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West Point N.Y. Jan. 1st 1854.

My dear Mother

I wish you all a happy New Year! I know the wish will get to be stale before you get this letter - but you can transport yourself back by a kind of fancy to one minute after twelve on Saturday when the bright face of the New Year first made ~~the~~ appearance. I had a Watch meeting all by myself alone - I thought it no more than common decency required of me to show a little reverence for the white haired old man as he was taking his departure - so I sat up & reflected upon his deeds of merit & demerit, with the time piece on my table by my side which was hastening his appointed end. I read a German tale description of the festive joys of New Year's eve on the Rhine - and laughed at the idea of men bearded & fierce hugging & kissing like two young maidens at partings & meetings - of corpulent convivialists whose abdomens rendered lip-contact exceedingly precarious passing with out stretched necks. I thought if I lived in Dutch land - I should always manage to see the old year out & the new year in, in a select company of young people composed of young women all but myself. I got a leave I spent Christmas at Peekskill. I went on Saturday at 1 P.M. & returned on the following

Monday at 6 o'clock; had a very pleasant visit. Plenty of
good cheer in the shape of eating & might have had
enough to drink if I had been so disposed - as the
Liquor Law has not ^{yet} set its restrictions upon the merry
making people of New York. I would sum ~~cord~~ to our
good temperance people in Maine to sit down to
a table of twenty where the gentlemen drink brandy & the
ladies insist that you shall drink their healths in a
glass of wine - and regale you finally with a tippsey pudding
with brandy sauce. Such was my position at Capt DePues.
Uncle informed them I was a totaler, which I presume saved
me a world of trouble, though I confess it is not very
difficult for me to do as I please, especially after I get free
from West Point. I spent six dollars nearly while I was gone
I got gloves, a collar, a box of tooth powder - left my watch to name
a crystal put in & to be cleaned & regulated - letter envelopes
&c. &c. - Where did I get my money? I got it of Warren
just before I left. I hope this will be the last time I shall
have to ask you to send me any before I graduate. I
went to Col Lee to get money on my regular account, but he
sent word back that if I could get it else where, I
had better as my accounts now stood. I don't know how
he expected me to get any here. Probably he thought I might
borrow enough to get to Uncle's, & get money of him - I
did not ask him, but went to Warren's barracks
as soon as my leave commenced & he let me have money

I saw Warren at Church to day. He had from Professor Spiro one of the best sermons I ever heard. written especially for the occasion. The text was Let your house in order; for you shall die & not live. Compared with the sermons that I heard while I was gone it seemed a treat indeed to hear such one. I attended the Episcopal all day, a week ago at Dutchkill I went to the "Dutch Reformed Church" in the evening & did not hear a fair sermon at all. I am not very fastidious, but I wish either profit or pleasure when I listen to a speech of any kind & when I get neither information nor receive pleasure from a discourse I do not pronounce it good. Though to some others differently constituted or differently circumstanced, both might be derived. Our examination commences Tuesday. I shall not be up before next week if so soon. Ah! what a task before me to prepare for this examination. I shall not do well & will fall, but am in hopes to make up before June. You know my final standing depends on the whole course since I have been on West Point. I have graduated in the fives in all things thus far except drawing & 9th in that so that my final stand will not be much affected by a single failure. We celebrate tomorrow for New Year's by our Mess Hall festivities. I will have to call on every body tomorrow - as this is New York Etiquette, but I would like to be excused.

I shall ask you to enclose me ten dollars if you can conveniently - if not I will do. My Uncle is going to send me my wallet. I don't know how much I will have to pay for postage.

Rowland must be home before this - You must appoint him scribe of the family this winter - I shall expect to hear from him often. You need be anxious about me if you do not hear from me very often during the examination for I have got to work. (Charles, Dillie & Rowland & Roland only wants me there to make the compliments. Well, we will if we all live be home together next summer. I am thinking that I shall have as hard a time to elathe myself after I graduate as for anything - You see I have got to be such a mummy that every body can cheat me; that is so disposed. Tell Rowland that I called on Professor Charles A. Yee M.D. whose name we always find in the Bowd. Catalogue & who lectures every Spring at Brunswick before the medical class - I had a very pleasant call indeed. He said if I wished to get rich that I had better resign, leave the army & go West as a ^{Civil} Engineer - He says Ohio is covered with roads, that are located & not built & that good engineers are in great demand. But you see it takes so long to come up - I have no practice - business matters are ^{to me} ten times more enigmatical than difficult mathematical theorems. I am not going to leave a good nest, for the probable or the contingent - but if a good offer comes I will bid Uncle Sam adieu with few regrets - My love to all

Your affectionate Son W. Howard