

Letter 4.

P. O. D.
10 Dec. 1884

Dear May,

I cannot enough thank you for the Shakespeare and yet it must cost you much money which is not fitting. Gretchen also with her excellent Wordsworth can never be enough thanked. You must not make me any more presents of that kind – they are too expensive. – and you have enough I dare say to do with all your money.

I am in the midst now of the barren period: I cannot work; I have been writing at a voluminous fairy tale¹ – and have composed many sheets of very monotonous rubbish. – I can do nothing but saw wood.

I have had a change in mine office. I belong no longer to the Savings Bank Branch of the Post Office Dept. but to the Secretary's² which is an infinite improvement. I have a great deal less work to do & much more liberty. I can even sometime get out my paper to so far collect myself as to write down imaginative ideas at my desk in the office.

I have read several of the comedies³ in [the] last few days, some for the first time, some for the second or third. Oh they be marvellous – What a brilliant, startingly clever fellow is our father William at every turn. One becomes altogether bewildered sometimes with the rapid fire of his sharp sayings. To read 10 lines almost anywhere in Shakespeare is to run the gauntlet of as many sudden & enchanting surprises.

Write when you can, and say when you will set out for New York, and tell me of your preparations.

Your sincere friend,
A. Lampman

¹ “The Fairy Fountain,” first published in its entirety with Lampman's other fairy tale, “Hans Fingerhut's Frog-Lesson” (also written around this time) in *Fairy Tales*.

² A subordinate of the Postmaster-General, the Secretary of the Post Office Department was responsible for, among other things, procuring supplies. In 1884, the position was held by William Wright.

³ Plays by William Shakespeare.