

Vassar College.
September 18- 1865

My dear Jen,

Very often have my thoughts traveled towards "the setting of the sun" since I have taken up my abode in Vassar but this Saturday is the first day I have found to write you. I need not tell you that your card had a hearty welcome from Jane - that you may always know. And now where can I "begin to commence" to "send forth" for your edification, - I am again a school-girl in name and truth under law and order as in the days we used to know - but how changed! - Yet Jen I am so contented here - so satisfied - there is not that uneasy restless feeling in my heart which I have before felt ever since a year ago when the object of my life was taken from me. I find in close study and new thoughts the refuge from sadness which I longed for. The first few days I was lonely and [strange?] enough but now I am acquainted with so many and find such good friends among the students and teachers that I am with them at home. I have been here three weeks and over. The last few weeks at home were full of business - until the starting day came on. A concourse of people followed me to the depot consisting of the near friends, Amelia, &c. The train abounded in Warren people so we were not without company as far as Cleveland. We came around by Albany. The ride down the Hudson was perfectly charming. The day was especially beautiful and the scenery along the way filled my heart with peacefulness. The hills are as friends to me in their grandeur. I went to New York and stayed over night with Marcia at Mrs. Brown's. Wednesday night that was. On Thursday we went out to Central Park and enjoyed exceedingly the many beauties there. We spent four hours there. I was completely lost in admiration but you know its attractions. On Thursday at three o'clock I left the city and was all alone found myself a stranger among a traveling world with a new future before me. At seven I was put down in Poughkeepsie but it being too late for admittance into the College I helped fill up the Hotel and waited for the morning's light with anxiety. At 8 on Thursday the omnibus appeared marked "Vassar College" and "Mrs. Miller" patronised It. We are two miles from the city so about half past eight I found myself facing the elephant: with a fluttering heart- I gave my name. paid my [...] was [introduced?] to one of the [teachers?] - then conducted up four flights of stairs to my sanctum which had been assigned me. Alone and away from home, no Jen or Amelia around, how desolate for awhile until the Saratoga came, then I had plenty to do unpacking what mother had carefully stowed away. The first day two hundred arrived and they have been coming ever since until now our family numbers three hundred and thirty - excepting Professors, Teachers and their families - There are 340 students accepted for this year. The building is very extensive and fine beautiful within in newness. Our rooms consist of a Parlor containing a round center table, a "what-not", chairs, with walls of hand finish and wood dark. These Parlors are our study rooms. off from them are two, three, and sometimes four rooms - for bed chambers. These are nicely furnished with oak furniture - a cottage bedstead, wash-stand, bureau, wardrobe, and a chair - no carpet on the floor, except a strip in front of the bed like the Parlor one. We have a good mattress and plenty of nice accompaniments - are warmed with steam and lighted by gas. We have bathrooms on every floor, also warm and cold water. The College looks so nicely now while new. On the First Floor are the Post-office, chemical rooms and in the back part the kitchens, so well arranged in everything. The second floor. The Parlors,

furnished with green and rose colored covered chairs and sofas, marble tops, &c. also the dining room, President's rooms. The Third Floor has the Chapel, Library, Principals Rooms. The Fourth, the Art Gallery and Fifth the Cabinets. Then in every floor in each side of the halls are the recitation rooms, more parlors, and the Teacher's rooms. On our Corridor is the Infirmary – in here a Lady Physician, Dr. Avery. I wish I could conduct you, and your very appreciative Father and Mother through our home here. The Art Gallery, Cabinet, and Library are splendid – so complete in beauty and elegance. I could spend hours there studying the new delights – such line paintings and hundreds of specimens. Prof. Tenney, whose Geology we studied is Prof. of Natural History. He is very fine looking and pleasant, and has given us one lecture. There is a Prof. at the head of each department – and under them lady assistants. Prof. Knapp of Madison University is "Captain" of languages. There is one French lady Teacher, Madame Spartan, who has only been imported four months. I am in her class. Miss Lyman is very lovely. She is our Principal, is rather old, her hair is grey, but she has a young lovely face and heart. Pres. Raymond is all that is good and noble. We admire him very much, he is so very high minded – and intelligent. He conducts the chapel services morning and evening, also preaches to us on Sabbath afternoons – Sabbath mornings we have our Bible Classes. I am in Prof. Farrar's class. They allow those who are communicants to go to the city on Communion Day only – and whenever we go to the city we are not allowed to go without a Teacher. We arise at six and retire at ten – breakfast at seven, dinner, noon, tea, six, an hour allowed for each. We have excellent fare and plenty of everything. The tables look nicely with white cloths, silver and white dishes. We are seated at round tables, twelve at a table, and one, Teacher. We are to have an organ in the Chapel, back of this are a great many rooms containing each one piano for our practicing – they are very good ones. We make our own beds. Servants do everything else. Every Monday morning we meet our Corridor Teacher and are all obliged to give an analysis of the sermon heard the day before. Other mornings we meet Miss Lyman in the Chapel for twenty minutes, after Chapel service. I am studying French, Chemistry, Rhetoric, Music, and think I shall take writing lessons. Then we are required to practice gymnastics. I have a costume – as all have [short?] dress, hose, waist and bloomers like the dress. I shall not take singing lessons. There is a skating pond near. We are not in sight of the Hudson, which I regret so much. The Observatory is very fine indeed. They have next to the best telescope in the world. Miss Mitchell is Prof. of Astronomy. I take it next year. I like her very much and in so many of the Teachers have found warm friends. The scenery around is delightful – hills and mountains. The forests are turning into a deep scarlet and russet brown. I have an east window in my room. The sunsets are glorious here. I have a room-mate from N. York, Miss Helen Phillips – she is pretty, smart, tall, quiet, but very warm hearted. There are three other young ladies in our Parlor whom I like very much. One is a lame girl, another very beautiful – she commences the regular course, while the third is quiet and good. They are all good, though not professing christians. I am fortunate in being thrown among those whom I can love – but I must not forgot to tell you about the examinations which were the higher you know. The first week or two was taken up in that delightful way. We all went to Pres. Raymond first. He gave us a list of what we must be examined in. I was pounded in Arith., Gram., Geog., History, Rhetoric, spelling, also French, and we were obliged to write an essay and hand to the Prof. of English Literature. Well this was all delightful you know. I was so excited and anxious – but I had reviewed my common branches before coming away and I am happy to tell you that I came out of the mill alive and sane. The highest mark was 10.

After the examination, Pres. R. read off a long list of names, under mediocrity, and said opposite those names was put not fit to enter "Vassar College". He gave them the privilege of being examined over again or of going into Grammar & arith. on the spot. I was not one of those under the line for which I know you will congratulate me. I succeeded beyond my anticipations in not missing. I am very busy indeed. I fear I will not have much time to write or read but do keep me supplied with letters. I shall see Lou and Will in the winter. I do hope you can go to Warren this winter though you cannot imagine how badly I would feel not to be there. Give so much love to all

and I am your ever loving
Franc-

[Frances Harmon Miller to Jennie Elizabeth Clark.]