

Letter of Helen Temple Cooke to Mr. Marcellus E. Wheeler, dated May 17, 1904

Addressed to: Mr. M. E. Wheeler, Pleasant Street, Rutland, Vermont

Dana Hall, Wellesley, Mass. May 17, 1904

My dear Mr. Wheeler,

As I seem to be alone for a few moments I will begin a letter in reply to yours just received. I am anxious to correct at once an impression which I did not intend to give you – that Mrs. Hunt's friends objected to her keeping the care of Temple House. What I said was that her family objected to her having the care and responsibility of the Brookes family in addition to her teaching at Dana Hall. Mrs. Hunt herself is very eager to have the children in a quiet little home, but as she would be quite dependant upon her brother in the event of her breaking down physically she felt that she ought to consider his advice in this matter. She wrote me with great regret while she was away this Spring that as she could not hope to teach forever she must earn more money. She had received the two positions of which I spoke, and while she was willing to sacrifice something to remain at Dana Hall, the difference between what she was offered and what she has [been?][getting?] was too great. I hoped to keep her by giving her the Brookes children but when that did not seem best an advance in salary was necessary. She now remains at a salary of eleven hundred instead of nine, and one hundred in addition for the loving care and influence {page 2} she gives the girls at Temple House. I am sorry that I cannot put my hand on any of the many letters that have come to me showing the deep appreciation of the mothers for the individual care which has been given. This is only one side of course. The most important thing is the intellectual contribution she makes to the life of the school. In this there is no one who can be compared with her except Miss Bennett. I make this statement knowing that all who know her from the Misses Eastman and Miss Smith – the old residents – to Miss Stewart, Mlle. Laigle (?), and Miss Allen – the latest comers – agree with it. One of the leading citizens of Waterbury, who has been a devoted friend of Mrs. Hunt's for twenty-five years told me a week ago that he was deeply disappointed that Miss Willard did not go to Farmington, as he expected to make Mrs. Hunt Principal of St. Margaret's. His daughter is coming here to be under her instruction. It is not my intention to espouse the cause of any unworthy person or insist upon anything, but it is a trial to have you so prejudiced against a woman for whom all the teachers and pupils have so great a respect and admiration.

I also wish to correct the impression which you received regarding my feeling towards Miss Stewart's "success" with the girls. I was probably comparing her influence, when character problems presented themselves, with that of someone else and I said that she was stronger as a teacher than as a character builder. Miss Stewart does not pretend to like this kind of work or to have ability in this direction, but she is a very attractive Nana [or Mama?], very pleasant with the girls and they do like her on the {page 3} social plane. Personally, I have a very deep interest in her and have done all that I could for her happiness and success in and out of the school. She retains the charge of Clematis for the coming year(s).

Miss Allen teaches the full number of hours, is present at each Chapel exercise, manages the book store, and has charge of Rutland House, which is certainly a pretty full program. Miss Evans and Mlle. Reuche as you know are at Aloha. As I look over the whole faculty there is no one except Miss Evans whose time is not full. Hers would have been if she had been equal to the Science Department as I hoped and expected she would

be when she came here. When her salary was fixed it was with the understanding that she was to carry that work and have the general charge of the Classification of pupils. When I found that the science work was not at all on a level with that in the other departments a change became necessary and I treated the matter as delicately as I possibly could. Miss Allen has not realized my high expectations, but she has done a great deal more teaching, thus relieving the other departments, and so making things go better. Jean [Evans] has never been strong or well or really able to do a day's work, but she had had such a sweet helpful way with the girls and has been so well liked by them that I have accepted a few hours work a day from her, while Mrs. Page and the teachers put in practically the whole day and the evening. If she could have carried the science work I should be perfectly satisfied with what she receives. As it is I consider that she {page 4} receives Miss Allen's salary in excess of what she really earns, or what her work could be done for. Jean is one of several women who is sincerely interested in the school and although she has not the creative or the teaching ability that I thought she had, she has a very winning and attractive personality. A school as large as Dana Hall can well afford to sacrifice a few hundred dollars in this direction.

I will enclose the payroll of teachers under Miss Eastman's administration and our own. Her school numbered seventy-five the last years -- ours one hundred and seventy-five, exclusive of day scholars. I will not mention the art or music teachers, as their income exceeds their salaries. Miss Eastman had the whole time of two men, when there were no lawns of any account to mow and when she was occupying only two cottages (Clematis & Ferry). We have only three men to care for our extensive grounds, which are now beautifully kept and for the fires in eight cottages (Clematis, Ferry, the two parts of Temple House, Red Cottage, Aloha, Rutland, and Jennings), and the Main Building, School Building, and New Building. The house servants are of course fewer in proportion to the number of pupils than in her time.

Miss Eastman's school you must remember was running down. While ours is running up -- both as regards quantity and quality of patronage. In a year or two without a [] we can raise the tuition a hundred dollars and thereby increase our income \$18,000. Miss Eastman couldn't get but 75 scholars at \$500. We have put a lot of money into equipment and we now have it to work with for years. You ask where the money has gone this year. Her it is.

Natick Bank	20,000.
M.E. Wheeler	14,000.
H. E. Page	4,000.
H. T. Cooke	2,000.
Organ	7,000.
A. H. Bailey	1,000.
Colby Street Lot	2,000.
Rent to Mr. [Bond?] -- in advance 1904-5	1,300.
New [Filter?] Plant	900.
40 rugs (good for years)	1,000.

Grand Piano for Living Room 800.

We have also paid up all insurance to 1908, and we not expect to use 20,000 from Natick to pay the remaining bills of the year. (over)

I can well understand that \$2,000. seems a great deal for me to draw, but I am now carrying life insurance which means \$500. and I find it necessary in my position to do a good many things to keep up the charitable reputation of the school which I do not care to call upon you or Mrs. Page to share. I do not spend more than a thousand dollars for myself – outside of travelling expenses.

There is one more thing which I wish to bring to your attention, and in regard to which want an immediate reply. You will remember meeting Mr. Ryan, the owner of the large new house in Wellesley, and his little girl, a day scholar at Dana Hall. Bertha attended school for about two weeks last September and then was summoned to what we thought was the death bed of her mother in New Jersey. Mrs. Ryan did not die, but has been so ill all winter that Bertha could not leave her and so has never returned to school. I have written to the child and kept her as closely in touch with the work as possible hoping that she could come back as she is a very bright engaging little girl. Imagine my surprise at receiving the enclosed letter from Mr. Ryan yesterday morning with a check for \$800. Now, what shall I do with it? You see they are not at all indebted to us. Mr. Ryan insisted on paying \$600. last year for day tuition, now he raises it to \$800. when he hasn't had it. I have never seen the man since we met him that day at his house, and can't imagine why he should be so lavish in our direction. I have asked Bertha to come up for Commencement and expect her.

Yesterday was clear, though a little cold but the exercises went off finely. The Cup has [been] rewon by the Seniors to their great joy. The girls were so sorry you could not be present. The family are all well today.

The umbrella left in your room was mine that I loaned you.

Sincerely,

Helen Temple Cooke