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1-12-1861

## Letter from Ellen Carpenter to Austen Carpenter, January 12, 1861

Ellen Carpenter  
*Lindenwood College*

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Lindenwood College  
Saint Charles, Mo., Jan. 12, 1861

Dear Brother Austen:

Yours of the 29th was received yesterday, and now before I have breakfasted I am seated to answer it. I feel more sorrow than I can tell you with pen and ink, on account of the impossibility of your coming to see me this winter. I have talked about the visit, thought about it, and finally almost brought myself into the belief that you were coming. And now this cherished hope must be abandoned- you are not coming. I suppose times must hard in Kansas. The accounts I glean from the papers represent things there in a dark enough time. But then, they are hard everywhere; the suspension of the banks throughout the country has also suspended business in every quarter, and little is heard but the cry, hard times.

Your letter that I so long waited for came at last, and but read for some time after I wrote, so I waited until I would hear from you again. I receive no letter from any of my brothers but you, and of course the time between reception of them seems very long. I formerly heard often from Henry, but almost a year has elapsed since I have received a letter from him. Eunice has written twice to me since I came to Missouri; John three times on business; Lizzie and Susan never notice anything I write them. So that my correspondence among my own tribe is very limited indeed.

Since I last wrote I have had a severe attack of spinal and nervous difficulty. I suffered much and for five days was unable to move from the room. During the holidays I was confined to the house, whilst the residents of the institution were enjoying themselves. I was invited to the parties, one at the military institute, to which I did not go, although I was strongly urged by the president. Neither Miss Sherman nor I went as we thought it neither proper nor dignified for us to go and .....with fifty children, the greater number of whom were not twelve years old. The other was a regular teachers leave. We had the profession well represented, and I never enjoyed myself better, notwithstanding I had so much difficulty in getting there. The party was given by Mrs. Sybly, an old lady upwards of sixty, who was the founder of Lindenwood, and taught here some thirty years. She, as most proprietors of boarding schools do, made a fortune and then retired to enjoy it. I wonder if I can't do so sometime. There is not much danger of the event ever coming to pass if I spend many more years in the capacity of teacher, especially when they promise so much salary and then you find out that half the things you supposed were included in what they were to find, turn out to be extras

It is now after dinner. I have this morning recited my first lesson in German. I think I will like the study well. My teacher is a lady of education and some accomplishments and seems highly flattered at my putting myself under her instructions. If perseverance will accomplish anything, I certainly will succeed in gaining a knowledge of the language. I see by the papers that Mr. Montgomery, the gentleman of whom I wrote you last summer has settled his colony at Le Compton and wishes correspondents to address him at that place. I believe however, that I will not decide to fall in and be one of them. They will, however be an addition to Kansas, as they are

moral and the greater number of them wealthy families. What kind of a time would I have if I went to Kansas and spent my vacation. It will be from the first of June until the first of September. I have no place to go and do not know what I shall do, providing I am living and well. I received a letter this week from Leavenworth from a teacher with whom I was formerly associated, inviting me in very strong terms to visit her, and stop teaching for the present. I would like to see her, as she is one of my dearest and best friends, but how upon earth would I support myself? Even if my health is precarious I must work away.

Please write as soon as you receive this. I am punctual and wish you to do so.

With much love from your affect. sister, Ellen

(Marginal additions)

I must confess this letter is a shabby looking affair, but I have been interrupted more than twenty times since I commenced writing; first one comes in, "Miss Carpenter please help me with my composition", another "Miss C. Work this example", a third "please tell me how to spell this word" and so my time goes and work done amid a constant interruption. Just now one comes in to torment me, how sweet and peaceable the life of a teacher.

I have just heard that Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi have seceded. We are now missing six states and doubtless, Louisiana will follow in a few days. Can we do without them?