

Letter from Mrs. Durrant, dated November 1 1905

282 Chattanooga Street

San Francisco.

My dear daughter

Your dear letter #45 dated October 17. I thank you for your kind wishes. The surprise has reached me safely. I think the likeness very good indeed, also the tone of coloring is very beautiful, particularly so when the light falls from above upon the hair in its natural coloring. I can see the likeness much better than your father, having seen you arrange your hair just so. He only remembers you as a bright young girl without that serious look. Also all your friends say where is her dimple. Well, I think it very beautiful and thank you very much for remembering me so kindly. I send you many kisses my dearest.

Now for how well I have progressed in bringing your new art to California. It was Madge, I told you (she married an artist) who said on the morning of Alice [Lonnon's] departure "I think if Maud would come over here under the protection of the U[niversity] of C[alifornia]

*Repetition*  
[Lonnon's] departure "I think if Maud would come over here  
under the protection of the U[niversity] of C[alifornia]

that her work would be kindly received. May, her sister, 2

said U.C. would never take it upon themselves to accept it.

I said, "Well, there are many points in which we must view

Maud's coming here with that work. Before I speak of it to

that body I must consult our lawyer ["General" John

Dickinson] for eleven years. He will give good advice I am

sure." I will give you our conversation. I hope you will look

at it in the spirit it is given you.

The General is very practical and to the point. He

thought a moment after I had placed the matter before him.

Then he said: "That must depend upon the temperament of your

daughter." Then he asked "Do you want her to appear in

California in that dance?" I said, "No, as you know,

General, neither our boy nor ourselves have ever wanted her

to be subjected to the criticism of our enemies."

"Then why have you not advised her to that effect?"

"I have, and have even gone so far as to qualify ourselves [i.e. as optometrists] to be more fitted to meet her station abroad, which is far superior to that she would hold here should she come, but she does not look at my not being in favor of her coming to California in the same light as me."

"Why do you think so?"

"From what she said to me while I was over there."

"Does she still want to come here?"

"I think so, by the way she wrote to me. It was her intention to be here last May had she been financially successful last winter."

"To give this dance?"

"I do not know."

"Does she not realize that even her friends would be severe in their criticisms at her appearing here in such work when she remained away during your deep affliction, so that she

might perfect herself in other branches, which to my mind would be more in harmony with the pathetic side of the whole affair."

Here I tried to explain as well as i could the kind of dance (I dislike the word 'dance,' anyway I wish your work could be called by any other name.)

The General said: "No matter, it is the idea of her appearing in a dance, as a dance is a dance and sooner or later it will be given in Variety Halls. You have only to look at that Fuller girl's dance - it is given in the ten cent show as also in the free beer dives danced by painted up beer handlers."

"I agree with you, General, but so are the very best singers taken into such places."

"But the best people do not go there to hear them."

"No, but your daughter would not want her name sounded as the Fuller's when mentioning the dance."

"I know that would be so," said I. "While I was keeping

house for Mrs. McCoramack she had rooming with her a Mrs. Rogers who dances every kind of fancy dance. She is a very pretty woman, she would love to do the Duncan dance and she means to as soon as she has the opportunity of seeing it danced. She showed me her pictures in many poses of her dancing - the fire dance, the sword dance, flag dance, serpentine dance. "Loie Fuller was the originator of that dance," interrupted the General, so of course they all call it the Loie Fuller dance, and should you be seen here they would all call it the Maude Durrant dance. Well, there is not a dance she has ever seen that she cannot dance, for like the Duncan she has danced all her life. She does not get very much pay for her work but depends upon tips and a pourcentage for the beer she sells after 12 p.m., returning home at about 4 a.m.,, sleeping until about noon. Horrid. I only mention this to show what the General said is true, as with any speciality. She knows a girl who went to school in Oakland with the Duncan, who by the way was a dancing

teacher in Oakland. Well, my dear, to proceed with our talk.

"Then again the Church people would jump upon her very heavily indeed," said the General, of course not so heavy should she have the protection of the University, which by the way would be all honor, no pay, as all that's made in their theatre goes to the support of the University, but heavy enough to cause many a heartache. Whose idea is this of her coming over here if not yours?" concluded the General.

I told him it had been by friends who had seen the Duncan in Europe and should Maud come in such a way it would tend to place this new art high classed as it is in Europe. "Again, there is no future for such art but just the fad for the moment, and the money there is in it becomes the object, while with the legitimate arts there is an incentive to become higher and higher until the highest point is gained," argued the General. "If this girl Duncan has made a swell in Europe, I would advise your daughter to

be as she has been, remain over there where it is well received, and where she is respected, and not take any chances with that dance over here. If she must come before the public here, let it be in a work more suited to the surrounding atmosphere of California."

I said: "My daughter has felt she could not do herself justice with her piano. No one would expect big things if we don't do the very best we know how. In her case the public would show her much more respect at her show of courage to come and do the best she can in this other work."

"What," asked the General, "is keeping you and her father here? If you were both with her perhaps she would never think of coming here. I cannot see what is to bring her here unless it would be that she were giving concerts. Write and tell your daughter what I say, then should she come she cannot say she has not been forewarned as to what people will remark of her dance. Tell her to remain where it is accepted without comments as to her taking on such work; I

speaking in her interest as it is nothing to me."

I thanked him and left with a heavy heart and it has taken me two weeks to write you his idea of what is best in the matter. I will not do any more in this matter until I hear further from you. It seems so strange that after our talk a letter should come telling us of the Loie Fuller gone as far as she can in her line, and she might impose something upon you which would bring you down to her level, so take care of her, better to go slow than have her spoil your ideas. Why, you have met a number of people who have helped the Duncan, have you not? Well, my dear, if you do not get along, don't worry, you have your parents who will give you a warm welcome when you are tired of trying. It will take lots of worry off us when we are having a quiet life all together or near enough to visit our little girl. We are getting along in years now and would be happy if only with three rooms to be near each other. If it must be here,



why, when you are ready to come, say so, and we will be only too happy to send you your expenses to come to us, but not to go back unless we all go, which in that case it would be very foolish to bring you here, but I hope it will be very soon one way or the other. Why not do as I wanted you to do, when I came home, don't you remember? I asked you to come home, give up trying to come before the public, take what we can give you. I ask it again, for what is the use of it, after all? You can come for the same amount as I did - slow steamer and Tourist Pullman - no one need know until you are here. It did not cost me \$150, we will send you that amount anytime you say so. Of course it will be like beginning all over again, but it must be one way or the other sooner or later, why not now? Now, my dear, don't think this letter is written to discourage you, do what you have always done - whatever is best for your own happiness and you have our good wishes for your welfare. I wish we could do more but that is impossible. We know that what we

o is not near enough to pay the expence of your living, but  
what can we do? We are living very humbly so as to live  
within our means, but so long as we both have our health is  
all we ask, than to know what our little girl is  
doing when we lay down at night. Now with much love and  
good wishes  
your ever devoted parents.

4 1564.

5 2352.

6 2550

7 3384 LONDON

8 3685 KILMANN

9 3711 SOUTH AFRICA

10 5051 INDIA

11 5051 TOULOUSE

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ERL+K

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