A Letter from Sarah Orne Jewett to Mary Jewett

Artists & Upholsterers

[Nd, np – but apparently from Manchester MA, in the summer when nephew Theodore was at prep school (1896-97)]

John Singer Sargent, Edwin Austin Abbey, Jean Francois Raffaelli, Francois Millet, and other artists

(in sleeve marked G-3)

Saturday morning

Dear Mary,

I should think our parrot would have thought she had got back where she came from yesterday, if it was as hot at home as it was in Boston [,] but it seems fresh and nice this morning. I gave a sigh of relief when you spoke of the water cart but I am afraid both houses will be very dusty again. Every day I think this strange little summer must be over. – We went right to the library yesterday and found Mr. Sargent there and went up to see his splendid beautiful pictures – and talked all about them [,] and presently along came Mr. Howells looking so old and tired, and we had a lovely time with him: he said he had come on with Mrs. Howells to the dentist for two days. Pilla is going abroad again this summer and he and his wife are going to Long Island somewhere – and “going to bat round for summer” as he said laughing. Then we went into the art museum to see the Raffaelli things and Raffaelli himself which was a great pleasure – such a nice Frenchman and I felt sure he must know Therese though we didn’t get to that. We walked about a little and saw the new Sir Joshua which I believe [,] and the Millets again. I didn’t say how beautiful I thought Mr. Abbeys pictures were. The young knight is one of the most beautiful figures it seemed to me. his face is perfectly beautiful with such light in it – and all the colours splendid. We can’t think any longer that such paintings & decorations could only be done in the past. – Then we went to the house where Mrs. Fields had to look out some things to come down by express, and then we stepped to the Mayflower in a glass coach for dinner and fell in with Margaret Loring awful cheerful

and joined forces. She has taken a lot of rooms “with a spare room” at the Albracca for July & August. Which is pleasant [,] I think Stubs would like her girls. We must be thinking of that against he gets to college! – In the afternoon A.F. went off to the Board meeting and I did an errand or two at Houghton & Mifflin &c and then went back to the Club and wrote two long letters to Therese and Alice Howe, and then we met

[Cross-written on 1]

met at the station and came home. It sounded so pleasant about your coming home. You had better get the spare floor of the shed chamber cleared for the upholstering and I should like to know what there is to do for which we must pick out covers. I should think a corduroy would be as nice as anything for Carrie’s things, but she had better get some idea

[Cross-written on 2]

how much. I am going to town Tuesday and I can get patterns and see the man & his goods. It would be nice if we could get them [?] of him. Suppose we say week after next for him to come? Will you tell me

[Cross-written on 3]

Monday. and what you think for us to have done. A.F. sends love.

yours affectionately

Seddie.

38 John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) is best known today as a painter of brilliant society portraits. In 1890, however, he embraced the opportunity to prove himself at mural decoration, a genre he and his era judged superior to portraiture. Triumph of Religion (1890-1919) was Sargent’s first and most complex mural program; it was also the work he hoped to make his masterpiece. If the Boston Public Library, in the words of Sargent’s contemporaries, was the city’s “shrine of letters,” the library’s special collections on the third-floor most firmly established this reputation. Here literate Boston stored and consulted the books and documents that constituted its most “sacred” intellectual treasures. Here, in the entry hall to those riches, Sargent would paint his Triumph of Religion. (from a website by Sally M. Promey http://www.bpl.org/guides/sargenttriumph.htm)

39 Jean Francois Raffaelli (1850-1924), a popular French artist of the day.

40 Edwin Austin Abbey (1852-1911), along with John Singer Sargent, painted murals for the Boston Public Library. In 1890 he received the commission for the Holy Grail murals at the BPL. The first half were completed and installed in 1895, the remainder in 1901.