

1028/71/7

CUS417/71.7

(From Miss Jennette Osler to Mrs. Osler)

47 Durocher St., Montreal.
St. Stephen's Day
(Dec. 26?) 1875

My dear Aunt Ellen,

My last letter to you was meant to be long, but was interrupted & a scurry to finish before pillar-post time made it unsatisfactory & I could not send the Christmas greetings that are a world too late today. You were all in our minds on Xmas Eve. I fancied you busy over the decorations & cumbered with the cares of Martha, & we all wished ourselves at Staplehurst around the Xmas Tree. Surely some kind heart will send us an account of the doings of that day & the next. I did long to see the children; Hennie's fair flock & Annie's bonnie Gordon & Chattie's beauty boys, & my own two special lassies, but I was far more wanted here than there where there were so many able hands & as willing as they were strong. I am sorry dear old Edmund could not be at home in time; have you ever before had a Xmas with only three of your very own children to keep it with you? We drank the health of all friends east & west & hoped that Edward & Frank were not spending a lonely day. Perhaps you sent a kindly thought in this direction & will like to hear how we spent our hours. Xmas Eve was dreadfully busy. We had to finish Willie's handkerchiefs, old English initials worked in red; Marian had George's grand braces, crochet-work in purple-silk to complete; May's muslin pinafore was not cut out till 8 o'clock at night & had to sit up to the small hours to get it done, such a little beauty as it is! George went out to dinner & Marian was tired from getting up the day before so stayed in bed to gather strength for Xmas, but Willie put his slippers on at six o'clock & we had a high tea in Marian's room & then amused ourselves by stuffing stockings for everybody. All the children were miserably poorly: that cold snap played the very mischief with them, but they went to bed in high excitement over "Sandy Claws" who was to bring everything to Mamma's room for fear he would wake the baby. I sleep in my own room now, next the night nursery. May coughed till three o'clock by which time Willie & I, wandering off to her cot in our dressing gowns had dosed her into quietness, & the troubled household got a three hours' sleep, when the poor teething Bruiser woke & roared every eye wide open. He yelled steadily for an hour, till every soul but Willie thought it just as well to get up and dress & make the best of it; even George turned out & we all gathered in the old Mammy's room to see the stockings unstuffed. They hung around like ghastly artificial legs; Baby's had been rifled to appease the evil spirit wherewith he was grievously vexed but he dashed everything from him except a furry rabbit which he kept as a pocket-handkerchief & watered its back with his tears. Mrs Sanyon brought us up tea & cake all round at seven o'clock, & Marian sent me up with Willie's to ask him if he would not come down & see the fun, but he did not receive me kindly; he asked what in thunder was the time of night, answered my Merry Christmas with a growl at the baby's lively music & bade me drink the tea myself & shut his door & let him get a wink of sleep if he could. So we left him to his dreams, while the little ones, Polly included, skipped & rejoiced over their presents, & Baby, pacified with May's biggest doll, flung a feeble smile at his friends, & was borne off hugging his fetish, to spend the rest of the day in a state of solemn peace or loud melancholy. I cannot say that I had a lively Xmas breakfast: Grant & May were pitiful objects; he a mere whitewashed wisp after four days of starvation and antimony, and May with wide-open gasping mouth and swollen eyes, laying her head on the table and refusing everything; she collapsed at dinner & went off to the sofa & Ishmael was ~~was~~ a mere looker-on at the feast. George rarely takes breakfast: he has a cup of coffee brought to his while he dresses, &

Willie was sleeping himself into a happier mood. I started for Church & got half way down Bleny Street when the rain came down like a summer thunder shower & drove me back, a dripping thing. George brought Mr. James Oswald home to dinner, which we had early. Annie will remember the Oswalds. He enquired for her. They went off immediately after & we saw no more of George till late this morning. His double Xmas dinner did not agree with him, but he is off spending today somewhere, so I suppose he feels better. The children were not equal to any play, but we kept them soberly happy by gumming their Xmas cards into the scrap-books Sandy Claws brought. Those from the West were much admired: receive our thanks. Willie had the pony out & drove down to see his two dearest friends outside No 47: Dr. Howard and Dr. Browne; and brought it back in time to take me to afternoon service. The walking was a species of wading, but ducks do not mind that! Marian got up in time for dinner & stayed up to tea; she looks younger & more fetching than ever, & her downy hair is most becoming, surmounted by a soft mob cap & dainty blue ribbons. Willie remarked that she had never looked so kissable before, and led her under the mistletoe on the strength of his compliment! He was invited to a party at the Kenneth Campbells; Marian would not hear of his refusing, for he was sure to meet nice people there & going into society is good for his practice; he did not like leaving us to spend our Xmas evening alone, but we were very happy together. I curled myself up on ~~Mammy's~~ downy quilt and we had a good old-fashioned chat, & a great innocent bowl of bread & milk between us! Our menkind came home too late to do anything but creep to their rooms like cats. Willie spent a pleasant evening & is invited there again for New Year's Eve. He & I went to St. John's this morning & had a beautiful Xmas Service. They collected at the offertories yesterday \$250 for Mr. Wood, \$40 for the poor & \$50 for general church purposes. The new free church has not cut down St. John's as yet. Did I tell Chattie that the German Baroness, who was once Miss Mary Gale, is dead, & has left \$10,000 for Mr. Wood's new Church? We have been singing Moody & Sankey this evening. Ask B. B. if he remembers "The sweet bye & bye." Willie went to a P. M. this afternoon; we had to make him go through a course of hot water and carbolic soap before he was a pleasant neighbour at tea! Now they are hurrying me to come to supper; I wish you were all here, we should have a merry meal. The children are better today, trying hard to get well & go to the Pantomime tomorrow. Dear love to Uncle & all.

Ever your aff^{te} niece,

Jennette Osler.

Willie sends love to all, & Marian says she will write soon. Kiss Isabel & Ethel for me, Mother dear.