

Woodbourne  
September 18<sup>th</sup> 1880

My dear James

As I wish to encourage you in well doing & as I know that people who only do their duty occasionally expect an immediate reward when they do, I sit down - or I take up my pen, which ever phrase suggested by the "elegant letter-writers" you prefer - to <sup>answer</sup> your delightful long letter received this morning - I don't know whether I shall be able to give you a reward equal to what you will consider your deserts.

For I am very stupid this evening (the fact being a phenomenon it deserves chronicling) not the usual conventional stupidity of letter writers, but occasioned by a headache, & my attention being distracted by some of the boys in the room who are looking at pictures & who expect me to give an explanation of the most startling. I have also had brought me by George & Louis, a small book called "cobwebs to catch young flies," a ~~two~~ volume to "Lined twigs to catch young birds" which used to beguile your unsuspecting infancy, didn't it? I found the dialogues between "Boy & Man" very monotonous, but not so my audience who listened with open-eyed interest & begged her earnest

ly to go on, when I stopped  
now & then to you. Happily for  
me it is "but night" & they have  
been borne off reluctantly by the  
long suffering Army. I got your  
epistle this morning, when Mrs  
Latenby & I drove into Cressy as  
we do almost every Saturday.  
I enjoy the drive, not for the  
excitement for that there is not,  
but the country looks so lovely.  
This is how we  
look:—



I feel that our appearance doesn't  
appeal to the aesthetic feelings of

Cressy. I do my best, as you may  
suppose, to lend an air of distinction  
to the turn out, but as I cling with  
all my might to the sides of the  
dog-cart, when we go into a par-  
ticularly deep rut, I recall with  
painful regret that happy morn-  
ing when the smooth roll of a  
luxurious carriage impressed  
on my features that look of im-  
mortal dignity & ease ~~which~~ which  
earned me a title. My present  
condition seems to mock. I feel  
that it is indeed "the Duchess  
in reduced circumstances. The  
sketch represents us when we are  
going evenly along a deep rut.  
Mrs Latenby has taught herself  
to drive & does not scruple to take  
a rein occasionally in each hand.  
As it says in that book "Beque  
Lady Disdain" - which I have  
just begun to read, "In the coun-  
try you must live on sensations

or be content to vegetate." & so  
I am thankful I can enjoy a  
fine morning, the glorious sight  
of purple mountains with the  
shadows of the clouds sweeping  
over them, & take an interest  
in the height of the wheat, the  
condition of the lambs fresh-  
ing about as they do, <sup>on</sup> a lovely  
spring morning, the sweet  
scent of the gorse hedges & the  
wattle with which the trees are now  
golden.

Sunday. You had no business to  
show that frightful scratching to  
Mrs. Stephens. As I have often told  
you "that is the worst of you", there  
really is a charming simplicity  
about you, you think people must  
be amused and interested where  
you are amused & interested, &  
you forget that one is naturally

interested in the performances of  
members of their own family.  
Never mind, my dear boy, it is  
an amiable weakness, only  
a little embarrassing to modest  
relations. I told Mrs. Satebury  
what you had done & explain-  
ed to him what I had sent.  
It seemed to tickle his fancy  
very much. They always call  
Mr. Looney my friend. Mrs. S.  
said "Oh! there's no knowing  
what you send". It's such a  
bother, I am always quite uncon-  
fortable when I am writing, for I  
fancy they think I write about them  
at least Mrs. Satebury laughs & shakes  
his head at me, & Mrs. S. smiles  
in rather a constrained way. I  
have to explain to them how much  
I have to say about things at home.  
Mrs. Satebury is in the room now & he  
says "what writing again?" It's quite  
embarrassing, for they are so exceedingly  
by birth, that it makes me feel quite

treacherous. But I don't do I? even  
the sketches were not sufficiently  
like them to be caricatures, in-  
deed I was too much afraid of get-  
ting them so, to get them like.

I am glad John liked "John  
Gilpin" but I was every dis-  
gusted with them, I could have done  
them better; some of them, the  
faces at least, are only reflections  
of the expressions in the book,  
but I was so hurried & I had to  
do them at odd minutes — when  
the boys were preparing their lessons  
&c — & I got them a good deal soiled  
tho' the boys were very good & had  
the greatest horror of doing them  
any harm. I did two of the mats  
— the "embrace" & the "linen draper  
bold" a good while before & then  
I had wait till I got some more  
jean, from Lanneston, & I had  
been thinking I had plenty of time  
when one evening — the Wednesday  
before the Moller's birthday, was

Gratefully dumbfounded me by say-  
ing "do you know next Tuesday  
is the 14<sup>th</sup> & you have it even  
cut out the things." So the next  
afternoon I set to work & cut out  
the sacket, but I don't think I began  
the sketching at all, till Friday or  
if I did it was only the beginning of  
one. Then on Friday I had done  
the whole of the sacket except the last  
two pictures on the back, & I had  
just been giving the finishing touches,  
to John Gilpin & the post boy, when —  
I upset the whole of the bottle of mark-  
ing ink ~~over~~ the sacket! Such was  
the ~~excessive~~ agitation of my mind  
at the time that I could never recall  
how it happened — but there it was  
on the smooth white surface, looking  
quite appalling in its blackness, — an  
irregular & not improved by my having  
attempted to dry it up with my mouth  
(was it that healthy feel?). There was  
nothing to be done but to put a half  
back in which I did the next morn-  
ing & put the two other sketches on  
it as well as on the two square  
mats besides driving into Tresey

for the fringe. Then Mrs Latent  
machined the fringe on & we sent it  
off early on Monday morning getting  
it ready of course over night.

I want the advice of you people as  
to what I better do at Michaelmas  
whether I had better go to Trepois.  
You know I had a very kind  
letter from Fanny a good while  
ago, but I have not answered it  
yet & I can hardly write now  
& say I am coming. Bessie asked  
me to go to Rhodes, but I have  
heard no more about it I think  
it will end in my going  
no where.

I must leave off they are  
waiting for the letters I'm sorry  
I can't write more

Your sister  
Mary