

Mary Antin  
GOULD FARM  
GREAT BARRINGTON, MASS.

March 11, 1925.

Dear Mary Austin, —

It is almost like talking to myself to write to you, because I have so long taken you into my utmost confidence, referring my great problems to you, inwardly; especially my professional problems on their spiritual side —

I am going to ask you present what is the matter with me, and how to remedy what's wrong, actually address myself to you by word, this time, instead of mentally asking myself what would Mary Austin think! I will omit the usual apologies for adding to your burden of unsolicited correspondence — don't I know what it's like! — I will only apologize for not using a typewriter. There's a reason!

I don't know the bulk of your writings, but I know you extremely well from the little I have read. I first knew you for a sister spirit (I know you will not repudiate the claim!) through your stories of the desert, and your interpretations of the Indian made me kiss your hands in loving gratitude. Stray articles of yours on Jesus, on the spiritual roots of artistic technique, placed you high up in the rank of my personal teachers. This last stage occurred when I had come to live, as I am now living far from any library, or I would have hunted out everything you have written on these subjects. I shall do so the next time I am in a library, unless in the meantime you will refer me to your best things,

which I can order from a bookseller.  
 The present personal enquiry has to  
 go just the same. I am impatient  
 for the application of your wisdom  
 to my individual problem.

I hope you have read "The  
 Promised Land," which would be my  
 introduction to you. I am going on  
 from that, as if I knew you had  
 read it. That's a good piece of work,  
 with all its obvious faults, and  
 the best thing about it, in my opinion,  
 is that it says that the person who  
 did it ought to be able to do really  
 fine things, after sufficient maturation  
 and training. The only things I have  
 done are: an amazing mixture of  
 naivete and shabby published  
 under the title of "They Who Knock at Our Gates,"  
 ("they" being the immigrants)  
 and a few short stories, three of which  
 were published (Atlantic Monthly), stories of

which I was once enamored, which I still think well of, and which, like my autobiography, promise better things to come.

The better things haven't come. Nothing has come since 1914. The little I have published came out between 1911 and 1914. In 1914, the War. My husband, a man of great genius in scientific research, a palaeontologist of international reputation, who had initiated me into the meaning of love and flawless marriage, suffered the peculiar catastrophe of German-Americans, he being born on American soil of the German spirit. Because I was spoiled and undisciplined I didn't know how to meet my catastrophe. The story of how my beautiful home was broken

up, in spite of years of spiritancy -  
 clumsy though absolutely sincere efforts  
 on my part to save us all, is well  
 indicated by an anonymous article,  
 "Wives of German Americans," which  
 appeared in the Atlantic during the  
 interval before 1917(?) an article which  
 I might have written of my own  
 household.

In 1913 I found myself, through  
 a series of curious accidents, launched  
 on a lecturer's career. To my amaze-  
 ment, for everything, I thought, was against  
 it, I had a great success. Driven  
 by a sense of civic duty, I kept on,  
 although I hated the life and dis-  
 counted the value of my efforts;  
 and my husband followed my public  
 career with the same affectionate  
 pride - a pride almost paternal in  
 its intensity - just as he had watched

my literary beginnings. It was he 6  
 who collected volumes of newspaper  
 clippings about me and my doings.  
 Then, in 1914, my lover-husband  
 turned into a dreadful hostile  
 stranger who terrorized the household  
 and scandalized the community (no, I  
 am not exaggerating; these are matters  
 of history) I suffered, through my failure  
 to adjust myself, a nervous break-down.  
 Now commenced my real education,  
 through the discipline of mind and  
 heart in nine years of nervous  
 derangement. I kept on with  
 my lecture work, intensively till about  
 1916, sporadically for some time after  
 that, - during 1917-18 under war-time  
 organizations. When I wasn't lecturing  
 I was under treatment by an  
 assortment of neurologists. I wasn't

writing at all, not trying to. It wasn't till the summer of 1920 that I made the terrifying discovery that the reason I wasn't writing was not, as I had supposed, because I was fully engaged otherwise — lecturing, organizing and caring for three separate families broken and mutilated by the war, and always, always watching over my only child, a very gifted girl; studying and improvising to protect her from the shocks of the poor transfigured father and the disrupted home life. The reason I wasn't writing, I hardly discovered, was because I had lost the power to write.

A psychoneurosis, of course. My education continued, in the shells of sanitariums, at the hands of doctors

of various schools of psychotherapy. At length, at the end of 1923, when I had been beaten to a pulp spiritually, I abandoned the doctors and entered on the life of prayer.

Immediately I was lifted up out of the pit. The miracle took place within a few days after my coming to Gold Farm (which is now my home), where for twelve years Dr. and Mrs. Gould have been reclaiming broken lives by the power of love and prayer. Their work has won the admiration of the leading psychotherapists, who send to Gold Farm all the cases that baffle their science; and Gold Farm takes them in as fast as room can be found for them. The technique of the Gold Farm "cures";



the simplicity-in-profundity of  
Dr. Gould's processes - his original  
adaptations and unqualified applications  
of the teachings of Jesus, his amazing  
versatility, his challenging revolutionary  
economics - all this has become  
a profound study to me; and the  
burden has been laid on me, if I  
am not mistaken, to interpret  
the Goulds to the world, or to attract  
to Gould Farm a worthy interpreter,  
someone like Mary Austin.

Indeed I have thought of you  
in this connection more than once,  
you with your spiritual insight  
and your literary ease. But this  
letter is not to invite you, unless  
the little I have revealed of Gould  
Farm in itself invites you. I have  
set myself the task of challenging the  
attention of such as you, in a preliminary

account of the farm, which I had <sup>10</sup>  
 expected to produce about this time.  
 A year after I came here - last Novemb  
 to be exact. - I suddenly felt the  
 stirring of the writing part of me.  
 All the year I had been completely  
 contented, profoundly at peace, serving  
 my apprenticeship in the humble  
 service of love, after the Guild  
 pattern, in kitchen and pantry  
 and chamber - in whatever manual  
 work I could lay my hand on,  
 while at the same time assisting  
 with the direct handling of patients,  
 for which my own experience of in-  
 validation and the <sup>resultant</sup> practical training  
 in psychotherapy had somewhat fitted  
 me. Working with or initiating patients  
 - I prospered in everything. And I  
 became skilled in extemporizing hymns  
 of thanksgiving for the absurdities

increase of power I felt in every direction - physical, mental, spiritual. It was a genuine rebirth I had undergone, and He who had so miraculously healed me continued to instruct me. Vita after visits of the spiritual life opened to me, through my daily labor and study and reflection. Then, all in that quietness which I had learned to regard as the best guarantee of authenticity, came the prompting to write. It was simply that a door had opened and I stood in another room. Dr. Gould had the same prompting concerning my writers work at the same time. It is a frequent "coincidence" between us two, that the same inspiration hits us at the same moment. The Goulds knew - everybody knew - that I was carrying on

a minute study of the life or the  
 from all the time. My notebook is  
 a pet family joke. And now everything  
 was done to enable me to organize  
 my day in such a manner that  
 I should ~~be~~ might be at my writing.

There are cumulative indica-  
 tions that the next development  
 of the Goulds' work must be in the  
 directions of duplication — doing like-  
 wise elsewhere — and public in-  
 terpretation. No one has come so far  
 to interpret except myself. If I am  
 sure of one gift that I have it is  
 a trick for showing the <sup>hidden</sup> <sup>obvious</sup> meaning of  
 things. Oral interpretation I am doing  
 all the time. I now feel the  
 urgency of literary interpretation —  
 some preliminary articles, stories; by  
 and by, if I grow sufficiently in  
 power, a life of H. J. Gould.

But I am having extraordinary difficulty. These all other forms of ability have vanished, the writing faculty is still crippled. Of course that is, in a sense, the critical point: can I say I am restored if I cannot write with at least my old ease? I always was a slow, fumbling artisan with the pen, my output always extremely slim. I never had any technical training. I still doubt if such training is my primary need. I always knew that I wasn't a writer, but a channel for written words. In the old days I didn't know enough to ask the Great Teacher's help. Now I pray constantly to be used as a channel of good tidings, a transmitter of beauty. I take my literary difficulties

daily to my Father; as frequently, indeed, 'as I become aware of them. I pray in particular to have my day's work laid out for me, to be shown if I am in error as to the call to write. I am entirely free from anxiety about the outcome — that I ought to put down in capitals, for it marks the difference between my present state and my past. My temptation is to take the line that I was mistaken as to the vocation — that it is not yet time to be writing. I do love the direct work with the patients, I love the healthy brook of the kitchen, I love meeting the daily emergencies, the frequent call to a renewal of physical strength and mental elasticity without taking rest — I love and rejoice in the full

impact of the <sup>wholesome</sup> strenuousness of this <sup>is</sup> life. And I have developed a good deal of skill in it — I was counted on, while I was involved in the machinery, as I call it, as one of the principal workers. The solitary task of writing, in its present unfruitful state, does not yield any such satisfaction as the other. You see my temptation: there is no question of my usefulness in the more active work, while the other is one continued wrestling with ghostly shapes, in the expectation of some future usefulness. But I am held to my solitary task with its deferred satisfactions. Held. My prayers bring no indication that my "call" was an illusion, and I continue free from anxiety. I laugh at myself a good deal — a good sign, isn't it?

and I continue to let people think 16  
 that I am about to bring forth the  
 word that will be as a beacon  
 lighting enquirers to Gould Farm,  
 the materialization of the teachings  
 of Jesus in the life of a community.

What can you tell me, dear  
 Anstus? An instinct which I dare  
 not disregard warns me not to  
 reveal my difficulties to anyone here,  
 not even to Brother Will (that's Will Gould)  
 Brother Will must come in by and  
 by; not at this stage. You can help.  
 What must I tell you about my  
 daily life, about my habits of praying  
 and of writing, to enable you to make  
 a diagnosis? I suppose that my  
 primary failure is in the realm of  
 prayer. What can you say?



If you are a reasonable journey "away from here, perhaps you will come after all, to see Gould Farm for yourself. This, indeed, may turn out to be another instance of God moving in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. He gave me the writing faculty, I mislaid it, He prompts me to ask help of a finer artist than myself — and my task is accomplished in my finding an interpreter equal to the thing to be interpreted! Perhaps I should make it clear that while my conviction of the need of interpretation has been constant, the sense of myself as the interpreter has been less constant. Always there is the thought of the alternative, that not by my mouth but by the mouth of a messenger whom I should bring here shall the meaning of Gould Farm be

published. That doubt as to my importance is characteristic, however. I always saw people who could do what I was doing far better, even when the public put me at the head of the column. I always knew that my greatest successes were accidental; that I never achieved much by my conscious efforts, that things sometimes got themselves done through me. (Once, while facing an immense audience I couldn't keep back the cry, "Why am I chosen, instead of any of these?")

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I have read over what I have written. It is quite legible, so I don't hesitate to send it. It occurs to me, however, to write to your publisher first, to locate you, before sending on this weighty document. One isn't always stationed at the address given in Who's Who!

Two other points I want to touch on. (1) I am not a Christian — not in any technical sense of adherence to orthodox Christian dogma; not in any popular sense. One friend defines me as "a Christian and a Jew", making a distinction from the popular rather distasteful conception of a "Hebrew-Christian". I don't care what I am called, but I want to be sure I don't mislead anyone.

(2) Gould Farm is not the only subject that stirs my literary faculty. Old literary projects, of such vitality that they have survived the years of the valley of the shadow are now revivifying. My stones that I didn't write, a novel! — or is it a play?! — on the theme of an unwelcome apotheosis. Yes, plays. I have to write plays. There is hidden in me

the form of more than one 2  
 stirring photodrama - one on the  
 life of John Woolman! And poems.  
 Why is it I don't make poems? I  
think poems enough.

You see: I don't seem to  
 be dead. Will you help me learn  
 how to be more effectively alive?

Your disciple from afar,  
 Davy Jones

N. In the first page, second paragraph, *present* should read *presently*. The question mark on p. 97 was perhaps added later. On p. 102 *novemb* should read *november*.