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Letter from Julia Strong to Her Aunt, February 15, 1838

Julia Strong

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Barnard

Lindenwood, near St. Charles, Feb. 15th, 1838.

My ever dear Aunt H.

It is now the middle of February and your last affectionate letter of Oct. 4th is still unanswered – not because I intended to retaliate for your long silence, or even to follow a bad example – but for reasons with which you must be acquainted thro' my friends in your vicinity. I regret much that anything should have compelled my pen or hand to be silent in its intercourse with my much loved aunt H, and the the [sic] precious few who are in any measure faithful or prompt in discharging the duties growing out of a friendly correspondence.

It is with a heavy heart that I allude to the chilly reserve of our dear parents and other friends who have been for many long months indebted to us for letters. What apology to make for it I am at a loss to know. My blood curdles while I admit the possibility that they have ceased to love as tenderly one who was once sure she held a large place in their affection – – or that absence may have rendered them less alive to her health and happiness than was their wont. If I mistake not – not the first line, penned by the hand of either of my aunts, has been received since the arrival of Miss Rossiter [sic – see note below] in Mo. which was about the end of last May, and this notwithstanding I have repeatedly written them, and always long and full letters.

I suppose they would say Algernon and other friends have written – I grant it and their letters have been gratefully received – but here is a case where substitutes will not answer. Three letters have been addressed to them since early in Nov – the two last of which informed them of my sickness and the birth of our dear little H., but even the knowledge of my illness – my need of sympathy while removed from parents and home, a sojourner in a strange land, has not as yet elicited from them a syllable. I speak of dear Father and Mother because their seeming neglect grieved me most, – not because others of our dear friends are not in the same condemnation. But I should not trouble you with my complaints – pardon me for having done so – but my heart is full and it gives relief to speak out.

Since my last to you dear Aunt H. I have passed thro' a variety of scenes – some of trials and suffering, and others of joy – in all which I can truly say “Goodness and mercy have followed me”. I have experienced in a large measure the loving kindness of our covenant-keeping God – and feel my obligations proportionally increased to renewed consecration to his service. We now sustain the endearing and responsible relation of Parents – how shall we discharge its duties? You know my youth and inexperience – pray for us.

How were you pleased that we bestowed upon our dear little daughter her Aunt H's name? We did it not for flattery's sake, but because we love you, and if imitating your example she shall grow up to occupy as large a place in the hearts of all – as does she whose name she bears we shall be satisfied. We have not yet had our babe baptised for want of an opportunity.

There has not been a Communion in the Pres. church since we have been here, and no stated minister.

Our little H. is a fat healthy child, weighing now about 15 pds. is nearly 3 months, her hair and forehead much like mine, deep blue eyes which indicate sprightliness, and are rather prettier than either of her parents can boast; added to this she has a very fair complexion, [sic] and a pretty mouth – this last she did not get from her mother. I should like to put her in my letter and send her home.

We still live at LindenWood, and feel ourselves more at home than we ever shall in any other place in Mo. Mr and Mrs. S. have no children of their own and as ours was born under their roof they seem to take a special interest in it. The Maj. makes quite a fuss over it. We have experienced much kindness from this interesting family – they seem to cherish for us almost paternal feelings. Mrs. S's school flourishes more than ever before; there are now 30 young ladies pursuing all the branches of education which are taught in Eastern Fem– Sem's. Miss R. [osseter] is highly esteemed by all, and does much to give influence and respectability to the school.

You are perhaps aware that Mr. Strong's brother and sister came to this state last fall – both in search of health. They remained with us a few weeks and then left us for Fulton, 30 miles above – where Mary has been teaching an interesting school. Mrs. Sibley has just invited her to return to Lindenwood and become an associate with Miss R. – with a salary of \$300 each per annum. Mary will probably return as the prospect of enjoying our society, as well as other circumstances will operate as an inducement. Mary is a sweet girl and well qualified to instruct. She is earnestly solicited to remain in F. Our dear brother Wm's health has remained about stationary during the winter thus far; he has all the symptoms of speedy decline, though he has borne the winter better than our fears. I wish you could see him. He is a lovely fellow, just one of the sort that would interest you. All at Lindenwood take a deep interest in him for his own sake. Brother W., if Providence permits, will in the Spring undertake a trip to the Rocky Mountains or to Santa Fee [sic] as a last hope for restoration. Many predict either would restore him, & instance many cases where pulmonary cases have been cured – but we dread it much on account of the dangers of the way from hostile Indians and other obstacles.

Our friend Miss R. is very contented and happy this winter – her health is good and she feels that she is useful and enjoys the confidence and affection of many, particularly of Mrs. Sibley – They have become like twin sisters. Miss R. has pledged herself to remain another year on condition that Sister Mary becomes associated.

On the whole we have a delightful family circle – are so much society for each other we need not go abroad to seek it. Do you ask what we are doing? As to myself my labors in school are of course suspended – but indeed you would not call me idle. I have no nurse for my baby – take the entire care of it myself with the occasional assistance of Mr. S. and having no cradle she is most of the time on my lap – In this position I use my needle some hours every day in

order to accomplish the necessary making and mending for our little family. If I could as well use my pen and tend her at the same time, perhaps your letter would not have been so long unanswered. I have also been trying to study Greek a little.

As to my dear husband – he is hard at work for the Tract Society– sometimes feels as if he bore a heavy burden to look after the interests of the Tract Society in two destitute but mighty states. [Illinois and Missouri]

Mr.S's business with the Ill. chs [Sic – clearly an abbreviation for "Illinois churches," just as later in the sentence when it appears as "ch's".] this winter was to be done by correspondence chiefly – he has written something like 100 entire sheets of foolscap to the several ministers and ch's on the subject within the last 2 months; – of course I have been favored with his company at home– indeed he has been mostly here since Nov. Success in an unlooked for degree seems to be crowning his efforts – a great work is going forward for both states – the influence of which you could better appreciate if you knew the extent of destitution.

My dear husband seems to be growing in the confidence and affection of the parent Soc. not only, but of the good people of Ill. and Mo., and many stand ready to lend him their aid by putting shoulder to the wheel. That these things are so should be matter of gratitude – I trust they are not exaltation. The friends of the cause have nobly come forward in St. Louis and pledged \$ 500 to sustain a volume Agent for 8 months in the most destitute part of Mo., – also in the vicinity of Galena, [Ill] the mining region. Mr. Kent informs they will pledge the support of another, –and we expect Alton will bring forward a third, – then the Parent Soc. will keep 1 more vol. Agt. in each state, which will make 2 men going from house to house distributing the word of life – these all carry bibles as well as the bound vol's of the Tract Soc.

To select suitable and efficient men; – provide horse and wagon, give instructions, obtain commissions, and direct the movements of all these , and keep such a machinery in motion is not a trifle. It is sufficient to tax any powers. Besides this Mr. S. has to visit churches and make friends for carrying on the same work among the benighted heathen – and besides all this has for many weeks prepared and preached two sermons each Lord's Day, one in the new church just completed in S. C. , and at night at Lindenwood. In both places he is listened to with interest ; –an acquaintance of near a year and a half has served to attach the people of St. C. very strongly to Mr.S. – They are I believe unanimous in wishing him to become pastor of the 1st presbyterian [sic] ch. here and will make out a call for him soon. This is a point of influence I suppose second to none but St. Louis in the state. The field is lying waste and much needs cultivation. Whose work it is to do it, I trust Providence will determine.

It is not yet a matter clear – that duty requires our stay in a slave state – this much we know – inclination does not. Neither are we certain that Mr. S. should leave the Tr. Soc's service. [sic] You see how difficult and trying it is to decide in such a case, and yet you know not half the circumstances which render it so.

Respecting the murder of our lamented bro. Lovejoy we cannot tell you anything more – all has been told and enough to make ones [sic] heart bleed and blood boil. We knew him well and valued his personal character – were both at his house in Alton after the first attacks of the rabble. Mrs. L. is in St. C. in miserable health just on the eve of confinement – has already one son. It would break your heart to see her, yet she looks calm – told me that there was much of consolation mingled in her bitter cup. The death of Lovejoy we have no doubt will eventuate in the universal prevalence of the principles he advocated. We hope it will – and may the time be hastened. And yet Ministers in Mo. must not preach about it!! Mr. S. leaves early next week for Marion Co. to be absent 3 weeks. I shall be very lonely without him. The weather is cold – yesterday below zero cold. Monroe Co. weather. The Majestic Missouri is bridged from its source to its mouth. I wish you could see it.

We feel some solicitude respecting the health of our dear Grandparents on account of the February cold season – Tho' how much pleasure it would give us to be near you to enjoy your society and be comforted by it. Indeed it sometimes seems as if I could not be denied the pleasure of making one among your happy family circle. I see not how Aunt E. can desire to leave it. She knows not what she does. Her letter of Nov. 20th came duly to hand and shall be answered soon – also brother Algernon's last shall not long be neglected. – I was much gratified with A's improvement both in penmanship and composition – think if he keeps his ambition up he will soon make a smart man. All my brothers' birthdays are just past – We spoke of them and were reminded how fast our lives were ebbing. – How is Maria T, my old and much loved friend. I think of her often and am anxious to know the state of her health. Give her much love and tell her I shall write to her soon if life and health permit. Thank you for many particulars of family matters – Your letters can not be too minute in this particular. These are things which interest me no less than formerly. How are Uncle H. Aunt S. and Little E. You know not how anxious we are to hear. The two first have been long indebted to us for letters. Also dear Sister Sophia – Oh! that we could hear from her.

May I ask my dear Aunt H. to favor us with an early answer. We must depend on you or relinquish the expectation of hearing from home. Be particular in regard to all family friends. Is Uncle D.B.B. in the N.Y. legislature? We see a Barnard name but do not know. Tell us of our Rochester friends – every one have [sic] been written to but do not answer. Is Aunt E. Married or likely to be? We hear of general news thro' Maj. R's letters and papers, but we want particulars. Mrs. Buell wrote that she informed Aunt Susan of the birth of my baby but from her singular manner she knew not whether she felt any interest in it.

Ever your attached niece Julia B. S

Marietta is the Spanish pronunciation. Mrs. Sibley and Miss R. desire an affectionate remembrance. Our love to Mrs. Andrews' family. Am I off your list?

[a) Several bracketed notes appear throughout this digital copy. This one, as well as all beginning with "sic," were added by me. The others were apparently added with pen to the typescript that I am copying as clarifications of abbreviated terms. A few penned and non-bracketed additions, apparently corrections of typos made during the original transcription, are accepted and copied without notation. b) In several places, eliminated spaces between words have been restored without note; although their origin is not certain they are more likely typos, and in any case may hinder comprehension. c) The correct spelling of "Rossiter" is believed to be "Rosseter." It is not clear whether the typed error belongs to a transcriber or to Julia, especially since the penned clarification is not clearly written.]