

About the card to  
 Christmas, I did send  
 you one. There is no answer  
 yet. My dear old friend  
 I have written over the  
 subject, but I can't  
 send it.

The Hollies. Jan 13<sup>th</sup> / 84.

I had your letter this  
 morning, and as I never know how  
 my time may be employed a day in  
 advance, I will begin to answer it at once.  
 To say that it was a very comforting and  
 encouraging letter would be to say what  
 is untrue, for pages out of the seven  
 being occupied with criticisms on our  
 unfortunate Christmas cards. So far  
 as mine is concerned, it is the best you  
 will receive from me, for what you say  
 has determined me to do what I have long  
 thought of, namely, give up sending them  
 to anyone. The custom has now become  
 a formality, so as I write to my acquaint-  
 ances one by one this year, I shall tell them  
 that I have dropped it. As for my poor Nigbels  
 card, which in my foolishness I thought  
 would be pleasant to you, it was neither  
 cheap nor dirty, when after much turning  
 over and consideration, I bore it from  
 New Town's store. Last night was one  
 of the worst nights mamma has had. I was  
 up five times during the night to attend  
 to her and prepare food, so that I got very  
 little sleep myself, and I began the day  
 with a dreary dead weight of anxiety and  
 dullness. I have come up with a

Bright face after breakfast, to say the post  
lad brought me a letter which would do  
me good!! It was yours.

Had had an unusually tiring day  
yesterday also, having been at Mrs Reed's  
for three hours in the afternoon, dressing  
and preparing the children, ten in  
number, also were to take part in the  
scene from the Merchant of Venice. When  
I came home between five and six, I  
spent the rest of the evening with Mamma  
and then at eight she had one of her attacks  
of faintness and prostration, which as  
Dr James tells us, may sooner or later  
be fatal. This was followed by an almost  
sleepless night, upon which came your  
letter. The children are going out this  
evening, tomorrow, Thursday and  
Friday. Thursday is here set at Mrs  
Joseph's, when I shall have to go and sleep  
there again, not staying here to take  
my place with Mamma, as we do  
not now leave the house together.

I have endeavoured during these  
holidays, and I hope with success,  
though at the expense of a heavy tax upon  
my own powers of endurance, to put  
all the customary Christmas brights  
into ten lines, for I was determined

that Mamma's illness, and my own  
trouble should not damp the enjoy-  
ment to which they were entitled, at least  
Filian and Noel, after the hard work  
of the previous term. Of course I could  
not arrange for any children's parties  
at home, but they have had their com-  
panions by two and three at a time  
and our friends here, trusting for I  
am situated now, have been more than  
usually kind in inviting them. I  
shall be glad when Mrs Joseph's affair is  
over, as I begin to feel that I cannot go  
on much longer. I wrote to the lottery  
at your request, enclosing the newspaper  
cutting and copying that part of your  
letter which had reference to the death  
of Major Crichton. I send you Major  
Cotton's reply. I have also made a note  
of the books (Roster & Monier Williams)  
which you wished ordering, and when I  
have sufficient money in hand I will  
procure them. At present I have only  
two pounds in hand for my current  
expences; house rent, school bills and  
servants' wages falling payable during  
the last week of the year, and the £30  
which you have sent through the India

will probably not reach me for a fortnight,  
it is generally that time before I receive it,  
after hearing from you of its being  
sent. The children enjoyed their party  
at Mr Douglas's very much. They had  
dancing and charades and got home  
at half past eleven. I have not yet been  
able to come to any determination  
about a suitable Continental school  
for Filina. Your sister writes to think,  
and is most likely correct in her opinion,  
that the preponderance of English girls in  
most French schools, renders the ac-  
quisition of the language (which is Filina's  
main requirement) almost impossible.  
To find a cultured and refined French  
family, and place her there as one of them-  
selves, would be the best thing, but that I  
should hesitate to do without personal  
knowledge. I am still making enquiries.  
Mamma sends her love to you. Filina  
will give you the account of the holiday  
making. I hope you too have been  
having a pleasant trip after the winding  
up of your Darjeling residence. The  
weather here is bitterly cold and very  
uncomfortable, and I have neither medicine  
within nor without to make it more  
endurable. Ever your loving &c.

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