1868 Letters #105–118
Brick School House, Amberson's Valley
October 21, 1868

My Dear Tom,

You will think I got lonely very soon, but I don't feel as lonely and homesick today as I did Sabbath, Monday and yesterday. But as it is raining today noon and I do not feel like going to my boarding place through the rain, so I shall employ the time in writing you. Now don't think I merely write to pass the time. It is for my pleasure and yours.

I hope you had a safe and pleasant journey. It would be lonely, but a good opportunity for meditating. I wonder what subject occupied Tom's thoughts as he and Jinny slowly winded their way through valley and over hills. Something sensible I'm sure, as he is a sensible man.

Sabbath was a delightful day, so clear and calm, but I wasn't just in the mood to enjoy its beauty. I went to preaching in the afternoon and heard a very good sermon preached by Rev. Wolf. He is a good preacher and apparently an earnest Christian. I think I shall like him. He preaches every two weeks. His text was Matthew, tenth chapter and twenty-second verse. The folks at my boarding place are very kind, and I hope I shall be comfortable. The girls are not, nor I don't think will be much, company for me. But I shall enjoy my own thoughts, and will have the more time for reading if they don't intrude. I have read about 150 pages in your History. It is very interesting. The passage of the Israelites through the midst of the sea I always thought a most miraculous event. Last night I was reading of it, and also of the plagues of Egypt.

By the way, perhaps you should like to know something of my school. I opened on Monday morning with seventeen pupils. I have now twenty on the roll. They appear well disposed and pretty bright. I think I shall be able to make something of them by patience and perseverance. I hope I shall not be much homesick. I shall try not to be. I don't know what to write you, for I have no news. Mr. Fagan brought me my report book. I have not used it much yet.

I have now an opportunity of sending this to the office, and I shall close as the fellow is waiting. I shall write more next time. Bye, bye,

Much love and a kiss from yours as ever,

Mattie
My Dear Tom, 

It is Sabbath again, my second in Amberson's, and just one week since I bid Tom bye, bye and was left alone among strangers. Time still moves on, both to our joys and sorrows. Your kind, comforting missive of the 21st was read yesterday evening. Thank you for you kind consideration in writing me so soon, but it is just like Tom to try to comfort others, especially Mat. I have not been very homesick yet. I now shall not allow myself to become so.

The folks at my boarding place are very kind to me and I am quite comfortable. Though making no profession of religion, they are moral and know the Sabbath. Mrs. Stewart is now seated at the same table on which I write, reading in the large family Bible. The younger of the young ladies is reading, too, in the Bible. The older one is much interested in your History of the Bible, and she is reading it now. They all appear very fond of reading and have good memories. All this is very encouraging and pleasant to me. Yet I feel that God is not acknowledged as the chief sovereign nor is their morality prompted by a love to Him. And I can not feel the same safety and comfort that I ever felt when absent from home, but in a Christian family. But as you say, dearest God is ever near and I am not alone. He will comfort me and is ever ready to grant strength sufficient for all emergencies.

My world at least is not large. It does not as yet embrace Amberson. Though my bodily presence is here, my mind very often and all my heart is with my dear friends. I know they think of me often and wish me well. And what is better, I know I have their prayers for my virtue and happiness. May they be answered in peace. And though we may be separated here, and endure many trials, I long for each other's society and pleasant home associations. May we all meet in one home above where we shall never more be separated, but be forever saved from sin and sorrow. If we had nothing but happiness in this world, we would be likely to forget that we are strangers and pilgrims here on our journey to our Father's house.

Your letter came real soon, and it doesn't appear so far to Mt. Union now. The mail comes from Shippensburg on Wednesday and Saturday, so if you write I can hear from you twice a week, the same as if I was at home. The mail goes east Tuesday and Friday. I'm not sure yet, but I think that your letters would come sooner by Shippensburg. I sent mine the other way. I shall send this one east and see which goes soonest.

You made a speedier trip on Sabbath than we did on Saturday. I think the Concord road must be the easier, but Stewarts say it is much nearer to cross the mountain where you did, and then cross the valley, and cross the mountain at Dry Run. But I don't expect to travel the road often. It is too far, and must be tiresome anyway.
You wish to know how I like my school, and all about it. Well, I fear I shall tire you sometimes, for I have no one to talk to here. I mean no one that I care to tell what interests or distresses me. So I shall tell you. So far I like my school pretty well, but it is hard to get up my usual interest. But then I have taught only five days, and scarcely know one pupil from another. And they are shy, and frequently two or three of them cry every day. They are all small, and some of them too young to come to school. But their parents send them now because the older ones are not ready. One boy came that has the whooping cough. I suspended him and have not seen the director yet. I don't know what he will do. Two others they say have the itch. They will have to leave next if that is correct. I think the director should see to that. It can't be expected that I should know these things.

Yesterday we scrubbed the school house, took all the desks out and cleaned it up nicely, and put up the maps. It now looks cheerful and neat. I think I shall feel more at home this week. The stove draws very well. I have no trouble with the fire. We haven't any chalk yet, but will get some the first opportunity. Do not the directors have to find the chalk for the use of the school? I never bought any, and Mr. Fagan says he won't find it.

You and Annie still remember the bet? I guess you will win this time. Annie's term will close in February, I think. And as she has been preparing for the last two years, she should have her fixings nearly all ready, and many more than I should be able to prepare in a few months. Annie is gay. I like to talk to her.

I should like to see your room. Now it must be "much nice" with so many pictures to decorate the walls. You should have McClellan and Johnson yet to set off the others. Your walk I think was a long one, and I should think you would be quite tired enough to rest well when you got to Shade Gap. I often wondered how you succeeded in your attempt at clock fixing, but did not like to inquire. I am glad you are ingenious, and I expect you will be traveling around as a clock and watch mechanic. Please call around at Mr. Stewart's, Amberson. My watch runs too slow. Ha! ha! Or perhaps you will be a carpenter, just commencing on wood houses. I suspect your Ma did more of the work than you.

I believe you slighted Aunt Betty entirely as you say nothing about visiting her. Well, well. You would miss her good advice she would very willingly have given you. By the way: I always forget to ask you if you heard her tell someone, the Sabbath we were at Pleasant Hill, that I was visiting my friends. I'm pretty sure your Ma did.

Today Rev. Kuhn preached at Shade Gap. I suppose our folks are there. They will be thinking of me and wondering how I am spending the Sabbath. I can imagine what they are all doing and thinking and talking about. And Tom: I wonder what he is thinking of, and how employed while I write. Very likely he's been to church and is now having dinner as it is about 2 o'clock p.m. Then very likely he will spend the afternoon reading and meditating. He will probably attend church again in the evening. Will he find time for a thought of Mattie? Yes, I
know he will be wishing her contented and happy.

Your imagination was pretty nearly correct as to how I spend my evenings. I have read 268 pages of the History of the Bible. I could have read much more, but I wish to read it carefully so I can remember it. I am much interested and hope to be benefited by its perusal. As to my thoughts, they are sometimes sad, but usually hopeful and cheerful. Our last intercourse is the subject of many happy thoughts, especially our trip across the mountain that was so pleasant despite the rough and steep roads and the cold wind. Ah, it is not so much the place and circumstances, as the associations that render us happy or miserable. But Jacob has invited me to get ready, and he will take me to church. Mr. West preaches. I shall tell you how I enjoy it when I return. Bye, bye.

I do wish to be good, but fall so far short of the Christian standard that I am often discouraged. But we are all promised strength sufficient unto our day. I have now written you quite a long letter, but I fear not very interesting. I am glad you have obtained light paper. You can send a number of those sheets for three cents. Bye, bye.

A kiss and a bushel of love from,
Your Mattie

Monday morning, seated at my desk: I shall write you a few lines until school time. Jacob took Beckie, the younger one of the young ladies, and me down to church. Mr. West preached an excellent sermon from the words in the ninety-third Psalm, "Thy testimonies are very sure." He spoke of the promises to the Christian being very sure and that we should never doubt them. Also the promises to the penitent are sure, and none should despair of mercy. And that the threatenings against sinners are awfully sure, and that they can be saved only on the easy terms of the gospel. I like Mr. West so much. He speaks so gently, yet firmly. One is impressed with the solemnity and truthfulness of his subject. I think he is a good Christian and tries to do good to others.

I was much surprised to meet an old acquaintance at church: Mr. Will Skinner of Path Valley, near Doylesburg. He has changed considerably since I saw him last, and I should not have recognized him but knew him when he spoke. He was visiting friends of his near my boarding place. And in the evening about dark, he and his cousin, a young gent, called and spent the evening till past nine o'clock. The Stewarts had all gone to church except the old lady and gentleman, and I had to entertain the guests. I was glad to see Skinner, but wasn't quite sure that it was the best way of spending the Sabbath evening. I did not feel like going so far to church in a strange place after night. It is hard to know one's duty sometimes. Thank you for your confidence in the sincerity of my wish to be good.
My Dear Tom,

Again I have the pleasure of replying to a kind missive of Tom, which was read yesterday evening with the interest and pleasure your letters only can awaken. Thank you for its length, interest, and kind loving words of comfort, cheerfulness, and Christian resignation. Your letters always do me good by quickening my energy and zeal, and strengthening my faith and reliance on our Heavenly Father.

I am quite well at present, and even more contented and happy than I expected to be in so short of a time. When I made up my mind to come here I expected it to be a lonely place, quite different from my own dear home or any place I had ever been before. But I believed it my duty to come. It was apparently the only opening I could see, and I thought it would be much better for me to be employed usefully than to stay idly at home, even if I should be subjected to many privations. But though I am absent from my dear friends and home, I have no time for idle regrets and complaining and homesickness. I mean by God's help to perform my duty in the position. He has been pleased to place me, without even wishing that the time may pass more quickly. I have a great work to perform and shall be given just sufficient time to do it in no matter where I am placed – if followed by God's blessing. And he has promised his blessing to those who ask it, and will be ever near to comfort his children. And you know, dear, we have professed to love Jesus more than our earthly friends and should not murmur or complain so long as He is with us. But our faith is like Peter's: it often fails us, that like him we begin to sink under our troubles of life. But he will ever stick out his hand to save us, if like Peter we pray to him.

This week I have been reading the life of Christ. It is most encouraging to observe that he never denied the prayer of any who applied to him for relief from their various diseases of the body. He granted the prayer of the Syrophoenecian woman, after due trial of her faith, though the Greeks were held in contempt by the Jews and supposed by them to have no interest in the expected Messiah. These instances of our Saviour's love and compassion are recorded for our encouragement. We should not doubt either our Lord's ability or willingness to save all who come unto Him in his own appointed way.

You remember we spoke of our confidence, as we came across the mountain, and I remarked that I was not confiding. And you said that I should believe you and trust you. I do, and do you know why? It is because you never told me an untruth or tried to deceive me. Had you done so, I never would have trusted you and we never could have been the friends we are. So we should trust our blessed Lord, for he never deceived any and his word is truth. But I hope we both love him and trust our all to him. May your faith be strengthened. And remember whatever is your lot in life, God has appointed it and it is unquestionably best and right. Our God is not only a God of nations, but of
individuals. He knows the thoughts and intents of every heart and governs all according to his good pleasure.

I am sorry, dear, that you should have occasion for anxiety concerning your business interests, and that you are annoyed and perplexed. But sometimes those things cannot be avoided, and we should not be over anxious. Diligence in business is all that is required. I know you will do all you can to succeed, but the best meet with misfortunes sometimes. You have too much care and labor both. I would shift more of the responsibility on the other members. If Blain would remain in the store more, I know you would feel relieved. Dan's business habits are so loose you can scarcely trust him. But I have no doubt you will come out all right. At least all will be for the best, even if you cannot see it clearly to be so at the time.

You speak of telling me if anything should happen disadvantageous to your prospects. You must just tell me as much as you wish. I should be glad to sympathize with you in anything where my sharing your confidence could be a relief to you. You will not deceive me. For let what will come, Tom will be the same. As long as he is pure in motive and principle, he is the same to me. Tell me whatever troubles you. Don't fear that you will distress me. Perhaps the burden would be lighter if borne by both. Tom, telling me is not complaining. I know your courage will not fail, but I fear your strength may as you are not very strong at best. But I hope for the best. You are generally very truthful. Don't allow yourself to become discouraged, dearest.

I am glad to know Dan's health is improving. I hope he may soon recover entirely. Perhaps if cured, he may be more careful in the future. He will have to visit Allie often, of course, and the ride from Mt. Union to Shade Gap is a long one, and cold in the winter. But I shouldn't think such exposure would hurt him if well protected. I suppose Allie will soon commence her school. She will be sick and tired the first week.

Jim will feel his importance I have no doubt. But I shouldn't wonder if this term would wind up his school teaching. I may be mistaken, but I have no idea he will like the employment. He will dislike the confinement. I wonder how Dave and Peterson are getting along. I should like to see them in the school room.

I wrote to cousin Rob the other day. He wrote me before I left home, but I had no time to answer it. He is always very punctual, and I shall expect a reply very soon. I do like my cousin Rob, and he writes a real good letter. He was very anxious that I should get a school in the upper end of the county. In his last he promised me a sleigh ride if I would come up. Too bad, ain't it? For I haven't had the promise of a sleigh ride here, but I think Jacob will take me home some time. That will be nice.

The incident you speak of would be amusing indeed. The French man should have known better than to take hold of a hot bowl. But I expect he was for the time absorbed in the important subject he was speaking on, and had forgotten his culinary art.
I usually attend to getting my meals. The day I wrote you was the only time I have done without, and the little folks gave me as many apples as I could eat. So you see I wasn't hungry.

I think I should be glad to see Miss M.E. Appleby over here, but I fear she will not come to see me and I may not know when she is over, or I should go to see her.

Mr. West does not preach again in this valley again for six weeks. He has to attend Senate the week of his next appointment, and consequently will not be here.

I had a letter yesterday eve from sisters Mollie and Kate. All are well at home, and Kate is as gay as ever. She always writes something simple to make me laugh. I don't think I ever read her letters without being amused. I never saw such a girl: she will laugh and make simple speeches when I know she feels more like crying.

The teacher's association meets in Chambersburg on the 8th November. I don't know whether I shall attend or not. I don't think I should spend the time much more pleasantly there than teaching, as I am not acquainted in the place and know very few of the teachers. I should have to go across to Shippensburg in the hack, and then from that in the car. I don't think I should enjoy it at all. I mean to tell the director that I will attend in Huntingdon. It will be all the same. I don't know whether they meet in Dry Run next Saturday or no, but I don't think I shall hunt it.

I commenced this in the morning before school. It is now evening and I am writing by lamp light in the sitting room with the family. They are all quiet and don't disturb me in the least. Jacob is reading the paper, and John is looking at me. Ha! ha!

My school is about the same this week as last. I like my pupils pretty well, and I think they like me. Only they think I am cross. But I am always more strict at first, and then I have less trouble keeping order. I don't whip any, and I hope I may not be compelled to. I shall try to do without it.

By the way, we had visitors this p.m. – the director's wife and daughter. They are very pleasant folks, and I mean to visit them. They are good Presbyterians, which makes them much better in my estimation. I think Mr. Fagan will be real kind, despite his short way of talking.

The 16th verse 16th chapter of John is very interesting and comforting, and spoken for the profit and comfort of his disciples in every age of the world. What unspeakable love and condescension in our divine Redeemer to ever have thoughts of mercy to poor fallen creatures like me.

I shall now close with many good wishes for your health and happiness. Much love. Bye, bye. Yours, Mattie
Good afternoon Dear Tom,

I hope you are spending this cold, dreary day pleasantly and profitably, as I have no doubt you are. It is the Sabbath, God’s holy day, and should therefore afford us pleasure. Last night was terrible, rainy and stormy, and this morning was so wet and cloudy I did not think it best to go to church so far. Jacob kindly offered to take me, but I was fearful it might rain, so I remained at home. It was the Methodist minister that preached. And though I like him pretty well, you know my prejudices. And I think on the whole I may be as much benefited by remaining home and reading the Bible and the Life of Christ. The latter I finished today. It is very interesting and effecting, especially his trial and death. Also the application in the last chapter: it makes every act of His life so plain and explains many of his words differently from what I had understood them. Thus I hope I have received valuable information that shall not soon be forgotten.

The infinite love and condescension of our blessed Saviour is truly amazing and sublime, worthy of our God. We cannot reasonably doubt his love and willingness to save sinners after so great a proof. Yet how slow we are to believe it, and fear to come lest we be rejected. Mortals reason in everything else, but unbelief here is stronger than reason. O, if we would just cast ourselves entirely on Him, and believe that he will save us, without any righteousness of our own, I believe we would be as happy as any mortal is capable of becoming. But we fear and doubt and trust, as Peter did, to an arm of flesh. And so we miserably fail and are ever unhappy.

Dear, I have felt lonely, almost sad and homesick, for the last two days (i.e., sometimes). I wish I had some one to talk to. If only Tom was here for to drive away my melancholy by his hopeful conversation. But it can not be, so I will dismiss the wish and imagine what he would say if present. I know he would say to enjoy the present as well as you can and be hopeful for better times. I shall try to be contented. If I was home, or my friends were present, I might not be any more happy than as it is. I am not unhappy, only lonely. You are not to understand from this that the folks are selfish or unkind. Not at all. I believe they try to make me feel at home and are very kind. The neighbors come to see me and kindly invite me to visit them.

There is now a young gent and a lady and her husband downstairs. Of course they did not call on purpose to see me, and I don’t think it is right to spend the holy Sabbath hours in light and trifling conversation. So I have retired to write you. I wonder if the time will be thus better spent. Yes, I believe it is. Letter writing generally, I think, is better done on some other day. But I believe we can pen our thoughts to each other, and both be benefited by so doing.

I have gotten to Zephaniah in my Bible reading. I think I can finish the Old Testament very easily this year. I have commenced reading the New
Testament through in school. Dear, I wish your opinion with regard to opening my school with prayer. Do you think it is my duty to do so? I am not fully convinced that it is, and so I have not done so. Please tell me just what you think, as I know you will.

But I must stop writing for this evening. I shall write more tomorrow. May the Holy Spirit, the comforter, be with you this day and lead you in the way of all truth. Bye, bye.

School room, Monday morning, November 2nd: We are having a little taste of winter this morning. I was fearful it might be uncomfortably cool in my school room this morn, but I did not feel it so. I rather enjoyed the bracing air during my short walk. It took me only a few moments to have a bright fire, and now I am as comfortable as if there were no chilling winds or rude blasts. I am alone, none of the pupils having gathered. You see, I came early so I could have the house warm by school time, and that I might have an hour to write you before the antics of the day commence.

I have discovered that Mrs. Eckenrode (the storekeeper’s wife) is an old acquaintance of mine. She was Miss McElhenny\(^1\) of Concord. I have not been to see her yet, but she sent word that I should come. And I shall when convenient. I liked her pretty well when she was single and hope to find her the same, though I suppose she is now settled down, a sedate madam feeling her dignity and importance as all do when they get married. Ha! ha!

I think I forgot to tell you in my last that I had seen an Amberson’s Valley bride last Sabbath at church. She did not make a very dazzling appearance. She was dressed in a black silk dress and a dark lady’s cloth coat, a bonnet some kind of a brown or slate colored trimmed with white, and a short black veil. She was tall and a good figure, but not at all pretty faced. The groom was quite boyish looking. He was dressed in a plain black cloth suit, black kid gloves, and a hat like the one you had on when you visited Amberson’s. You will think I am a close observer of dress. Well, I think people dress to be looked at, particularly a bride and groom. They would think themselves slighted if they weren't looked at when they are trying to look their best.

I was expecting a letter, and the papers you promised to send me, in the Saturday's mail, but was disappointed. I suppose I shall get them on Wednesday. I suspect Tom would be disappointed too on Saturday evening, as I could not get my last to the office in time for Friday morning's mail. And it would go next on Saturday evening, but I expect not farther than Dry Run. And if not, you won’t receive it till Wednesday either. If I was not so far from the office, the letter would go pretty direct. But if I miss one mail, I have to wait so long.

Tomorrow is election day, and I suppose many are anxious. But they will soon be relieved. I hope all may be overruled for the best interests of our beloved land, and that union and prosperity may be restored. I seen a notice in the World that the Democratic committee have offered a flag worth $500.00 to the district
that polls the greatest majority of Democratic votes over the October election. I wonder if Tell will get it. You see, for all you wouldn't send me the Monitor. Now I get to read the World, which is nearly as good. Stewarts have been teasing me several times about politics, but I am no politician. At least I always found it best to keep my own opinion in a strange place. I like to have a part when among my old acquaintances who have known me always.

I wonder what Tom is doing and how he is enjoying himself. I hope business is flourishing and he has no cause for anxiety on that account. I suppose you and Lida must have the cornucopias arranged satisfactory to both. Lida must have great confidence in your taste.

But this is a miserable failure in letter writing. I shall stop now. Perhaps next time I may be in a better mood for writing. May you be glad and happy.

Bye, bye.

Mattie

PS. Tom, please get me a book on etiquette and send it me. Now don't laugh at the idea of a young lady studying etiquette in Amberson's Valley. I mean to be on drill this winter. Yours, Mattie.
I am very sorry to hear of the death of Dr. Kerr. I knew him by reputation and have seen him. It is certainly very distressing to his friend, and a solemn admonition to all to be prepared. "For we know not the day, neither the hour, when the Son of Man cometh." Life is very uncertain, but death most certain. We should then prepare to meet it with joy and not with grief. What is this life compared with that which is to come. May we each be clothed with our Saviour's righteousness, and may His grace support us in the most trying hour. But if our dear Saviour grants us living grace, he will also give us dying grace.

I am glad to know Dan's health is so much improved. I hope he may be entirely cured. If going with Liz is injurious to his health, I hope he may give her up. I hope so at any rate, for I fear such an arrangement is detrimental to the morals at least. And I should like to see Dan a Christian. His trip to Blacklog I have no doubt would be amusing, and Dan could enjoy it.

I am sorry to hear of your uncle Montague's sickness. I hope he may recover. Your aunt, of course, will be very much distressed and may be imagines him worse than he really is. I think I have heard you speak often of him being very delicate.

I presume you would come out on Saturday, but would not return in the evening or next day, I should think, if the weather was as unfavorable there as here. I presume you did not intend visiting Shade Gap, or rather your Ma, this trip when you spoke of returning so soon.

So then "Simon" has left and you have gone back to Norrie, which I presume is much more to your taste. I don't believe you would like the old batch style a bit. Norrie's coffee is much better, ain't it? Ha! ha! Give my regards to Norrie, if you will. I hope you and she will still be good friends, then you won't be so lonely. But then Lida is most kind, and will see that you are entertained.

I like my boarding place pretty well. They are all very kind, and I think I shall like it here as well as most places when I get acquainted. I like quiet, but this place pleases me a little too well: one has no society at all. I like to be where I can be alone when I wish and be in company when I feel like it. But now all the company I have is in books. As long as I have plenty to read I won't get very lonely. Then I have been working whenever I get tired of reading. I keep myself busy all the time, and so have no time to get homesick.

It is now almost three weeks since I left home and I am beginning to think of paying them a visit. I mean to ask Jacob to take me home about the 20th, if it is nice weather. But perhaps I may not get home till the holidays. I shan't think much about it. Sister Mary says she is coming over to see me, but I expect it will be like all her visiting. She can't leave home.

I should have liked to have seen the honorable H. Seymour. I suppose it will be about the last we will hear of him, as I suppose the boat has started up Salt River by this time. Tuesday would seal his fate. Well, well. I suppose the majority of the people are still blind to their own interest.

I got the chalk and mean to have the directors pay for it, if they will
without a fuss. If not, of course, I shall let it go. I got the lump chalk. I don't like the crayon, they are too hard. I have about twenty-five names on the roll, but never have had more than twenty-one present in a day. I like my pupils. I think they will be very pleasant if they continue as well disposed as they are now. I should have a real easy time now if they had just all come in the first week. About all the trouble I have is with the new scholars coming in. My rules I see are quite different from any they have been used to heretofore, and it takes them about a week to get duly installed.

I wish I could be home from Friday evening till Monday morning. I think I should then be satisfied, but may be I should then want something else. I better be contented just as I am, because vain wishes and conjectures only make matters worse. I have tried the "compass arrangement" in my watch, but it does no good. But I guess it keeps good enough time. It don't lose more than ten minutes in a week, I think. The Rev. Kuhn's friends are all visiting him this fall. I presume Alice is the attraction. I have not yet finished the History, but I think I will this week.

It is now eight o'clock and I am writing at the table in the sitting room. They are all talking around me, but it don't disturb me so long as I don't have to take part in the conversation. Miss Ettie has just finished a nice quilt, and she wants me to look at it and give her my opinion – so I must stop writing and talk. Best love and a good night kiss. From, Mattie

Rev. William Armstrong West, pastor of the Upper Path Valley Presbyterian Church. In 1868 he preached approximately once every four weeks at the Union Church in Amberson Valley. The Presbyterian Church in Amberson Valley was erected in 1876.
Dear Tom,

I shall commence a letter to you this afternoon and shall write until tired, then read in the History. I must first hope you are quite well and enjoying this pleasant Sabbath afternoon. This morning we attended church at ten o'clock. The United Brethren had communion. The exercises were impressive and furnished abundant food for thought. They wanted the solemnity that always pervades on such an occasion in our dear old church, and I did not enjoy it so much. But probably the fault was my own. My prejudices are strong, and I never enjoy myself so well in any church as my own. The man that preached the sermon I did not like. He was rather dull, looking not at all prepossessing in appearance. And I did not like his sermon very well. It was all about what we should do to obtain our own salvation. He appeared to preach that we could work our salvation for ourselves. His text was First Peter, 5th chapter and 4th verse – a splendid subject for such an occasion. But he done very poorly, I think.

He said he believed all Christians were holy in heart, and none were regenerated that were not. Then he quoted the passage, "Be ye holy for I am holy," and said when we obtained favor of God that we were cleansed from all sin. Now if the heart is pure and holy, how can we again sin? Surely from the heart proceed all our evil thoughts and all sin. If the fountain is pure, the stream will be pure also. But I am persuaded from the word of God that none are sanctified in this life and that no mere man since the fall is able in this life to perfectly keep the commandments of God, but does daily break them in thought, word and deed. If we should keep the commandments perfectly from the time we were converted, we still would be saved entirely by grace, for we could not thus atone for our sins prior to that time. Perfect obedience is only what is required by the law, and none can do more than their duty. So they can never make any atonement for themselves.

He also said when preaching about the "crown of glory," that he would never had preached the gospel had he not wished to have a starry crown. He said every soul he was instrumental in saving would be a star in his crown in heaven. It may have been all right, but to me it sounded harshly. I think Christian ministers should preach the gospel through love to Christ, and we should seek His glory and not our own. I don't think we are to serve God merely because we wish to promote own glory, but for the glory of God and in grateful love for what He has done for us. Am I right?

He said many things I did not believe, so you see the sermon was not likely to do me much good. I hope I am right – or if not correct in my doctrine, I hope I may see the error and be set right. I did not join the Presbyterian church because my friends were members and I had been instructed in that doctrine, but because I think it most correct and in accordance with the word of God. I read for
myself and every opportunity of knowing the Arminian doctrine, and I find their best members hold the same principles that I do – though they don't use the same words to express their meaning. Ask a Christian of the United Brethren denomination if he expects to gain heaven by his own exertions, and he will tell you his only hope of salvation is in Christ. And ask him if he came voluntary to seek religion, and he will tell you that his conscience was so troubled he could not rest until he found favor with God. Now this is just what all Christians believe. We say: we were elected into the number, saved by grace. They say: we were troubled and could not rest until our sins were forgiven. And it is saved by grace all the while.

I do not think Christians should be idle, nor will they be. Their love to Christ and for souls will prompt them to every exertion that will promote the glory of the former and the good of the latter. And may you, dear, and I improve our every opportunity of doing good. And we have many, though we may not be missionaries. We have our influences, and I believe every one may do some good if they have the will.

Today there is preaching at Shade Gap. I imagined myself there, seated in our own pew with my dear friends, listening to Mr. Kuhn. But I awoke to the less pleasant reality that I was many miles from home, and there was no earthly friend near. But Jesus is here and I believe comforts me by His word and spirit. And I am satisfied there are some Christians in this Valley, and we all worship the same Father. So they are my friends.

I made a very pleasant discovery today. Henrietta, the eldest of the young ladies at my boarding place, is a church member. She communed today. But whether she is a member of the United Brethren or what church, I don't know – but I presume she is.

The United Brethren there is meeting again tonight, but I shan't attend. Probably the meeting may last for some time. One of their preachers, a young man of 33 years, died in Chambersburg recently. They apparently lament him very much. I saw a memoir of his last hours, and he died in triumph. It appears he saw a vision of two angels standing by the foot of his bed about a month before his death, and he told his wife shortly afterward and expressed the opinion that he would not live long. It was a very remarkable occurrence, and his death is another admonition to the living to prepare to meet their God – for the young as well as the aged must die. Death is most certain, but the hour is uncertain. But if God is our friend, death is but the gate to everlasting life and happiness.

Your kind favor of the 1st was read on Thursday. Thank you for its length, interest and kindness. I shall reply to the Sabbath part of it today. You spent the day quietly at your own store. You could enjoy yourself much better alone than if you were surrounded by strangers. My meditations are often disturbed by having to mingle in the family circle of strangers. I do like to be alone when I want to think or read or write, but here it is impossible, so I must learn to not care.

Dan did not spend the day so profitably I should think. I have heard him
say Sabbath was a dull day to him. And I suppose he don't enjoy it any better yet, but does any thing just to put the time in. But I have no doubt he will yet feel the loss of the precious time he thus squanders. Oh that he would be wise and would choose the better part that would insure his happiness in this life and that which is to come.

I am sorry to hear of your uncle's being so ill. It appears hard indeed for his family to be deprived of his kind care and love at so early an age. But if such is the will of our kind heavenly Father, it is unquestionably right and He will provide for and comfort them. Your uncle certainly pays you a high compliment – as you say, probably the highest ever paid you. But Tom is worthy of the trust. And none would be more kind or take more interest in the welfare of the family than he. And I have no doubt he will take pleasure in advising the boys and watching their interests, but it will be a responsibility that many would feel weighty.

It is getting dark, and I must stop writing for this evening. This holy Sabbath will soon be numbered with the many that is past and gone, never to return. Another day nearer eternity and the eternal Sabbath of rest.

I have read the lives of Luther and Knox today. I find them interesting. I wonder how Tom is spending the day. No doubt he attended church and Sabbath school this morning and spent the p.m. reading and meditating. Whatever he may be engaged in, may he be happy in the consciousness of pardoned sin and communion with the Holy Spirit. A goodnight kiss and peaceful slumber.

School room, Monday morn: As I can not mail my scribbling today, I shall spend the hour before school in reply to your kind missive of the 6th instant, which was read Sabbath morning. Tom is real kind and good to write me every mail. I have become so accustomed to receiving a letter of you on Saturday eve that I feel disappointed without it. But I did not get an opportunity of sending till church time Saturday evening. And they stayed so late I could not wait until they came home from church, but was away in dreamy land when they returned – unconscious until morning that Tom's letter and also sister Kate's was awaiting me.

Thank you also for the papers which were received with the letter on Thursday. They appeared like old friends. The magazine was real nice. The tale of Love and Deception I admired very much. The hero was a fashionable gent who wooed and won a pure-minded school marm. And they were to be married in a few days, when she discovered he had at the same time been wooing a very beautiful and unprotected sales woman to her ruin. She (the school marm) was so disgusted by his treachery and want of principle that she never forgave him, or would meet him again. If some of the fashionable unprincipled of our day would be just treated with contempt by the pure and good, our society would be improved considerably I think. But it don't matter what a man does, he can go where he pleases and be well treated by the majority of both sexes. It is a
lamentable fact that virtuous ladies and gentlemen are scarce in our day, more so
than many suppose. I have been surprised on an intimate acquaintance with some
of our young ladies to find them void of principle, self respect, or any of the
virtues so desirable in a lady.

Going to board with Lida, indeed. Well, that is a gay arrangement. She,
then, is one of the supposed unfortunate ones that were not born to wealth and
affluence, but have to make an exertion for their own support. Well, I hope she
will succeed in her plans for the comfort of her parents. I hope you will find it
pleasant, as I have no doubt you will, as I know she is a kind-hearted girl. Mr.
Stewart went back on you in your settlement? Well, I suspect the extra charge
was for extra accommodations of evenings. Ha! ha! No, not any danger of Lida
going back on you. Women are honorable.

I have often noticed you making use of the saying, "The world is a stage,
etc." And I, too, often think of it. May we be enabled to play our part creditably
to our profession and give glory to the great Manager. Perhaps we should soon
give places to others. Our time, at best, is short.

Lida was very kind to give you the company roll. But I am glad she did,
for I should like to see it and now you will allow me the privilege, even if Lida did
give it you. I should like to have mine framed, and the first time you are out in
Tell, you can take both the rolls of Co. I. & G. and send them to J.C. Blair and
have them framed, if you please. But I should like to have the deaths and
proportions marked on Co. I. Mr. Dan could do it if he would, but I shan't ask
him for the favor, for I know he is not at all willing to accommodate me. Capt.
B.H. would do it. Please ask him for me. Port Neely offered to mark the names,
but I neglected giving him the roll. Lib Neely has a roll just like mine, and Port
fixed hers after he came home and she has it framed.

The election is over, and I suppose you have had a rumor at least of the
result. We have heard nothing as yet, and I suppose will not until the last of this
week. But it will be bad news any how, and I am not anxious. I wish you to send
me the paper you promised with the official returns. I suppose you can send it
before we will get it here any other way. I think I was telling you about Kate
talking politics to a strange man in Petersburg. Well, don't you think he had the
impudence to write her a note after the first election. The most insulting and
impudent thing I have ever heard of, but still Kate must blame herself for many of
her insults. For if she would be quiet, persons wouldn't have so many
opportunities to speak to her.

She writes me that she is going to teach in Hill Valley, but I don't know
whether it is the school near Sam Books or no. I presume it is. She and Benton
applied in Tell, but did not succeed. It appears Benton would not have the
Bolingerstown school. If I had the house I am teaching in over there, or as good
a one, I don't think I would be in Amberson. But it is best, and so I am content.

I must tell you I was visiting Saturday afternoon at Mr. Fagan's. I spent
the evening real pleasantly. I like Mrs. Fagan and her daughter very much. If they
had only lived near the school house, I should have liked to have boarded with them. But it is too far. We had a splendid supper, something new in Amberson. Ha! ha! I don't complain of my board. It is good enough, but, dear, it is not clean. You could see that when here. But perhaps I am a little particular. My mother has spoiled me during the summer, may be. O, well.

Evening: School hours are over for today and I shall finish out this sheet commenced this morning. My school is still increasing. I had three new pupils today, but none are more than 12 or 13. I suppose the larger scholars will be in next month.

This day don't appear at all winter-like. It was warmer than many days we had last month. Yes, winter will come – and spring, too. But I think you rather inconsistent. You told me you liked fall best, and in your letter of Wednesday you were wondering if spring would never come. How am I to reconcile the two? Perhaps spring commences in the almanac in March, but I am sure nature never looks very bright. I think it is the most unpleasant month of the year. I am always glad to have my school close before its storms commence, I know. If spring is to come with apple blossoms, I guess it won't commence till May, as they scarcely ever make their appearance sooner – or if they do, they are likely to get frost bitten. The daisy is my favorite flower, and I shall say it is spring the first one you give me gathered from the mountain or meadow. The apple is generally more appreciated than the blossom, providing it is ripe.

You haven't yet abandoned the idea of building. I had not heard anything of it for so long that I though perhaps you had given it up. I wish you success. I am glad to know that the business is flourishing and Tom has gotten over his anxiety. I know you are hopeful and will not long remain despondent.

Dan knows he has the inside track, and Bare's going to Shade Gap would not trouble him, even if he does intend to marry her. I presume Allie is sick and tired of the school room by this time, but she may like it better than I think. But I will weary even Tom's patience if I continue. Bye, bye, dear.

Yours,
Mattie
Good morning Dear,

I wish you a pleasant morning and all the health and happiness that usually fall to the lot of a merchant. I suppose as the morning is cool and nice for sleeping. Tom is about breakfasting with – I wonder whether with Lida or Norrie, for you did not tell me in your last, and I don't know. But you will tell me in your next, won't you?

Yours of the 8th and 9th was read yesterday evening. Thank you for still remembering Mattie and penning so many kind words for her personal. It wasn't a bit too long, and I could have read as much more without being wearied. My last would reach you on yesterday evening, I suppose. It was too heavy and would have had three cents due on it. I am sorry. I intended to put another stamp on it, but Jacob went off in a hurry and I forgot it.

The meeting is still going on at the church, but I have not been there since Sabbath. Nor do I think of going until Sabbath again. The minister in charge, Mr. Anthony, spent yesterday at Mr. Stewart's. I saw him at noon and tea time. He is pleasant and has a tolerable education, and appears zealous in the cause of his Master. He has a youthful appearance, but his complexion is light and he may be older than he looks. He talked considerable to old Mr. Stewart, and prayed very earnestly for him. The old man acknowledged the claims of religion and listened respectfully to all he had to say, but did not appear to be deeply impressed. It is sad to see such an aged man, which in the course of nature must soon bid adieu to earth, unprepared – without God and without hope in the world. I am not sure whether the old lady professes religion or not. I thought from the minister's prayer that probably she did. One of the young ladies and one of the boys are members of the United Brethren church. They are all moral and respect religion. The old gentleman attends church.

I presume Jim knows something about school teaching by this time. I am anxious to hear how he will like it. You should correspond with him. Your influence may be greater than you think. Jim is wild and thoughtless, and has considerable independence about him. He is almost reckless. The more he can make people stare and shock their sensibilities, the better he enjoys it. Though I believe he has a better nature, if he would allow it to come up. You did right to give him your Bible. He may read it for your sake.

I suppose Mary Taylor is coming back to school, and that it will open soon. I am glad to know Tillie Appleby enjoyed her visit to the west. But certainly it would be pleasant, particularly to her that had never been far from home before. It would have been very nice for her to have gone to school, but I don't think she has much notion of going to school now. I would rather think she was studying matrimony and would give that all her attention.

You must intend to stay from home now just as long as I do. Well, I'm not
sure, but I think if it is nice weather I can coax John or Jacob to take me home on the evening of the 20th. I had thought of going then, at any rate. And yesterday evening I read a letter from sister Mollie telling me Mr. Kuhn holds his communion on the 22nd, and I should like so much to be there. I shall tell you in my next if I can make any arrangements to go. Kate said to tell you if you come out to come out through Hill Valley and bring her along. She's clever, ain't she?

So you think you like Norrie's coffee better than Lida's. Men are strange creatures to be sure! I have no doubt Lida goes to more trouble to have it nice than Norrie. Ain't you fearful of making me jealous telling me you escorted Norrie to church? Ah well, I shall be revenged. I'll captivate some Amberson Valley chap, I will.

The Mt. Union ladies certainly honor you very highly. I think I shall tell them to confer their honors where they are more appreciated. To think you would dare to laugh at the ladies. I should certainly inform on you. Allow your whiskers to grow, indeed. I guess you will have to have them grafted first. May be Jimmy Goshorn could spare some of his.

It is now evening, another day almost gone. Oh, resistless time, thou hast no pity on the old maid. Leap year is almost gone and no conquest yet. Ah, me. Well, well. While there is life there is hope. Excuse the sentiment. Ha! ha!

What a beautiful sunset. Please enjoy it. It is lovely. I shall bid you good evening. Many wished for your health and happiness. And may the choicest blessings of heaven rest upon my dear Tom.

Your Mattie

Amberson's Valley
November 15, 1868

My dearest friend,

Seated in my room all alone, I shall write a few thoughts for you personal. It is again the Holy Sabbath. All is quiet and home-like. And nature is calm and serene as in gentle spring time, but the bare boughs and withered flowers tell us that stern winter is not past, but coming, and will soon be here. I love this Indian summer time. It is in harmony with my nature. Every season has its charm and beauties, but give me May – beautiful blooming May, when the breeze is so gentle and all nature is clothed in living blooming loveliness. May is my favorite month. The summer is too hot, you see I don't like burden. And winter is too cold, neither do I like idleness and solitude. But autumn is a medium, and I love its beautiful changes and useful lessons. Surely it is only sin that has rendered this a "vile sorrowful world." Our beneficent Creator has made it most beautiful and happy. Ah, it is not the world of nature we are warned against loving too much, but the
world of art. The lover of nature will look through nature and adore the God of
nature, but the lover of art knows no god but its own.

I suppose you were not up in time yesterday morning to see the great
meteoric phenomena. I don't know when I ever beheld a grander sight. About
five o'clock a.m. the stars looked as though they were falling to the ground and
would leave streaks of light that lasted for some five minutes. The chickens were
frightened off their roosts, and the turkeys flew in all directions. I did not see the
most brilliant part of it. They did not wake me until five o'clock, and Mrs.
Stewart says the grandest sight was between three and four. I should like to know
the cause of such an appearance. Please consult Dick. I presume he explains it,
but I don't remember of reading it. Two years ago there was a notice in the paper
that the stars were to fall at a certain time. I was boarding at Mr. Fabey's at the
time. We waited for them but did not see them. I guess the philosophers made a
mistake, and this was the time.

Thank you, dear, for answering my question as to opening my school with
prayer so kindly and satisfactorily. I shall try by the divine help to perform my
duty fearlessly, whatever that duty is made plain to be. May your prayer and
mine, for the direction of the Holy Spirit, be answered. And I believe it will. Our
God is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God.

Yours of the 12th was received yesterday evening, but not read till this
morning. Don't think because of indifference or neglect. I shall tell you why.
The teachers' association met at Dry Run yesterday. And as it was a very pleasant
day, I concluded to attend. Mr. Stewart gave me a horse and I went over on
horseback. I arrived at Dry Run about eleven o'clock a.m., stopped at Mr.
Stark's, had my horse put up, and then walked down to the school house. I
found eleven teachers present and engaged in the exercises of the day. I think they
commenced at nine o'clock, perhaps, and remained at the school house until 12
noon. We then had intermission 3/4 of an hour, and I walked back to Mr. Stark's
and had dinner. Then I returned to the school house and remained till three
o'clock, when Mr. Devor, the secretary of the board of directors, asked the
teachers of the association to excuse me, as I had probably 12 miles to ride that
evening and it was high time I was on the way. And he said also that he wished
the teachers to pass a resolution to the effect that I should be excused hereafter,
whenever I asked to be. The resolution was passed unanimously. So after
thanking the teachers for their kindness, I bid them good afternoon and repaired to
my stopping place. I was ready in a few minutes and struck for Amberson. I
arrived at my boarding place at 7 p.m. I had no company across the mountain.
But when I came to the store, Jacob and John were there and came home with me.
It wasn't much dark before I came to the store, but the ride was too much for my
delicate head. And when I got to my boarding house I couldn't even read your
letter, but retired immediately, suffered considerably for some time, but at length
fell asleep. And in the morning I felt better, but my thoughts are still scattered and
it is almost painful to think. I did not go to church today, as I was fearful of the
effects of the ride, but hope I shall soon feel all right again.

I got through the Bible today and was trying to think how much I could remember of the principle scenes, names, etc. I think I will have to read much more before I can remember much. It is surprising how soon I forget what I have read. I wish I had a retentive memory, but I can not remember. But I can soon learn anything I wish, and must be content. I think memory can be strengthened by application.

Monday morning: Good morning, dear. I hope you are well and happy this morn. I am glad to be able to inform you that all traces of my rather sudden indisposition have disappeared and I am again seated in my school room, and I will spend the time before school hour in writing to you.

Saturday closed my first month of school in Amberson's. I have really been here a whole month and still survive. Ha! ha! No, dear, I am not just staying in Amberson's. I am living really earnestly – and I hope profitably. Some times it is not just as pleasant as I could wish, but I have never yet had everything just my own way. And on the whole I think the past month has been spent usefully, and consequently brings the satisfaction at least of time usefully spent. Of course I long for friends and familiar associations, but I don't allow them to destroy my peace of mind or to interfere with the pleasures I may enjoy in my present position. God has placed me here, and it is undoubtedly my duty to make the best of my position and not vainly sigh for other positions and imagine I would be happier and could do more good if differently situated. You know we are only to improve the talents we possess, and do good according to our means.

My school so far has been pleasant, the pupils obedient and respectful. But I expect this was my easiest month, at any rate, for my school will be larger and the pupils larger – and I suppose farther advanced. My school for the month just closed averaged 21 pupils, about as large a school as I have taught heretofore. The association is not very interesting as yet, though I think there is good material in it. And it may be more interesting to those who are convenient enough to attend every meeting. But don't think I shall cross the mountain often. I would rather pay $100 than attend.

The meeting is still in progress in the church. John was telling me this morn that Old Crammer\(^{35}\) preached for them last night. I think they must have run nearly ashore for preachers when he was employed. But I guess they did not know any thing about him. It suits me very well while the meeting is going on. I can get my letters sent and receive those that came in the mail, but I don't attend meeting myself. It is too far.

By the way, I must tell you the news. Jacob and Beckie got religion since this meeting commenced. I am really glad, but some how I think they don't feel much impressed. But they may feel more than they practice. They don't like it very well that I don't attend meeting with them, and tell me I am prejudiced. If it
was Mr. West that was carrying on the meeting I would go. Perhaps I should attend some.

Evening: School is dismissed and again I am at liberty to finish my letter to Tom. Today has been cloudy and dreary, looking austere. But I have scarcely noticed nature, have been very busy all day in the school room. Dan must have found his ma’s very attractive suddenly. Circumstances alter cases with more than Dan, though perhaps more so with him than some others. I am sorry his eye is sore. I hope Allie will be able to doctor it for him. My private opinion is that the school marm would be better prepared for the duties of the day if Dan was in Mt. Union, but I suppose they know. I presume he is assistant teacher. I don’t know that I can tell you why I think Dan unwilling to accommodate me – If I was talking to you I could. He appears so selfish and distant of late I don’t care to ask him a favor.

Thank you for your kind offer to have my roll marked. I shall give it you first opportunity. The illumination and oyster supper at Mt. Union must have been a grand success. Thank you, Mr. President, for your kind invitation for the 20th instant, but I must respectfully decline the honor as I haven’t had my shoes half-soled lately and fear they might not stand so much travel.

I am sorry you are previously engaged, as I should have been pleased to have met you at Shade Gap on Friday evening. But perhaps it may be impossible for me to go home. I shall go if at all possible. Jacob won’t say he will take me, but he hasn’t said he won’t. Of course if it rains or snows I shan’t go.

Thank you for the election news. We have not had the whole official returns yet, but I expect we will get it in this week’s paper. I did not see any thing of Father Abraham yet, but I presume you will send them with the Soldiers’ Friend.

So you still continue on with Norrie. Well, it is too bad that Lida’s plans must be frustrated. You think of discontinuing boarding in Mt. Union sometime? I wonder where you will go then. Not to Kansas I hope? Ha! ha! The Tell Township judges and the one of Carbon Township must have been sad[?]. But I suppose like Father, "There is some fraud in it." Thank you for the Republican ticket. I have not seen a Democratic one.

It is drawing toward supper time, and I am as hungry as a bear. So I must stop writing, shut the school house, and go to my boarding place. Good night, dearest. A pleasant time and many wishes for your health and happiness. Thank you for your good wishes and prayer for your unworthy Mattie. Bye, bye.

A good night kiss, if your imagination is strong enough,

[Mattie]
My Own Dear Tom,

It is Sabbath p.m., and I have spent the a.m. in reading: first the fifty-first Psalm, then many other psalms and proverbs. Then I spent some time in reading Mr. Fagan's Presbyterian. It was brought here by some one yesterday evening and he did not come for it this morning. I was so glad, for I like so much to read that paper – also the Banner.

I believe there is no preaching in the church today. It is the Methodist minister's day, but he made no appointment and the folks supposed he would not be there, so no one went down. Mr. West preaches next Sabbath p.m. I suppose Tom attended church today, as it is pleasant overhead but still quite muddy, and also Sabbath School. I hope however employed he may be happy, most happy in the thought of a Saviour's love and in communion with the Holy Spirit. What a blessing to man is the holy Sabbath, and how thankful we should be to the Divine Institutor who has so mercifully provided for all our wants. Today we lay aside all worldly cares, and have a short respite from anxiety and toil, while our souls are fed with the Bread of Life and we receive fresh strength for the duties of the week.

It is quite a loss to me that I am so far from a church here, and then we have Presbyterian preaching so seldom. Mr. West has preached but once in the Valley since I'm here six weeks today. It appears to be my lot to be deprived of attending church when I am teaching. But I spend the time very pleasantly and profitably, I hope. At home I have my Bible and many good books to read, and can meditate and pray at home. Though a good sermon supplies food for thought and often increases our zeal and love. Last Sabbath I spent in my dear old home surrounded by kind, loving friends. Today I am far away, separated by mountains and valleys from those I love best on earth. But my best, my Heavenly Friend, is ever near.

And I must tell you I am beginning to feel quite at home in Amberson. When in the school room surrounded by my pupils, I am contented and happy and time passes rapidly. I don't just feel so much at home at my boarding place as I should like, but am quite comfortable and have no doubt it is my own fault that I do not enjoy it. Today we have had no visitors as yet, but nearly every Sabbath there is company here and the time is spent in light conversation. I have no fire in my room, so of course have to sit with the family and am considerably annoyed. I can read where talking is going on, but can't get the sense of it – or think as I should like to do on Sabbath.

You said in your last it was a luxury for you to be alone, so it is to me sometimes. I very much miss your usual letter of Saturday evening. I received the paper yesterday evening – also the book, for which please accept my thanks and a
kiss for your trouble. I have scarcely looked at the book yet. I read the papers until bed time last night. They are interesting. There is considerable reading matter in the *Telegraph*. I like it very much. The pieces you spoke of I read with pleasure.

May you be happy and in good health, and enjoy this holy Sabbath both temporally and spiritually where ever you may be or in whatever engaged is the prayer of your Mattie. I shall now stop writing and finish this tomorrow. Bye, bye.

School room: Monday morn. Good morning, Dear. I shall spend the short leisure I have before school time in writing you. First I shall wish your spirits well and happy and ready for the day's duties whatever they may be. This morning is cloudy and dull looking, though not at all cold for the last day of November. It looks snowy looking, I think, but I am not much of a weather prophetess, for I was not looking for the last snow.

I wonder why Tom did not write me last mail. Probably he is waiting to hear from me, or may be he hadn't time. He would likely receive my last on Saturday evening, I hope so at least. I mailed it Friday morning before the mail crossed. I know you would be real anxious, for since I think of it, I did not write for almost two weeks. Too bad, indeed. I must try not to have you wait so long again, though some times I can't send my letters to the office. Then you must wait a week if I miss one mail.

I must tell you how Peter came to his death, though I suspect it will now be too late for your Sabbath School lesson. He was crucified at Rome by Nero about the close of the reign of that emperor. It is said he was crucified with his head downward, by his request, not thinking himself worthy to be crucified in the same manner his blessed Master was. I was reading his life last night. It is supposed he was 33 years old when called to be a disciple, consequently he was older than his Master. I was also reading in the life of Christ last night. It is very interesting. I think you told me you had not finished the book yet. If I had an opportunity of sending it to you, you could have it now and I could read it some time again. Perhaps I can send it home some time and you can get it from them.

This last week would be favorable for masoning. I suppose the wall is now finished. I suppose the carpenter can work if it is cold. I suspect there will be a new house in Mt. Union soon. I wonder if Tom is boss of the job. Sometimes I think there is no one else there to take charge of it.

It is now noon. Since the roads are so bad I do not go home to dinner, but bring a piece along like any other little school girl. My school is not very large today. A good many of my pupils are out today, and just one new one came in – one large boy, too big to be whipped by the school marm. But he appears to be very good, and I don't think he will be much trouble.

I had a letter from cousin Rob. He is gay. I like his letters. He says he is sorry I am not teaching in Huntingdon County, for if I was he should expect to see
me at the Institute. It would be pleasant to be there. I would know so many folks, and then a visit to Mt. Union would be so pleasant.

I taught on last Saturday. I don't know whether they will allow me for it or not. I would have asked the director, but could not get to see him. He has never come near to see how I get along. I think it is real mean. I get along very nicely, but it is his place to see that all is moving smoothly. I don't think it fair that I must have all the responsibility.

I must close now as it is time to get to work again. Bye, bye, dear.

Your Mattie

Amberson's

December 10, 1868

Dear Tom,

I seat myself in my school room this cold morning to acknowledge the receipt of your very kind and interesting favors of the 28th, 29th and 2nd, which were read on Tuesday evening. You thought a week and a half a long time to wait for a letter from me. And it was two weeks from when I had read your last before Tuesday, but it was not your fault. But I thought it a long, long while indeed to be without hearing from Tom. The roads are so badly drifted now the hack driver don't want to come up to our office. And he did not come yesterday eve, so I shall not hear from you again until Saturday.

I had only a few moments to write this morning and now it is noon, and about twenty young ones around making a noise and of course I can not write very well. But Tom will excuse all mistakes and bad writing from Mattie. My school is still enlarging. I have 37 names on the roll, but the smaller ones can not come now through the deep snow.

There was a rather large boy of 19 years came in yesterday morning. I feel almost frightened to think I am to teach such a manly looking chap. He is smart and a tolerably good scholar. Yesterday was his first day. At noon I was writing a letter. He came up pretty handy and said, "Writing a love letter?" I said no and wouldn't he give me a form, as I was fearful I did not know him. He turned and left saying, "Perhaps T.A. Appleby will give you all the information necessary." Ha! ha! His name is Eckenrode. He some times stands in the store and I suppose had mailed letters of mine. He is going to Shippensburg tomorrow and says he will take my letters for me and mail them in that place. Then you will get this on Saturday evening, and you will think it is time as you did not receive any in the middle of the week.

I didn't write on Sabbath because I was not feeling very bright, was in bed most of the afternoon. I don't know what was the matter. I was not sick. I shall
not attempt to answer your kind views as to how we should settle the political question, only to say that I never considered myself a member of any party or that I should support the Democratic principles because my father does. Indeed, I have given it so little attention that I am not prepared to form an intelligent opinion on the subject. I love my country and what ever is for its best interests. I am willing to endorse that. There may be a difference of opinion between even us as to what is for the best, I do not doubt. But to allow politics to affect our happiness would not be so sensible, at least as long as woman is denied the right of suffrage. Perhaps there is not the same sympathy between us on that subject as on all others, and I am sorry that we should differ on anything. Yet I think our views may be so reconciled to each other that we may speak as freely on that subject as on any other. Prejudice is very strong, but you say you only endorse what you think is right. So we have nothing to do with party. I have talked and read considerable of the political stuff of the times for the sake of argument, and to tease, but I don't enjoy teasing you (only some times). At least I shan't tease you much about politics. But seriously, I do feel some times that there is a difference of opinion when that subject is mentioned. And I hope we can so far reconcile it, that it may not prove to be a barrier to our happiness.

Please accept my many thanks for the nice gift. I read it through last night. It is pleasing, and I suppose about a correct picture of human nature. No one knows really how weak they are until tempted. I saw the two marks you spoke of, but could not tell which was yours. One was a sentence underlined, the other in the form of a parenthesis. One is Grace telling Mary she was ashamed to tell her all, and ask her if she will laugh at her. The other is Grace, I think, describing her love to her husband, and said had she been asked which she loved most (God the giver, or his gift her husband) she would have sickened and turned away condemned. I rather think the latter is the sentence marked by you.

I had a letter from Kate this week. She is teaching at French's. Annie Peterson is teaching our school (Bolingerstown) and boarding at our place. Kate also boards at home. She will have a gay time getting through the snow this week. She and Annie both. I have no doubt Kate will have a gay time with Annie. She was telling me she intends having some sport with George. If he calls on Annie, she is going to entertain him. And Mrs. Peterson invited Kate and Annie home to Peterson's to a turkey roast on Christmas. Kate has to brag about that. She writes a good letter, though I can not analyze it so highly as your little brother. I do wish you could see some of the letters they write each other. They are sublime.

I suppose you would like to know how I get along through the snow this week. Well, this morning is the first time I have walked either to or from school. I am very fortunate in always having kind friends no matter where I go. I shall not go home the time of the communion. The next week you know is Christmas, and my cousins from Blair County are coming down at that time to pay us a visit. Cousin Annie I have never seen. She has been at our place, but I was not at home.
And she sent word this time that she is coming and wishes me to be home as she is anxious to see me. Of course I should like to see her, but do not know whether I can get home or not. Kate urges me to come, and have a week's vacation, but I don't know. I think the prospect is not at all flattering. If it is good sleighing I might may be get John or Jake to take me, but it is so far I shan't insist. And I guess my friends don't think enough of me to take the trouble to come for me and bring me back. And I could not ask them to do so. It is quite likely I shall not get home until my school closes. I hope you may have a more favorable time than I had. It would be very pleasant if we could meet again around our Lord's table in the dear old brick church, but such does not appear to be the will of Providence, at least for this winter, and I am content. Yes, all is for the best. And may we have grace to say, "Thy will be done." I must now close. School is dismissed and another day's work is done.

Again, many thanks for the kind gift, and many wished form your health and happiness.

Your Mattie

Milnwood Academy in Shape Gap, where Tom Appleby attended, see letter #126
Dear Tom,

Your favors of the 5th and 6th also of the 10th and 11th were read yesterday evening. Thank you, dear, for their kind contents. But words can not express my pleasure and my thankfulness for your last Sabbath missive. I should not feel lonely or discontented anywhere while I have so good and kind a friend to remember me and pray for my happiness.

I attended church today. The Methodist big meeting is now in progress. We were addressed by Rev. Crouse. I enjoyed the sermon very much indeed. His text was, "Wilt thou not receive us again, that thy people may rejoice," Psalm 85, 6th verse. He spoke of the way and manner in which we should approach into the presence of the Most High. He said we should come humbly, sincerely, and in faith – believing that God will answer our prayers and bless our souls. He spoke much of our duty, said we could not expect a blessing if we live in the neglect of any known duty. He said God worked by means and said every one had a work to perform. And he urged them as they valued their soul's salvation to be up and doing.

He said many things I did not think quite consistent. One struck me very forcibly, and I want you to please give me your opinion, won't you? He said salvation was obtained by sacrifice, ever since the promise was made to Adam in the garden, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. The smoke of the sacrifice has gone up to heaven (spoke of the Jewish sacrifice) under the Mosaic dispensation, and then of the sacrifice of our Saviour on the cross. But, said he, the sacrifice did not end here, and we will not leave the Saviour to bear the cross alone. We must make sacrifice every day of our life, and bear the cross after him. Perhaps he was right, but I thought it sounded like taking the merit of half our salvation to ourselves. I like better the doctrine that teaches a free and finished salvation, bestowed by grace alone. We can never merit anything but death, eternal death. We may through grace be made the instruments of doing good and thus work for our Master, but it is no more us that work but His spirit which is within us. But I must not allow prejudice to perhaps misconstrue his language. He may have meant all right. I believe it speaks in I Peter of the sacrifice of the heart.

I presume you attended church today. And perhaps while I was listening to Rev. Crouse you were also listening to a part of the same blessed word as it may have been expounded by another servant – and perhaps have with the servants of our blessed Master surrounded the table of our Lord to commemorate His passion and death. May the Lord of the feast have been there to preside at His table. And O may the participants be blessed and their souls be ever fed with the Bread of life. And especially may my own dear one be blessed and have his spiritual strength renewed, and consecrate himself afresh to the service of our
blessed Master – and may more zeal for His cause be given him and grace sufficient for his day trial. I wish we could have enjoyed the privilege of together commemorating His love. But no, it is better as it is – for God's will is right. And He will give us what is best for us. His arm is not shortened. I may be blessed here quite as richly as elsewhere.

You speak of me being happy and contented in circumstances where many would be disposed to complain. I do not deserve your kind words. God has always been very kind to me, and certainly my lot here is not a hard one – though I am often disposed to murmur, instead of being most thankful as I should be that I have a comfortable position where I can support myself in comfortable circumstances. And He has given me even here kind friends who do all in their power to make me comfortable and happy, while often I fear their kindness is received unwillingly and not appreciated. I know it is wrong and try to feel better toward them, but the heart is not there to give them. Of course I am grateful to them for their kindness, but somehow it has always been my disposition and appears hard to change.

I like some people, and others I don't want to trouble myself about – and it is a kind of an effort to treat them civil. Of course I do, and perhaps no one but myself may know that it does not give me pleasure to do so, but I don't like such a disposition. I would like all. Of course we all have our favorites, but I fear I dislike some and I don't think that is right.

You think I am generally happy. I believe I am not often really unhappy, yet sometimes I feel like complaining and think if I was differently situated I would be more happy. I think with you, dear, we are on the right road to happiness. And I would not exchange with the thoughtless who seek their happiness from the amusements of this world. We have one temptation, which I am some times disposed to think a trial, and that is that we are so far separated and can see each other so seldom. And when I think of it, times appear long until we may hope to meet again. But so far the time has not dragged nor appeared long, and I shall hope for the best in the future. True, we should not live so much in anticipation, because life is very uncertain. And many things may happen, which we may least expect, to frustrate entirely our expectations. But we should live actively and happily in the present, trusting the future with Him who doeth all things well. He has ever proved faithful in time past, and we should then trust him implicitly.

I was reading in the 37th Psalm this p.m. It is most comforting, showing us we should seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness – and all things needful should be given unto us. Every good and perfect thing cometh from our kind heavenly Father. And He will give His children what is best for them.

I hope your meeting may do much good, both to Christians and in convincing and converting sinners. I know the aged minister you spoke of would be interesting. I like to listen to those fathers. Indeed they have borne the burden and heat of the day and speak from experience and of course know many things
that younger ones have not thought of. Then it appears to me like as if they were near the end of their journey and have tried both the world and religion, and they surely know which is best. They speak to us, as it were, from the mouth of the grave. Though of course the young may die, yet the aged must die. We would be saved much trouble if we would learn more from the sad experience of others, but alas we do not believe their words until we learn sometimes by bitter experience that they told us the truth.

It is now evening. All the young folks have gone to church except Miss Ettie and I. She is reading in your history, and I am spending the time writing you. The holy Sabbath will soon close, and all will retire to their repose. I presume Tom is spending the evening at church, too. May he be benefited by the services, and his graces be in lively exercise. And may he have the witness of the Spirit that he is indeed and in truth a child of God. And may we both be blessed, though we are separated by many miles. May we be united in spirit, serving the Lord. And I hope our names may not only be written in the church book upon earth, but that they are inscribed in the Lamb’s book of eternal life – and our souls washed in His blood.

I must now stop writing this eve. Good night. Happy thoughts while waking and in your slumber pleasant dreams. And a happy awakening and a good night kiss.

Good morning, Dear: I wonder if you would be looking just a little bit for me to attend the Institute in Huntingdon this week. I guess not. I would like to be there, but it is too cold to think of going half that distance. It would be very nice indeed if I was there, but I am not. And so I presume it is better so. I did think in the fall that I would ask the directors to allow me to attend in Huntingdon instead of Chambersburg. But when the weather got so cold I did not think I should like the trip. So I did not mention it to the Board.

Kate wrote me she did not intend going to the Institute this winter. I suppose Annie will not either. I suppose the majority will attend. I hope they will have a good time. Allie, I have no doubt, will enjoy attending the Institute much better than teaching. I pity her if she does not like to teach, for she will have a poor time of it. I should not like to be in her place. She might have a real nice time if she would, but she don't like exertion. And if she can live without it, she will be more fortunate than most people in our country. Dan and she should enjoy the school arrangement, as he spends most of his time at home. But then it is Allie that has the responsibility, not Dan. And I don't think he likes exertion or responsibility any more than she. I shouldn't like to have any one for my particular friend that was more careless than myself. For I need all the encouragement from my friends to keep my courage up. But then I have kind sensible advisors for which I am most thankful.

My school is not very large today. I have only 25 present today. I have not much trouble in controlling them, and hope I may not have. There is two boys
from the lower school visiting us today, and of course they are a little more wild than usual.

Today I commence my third month. I have been two whole months in Amberson. The time don't appear long to look back over, but the three months to come appear a long, long time to remain. But I hope they may pass as pleasantly as the two just closed, and I shall be content.

And my brother Rob was out to Mt. Union with his beef. The paper said he thought he would take it to Shippensburg. I was in hope he would, and would come this way and see me. But I guess I must not think of seeing my friends this winter.

I think from the way winter commenced it must intend to be soon over. Such a snowy time I never saw. You say you have no sleighing out there. Why they say the snow is about 18 inches deep here, and drifted so that the roads are scarcely passable. I was out sleighing Saturday. John took me to Dry Run to attend the association. There were but eight teachers present – and such a cold day! I thought I would freeze before I reached the Run in the morning, but it was pleasant coming home. But I did not at all enjoy the ride going over, for I was all the time fearful we would get into a snowdrift and stick fast. Some times it was so sideling the sleigh be almost over, and John would have to get out on the runner to hold it from upsetting. The creek was open one place where we had to cross, and it was very ugly. But we got through safely.

The president of our association gave me a subject to write an essay on. It is, "The True Aim of a Teacher." Won't you please write some for me. I am so very poor in composition. But if you are too busy, don't take the trouble. I don't know when I will get to the association again – maybe not this month.

This week you will be out at Shade Gap. So I shan't write you on Friday, as you would not receive it until perhaps Tuesday or Wednesday at any rate. You will go to our place of course. Kate and Mollie will be glad to see you – also Papa and Ma. I hope you have a pleasant visit, also pleasant weather, and a good meeting. I presume Rev. Forbes will assist Rev. Kuhn.

It is now evening. School is dismissed, and I must hasten home to my supper. Bye, bye. Much love and a kiss from your own Mattie. Thanks for the paper, books and fancy picture. How very kind and thoughtful is Tom. Bye, bye.

[Mattie]
My Dear Tom,

Early this pleasant winter morning I shall commence a letter to you in reply to yours of the 13th and 14th instant, which was read with pleasure last night. Thank you, dear, for its kindness, loving words, and sweet Christian comfort. How very thankful we should be that we are so highly privileged, though we are poor worms of the dust, yet more vile than worms. Yet God has permitted us to come into his presence and has provided a way whereby we may be received into His family – and by His grace has sweetly constrained us, and brought us even to rejoice in His love, and permitted us to surround His table and commemorate His death until He come. Amazing grace, that we should be thus privileged, while many as good by nature and practice are still in the gall of bitterness and bound of iniquity.

I am glad to know you enjoyed the services of Sabbath so much, and that you were blessed and comforted. And I am thankful, dearest, for your prayers and kind words of counsel and comfort. I feel as though we are one in heart, and O may we be blessed and enable to do our duty. Yes, I believe every one has a talent and are responsible for the use of it. Our Saviour's example is simple proof that he does not intend his followers to sit down in idleness. He was ever going about doing good and relieving the suffering of humanity. We should follow him in this as well as all else in which he has made his will plain. It is hard to tell sometimes what is just right to do, but I believe it will be made plain if we seek direction from above. He will direct us by his spirit. We have the revealed will in the Bible and can read it, and the Spirit of truth will enable us to understand it.

Dear, I am not happy at present, nor have I been for more than a week. I am in the dark and troubled, but I hope God will bless me. We have our dark hours as well as bright ones. It is very likely our own fault. We become careless and neglectful, then we are permitted to suffer for our sins. And perhaps such seasons of darkness drive us more frequently to the throne of grace. I hope you will write me words of comfort often. I very much need instruction and encouragement.

I hope the meeting in Mt. Union may do much good. There is a Methodist protracted meeting now in progress in the church, but I don't attend. It is too far. I should like to be there some times, but can't go and so try not to think of it. I don't think there is much interest manifested, and it will likely close this week.

I am sorry if you postpone your visit to Shade Gap on account of my writing you that I should go home at that time if I could. I don't think it at all likely that I shall be able to get home, though I should like very much to go. I would have but a short visit to go home on Christmas and come back again on the Sabbath, and if I would spend the whole week I would have to make up the time. So you see a school marm is not very well situated for visiting. I have to teach all
the time, so Mr. Fagan says, not even getting Christmas for myself. But I shan't care if I do not get home. I may as well be teaching as not.

I received Bell's letter, but it was only by accident that I did so – as it was addressed to Spring Run, and I am 13 miles from there. A gentleman from this valley was over and brought it me. Bell would be glad to see you I know, though she is a little jealous of you she says. I do wish I could see Bell this evening. I could have a nice long talk. She was my early bosom friend, and the only one I ever had outside our family circle. I can tell her any thing and am always sure of sympathy. I do pity the poor girl. She is very unhappy. She is not at all well either. She teaches too constantly. I think she will not live long.

Tim is in the right not to attend the Institute when they will not allow him the time. He will be losing some time visiting, but he can make it up in the spring. I suppose he is not anxious to close his school. I shouldn't wonder if he went to see my sister, but it is almost out of his range to go to Bolingerstown.

I had a letter from sister Mollie last evening. They are all well. Kate and Annie had a gay time getting through the snow at the first of last week, and I think it will be bad getting through any time. I fear Kate will not stand it, but suspect she will give it up before spring.

Mr. Stewart's are butchering today. We will have fresh sausengers, I guess, and I heard some talk this morning about a turkey for supper. But I have not seen any thing of it yet, and I am home from school writing in the living room as hungry as a bear. Staying in the school room gives me an appetite, especially when I have no dinner.

Mrs. Culbertson was here helping today, and had the sweetest little child with her. I do love it. I had to play with it or I might have had this finished before it got so dark that I can not see the ruling distinctly. You will excuse it if I miss the line,

Allie will have a nice time attending the Institute, visiting Mt. Union, etc. I presume the Dublin teachers get their time. Bell says Dan wrote her some time lately, and she thinks him miserable – life almost a burden. Poor Dan. I fear he has mistaken the road to happiness and is reaping even this early the reward of his folly. I am the opinion that Allie does believe him, and trusts him more than she will any one else. It is her nature. She loves him, and that blindly – and one would think unreasonably. His influence over he is unbounded and not balanced by reason. I like the doctor's sentiment best: keep the eyes open during courting days, then go blind if necessary.

You think there will be a change in the firm soon. Well, dear, I hope it will be beneficial change for you. And I think it will. You had nearly the whole burden of the business as it is – Blair seldom being there and Dan unwell. And perchance it will be all for the best for Dan, as it must annoy him to attend to business when feeling badly. But I fear it will not benefit him, perceiving as he will lose a good position.

The patent crinoline you speak of must be very nice. I have not seen any
of the style in this country. They will reach here some time in the next century. Ha! ha! Tell me Tom, is the Grecian Bend in vogue in Mt. Union yet. And how do you like the style. Ha! ha! I see in the Chambersburg paper a notice that a man purchased one for his daughter, and she not knowing what to do with it took it for a milk strainer. There are some most ridiculous stories in the paper. The ladies' fashions always have to be commented on by the bachelors.

My health is very good, but I am losing flesh. I don't know why, as I am usually more lusty in the winter than summer. Now you don't need to say that I can lose several pounds and still be heavy enough. Well, may be it is so. I guess I will have to take out visiting and fatten up.

I wonder what Tom is doing or thinking of while I write. May be he is penning a letter for Mattie. I hope so, or at least that I shall get one on Saturday. I suppose you won't be expecting this, as I had not intended writing again this week – thinking you would be visiting home and friends the last of the week. But you will think of Mattie even if you do visit your Mamma, won't you? You have stayed from home a long, long time and I know your Ma will be glad to see you. Bye, bye. And a kiss in return for your last letter.

Mattie

PS. Supper is ready. Good night.

Jacob (1849-1920), the youngest child of Davis and Juliana Stewart, was 19 when Mattie boarded with the family. Called "Big Eyed" Stewart because he had such large bright eyes, he frequently volunteered to drive Mattie when she needed transportation.
December 20, 1868

My Dear Tom,

Again it is the holy Sabbath. Winter has hid the beauties of vegetation, but the pure white robe looks pure and beautiful – before it becomes contaminated by contact with the earth. The cold and damp without makes one appreciate the nice warm comfortable room the more.

I am seated in the living room at the dining table, it being too cold to remain upstairs. It is now about 12 o'clock noon, and I imaging while I write Tom is probably attending church – perhaps ME church, as I presume Rev. Forbes is at Shade Gap assisting Mr. Kuhn today. And while I write I have no doubt all our family except myself are seated in the dear old church, perhaps at this moment surrounding the table of our Lord to commemorate his death until he comes. And your relatives too, dear, are there I have no doubt. And you too have an interest there and are very probably thinking of them and our blessed Master. Thus, though we are separated, we have the same interests and sympathy. It would afford us much happiness to be present in body, but that cannot be. But we can pray for those dear friends. And I have no doubt the absent ones will be remembered by our respective friends, and prayers offered for our spiritual welfare and happiness. What a great blessing is Christian friends!

I hope your brother John and sister Annie will join the church this time, and will have Loretta baptized. John, I believe, will make a good and noble man – if only he will decide to become a Christian. I do not know much about his disposition for I never met him often, but from observation I admire him. He is young to assume so many responsibilities, but with the blessing of God he will be more contented and happier than many who boast themselves as being free from responsibility and care.

There is a Mr. and Mrs. Fagan visiting here today, and all are talking around me. So you will please excuse this miserable composition, for I can not write or think connectedly where people are talking. The folks here were enquiring of Mrs. Fagan about your grand-aunt Mrs. Magee! She is well as usual. I saw a Mr. Culbertson last Saturday that claims to be a relative of yours. His mother was a Magee. He said if you came over here again you should go to see him. He is a personable young man, but he has never been very far from home. I liked his appearance pretty well, but could not observe any resemblance to my Tom. Ha! ha!

I expect to attend church this afternoon. Rev. West preaches at 3 o'clock. Mrs. Fagan (the director's lady) said I could go down with them if I would be ready. So if Jacob don't go, I shall be accommodated at any rate. I should like so much to hear a Presbyterian sermon, having heard Mr. West but once since I came over here.

I am feeling bright and happy today. I believe God has blessed my soul, and I have been enabled to cast myself on him entirely and trust him for his grace.
Thank you, Tom, for your prayers. And O I need them so much. Please do ever remember your unworthy friend at a throne of grace. Yes, dear Tom, I believe we are ever present to each other in mind. And it often appears to me, when thinking of you or reading your kind letters, that we are not so far separated. Though many miles intervene, we are near in heart.

You are correct in saying that we are now learning a lesson of submission to the will of our heavenly Father. And I know and feel that I much needed such training. I used to think my happiness depended entirely on my friends, and was miserable when separated from home. And yet I fear I depend too much on earthly objects for happiness. Yet God in his wise providence is leading me to know that in Him is all fullness, and that I must not depend on earthly friends too much – but on Him and Him alone. And surely He is worthy of all honor and love.

Later: I was to hear Mr. West preach this p.m. Mr. Fagan took me on his sled. Since the Stewarts have joined the United Brethren, they don't attend Presbyterian church. Mr. West's sermon was excellent, so plain and full of kind counsel and advice. It was quite a treat to me. May I be benefited by the instructions received. The text was, "Fit for the Kingdom of God." He very briefly pointed out three things as necessary for our fitness for that blessed abode. The first was to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ as with a garment. Second, our hearts must be renewed by the Holy Spirit. And third, sanctification by grace.

He then made a personal application of his subject by urging every Christian to examine their own heart and see if they had the evidence within that they are the children of God. It was most interesting and instructive. I enjoyed it very much. He will preach again in four weeks. The communion at Spring Run will be in five weeks. The week of prayer (viz., 1st week in January) will be observed at Spring Run. I should like to attend, but don't expect to get – as it is far and I have no one to take me. I presume you will attend services at Mt. Union during the week of prayer. Please remember Mattie, but I know you will.

Monday morning, school room: It is again Monday. Another week has begun, with its duties. May it be well improved by Tom and I. There are not many pupils in yet, but it is early. And the day is not so cold, and the roads well broken. I expect to have a full school. Many of the large boys are rough and impudent, but have given me very little trouble as yet. I expect the director to visit me today. He is kind, and I think will endorse my rules and method of teaching.

I fear the sleighing is now spoiled. It was soft yesterday p.m., and last night it thawed nearly all night. So I think it must be poor today, but I must call order. 9 o'clock.

Noon: I have now a few minutes. If the scholars keep still I shall write you. They are not very troublesome, and give me very little trouble – unless it is so
snowy they can not get out. Then they make a little noise in the house. Some of the girls were standing around my desk, apparently depending on me for amusement. I entertained them awhile talking, then gave them *The Soldier's Friend* to read and they are as quiet as can be.

It is snowing a little, but I don't think it will amount to much. We may expect, though, when there are so many weddings on hand for tomorrow. I hope Ben Douglas may get a good wife. I am not personally acquainted with him, but know the family. Mr. Alexander Magee is to be married to Miss McVitty tomorrow, both of this valley. I saw the gent at church yesterday. He is quite young looking, is about twenty, and follows the Appleby fashion of marrying young. The lady is eighteen. I have never seen her.

I fear I shall not get home at the holidays. I would like so much to be there, but you know what a long road it is – and no public conveyance. And the roads are badly drifted many places. And on the whole I think it will be better for me not to try to go. But I should like so much to see my cousins. Yet, "duty before pleasure" you know is our motto. You have not been at home for two months and a half, and I know your Ma would like to see you. So if you could come if I would be there, you had better come and see your Ma. But of course you know best what will suit you, and will act accordingly. If the goods arrive about that time, you will be busy.

Best wished for the success of the remodeled firm. I have no doubt it will be a success. I know Dan only annoyed you, and you will be better without him. He is a trouble to all his friends, but he alone is accountable for his conduct. His friends can only advise and pray for him. I hope he may yet reform.

In one of the pamphlets you sent me was a short verse on "What Makes a Man." It is marked by you and is a splendid sentiment. I can not allow you to risk your health in a cold room writing me. I fear you will take cold.

I should be happy to enhance the pleasure of Tom, but know I could not do so by any neglect of duty. So I shall do as I think duty calls, knowing that will please Tom and insure my own happiness. So if we do not meet during the holidays, we may still be assured of each other's happiness. Write me a holiday letter, ever so long, won't you?

Many wished for your health and happiness, and a kiss in return. But I am fearful it will freeze before reaching you. Bye, bye.

Mattie

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Endnotes for the 1868 letters #105–118

1 What Mattie calls the brick school house was more properly called Mill Run School. It was built in 1856 where Mill Run crosses the road through Amberson Valley on property sold to the Fannet School Board by the Davis Stewart family with whom Mattie boarded.
Jinny was Tom’s horse. He had apparently brought Mattie back to Amberson Valley on Saturday and had to make the return trip to Mount Union alone.

This preacher or his denomination cannot be determined. One possibility is Henry Wolf (1841-1923), a local preacher of the rural Bethlehem United Brethren Church in northern Fulton County.

Mr. Fagan, the school director, is likely James Edward Fagan (1816-1899) – a brother of Juliana Fagan Stewart, the lady of the house where Mattie boards, but such a relationship is never specifically noted in the letters.

Mattie boarded with the Davis Stewart (1802-1871) family. Mrs. Stewart was the former Juliana Fagan (1812-1884). The Stewarts had 8 children: 4 girls (Maria Eva, Margaret, Henrietta, Rebecca) and 4 boys (Simon, David, John, Jacob). They were approximately Mattie’s age – some being older, and some being younger.

There is a natural gap through Tuscarora Mountain at Concord. When taking Mattie to Amberson Valley, Tom crossed no mountains from Shade Gap – taking the northern route through Concord, and then the southern route into Amberson Valley through Spring Run. Returning home he went almost due west – going over the mountain from Amberson Valley to Dry Run, and then taking present route 641 over Tuscarora Mountain to Shade Gap.

Aunt Betty (1811-1875), the former Elizabeth (Betty) Spear, is the wife of William Appleby (brother of Tom’s father).

Pleasant Hill is assumed to be the location about three miles southeast of Shade Gap where the present Pleasant Hill United Methodist (former United Brethren: on the Shade Gap charge with Bethlehem, Mt. Zion and Salem). There was a school house by that name in the 1860’s, but the church was not erected until the 1880s.

William C. Kuhn became pastor at Shade Gap on September 10, 1867, and served until June 11, 1879.

At 19 years old, Jacob Stewart (1849-1920) was the youngest of the children in the house where Mattie boarded. He is mentioned frequently in the letters. He married a Nancy Susan Nesbitt and settled in Lurgan.

William Armstrong West (1825-1909) was pastor of the Upper Path Valley Presbyterian charge 1853-1873. He was responsible for the home congregation at Spring Run and five outlying churches, including the one at Amberson. He was later secretary of the presbytery at Harrisburg.

The designation “Oak Grove” is a mystery and appears only in this letter. There is nothing to indicate Mattie had traveled outside Amberson Valley, and the Amberson Valley letters are typically written from the “Brick School House” where Mattie taught or “Stewart’s” where she boarded. In letter #12 Mattie refers to Oak Grove as a previous school at which she taught, and this reference is most likely an error on her part.

Margaret Alice Montague (1848-1904) was Dan and Tom’s first cousin, the daughter of their mother’s brother Thomas Montague, Dan and Allie eloped in May 1869 and went west. Dan was killed by a train in 1905.

This is Tom’s cousin Mary E. Appleby, the daughter of the
Aunt Betty cited in letter #106. Mary E. Appleby was a year younger than Mattie.

15 John Stewart (1846-1873) married a Mary E. Shearer. While visiting his in-laws, he slipped on some ice and fell down stone steps leading to a spring and drowned. After Mary died in 1879, their son David was raised by his Shearer grandparents.

16 Mary E. McElhenny married Sylvester Eckenrode in August 1865. They were Catholics, married in the church at Doylestown. She is mentioned again in letter #123. After serving in the Civil War, Mr. Eckenrode ran the store in Amberson until moving to Illinois in 1871. There was no Catholic church in Amberson Valley, and the Eckenrodes were likely among those who trekked over the mountain each Sabbath to Doylestown on the trail that is known to this day as “the Catholic path.”

17 James B. Culbertson was married to the Stewart’s daughter Margaret. One or both of them are mentioned in letters #117, 123, 125, 126 and 131. He was elder in the Upper Path Valley Presbyterian Church at Spring Run and responsible for building the Amberson Presbyterian Church in 1875.

18 Uncle Montague is a brother to Tom’s mother, the former Marie Priscilla Montague. The surname is also rendered Teague.

19 Horatio Seymour (1810-1886) was the Democratic candidate for president who lost the 1868 election to succeed Andrew Johnson to Ulysses S. Grant.

20 “Salt River” is a colloquialism for political disaster.

21 The reference is to Hiram Y. Hummelbaugh (1835-1868), who had served the Path Valley circuit 1860-62.

22 John C. Blair (1847-1897) is the son of Tom’s business associate Brice X. Blair. In 1869 he opened a retail stationery store in Huntingdon, and in 1881 he purchased the old Presbyterian Church building there for a stationery manufacturing plant rechristened the Keystone Building. He is the namesake of the present JC Blair Memorial Hospital, and his factory now houses a museum operated by the Huntingdon County Historical Society. Earl C. Kaylor’s 1995 biography of Pennsylvania governor Martin Grove Brumbaugh, pages 91-92, states Blair “was a small-town entrepreneur who had risen overnight from struggling stationer to global industrialist. His story was right out of Horatio Alger books, then so popular. He was a rich man thanks to an idea borrowed from a friend who paid a visit to Blair’s little stationery shop. While chatting with the owner he idly fashioned a crude tablet out of newsprint and carpet tacks. He intended to use it as a notebook. The young shopkeeper, on the lookout for a more lucrative business venture, took notice. From that casual creation sprang, virtually overnight, a whole new stationery line: the paper tablet. The Blair Handy Tablet found an instant world market. America’s public school system began to adopt it to replace the cumbersome slates. Mark Twain dashed off a chit to Blair in 1884 saying, ‘Your packets are an unspeakable convenience. They make authorship a pastime!’”

23 This is a reference to Tom’s brother Dan, as made clear in letter #112.

24 David R. Porter Neely (1836-1918) laid out the village of Neelyton on land that he owned. A Civil War hero, Captain Neely was elected sheriff of Huntingdon County and was known for his courage and honesty. He married Mary Elizabeth Minick (1843-
He was named for David Rittenhouse Porter (1788-1867), a prominent Huntingdon County politician who was elected state senator in 1836 and governor of Pennsylvania in 1838.

Mary Elizabeth Minick Porter (1843-1916) is a sister to Ellen Minick of letter #129 and daughter of the Mrs. Minick of letter #12.

Hill Valley is the valley between Three Springs and Mount Union followed by route 747. There was once a frame United Brethren Church in Hill Valley, erected in 1892 and abandoned and razed in 1963.

Tell is the northeasternmost township in Huntingdon County.

The so-called Bolingerstown school was on the east side of present route 35, about half-way between Shade Gap and Richvale. Just north of the McNeal farm, it was the school attended by Mattie and her siblings.

John P. Anthony (1843-1919) was the United Brethren pastor on the Path Valley charge 1868-1870. He had just received his license and first assignment in 1867. He would be ordained in 1870 and go on to be a district superintendent.

Mary E. Taylor (c1852–1942) is Tom’s cousin, the daughter of his father’s sister Ann Elizabeth Appleby (1817-1891) and John Taylor. She married Dr. Alvin R. McCarthy, for many years a practicing physician in Mount Union. She died in Pasadena CA.

Elizabeth Matilda Appleby (1846-1926) is Tom’s cousin, the daughter of his father’s brother Alexander Appleby (1817-1897) and Ann Elizabeth Jeffries. She married George S. Doran in May 1870 and settled in Burnt Cabins.

This is believed to be James L. Goshorn (1832-1911). He married Arabella McClay Noss in March 1864. His brother Samuel Goshorn (b.1848) would marry Mattie’s niece Margaret Ella Glenn McNeal (b. 1858), the daughter of her older brother Robert McNeal (1833-1897).

This is the annual Leonid meteor shower, so called because the meteors appear to emanate from the constellation Leo. The Leonid meteor shower has produced some of the most spectacular meteor displays in history, but it is unfortunately periodic in nature. It generally begins on November 13 and ends on November 21, with maximum intensity occurring during the night of November 17/18. The Leonids are barely detectable on the beginning and ending dates, but observers are treated to displays of about 10 meteors per hour on the night of maximum. Every 33 years, the Leonids enter a phase of enhanced activity that accompanies the return of its parent comet. During these periods, rates can amount to hundreds and even thousands of meteors per hour. The last such enhanced period occurred in 2000, and so 1868 = 2000 – 4(33) would also have been a peak year.

This is believed to be James Stark (1799-1882) and his wife Martha Skinner Stark (1808-1889+). They were prominent figures in the Upper Path Valley Presbyterian Church. Although some sources give an 1886 death date for Mrs. Stark, the 1889 History of Franklin County states that “she still resides on the homestead in her eighty-third year.” Her father’s name was William Skinner (1757-1856), and she had a brother, nephews and grand-nephews named William – one of them undoubtedly being the Will Skinner mentioned in letter #106.

The United Brethren pastor named “Crammer” cannot be
identified. There were United Brethren pastors named Craumer and Cramer in the Conference, but their ages and assignments make it unlikely that any of them is the preacher referred to here. “Old Cramer” may have been a local preacher.

36 The Soldier’s Friend by Mrs. S.E.D. Smith, “a thrilling narrative of Grandma Smith’s four years experience and observation, as matron, in the hospitals of the South, during the late disastrous conflict in America,” was published in 1867.

37 James E. Eckenrode (1849-1894) is a brother to the storekeeper Sylvester Eckenrode. He is mentioned again in letter #122. He later married a Lizzie Hoopes and lived in Summer IL, where he died at the age of 44.

38 French’s school was in southern Tell Township, one ridge east of the McNeal farm.

39 Ann Elizabeth Peterson (1848-1907), daughter of James Peterson and Mary Thompson Devor, lived in Dublin township near the Appleby homestead. She married Tom’s cousin William McGinnis Appleby (1846-1909), the son of his father’s brother William Appleby (1812-1891) and Elizabeth Spear.

40 William Augustus Crouse (1824-1906) was the Methodist Protestant preacher serving the four point Concord charge which consisted of Concord, Doylestown, Amberson Valley and Roxbury. The present United Methodist church in Concord was formerly Methodist Episcopal, and the Concord ME building is no longer standing. The other congregations are now United Methodist - Amberson Valley having erected a new building, and Roxbury having absorbed the former ME congregation in that community.

41 Cochrane Forbes, a returned missionary to Hawaii, began preaching in Mount Union and Sherrillsburg in October 1866 and served as a supply there for about 3 years.

42 Sausengers is a slang term for sausages.

43 Captain Brice X. Blair (1820-1890), a Civil War hero who lost an arm at Gettysburg formed a partnership with Dan and Tom Appleby. They purchased the store of Daniel Etnier in Mount Union and began merchandising in the brick building at the corner of Water and Division Street on October 1, 1867. After Dan went west and Brice moved to Huntingdon, Tom became sole owner of the business. Brice X. Blair is the father of J.C. Blair.

44 A crinoline, a petticoat made of very stiff and coarse material, was worn under a full skirt to keep it billowed out.

45 The Grecian Bend was an exaggerated bustle.

46 This is Tom’s great-aunt Martha “Mattie” Appleby Magee (1785-1870) who married Adam Magee (1779-1854). Martha’s sister Agnes “Nancy” Appleby (1777-1852) married Adam’s brother George Magee (1776-1855) and so the families are doubly related.

47 This son of Joseph Culbertson (1811-1890) and Martha Magee (1815-1879) is no direct relationship to the James B. Culbertson who married Margaret Stewart. Martha Magee was a first cousin to Tom’s father John Appleby.

48 This is actually William Alexander Magee (1848-1924), the son of George Magee and the grandson of Adam Magee and Tom’s great-aunt Martha “Mattie” Appleby Magee.

49 Margaret A. McVitty (1850-1915) is the daughter of Robert McVitty. She and Alexander Magee remained on his father’s farm and had a family of 7 sons and 4 daughters.