

Woodbourne  
March 29<sup>th</sup> 1881.

My dear James,  
I have just been re-  
marking that I don't feel incli-  
ned ~~to~~ writing. But I have got  
such a budget tonight that I  
feel I must pay off the debt to  
somebody. That last sentence  
strikes me as a little ungrac-  
ious-sounding after the refresh-  
ing letter I got from you on Sat-  
urday, but there is a talisman in  
it if you only look deep  
enough, for just consider that  
you of all my beloved corre-

spondents, are singled out as  
having the first claim for a  
letter!

Before I go further I must  
give vent to my curiosity &  
ask you of the question. Whe-  
ther you can get away the Easter  
or not, is occupying your  
mind very much? Envelopes  
were invented, I have always  
thought, to keep the contents of  
letters private, but when they  
are not fastened up at all,  
that purpose is hardly ful-  
filled. I have no doubt that  
the people belonging to the  
different post offices your letter  
passed through, were much  
interested in your letter, but  
when you write to me I should

prefer it to myself & not want  
to share it with the public.  
I make allowances tho' if <sup>possible</sup> ~~it is~~  
I said before that, <sup>possible</sup> ~~it is~~  
Loren is filling your mind.  
Last Sunday week I was  
up at Mrs. Todd's to tea for  
the last time before they went  
for a visit to Knebworth. And  
tho' no event of any kind  
has taken place, yet even going  
to church on Sunday, for the  
Mrs. nor Mrs. Tatum were well  
& as I had been a good day in  
the morning with the <sup>top</sup> ~~top~~ I didn't  
feel inclined to walk <sup>there</sup> myself.  
So hear but business is not a  
very great inducement to go to  
church. There! I have slipped  
into the fault I am always

seeing in other people - talking  
as tho' "the assembling of our-  
selves together" was entirely for  
the purpose of having an in-  
tellectual feast prepared by  
the brains of some man. Still  
I must confess - such is poor  
human nature - that it does  
make a difference to the en-  
joyment of church. What kind  
of a man the clergyman is.  
Talking of events, suppose a day  
many small things happen in  
the country as in the town but  
at ~~consequence~~ but then they are  
not so much things of general  
interest. You can suppose every  
one to take a certain interest  
in the gossipy hearsay of the  
town but you can't expect many

people to feel much amusement at the prospects of the harvest, the scarcity of grass, or any of the other unimportant local matters. Some interests have to do with men & manners, country with nature in a rather common place dress. — the latter are perhaps the wholesomest but at times rather dull. — The drift of all this is apropos of writing letters.

Now the evenings are getting longer. I find nearly the whole of them taken up by the boys' urgent demands for stories. No sooner am I comfortably settled with in the drawing room by the fire, with my writing materials, or the new

Spectator — kindly provided by an attentive brother — or any other easy mode of spending the evening than in they come trooping. It is no hardship however, reaching to such an absorbed little audience as I usually have, the occasions when Louis is by himself & there is no strong public opinion to keep in check his remorseless passion for hearing the oft repeated adventures of Jack the Giant-killer or John Bull, Legation & remonstrates a little. There was never a happier day than when you got Hans Anderson for me. The stories seem to have a perfect fascination for them. Fortunately they bear repeating, for some they seem as if they

could never tire of, & they are  
always finding reasons why I  
should read them again. Last  
night it was Alfred who must  
hear Great Claus & Little Claus - Al-  
fred, who you may remember his  
mother described from the first as  
'not a child', - does not condescend  
to join our reading parties, except  
in an indirect way. I read  
it, & ~~that~~ I have read it before  
hundreds of times even to them,  
such was <sup>the perfection of</sup> their appreciation of  
its humour, that I found my-  
self laughing till the tears roll-  
ed down my cheeks.

Do you know that I am sitting  
writing in my room, "all the  
house is quiet" ten o'clock  
being awfully late in this un-

( 2 )  
sophisticated household. The wind  
is blowing gusts against the window  
the fire gives out uncertain & a  
cracks & crackles, it is getting  
rather low. I must leave off  
writing or I shall not have its  
light in the room after I get into  
bed.

You would hardly expect believe  
the pangs of remorse I felt when  
I found by your letter that I  
had never acknowledged those  
HMAS magazine you sent me  
that I enjoyed so much too. I  
can hardly believe that somewhere  
in some of my letters I have not  
mentioned the delight these un-  
expectedness gave me & how  
I whiled away a long Sunday  
afternoon over one, & how

much obliged I was to you. Well if it would ~~said~~ before it was all thought & now it is said.

The dining room clock I hear strikes eleven I must go to bed. Breakfast & you know is never later than half past seven.

~~And~~ I have foolishly been given another sheet. Well it shall only be a half <sup>on Friday if necessary</sup>.

~~Monday~~ - Thursday - Mrs. W. & I went to Rhodes. They asked me if I would go with them but I didn't think it would be right to give the boys another holiday as they have had such long ones & Easter will be here shortly.

Fanny Stackhouse is staying here <sup>parent</sup> they were to see her. She is coming to stay here until a bid I

believe. Mrs. Boyd & the four children were there too, they had been staying a week on their way to Bridport (isn't that the place they are going to?). They left for Lameston yesterday afternoon. Tomorrow & Saturday - Mrs. W. & I are going into town to get the baby's business taken. I shall have a long quiet day so I must be very busy - take some interesting piece of drawing or mind what I am in a breadful. My despondent state at present over my drawing. I have seen novel from Rhodes - "The Poor Traveller" that I can fall back on if I am a prey to dullness. Talking of books I don't know

how to send what books I have  
to back there is no one going  
down that I know of. I'll  
have to wait till Mrs. Stephens  
comes up & send a parcel down  
by her. And you might send one  
up by her if you like. Kind  
at any rate, you don't forget to  
send J. Buckhous's journal for  
old Mr. Looney.

There has just been a most de-  
termined rat-hunt going on  
in the garden. I had to run  
down to the schoolroom window  
to see it. The battle was to the  
strong, consisting of four shoot-  
ing, howling boys with sticks  
& three equally excited dogs, &  
the weaker side hangs in Charles's  
hands by the tail - a mangled

corpse.

I wrote to Dad on Wednesday.  
I am afraid that there is no  
chance of her being here at Easter.  
Lizzie will never let go under  
a month I am sure. Perhaps  
it will be as well for some things  
as I believe Mrs. C. would  
rather she came later. The house  
will be full of quail-shooters &  
the Dad of course won't share any  
room while she won't be one  
at present. I have no prospect of  
going any where for Easter. My  
Dad won't allow of my going down  
to his work or Trip's at this time.

Mrs. Clarke sent me a nice little note  
enclosing Missed Grace's letters &  
I must return them. Thank her by  
this mail & do more from  
your affectionate sister  
Mary.