

57
Clifford School Room,
April 6. 1867.

My dear young friend,

Here I am - superintending a School exam -
where I am as quiet as a lamb - sitting up like
a peck sham (after having attempted a crane!)
to overlook Annie and Pottie and Sam -
which by the way is rather a "flame" - only
to save my rhyme from a "jam" -

No Sam ^{at all} ~~at all~~ being here - as by the list doth
Mainly appear - But Tom, and one-eyed ~~Tom~~
George so queer - And little Jan with her hair
in a net - That wishes she did not know how to for-
get - And ~~some~~ dark-eyed Jane so steady and nice,
And Mary Anne and Anne Mary Price - Twins as
like as a pair of dice - And Lizzie the tippy keep-
er's daughter - That's taken a pledge and drinks
cold water - Nine in all, all striving for fame
- Do you know any one doing the same? -
Anyone whom I need not name? -

But here my doggel came to a tick, and I
was forced to shut it up quick, for time & place I
could not pick, but like an old lamp without a wick,

I just "went out", when my work was done, and
they went off at a walk or a run, convinced an exam:
was very bad fun, Tommy, and Proge that eye has
one, Polly and Annie with each of them two, and
~~one~~ fourteen-year Jane, with her jacket blue -
(It was red, by the way, but the rhyme wouldn't do!)
Nine that had all been striving for James, with
a puzzled head, and a hearty good-will, - Do
you know anyone doing the same? Anyone
that 'tis needless to name? I asked you before,
and I ask you still! -

I've "tried it with x's and tried it with y's" -

And the more I've tried it the worse it ~~gets~~^{grows} - And
it boils in my brain, and burns in my eyes - They
talk about being merry and wise, but I shall be
neither - this task defies all heart and hope - 'tis
under my nose from morning till night, - and the
sweeth wind blows, The sweet spring wind with its
fragrant sighs, And soft clouds float in the smil-
ing skies, And flowers from their wintry beds arise,
But all, alas! ~~is~~ ^{is} vain for me in vain! Better
would suit the drenching rain, Better the hail on
my window-panes, Better the blast of the Eastern main,

Better each weary troublesome thing, than the mocking
call of the lovely Spring!

"I've tried it with you, and tried it with X's" - The
more I try it the more it perplexes - Does anyone
want a thing that vexes? Here then it is - you may
take it all - All, and welcome, whatever befall - Look
out ahead for the coming squall - My mind's made
up and off I shall go - off to Hardwick "as
sure as a gun!" To see the last wreaths of the
fading snow, and catch by the hand old friends that
I know will joy to see me whenever I go, and
cry from their hearts, Well done!

There now. —

Did you ever read so much nonsense in $2\frac{1}{2}$
pages of note paper? —

Did you ever expect that from me?

Can you excuse it as simple reaction? The over-
flow of a brain squeezed up & cooped in so long among
the trammels of O' hess "s + - RA pre: NPD &c.
&c. &c. that it must break out somewhere? —

If you will forgive all that I have - I dare say
most unjustly - ~~ascribed to you~~ - at any rate most
impertinently, ascribed to you - and believe that I have

- I communicated your remarks on Light to Slack. She was still unsatisfied. because...

excited to ourselves in the matter, it will be all right. - I used you must know to be a bit of a rhymester in old, old days - and especially when I was in love! But I have not broken out in this way, I am sure, for years and years - and probably should not now, but that, as I said I have been so over-battered and utterly wearied with this 2^d Edition - that the reaction led to this outbreak.

I wonder whether your friend Simonides was ever obliged to prepare a 2^d Edition! If that were the case, it would be a fair punishment for him.

And now - it is really hardly fair - but may I beg permission to enclose something which I am afraid you will not like very well. You will forgive me, my dear young friend - but you know my old-fashioned notion that on some points you have had things put before you - and, very naturally, accepted ^{them} in default of any evidence to the contrary - to the truth of which I strongly dissent. You will I dare say remember some discussions we had on such matters. The enclosed will state what I believe to be fair and true. I shall be glad to hear its gain at your leisure - but better bring it with you. And now for another matter - in which I am going,

55

I am sorry to say, to give you a little trouble. If you don't remember, I am sure I do, the long consultations we held together - and the very pleasant walk we had at the time - among other places, to that delightful service at St. Paul's - I see we discussed the legal difficulties of some friends of mine, and your benevolent plan of getting Mr. Bompass's opinion upon the case. The occasion has now passed away - the sol^r. employed by my Co-Trustees having behaved so handsomely & liberally in the matter that no difficulty arose. But a matter has just come before me in my parish, which is beyond my legal ability altogether - and which is so utterly within the province of charity, that if I am not taking too great a liberty with you and him, I ventured to hope that your good friend might be induced to favour me with an opinion - or possibly you may know of some one in Cambridge who could answer the question - for I apprehend the resolution of it requires but a very small knowledge of law, though more than I possess. - To save you trouble I have written the case on a separate piece of paper - and if you could without inconvenience to yourself or interruption to your studies, get me an answer

(An answer it yourself - which by this time per-
haps you can do! -) before long, I shall feel es-
pecially obliged to you. The poor old people are getting
very fidgetty & anxious about it - and tho' I see
but little cause - for the old man is in no present
danger - yet that won't satisfy them. You know how
it is when people get "set on edge" -

There is not much news here - my little Observatory
almost unused, I need not say - a perpetual veil
of cloud. I dare say you recollect my truly excellent
friend Mr. Woodhouse - whose frequent visits used to
be so reviving & instructive - I expect to say they
are much less frequent now - he scarcely ever sees
us - because he has seen somebody else - at Bre-
con - to the great advantage of his health & spirits -
tho' some who have seen the lady (we have not) are
not in raptures with his choice. I should be very,
very sorry if it should happen to him according to
the old proverb preserved by Letimer

"well have I fished - and caught a frog!"
But time for me to have done. - My wife sends

her kindest love, & believe me,
Dear Arthur, your very affectionately
yours
Wm. Webb