November 18, 1846

My dear Mother,

I yesterday finished a letter to Emperor, which, on reading it over, I found to be not very appropriate for one of his years. I intended, as I explained to Him, to dissuade Him from entertaining any martial pretensions, but finding that I had spoken rather carelessly of a profession which I really esteem, could not help adding a few words, justifying the individual and the conduct of themselves with it; for although, from my own short experience, I am anxious that my little brother should never indulge a taste for the Army, yet I would urge caution, warning against any narrow-minded prejudices against any institution, which is, in fact, on the whole, the government calculated to preserve peace.

The peace of the world. If nations did not support regular armies, their disputes must be terminated by the contest of the citizen by bow and arrow. The brilliant, which is in fact, on the whole, the government calculated to preserve peace. Comparatively a small number would fall upon all. The pursuit of commerce, agriculture, manufactures must cease, and instead of the crimes and misfortunes from the lower ranks of society being...
called out to fight the battles of the state, men from all classes, with the tenderest domestic ties, and upon whose daily exertions, perhaps, a large family may be dependent for support, would be freed from their homes and occupations, leaving their wives and children destitute, and thrown upon the cold charity of fellow citizens, all of whom would be worse or less impoverished by the discontinuance of their ordinary avocations, and many in the same position with themselves. Even one volunteer by itself is attended with new disadvantages, though to a much less extent than in the case of a levy on wages. Instances of the kind just related are not wanting in this regiment. An industrious respectable cabinet maker from Louisville, who, until the commencement of hostilities, supported his family in comfort, has left them without assistance to their own exertions. I attribute my conscience a little, the other day, to discharge a member of the Kentucky regiment for a similar reason. Many their deaths are all avoided by the regular enlistments, as no married men can be received from any, after marriages allowable, but by permission of the Captain.
I spoke of standing armies as peace-preservers, and such is my deliberate conviction certainly, so far as regards our own country. Among boys at school, you rarely see fight between two of known strength or courage: may always it is the bold, the timed, the strong, the weak, that quarrel; and is not human nature always the same? What can prevent preserves the peace of Europe? Why do all England and Russia come in conflict about their Eastern Contests? Why not France and England indulge their mutual feelings of animosity, rivalry or some similar pretext? Is it love or friendship, sentiments so kindly expressed by their Governments for each other, that really prevents an outbreak? In my mind, it is, on the contrary, a mutual fear. Each nation knows the other's power to defend itself, or injure others, for this power has its expression in the size and effective mass of the National forces. Deprive and the Couvrier, and abolish the Duchies, and it is likely that the Government of one Country will not permit its measures to be restrained for fear of such or the broken guards, the militia of another! It is supposed by some that the great bond of peace in modern times is commerce, but this is at least doubtful. To some extent, I agree, with a late author, Headley, in the following remarks.
"Rapidity must be a source of future collisions. There is cause for alarm rather than congratulation in the intensity with which the human mind is directed to the peaceful channels of wealth. The courage of peace, in clashing before them the obsolete, a heroic spirit that lay at the bottom of ancient wars, are pursuing an enemy that left the field long ago, leaving its place occupied by a more sacrilegious, exaltable and dangerous spirit."

I think, that there is unquestionably some truth in the above opinion, and it is certain that, while commerce often affords a pretext for war, those who are engaged in it rarely derive this event, since Martial renown should afford no gratification to their passions for gain, and some of its men of casual this are nearly certain to interfere with their profits. However militarism the spirit of war may be, and however devoid of martial sentiment the citizens of a country long at peace may appear, there are always many restless souls any wish to find ground of dispute in every little interference with trade, however trifling or unimportant. It is thus that Commerce though sometimes only the source of war, much oftener affords occasion for a long desired quarrel, and a plea for the gratification of military tastes, and the acquirement of a glorious fame.
Standing Armies have been accused of fostering this taste for war, and encouraging personal ambition—to some extent purely; but when we reflect upon the small proportion of the Military to the Civil population, and the much longer periods of Peace than of War (excepting France), in both depots as an essential feature of the Army, the objection has but little force: for the Armies have worked much influence in the decisions of Government on a question of Peace or War, and, while at peace, through their constant glitter of epaulettes and the splendour of Review and the spectacles of the Army, they offer some temptation to disturb the fine peace, an imposing drill, or a magnificent moustache, we cannot see that all this has the slightest connection with a genuine Military taste.

As to here I am again. Mrs. Themel- Mother, I did begin that letter with an apology for writing an absurd essay yesterday to Eugene, and behold here I am running off again. Indeed, I did not mean to write you an essay, or I should certainly have given you something a little more connected. So be indulgent, and think that, having been sitting down in the hummedat rocking-chair before a bright fire, and deeply enjoying myself by chattering away in a perfectly free and effortless, and homely style...
Please to explain my letter to Eugene, and tell him that, I had a great deal more to say about that, like the Ethiopian Suzerain, it is the famous Nile Road long, seen off the track, and was so absorbed, like one passionate individual of that story act, that I must blustering on, mention of my misfortune. My heart, thank God, is improving rapidly, and although my bowl of chocolate rather larger than it ought to be, no doubt it is doing wonders. The weather has been uncomfortably warm until this morning, when a cold blast commenced to blow, with a light driving rain. It may interest you to know how I keep warm and dry. An old Dutch kettle, no longer fit for cooking, has been filled with coals and ashes, and keeps my tent quite comfortable. There is abundance of draft to ward off all the danger of the Customs acid gas. We have some new reports about, do ours (about 1000 coming out) contradicted. There is no doubt but the army will soon start on its March to Tampico.

I bought some Indian Rubber Cloth for 50c, enough to keep me dry. As it will add nothing to the postage, I believe I will send you a sample of the substance in which I occasionally spend a portion of my wages. Write to me one of your truly precious letters, my dear mother, when you have time, and urge my kind father to do the same. I fear concerning the way my poor returns much more barren a smile from The