

**THE OWL CREEK  
LETTERS, AND OTHER  
CORRESPONDENCE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649207046

The Owl Creek letters, and other correspondence by William Cowper Prime

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**WILLIAM COWPER PRIME**

**THE OWL CREEK  
LETTERS, AND OTHER  
CORRESPONDENCE**



THE  
OWL CREEK LETTERS,

AND

OTHER CORRESPONDENCE.

BY W.

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NEW YORK:  
PUBLISHED BY BAKER & SCRIBNER,  
145 NASSAU STREET AND 36 PARK ROW.

1848.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
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DAVIS

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S. W. B E N E D I C T, Printer,  
16 Spruce Street.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

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MY DEAR L—— :

These letters, which were commenced without any idea that they would be continued beyond the month in which the first one was written, have at length become a long series, and are now gathered between covers for your benefit, whose they have been in their origin and continuation.

And you will permit me, in laying a copy of them on your table, to say again and yet again, that it shall always be, as it has always been, my duty as well as my happiness, to contribute in every method in my power to your gratification, however slight my ability may be.

These letters which have met your eye regularly, as they have from time to time appeared in the *Journal of Commerce*, are no elaborate paintings. They profess to be entirely the contrary. Many of them, in fact the larger portion, were written under circumstances that rendered it impossible to refine a sketch or shade an outline. With folio resting on

a gnarled branch of the fallen tree on the river bank, or on the unsteady deck of the Phantom, or on my knee in a rail-car, by the sunlight, by the twilight, by the fitful glare of the pine knots on the cabin table; at morning, evening, and midnight, from every place, every situation; these sketches have been sent without revision, without even a second reading after being once written, and while they lack the polish which a careful elaboration might have given them, they will be more valuable to you as the unschooled, unwhipt fancies, and the matter-of-fact experiences of your friend.

They were sent originally to be read by the denizens of our great city, and thus published in the columns of a commercial paper. It may be supposed that they contain much that would scarcely interest such readers; and I may have failed to attract their attention to my thoughts in my many roving. Yet I have never hesitated in overstepping the ordinary line of demarkation, nor did I ever fear that allusions to the deeper feelings, the finer sensibilities, the holier affections of the heart, would fail to meet a welcome in any soul which has been *thoughtful* while it has lived. On the contrary, I have found none so ready to sit and talk with me as I most love to talk in the more serious hours of

my day, as are those very persons who are at other times occupied with the weary duties of business-life.

That heart was originally callous and has not been made so by contact with the world, which refuses to grow glad when the springs of youth gush forth again. Believe me, there are very few persons who can look at the days of youth in any other light than as a holy memory. To you, to them, to me, the past is a memory of vigils on earth, by the wreck of many earthly hopes, the grave of many earthly loves. A memory of green fields we once walked through, and pure springs we once drank of, such fields as we may never walk through again, such springs as we may never kneel beside again, until the voices that died away here break once more melodiously on our ears, and we find rest in the green fields by the still waters of the better land.

I need not point you to the refuge from such a saddening memory. When visions of faded fancies, of eyes that are dim, and forms that are dust, thus haunt you, when songs long hushed fall faintly on your ears as echoes from the blue arch of heaven mingling somewhat of its sounds with their own remembered tones, you will go as I have gone, out into the starlight, and bowing reverently awhile, lift