

Vassar College.

Oct. 30, 1873.

My dear Cara,

Last week I was either too busy or lazy to write to you on Wednesday, so no letter was sent you, and last night I debated some time the question whether to write you a letter or to write my essay. Finally I decided that my duty called me to the latter. Looked at my paper and pencil point for some time without accomplishing much, and now think the time might have been as profitably spent in writing you. This essay, by the way, is the bane of my existence. It must be handed in on Saturday and it can scarcely be called begun, only two sentences being written at present and very likely I shall strike those out. Essays are bad enough at all times, but these, our first Junior essays, we must read before the class, who have "carte blanche" to criticize; and not the class alone but its Professor, who is sometimes just withering. When we were told of this sad fate which had befallen us, we were ready to pack our valises and leave the walls of our not then "alma" Mater; but alas, they might have been prison walls for all we could do about getting out. Many were the tears shed, many the groans groaned, many the cutting sarcasm uttered in regard to Prof. Backus, but all to no avail. Our death warrant had been sealed and the only course left us was to bear our fate like noble Vassarites. Choice of subjects was left to us, but I, with many others preferring not to choose for myself, went to Truman J. and demanded something to place at the top of my sheet of composition note. Immediately he said, "I want you to write upon Sam Houston, do you know much about him?" Meekly I answered "yes." Do you like him, "yes." Then you can make an interesting essay about him. Sadly I departed, knowing that far from being an interesting essay. It would be so dull that I hoped the greater part of my audience would fall asleep, and thus I might avoid a part of the crushing criticism to be given upon it. Pity me if you can, you who never used to mind writing, and who are now revelling in bright sunshine and warm weather, more inspiring than frosts, fogs and freezing corridors. If all the class were poor writers I would not mind so much, but the best writers in the College are in our class, and it is hard to have them hear one's poor effusion.

I can think of no better way of trimming the skirt of your black dress than to put a wide ruffle around the back and puffs up the front. A ruffle, with heading like mine to go up where the ruffle ends, and then the puffings, like this. Be sure and put a standing ruffle of the same around the neck of the dress. I hope you can make something of the elaborate picture. I know of no polonaise pattern. All look about the same. You ask if my bracelet is here. X found it in my box of ribbons, which you remember I did not look over before leaving. I am very sorry as I have no particular use for it here. Have you seen no little black studs and pearl sleeve-buttons. I cannot find them here and need the studs as all my sailor waists are made for them.

How is Papa's bank getting on and have you seen his Cashier yet? Papa must have been exceedingly busy for some time past, organising the bank while he had an important case en hand.

Mr. Baker's death seems so sudden and sad. Do you remember his saying, the last time he was out at our house, that he never expected to have so pleasant a summer again as this one had been, and that in his life he had had few pleasanter ones?

I am going to paint in watercolours some this year, and have already sent for my

paints. Mannie Hopkins and I will be able then to take our boxes in our hands when we make each other visit, there. I have been copying a picture of Landseers, the little dens which I told you about, and some lilies of Prof. Van Ingeness these are all I have done so far.

Professor comes out every day now, although his ankle pains him a good deal and he walks quite lame. It is very wrong in him to use it so soon after the sprain, as it will make it last much longer, but he is like most men, obstinate, and cannot be persuaded to remain at home. He knows that nothing could go on in the Art Gallery without him, and so of course feels it his duty to be here. Don't you want me to send you some kind of a leather for your winter hat, If I can find anything suitable in Po'keepsie? All in the house must be too worn to use again. I have not sent the gloves yet because I thought the mails were so irregular that they might not reach you. Accept the greatest amount of love from your loving sister.