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Roxbury, Dec. 15, 1878.

My dear Fanny:

I have been baffled till now in answering your most filial letter with reference to the completion of my seventy-third birthday; and for all your loving expressions accept a fatherly benediction. It is indeed a source of unspeakable satisfaction to me that my children will have no cause to blush for any stain upon my character, and that, whatever may have been the infirmities attending it, my career in the cause of freedom and humanity may be viewed with heartfelt satisfaction by them, as well as my daily home life. In return they have been to me my comfort and pride, not only for their filial love and devotedness, but for their disinterested affection for each other, and their most exemplary lives.

It is melancholy to see how seldom it is, in families of any considerable size, such affection and unity as abide in my own, with no wanderer from the flock, no poor castaway, to bring shame and distress to the household; just as

"One sickly sheep infects the flock,
And poisons all the rest."

I do not remember ever to have had an anxious hour in regard to any of you, so far as the snares and temptations of life are concerned; and is that not saying a great deal? And the lesson of all lessons I have taught you, — as you do me the justice to say, — has been to follow your own convictions of duty, however widely in any case they might differ from my own; at the same time, while "proving all things," scrupulously endeavoring to "hold fast that which is good." I am glad there is a marked individuality in each of you.

You should have been content with sending me your congratulations and good wishes; but I find myself indebted to you and Harry for a substantial and comfortable chair for my desk in the sitting-room, and for its return many thanks. Darling Helen sent me a nicely written note, enclosing a prettily painted little flower by her, both of which pleased me very much; as did dear little Oswald's gift of a pretty Japanese match-box, at the hands of his "uncle Frank." Agnes made me a pen-wiper in the shape of a butter-fly; Charley carved out for me, with a jackknife, a tiny boat, having one mast, and a flag flying at the top of it; and little Willie made me a book-mark at school, quite neatly put together. Helen wrote me that she should be much disappointed if I did not join you at Christmas; but the will for the deed must be accepted, and I must defer the visit awhile longer. Yet I would be glad to be with you.

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Wendell wrote me a felicitous letter, in which he laid out for me a series of years, culminating in a round century of earthly existence! But, at my time of life, it is rather a matter of months rather than of years how long I may be permitted to be with you in the flesh. "All as God wills."

Speaking of birthdays, to-day our venerable friend Lady May, completes her ninety-first year. I have just written her such an epistle as the occasion suggests, not wishing to run the risk of overtaxing her strength by calling upon her.

And to-morrow is your thirty-fourth birthday! I send you one kiss at least for every year, and an invocation for continued blessings upon you and yours.

To-morrow noon is assigned for the funeral of Rebecca Bradford, who died in Paris of pneumonia some three weeks ago.

Your loving Father.