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Fiske, Mrs. Francis S.

Susan Hale

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To Mrs. Francis S. Fiske

Feb. 6, 1882.

Dearly Beloved,

The spirit moveth me in sundry places, and especially my thumb and finger, to write to you; for Mamie says you are ill,-- and I could sooner reach the moon than achieve a visit to you, or let us say as easily,--not to exaggerate, which I am told is my prevailing fault. There's this advantage in a note, that I can talk all the time, whereas if we should meet, you would require a fair chance,--but then, on the other hand, I lose your comments on my discourse, even.

Well:--It is a little like the old friend that inquires, "Have you been well since we met?" when the period of absence is thirty years or odd. So what shall I begin on! All letters should be egotistical, that is what they are for, so I will give you a slight sketch of myself at the present time.

"Somewhat nearing the higher forties, her figure had now lost that air of svelte willowyness which characterized her earlier days, but this had given place to a rotund grace, let us say, which was hidden rather than concealed by the carefully buttoned polonaise. Her hair was grey but not so grey as you might expect, and there was no concealment about the parting. She wore A No. 1 spectacles, which shows that they were her first pair. Her life was divided between assiduous attentions to elderly gentlemen, and equally ditto ditto from youths under twenty, the latter being her nephews, who in a manner quite providential were thus raised up to her declining years, when contemporary admirers had begun to wane. For this boon she was forced to accord the meed of gratitude to her sister-in-law, who all unwittingly now contributed a large portion of felicity to one whom, in the phrase of the moment, "she would have seen further first." And so on.

Why don't I see you at the readings of Locke Richardson, conferred upon us by M. E. W. and others; a charming young man, with a delightful turn for Shakespeare, recalling the mad bliss of listening to Mrs. Kemble, thirty years ago? And have you seen my "Family Flight"? and do you know its an immense success, and my publishers are delighted with me, and I am just beginning a new one, "Up the Nile" for next year. And I have also just begun a new set of Readings from Novels. By these simple devices I make the pot boil, and pay my bills,--and by the way, I have got some very good clother,--although the Class in W. Colours is small this year.

Clock strikes!

Exit Cinderella.

Goodbye, dear Anne. This is all I have time for.

Yours,

Susie Hale.

It seems hardly worth while to send this fragment, but as I say of a hopeless sketch to a pupil, "the intention was good."