

No. 54 West 46th St.
N.Y. Dec. 24th 1884

My own precious Harry,

I tried to write last night, but had to give it up, for I found I had some extra work to do that I hadn't counted on, and company came, & altogether I had a hard time. I was so disappointed for I wanted to write to you every day during the holidays. I have been so rushed all day that I feel completely worn out, and told them all I tho't I'd enjoy spending my Xmas in bed, more than any other way. I dont think I was ever so tired before as I have been the last few weeks, & this week it has seemed as tho' I must drop. I have lived two days, (& three of some people's days) in every one, but I could not help it. Now at 11:30 P.M. I have got a little time to write. I have been dying to do it all evening, but my things had to be finished, and tomorrow it will take me all morning to make an extra present. My dearest dearest Harry your present came to me this P.M. and I am too full for utterance. Oh! if I had you here perhaps I could do the subject justice, & you could see my appreciation and delight and that would show you better than any words could do, but now, alas! I feel perfectly helpless. What can I say? Nothing seems to be expressive enough. My feelings defy any words, but my darling boy knows all that is in my heart without being told. How very fortunate it is that you know me so thoroughly. If it wasn't for this comforting tho't I should be actually unhappy, for you could have no idea of my delight and appreciation, if your only means of knowing was thro' this letter. Why Harry I should be wild, for I'd be just as clumsy as I am now, and what could my poor miserable letter show you? Nothing, absolutely nothing, but now it doesn't worry me for I know that between these lines you can read, and understand all that I would like to be able to say, but if you really see my heart as it is, & as I think you see it, I dont believe even you could find language to express all you find there. Of course I would like to write a beautiful letter, one that could do the subject justice, and if I could write all I feel, I think I would do the subject justice. My! wouldn't you be proud if your future wife could write such a letter as that would be, but tho' you'd admire the letter & be proud of me because I could write it, you really would not know any more than you do now. We know and understand each other so perfectly, that words are not necessary. We can make our feelings known without them. Isn't it wonderful to feel so, & isn't it fortunate that we can feel so sure of being understood? And now on top of all that, I have got to make a confession, and own that I dont quite understand one thing. You said you had ordered "a little thing" to be purchased in N.Y. & delivered to me on Wed. Well I didn't receive any little thing, and dont know exactly what to think. The present was bought in N.Y. and was sent at the time you said, but it was very big, and very valuable, and I dont see where the little thing comes in. You couldn't have ordered a "little thing" besides, for if you did, I will give you an awful lecture, & will refuse to accept it, will make you keep it for my present next Xmas and decline any other present then, for I wont encourage any such extravagance as that, but Harry, I cant believe you would do such a thing. I dont think that even your love for me, or your generous heart, could make you do anything so wrong & foolish. Besides you would know that such extravagance would frighten me. I'd be afraid to marry you on a small income if you used money in that style, but I am sure you didn't do anything so dreadful, and yet as you told me to write if the "little thing" didn't come I suppose I must do it, because if you did it, you can refuse to take it because it wasn't sent on time, and thus get out of it nicely, but if they act up about it, & wont refund the money, I have told you what you must do. But I hope that I wont

have to see you in such a poor light, for I would really think you had done wrong. My idea is, that you at first ordered something different, and then changed your mind. As your letter of the 18th speaks of the "little thing" you must have changed your mind at the last minute almost, and perhaps you had to telegraph. I hope that the elegant present I rec'd wasn't what you called the "little thing," for if you put on such airs, and call Grove's Dictionary a "little thing[']", what must you think of my poor attempt at a present. If you look at your present to me with such contempt, you had better give the "Thing" I sent you to the first poor person you see, for by the side of your presents to me, it is nothing. But I suppose you'll say "Oh that is different." You see I have conceit enough to believe that you'll be pleased with it, and that it will not come amiss these cold nights. As I said before, I have never tho't you would think it "a thing of beauty" (and probably it wont wear well enough, to be "a joy forever"). I had too good an opinion of your taste to think that, & you would never say it if you didn't mean it, so if you say it it will show a want of taste that I could not have believe[d] possible & I will think that love has made you blind, but you know why it is so homely, & I believed you'd rather have it so, and be able to get some comfort out of it. But goodness! I cant speak of that thing now, for my mind is too full of other things. My own Harry, Grove's Dictionary, only think of it! Grove's Dictionary, the very thing I have longed for and actually craved for several years. I never expected to own one vol. or even a few pages out of one & now I have all three. Just think of it! No wonder that I'm kind of loony, & dont know whether I am myself or somebody else. I keep wondering "if this be I, as I think it be, how under the sun did I come to own these books"? I can hardly believe my senses. Then I look around and see my darling looking at me ~~from~~ thro' a frame, and then I can account for it all, for he can do anything, & knew just what I would like and ~~humoured~~ humoured me. If he always humours me in every thing as he has done so far, I'll surely be spoiled. He knew that first of all I would like his picture, and wanted that more than anything he could possibly give me. He had already given me himself, and as I had him, his picture was what I wanted most. It was the next best thing to himself. This was all he ought to have done for me, but he was not satisfied. He knew that these books would please me and so he allowed his generosity to have its way and got them for me. I would rather have them than any piece of jewelry, and since I had rec'd your picture nothing could have pleased me so much. But my own Harry it was too much for you to do, yet I cannot find fault with you, for I know how you felt about it, & I dont feel as I would have if you had spent so much on jewelry or anything of that sort, for these books will be "a joy forever" & will be a valuable acquisition to our library. We'll always have them, and I dont think it is a waste of money or a foolish extravagance, and so I dont feel badly about it, but I think you are too good, & that you ought not to shower so much on me at one time. Your perfect picture with the frame, and all the things you sent ~~you~~ the others, ought to have satisfied you, and then you could have saved this for next year. But I know how you felt about it. If it hadn't been for a big scheme I have had for a long time I should have allowed my feelings to run wild, and would have sent you what I first tho't of, & came near deciding on. You mustn't ask me what this big scheme is, that held me in check, for it is the one I alluded to some time ago, & one I am hoping to surprise you with some fine day in the dim distant future. It is a pet scheme, and yet it is one I can never carry out if I dont keep it always in mind, and even with the greatest care I may not be able to carry it out. But I can imagine how you feel by the way I feel myself & I know what a pleasure it is to you to make me happy. Either I'm not as possessed by generosity as you, or else I hold it in better

check. I believe I am just as fond of giving as anyone, but I have been obliged to fight it. I believe you can save, as far as it concerns yourself, but you cant make up your mind to save on me, but you must hereafter. This time I wont say one word, for I am too delighted. You couldn't have made a better choice, or a more useful one, but you must never again do so much at once. I know your weakness now and next Xmas I'll "head you off," for aside from your doing so much, you must consider the danger of spoiling me. If you begin so I may sometime become so unreasonable that I'll insist on your keeping it up, & then you'd regret getting me started wrong. It wont be good for me to have more than one present at a time. You see I want to warn you in time, for if you make me extravagant, we'll have an awful a time, for I see very plainly that I'll have my hands full to hold you in check, and you mustn't not spoil me so that I will be unfit to do that. But it was awfully sweet for you to do it, and I cant lecture you this time as I really ought to, for I'm so happy over your presents. ~~and~~ I have felt that your picture was a necessity to me. I haven't said much about it, because I knew that you understood how much I needed it, and I was almost sure you would send it for Xmas, & if you hadn't I should have kept at you in every letter till I made you send one, & that wouldn't have been any thing more ~~that~~ than right, so I cant go for you there, or because you had such a large one. Oh Harry it is a constant delight to me. The likeness is wonderful. Mamma thinks as I do, that she never saw anything like it, and says when I get out there, the same man must see what he can do with me, because she isn't any better satisfied with my pictures than you are. I feel as tho' you could speak, and I couldn't have imagined anything so life like. Why, do you know that even Fritz knew it, and when I put it down to see if he would recognize it, he got as excited over it, & smelled it, and then growled, as tho' he was disappointed because it was not live. He acted too funny for anything, as if he didn't know what it meant to see you in that way. It is the first picture he ever noticed, except one Mrs. Landen had of a cat, life size. It wasn't in a frame and was on the floor against a chair. It had a dark background & stood out wonderfully, & Fritz came in the room, saw it at once, & began to bark, and then made a rush at it, but ~~h~~ we rescued it in time. No one called his attention to it. In fact we didn't think of it, and didn't know what he was barking at till he rushed at the picture in such a ferocious way. Since then I have often tried him to see if he'd recognize photos of different people he was devoted to, but he has never shown the slightest sign of recognition until yesterday morning when I showed him your's, and there ~~we~~ could be no mistake about his knowing it. Let that proof of the likeness speak for itself. Now you must distinctly understand that all my little hints about your being extravagant were not suggested by the picture. I needed that. It was an absolute necessity, and it wasn't possible for me to manage without it. I had to have it and if it hadn't come Xmas I would have insisted on having it if I'd had to pay for it myself. It was a lovely tho't of your's to have it so large, and I'm so glad you did it. I cant feel sorry that you gave me the books. I ought to, but I cant, so dont let any thing I have said worry you for I am delighted with them. It was only that it showed me your tendency to spoil me, because you wanted to do so much for my happiness, & so this time I am really glad you did it. I know you'd always do it if I'd let you and your generous heart would run away with you and lead you to do things you ought not to ~~know~~. I know how gladly you would give me everything, & will always take the will for the deed. This time there is more "deed" than you must have next year. This is more of a lesson for next year than a reproof for this. I only want you to see that I dont expect or want you to do so much for me next year, but appreciate and delight in this year's present, and couldn't wish that

you hadn't done it, and I don't want you to think that I don't feel pleased, for I am more than that, and tho' the books suggested all this, I am not at all inappreciative, & not at all sorry, so please see that all this is intended for advice for next Xmas & is not meant for this, and you must understand it as I mean it. Oh my darling I would like to write on & on for a whole week but I can't. It is really morning now, and I can't keep your Xmas letter any longer. I enjoyed your last letter, so much this morning, and also the one I received last evening, with the sheet from Sue's letter. Yes I'm sure that the next few months will not be so hard to bear, & that every thing will go better, and I am sure things at Madison are all straight. I sent the box this A.M. and they promised to have it reach Madison on time. I sent for the expressman last evening on my return from Orange, but he didn't come till this A.M. I do hope it will reach there on time. It hasn't been any extra trouble for me, for I had to go to the music store anyway, & you mustn't say another word about it, or I'll be real provoked, for if it had been anything extra it would not have made any difference, for you know I am constantly doing errands for other people, and it is a pity if you have to make so many apologies for asking me to do any errand for you, and particularly a thing that gives me no trouble at all. You ought to be shamed to hesitate a moment about sending to me to do anything for you, and you ought to feel that you are perfectly free to do it, without making any apologies. I wrote Sue last evening so they'll be on the lookout for the box. Mag's present didn't come till after the box had gone, but I mailed it at once & I guess they'll get it tomorrow, (or rather this evening. Merry Xmas my dear dear boy. I bet I got ahead of you this time, if you did beat me on New Years, for I guess you are asleep by this time, (even allowing for the ~~distance~~ difference in time,). If you are not you ought to be. Don't tell me to "practice what I preach" for you know "that it is different" _ besides I know almost, that I won't have a chance tomorrow. (today I mean) I wanted to hear the music at St Francis' but must give it up & make another handkerchief case, and it will take me nearly all morning if not quite, but I've got that handkerchief case business down to a fine point now & do it in less time. Then all kinds of things have been planned for the afternoon and evening, but I'll leave everything else to tell in my next letter, which I will write as soon as possible. There is so much to tell. I never fared so well as I have this Xmas, but now I really mustn't begin to tell you about it. I will read your letter (that I have been dying to read ever since it came) for you know it is now Xmas morning, and then I'll go to bed.

Goodbye my own dearest Harry. May you have a happy Xmas, even if it isn't merry, tho' my poor boy I hope it won't be so very dreary. I hope someone will make it merry for you, and that the day will not be an unhappy one. Our first Xmas mustn't be that, & I know that you won't be really unhappy, tho' your longings may sometimes make you think that you are. I think of you all the time, and we'll be very near in spirit all day, as we have been all of Dec. 24th. With fondest deepest love

Your own devoted Effie.