

Burlington Dec. 30./66

My dear, dear Mother,

We received your delightful letter this morning at breakfast. It was very kind of you to write us such a good long letter, and tell us every thing. We are at Mr. Catlin's now, we came here yesterday (Saturday) afternoon, and certainly I never was in a more delightful house. Our vacation has been perfect so far - I suppose that by this time you have received my letter written last Sunday, telling you of our safe arrival in Burlington and how pleasantly they are situated at Mr. Benedicts. Monday we had a very pleasant day, although a quiet one, in the evening the rest of them went to hear Colfax, but I staid at home and enjoyed myself reading and playing backgammon with little Mary, who much to my astonishment, and not a little to my chagrin, beat me badly each time. After the family came home they read aloud some long letters just received from Mr. & Mrs. Benedict - They seemed in very good spirits, but anxious to return. Mrs. Benedict is sure that they are both of them much better and almost ready for home again. Christmas day was very pleasant, at breakfast the presents were put on the plates. Katie gave each of us a book. To Helen she gave a very pretty copy of Tennyson, bound in library style, with marble paper and calf edges. To Hattie, a copy of Longfellow's new poem "Fleur de Luce", it's a beautiful book. I received a "Snow Bound", a green one. Wasn't she good? We gave her nothing, as we preferred to wait till New Years, so that if she didn't want to give us any she wouldn't feel obliged to and we could tell better what to get her. We are going to give her some thing to put on a beautiful bracket which she has, and which she is very anxious to fill. Hattie has made her a pretty little head fixing, and I have made one like it for Sarah - Christmas morning Katie, Mr. Benedict and I went to the Episcopal church. Bishop Hopkins preached. The music, which we went to hear, was very fine. We had a very nice dinner, oysters and turkey, and while it was in progress Mr. Catlin called to see us. He seemed very glad to see us, and asked a great many questions about Detroit and Detroit people. We had a delightful evening, during which Katie played the piano, while her husband, accompanied her upon the flute, and Mr. Lincoln Benedict accompanied her with his violin, the music was beautiful, and unappreciative as we are, we enjoyed it very much. The next day Miss Abbott from next door called upon us, and Miss Buckham sister of the Prof. also Mr. and Mrs. Angel. Mr. Angel is president of the College - He said that he had often heard Father spoken of - I forgot to say that at church we met Mrs. Allen. She utterly scouted the idea of my being the full grown plant which she had known in embryo, but condescended to express great pleasure at seeing me, and gave me an urgent invitation to call and see her - Charlie Allen I saw at a distance. He is grown up of course, and has been engaged for a dozen years, more or less, to Nellie Lyman. Wednesday about six o'clock Sarah arrived, and I immediately recognized a kindred spirit - She seems more and more natural to me, the more I see her. We roomed together and had the gayest possible time. I hated to leave there so soon after she came, altho' we had been there quite as long as I should suppose would have been convenient for Katie. Thursday we visited all day, and talked of making calls, which owing to a slight inclemency in the weather were deferred until the next day - Thursday evening is their church meeting and after it Mattie Buckham came in again to see Sarah. Friday the thought of calls was dispelled by a blinding storm of snow, of which you have probably read accounts if you did not feel it yourself. The snow was very deep, and walking almost impossible - but toward evening the snow stopped falling, and we went up to Sarah Frances' to tea, that is we girls.

Mr. Benedict's man drove us up, and Mr. Benedict himself drove us home - I must confess that the sleighing was poor, the snow having drifted so that by not considering it exactly the thing for us all to leave her the first evening. I believe they had a very pleasant time - The family live in the same house. Mrs. Wheeler devoting her energies to bringing up John's children - Mary Torrey called Friday. Hattie thinks that she looks older than Miss Mitchell - Katie is going to make a little company for us tomorrow night. I'll tell you about it next time I write - Mrs. Angel called on Mrs. Catlin after we came yesterday, and invited us to receive New Years' calls with her, an honor which we respectfully declined. Mrs. Catlin doesn't receive calls, on account of the death of a niece of Mr. Catlin's who has lived with them most of the time since they came into the house, Miss Myra Catlin. Her death seems to have affected Mrs. Catlin very much, especially at this season of the year, as she had been with them for four Christmases - She was only twenty years old and had attended Mrs. Worcester's school. She died last October, and Mrs. Catlin neither invites company nor makes calls. Of course both Mr. & Mrs. Catlin are anxious to hear all the Detroit news, and I told them last night every thing I could think of about every body. This morning Mr. Catlin brought down a beautiful paper weight of black slate set with most exquisite mosaics, a large one of St. Peter's Church in the center and eight smaller ones around it, which he said he brought from Rome for Father, but had never had an opportunity to send him, and so would give it to us to take to him. It is just about the size of "Snow Bound" only much thicker. The mosaics are perfect. The shading are as delicate as in a fine painting, and the designs are very beautiful and interesting, being mostly of Roman ruins - It is certainly a very beautiful and valuable present - Their house is delightful, and full of reminiscences of their travels. I do think that fewer pictures would look better in the parlor, but elsewhere there are none too many. Mrs. Catlin has grown old some what, and Mr. Catlin's beard is whiter, otherwise they seem precisely the same - I think they enjoy seeing us quite as much as we do them. As for Katie Benedict's I am in love with them altogether - Katie is charming, I do certainly believe that there never was another such child as her Mary, and words fail me when I think of her husband - He is just as good a husband as she and the rest of the family deserve and that is the most I could say for any man. As for your Christmas Mother dear, if the good wishes sent westward that, and every morning could make it so, it must have been a very merry one - Willie's letter did me a great deal of good, and certainly I shall answer it at the first opportunity. He fared beautifully did he not? His letter seemed full of gratitude to the kind hand that had filled his cup of happiness so full. Ah Mother! I wish that we could all of us give you some expression of the dear, dear love we feel for you - Willie didn't tell me who gave you the mirror, nor what one of Father's he referred to. I must stop and dress for dinner, altho' I haven't said a third of all I want to - But I shall write again very soon and say some more things then. Love to Father, tell him that his memory seems very green in Burlington yet. I must say that I suspect that any attention we have received here is much more on his account than our own. Miss Foote is to be congratulated. Thank Father for his note on the envelope did he mean Mr. Howard? Mr. Kent seemed quite exercised about June. He was also deeply impressed with the fact that Tom Pease seemed matrimonially inclined, and called upon Sarah in Montpeiler, apparently for the purpose of impressing upon her the startling fact that she was the object of his choice Le. T.P.'s, a fact which startled Sarah quite as much as she imagined it would T.P. himself. I must stop. Good bye. Much love to all. Your loving child Mattie - I think that case was brought home. Happy New Year -