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Love Letters of Samuel Pearce.

IN an unpromising-looking packet of old scripts, recently sent to me, I found to my considerable delight five love-letters of Samuel Pearce. If only they could have come to light twenty-five years ago, they would have enlivened my Memoir of this Saint. For Saint men reckoned him, but Saint of a lovable order. Reflecting on the spell he had cast on men during his so brief three-and-thirty years, they called him "the Seraphic," for the *warmth* of his holiness, and they talked of his "*endearing* saintliness." Of what "endearingness" he was capable, these discovered letters will help to tell. They will enhance what he once wrote: "O my Sarah, had I as much proof of my love to Christ as I have of my love to you, I should prize it above rubies."

The merriment that sparkles in the letters is, also, a great joy, and assures me afresh that in that inner circle of the zealots, including Fuller and Ryland and Sutcliff and Pearce and Carey, there could at times be heard the sounds of pure and ringing laughter.

And this sustains and illustrates anew my conviction that all the world's greatest preachers have been endowed with a quick sense of humour. That Pearce was a preacher of the first magnitude, let William Jay sufficiently attest, who wrote, "When I have endeavoured to form an image of our Lord as a preacher, Pearce has oftener presented himself to my mind than any other." So I am not surprised to find him, like his Master, specially sensitive to the quaint and amusing aspects of things as well as to life's pain. He was intensely human. In no other man's preaching that Carey knew was there so "warm an appeal to the heart."

Perhaps, too, Pearce's powers of animal magnetism, confessed in one of these letters, played a little, though unconscious, part in his extraordinary influence over his audiences.

The lady of his admiration and devotion was well-fitted to become a minister's wife. For her mother had been the daughter of a noteworthy Baptist scholar and minister; and her father, Joshua Hopkins, a capable business-man of Alcester, twenty miles due south of Birmingham, was also its most zealous Baptist deacon; and in his widowerhood Sarah had learned to be his kindest companion and comfort.

The Baptist layman of Birmingham, whom we know best to-day, was Thomas Potts, who goaded Carey to the writing of his *Enquiry*, and contributed £10 towards its cost. In one of these letters we see Pearce nursing Mr. Potts' baby, whilst he despatches the nursemaid to light the fires in the house which he is impatiently making ready for his bride. Indeed, these letters make many homely things vivid.

* * * *

[An early and rather formal letter.]

Inattention and Presumption are extremes into which many a respectful and affectionate friend apparently falls, but between both I am persuaded every friendly heart would desire to steer. Shall I tell my dear Sarah, I said to myself, that through divine goodness I arrived here this morning in safety, and found all well? Perhaps she may think I presume too much on the permission granted me to write to her, in scribbling again, before I visit the dear atmosphere in which she breathes. I would not for the world expose myself to her censure for a forward impertinence. Had I not better decline? But may not my silence be deemed a mark of inattention? "Surely," she may say, "with all the regard he professes for me, he might at least have let me know when he arrived." Now what should I do in this strait? I resolved to throw myself on her clemency, and venture once more to charge the post with a testimony that in all my thoughts my dear Miss Hopkins is uppermost, and that over my affections she supremely presides. Adieu!

* * * *

Birmingham, October 8th, 1790.

After a very fatiguing journey, made more trying by a violent cold caught after preaching last Lord's Day, I hailed the pleasing sight of the hills and dales and plains of Warwickshire. The first sight suspended the fatigue I felt. "Every hour," said I, "brings me some miles nearer Birmingham. Every turn of the wheel, every step of the horses, brings me nearer Alcester, and hastens, I hope, my longed-for interview with my lovely friend."

I have almost forgot my indisposition in the pleasing prospect before me on Wednesday next. But I fear the moments of bliss will be still retarded. Mr. Harwood (a noble deacon of "Cannon Street") called on me just now to say that he thinks of accompanying Mrs. Harwood and Mrs. Maddock there the same day, and I believe he wishes so to dispose the order of the journey as to make me his fellow-traveller. I told him I could not engage to go with him, unless he would engage to set off early in the morning. But, as he is not positively determined about going at all, he made no determinate reply. "Surely, my dear

Johnny! the wings of love must not be attached to thy bulky frame, although a friendly one!" Methinks, he pats me on the shoulder, and says, "Go, fly to the presence of thy charming friend," dismisses me with a smile, and loses sight of me in a moment.

My hand so trembles for want of rest that I fear this will be hardly intelligible. If so, I will explain all, when I see you, intreat your forgiveness, and assure you in person that every day makes you more dear to your much obliged and very affectionate

SAML. PEARCE.

* * * *

Birmingham, November 26th, 1790.

Again I enter on the pleasurable employment of addressing my dear, very dear friend. Who would be ignorant willingly of the sacred sweets of friendship?

"Poor is the master of a friendless world."

My highest earthly bliss I derive from my friendly intercourse with *you*, my Sarah! Never more suspect "your letters uninteresting." It gives me pain that you should imagine I estimate them at so low a rate. Need I again repeat the happiness they impart, or rather repeat my attempts to express that happiness? No. I will only intreat that you will not reckon their value to *me* at the price put on them by your own *humility*.

From my soul I thank you for the felicity your letter of this day has brought me. I cannot any longer refrain from making known my gratitude.

Shall I be so very impertinent as to complain of one omission? You have not informed me the state of your health, or whether the pains in your side are abated or not. But, perhaps I forgot to make the enquiry; if so, the apologies must be mine, and the pleasure of exercising forgiveness, yours.

I feel a peculiar pleasure in being the messenger of joy to my dear Sarah by informing her that she may banish her painful anticipations arising from Mrs. Harwood's late complaint, as through great mercy it has entirely left her, and her hearing is as quick as ever. Yes, my love, you may now talk as many secrets as you please. There is no longer that mighty obstacle in the way. I do not wonder at your pain, for surely it must be a most unpleasant thing to meet a *female* friend (especially after so long an absence) without being able to enjoy the pleasures of private intercourse. Oh, what an embargo both on mind and tongue!

I told you in my last that by the power of animal magnetism I had raised some hands. I have since tried, and not once failed

in the attempt. I have been, since I wrote you, studying the anatomy of the hand under Mr. Blount, and last Tuesday evening Mr. Blount and I raised both the hands of a Miss Olney—the most accomplished and agreeable female that I know in *Birmingham*. We kept one up nearly two hours, and found we had every finger at our command. Last night I did the same with Mrs. Harwood's and Miss Turner's, to their no small surprise. Yet, proficient as I am in the art of handraising, I confess I am not capable of applying my art to the removal of any complaint much deeper than the skin. I think I could remove a swelling or disperse a slight tumour. But to cure deafness or blindness, or to work miracles of any sort, I make no pretensions, nor am acquainted with any science to which I can annex such efficacy.

Perhaps you'll think Mr. Blount and me very conceited, when I tell you that we think ourselves better operators than many of those who have paid Holloway for learning. But I must cease to boast lest I should leave my magnetising powers behind me when I leave Birmingham next week to visit Alcester.

Alcester! A name dear to my heart! A place dear to my eyes! How this throbbing heart shall beat as it approaches to thee! Sacred be thy walls—walls which encircle the friend of my heart. "For her sake," these lips say, "let their inhabitants be blessed; let no evil come nigh their dwellings." Oh, how I rejoice in the approaches of the longed-for period when these eyes shall see and these arms embrace my earthly all! But, as you justly observe, pain mingles with all our joys. "Tell Miss Sarah," said Mr. Harwood a short time since, "that we shall all be there by one o'clock." "I'll tell her that *you* will be there by one o'clock, if you please," said I, "for I hope to be there at a much earlier hour." "What!" returned my friend, "will you leave us to find the way by ourselves? Have you not friendship enough to see us there in safety! Well! Go, if it will be more agreeable, but your absence will exclude pleasure from *me* all the way." He spoke—he spoke with affection—he almost spoke with tears. Could I help feeling? I must have been composed of adamant, if I had been insensible to the language of heartfelt affection, united with bodily infirmity. "I have done," I replied, "my time and attendance are at your service." Will my Sarah think that my respect for her should have conquered the pleadings of aged friendship? No, I hear her say, "Mr. Harwood is both my friend and yours. You did right to deny yourself to gratify him."

But I'll tell my Sarah what I hope to do. It surely will be by no means unfriendly to endeavour to get him in the chaise an hour or two the sooner, and, having seen him safe within three or four miles of Alcester, to obtain leave to announce his coming;

then put spurs to my horse, and fly to the presence of my charming correspondent.

What d'ye think? Will it be a rainy day next Wednesday? "Oh, Oh, no doubt of that," say you. Do you know, I almost wish it may, for then the same friendship in Mr. Harwood which now asks for my company will cheerfully dispense with it and say "Get out of the weather as fast as you can." I'll be bound such orders shall be quickly obeyed.

Believe me, with great respect and warm affection to be your own,

S. PEARCE.

* * * *

January 8th, 1791.

I am seated by a snug fire in a snug parlour in a snug house in St. Paul's Square, where I have spent above two-thirds of this day overlooking the papering of the sitting-room, which is now just completed.

Whose name should I first inscribe within these walls but yours, my Sarah? And, though I have not yet received an answer to my last, cannot forbid the impulse which bids me (from a fireside shortly to be your own) tell you with what pleasure I shall look forward to this day four weeks, when my own dear, dear Sarah shall grace *this habitation*.

Everything seems comfortable around. The fire burns so bright as tho' it meant to indulge me with a lively smile, whilst it hailed the approach of the day when it should give warmth and comfort to its longed-for Mistress.

But, ah, I am not made for solitude. I already wish the tedious days were past, and I was actually in the enjoyment of that which now I hope for. Were but my dear Sarah by my side, everything would look as comfortable again—the fire give more generous warmth and the taper a clearer light. Oh, you'd laugh at my saying how *comfortable* things are, were you but capable of taking a peep at my candlestick. It consists of an old rusty canister, its mouth stopt with paper, and in the centre of the paper a penny candle, for which I just now sent to a huckster's shop.

But I assure you everything seems to promise readiness for your reception a week earlier than you intend to honour Birmingham with your presence.

The upholsterer I almost made swear by the word of a Christian that he would have all his part ready in and up in three weeks. Crockery ware is already waiting for the signal to come. Papering has been done to-day, and the painting will be finished to-morrow. The furniture is to be here on Monday or Tuesday

next. *Crocks, Kettles, Heaters*, etc., are bespoke. Indeed, instead of asking you to procrastinate, I might (as to the convenience of it) request your society a week earlier—but I forbear.

How you would have enjoyed to have seen me this morning getting ready for the workmen! I have been these three weeks disappointed in a woman to clean the house. Had it not at least been dusted, it would have been imprudent to have it papered or painted. But nobody could I get, and so I rose early this morning and, with a broom of straw and by the help of a fire shovel, got the floors in tolerable order. But the house was damp, it wanted fires. This I thought would be a difficult job for me. So home I ran, sent Mrs. Potts's child's maid to the house, and I nursed the while. She having lighted fires in most of the rooms, I tended them, and I assure you kept them in much better order than we do when in your parlour.

Here I shall take my leave in full expectation of a letter by to-morrow's post, which I shall answer as soon as received. Thursday afternoon, 3 o'clock.

No letter yet! Why does not my dear Sarah indulge me? I won't complain. I know she would not be unkind. Soon I hope there will be no more occasion to lament her literary silence. A mode of communication much more speedy and infinitely more agreeable will supersede this anxious correspondence.

I am seated by the side of my snug fire again. I already feel this house a home, and cannot but flatter myself that when my Sarah sees it she will feel the same. . . . I have to go to Moseley to preach [in Mr. Harwood's own house, which he had had licensed for the purpose]. Hope to hear from you to-morrow at furthest. Adieu.

* * * *

Friday noon.

Returned from Moseley, I reassume the seat where I first began this letter, hoping that a few hours will convince me that you have not forgot how much joy a line from you affords to your poor Peter. We quite enjoyed the last evening. With glasses of generous Port, mixed with currant, we drank to the health of all friends at Alcester, and particularly of Miss S. Hopkins! "May she and . . . long live happy together!" Oh, with what ardour I said Amen and Amen!

I did hope to see you, and Alcester for your sake, next Wednesday. But I imagine I shall be detained in order to prepare for the reception of the servant, and to receive some furniture immediately wanted. However, it is possible that this may be completed by Tuesday evening. . . . I'm almost ashamed to send this scribble, written with so bad a pen and worse ink. I almost fear it will puzzle you to interpret it. But, bad

as it is, I commit it to your candour, having not time to copy it, as three Sermons are to be prepared for the Sabbath, though I fear you'll say it's a bad sample from *Paul's Square*.

'Tis Friday *evening*, and again I sit down disappointed. Since dinner I have been in the utmost impatience, enquiring again and again and again twice told, for a letter from you. But still my Sarah is dumb. Why so backward to gratify a heart proud of being deemed your own? But I have *one* consoling thought. Surely my last (written and sent on Monday) must have *miscarried*, and my friend is probably now as much blaming my negligence as I am lamenting her silence. However, I'll wait over to-morrow's post. I cannot think my letter (if received) will go longer unanswered, and, if then I do not hear from you, shall be assured of the miscarriage of the former, and despatch this to convince you the neglect lay not with me. I am just going to the House of God.

* * * *

Saturday evening, 7.

Never did I need more the supports of philosophy than when I enquired for a letter this afternoon, and was repeatedly answered "No." But never did my hands receive nor eyes peruse an epistle with so much delight as the dear messenger of joy which I have since received from you. How mine (written the 3rd of January) should not reach you till the 6th is a mystery; but my surprise is lost in joy, my friend, my Sarah! Conceive and accept the gratitude which cannot be expressed. Oh, were I at your writing-desk, I would embrace the quill employed to remove my anxieties and augment my delights.

* * * *

They were married on February 2nd, 1791, and their love kept deepening through the tense brief years, till Pearce's death in 1799. He had yearned to go to India to Carey, but all his brethren insisted that his advocacy of the Mission was indispensable at home. So he climbed his Mt. Moriah and remained. In 1817, however, his eldest son went thither in his father's place, and did a great day's work in Calcutta in the Mission Press. And five years later his daughter Anna followed her brother to Calcutta to be one of the pioneer teachers of Indian girls. There Carey's youngest son, Jonathan, wooed and wedded her, and my father, Jonathan Pearce Carey, was their second child.

S. PEARCE CAREY.