



6-15-2000

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Recommended Citation

Cooperman, Robert (2000) "Sophia Starling in England Writes to John Sprockett, Colorado Territory, Late 1875," *Westview*: Vol. 19 : Iss. 2 , Article 30.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol19/iss2/30>

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Sophia Starling in England Writes to John Sprockett, Colorado Territory, Late 1875

by Robert Cooperman

Dear John,
I have grappled all morning
with how to break my news to you.
The swiftest way best:
I'm to be married.
Perhaps I have erred in answering your letters,
which would have surely ceased
along with your infatuation
when I boarded my train in Denver:
you the one who didn't wait
to shake hands like true comrades.

I would be a liar
to say I don't miss you:
especially when the east wind
blows dustily in high summer
and I can smell thin mountain air,
a campfire, the rank perfume
of horses ridden over rough terrain;
hear the songs you sang—
little miracles of civilisation
in that pagan-glorious wilderness.
Our grand scaling of Long's Peak
is a memory that warms my heart
as a match illuminates a lamp
and in turn, a whole room.

Edward is a gentleman,
a physician devoted to the poor,
thus a paragon in my eyes.
Wish me well; find your own joy,
or better, the treasure of contentment,
its surfaces not so easily tarnished
as the base pyrite of brief ecstasy.

To be continued in future issues.

The poems that comprise *The Badman and the Lady* are part of *IN THE COLORADO GOLD FEVER MOUNTAINS*, published by Western Reflections Inc., P.O. Box 410, Ouray, CO 81427.

