

AL/1877 Bedford College.
20. Nov. 1883.

Very dear Mother & Father.

I meant to write to you about something on Sunday, but as you know I was away, & I had not much time; But I can't put it off for another week so I'm taking time now.

I don't want to ~~do~~^{write} it, - I feel as if I were going into a cold shower-bath, but I must write sometime: I wish I had talked to you more about it before. It is two things, - partly connected.

First: Father wrote me, - a year ago a nice long letter about the reasons of your objections to dancing, but giving me leave to do exactly as I pleased. Well, I thought then it was better not to ^{dance} & I did not though I wanted to very much when I saw the others all spinning about. But I've been thinking about it since, a good deal, thinking over all the objections & I have come to the conclusion that they ~~hardly~~ have not, with me, sufficient weight to counter-balance the reasons for it. Those reasons I think are that it is a pleasant & natural exercise for young people, healthy under proper conditions: & what Father has so often

said, it is a pity to make more points of difference from others than we can help. On the whole it seems to me, that almost all the objections to dancing apply, though not perhaps in the same degree to cricket for instance, - waste of time, - leading into bad company, waste of money, &c. But it is not easy to discuss a thing like this in writing: I've always felt that in the thing itself as it is done here, there is no harm whatever, & a good deal of pleasure & relaxation. And the other thing you said "Can we imagine Jesus looking on approvingly?" Yes, I can, as we have it here. And I think it must be left for ~~other~~ ^{other} times & places to be judged separately & individually.

Well, in short, I think when we have a party this term, I shall not hold back from the dancing. Of course, I can't dance one bit, & I shan't take more trouble to learn than I should any other game, but I should like to do it a little.

That is one thing: I had nearly decided about that before I came back to College, & I hardly know why I didn't talk to you about it then. The other thing I have thought less about, & it has come more suddenly: but on it also I am afraid I you won't think quite as I do.

They are getting up some acting for the party, & I was drawn into it, ~~some~~ ^{some} talking about it, I hardly know how, & then, ~~to~~ rather to my surprise, they allotted me a part, - not a very important one. This is a good deal like the other thing as to pros & cons. It's not at all a foolish thing we are going to act, - if it had been, I was quite resolved to have nothing to do with it. It is not written for acting: it's an American book called "Out of the Question." & the story is simply ^{this} a girl of a "first family" is rescued from robbers by a very fine & clever man who has been a steamboat engineer: she falls in love with him, her family are horrified, & her brother is sent for to set things right: he thinks the situation difficult, more especially when he discovers that the lover is a man who once saved his own life: however he resolves to do "his duty" & tries to set before him, as delicately as possible, that "it won't do". Very cleverly the man shows him how nonsensical & mean it is, & it ends up with a happy reconciliation all round.

My ~~part~~ ^{part} is the mother of the girl. Now, in acting it, we ~~are~~ shall have hardly any expenses, so there will be no waste of money. As to waste of time, I am not so

sure: but nearly all the time we give to it will be taken from the time when we should otherwise be listening to novel-reading.

If I were trying to make paltry excuses, I should say, & with truth, that the preparing will teach us both patience & frankness with each other.

We shall have a good deal of fun out of it, & those who see it will have lots of enjoyment, I know.

I have been rather perplexed about both these things for some days, & I thought that writing to you, besides making me feel that it was all above-board, would make me surer one way or the other: I half thought that perhaps after writing I should feel I could not do it. But I don't, though I ~~do~~ think I have not put my case ~~as~~ ^{as} strongly as I see it myself. The worst feeling I have is that it is a beginning of being different from you & that perhaps other things will follow now; but I hope not, & if they do I will ^{try to} do nothing hurriedly. Now if you would rather I did not do either of these things only say one word, & I won't. Or if you want to persuade reason with me again I shall be only too glad to read anything you write. Only, about the acting, please don't

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delay in writing, - if you do write, - as it will inconvenience the others if I give up my part when we're just getting into it.

The party, when these things are to happen is not till Dec. 13th.

Oh, I do hope you won't mind much or be grieved about it.

Now there are one or two other things to write about.

The microscope arrived yesterday: I was rather daunted at its size: I did not measure it, but I should say the box was about $20 \times 12 \times 12$ inches, & so heavy that I can only just lift it with one hand, & could not carry it very far with two hands. But I suppose that is no real objection, & I ought to have expected it. What do you think? It seems very good & well-fitted.

They have not sent the bill as it has only come on approval: but Mr. Stewart says it is £32.10s. Shall I say it is

to be kept?

Many thanks for the budget of letters this morning, which I have forwarded to Cecil. I understand now that you must have been too busy to look up Bonn accounts. But ~~the~~ ^{where} you have time I would like to know: I'm afraid I'm teasing about it, but the girls are most excited to know.

This evening I found a post-card ^{which must have come a day or two ago} asking about Alice's letters. I have seen none, except one I received from you this morning which I have sent on to Cecil.

I am astonished to hear the drawing room is not furnished yet. I thought you had ordered the furniture before I came away. I don't think I can make any suggestions on the spur of the moment, but I will be on the look-out diligently now.

I have spent almost an hour over this letter, so I will stop now, having no more to say of importance.

Believe me always

Your very very loving daughter,
Helen.

Nov. 21.

P.S. - Many thanks for letters, & lace received this morning. I will write to Frau Brédau.

Since writing this letter I've changed my mind I think four times about the acting: my chief feeling is that I can't enjoy it, or do it well, if I think all the time that it would vex you & others. But I'm not quite sure ~~whether~~ you would say about it. ~~If you have~~ It would make me feel much easier if you could just find time to send a p.c. with your advice, even without reasons, so that I should get it before the first rehearsal, - to-morrow afternoon. If I don't get it, - well, perhaps by that

time I shall have arrived at a more
definite conclusion myself

Your very loving & puzzled
Helen.