

## Mabel Loomis Todd and the Will of God: Three Crises of Faith in Late Nineteenth-Century America

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On Sunday, 5 February 1871, a precocious fourteen-year old American named Mabel Loomis wrote the first entry in her new journal:

It is a beautiful day. The distant hills look so near, and every thing has the appearance of spring. Mother and Grandma have gone to church, but last night I had a dreadful earache, and so today am not able to go out. Last summer . . . I read a book called "Stepping Heavenward." It is the Journal of a young girl, first, and goes on until she becomes quite an old lady. For three or four years I have kept a *daily* journal, but have not written in it lately, for I do not have time. So I thought I would begin this one, *not* to write in *every* day, but when I feel like it, or to put down important events.<sup>1</sup>

Like the earnest narrator of *Stepping Heavenward*, Mabel Loomis kept this record of her life throughout her girlhood and her marriage to the astronomer David Todd; she only stopped when she became "quite an old lady" herself. When she died in the autumn of 1932, Mabel Loomis Todd left behind as rich a record of a life as one could hope to find.

That life took fascinating turns in both the private and public spheres. As an adult, Mabel became a public intellectual. She accompanied her astronomer husband to Africa, Asia, and Europe in various attempts to observe solar eclipses. She wrote books and for magazines and newspapers; she also gave hundreds of public lectures on a wide variety of topics.

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If people know about her today, however, it is because of her friendship with Emily Dickinson – the brilliant and reclusive poet of Amherst, Massachusetts. Mabel edited the first edition of Dickinson’s poetry, along with Thomas Wentworth Higginson, the radical abolitionist, Civil War veteran, and amiable man of letters. More controversially, in 1882 Mabel embarked on an extramarital affair with Emily Dickinson’s brother, Austin. In their journals, both Mabel and Austin Dickinson marked the beginning of that love story with a single word: “Rubicon.” Apparently, they both forgot that Julius Caesar’s seizure of power did not end well either for himself or anyone else. At any rate, the affair between Mabel Todd and Austin Dickinson tore the Dickinson family apart and only ended when Austin died in 1895. Mabel recorded its ups and downs with the same frankness that characterized all of her self-analysis.<sup>2</sup>

Mabel Loomis Todd’s voluminous and obsessively honest record of her private and public lives has laid her open to a number of different interpretations: some generous and others not so much. The historian Peter Gay, for instance, praises her “indefatigable energy . . . her infectious gaiety” and her “robust and resilient character.” She was, quite simply, the “most candid of historians when it came to her sexual life” – something that was bound to appeal to a biographer of Sigmund Freud. In contrast, Polly Longworth, the editor of the love letters between Austin Dickinson and Mabel Todd, is less enthusiastic, introducing her as an “extremely self-centered personality” whose claims to “genius” were more apparent than real. The biographer Lyndall Gordon is harsher still, labeling Mabel the “Lady Macbeth of Amherst.” Gordon concocts a strange reverse anthropomorphism, describing her subject as a petted, rambunctious, vaguely idiotic poodle with “warm, reddish-brown eyes,” “her lower lip . . . a little open,” and “fine, floppy hair elaborately coiled and puffed out.” And, as is the prerogative of any writer of fiction, the novelist Jerome Charyn goes his own way, transforming Mabel into a stylish figure who skated into the lives of Emily Dickinson and her family “with one leg high in the air until she resembled a schooner with her own taut body as a mast.”<sup>3</sup>

Most scholarly studies of Mabel Loomis Todd have focused on her sexuality and her interactions with the Dickinson family. While those topics are interesting and important, concentrating on them so completely gives only a partial view of Mabel and her world. As that first entry that Mabel wrote in her journal suggests, religion also played an important role in her life. Longworth alludes to that fact, summarizing Mabel’s spiritual

trajectory from Presbyterianism to Unitarianism to pantheism to a God forged in the image of her father, her husband, and her lover.<sup>4</sup> That summary is accurate enough, as far as it goes; but I am going to argue that it does not go far enough. Between 1871 and her engagement to David Todd in 1879, Mabel experienced both the everyday religion of her era and three crises of faith. Such moments of normality and religious transformation help reveal the forces that underpinned America's Protestant century and that eventually propelled Mabel Loomis Todd into Transcendentalism.

### *A Girl of the Gilded Age*

Before coming to Mabel Loomis Todd's religious life, one should spend a few minutes getting to know her. Where did she fit in the gaudy tapestry of Gilded Age America?

Growing up at the centre of American politics in Washington, DC, Mabel and her family were typical Northerners. They were solidly Republican. Mabel made sure to record Ulysses Grant's successful bid for reelection in November 1872. In March 1874 she lamented the death of Charles Sumner, one of the Republican Party's founders. She noted that "Congress has lost her greatest statesmen; the colored people their truest friend; the cause of right and truth its noblest champion." "It is sacrilege for little popinjays to attempt to criticize such a glorious man," she added indignantly, "He is entirely too far above them for their comprehension."<sup>5</sup> Two years later, in 1876, Mabel noted that "the whole country" was "greatly excited" by the electoral contest between the Republican Rutherford Hayes and the Democrat Samuel Tilden, which threatened to plunge the nation into another civil war. That did not happen, of course; the two parties reached a compromise that gave the Republicans the White House, handed over the state governments of the South to the Democrats, and abandoned the region's black population to the none-too-tender mercies of Jim Crowism. For her part, Mabel was happy that a "great deal of trouble and even bloodshed" had been avoided. Perhaps, like most Northerners, she had had enough of the upheavals of Reconstruction; or maybe, as a teenager caught up in her own world, she had simply reached the limit of her political interest.<sup>6</sup> Mabel's reaction to a school assignment in 1871 suggests that the second possibility is just as likely as the first. She had to write a letter to President Grant about the proposed annexation of Santo Domingo; but, she declared, it was the "ri-dic-ulous-est" of

composition subjects and she put it off as long as possible.<sup>7</sup>

When it came to social class, the Loomis family was, once again, typical of Northern society. Mabel's parents, Eben and Mary Loomis, were proud of their middle-class background, but they had ambitions well beyond their resources. Relying solely on Eben's salary as a clerk at the Nautical Almanac Office, they were always worried about maintaining their social position. The Loomis family never owned their own home; instead, they moved from boarding house to boarding house during Mabel's youth. Mabel fully assimilated her parents' mixture of pride and anxiety. It shaped her friendships. In what was likely a subconscious attempt to compensate for her own insecurities, Mabel insisted that she was inherently superior to all of her friends. On 14 February 1871 she wrote in her journal during the noon recess at Miss Lipscomb's finishing school for girls in Georgetown. She noted that there were only a few girls in the room and that they were all "stupid." By 10 March 1872 Mabel was willing to concede that some of her classmates were not complete simpletons. Julia Moore was "very smart at saying bright things," she admitted, before adding that Julia was "too old-maidish to suit me. She can also be extremely disagreeable at times." Clara Hoover was a bit better – "quite pretty," in fact – but she was also "extremely silly and affected."<sup>8</sup> This streak of snobbishness in the young Mabel became a mile wide later in life. After she met her future husband, David Todd, in 1877, she noted that he was a direct descendent of America's greatest theologian, Jonathan Edwards, "so [he] has good blood." Mabel was probably unaware of the fact that, through the Edwards connection, David Todd was also related to another, altogether less savory, character: the duelist and relentless schemer, Aaron Burr.<sup>9</sup>

### *Everyday Religion*

Mabel Loomis Todd's experience of everyday religion – religion as it is lived day-to-day – was no more outside the norm than her political and social identities. She was the granddaughter of Reverend John Wilder, a Protestant minister in Concord, Massachusetts.<sup>10</sup> Mabel's denominational identity may have changed between 1871 and 1879, but her adherence to her ancestral religion remained constant. She certainly harbored an instinctive distrust of Roman Catholicism, as was the case with most nineteenth-century Protestants. As a music enthusiast, Mabel was happy, now and then, to visit Catholic churches. On Christmas Day in 1873, she

and her mother went to one “to hear the music.” That, however, was the extent of Mabel’s appreciation of Catholicism. When one of her suitors announced that he feared he was “becoming a Roman Catholic,” she noted that, “of course if he does, that finishes any relation with me.” She had read novels like Julia Wright’s sensational and “exciting” *Priest and Nun*; she knew better than to put any faith in those who made an art of “calling evil, good, and good, evil.”<sup>11</sup> Instead, like almost all Protestants, Mabel was a person of the Book. In October 1871 she pasted a newspaper article dealing with “Facts about the Bible” in her journal. Discovered by “a prisoner condemned to solitary confinement” for three years, they were “remarkable,” she declared. “The Bible,” the convict had found, “contains 3,586,489 letters, 773,692 words, 31,173 verses, 1,189 chapters, and 66 books.”<sup>12</sup> Mabel seems to have been equally traditional when it came to one of the burning intellectual issues of the day: evolution. Louis Agassiz, the biologist and ardent opponent of Charles Darwin, whom her father had heard lecture at Harvard University, died in November 1873. Mabel lamented that, “America has lost a great man.” The apple likely did not fall far from the tree, in this instance.<sup>13</sup>

Mabel Loomis Todd was also a regular churchgoer during the 1870s. Again, that is not surprising. In the late-nineteenth century, weekly services and other church functions were important sites of youth culture – of friendship, public display, and courtship.<sup>14</sup> Mabel threw herself into each of those activities with teenaged zeal, often, it seemed, to the exclusion of the business of salvation.

During Mabel’s teen years, friendships were broken, made, and consolidated at church. In February 1871, for instance, Mabel complained that her friend Edith had “looked as solemn as a deacon, shook her head, & walked out in the other direction” after Mabel invited her to “walk down to church” after Sunday school. “Maybe I was mistaken, and . . . she shook her head because she wanted to go with her Aunt,” a hurt Mabel wrote, “. . . but I don’t know, and what’s more, I don’t *care!*” Edith, she decided, “is a queer girl; sometimes very loving & affectionate, and sometimes very distant & tries to put on airs.” Mabel had an altogether more pleasant time with down-to-earth girls like Cara Lovejoy, who went to church with her in July 1871. Such happy moments, however, could not equal the joy of a day like 8 March 1872, when Mabel and some of her friends “read, & ate taffy all day, & went to church in the evening.”<sup>15</sup> When combined with agreeable company, candy made even the dullest church event more enjoyable. In March 1873, Mabel went with her friend Julia to a Presbyte-

rian chapel for “a congregational meeting” held to discuss the building of a new church. The two girls did not care much about the matter at hand, but they had “ever so much fun eating caramels” and chatting with a young theology student. A little under a week later, Mabel and Julia were back to attend another meeting; while the adults argued vociferously for or against a new church, Mabel, Julia, and five of their friends “sat in the little alcove at the back of the chapel, & had a gay old time.” “We scarcely heard a word of any of the speeches,” Mabel gleefully admitted, “and when we came out to go home, the floor was fairly white with little bits of paper, for we wrote notes, played consequences, & drew pictures all the evening.”<sup>16</sup>

In addition to gay old times with their friends, attending church gave outgoing young people like Mabel a chance to be noticed in public and even to turn otherwise sinful vanity to religion’s advantage. Always a keen clotheshorse, on 20 December 1872, Mabel noted that she “went to S[unday] S[chool] and then to the Quaker meeting in Washington.” She was happy to report that her hat “was very much admired,” but “not in the Quaker meeting,” she made sure to add. In April 1873 Mabel was delighted at the prospect of appearing at church on Easter Sunday “in all the gorgeousness of a new dress & hat.” At other times, however, she worried that she was doing herself an “injustice” in “thinking that whenever I am dressed nicely I can be good.” “I really do think it adds to my good behaviour,” she wrote in February 1873, “but it don’t *make it*, for today I had on my pretty winter suit...but I was certainly no *better* than usual.”<sup>17</sup> That was a sore disappointment. Mabel attempted to make up for it by taking an active role in fund-raising for the Presbyterian Church. Performing tableaux was “a very easy and pleasant way of getting money for the new church,” she discovered. It helped that she had the chance to wear “a regular nun’s costume, with my beads and prayer-book.” Evidently, she was willing to put aside her distrust of Roman Catholicism for one night, since “I had a perfect nun’s face and I *know* I looked pretty.”<sup>18</sup>

Looking pretty was important to Mabel, who was drawn to boys throughout her teen years. Church provided an opportunity to meet and get to know handsome and eligible young men. In February 1873, she candidly noted that a Sunday school meeting “was so much fun, for all the boys were there.” That did not mean that the chapel was a danger-free zone for a young woman. On 20 February 1873, one of the boys in her church, Harry Brown, took advantage of a moment before an evening

service to hand Mabel a confidential note. He accused her of leading him on: a “*sin*” that she would have “to answer for,” if it was true. “I fear the sermon did not do any good, to me that night,” an upset Mabel wrote. A month later, in March 1873, a trip to a Methodist chapel with her friend, Clara Hoover, offered an opportunity for revenge. She “never had such a good time,” Mabel noted, “for all the boys heard that she & I were going . . . & so, left our church” and came over to the Methodists for the evening. Harry Brown “left before the meeting was over, seeing . . . all the boys, & knowing he could have no chance,” a triumphant Mabel declared.<sup>19</sup>

Such teenaged drama was a thing of the past by the end of 1877. In December, David Todd began to court Mabel in earnest. Sundays were their day of the week. They attended church in the morning, went for a walk in the afternoon, and frequently went to another service in the evening. During those days together, Mabel tried to gauge whether David was a good match for her. She seems to have decided he was worthy by the end of April 1878. After a stroll, the couple returned to the Loomises’ boarding house. They went into the parlor “sat down, & then walked up & down the room,” Mabel wrote, “and, – and he – well, I couldn’t help it.” “I woke up the next morning,” she continued, “very happy . . . & feeling not at all condemned. The next day was Easter.”<sup>20</sup> For Mabel, this was a match made by God.

### ***Crises of Faith***

That was the one of the few certainties that lay at the end of Mabel Loomis Todd’s religious odyssey during the 1870s. Despite the surface calm, the almost jolly paganism that often marked her everyday religion, the teenaged Mabel was troubled by religious doubts. That interior struggle sometimes manifested itself in public, but it was primarily played out in her mind, her soul, and her journal. Mabel’s eight-year quest to find a faith that made sense to her allows us to examine the forces that propelled a typical young woman of the American middle class from Presbyterianism to Unitarianism and Transcendentalism. Those forces included friends; family; nationally celebrated and local preachers; two dead German theologians; a radical Unitarian; the intellectuals of Concord, Massachusetts; and a summer vacation at the seashore.

I will start with Mabel’s friends. They set the stage for her first crisis of faith: the one that made her into a member of a church. Until 4 May 1873, Mabel was an uncommitted Presbyterian – in other words, a

Presbyterian who attended services, but who was not a covenanted member of the congregation. She was plagued by doubts about her own spiritual state. As she put it in March 1871, "I really do think I love the Saviour, and I *know* He loves me . . . and I *do* want to be good . . . I know I have a hasty temper, and I will *pray* to have Jesus help me cure it."<sup>21</sup> Even the beginning of a "great revival" at her church could not convince her to "unite" with the Presbyterians, despite the fact that six of her friends "and others" had decided to take the plunge. Mabel hoped that she knew "what a friend the dear Saviour is," though she remained outside the ranks of the covenanted. "I know I am very bad, get angry very often, am vain, and foolish," she reasoned, "but still, since I have Jesus for my Guide and Friend, I cannot go *far* wrong." Two years later, peer pressure was having a much more decided effect. "All the girls have been talking to me this week, about joining the church," Mabel wrote on 2 March 1873, ". . . but I did not feel myself prepared to take such an important step, & so, resisted all their entreaties." "But," she added, "I have made up my mind if I feel ready next time, to do as they wish." This was hardly an unqualified triumph for Mabel's friends. "Although I believe so differently from them in many respects," Mabel noted, "I think Christ will take the will for the deed." At any rate, she would do her best "to believe aright."<sup>22</sup>

Among Mabel's problems in deciding her future course were the clashing influences of her grandmother, mother, and father. Mabel's grandmother, who lived with the family, was the widow of Reverend John Wilder of Concord, Massachusetts, and a committed Congregationalist. Mary Loomis was equally pious and keen to see her daughter settled in a church. In contrast, Eben Loomis was less interested in organized religion. In February 1873 he advised his conflicted daughter to "*do right* in all things, and let beliefs alone." "And his life is more pure," Mabel wrote, "and his motives higher than many who profess to be Christians."<sup>23</sup> Eben was even more direct a few months later, warning Mabel that, when it came to her eternal soul, she was too young to know what she was doing. He firmly believed that no one should be worried about what they "believe, or disbelieve." "No human being has a right to impose *any* belief on you," he argued, without a hint of irony. And yet Mabel did decide to unite with the Presbyterian Church – and Mary Loomis joined at the same time.<sup>24</sup> What convinced Mabel to go against the advice of the father whom she adored?

Looking back on her spiritual journey, Mabel concluded that, much like other "sensitive girls" who became "enthusiastic over religion," she



was influenced by “affection for the pastor.” She was, indeed, briefly swept up in one of the cults of personality that took shape around nationally renowned ministers during the late-nineteenth century, including Boston’s leading Episcopalian minister Phillips Brooks. Mabel first heard Brooks preach in October 1872 and she recorded that he delivered “such a sermon” as “I believe no mortal man e’er preached before.” She was not exactly sure what his text had been, but “the impression which it made on me has lasted until now, and I hope it may never be lost.” Every time Mabel heard Brooks speak, she felt closer to God. So much so that, in November 1872, she admitted that, “if I ever attend any church permanently, I think, now, it will be” the Episcopal Church, “but I may change.”<sup>25</sup>

That Mabel did change was the result of the more immediate and consistent influence of another preacher: her local Presbyterian minister, Mr. Howe. Mabel was impressed with Howe from the moment she first spoke with him in late January 1873. Urged on by one of her friends, she went to see him at his parsonage. “He did me ever so much good,” Mabel wrote, “although I can’t tell exactly what he said, but I know one thing – He thinks a person ought to join the church.” “I will,” she promised herself, “if I have the courage, after he has satisfied me upon one or two little points.” Among those “little points” were her “intelligent doubts” about the “doctrines and teachings” of the Presbyterian Church, particularly concerning “eternal punishment” and the truth of the Bible.<sup>26</sup> Howe did his best to sooth her troubled mind by urging her to “only believe the *one* thing, and let all the rest go.” For Mabel that meant that she should “simply give myself to God, and tell Him that I will be entirely guided by what He may tell me.” In less than a week, thanks to Howe, who continued to help her “ever so much,” she had received the guidance that she needed. She had “determined which is the right, or rather the *best*, religion.” It was “not exactly strict Presbyterianism” or her father’s skepticism, but “a lovely intermediate system” – what she thought of as “Mr. Howe’s religion” with “*Christ* the prominent feature in it.” Chapter fifteen, verse five of the Gospel of St. John, “Without me ye can do nothing,” was Howe’s creed and now it was Mabel’s too. That was enough to carry her into the Presbyterians Church on 4 May 1873.<sup>27</sup> But it was a weak foundation for a faith.

As it turned out, Mabel’s religious doubts had only been papered over by Mr. Howe’s spiritual counsel. When regular meetings with the kindly minister became impossible, she was plunged into her second

spiritual crisis. There had been warnings that that might be the case two months before Mabel joined the church. She went to Howe's chapel on 5 March 1873, but since he "was not there it was rather stupid & I do not want to go again till he comes back," she noted. That feeling of disdain for the Presbyterian Church returned when Mabel, her mother, and grandmother travelled to the New England coast to escape the heat of the Washington summer in June 1873. Within a month, Mabel was writing that her "spiritual welfare" was "not coming on at all." "I am still mixed up," she confessed, "& wish I had not joined the church, for I don't believe their doctrines, & it can't be right to profess what I don't believe." "Oh for one sweet long talk with Mr. Howe," she wrote, "I have written to him & hope to get [an] answer soon."<sup>28</sup> No answer came. Attending other churches did Mabel little, if any, good; no preachers could hold a candle to Howe, with the possible exception of the "sympathetic" Phillips Brooks, whose sermons left her "quieted & rested." Such reprieves proved increasingly short-lived, however. Left alone to battle with her doubts, Mabel surrendered to them. She convinced herself that she was finished with "the little narrow-minded Presbyterian Church." By the end of the summer, she could not understand how she could have been "blind enough" to join "such a sect" as that. "I can't endure the name, Presbyterian," she concluded in October 1873.<sup>29</sup>

As autumn took hold, Mabel was well on her way towards a more congenially faith: Unitarianism. True to form, she was influenced, at least in part, by a meeting with another preacher on a train trip to Washington. Dr. Miner, "the great Universalist divine," gave her "a new insight into things." "Oh I am so glad that I have found one sensible man," she wrote with relief, "one who does not think it consistent with God's fatherly love to doom his children to everlasting sin & misery." Mabel was also delighted that she would be able to tell her father that she was "not any longer a Presbyterian at heart . . ." "Being one would imply a sort of check of intellectual growth," she argued, "& my dear Father wants to be proud of his daughter, which I hope he may have cause to be."<sup>30</sup> In October 1873 Mabel decided that all "Churches are a fraud;" and, a month later, she was almost ready to toss the Trinity overboard. "Can it all be a fraud, an imagination of the heart, this belief in Christ, etc.?" she asked herself. By January 1874 she had an answer: yes. "I don't believe Christ is God," she stated. Mabel made a public display of her rejection of the core values of Presbyterianism by refusing to take communion. In her mind, that made her superior to the "commonplace . . . society" that surrounded her, awash

in “fearfully bigoted . . . religious views” and “foolish superstitions.”<sup>31</sup> To an egoist like Mabel that was no small thing. But even her sense of righteousness and her happiness at the likelihood of her father’s approval could not lead to a calm mind and soul.

It took a third crisis of faith to put Mabel’s spiritual upheaval to rest. In January 1875, she signaled that this latest transformation was complete: she had become “an out and out radical, [a] Parkerite,”<sup>32</sup> Mabel wrote. However briefly, one must embark on some of the choppier waters of nineteenth-century theology in order to explain what she meant. In the middle of the century, the Unitarian Church in the United States split into conservative and radical wings. Among the most vocal of the radicals was Theodore Parker. Influenced by two of the greatest theologians Germany ever produced, David Friedrich Strauss and Friedrich Schleiermacher, Parker blew huge holes through traditional Unitarian beliefs. Where conservatives saw the miracles recounted in the Bible as proof of the historical existence of Jesus, Parker saw nothing but myth. He argued, instead, that to understand God one had to look inward. There was a religious element in humanity, beyond and apart from any text or doctrine. It was an “innate truism like liberty or immortality” and the only proof of God that a true believer required.<sup>33</sup> A theology that centered so completely on the self – on the knowledge of God’s reality through the existence the individual soul – was bound to appeal to an introspective person like Mabel. It also helped that Parker’s skepticism about the Bible and doctrine chimed with her long-held doubts about the value of traditional Protestant beliefs.

### ***Conclusion***

Mabel was also drawn to Theodore Parker’s ideas because of his connection with some of the most famous thinkers of her time: the Transcendentalists of Concord, Massachusetts. The Transcendental idea that “all of nature in its parts and as a whole” was a “symbol of spiritual reality” and that the universe was never “malignant” completed Mabel’s new faith.<sup>34</sup> She loved to be in nature – “some quiet place just at sunset either in the intensely quiet heart of the mountains or by the ocean” was her ideal spot in the world. If she could not experience that sort of beauty on a daily basis, she could at least try to stay “out in the happy sunshine” rather than being “shut up for almost two hours” in a church, listening to “indifferent music, stupid doctrines, & see[ing] stultified faces.”<sup>35</sup>

Combined with Parker's takedown of mainline Protestantism, Transcendentalism was a faith that Mabel could throw herself into wholeheartedly. That is what she did. She chased the Transcendental great and good with all the zeal of a convert. She met the philosopher of Concord, Ralph Waldo Emerson; she had tea with Louis May Alcott and her father, the "blessed old prophet" Bronson Alcott; she visited the thinker Henry David Thoreau's famous cabin at Walden Pond; and she became so chummy with Thoreau's sister Sophia that the old lady bequeathed Mabel "nine volumes of Emerson's works," signed by the eminent man himself.<sup>36</sup> Mabel had not quite achieved a "perfect character" by the time she and David Todd became engaged in 1879; in her own estimation, however, she had escaped her earlier obsessions with "church and theology and boys."<sup>37</sup> It was a happy ending of sorts – or, at least, it would have been if that had been the conclusion of her question for religious certainty. Mabel Loomis Todd's spiritual evolution continued and, in many ways, became even more fascinating after 1879. But, as the novelists say, that is another story.

### ***Endnotes***

1. 5 February 1871, Volume 1, Journal, Mabel Loomis Todd Papers (hereafter MLTP), Yale University Library and Archives (hereafter Yale). Emphasis in original.
2. The best account of Mabel Loomis Todd's life, concentrating on the period after her marriage to David Todd, is Julie Dobrow, *After Emily: Two Remarkable Women, and the Legacy of America's Greatest Poet* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2018). For the "Rubicon" episode see page 52. To my mind, though claiming no expertise at all in the field, the most effective analysis of Julius Caesar's assassination and its tumultuous aftermath remains Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939); for sheer readability, however, it is hard to beat Tom Holland, *Rubicon: The Last Years of the Roman Republic* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003).
3. Peter Gay, *Education of the Senses. The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), 71; Peter Gay, *Schnitzler's Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture, 1815-1914* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 263; Polly Longworth, *Austin and Mabel: The Amherst Affair and Love Letters of Austin Dickinson and Mabel Loomis Todd* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 27, 44; Lyndall Gordon, *Lives Like Loaded Guns: Emily Dickinson and Her Family's Feuds* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 10, 12, 231; and Jerome Charyn,

*The Secret Life of Emily Dickinson* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2010), 310.

4. Longworth, *Austin and Mabel*, 16, 29-30, 52-3, 286.
5. 7 November 1872, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 12 March 1874, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale.
6. 15 December 1876, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 5 March 1877, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale. On the election of 1876, the compromise of 1877, and the waning of Northern interest in Reconstruction see the classic account by C. Vann Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), and the relevant sections of Richard White, *The Republic for Which it Stands: The United States during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
7. 29 March 1871, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale. On Grant and Santo Domingo, fans of high political and diplomatic maneuvering will want to see the thrillingly, but almost exhaustingly, detailed narrative in Charles W. Calhoun, *The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017), 199-261.
8. 14 February 1871, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 10 March 1872, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale. See also Gay, *Education of the Senses*, 72-3 and Longworth, *Austin and Mabel*, 13-14.
9. 18 April 1878, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale. See also Gay, *Education of the Senses*, 74. There are many excellent works on that North American *caudillo* Aaron Burr, but, for an approachable and easily digestible summary, why not see Todd Webb, "Aaron Burr (1756-1836)," in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Political History*, ed., Michael A. Morrison (Washington: CQ Press, 2010), 2:69-71?
10. Dobrow, *After Emily*, 10.
11. 25 December 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 25 November 1875, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 21 July 1872, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; Julia McNair Wright, *Priest and Nun* (Philadelphia: Crittenden & McKinney, 1869), 11. On anti-Catholicism in the United States, how about giving an old classic a try – Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1938) – which includes gems like a description of the skeptical New York editor, William Stone, inspecting Montreal's Hotel Dieu nunnery in the wake of the Maria Monk scandal, "poking into every closet, climbing to a high window to see into an unopened room, and smelling a row of jars in the basement, which might have contained

lime used in the disposal of infants' bodies," before concluding that the story was utter rubbish. This quotation appears on pages 105-6.

12. 6 October 1871, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale.
13. 15 December 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale. On Eben Loomis and Louis Agassiz see Gordon, *Lives Like Loaded Guns*, 170.
14. This seems self-evident to me and so requiring no specific references. But, as Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in his foreword to *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution*, "I could supply many more examples, if anyone thought that this book merited their asking for them." Substitute "article" for "book," of course. See Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution*, trans. Gerald Bevan (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 15.
15. 19 February 1871, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 10 July 1871, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 8 March 1872, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale. Emphasis in original.
16. 6 March 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 13 March 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale.
17. 20 December 1872, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 6 April 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 12 February 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale. Emphasis in original.
18. 8 February 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale. Emphasis in original.
19. 8 February 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 20 February 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 13 March 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale. Emphasis in original.
20. 25 April 1878, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale. See also 6 January 1878, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 14 April 1878, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 8 May 1878, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 12 May 1878, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale. On 8 May 1878, Mabel wrote, "The weeks fly by so fast, & Saturdays I love, because then I can say—"tomorrow is Sunday," and Sundays I love, because I never fail to have a charming time [with David Todd]. It is the red letter day of the week to me, in truth, just as all Sundays are printed in red ink on the little calendar which hangs in my room."
21. 17 March 1871, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale. Emphasis in original.
22. 11 May 1871, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 12 May 1871, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 2 March 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale. Emphasis in original.
23. 12 February 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale. Emphasis in original.

24. Longworth, *Austin and Mabel*, 29-30. Emphasis in original.
25. 1 November 1874, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 9 October 1872, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 18 November 1872, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale.
26. 2 February 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 12 February 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale. See also 30 June 1874, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale. On the increasing controversy about the doctrine of eternal punishment during this period see Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: The Crisis of Conscience of Nonconformity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 48-58, which, admittedly, deals with British Protestants.
27. 12 February 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 16 February 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 4 May 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale.
28. 6 March 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 11 July 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale.
29. 10 August 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 16 September 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 12 October 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale.
30. 16 September 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale.
31. 12 October 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 9 November 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 21 January 1873, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale.
32. 31 January 1875, Volume 1, Journal, MLTP, Yale.
33. On Friedrich Schleiermacher, David Friedrich Strauss, Theodore Parker, and Unitarianism see B.A. Gerrish, "Friedrich Schleiermacher," in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, ed. Ninian Smart, John Clayton, Patrick Sherry, and Steven T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1:123-6, 1:134-5, 1:136, 1:138-41, 1:143-4; Hans Frei, "David Friedrich Strauss," in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought*, 1:233-55; Gary Dorrien, *The Making of Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805-1900* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 80-110. The quotation is from Dorrien, *Making of Liberal Theology*, 95.
34. On Transcendentalism see Dorrien, *Making of Liberal Theology*, 58-80; Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "Ralph Waldo Emerson and the American Transcendentalists," in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought*, 2:29, 2:31-40, 2:42-3, 2:45-51, 2:62-3, 65. The quotations are from Ahlstrom, "Ralph Waldo Emerson," 2:40, 2:45.

35. 21 May 1876, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale; 18 February 1877, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale.
36. 17 June 1877, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale; Mabel Loomis Todd, *The Thoreau Family: Two Generations Ago* (Berkley Heights, NJ: Oriole Press, 1958), 15; 28 November 1876, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale.
37. 17 June 1877, Volume 2, Journal, MLTP, Yale.