CHAPTER V.

THE LETTERS

MISS PHEBE SEAR,

My affectionate friend—I am glad you thought about it. Letters will make us happy. I'll write one every day if I can.

My book says butterflies used to be worms. Why don't they hatch out of eggs like chickens, with wings already fixed on?

Expectfully yours,

Miss Florence Amanda Janet Loring.
THE LETTERS

Miss Florence Amanda Janet Loring,

Dear Miss—I am writing to you because I wanted to tell you about my recent experiences. I had a dream last night about a magical garden. In this garden, there were flowers that changed color throughout the day. They started as soft pink in the morning, turned to vibrant yellow in the afternoon, and ended as deep purple at night. I felt very peaceful and happy in this dream.

I wanted to share this with you because I think it might be a way for us to bond more closely. Perhaps we could start a garden together, and I can teach you about different types of flowers and their colors. It would be wonderful to have a flower garden in our town where everyone could come and learn about the beauty of nature.

Please let me know your thoughts on this idea. I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

With love,

Miss Phoebe Sear.
sometime you will get the letters, so I will write more.

I have been learning some things about butterflies. I asked my aunt Sarah Smith who teaches school. She had tea with us. She says caterpillars are all rolled up in the dark before they get wings and turn into butterflies. So they don't get their paint in the sun. I guess the reason they don't hatch out of eggs is because they are not chickens. Trees have to hatch out of tree-seeds and chickens out of eggs and butterflies out of worms because you can't gather figs out of a thistle.

I am well. Hoping these few lines find you the same,

Your esteemed friend,

Miss Phebe Scar.
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Miss Florence Amanda Janet Loring.

My dear Miss—I hope you are well but I did not see you at the church nor at the Sunday school.

Weep not for me. If you get sick how can you go to our post office? Do not be sick.

Your esteemed friend,

Miss Phebe Scar.

Miss Phebe Scar,

My affectionate friend—I did not go to the Sunday school nor the church because my mother had a sick headache and I stayed with her to sop off her brow with a wet rag.

Why do people when they write letters be so polite and not the way we talk? If your father ever writes me a
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letter I shall be most happy to have it begin Miss Florence Amanda Janet Loring but when you write I wish it could be different. Please explain this to me.

Expectfully yours,
Miss Florence Amanda Janet Loring.

My darling Janet——
Your question is like something I have been thinking. We've been putting on our Sunday clothes in the letters. Let's write as we would talk if we were sitting on the grass near the spring with our feet bare and our dresses patched. Nobody sees the letters but just you and me and we may as well please ourselves and write the way we want to. So now you are not
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Miss Janet any more. You're the White Flower of Amity and I'm your Tall Red Poppy. This is not printed in a book nor a reading paper and we say things the way the wind blows—without being afraid, for I won't laugh at you and you won't laugh at me.

Just
Phoebe.

My pretty Phoebe—

You know that flower they call The Wild Sweet William? Every head of it is like a bunch of stars shining together. Your head is like a bunch of stars, your thick is so bright. So you are Sweet-Phoebe, but not Wild.

I guess it's a mistake about my father being an Iguanodon. My father knows a very great deal but not so much as
you. He knows why we ought to have a new teacher for the school and other Truss-Tees to see about The College. But he won't tell me. Fathers are so queer. If he knews, why not tell me when I ask him? Last night he told me about Berlin. That is away off but he won't tell about Mrs. Brown and Mr. Witt, who live so near. I like Mrs. Brown but I know we ought to have a different teacher next term, because My father says so.

Will you please tell me why Grandmothers have white hair? Also why they knit so many stockings?

Your wants-to-know-friend,

Janet.

Dear Lamp of Sugar—

The reason grandmothers have white
hair is because they are soon going to heaven where everything is white. They knit because it takes so many stitches to make a stocking and our mothers haven't so much time.

I have been trying to knit some socks for my father, to show me that I am not as bad as I thought I was, but I can't do it. Every stitch seems to be calling him name about not letting me see you. That kind of socks would feel like needles sticking in his feet. I will make him some slippers, instead. They can't hurt him clear through his socks, even if they do have sharp-pointed thoughts knit into them, so that'll be best. Even after they are all done I'm afraid I shall still be very bad around my heart. I don't know how I'm to get
good and Honor my father, until I
may see you. Then I could Honor
most everybody.

From Still-naughty
Phoebe.

My sweet-Phoebe (not wild)—

I dont spose we have to call our-
selves bad and naughty when we do all
we can to get right. We can make our-
selves do things and not do things but
we cant make ourselves feel different.

I wiped the dishes this morning.
Then mother gave me some yellow cal-
ico to make a dress for Ragged Lady.
I hate yellow dresses and dolls and
dishes and needles.

Why do I not love Ragged Lady?
She was a rag doll then and she is a
rag doll now. I loved her when you
helped me make her a cabbage-leaf hat with fire-flower trimming. That was a
day I have over again in my head nights
and nights before I go to sleep. Do you
remember about it? You came in the
morning with crullers in a clean cloth.
Your mother went to see a sick woman
and you could stay all day. We tried
to be sorry the woman was sick but we
were very very glad that you could stay
with me while your mother was gone to
see her. Mother made us thimble biscu-
its and pie in the lid of the coffee pot
and teakettle tea with brown sugar to
give it color and we had a tea party with
our dollies in the back yard. Then we
got smartweed and colostall and made
trains to our dresses and we were great
ladies calling on my mother. We only
knew about one very very great lady, so we took turns being Queen Victory and we always got some water and put on our cheeks to cry tears for us whenever it came our turn because she weeped to wear a crown.

We laughed at the biscuits and the tea and the train and the calls and Oh everything was very funny that day. Mother said we laughed so much because our hearts were happy.

When shall we laugh like that again?

From Janet who does not feel at all like laughing.

White Flower of Amity—
The reason you do not love Ragged Lady is because I am not there to help you. When we have our arms round

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each other, love comes easy. We love
dolls and fathers and everything, then.
It's the same with laughig.

Whenever laughing comes easy well
laugh again, Honey-Bee. It doesn't
snow the year round; it just snows in
the winter. Our fathers have made us
a winter in the summer but may be
they'll let us have summer in the winter.
But I don't know. My father says I
must NEVER speak to you again. He
says never hard, hard, like stamping
your foot when you mean a thing very
much. So I don't know when we'll
have any more fun or feel like laugh-
ing.

Are your eyes red?
Mine are.

From Phebe who feels like crying.
JANET AND HER DEAR THERE

Oh you darling—
Do you feel like crying?
I do, too.

Mother knows it and she is kind. She lets me have seeds to plant a little garden, though it is so late in the year for gardens. She does not care for Tuck-Me-Nots but she lets me plant a whole row of them. I wanted them very much before, but now I just drop the seeds tosey-turvy and cover them as may happen, like tumble-weeds rolling about in the wind not looking to see where they are going. I wonder why I do not shut my eyes sometimes and play I see the lovely pinkish-reddish blossoms that will by-and-by be cuddled close to their stems with leaves hanging over, just like birds in a tree at night. Last year
I seemed to feel the queer little soft things in my hands weeks before there were any buds on them. Now everything is different. I can't care for them before they come, but may be I will after. I shall have sunflowers too and Marygolds and may be Hollyhocks. I am trying to be glad for that would please my mother. I also study Webster's Elementary Spelling-book a good deal, because it will please my mother and you and me when I can spell better.

Why don't clouds fall right down? What makes them stay up? I didn't think of this just to-day. I've been wondering about it a long time whenever there seemed to be rain coming. I don't know why the water doesn't all
JANET AND HER DEAR PHEBE

got to the ground at once instead of
pitty-pattyng along a drop at a
time.

From your same little

Janet.

Morning-Glory Janet—
The clouds could stay up longer if
they wanted to. They could hang on
the upper edge of the world and wait
but they are sorry when things are go-
ing to die of dryness. That makes
them cry toes and the tears are rain.

I havent any garden, but mother is
teaching me to sew. You know I'd
rather read but when I can do it well
I mean to make a pincushion for you,
so, thinking of you keeps me trying to
learn, but it will take a long time. I
don't study Webster's Elementary
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Spelling-book, but reading helps with spelling.

How strange that I could not go to church last Sunday. I thought I should see you there, but I could not go. I had a cold and an earache.

I am always glad when bedtime comes. I can cry all I feel like in the night and nobody will say, "What's the matter, Phoebe? Does your ear ache again?"

Farewell until to-morrow.

Phoebe.

My darling Sweet-Phoebe—

I hope your ear does not ache any more. Earache is most as terrible as war and not seeing the One We Love Best. My dearest I hope you may never have any more such aches as that.
JANET AND HER DEAR PHERE

I wish and hope it from the top of my head to the ends of my toes.

What do you spose makes me keep on being me? I used to be a little baby, I know it because mother has the pick-cher. Its an ambertape and if it the light doesn’t fall just as it should the pick-cher isn’t there, then, when you turn it a little, there’s a teny queer baldheaded little thing with a long dress hanging over mothers arm. Yet its I, Janet, mother says. I grow older and taller and my hair gets longer and I learn things, yet I am always Janet, always myself. Mother says she has been herself ever since she can remember but she doesn’t know why. She said I’d better not ask father or he’d want to call in Doctor Step. Isn’t that strange!
THE LETTERS

Why should he want me to have a doctor when I am perfectly well, all but the part of me that wants Phebe! A doctor could not cure that. Perhaps wanting to call a doctor would be part of my father's staying himself; so he can't help it. But what's the reason father must be himself and mother must be herself and I must be myself? I'm most very glad you can't be anybody but Phebe. There isn't any one nicer you could turn into if you were a fairy and could be whoever you liked.

Your full of love

Janet.

White Flower of Amity—

There's a little baby looking out of the eyes of every big man or woman I ever saw. Everybody used to be little,
and the big is just grown on outside of
the little, like bark round a tree. That's
the reason we always stay us. We are
us inside, with more bark growing on
all the time.

That's the reason its silly to get mad
with big folks for doing things to us.
We don't get mad with babies, and the
big ones are babies, too, only they have
thicker bark and more branches.

That was the right kind of a ques-
tion. I liked it. But I could turn into
A Good Lady, like Mrs. Marshall, who
raised two orphans, or A Poet-Lady,
like my Aunt Fanny. I think I should
rather be the Poet-Lady but my head
wasn't born the right shape for it and
I am not a fairy, so I can't.

Mother says the girls who write
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rhymes when they are little, usually wash dishes when they grow big. She says its well, too, because working is better than dreaming, but I don't think so. I hate dishes. I wish we could eat off clean stones by the side of a river and afterwards throw them into the water. I wish we could dream and dream forever and forget that there are dishes and dirt and thimbles and stitches.

Your own
Thiebe.

My Tall Red Poppy—

I am not sure after all that we are always ourselves. Who are we at night when we are dreaming? Was it really I, Janet, who stole a blue ribbon last night and flew up in the air with it.

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flew without wings? I'm not that kind of a Janet when I'm awake.

Why do we need to sleep, anyway? I fight against going to sleep. I always did since I can remember about it. I seem to be getting lost from myself when I'm going to sleep and I try to keep awake thinking of you. I look at you with my other eyes the ones that see at night or when they're shut. I see the red of your lips just as plain and the white of your teeth and the brown of your hair and the shine of your eyes that isn't a color but a kind of glori-ness.

In the morning I remember that I saw you and then lost you but I can't be sure whether you faded or melted or went away slowly or stopped being
there all at once or whether it was myself that got dim and went out like a wick without oil.

I do not like going to sleep.

Why must we sleep?

Yours all day every day.

Janet.

My little white-and-pink darling—

We go to sleep to give our baby-part a chance to play.

Babies don't know any better than to take ribbons.

I s'pose you just played you were flying. We can play anything we want to, and the dream-baby doesn't know the difference between playing things and doing them.

Don't try to stay awake, don't, don't, little white flower. If you do, a little
rinkel will come before long in your snowy brow. Go to sleep and then don't think you have to be sorry the next day for what your baby-part did in the night while your bark and branches were resting.

My ears do not ask for anything now only the sound of your voice. I think I would walk all day just to hear you snore at night, I am so sure you are you, awake or asleep.

Your lonely Phoebe.

My Sweet Phoebe—

What do you think we shall be when we are winnin'? Perhaps I shall be a merchant and have a great many blue dresses and a banquet with you for my Honored Guest.
THE LETTERS

Are you learning to sew? Can you wear a thimble? Mine won't stay on but without it I prick my fingers.

I made a doll to-day of a big reddish. I snipped the leaves into strings for hair. I play she is a red lady but her eyes are white so are her teeth where I scraped the red off with a knife. She is dressed in sunflower leaves. She is a red lady in a green dress. I send her pickcher, for if I send her your folks might ask where she came from and learn our secret.

From your dear
Janet.

My pretty little flower-blossom—

I am not learning to sew nor to knit nor to make a garden. I am not a useful girl. I read and read and read.

I
JANET AND HER DEAR PHEBE

try to do other things. I try a little every day but it all looks so hard and reading is so easy.

I got a book out of Amity Public Library yesterday. It is about the Spanish people coming to America a long time ago.

The book is so big I could hardly carry it home. Father says there are no books in Amity Public Library only some that nobody wanted for themselves so they gave them to the Public. But I like to read this one. I liked the Temperance Tales and a book of stories that had Nanticoke in it. Any book is better than none. I am very glad there is a library in our town. I only like books and answering questions and you. You best. I suppose
THE LETTERS

when I am a woman I shall be the keeper of Amity Public Library. By that time there'll be more books and I'll read them all. I'd like to help make books but I'm sure I couldn't. I'd never be able to get the covers on straight.

I surely will learn to sew enough to make you a pincushion, but no more.

I think when you grow big and your hair gets all white enough you will be a dear lovely grandmother. I guess that's what you will be—a grandmother. I don't think you'll be a merchant, for you don't like black and there's always so much black cloth in a store.

Good day, My pretty love,

From Phoebe.
Dear beautiful Moon-star—

I'm so glad about the books. Then you won't be crying for me too much.

When we cry and cry and cry, why do we have eyes left? Are not the tears made of our eyes?

I'm sure you are right. You will be The Book-Keeper and I'll be a grandmother. You will know a great deal and you will teach some of it to my dear little girls and boys. And I'll always have plenty of donuts and gingerbread for you when you come. Your father will not say you must not speak to me then, I'll be such a very nice kind grandmother and he'll want some of the donuts.

I wish we could hurry and get big. It is so long to wait till we are too old.
THE LETTERS

to be forbidden before we may sit bare-foot together by the spring.

There is going to be a Fourth of July before long. Mother is making a flag. It makes something inside of me go thump-thump like a big hammer when I think about the Fourth of July, for may be you will be taken somewhere and may be I will be taken somewhere and may be it will be the same place and may be there will be so many people that no one will mind if I just squeeze your hand a little. And I might whisper Beautiful Tall Poppy close to your ear but you couldn't answer me for you are not allowed to speak to me, but it was your father, not mine, said I mustn't speak to you. If our own fathers say things we do what they say,
JANET AND HER DEAR PHEBE

but other peoples fathers dont count, not very much. He surely speak to you if I get a chance. I just must. I hope its right but Ile do it anyway. We are too little to be good all the time when being good is such hard work.

Your naughty
Janet.

Little white kitten—

Has it dot its little claws out? You think you can be naughty, Janet, but you can’t. You’re just like my little white kitten. She sticks out her claws and pretends she’s going to hurt some one, but she never does.

Tears are not made of eyes. If they, were I should not have any eyes left, Ive cried so much, though, for a few
days, now, I have kept from crying so I could see to read.

No, tears are sorrowness turned to water and dropped out so we won't hurt quite so bad.

Oh, Janet, they used to do dreadful, dreadful things to people in the days I've reading about. There were some folks living in The Western Hemisphere, up and down, Central and South America and islands, and the ones that came sailing on the sea pretended that they owned all the land they could find. Then they just took everything they wanted and spoiled lots of things they didn't want, and killed people and hurt people—Oh, Janet, I'm glad we live now. Other people are most all happy. It's just you and I
JANET AND HER DEAR PHEBE

who are unhappy, and we'll be brave
and stand it, won't we?

Fifty kisses for you, my Bessedy. I
love you when I am awake. I go to
sleep hoping I shall dream of you, but
then I hardly ever do.

Your own
Phebe.

Phebe, my best hero—

You make me feel ashamed to be bad
and a coward. But I can't help it, not
yet. When I think of days and days,
snow coming then warm rain and flow-
ers and grass, once, twice, Oh I don't
know how many times, how long, and
no Phebe, I am afraid, afraid. I could
bear it a little while but not so long.

I saw you go down the hill yesterday.

I was glad there would be a letter
but my neck had a lump in it because
I couldn't go, too. Then, after you had filled the pan, I saw you go and go and go, up the hill and into the gate.

Then I went down the path. I didn't run.

I saw the mark of your foot in the mud, your dear little bare foot. It made me cry. I took the dirt with the mark in it and made a little mud foot and brought it home. Its dry now, in my patch-box, covered with quilt-pieces and the yellow doll-dress, part made. No one will see it. I don't want any one to see it but I shall kiss it sometimes. I guess its my little leather idle.

There isn't any question to-day. I don't care about things. I don't want to know anything. I just want you. Oh Phebe, I can't forget you a bit. I wish
JANET AND HER DEAR PHEBE

I could. When I think about something else you're under it all, ready to pop up in a minute. I can shut my eyes any time and there you stand. Oh! Phebe, I want you, I want you, I want you.

Your own lonely
Janet.

There was no answer to this letter for several days. Then Mr. Loring brought from the post office an envelope addressed:

MISS JANET LORING,
Care of Mr. J. J. Loring,
Amity,
Iowa.

Mr. Loring opened the letter and read it aloud—
THE LETTERS

Miss Janet Loring—
I have discovered a letter written by you to my daughter Plebe. I have directed her not to reply. She shall write no letters to you and I desire you to discontinue writing to her.

H. Y. Sear.

"I never saw such nosing about in a pigeon's nest for a buzzard's egg," Mr. Loring said with a curl of his lip and a flash of his eye.

"What do you mean about eggs?" Janet asked. Her voice was trembling.

Mr. Loring lifted her upon his knee and began to tell her that there would be a grand Fourth of July celebration in a few days. She could not get an answer to any question she asked about Plebe or Mr. Sear.

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