

Villepranche

Christmas, 1893

My darling Child: The sun has just set, so I am in one way a little late in wishing you and all a merry Christmas for this year. I trust it has been so to you, though you as well as I, if not so deeply as I, must have felt that the separation of a family greatly sways the expected pleasure. Last year I was in San Francisco; and uncertain as I knew the future to be, I assuredly did not anticipate that this would find me in Europe. I am & have brought with the Schiffs, as perhaps have already said - certainly I have mentioned the family often enough. They seem as if they could not do too much for us, and, which I dare say that a dozen or so of reasonably pleasant & gentlemanly men are an addition socially,

there is a cordiality in their way that shows
there is real kindness and good will be-
hind it all. On Saturday I went to Nice
to square up a lot of visits which I owed, &
in returning I met at the station the two
elder daughters - who must have - and the
third, who had just come from school with
papa for the holidays. Mr. Rogers (J.S.) was
also there, but he was looking for other friends
and so did not come in the train; conse-
quently I went alone in the compartment
with the three young women. I think you
would have laughed - I nearly did aloud at
the train - to hear them all chattering a hard
as they came, keep the train all at once, all
different and yet all with that odd family
resemblance, which strangers note so easily.
It is odd to see how young girls go about
by themselves here in Europe - so contrary to

the impressions I had. This was 6.15 - two hours after sundown - of course they would be out at the home station by a servant and their house is close by - but still we don't expect such freedom here. I was very tired that evening, and had already something like influenza - so yesterday, Sunday, I stayed in bed and took quinine. Today I am better, but very shaky. The running from eyes and nose on Saturday morning was excessive - showing either malaria or a touch of influenza, which is about. Of the latter it was very slight. Your letter of the 10th came three days ago - but I am really puzzled how to answer your question about books. My knowledge on the subject is very slight. Have you tried Oread any of the selections from Keats and Shelley in the Golden Treasury? They are great poems certainly - but perhaps might not interest you. A book like Agnes Repplier's might be suggestive to you - and I daresay that Hubert de St Amant's sketches of women would be useful in giving you ideas of periods then - or those times. Well down memoirs give more life like ideas of periods than history usually does - for the private motives of men, by which history is made, & mean much the same from age to age, the superficial details alter and this memoir give or may give. The book I have had sent you from London "Sacharoff," is in the line you speak of. Have you seen the Love letters of Dorothy Osborne? These two were good women of the olden time. I can only say that I will now try to keep my eyes open to note books for you, and would advise you not to be in too great a hurry. Buy & read - and as for Quinine be content for a time & have books in the bath - don't aim at filling a case all at once. There is a book now in 54th St, Memoirs of Madame d' Oberkirch, which with a lot of odd little girls also much curious gossip information of somewhat celebrated people - Marie Antoinette - Dorothea, the wife of the crazy Czar Paul, and mother of Alex: the ally of Napoleon, and many of many celebrities, as well as of aristocratic provincial life before the great Revolution. With regard to reading in French or English - the former is better, if you can read easily - but directed when are you to get the time? You don't know much French words & read without frequent recourse to the dictionary. I am deeply inter-

ested, and upon the whole pleased at your money-
 winning and pupils, but don't take any more now,
 and beware about getting yourself hurried. You have
 not yet reached the age when you can undergo drive
 without injury, and as no necessity exists it would
 be wicked to hurt yourself. Beware then of accumu-
 lating employments - you may find them here
 You as ~~the~~ time for quiet thought or prayer.
 It would be in every way bad for you, mentally and
 physically. Young organisms need spare time
 just for growing, which those who have attained
 maturity can dispense with. I do wish, too,
 that you would, as a kind of religious duty,
 save a little every month. Say \$5 out of
 the \$75 - it is not so much the amount as
 the habit of saving by for the future, which
 all should attempt. I have failed herein -
 I wish you would do better. I am also much
 pleased to hear about your voice - it is a nice
 gift to possess - but don't waste time, or get
 hurried unless it really is fine enough to pay
 you. I went to day to church in town, the first time

I have been to a service in church since ~~the~~ ^{Sunday} ~~morning~~
I spent in the country in England. On the way I met
Mr. ~~John~~ ^{Frank} Ogden and his wife - the latter I had
never before seen. Another visit for an I suppose.
On Thursday I am to dine at the Kobajovs & meet
Mr. Kuhn, and that evening a dancing party at the
Delgroots, when I suppose I shall have to show
up. To-morrow is their day, and as I have not yet
been I must do that. Then Friday there is a Joy
Symphony at the Schiffs, and the following
Tuesday I am to breakfast here nearby, and (if
I survive) a dancing shindy at the Schiffs that night.
I count for nothing in the dancing, of course, but
I rather like the meetings with the women. All
an very cordial and the society is so small you
feel quite at home. For the small numbers
there is a remarkable proportion of pretty
young women - which always is an attraction
to me - as it was to my father. It is a privi-
lous kind of existence, but no harm for me
coming incidentally for a little while. I cross
its charm with the delicacies surrounding, but

I should think it might easily pall and become
flat. I have not missed the girls for your sake,
being persuaded that occupation, good earnest
work with an object and an interest, such as
yours possesses, is a surer and more durable
happiness than the pleasure existence here.
For while in itself inadequate, it leads to nothing.
For one year or two years very well - but after
them what? With regard to your occupations
you must remember there is not only the Irish,
but that no one can do many things well; you
must concentrate on one or two, and touch
all others superficially only. I am so pleased to
hear of Lyth's efforts about his French - it
shows thought and determination with which
he will do well; for he has plenty of brains
and health, if he only uses them diligently.
When thus away from home, and myself crippled
for the work to which I am best fitted, my
greatest happiness is in hearing of you all
doing so nicely, and trying so hard

Tell mamma that if she wishes to acknowledge
the photo of Madame de Robiglio the address
is Boulevard Victor Hugo, Number 44. She
will remember that she is the Comtesse
de R. I enclose a note from Mrs Schiff
actually written by the eldest daughter, who does
her mother's writing. Is it not an extraordinary
hand? then certainly ought to be a patent
taken out on the "M," - and the D and O
are not without certain eccentricities of
accent. In fact if you will not be content
with merely making out what it is about, but
will really study it out and note the
formation of the letters it will repay you, &
suggest ideas as to the Origin of the Alphabet

And now, dear, this is a very long
letter. Give my best love to your
dear mother and the other Children
Your loving father
A. J. Mason

Dec. 25 - 1893

Mrs Helen Gray McKean

75 East 54th St

New York

Etats - Unis d'Amérique