

AMHERST, Jan. 29, 1850.

VERY DEAR A., — The folks have all gone away; they thought that they left me alone, and contrived things to amuse me should they stay long, and I be lonely. Lonely, indeed, — they didn't look, and they couldn't have seen if they had, who should bear me company. *Three* here, instead of *one*, wouldn't it scare them? A curious trio, part earthly and part spiritual two of us, the other, all heaven, and no earth. God is sitting here, looking into my very soul to see if I think right thoughts. Yet I am not afraid, for I try to be right and good; and He knows every one of my struggles. He looks very gloriously, and everything bright seems dull beside Him; and I don't dare to look directly at Him for fear I shall die. Then you are here, dressed in that quiet black gown and cap, — that funny little cap I used to laugh at you about, — and you don't appear to be thinking about anything in particular, — not in one of your *breaking-dish* moods, I take it. You seem aware that I'm writing you, and are amused, I should think, at any such friendly manifestation when you are already present. Success, however, even in making a fool of myself, isn't to be despised; so I shall persist in writing, and you may in laughing at me, — if you are fully aware of the value of time as regards your immortal spirit. I can't say that I advise you to laugh; but if you are punished, and I warned you, that can be no business of mine. So I fold up my arms, and leave you to fate — may it deal very kindly with you! The trinity winds up with me, as you may have surmised, and I certainly wouldn't be at the fag-end but for civility to you. This self-sacrificing spirit will be the ruin of me!

I am occupied principally with a cold just now, and the dear creature will have so much attention that my time slips away amazingly. It has heard so much of New Englanders, of their kind attentions to strangers, that it's come all the way from the Alps to determine the truth of the tale. It says the half wasn't told it, and I begin to be afraid it wasn't. Only think — came all the way from that distant Switzerland to find what was the truth! Neither husband, protector, nor friend accompanied it, and so utter a state of loneliness gives friends if nothing else. You are dying of curiosity; let me arrange that pillow to make your exit easier. I stayed at home all Saturday afternoon, and treated some disagreeable people who insisted upon calling here as tolerably as I could; when evening shades began to fall, I turned upon my heel, and walked. Attracted by the gayety visible in the street, I still kept walking till a little creature pounced upon a thin shawl I wore, and commenced riding. I stopped, and begged the creature to alight, as I was fatigued already, and quite unable to assist others. It wouldn't get down, and commenced talking to itself: 'Can't be New England — must have made some mistake — disappointed in my reception — don't agree with accounts. Oh, what a world of deception and

fraud! Marm, will you tell me the name of this country — it's Asia Minor, isn't it? I intended to stop in New England.' By this time I was so completely exhausted that I made no further effort to rid me of my load, and travelled home at a moderate jog, paying no attention whatever to it, got into the house, threw off both bonnet and shawl, and out flew my tormentor, and putting both arms around my neck, began to kiss me immoderately, and express so much love it completely bewildered me. Since then it has slept in my bed, eaten from my plate, lived with me everywhere, and will tag me through life for all I know. I think I'll wake first, and get out of bed, and leave it; but early or late, it is dressed before me, and sits on the side of the bed looking right into my face with such a comical expression it almost makes me laugh in spite of myself. I can't call it interesting, but it certainly is curious, has two peculiarities which would quite win your heart, — a huge pocket-handkerchief and a very red nose. The first seems so very *abundant*, it gives you the idea of independence and prosperity in business. The last brings up the 'jovial bowl, my boys,' and such an association is worth the having. If it ever gets tired of *me*, I will forward it to you — you would love it for *my* sake, if not for its own; it will tell you some queer stories about me, — how I sneezed so loud one night that the family thought the last trump was sounding, and climbed into the currant-bushes to get out of the way; how the rest of the people, arrayed in long night-gowns, folded their arms, and were waiting; but this is a wicked story, — it can tell some better ones. Now, my dear friend, let me tell you that these last thoughts are fictions, — vain imaginations to lead astray foolish young women. They are flowers of speech; they both make and tell deliberate falsehoods; avoid them as the snake, and turn aside as from the rattle-snake, and I don't *think* you will be harmed. Honestly, though, a snake-bite is a serious matter, and there can't be too much said or done about it. The big serpent bites the deepest; and we get so accustomed to its bites that we don't mind about them. 'Verily I say unto you, fear *him*.' Won't you read some work upon snakes? — I have a real anxiety for you. I love those little green ones that slide around by your shoes in the grass, and make it rustle with their elbows; they are rather my favorites on the whole; but I wouldn't influence you for the world. There is an air of misanthropy about the striped snake that will commend itself at once to your taste, — there is no monotony about it — but we will more of this again. Something besides severe colds and serpents, and we will try to find *that* something. It can't be a garden, can it? or a strawberry-bed, which rather belongs to a garden; nor it can't be a school-house, nor an attorney-at-law. Oh, dear! I don't know what it is. Love for the absent don't *sound* like it; but try it, and see how it goes.

I miss you very much indeed; think of you at night when the world's

nodding, nid, nid, nodding — think of you in the daytime when the cares of the world, and its toils, and its continual vexations choke up the love for friends in some of our hearts; remember your warnings sometimes — try to do as you told me sometimes — and sometimes conclude it's no use to try; then my heart says it is, and new trial is followed by disappointment again. I wondered, when you had gone, why we didn't talk more, — it wasn't for want of a subject; it never could *Se for that*. Too many, perhaps, — such a crowd of people that nobody heard the speaker, and all went away discontented. You astonished me in the outset, perplexed me in the continuance, and wound up in a grand snarl I shall be all my pilgrimage unravelling. Rather a dismal prospect certainly; but 'it's always the darkest the hour before day,' and this earlier sunset promises an earlier rise — a sun in splendor — and glory, flying out of its purple nest. Wouldn't you love to see God's bird, when it first tries its wings? If you were here I would tell you something — several somethings — which have happened since you went away; but time and space, as usual, oppose themselves, and I put my treasures away till 'we two meet again.' The hope that I shall continue in love towards you, and *vice versa*, will sustain me till then. If you are thinking soon to go away, and to show your face no more, just inform me, will you? I would have the 'long, lingering look,' which you cast behind, — it would be an invaluable addition to my treasures, and 'keep your memory green.' 'Lord, keep all our memories green,' and help on our affection, and tie the 'link that doth us bind' in a tight bow-knot that will keep it from separation, and stop us from growing old; if that is impossible, make old age pleasant to us, put its arms around us kindly, and when we go home, let that home be called heaven.

Your very sincere and *wicked* friend,
EMILY E. DICKINSON.

I haven't thanked you for your letter yet, but not for want of gratitude. I will do so *now* most sincerely, most heartily — gladly and gratefully. You will write me another soon, that I may have *four right* feelings again! They don't come for the asking. I have been introducing you to me in this letter so far; we will traffic in 'joys' and 'sorrows' some other day. Colds make one very carnal, and the spirit is always afraid of them. You will excuse all mistakes in view of ignorance; all sin, in view of 'the fall; 'all want of friendly affection, in the sight of the verse, 'The deepest stream the stillest runs; 'and other general deficiencies, on the ground of universal incapacity! Here is surely room for charity, and the heavenly visitor wouldn't have come but for these faults. 'No loss without a gain.' I called to see your cousins an evening since; they were

[Amherst, November 17, 1851.]

Sunday Afternoon.

DEAR AUSTIN, — We have just got home from meeting — it is very windy and cold — the hills from our kitchen window are just crusted with snow, which with their blue mantillas makes them seem so beautiful. You sat just here last Sunday, where I am sitting now; and our voices were nimbler than our pens can be, if they try never so hardly. I should be quite sad to-day, thinking about last Sunday, didn't another Sabbath smile at me so pleasantly, promising me on its word to present you here again when 'six days' work is done.'

Father and mother sit in state in the sitting-room perusing such papers, only, as they are well assured, have nothing carnal in them; Vinnie is eating an apple which makes me think of gold, and accompanying it with her favorite *Observer*, which, if you recollect, deprives us many a time of her sisterly society. Pussy hasn't returned from the afternoon assembly, so you have us all just as we are at present. We were very glad indeed to hear from you so soon, glad that a cheerful fire met you at the door. I do well remember how chilly the west wind blew, and how everything shook and rattled before I went to sleep, and I often thought of you in the midnight car, and hoped you were not lonely.... We are thinking most of Thanksgiving than anything else just now — how full will be the circle, less then by none — how the things will smoke — how the board will groan with the thousand savory viands — how when the day is done, lo, the evening cometh, laden with merrie laugh and happy conversation, and then the sleep and the dream each of a knight or 'Ladie' — how I love to see them, a beautiful company coming down the hill which men call the Future, with their hearts full of joy and their hands of gladness. Thanksgiving indeed to a family united once more together before they go away.... Don't mind the days — some of them are long ones, but who cares for length when breadth is in store for him? Or who minds the cross who knows he'll have a crown? I wish I could imbue you with all the strength and courage which can be given men — I wish I could assure you of the constant remembrance of those you leave at home — I wish — but oh! how vainly — that I could bring you back again and never more to stray. You are tired now, dear Austin, with my incessant din, but I can't help saying any of these things.

The very warmest love from Vinnie and every one of us. I am never ready to go.

Reluctant EMILY.