Dear Mary,

I don't know what time my letters stray along to you for I write them at any time of day. Now, since breakfast, Mrs. Cabot and I have had such a long parley that the morning mail has long since gone. In times of ease I have worked through

the six White murder books, tell Stubby, and I can now pass an exam. upon the Knapps & Crowninshield with the best. Websters great speech I had never read before except in fragments: but alas by the time of my winter visit these vastly important things will no longer be clear in my mind. At present you may hear either of us begin out of clear sky: "Yes, there

is no doubt that Mrs. Bickford was at the bottom of the whole thing." or "Jo Knapp was considered by those who knew him best to be a man of weak intellect[,] my dear Sarah," and then off we go upon a new consideration. – This morning Mrs. Cabot assured me while I was taking a hasty look at the Advertiser "I owe a great deal to Theodore for his kindness in finding those pamphlets. I had a copy!!"

and off we flew again! She had rather a down day yesterday[,] it was so close and sticky[,] but today seems to begin in great feather. How pretty it sounds about the garden tea! — I do wish I had been there. I look forward to next Wednesday as if I had been abroad or somewhere finally distant & remote for at least six months. Yesterday I had a pleasant time at Miss

The reference here and in the next few sentences is to the highly publicized 1830 brutal murder of the prominent 82 year old Salem MA citizen, Captain Joseph White. There was much speculation as to who had committed the deed and why over the next several weeks – and the event gathered national interest. Captain White’s widowed niece, Mary Bickford, had been his housekeeper for years – but she was away visiting her daughter, Mrs. Joseph Knapp, on the night of the murder. It became known that Mary Bickford was designated to inherit only $15,000 of the half million-dollar estate – while another nephew, Captain Stephen White, was to have the rest. Suspicion fell on Stephen White – but eventually a couple of petty thieves were caught (one in New Bedford, MA and the other in Belfast, ME) who, much to the shock, dismay (and delight) of readers around the country, implicated two brothers of the prominent Crowninshield Family of Salem – as well as Joseph Knapp and his brother Frank. Richard Crowninshield (hired by Joseph Knapp to commit the murder in a futile attempt to alter the will) hung himself in prison – thereby prompting prosecutor Daniel Webster’s famous quip: “There is no refuge from confession but suicide; and suicide is confession.” Joseph and Frank Knapp went to trial, were found guilty and hanged. George Crowninshield, however, was acquitted. The murder, the arrests, and the trial were headline news around the country for several weeks. For a complete account of the event – and especially Nathaniel Hawthorne’s interest in it – see Vernon Loggins, *The Hawthornes* (1951) pp.242-254.
King's, and today her two guests are coming here [:] Miss Louisa Huntington & Miss Cushman [?]. How lovely that was of Katy! [written between the two lines]. Also little A.F. I could not get to see her yesterday it came on to rain so heavily, and the day before she went to the conference. Maud Scott is going this morning and Marion Dodd comes back.

- I have just remembered that I can send this

[6] to the station by Maud, so off it goes, with all its sins on its head!

Affectionately your – Sarah