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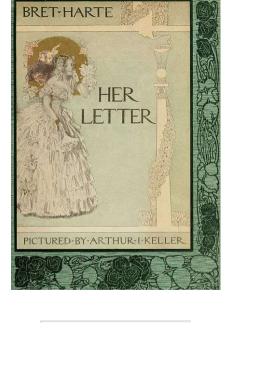
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Letter, by Bret Harte

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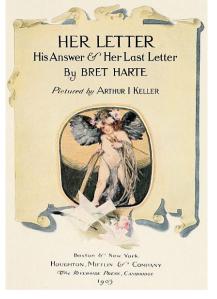
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I'm sitting alone by the fire,
Dressed just as I came from the dance



HER LETTER

His Answer & Her Last Letter

By BRET HARTE

Pictured by ARTHUR I KELLER

Boston & New York.
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1905

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The first two of the poems here printed have long been popular favorites, but the third was not written till near the end of Mr. Harte's life. It rounds out the romance with such completeness and charm that it is peculiarly fitting that the poems should be grouped, and issued in a form worthy of their own excellence. The cooperation of Mr. Keller was secured for making the illustrations, not only on account of his recognized ability as an artist, but also because of his admiration for Mr. Harte's writings and his previous success in illustrating

Several of the stories.
Buston, 4Park St., October, 1905



I'm sitting alone by the fire
Dressed just as I came from the dance. (In color) <u>Frontispiece</u>
Title. (In color)

Publishers' Note Headnings

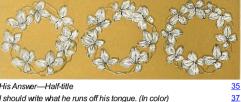
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List of Designs—Headpiece	

Her Letter—Half-title	<u>1</u>
Is wasting an hour upon you	<u>13</u>
That waits—on the stairs—for me yet	<u>1</u> 5
With whom do I waltz, flirt, or talk?	<u>1</u>
To look supernaturally grand	<u>19</u>
And the hum of the smallest of talk	2.

With the man that shot Sandy McGee. (In color)	<u>23</u>
The man that shot Sandy McGee	<u>25</u>
Of that ride,—that to me was the rarest	<u>27</u>
And swam the North Fork, and all that	29

Mamma says my taste still is low	<u>31</u>
Florations, to a sufficient to the control of the c	22





	THE RESERVE AND ADDRESS.
His Answer—Half-title	<u>35</u>
I should write what he runs off his tongue. (In color)	<u>37</u>
Being asked by an intimate party	<u>39</u>
That with you, Miss, he "challenges Fate"	<u>41</u>
Though the claim not, at date, paying wages	<u>43</u>
And the rose that you gave him. (In color)	<u>45</u>
Is frequent and painful and free	<u>47</u>
Imparts but small ease to the style	<u>49</u>
In this green laurel spray that he treasures	<u>51</u>
But he lies there quite peaceful and pensive	<u>53</u>
For I have a small favor to ask you	<u>55</u>
Here's my pile; which it's six hundred dollars	<u>57</u>
Her Last Letter—Half-title	<u>59</u>
That you last wrote the 4th of December	<u>61</u>
And you're not to be found in the ditches. (In color)	<u>63</u>
From this spot, that you said was the fairest	<u>65</u>
To London, when Pa wired, "Stop"	<u>67</u>
And as to the stories you've heard	<u>69</u>









Whose father sold clothes on the Bar	<u>71</u>
With a look, Joe, that made her eyes drop. (In color)	<u>73</u>
To find myself here, all alone	<u>75</u>
Ah! gone is the old necromancy	<u>77</u>
And you called the place Eden, you know. (In color)	<u>79</u>
And the copse where you once tied my shoe-knot	<u>81</u>
There's the rustle of silk on the sidewalk	<u>83</u>
But there's still the "lap, lap" of the river. (In color)	<u>85</u>
There's a lot that remains which one fancies	<u>87</u>
He thinks he may find you	<u>89</u>
And good-night to the cañon that answers	<u>91</u>
l've just got your note. You deceiver!	<u>93</u>
NowI knowwhy they had me transferred here. (In color)	<u>95</u>
Howdared you get rich—you great stupid!	<u>97</u>
The man who shot Sandy McGee	
You made mayor!	<u>99</u>
Tailpiece	100

All the headpieces and other decorations are from Mr. Keller's designs.





HER LETTER



I'm sitting alone by the fire.

Dressed just as I came from the dance, In a robe even *you* would admire,—

It cost a cool thousand in France; I'm be-diamonded out of all reason,

My hair is done up in a cue: In short, sir, "the belle of the season"
Is wasting an hour upon you.





In short, sir, "the belle of the season" Is wasting an hour upon you







A dozen engagements I've broken;

I left in the midst of a set;

Likewise a proposal, half spoken,

That waits—on the stairs—for me yet.
They say he'll be rich,—when he grows up,—

And then he adores me indeed;
And you, sir, are turning your nose up,
Three thousand miles off, as you read.





Likewise a proposal, half spoken, That waits—on the stairs—for me yet



"And how do I like my position?"

"And what do I think of New York?" "And now, in my higher ambition,

With whom do I waltz, flirt, or talk?"
"And isn't it nice to have riches,

And diamonds and silks, and all that?"
"And aren't they a change to the ditches And tunnels of Poverty Flat?"





With whom do I waltz, flirt, or talk?



Well, yes,—if you saw us out driving Each day in the Park, four-in-hand. If you saw poor dear mamma contriving To look supernaturally grand,— If you saw papa's picture, as taken By Brady, and tinted at that,— You'd never suspect he sold bacon And flour at Poverty Flat



If you saw poor dear Mamma contriving To look supernaturally grand



And yet, just this moment, when sitting In the glare of the grand chandelier,— In the bustle and glitter befitting

The "finest soirée of the year,"— In the mists of a gaze de Chambéry,

And the hum of the smallest of talk,—
Somehow, Joe, I thought of the "Ferry,"
And the dance that

we had on "The Fork;"







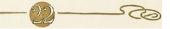


In the mists of a gaze de Chambéry, And the hum of the smallest of talk





Of Harrison's barn, with its muster Of flags festooned over the wall; Of the candles that shed their soft lustre And tallow on headdress and shawl: Of the steps that we took to one fiddle. Of the dress of my queer vis-à-vis; And how I once went down the middle With the man that shot Sandy McGee;





And how I once went down the middle With the man that shot

Sandy McGee



The man that shot Sandy McGee



Of the moon that was quietly sleeping

On the hill, when the time came to go;
Of the few baby peaks that were peeping

From under their bedclothes of snow; Of that ride,—that to me was the rarest;

Of—the something you said at the gate. Ah! Joe, then I wasn't an heiress

To "the best-paying lead in the State."





Of that ride,—that to me was the rarest



Well, well, it's all past; yet it's funny

To think, as I stood in the glare Of fashion and beauty and money,

That I should be thinking, right there, Of some one who breasted high water,

And swam the North Fork, and all that, Just to dance with old Folinsbee's daughter, The Lily of Poverty

Flat.





And swam the North Fork, and all that, Just to dance with old Folinsbee's daughter



But goodness! what

nonsense I'm writing! (Mamma says my taste still is low). Instead of my triumphs reciting, I'm spooning on Joseph,—heigh-ho! And I'm to be "finished" by travel.— Whatever's the meaning of that. Oh, why did papa strike pay gravel In drifting on Poverty



Flat?





Mamma says my taste still is low



Good-night!—here's the end of my paper; Good-night!—if the longitude please,—For maybe, while wasting my taper, Your sun's climbing over the trees.
But know, if you haven't

got riches,
And are poor, dearest
Joe, and all that,

That my heart's somewhere there in the ditches.

And you've struck it, on Poverty Flat.







That my heart's somewhere there in

the ditches, And you've struck it, on Poverty Flat



HIS ANSWER



Being asked by an intimate party,—
Which the same I would term as a friend,

Though his health it were vain to call hearty, Since the mind to deceit it might lend; For his arm it was broken quite recent, And there's something gone wrong

with his lung,—
Which is why it is
proper and decent
I should write what
he runs off his tongue.





Which is why it is proper and decent I should write what he runs off his tongue



Being asked by an intimate party



First, he says, Miss, he's read through your letter

To the end,—and "the end came too soon;"

That a "slight illness kept him your debtor,"

(Which for weeks he

(Which for weeks he was wild as a loon); That "his spirits are buoyant as yours is;"

That with you, Miss, he "challenges Fate" (Which the language that invalid uses

At times it were vain

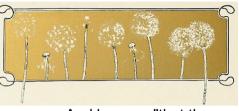
to relate).





That "his spirits are buoyant as yours is;" That with you, Miss, he

"challenges Fate"



And he says "that the mountains are fairer For once being held in your thought;" That each rock "holds a wealth that is rarer Than ever by goldseeker sought." (Which are words he would put in these pages, By a party not given to guile; Though the claim not,

at date, paying wages, Might produce in the sinful a smile.)





Though the claim not, at date, paying wages, Might produce in the sinful a smile



He remembers the ball at the Ferry,

And the ride, and the gate, and the vow,
And the rose that you gave him,—that very

Same rose he is "treasuring now." (Which his blanket he's kicked on his trunk, Miss,

And insists on his legs being free; And his language to me from his bunk, Miss,

Is frequent and painful and free.)





And the rose that you gave him



And his language to me from his bunk, Miss, Is frequent and painful and free



He hopes you are
wearing no willows,
But are happy and
gay all the while;
That he knows—(which
this dodging of pillows
Imparts but small
ease to the style,
And the same you will
pardon)—he knows.

That, though parted by many a mile, "Yet, were he lying under the snows, Miss, They'd melt into tears at your smile."

Miss.





Which this dodging of pillows Imparts but small ease to the style



And "you'll still think of him in your pleasures, In your brief twilight dreams of the past; In this green laurel spray that he treasures,

It was plucked where your parting was last; In this specimen,—but a small trifle,—

It will do for a pin for your shawl."
(Which, the truth not to wickedly stifle,

Was his last week's "clean up,"—and his all.)









In this green laurelspray that he treasures, It was plucked where your parting was last



He's asleep, which the same might seem strange, Miss,
Were it not that I scorn to deny
That I raised his last dose, for a change,
Miss,
In view that his fever

was high;
But he lies there quite peaceful and pensive.
And now, my respects, Miss, to you;
Which my language, although comprehensive,
Might seem to be

freedom, is true.





But he lies there quite peaceful and pensive



For I have a small favor to ask you,

As concerns a bullpup, and the same,— If the duty would not overtask you,—

You would please to procure for me, *game*; And send per express to the Flat, Miss,—

For they say York is famed for the breed, Which, though words of deceit may be that, Miss,

I'll trust to your taste, Miss, indeed.





For I have a small favor to ask you, As concerns a bull-pup



P.S.—Which this same interfering Into other folks' way I despise: Yet if it so be I was hearing That it's just empty pockets as lies Between you and Joseph, it follers That, having no family claims, Here's my pile, which it's six hundred dollars As is yours, with respects,

Truthful

James.





Here's my pile; which it's six hundred dollars, As is yours, with respects



HER LAST LETTER



June 4th! Do you know what that date means? June 4th! by this air and these pines! Well,—only you know how I hate scenes,— These might be my very last lines! For perhaps, sir, you'll kindly remember— If some *other* things you've forgotThat you last wrote the 4th of *December*,—
Just six months ago!
—from this spot;





That you last wrote the 4th of December,— Just six months ago! from this spot



From this spot, that you said was "the fairest For once being held in my thought." Now, really I call that the barest Of—well, I won't say what I ought! For here I am back from my "riches," My "triumphs," my "tours," and all that;

And you're not to be found in the ditches Or temples of Poverty Flat!





Flat!

And you're not to be found in the ditches

Or temples of Poverty



From this spot, that you said was "the fairest For once being held in my thought"



From Paris we went for the season To London, when pa wired, "Stop." Mamma says "his health" was the reason. (I've heard that some things took a "drop.") But she said if my patience I'd summon I could go back with him to the FlatPerhaps I was thinking of some one Who of me—well—was not thinking that!







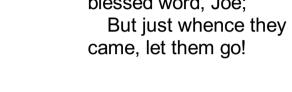
From Paris we went for

the season To London, when Pa wired, "Stop"



Of course you will say that I "never
Replied to the letter you wrote."
That is just like a man!
But, however,
I read it—or how could I quote?
And as to the stories

you've heard (No,
Don't tell me you
haven't—I know!)
You'll not believe one
blessed word, Joe;
But just whence they
came, let them go!







And as to the stories

you've heard (No, Don't tell me you haven't—I know!)



And they came from Sade Lotski of Yolo,
Whose father sold clothes on the Bar—
You called him Joblotski, you know, Joe,
And the boys said her value was par.
Well, we met her in

Paris—just flaring
With diamonds, and
lost in a hat!
And she asked me
"How Joseph was
faring
In his love-suit on
Poverty Flat!"





Whose father sold

clothes on the Bar— You called him Joblotski, you know, Joe



She thought it would shame me! I met her With a look, Joe, that made her eyes drop; And I said that your "love-suit fared better Than any suit out of their shop!"

And I didn't blush then—as I'm doing To find myself here, all alone. And left, Joe, to do all the "suing" To a lover that's

certainly flown.





met her

With a look, Joe, that made her eyes drop



And I didn't blush then
—as I'm doing
To find myself here, all

alone



In this brand-new hotel, called "The Lily"
(I wonder who gave it that name?),
I really am feeling quite silly,

To think I was once called the same;
And I stare from its windows, and fancy

I'm labeled to each passer-by.
Ah! gone is the old necromancy,
For nothing seems right to my eye.





Ah! gone is the old

necromancy, For nothing seems right to my eye



On that hill there are stores that I knew not;
There's a street—
where I once lost my way;
And the copse where you once tied my shoeknot

Is shamelessly open as day! And that bank by the spring—I once drank there.

And you called the place Eden, you know; Now. I'm banished like Eve—though the bank

there Is belonging to

"Adams and Co."





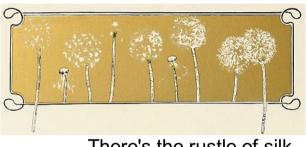
And that bank by the

spring—I once drank there, And you called the place Eden, you know



And the copse where you once tied my shoe-knot

Is shamelessly open as day!



There's the rustle of silk on the sidewalk;
Just now there passed by a tall hat;
But there's gloom in this "boom" and this wild talk
Of the "future" of

Poverty Flat.
There's a decorous chill in the air, Joe,
Where once we were simple and free;
And I hear they've been making a mayor, Joe,
Of the man who shot Sandy McGee.





There's the rustle of silk on the sidewalk; Just now there passed by a tall hat



But there's still the "lap, lap" of the river;

There's the song of the pines, deep and low.

(How my longing for them made me quiver In the park that they

call Fontainebleau!)
There's the snow-peak
that looked on our
dances.

And blushed when the morning said, "Go!" There's a lot that remains which one fancies—
But somehow there's

never a Joe!





But there is still the "lap, lap" of

the river



There's a lot that remains which

one fancies



Perhaps, on the whole, it is better,

For you might have been changed like the rest;

Though it's strange that I'm trusting this letter

To papa, just to have it addressed.

He thinks he may find

you, and really
Seems kinder now
I'm all alone.
You might have been
here, Joe, if merely
To look what I'm
willing to own.





He thinks he may find you



Well, well! that's all past; so good-night, Joe;

Good-night to the river and Flat;
Good-night to what's wrong and what's right,
Joe;

Good-night to the past, and all that—
To Harrison's barn, and its dancers;

To the moon, and the

white peak of snow; And good-night to the cañon that answers My "Joe!" with its echo of "No!"





And good-night to the cañon that answers
My "Joe!" with its echo of "No!"



P.S.—I've just got your note You deceiver! How dared you—how could you? Oh, Joe! To think I've been kept a believer In things that were six months ago! And it's you've built this house, and the bank, too.

And the mills, and

the stores, and all that!
And for everything
changed I must thank
you,
Who have "struck it"

on Poverty Flat!





I've just got your note. You deceiver!



How dared you get rich —you great stupid!— Like papa, and some men that I know. Instead of just trusting to Cupid And to me for your money? Ah, Joe! Just to think you sent never a word, dear, Till you wrote to papa for consent! Now I know why they

had me transferred here,
And "the health of papa"—what that meant!





Now I know why they

here, And "the health of papa"—what that meant!

had me transferred



How dared you get rich
—you great stupid!—
Like papa, and some
men that I know



Now I know why they call this "The Lily;" Why the man who shot Sandy McGee You made mayor! 'Twas because—oh. you silly!— He once "went down the middle" with me! I've been fooled to the top of my bent here, So come, and ask

pardon—you know

That you've still got to get *my* consent, dear!
And just think what that echo said—Joe!





The man who shot Sandy McGee You made mayor!





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