

BRET-HARTE



HER
LETTER

PICTURED-BY-ARTHUR-I-KELLER



Project Gutenberg's Her Letter His Answer & Her Last Letter, by
Bret Harte

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Endpapers

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

Title Page

HER LETTER

His Answer & Her Last Letter

By **BRET HARTE**

Pictured by **ARTHUR I KELLER**

Boston & New York.
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & COMPANY
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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 coöperation 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.

Boston, 4 Park St., October, 1905.

LIST OF DESIGNS

PAGE

I'm sitting alone by the fire

Dressed just as I came from the dance. (In color) [Frontispiece](#)

<i>Title. (In color)</i>	
<i>Publishers' Note—Headpiece</i>	5
<i>List of Designs—Headpiece</i>	7
<i>HER LETTER—Half-title</i>	11
<i>Is wasting an hour upon you</i>	13
<i>That waits—on the stairs—for me yet</i>	15
<i>With whom do I waltz, flirt, or talk?</i>	17
<i>To look supernaturally grand</i>	19
<i>And the hum of the smallest of talk</i>	21
<i>With the man that shot Sandy McGee. (In color)</i>	23
<i>The man that shot Sandy McGee</i>	25
<i>Of that ride,—that to me was the rarest</i>	27
<i>And swam the North Fork, and all that</i>	29
<i>Mamma says my taste still is low</i>	31
<i>That my heart's somewhere there in the ditches</i>	33

Page Number

Decoration

<i>HIS ANSWER—Half-title</i>	35
<i>I should write what he runs off his tongue. (In color)</i>	37
<i>Being asked by an intimate party</i>	39
<i>That with you, Miss, he "challenges Fate"</i>	41
<i>Though the claim not, at date, paying wages</i>	43
<i>And the rose that you gave him. (In color)</i>	45
<i>Is frequent and painful and free</i>	47
<i>Imparts but small ease to the style</i>	49
<i>In this green laurel spray that he treasures</i>	51
<i>But he lies there quite peaceful and pensive</i>	53
<i>For I have a small favor to ask you</i>	55
<i>Here's my pile; which it's six hundred dollars</i>	57

<i>HER LAST LETTER—Half-title</i>	59
<i>That you last wrote the 4th of December</i>	61
<i>And you're not to be found in the ditches. (In color)</i>	63
<i>From this spot, that you said was the fairest</i>	65
<i>To London, when Pa wired, "Stop"</i>	67
<i>And as to the stories you've heard</i>	69

Page Number

Decoration

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

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

Page Number



She

HER LETTER

Decoration

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.

Page Number

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

Decoration

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.

Page number

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

Decoration

"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?"

Page Number

With whom do I waltz, flirt, or talk?
With whom do I waltz, flirt, or talk?

Decoration

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.

Page Number

If you saw poor dear Mamma contriving
If you saw poor dear Mamma contriving
To look supernaturally grand

Decoration

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;"

Page Number

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

Decoration

OF Harrison's barn, with its muster
Of flags festooned over the wall;

Of the candles that shed their soft lustre
And tallow on head-dress 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;

Page Number

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

The man that shot Sandy McGee
The man that shot Sandy McGee

Decoration

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."

Page Number

Of that ride,—that to me was the rarest

Of that ride,—that to me was the rarest

Decoration

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.

Page Number

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

Decoration

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?

Page Number

Mamma says my taste still is low

Mamma says my taste still is low

Decoration

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.

Page Number

That my heart's somewhere there in the ditches,

That my heart's somewhere there in the ditches,

And you've struck it,—on Poverty Flat

Him

HIS ANSWER

Decoration

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.

Page Number

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

Being asked by an intimate party
Being asked by an intimate party

Decoration

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 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).

Page Number

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

Decoration

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 gold-seeker 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.)

Page Number

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

Decoration

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.)

Page Number

And the rose that you gave him

And the rose that you gave him

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

Decoration

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

Page Number

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

Decoration

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.*)

Page Number

In this green laurel-spray that he treasures
In this green laurel-spray that he treasures,
It was plucked where your parting was last

Decoration

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.

Page Number

But he lies there quite peaceful and pensive
But he lies there quite peaceful and pensive

Decoration

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

Page Number

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

Decoration

*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.

Page Number

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

She

HER LAST LETTER

Decoration

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

Page Number

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

Decoration

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!

Page Number

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

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

Decoration

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 Flat—
Perhaps I was thinking of some one
Who of me—well—was not thinking *that!*

Page Number

From Paris we went for the season
From Paris we went for the season
To London, when Pa wired, "Stop"

Decoration

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!

Page Number

And as to the stories you've heard (No, Don't tell me you haven't—I
know!)

*And as to the stories you've heard (No,
Don't tell me you haven't—I know!)*

Decoration

AND they came from Sade Lotski of Yolo,
Whose father sold clothes on the Bar—
You called him Job-lotski, 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!"

Page Number

Whose father sold clothes on the Bar—

*Whose father sold clothes on the Bar—
You called him Job-lotski, you know, Joe*

Decoration

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.

Page Number

I met her With a look, Joe, that made her eyes drop
I met her
With a look, Joe, that made her eyes drop

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

Decoration

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.

Page Number

Ah! gone is the old necromancy,
Ah! gone is the old necromancy,
For nothing seems right to my eye

Decoration

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 shoe-knot
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."

Page Number

And that bank by the spring—I once drank there,
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
And the copse where you once tied my shoe-knot
Is shamelessly open as day!

Decoration

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.

Page Number

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

Decoration

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!

Page Number

But there is still the "lap, lap" of the river
But there is still the "lap, lap" of the river

There's a lot that remains which one fancies
There's a lot that remains which one fancies

Decoration

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*.

Page Number

He thinks he may find you

He thinks he may find you

Decoration

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!"

Page Number

And good-night to the cañon that answers

And good-night to the cañon that answers

My "Joe!" with its echo of "No!"

Decoration

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!

Page Number

I've just got your note. You deceiver!

I've just got your note. You deceiver!

Decoration

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!

Page Number

Now I know why they had me transferred here

Now I know why they had me transferred here,

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

How dared you get rich—you great stupid!—

How dared you get rich—you great stupid!—

Like papa, and some men that I know

Decoration

Now I know why they call this "The Lily;"

Why the man who shot Sandy McGee

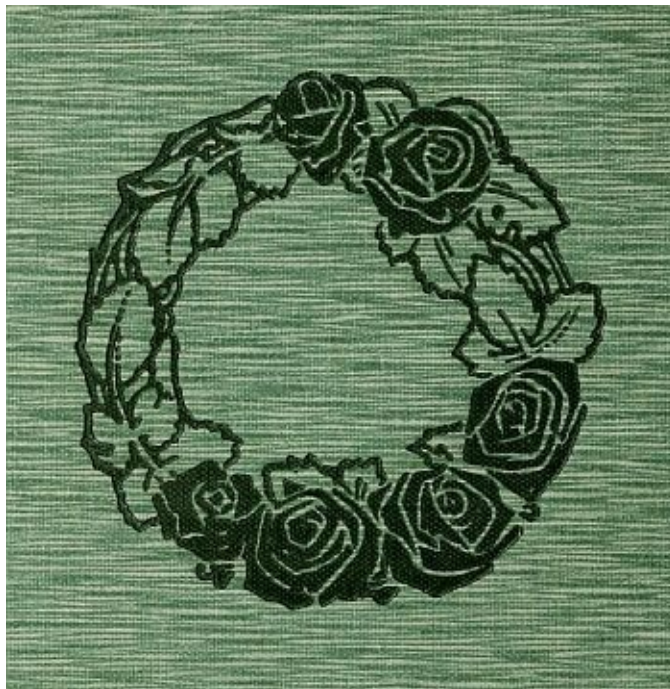
You made mayor! 'Twas because—oh, you silly!

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!

Page Number

The man who shot Sandy McGee
The man who shot Sandy McGee
You made mayor!

END



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Last Letter, by
Bret Harte

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