

Monsieur

Diary
January, 1804
Norristown,
Pennsylvania

Today our neighbor at Mill Grove paid us a welcome call. Belatedly, I add. Had not my father met him Monday hunting in our woods, would he have come at all?

I sent a servant to the barns to summon Father. We waited in the parlor, I sewing a shirt for little Will. With open curiosity *monsieur* surveyed the room, moved closer to inspect my work, claimed he found my stitchery *très délicat*.

Bold of him, I thought.

We spoke in both our languages as etiquette required; it was queer to note his preference for the Quaker *thou*. His chestnut hair falls well below his shoulder, and he is quite the dandy.

© 2020 Rose Metal Press

September, 1804
Fatland Ford,
Norristown,
Pennsylvania

Dearest Cousin Euphemia,

Since Mother took ill I am preoccupied with the children, helping Ann with penmanship and Sarah with her sums—leaving little time for riding or the garden.

Mother pines for Derbyshire, but Father is plainly fond of his new estate. He's changed the name from Vaux Hill to Fatland Ford. Perhaps he hopes to stimulate the harvest?

A neighbor, Mr. Audubon, has befriended us of late, here from France to avoid conscription in Napoleon's war. He lives on the farm his father bought some years ago when Saint-Domingue slave revolts threatened his plantation.

La Forest, I call our good *monsieur*, from his native *La Forêt*. Some afternoons we seek the birds he likes to draw. As to how he pronounces my name, you may not be surprised to learn I now prefer it uttered by the French.

Light

There,

on the limb of that red-leaved tree...

you have taught me to see
not only the cardinal

but light itself
and the wind in it.

Now as I move through Father's fields
the wheat divides

weighs against my thighs
like water in a creek

like a hand might
if it brushed me

unintentionally.