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6-15-1847

## Letter from Elizabeth Ott to Alton Easton, June 15, 1847

Elizabeth Ott

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St. Charles Mo

June 15<sup>th</sup> 1847.

A.R. Easton.

My dear Friend. — Six days since I promised it should be a long time ere I wrote again, unless a line from you sanctioned it. Alas! for my resolutions. When Mrs. Easton spoke of visiting Fort Leavenworth before you left, my feelings burst their bounds, I could not resist the flood + flew to this resource for relief – Now have I the courage to give this in her charge “I shrink from it without a thought of fear,” Mrs. E’s visiting Ft. L. W. in hope of seeing you is exceedingly gratifying to me, it seems next to seeing you myself, & far better for you. So you know that she has had a deep hold on my heart for more than a year!

Had there not been an answering chord [?] between us I could never have confessed to her my interest in you. — You remember leaving L.W for Mexico last year on Monday morning, on the Wednesday following I came into town to Mrs. E’s on an errand of Mrs. Sibley’s, While there she asked me of the Legions departure &c I made a remark upon your going there & at that unfavorable season Its tenor, the tone of voice & all startled me, I raised my eyes to her face, & saw, all the mother there, yes, even tears, my heart was hers then & forever, I was just leaving, she stooped & kissed me & from that hour my confidence in her has been constantly increasing, & now I seek her heart instinctively when in doubt or terrible, You once asked me how I knew she loved you; are you answered.? If not I will add I have had many like proofs since, & some very lately. — This call upon you is a severe trial to her, steady & calm as she seems I think the occurrences of the last winter and spring, have interested her in you perhaps unusually. The way you have been handled has touched her to the soul, & the stand she takes bespeaks all the mother & a summon of the highest integrity – Would that I were capable of such noble things, for your dear sake, my hearts Chosen.

I told you in my last that I had consented to board at L. W during Mrs. Eastons absence at Palmyra, I have changed that resolution & will give you the principal reasons, hoping to receive your opinion on my decision, Do not withhold it “As you love me,” Set me in order, do, a word now, may save a world of regrets. — Major Sibley, has been acted upon by the Princess of Jesuits, Mrs. Lee was the willing actor [acton?] and, the “Trifle light as air,” which came under the Major’s eye of which you told me, was to him I fear “Confirmation strong as proofs of Holy Writ,” to all they chose to pour into his ear, even Mrs. Eastman discussed that ~~matter~~ incident with Mrs. Love, They took the opportunity of Mrs. Sibleys absence to Palmyra, but I was not aware of the effect wrought, until the Saturday after you left, though Mrs. Love was but kept it quiet from me for fear of wounding me, & from you lest you might regard her as a tattler, — I had been walking with Major Sibley to see his improvements & from fences, we turned to the linen [?] trees, which were just in blooms, particularly to the one, over your room, From it I remarked “that room is now desolate, he answered implying it would be, Yes I replied it is not likely Col Easton will occupy it soon again, if ever — “I don’t mean he shall” said he, # in a marked manner, “I am going to make a lumber room of it,” — After a moments silence, he ~~said~~ continued – “I reckon he is of age now, & can take care of himself,” & to have me appreciate it fully he repeated the last sentence, I

opened not my mouth, Mrs. Sibley joined us & invited me to her room & shortly after I left. — You ask, as Mrs. Easton did, why did you not demand an explanation of Mrs. Sibley? — Simply because she most studiously avoids all explanation, That day I had determined to have all set in order, but she baffled me perfectly, & excused herself to Aunt Love, by saying “Miss Ott is nervous,” & treats me affectionately, but as if at present, I was not quite right but in time I would be ready as ever do [sic] her bidding — Mrs. Easton told me not to engage to teach there until all was made right & she told Mrs. Love, if she was in my place she would not set her foot there until Mrs. Sibley made an apology ————When I told her I had arranged to board with Mrs Cummins, She gave me a bright smile & said “Well, that is better than to go to L.W.” It was at table, so nothing definite could be said, though I saw she appreciated my motives, & approved of my decision.—

A man brought the Ponies last week, on Monday Henry Cly [“Clay” is obviously intended] went to Linden Wood after the “Mustang,” accompanied by your friend A. Chauvin, [?] to get the hounds, & while there the major gave Henry a “shot” about the Ponies, which chagrined [sic] & puzzled him not a little, for he knows nothing of “the news” & of course could not appreciate the motive ————

My last letters from “Adie Cayce,” [very uncertain last name, could also be “Coyer” or “Coger”] were unusually affectionate She seemed still unreconciled to give me up, & said her Father & Mr. Rogers hoped that by next year the school would support two & if so, “would I be one,” “Thereupon I took the hint,” + wrote her that I refused solely, because I did not then intend to teach, but from recent changes, — I now desired a situation, That I could have L.W. School again, but I dreaded the care, & would prefer less confinement & more opportunity for active exercise, & would even sacrifice solacy to some extent, to secure it, ——— I now desire an answer to that, as well as this, before I answer Mrs. Sibley, or commence on that delicate business — I have also written brother, advising him of my need of funds, & today a letter came to hand from him telling me that he is in business, in Albany, & therefore he can refund me, without any embarrassment to himself, Most joyful news, but he knew nothing of your learning them, So I have no good from him on that subject for you “Dearest,” but I know all will be well, for you there. . To return to myself — I am most sincerely grieved to day [sic] such a consternation of “affairs,” before you “My heart upbraids me for adding to your cares, My excuse is I feel so deeply my need of your clear judgment, and your generous love encourages me to “tell you all,” to trust you implicitly, fearlessly, entirely, & to look hopefully to you, for council & forgiveness, — O for one precious hour, with you! But I do not despise by any means. ‘Tis true they have stormed & taken the last stronghold; “Uncle George” is theirs for the time, but he is a man, and is open to reason, & fact, & some very important facts have been withheld from him, So I “hope” & feel my heart strong, & that I have right in my favor, & thus armed will not shrink from duty to myself & my Dearer Self, — Give me but a word of encouragement & I will be doubly armed, and will pledge myself that I will not leave St Charles, without a thorough explanation with Major Sibley — I will endeavor to be deliberate & not forget what is due the Major. & Mrs. Sibley, as well myself — [sic] now what I owe you my dear Friend at all times, — — Would you know where I am to live after tomorrow? You remembe [sic] the two cottages to the left of the Cottage on the hill, The second is Mrs. Cummins residence & a very pleasant one, with large yard & garden, & good rooms within, A few weeks since she could not have taken me, now she is glad too [sic] at the same price Mrs. Sibley would as a favor, - As we are “Led by a path we know not,” and good

prepared for us where it is least apparent to our finite minds, How can we be faithless, and full of care about this frail being, & how constantly should the publican's prayer be mine, and another still more appropriate "Help thou my unbelief."

[This marks the end of the fourth page of the letter. A note has been added to this page, written sideways in the left-hand margin. It reads as follows:]

Please examine your conscience & discover if you can what naughty thing you done, [sic] or what duty you left undone with Mrs. Margaret Sibley that she only remembers, to Land [?] "Langdon" for his gallantry & to send word to Mrs. Easton that she might be proud of such a son. – She gained nothing here, by her omission I assure you.

[This author's "r", "n", and "u" all closely resemble one another, and in the case of a word like "Land" which is clearly intended as a proper noun, it is nearly impossible to tell which is intended. After this note, the regular text of the body of the letter resumes with the fifth page.]

## No. 2.

My dear Friend. Are you not alarmed by this prolific commencement of my correspondence, I plead permission, & that most likely this will be the last I attempt to send you ere you leave, Mrs. Eastons journey suggested this & I send it by mail to make sure, & to give you time to answer it – if you can, feel like it, for your opinion on the matter of the 1<sup>st</sup> sheet is invaluable to me, lone, & isolated as I now am, and soon far more so. Mrs. E leaves tonight, Aunt Love this week for a long visit to St Louis, & cut off from all at Linden Wood, so as far as friends & society is concerned, I am quite alone, My world is in a great degree within, I hardly know what it is to be lonesome, I can people my room in a twinkling, & enjoy at my option the society of those near & dear to me –

My journal affords "nothing special," the chief entries are on the 12<sup>th</sup> The day I learned, when you left St Louis. & Sabbath the 13<sup>th</sup>. I will give you perhaps, a dry detail of its Sabbath doings – It was Mr. Smith's last day. He preached at the Hill church in the morning, & at Mr. Aldersons on the Prairie at 4P.M After Sabbath School Mr. Johns invited me to take a seat in their buggy & go down & dine with them & then on to Mr. A's, & he would bring me home at night. I accepted, Mrs. Sibley approving – He had come up on horseback, but exchanged with Mr. Nordruff & took a seat in the buggy, & having a very sore finger, his right hand was quite helpless, & at my request he gave me "the reins," Mrs. W. S. Morgan on the back seat, You would have been amused to have seen the inquisitive eyes upon me, in that position & among the many, I noticed particularly "La\_\_iver", [the word looks like "Lafoiver"] I was amused at my own feelings, & caught myself thinking "I could not do this with Alton, it would seem an assumption, & I felt sorry that I had not the same respect for him as a man, — I never understood till then, the philosophy of your telling me not to avoid the society of gentlemen, I glory in your discrimination, I see by experience, that you cannot but be advantaged by it, Again, & again I caught myself contrasting you & Mr. Johns, & each time you rose in my estimation, I never felt so strongly, as today, how incapable he is of deep feeling, & abiding attachments,— Perhaps I never should have felt this to the extent I now do, had I never enjoyed your companionship, nor appreciated your delicacy of sensibility & dignity character, & integrity but by contrast, — Mr. Alderson you know is wifeless also –

left with six children the eldest 7 years & the youngest 4 months I believe I pity him most sincerely, & there, has been a time when such a family would have affected, me strongly towards them, especially if I received distinguished attention from their father, as I do from Mr. A. kindness it is not like Mr. J's but such as a gentleman pays to any estimable woman, We arrived early & his fine house, garden, children, were duly exhibited, & there I tasted the first "rasp berries & cream" this season, May I not feel flattered a very little, they were prepared expressly for me, they family having just finished dinner as we came, I think I may as . Mr. Johns was most thoroughly annoyed by Mr. A's attentions & it was the second time that day, for at dinner in his own house a Mr. Dent [? Extremely uncertain] an "agent" took it upon himself to engross my attention, He had heard of me in Ohio, & in Farmington, & desired to make the most of his present chance not to court, but to say he too, knew "Miss Ott." — Just before service I took the babe from the nurse, & it liking my nursing I kept it during service, How would you have felt could you have seen that delicate Motherless babe resting on my bosom, with its bright, & unusually intelligent face turned up smilingly to mine, My heart swerved not, from its true allegiance, It pleaded in vain, & I wondered how I could be so coldhearted as not to be affected by its innocent helplessness, — It was to be baptised, After the sermon Mr. A went to the nurse for it, & she pointed to me, In a moment he stood before me. The babe lay asleep in my arms, (he may have remembered my taking it before the sermon,) I cannot soon forget the look he gave me, it was but an instant, for I feeling no answering bond, rose quietly & placed it in his arms & he was himself again — Mr. J. could never have felt what he did that moment, but you can appreciate, it, I know, full well, — Mrs. Thompson rode up to town with us, & I reached home in time to tea, very glad to seek my own room where I could give thought its freedom, to seek "its choice," undisturbed by the attentions of any one, — I fear I am becoming selfish. —

Are you not sick of all this, if indeed your forbearance has lasted this far, but I will not test your patience further with gossip, not even to tell you the Rev S. B Smith ceases St Charles, tomorrow to seek "a place", & his estimable companion, sacrifices the pleasure of accompanying him to St. Louis, & visiting her lovely & amiable niece, for the sake of obliging her dear friend Mrs. Lee, by staying with the fascinating Miss Mary, while her devoted brother visits Mr. M Sibley & her sister in Richmond, Mrs. Lee is now here waiting to take the boat with Mrs. Easton — What imprudence some people are endowed with, just think of her attaching herself to Mrs. Easton under present circumstances, But it too, has its use we else ~~we~~ should not appreciate the almost Godlike forbearance of others. — Mrs. Sibley called here on her way home from the Prairie, & said she too would accompany Mrs. Easton if it was only vacation, She is gaining slowly in health, —

June. 16<sup>th</sup> This morning finds us lonely Mrs. Easton having taken the boat in the night.— I did not even send a salutary word to you, by her, I will not apologise, for I know you can appreciate my feelings, and I felt too, that it would have caused you pain, rather than pleasure. — How I dread to close this, there is something analogous in it to parting, & I feel too if this reaches you, it may be the last in a long time, & I incur the risk of harassing your mind, without being able to relieve it by advising you regularly how matters progress, But I will make the effort to do so, & trust to Him who [sic] care is over all for the result — "Duty is ours, the result God's," is dear [?] brother's motto. —

I need not reiterate the requests, & assurances, of my last; my heart turns to you, as the earth, to the sun, & the more so, by far since, those of my family who were so much my charge, are provided for, Now I feel that I may follow the promptings of my heart, by a double right. 1<sup>st</sup> they need not my care, &

by far not the least the right, that your noble, generous love, endows me with, When I had reached that point in my history how very happy I was, I then tasted bliss indeed, I would not have exchanged the privilege of loving you for any earthly good, Do not now infer that I feel that I am again crossed, far from it, May I not continue to love, &hope, &pray. – Can I not wait, Yes most cheerfully, or submit to anything, that can advance your interests Something ever whispers, good is in store, for us, God grant it, and make this separation a blessing to us both,

Now my own and Dearest, Goodbye, God bless now and forever, & make me worthy of you, so that you can ever, Believe with your whole heart, that

I am Yours Only – Eliza, Ott.

[The first letters of the word rendered as “truly” are uncertain. At the bottom of this page is a sideways inscription which reads as follows:]

Assuring him of his  
Mother’s love.

Strange indeed  
June 15 - 1847