



Letter to Mary Johnson of Worthington, Ohio from  
Leander Holmes of Fremont House, Chicago, Illinois,  
1/6/1847

Subject: Prospective suitor, misunderstanding – he heard she was to be married, she thought he was courting another girl

[Handwritten, script, writer ran out of space and began to write vertically on last page]

Fremont House, Chicago, Jan. the 6th 1847

Miss Johnson

Just having returned from Wisconsin I received yours of the 9th ult. [ultima, ie. Dec. 9th] and after perusing it carefully as requested, and not withstanding your opinion to the contrary yet I find from many remarks then made that I shall in justice to both of us reply. I hope that writing per se will do no harm, but I trust that what I may say will have the effect of correcting some errors & presenting an apology or explanation with regard to a matter which you are authorvised [*sic*] in presuming I should have been more careful in divulging. If I had been aware as I am now of the proximity of those renowned personages for your sake, I should have been more careful. As to the anxiety any call may have or will produce in a certain quarter tis really amusing. If you knew all you would laugh. In a few words I will explain why & how I told Miss M\_\_\_\_\_ [blank] that I had been at your house & seen you. In conversation with her in Marion she became aware I had passed through W [Worthington] & in answer to her many interrogations as to those I saw there you were one of them. So it was told her in replying to a question as to whether I had seen you. At the time I was glad she asked the question & answered it with some feeling of pride or exultation, arising from the conviction I had that she would have spared no little pains in preventing what you seem to think the fates decreed.

You appear to be under the impression that (from my last Note) I do entertain the idea that you are a "Dissembler" or did not answer my first Note as clearly as it should have been done. I may have written my last in such a style as warrants you in forming the above opinion. But I can assure you that it is a mistake. That I never entertained such an idea, Though my language may convey it, The reasons which you most humbly assigned unto him whom you call your "Confessor" for not being more explicit, are the very reasons that that "Confessor" presumed did & would exist before he wrote a line. He was satisfied that you nor no Lady would be willing to make a decision of the Kind that you presume was called for under the circumstances. Neither did I expect or presume but that the whole matter as far as

it affected either of us, would be left open untill you knew how to Decide or untill circumstances should seem favorable. The whole matter was simply this, I desired the privilege to become acquainted with you & I also wished that my Note should be returned providing your engagements were such as would prevent you from encouraging me in that for which you would observe was the principle ulterior object I had in view. The return of that note convinced me that you might be engaged to someone, or that, if even such was not the case, I need not hope to attain my object. I find by your last note that my first opinion was incorrect. (as to the Note) In your Note accompanying mine you kindly granted me all I expected and had a right to hope for, the privilege of becoming an acquaintance. My own fears led me to form incorrect ideas, hence misconstrue what at the time you ment [*sic*]. The motive you had in returning it and the carrying it into effect was, Proper. [*sic*] What caused me to come to the opinion I did was perhaps in that, which I heard soon after writing - viz. That you were soon to be married, wherefore the misinterpretation in my last, and that misconstruction & misunderstanding must be attributed to a like cause & not as you suppose was designed & gotten up for effect. You Pardon it: and thereby add I was unknown & etc. So I in like manner & with all kindness of heart, Pardon the accusation, upon precisely the same grounds, that I was unknown.

The names you mention for "considering in circumstances against" are good reasons, so long as they exist. That, I construed differently from what you designed. But was laboring under the "delusion" since if all those reasons with respect to myself. I think I deserve credit for being but, mistaken. I cannot find in me an accusing conscience for doing that I knew not to be right.

As to how I should understand the remark "Now Sir Confessor," as applied to me, I hardly know. Yet have concluded that you used it with reference to the nature of your communication. This conclusion is based upon the reputation you have & which you try to present of Goodness & kindness of heart.

You may rely upon me yet, as to the safe keeping of anything you have, or may say. I shall endeavor to read & Digest you letter arright. [*sic*] You ajoin [*sic*] me that so far you have not had cause to be offended. If it should be it would be unwittingly done. You say as to a correspondence you think it had better not be continued, because it may lead to difficulty. I shall not attempt to insist or argue the question further, then. I cannot perceive the necessity or the danger of any difficulty. Tis my opinion that circumstances have caused us to misunderstand each other heretofore, more or less. I cannot suppose but that we may hereafter be free of that difficulty. In one place you say, you are willing to become acquainted. In another, you say in reference to myself, that I was & are unknown each other; with the understanding that acquaintance shall be no more than friendship, unless we agreed in changing its character. You say in your last, that you are yet free.

That you are not Bound by a promise. Tis what I did not expect to hear: your (marriage) from what I heard, I supposed would take place this winter. Knowing this, the former, I shall not doubt but that the determination you may come to in this respect shall have the sanction of a judgment made up before reflection. Whether a thought for me is to have its influence, I leave with you to determine when you know how to do so & circumstances prove favorable. Hoping that when I return I may have the pleasure

of seeing and conversing with you. With the assurance that a letter from you, whenever you will write shall be gratefully received.

Yours truly

Leander Holmes

{ Mary }

N.B.

Presume when this is compared with my former, there may be an apparent contradiction. But when we reflect that Ideas & opinions have considerable to do with one's feelings & actions. All may be accounted for & easily reconciled in accordance with honesty of intention & purity of motive. I write carelessly with no previous reflection & never keep a copy.

Far be it from me Miss Johnson to insist on that which may be disagreeable or unpleasant to you. I have written in order to make some explanation which I believe to be necessary to enable you to form a correct opinion as to myself or rather as to what I have written. I trust that what you may have observed in my last Note which is exceptionable [*sic*] will be attributed to the proper cause. The Delusions I was under in reference to your object in returning my note & saying circumstances were against. Where combined with what I heard as to your intentions I acknowledge I was misled. As above stated I was aware of the position you occupied. The delicacy of the subject (as you understood it) and I myself being a Stranger. If I had conversed with you when I saw you all would have been understood. But then I was too delicate to mention it save to your self. I never had seen your mother & your Father I had seen but a few times, and above all you were their daughter. Therefore you will excuse my timidity. I shall leave here in about 4 weeks. If you should get this in time to reply. Please do so if it is agreeable.

L.H.

If I should not hear from you will Pardon the offence of me calling again. We have fine sleighing here now, Not had very cold weather.