

Vassar College. Poughkeepsie, N.Y.
November 4, 1876

My dear father:--

I am late in answering your letter, for there were many things to be considered.

Paradoxical as fact and assertion may appear, at first, I have been trying to follow your wishes and make them my rules in expenditure: my cash-book shows no extravagances in the items of necessity—washing, books, taxes. College items—and travel,—in September and to Philadelphia; these expenses have exhausted the \$100.00 you gave me in Septembers I have kept my books, as usual, in order.

If all had been done as I ordered, the results would now stand as I told you. when estimating in September: \$100 for winter suit, and the same for the bridesmaids dress.

But when the suit came I saw the value on the box and I wrote to say I was surprised to see it exceeded my order.

Also when the silk dress came to Philadelphia, to my dismay it had much lace on it—thus bringing the expense to far more than I expected and had ordered. I wrote at once to express my surprise and displeasure.

In both cases, I had to accept the situation since there was no time nor opportunity to change these things, even if one would force a dressmaker to take back. This lace etc., made the dress unsuitable for a plain wedding like Will's and too showy to sacrifice to dirty carpets, in any case. I had expected it to be suitable for both occasions: I know you agree with me that it would be bad taste to wear a dress—out of proportion in elegance to Lizzie Hohlman's. It does not touch the main question to add that my dress was no handsomer than Lide Hersh's, Kate Lyon's, and not to compare with the other bride's-maids nor Alice's; and Katie's and Lide's were fully as expensive, as I know.

While, therefore, it was more than I expected, it was not as handsome as other's in the party.

I cannot see the judgment of getting another at the inexcusable cost of \$150"—either, under the circumstances; although If I should tell you what the cost of some dresses of ladies you respect happens to amount to—you would see the difference between \$60. in 1840 and \$60 in 1876.

I hope, papa, I have not so bewildered you with feminine details, that you fail to see how my good intentions have been frustrated. I have mentioned the cases of others in this condition only to show you the relative valuation of these things: I know just how good you are and that you are grieved at the apparent principle of the thing. It worries me to think how inconsiderate of the real question—moral limit to expenditure—I have seemed to be—and, at times, really am. I do not deny that there are times when the example set by those in similar, or even less abundant, circumstances; when the innate love of nice surroundings, tempted by the knowledge

of means at hand; when the girlish impulse to gratify myself and others - all these conspire to war against your wishes, which I have tried to make my rules in this matter. And it is at the time when all these vanities get the control, that I wish for the pearl ring at Caldwell's and other impossibilities. One would not expect an old head on young shoulders, and it is a pretty hard fight sometimes to see the possessions of other people like myself and make a virtue of necessity--necessity, in a moral sense, which is at times so much harder to bear than actual want, because the bad side of one is in constant - no, we will say, intermittent rebellion against an abstraction.

But when I see the indulgences of some people--to generalise from Emma Logan--I am thankful that there is a higher stand to be taken than personal gratification, and that you take it--and so help me to
Assume a virtue, if I have it not,

Mother did not help me say about something suitable for Will's wedding - as she misunderstood my idea--and it is now too late to correct it-- If it is possible to get a plain polonaise in such a short time, well; but I will write about that to her.

I enclose the [pass?]: I can get leave of absence from Nov 10th to 17th, better than from the middle of the week to middle of the next, on account of the arrangements for weekly reviews. Another note will not be necessary.

[V?]: I missed hearing Mr. DeWitt when in Philadelphia and, above all things--almost, would like to stay in Philadelphia from Saturday till Monday to hear him.

Cousin Agnes asked me to stay with her and has written to reiterate her invitation. She is lonely without Alice and I should like to stay there over Sunday, as she wants it so much. I do want to hear Mr. DeWitt.

Mother wrote that you were there last week.

I will have all the arrangements made, so that when the passes and \$20, please, reach me next week- (about Wednesday or Thursday, I suppose) I can leave. The \$20 is for travelling and expressage and slippers, I have, at present \$2.96--

With much love and penitence--
Your affectionate daughter
Mary Thaw.

Is it fair to feel absolved, before being shrived?