

Vassar 1868

March 7

P.M.

My Dear Belle.

I have just said "good-bye" to Louise, who is going down on the evening boat, to spend the week's vacation at home, and coming back to my room, I thought I would take occasion to do what I have long been meditating, but have post-poned from want of time; viz; write and ask you if you received our replies to your invitation to come and visit you at Christmas time. I think you must have done so, or you surely would have branded us as ungrateful, and written to us inform you wished to cut our acquaintance. — But if you did receive them, we thought we should have heard from you before this, and yet, as I reflect that you are in school as well as we, it does not seem so strange, for I know how time passes — Well, that is funny! It just this moment occurred to me that "Good Friday" is this week, and then a letter is due to you from me, and vice versa. Well perhaps two days before the "Eve" will be as good as keeping the contract literally, and I won't stop because of the thought. By the way, we did not hear a word from you last year at this time. — As you may have already inferred, our Spring recess commences to-morrow. I expect to spend it quietly here. I hope to get somewhat rested, for I have worked hard all the term, and had my annual lung attack and siege in the infirmary, about two weeks ago. — But I have my essay for Commencement to write, and do not particularly relish the prospect, — yet though work, it will be a change. Appointments for Commencement were made about three weeks since. Louise has the valedictory, and Mary Rhodes the salutatory. They, with Nellie Storke (she came the second year, — a very fine girl) for a poem, were appointed by the class. The others for essays, Misses Avery, Beckwith, Ely, Glover, Leland, Whitney and myself were appointed by the faculty. The ten mentioned unfortunate beings will proceed Wednesday A.M. June 24 to enlighten the enraptured audience who shall gather to listen, on topics which doubtless otherwise would never have had full justice done them. — The night before, there will be an address before the Philaletheus, and in the afternoon "Class Day" exercises. I think these will be interesting. L has the poem. You know they formed the "class organization" the second year. I did not join the class until just before I went home last summer so of course I do not take part on that day. And there will be a Junior Exhibition or Concert Monday night. — Cannot you come and spend Commencement week with us? Surely you ought to visit Vassar once before all those you know have gone. — "Founder's Day" is, of course, the present interest, being so near at hand. I fancy the literary part will not be quite up to the usual standard, but expect considerable from the "Cantata", of which Prof. R. has been composing the music, and Louise, Nellie Storke, Susie Wright and a Miss Taylor, the words. — I suppose I must have told you about the new professors in the Language and English departments. Mr Hart is to take Prof. Tenney's place. He is a dashing looking youth, unmarried, and said to be quite smart, and of considerable reputation among scientific men. He comes permanently in May, at which time Prof. T. will take his departure for Williams. I hope it will not harm the college, but it seems unfortunate about professors¹ leaving. — Oh Belle, were you not, when you were here, in favor of "Suffrage for Women"? I think we did not discuss the matter much, but I have the impression you must have been on that side, as you are a Radical in most everything. And have you heard Tilton or Holland? We have had both of them, to lecture before the Philalethean this winter. We have most emphatically heard "both sides". I think the people who uphold Holland will scarcely find a more talented and powerful advocate of their opinions than he, but his endeavors show how poor a side it is. — Do you believe, Belle, that the only end of woman is "marriage" — that she who fails of that

may be happy in another world, but never in this – that a woman who is earning her own living is wronging some man whom she is keeping from a situation which would enable him to be married, etc., etc.? – And to have a man stand up and tell a person of common sense that the only remedy of the great "social evil" (the evil which makes my blood curdle, and the existence of which would make me doubt God's goodness, if anything could) is marriage, is enough to make me feel that the world which will allow such a man to be tolerated hasn't advanced much since the time of my Biblical namesake. Is there no way for these wretched women – many of whom have been dragged to worse than death, – by sheer starvation – but "marriage". I believe the civilization of the 19th century has something better to offer than that – but Dr. H. doesn't. – Not but I think true marriage is noble and honorable, – but if I am to "accept the first offer I receive for fear I shall fail of my chief end in living" – I think we may as well come to the conclusion that human beings are mistaken in supposing that they have souls – and that they are in reality but animals. – I felt after hearing that man that if I believed him – which thank God I do not, – I would be tempted as "Marion Earle" to doubt if there "were a God in heaven"! Pardon my incoherency – if you have heard him you may understand what I mean by it, – if not, believe me it is but a slight expression of my disgust with Dr. H's views, which he is with great zeal promulgating this winter. Do write soon to yours lovingly

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