

EGP

623 Pa. Ave. N.W.
Washington D.C.
Dec. 25, 1881

My dear Emmie:

Your letter with the violets came yesterday in time to put me in a better humor with mankind

for the day, and I have since been trying to spend my exiled Christmas philosophically, if not cheerfully. The letter braced me up considerably and the violets recalled my youthful days when I wasn't in Yankeeland and didn't feel the need of a dollar - if I didn't have one. When I come to analyse it, I *have* had a good many things to give me "the blues", but I'm trying out of respect to the season to snake them off as best I may.

Christmas up here is far different from the Southern celebration. There are crowds of shoppers and great eatings and extensive drunkenness, but the spirit of the day is lacking. It is a smaller "Thansgiving." And all the fireworks are kept for the Fourth of July, hence the old familiar cracker-popping doesn't gladden me. Today isn't like a northern Christmas however, in respect to weather. It is a clear, cool, sharp-breezed day like our S.C. hunting days in January. There has been no real cold here yet. The winter has been phenomenal. The grass is green still and trees have just shed their leaves. It has been oppressively warm lately. Now about the only thing I care for Northward, is the snow and ice, and there hasn't been enough to shake a stick at yet.

I had a rencontre last Monday night with - Robert Smalls!²⁹² of all persons in the world. I had been sending down what their Republican competitors said about Mackey and Smalls, and that night was in front of Willard's talking to some S.C. Radicals when Mackey²⁹³ came up and wanted to know who told me that his "social misdeeds" would be laid bare to the President. (You know he is legally married to a negress.) I wouldn't tell him of course. He warned me not to send such gossip again. I told him I would use my discretion about that, and he went off without picking a row. Then rolled up Smalls. Wanted to know who told me of his selling out to Johnston &c. Gave him the same answer. He then said that I then adapted the falsehood. There were a lot of Republicans around. Smalls had a heavy stick, and I had nothing. I plugged him in the eye. He cuffed me, bear-fashion, on the side of the face twice. I renewed my blows, but failing to make an impression. I doubled him up with a kick in the expansive region "below the belt." A friend of his took his arm and led him away and I remained in possession of the field evacuating it, however, when a policeman and a crowd were attracted to the spot. Some friend mislead the officer and he went away, so there were no arrests. Smalls, I learn, received a bunged eye, a thing I had not dared to hope. I was unscathed. If I had had a pistol I would certainly have shot him, and wanted to go for him afterwards but Mr. Dibble and Gen. Butler advised otherwise. I was much afraid that some Stalwart paper would get hold of it and make out Smalls as the victor, but luckily none did. A Democratic sheet got it but didn't publish it on my account. I learn, however, that one paper did relate how a Democratic reporter annihilated a negro ex-Congressman, which indicates some friendly exaggeration somewhere. In spite of my modesty I have had to stand introductions as "the man that knocked h___ out of a nigger Congressman," which of course made me blush. Smalls says to his friends that he has a great respect for me since my demonstration as it "showed a great deal of courage" &c., but I guess that was for

²⁹² Robert Smalls (1839-1915). A slave and Charleston harbor pilot, commandeered the Confederate steamer *The Planter* in May 1862, and sailed it to the Federal fleet. S.C. State representative 1868-70; State Senator 1870-74. Republican Congressman, 1875-79, defeated for reelection in 1878.

²⁹³ Edmund W. M. Mackey (1846-1884). Born in Charleston, S.C. Lawyer in 1868. Editor and proprietor of the Charleston Republican 1871-72. State representative 1873; Federal Congressman 1875-76; Assistant U.S. Attorney for S.C. 1878-1881. Reelected to Congress, serving from May 1882 until his death in Washington, D.C. in January 1884.

effect. Any how I haven't let up on him in the paper yet. And won't. If any of them tackle me again I will be prepared.

I started to see Cousin J.H.E. several times but felt so lazy and dull that I came back without doing it. The other night - last Sunday I attended his church and heard him discourse, pounced on him after the service and surprised him a good deal. He seemed rather diffident or skittish, and wasn't particularly warm, but he invited me to see him. Miss. Nancy and Belle Elliott were with him. I expect to go around as soon as I can without being suspected of "spelling for a holiday dinner".

I met the Lady Nancy out shopping last evening and she told me they had just received a letter from Gertrude promising to pay them a visit on Wednesday next. She is to stay several days, I understand, and if so it will save my trip to Baltimore as I will take her around enough here. Trudie wrote several days ago but did not mention her intention.

Broise seems very cheerful in his capacity of Santa Claus. I confess that it depresses me to see so many beautiful things that I can't send home.

I am spending the day like any other. Felt very much like getting on a "ragle" last night to drown my sorrows, but wrote a letter to the paper instead, abusing the Stalwarts, which is my one consolation.

I hope you have all had a better time than you looked for, and that you will start the New Year braced up. With abundant love to all

Your affectionate

Nanno

Glad to hear that Bill is a good boy. Tell him so. he "does me proud." N
Saw your letter to the paper. It was first rate. We will get something yet. N