

and sympathetic - and so as best to express her unfeigned esteem & regard. 5
She desires her best love to Miss ~~Widdow~~ - and to be remembered to
Mr Aders. In short, she has an Amen at her heart to all,
that I feel and mean in entreating regards, dear Madam!
yours and Mr Aders's, sincere Friend J. L. Esteridge
30th Dec^r 1823-

Grove, Highgate

My dear Madam
If Paradoxes were in fashion, I might commence
by telling you, that with great regret I am, perforce, Mrs Gellman's
most willing amanuensis. Last Thursday was three weeks - N.B. we
rehearsal from Ramsgate to Highgate, 10 Nov^r, and drove to the new
house in the Grove - well, tomorrow will be a month, that Mrs
Gellman - all alive and stirring in the unpacking, so arranging, and
all the long et ceteras consequent on changing houses, came on
evening, between 8 and 9, and my Sister (who I was writing, with
some pointed love letters in her hand) to ask if any of those were
the things I had mislaid, and on my replying in the negative
disappeared so suddenly that I had not time to attend her to the
door with a light, even tho' I had not (as in fact I had) taken
for granted, that she had ^{come from} ~~gone to~~ the Room next
mine, where I supposed that she had left Poedlar, our black
maid, and a light for only two nights before I had
demonstrated with myself, in a tone of almost angry excoresship
against her running up and down ^{the} ~~the~~ steep and not yet familiar
flights of stairs, each so much higher than those in ^{the} ~~the~~ house,
without lamp or candle. "Some shocking accident or other will
come of it, I am certain!" - Alas! the vanity of these Prophecies,
which must be proved useless in order to be proved true.
So it was. My eyes ^{were} ~~were~~ not yet withdrawn from the Door,
when I heard a piercing scream and rushing out with the light
found Mrs Gellman on her back ^{at} ~~at~~ the landing place at
the foot of the first flight of stairs (consisting of 9 high stairs)
her head touching the wall and her feet and legs on the two
last stairs - crying out, "Don't be frightened! I am not hurt!
Her foot had slipped on the first stair edge, unexpected? ^{consequence}
as polished steel - she had plunged head foremost, fell on her
head on the edge of the 5th stair, turned round and head over heels
and thus glided down. Mrs Gellman was happily at home, and was in

Mr Aders
Custon Square

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her side, while I was yet raising her. We carried her to her Room, and the least of the inflammation was, that her right leg was broken, the wrist sprained, and the fingers likewise. But neither the Head, or Neck, or Back were at all injured. Mrs. Fever experienced. Now she has been obliged to keep her Bed, draw the Legs the Pain and the Distress and the foolish thought of being disabled all so long, or some have pulled her down sadly. The Splints will, I trust, be removed in a few days; but it will be some weeks yet before she can ~~use~~ do the thing, and still longer before she will have any free use of the hand. Afflicting as the reality is, we must still consider it as an ~~event~~ Escape, as a most providential Escape. But the Image and the Terror of the Surge, it do before my eyes, even upon my spirit, that the recollection of what has happened seems cruelly blended with a strange and fearful Expecting as if something yet to come, half-realizing what might have happened, which was so near happening. My soul hangs tremulously on the edge of the Precipice.

I grieve that I cannot balance this information by anything more cheerful respecting myself. For the last 5 weeks I have been almost confined to the house - so much so that Mr. Gellman strongly disapproved me, as a friend, and as my medical Superintendent, peremptorily prohibited me, from availing myself of the only opportunity, I was likely to have, of spending a few hours with Mr. Southey, with his Daughter, my own Sister's friend from infancy and her Sister, together with some Wordsworth, my God-daughter, and Miss Sara Hutchinson, the dearest of many dear Associates in happier Days - by dining at Mr. Southey's, 67. Gower Place. The most distressing of my symptoms is an almost incessant sound in my head, loudest in my left ear, as of a Forge Hammer at a small distance, and which in the least hurry or even excitement, or after writing for more than 5 minutes at a time, becomes so quick, thick, heavy and impetuous as to be destructive of all Attention, except to its own sound. As its Accompaniments, however, are chiefly in the Uteral System, & there

is no Head-ache, and the weight on my eye-lids, ^{with} pain and difficulty in the eyelids to awake thoroughly at my foot, or aching in the evening, are much diminished, no present danger is apprehended. and the whole the whole of my indisposition is attributed to the imperfect operation of a violent cold, derangement in the digestive functions, and over exertion of Mind. Mr. Gellman, thank God! is better, and has been for some months, than I ever knew him - the blessed effects of losing his food to 12 ounces in the 24 hours, and a very small portion of Fluid.

You cannot imagine, my dear Madam! how passionately I do wish, that you were under Mr. Gellman's Care, and how often Mr. Gellman exclaims - "If we could have Mrs. Southey & Miss ~~Southey~~ here but for a week or fortnight!" And this, we all hope, will be the case when the weather gets milder of the Days longer. It has been the chance of my life, that I have counted an unusually large number of medical men (several of them Men of great celebrity & eminence) among my friends, at least my intimate acquaintances. But I have not the least scruple in declaring, after the opportunity of eight years' London, that I never know a medical man into whose hands I could so confidently place my life and health as Mr. Gellman's - and this (I could easily convince you) arises from no blind partiality, or exaggeration of his Talents & requirements generally, tho' they are all highly respectable, but that I see weekly, such instances of Medical Facts, such a freedom from pedantry and the influences of the Names of Diseases; so thoroughly a bend so familiar a knowledge of what is known in the medical world shaped and worked by personal Experience; but above all, that quickness of sound good sense in the application of the right means to the particular case in each particular patient, as I never witnessed in the same perfection in any other medical Man. - Mr. Gellman expects me to say every thing that is heard, respectful,

Coleridge was now residing with the Gillman's permanently. Lamb dined with him almost every Sunday. Strangers from all parts were readily introduced, from Emerson, the essayist, to Joseph Green the surgeon; from Hookham Frere, the ex-minister, to the naive and often over-enthusiastic Thomas Allsop, who would have played the part of Boswell had he had the talent for it. Coleridge shared his breakfast with the birds, his knowledge with his friends; among whom, not mentioned in this remarkable letter, were the Rev. Edward Irving, Carlyle, Maurice, Hallam, Green, Hare, Montagu, Lamb, and Wordsworth. During this period Coleridge was in receipt of a pension from George IV's private purse of 100 guineas per annum: this and what little he earned from his lectures,

writings and books went to the support of his wife.

The letter consists of a eulogy of Mrs. Gillman and reveals Coleridge's estimate of her fine character and general worth, it is altogether indicative of his affection for the two who befriended him most, that it is outstanding in its revelation of Coleridge's own character, and his sincere gratitude^{to} and love for the Gillmans. The letter consists of around a thousand words and retains the original address stamp and seal.