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Letter to Rusella Easton from Mary Sibley, February 26, 1831

Mary Easton Sibley
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Linden Wood Feby, 26th. 1831

Dearest Rusella,

I do not know whether this will be a long letter or not, paper is very scarce with me and Mr. S. is so saving of his, since he has commenced writing so much got for newspapers that he scolds me every time I take an inch of it to write upon. Please ask Mr. Russell or Mr. Gamble to send me some, they are friends who are friends indeed and not in profession and whenever I want any thing of that kind I know it will give them pleasure to furnish me. Your letter was a great gratification to me except that part of it where you say Mr. Potts is sick and can not come up to our meeting. Some how I always have felt a great partiality to Mr. P. as a minister [“(added in with pencil] Not so much because I think him a smart man or an eloquent preacher but because I feel that he is a sincere Christian. A character that respect more than any other in this world is an humble & true Christian & such a character commands my respect whether is the person of the poor slave Bunyan; or is the popular preacher of the Presbyterian Church of St. Louis There is some thing far more enabling in the idea of action expressing from the high ___ of love & deeply to our maker & to fellow men then those deficit ___ which govern the greatest worldly character. How often has my heart ached when I have scanned my ___ for my best actions and looked abroad through the vast _____ of beings who fill this busy scene and found nothing but that meanest of all principals, self interest, deficiencies, in all that is done in all that is said. The patriot. The ___, the beneficent, the moral man, in short all that are ___ of character are met with respect. Their actions into the one great ruling profession, defy ___ the curse of sin, and the least proof to me of the existence of ___ sin that I know of. There is no case for it but in doctrines of Christ. I sought for a remedy every where, in my own bosom, in love, in friendship, in charity, in cultivating the benevolent properties of our nature to the extent that thy exist naturally but disappointment, a heart sickening disappointment was the result; disgust at times almost overwhelmed me, disgust at the imperfections of human nature. I longed to find noble motives, producing noble actions & both producing from some source more ___. More high than the degraded one of, self interest. Self, Self was still, however, disguised at the bottom of all, and had I not started the system of Christianity I should have gone to my grave never found what my heart sought for. Do not understand me to say that only Christians are ___ I know they are as often as others people but understand me to say that in the religion of Jesus Christ only this perfection I was searching is to be found which is a strong proof of its divine reign. The nearer the professed Christian can come to the example if Christ the more he approaches that kind of perfection I sought for. I feel now it is a perfection that god only can give and this it is that makes religious people talk about the “giving God” which means nothing more that the favor and assistance of the almighty to give us the power to become that which we admit & feel are ought to be to satisfy our own souls- I am afraid you will not comprehend me, but some day you will if not now I see this beautiful system that lays all self things in the dark and raises the thoughtful and feeling above the groveling propensities of human nature in the Bible and yet such is my impression altho’ I see it, I can not feel it. I am not come under its influence tho’ I would give worlds to do so.- Is not this another proof of the health of the scriptures where they teach that we can do nothing without the power of God? To this we are indebted for every thing, for power to become what see our selves would be for even a good thought. You have heard me say that inconsistency, ___ (by which I mean mistabliby or will and design) and selfishness, were the two great evils of our natures, evils I still think them but I now see that in the religion of the Bible there is a remedy no where else to be found. We may talk of philosophy, or heroic deeds & generous actions of safety ___ and benefactors of mankind but they are all high sounding words

without meaning and if tested by that knowledge that "search the heart" would be found to have no existence but that which proceeds from the means and most capable of motives and principles- Do not think I am ___ by the world and therefore ___ with it. In my gayest my happiest hours I still sought for it in vain ___ at looked for it in mankind who are by nature corrupt. I would not believe in the doctrine of original sin and went on seeking, until repeated disappointments has convinced me the doctrine is true. I did not intend when I commenced this sheet to say anything on such serious subjects but when writing to those I love I am indescribably led to speak of what interests me most, another part you might say of the truth of my text, however, I shall make up in the other sheet my ___ for the ___ I have __,

Your affectionate sister,

M. E. Sibley