State, & in that respect, if in no other, will be a great aid to me.

Our first number will be issued on Thursday next, — and I will send you one. Are you not a little surprised? This would be thought a queer move for a young lawyer in the east — but you must remember that the east and the west are as different as if an ocean rolled between them. Western

⁷ The *Democratic Enquirer* was founded in 1848 by H. D. La Cossitt. Carskaddan and Thomas M. Williams bought the paper late in 1853, but Carskaddan withdrew after about a year. *History of Muscatine County, Iowa* . . . (Chicago, 1879), 495-6.

men try everything in the way of business. The more irons in the fire, the better. In this very town I can point you to a carpenter & a tailor who have become successful lawyers, & to a lawyer who has become a *successful brickmaker*. . . .

Jan. 11, 1854

Your good letter of this morning must be answered, tho' my devil cries for copy, i. e. Something to print for tomorrow's paper.

My Partner is gone to Iowa City as a delegate to the Democratic State Convention, & I am alone in my glory as editor. This editing is queer business. It has kept me on the jump for the last week — & for that reason, if no other, I like it. Work, Work, for me — Anything that will keep hands and brain busy. I wake in the morning, and gather myself for the day's course like a racehorse, & then "pitch in." If in one year I am not one of the leaders of the rugged & unterrified democracy of this country, then you may take my head for a football.

I have one sad thing to tell, get an onion, peel it, and prepare to weep. Wo & alas, I have bid goodbye to my American Damsel. No more does she bake the buckwheat & boil the coffee for me. No more will her breakfasts gladden my palate, or her ankles my sight. I've shifted my quarters — & now board at the Iowa House, kept by the Mayor of the City — a rough & uncouth genius, but one of my firmest & warmest friends.

And Kate M. too has passed out of my hands, forever I fear. I attended a party last Monday night. She was there, but I hardly got a chance to speak to her, she was so assiduously waited upon . . . by a certain Mr Olds, — confound his picture. He went home with her. . . .

[Jan.? 1854]

I hardly know how to answer that last letter. I believe I ought to take a pretty stiff glass of brandy, in order to be in the right trim to give it an answer that will do it justice.

To commence at the commencement — my partner and I lodge together, we have partitioned off a part of the "Enquirer" office, & it makes as snug [a] little cubby of a place as you ever saw. . . .

I should like to know what you really think of this editorial move of mine. I suppose you do not exactly like it, but I hope you are satisfied

with it, or that you may become satisfied — for I should hate to be engaged in any business that did not meet your hearty approval. Let me explain the position of things a little — and treat you to a dish of politics.

The democratic party holds a great majority in this State, and for several years, one of the U. S. Senators from this State has ruled it completely.⁸ He & his particular friends have dictated as to who should hold office, & who should not. This faction, from having been so long in power, has become somewhat overbearing, & the great body of the party are getting tired of it. Chief Justice Williams, the father of my partner, is opposed to this Senator & his faction, & is one of the strongest men politically in the State. Last week the State Convention, to which I alluded in my last, nominated candidates for the State offices who are favorable to Williams, and opposed to the Senator. Thus you see the Williams party are getting to be the strongest.

Now our paper, under the former Editor, was bitter as death against Williams. We learned there was a chance to purchase it, & without consulting any one we dashed in and bought — & without the knowledge of the Chief Justice even. But he, since he learned the fact, heartily approves the move.

Our policy is to go in for the Williams portion of the democracy, and ride into influence & position on that hobby. I shall commence cautiously, of course, perhaps it will be months before we come out full & bold. Thus much, *politically*. Remember, Rilla, the above is between you and I alone. I don't know that I have made it very plain, but I have given you some idea of how the adventure stands.

Pecuniarily, I have no doubt I shall make three times as much as I should by the practice of the law alone. We have the best type & material in the State for doing job work, & that is the branch of business that pays the best. The paper, as you have probably noticed, is well patronised by advertisers — almost too well.

I, of course have the chief management of the concern, both in regard to the paper & the law business. I would never consent to play second fiddle to any man in this country. My partner is a fine and able fellow, and as

⁸ Augustus Caesar Dodge and George Wallace Jones were Iowa's Senators in 1854. This is probably a reference to Jones, whose second election, in 1853, had been hotly contested by Williams and several others in the Democratic caucus. John Carl Parish, *George Wallace Jones* (Iowa City, 1912), 44-5.

one of my best friends said when he heard of the new "firm" and its doings — "he is a first rate wheel horse." What do you think of the move now?

Feb. 24, 1854

. . . Our foreman was taken sick wednesday evening, & I had to take hold of the press myself yesterday, & work off the paper. You ought to have seen me — with my coat & vest off, sleeves rolled up, working like a nigger on a cotton plantation. . . .

I shall probably be with you earlier than I had calculated, perhaps about the first of April. And I think now that I shall go to N. Y. City while east. We expect to have a three thousand dollar job of publishing to do. If so, we shall have to get some new type &c. and N. Y. is the best place to get it.

Mar. 13, 1854

. . . I am sorry that the change in my plan about going east, interferes at all with your arrangements. But it will be much more convenient for me, under present circumstances, to visit the Castle early this spring, than to wait untill Summer. . . . Will you not be as ready to join hands with me in April, as you would be in June . . .? Never mind the sewing & the other little fixins. You can do it as easily when you are Mrs Carskaddan as while you are Miss Brown, Cant you? . . .

Doubtless there are many things which I have not yet done, that you as a prudent girl would wish to have done before joining your name to mine. But you recollect, you said in one of your letters sometime ago, "we can commence with but little & be prudent, as others have done before us." And this is the best place in the world to commence in that manner — for an attempt to "keep up appearances" here in the west, without the ability to do so, would only excite the ridicule it deserves. Economy is a virtue more honored in the west than in the east.

I cannot tell you on paper all my thoughts, hopes & plans in regard to our future. We shall have time to discuss all of these when we meet.

Meantime dream of me & of happiness, for we *will be happy*.

Good bye, darling —

Your

Jerome

Is this the last time that I shall ever write to Marilla Brown?