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12-27-1847

## Letter to Alton Easton from Mary Sibley, December 27, 1847

Mary Easton Sibley  
*Lindenwood College*

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Linden Wood Dec.<sup>br</sup> 27.<sup>th</sup> 1847 —

My dear Alton,

This night I received your welcome letter, the first I have received since you left Leavensworth.

I did not know but you were displeased with me for writing the letter you refer to, and therefore did not intend to write again – But if I love any one, I can have no concealments with them, my every thought feeling and emotion must be communicated if I hold communion with them, & when this unreserved devotedness is denied its exercise a revulsion [?] takes place and the pent stream of affection & confidence struggles in my breast until it overflows in some other channel – This is as characteristic of your sister as the reserve & severity of your nature is to you, and perhaps accounts for the influence gained & maintained by the individual you so much dislike – Although we you [the word “you” is faintly but clearly inserted between “we” and “have,” with an insertion mark to show where it should go. The word “I” followed by a comma (which could also conceivably be half of an insertion mark) similarly appears written above the word “have.” The only clear meaning I can think of for these words is that the phrase originally read “you and I” as a clarification of the word “we,” and the “and” was subsequently lost in photocopy. This explanation is, however, not at all supported by even the faintest marks that might be construed as the lost “and.”] have loved each other it has not been an unreserved confidential or rather confiding love that alone satisfies my Nature – And when I wrote that letter I wished to place you just in that relation which [sic] a friend I love best must stand, in order to obtain that influence over me which every true friend is entitled to possess – You think you know much of me, but my dear brother you are almost a stranger to my history & character — If you knew all, you would not wonder that I yielded my love & confidence to one who for years alone appeared to appreciate & desire both [see note A below] — & this is the reason of the remark I made that it was unfortunate for me that I had not sought from you that sympathy which I needed & without which I can not live – And even now as far as I am advanced in years my feelings are as strong as they were in early life – I have no such thing as what is called passion in my nature & never had, and it appears to me for that reason I have a double portion of affectionate & feeling [the “&,” which is incorrect, was clearly added as a later insertion/correction, probably a mistake made during proofreading] & child like confidence in my composition – The peculiarity of my temperament [sic] has been the cause of much of my unhappiness – I have been misunderstood, misjudged & slandered – With the warm affections of a little child desiring the kind & tender & innocent caress of a mother [see note B below] I have been met with sternness [sic] & coldness from parent & husband and even (shall I say it) from that brother who now loves me so dearly. – Is it strange then that the struggle should have been so hard? to give up the only one who appeared to me to understand & appreciate my character & feelings? — But the struggle tho’ terrible has ended, & She can never be to me again what she has been – I have no longer the disposition to pour [see note C] into her bosom the overflowing fulness [sic] of my heart – It is no longer a relief to me to confide in her sympathy – — And, in short, my heart is like Noah’s Dove when she was first sent out of the Ark — Its best rest, & final rest I know is in Heaven – But while we are in the flesh in spite of ourselves, we are prone to look for a portion of our enjoyment in earthly objects & in the exercise of earthly affections – I have endeavored to wean myself from all earthly enjoyments, and

desire to love pre-eminently my Saviour & my God – I desire never again to love another human being with the devotedness that I have the individual alluded to –

In my last letter I told you I intended to go and see Medora if Mr. S. would give his consent. I have not yet determined whether I should go or not – I did not mention Miss O's movements [see note D] as I supposed she kept you informed on that subject – I do not wish to do any injustice to any one, and I should be particularly sorry to do so in this instance. I therefore shall suspend my judgment for the present – I have seen nothing as yet to alter my opinion that she is a maneuverer [sic] but whether the maneuvering proceeds from a bad heart and bad motives I am not prepared to say or believe – "Time will determine" Mr. Alderson was married to Miss Baker on Thursday last and spent Christmas here with a number of neighbors & acquaintances, I will not desecrate the name of friend by applying it to any human being in my present state of mind – Henry has gone into Mr. Garriotts [sic] store I suppose with a Salary of \$4000 per year – He appears industrious and attentive to business – I hope he will do well —

Doct<sup>r</sup>. Thompson and lady have returned from Pennsylvania and are now preparing to take a final leave of St. Charles – They will remove probably to Indianapolis – Mr. & Mrs. Smith are boarding at Mrs. Cummins together with Mrs. Hill & Howard Douglass – Mary Lee has returned from Kentucky very much to the discomfiture of her mother who was anxious to break up an intimacy between her & Alec Shovin [ ? This spelling does not seem right. Eliza refers to the same person – a Catholic whose courtship of Mary Lee scandalized her Protestant friends and relatives – in her own letters with a spelling more like "Chauvin."] – Mary is headstrong & her imagination is the most corrupt of any I ever dreamed of to be possible, as I learned when she was at school here [see note E] by picking up accidentally a letter of hers to Narmie [?] Otie [?] – Things spoken of lightly in that letter I should not & could not have even thought of, without bringing the blush of Shame all over me –

And I am consequently fearful of the issue of this affair – I know Maj. Lee [see note F] will oppose & so ought he, Such a marriage – For neither by association, education, or religion is it at all a suitable match – Mrs. Lee has kept the whole matter from her uncle & myself because Mary begged her not to tell us any thing about it, for the reason as she said, that we were so much prejudiced against ~~by~~ [see note G] Roman Catholics — She has written to her husband and urged him to come home —

If he possibly can I hope he will – For no one else can put a stop to Mary's folly —

Miss Ott has been here since the commencement of the present session – But we had so few Scholars I have closed the school for the present – If I do not go to New York I suppose she will go to Farmington where she was so anxious to go, when I wrote to you my second letter – I shall pay her salary as punctually as though I had a full school – As I have written to you so recently, I will close this may you be blessed in all your ways & watched over by a kind providence is the prayer of your affect.ate sister

M.E.S.

[see note H]

[The postscript below appears on a separate sheet of paper:]

6.th Page – Dear Alton, I thought Mr. Sibley would write but as he has not done so, I will say that he has no hard feelings towards you at all – that he says Mrs. Lee & Mrs. S. never said any thing about you to

him in reference to any occurrence [sic] here or in St. Charles — He did at one time think you were trifling with J — [? See note I] but that he was afterwards convinced that he entirely misunderstood the matter —

Do not let what I have said about Miss O. influence you — You now stand to me in the place of such a friend as I must have, to be able to endure life, and I shall be likely to [the paper is torn here, but context makes it clear that “to” is the missing word] tell my thoughts and express my feelings [See note J] without reserve — sometimes those thoughts may be unjust to others & those feelings unnecessarily called into action — But if you understand the former part of my letter you will appreciate properly all my confidence in you — If not, I must remain like Noah’s dove, seeking rest for the sole [? The paper is torn so that only “so” is visible] of her foot & finding none — But I have no Ark to return to.

I am finishing this with the view of sending it by the present Mail — your affectionate

Sister

M. E. Sibley

[The address on the “envelope” reads as follows:]

Coln. A. B. Easton  
El Passo [sic]  
New Mexico

[There is a circular mark, presumably that of a seal, below the address, and at the top of the page (sideways relative to the original address) the document has been labeled in fainter handwriting as follows:]

Aunt Mary Sibley to her brother  
Col. A. R. Easton

[Other notes: A number of insertions were made, presumably by Mary giving her letter a brief proofreading before mailing it. The first is documented in a note within the text; the others are explained below.

A) – the words “for years” were added as an insertion.

B) – “of a mother” was added as an insertion.

C) – “pour” more closely resembles “pous” but “pour” is also a possible reading, and the only one that appears to make any sense in context. It is not clear who “She” is, although “Miss O” (Eliza Ott) seems a possibility. It is known that she and Mary Sibley were not always on the best of terms.

D) – “Miss O” could also possibly be read as “Miss D,” as the “O” is oddly shaped. However, the fact that Miss Eliza Ott, Alton’s fiancée, was at this time living at Lindenwood as a teacher makes it almost certain that the statement is in reference to her.

E) – “she was” was added as an insertion.

F) – A mark after “Maj.” may be a superscripted “r” but does not appear to be connected to the rest of the word; its meaning is unclear.

G) – A word that appears to be “by” was struck through and replaced with “against” as an insertion.

H) Something illegible was struck through before the word “ways” in the closing sentence. It is not clear whether “ate” in “affect.ate” was added as a superscript to the abbreviation or later as an insertion to clarify.

I) This puzzling reference is unclear. The opening letter could even conceivably be an “I,” “F,” or other letter, though “J” seems most likely. I do not know what personage is referenced.

J) – The margin here is torn, so it is possible that a word is missing.

K) – Mary Lee’s courtship of the Catholic Alec, Mr. Alderson’s marriage to Miss Baker, and the letter of Mary Lee’s that so scandalized Mary Sibley are all mentioned in some of Eliza’s letters from the same time period, although Alec’s last name is spelled differently by Eliza.]