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See Hollis. July 9th /85.

My dear Husband.

What do you think Mrs. Helen Stephenson has been doing? Buying the very loveliest and handsomest and richest looking — — — seal skin jacket!! She naturally thought that when her husband came home, he would like to see her well dressed; and ^{as} she had only spent three pounds over the whole of her own dress last year, she has made up for it this year by laying out seventeen pounds on one single article! When that woman does so in her dress, she does it to some purpose. There is one thing her husband will be glad to hear, namely when she has that jacket on, she looks "quite the lady". It is to be hoped she will not die before it is worn out, because in that case it would be such a bad investment of money. There is one thing to be said to her credit, that she has not wanted any other remittances to pay for it, as she has been saving up the price for some time, in other ways.

I think that one page of gossip about other people's affairs is enough, so I will stop. What you say about Mabel's letters is sadly too true. About a year ago, I told her I thought she would write to you more freely if I did not look over her letters afterwards, as I always used to do, and this has been the understanding since. About a month ago the outside page of one letter she brought to me was so slovenly that I took the liberty of reading the whole, and the writing was so entirely discreditable that I told her in future I should read over all her letters again, just as when she was a child. Since then she has taken more pains, but her handwriting is pitifully bad for a girl of her age, and considering the pains which have been taken with her education. I will not however tell her what you have said, but leave you to write to her on the subject yourself. It is not quite just that you write to her in a uniformly appreciative and praising manner, and then ask me to do your selling for you. It places me at a disadvantage with

the children, and is too much like the method of Letitia, who on one occasion wrote very strongly to me about a want of sincerity and straight forwardness which she had noticed in Filian, whilst to Filian herself she invariably wrote in a strain of flattery, as though the child had done everything that could possibly be wished. Filian comes home three weeks today and very glad I shall be to have her back again. Most fortunately the lady who lives with Mr. & Mrs. Tallon has arranged to come to England this summer, and will travel with Filian as far as Osprey, so that there is no trouble about an escort for her. It is such a relief to me, for I could not expect Mr. B. to undertake the journey again. And it is a great saving of expense too. We are all going on as usual here. On Saturday Aunt Susan and Aunt Jane come to spend the Sunday. I shall be very glad when, for Mamma the meeting is over, as I fear it will write her. Mabel and Miss Johnson go out a great deal and are having a pleasant time. Noel sorts away at school. I have not

seen him look better and more cheerful
than he is now. He gets some nice little
changes by being sorer at the cricket matches.
I hope next year he will be strong enough
to play. I well remember that bit in
one of Mr. Ruskin's books, about the liberty
of the fish. We had it at one of our readings
but I cannot recall the volume in which
it is to be found. I will look. There is also
an equally good bit, in the same chapter
about the freedom of the fly and the un-
pleasantness he is apt to create of it.
For myself, I entirely agree with Mr.
Ruskin in his preference of guarded
and happy restraint, at any rate for
those whose souls are not sufficiently
full even for self-adorment. Ruskin
is now publishing, in monthly parts,
a sort of autobiography, called *Præterita*.
It is to be complete in three volumes
of ten chapters each. Each volume con-
tains twenty years of his life. My last
exploit was to make good strong calico
covers for all the beds and mattresses
in the house. They look so tidy now.
And I have just finished another quilt,
the fifteenth. But the dear God's perfect heart
call. Mamma sends love to you. Yours truly,

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