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Letter from Elizabeth Ott to Alton Easton, May 17, 1848

Elizabeth Ott

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Letter 18.th

Linden Wood May 17th 1848.

Alton R. Easton.

My dearest. Friend. — Are you surprised that I appear to you thus, among your own family — I could not see the package depart — without sending a line, and message — I plead your own precious words in extenuation, of my presumption, if so it seem to you — “I shall expect to hear from you by every express travelling out, do not disappoint me,” Not wittingly in the least thing my dearest friend, — Mrs. Watsons kindness & sympathy enabled me ask this favor, & won from me a confession of a deeper interest in you than I should presume to express, for one who may rightly claim so great a precedence But you will not be surprised when I tell you she asked Major S. for your letters to carry to Mrs. E, & gave them to me to read, Those of Feb — March 1st & April 5th — but for her “womans heart,” I should now, know nothing from you but what I gather from chance conversations, or glean by stealth from the papers. — Even then I could give them but a hasty glance, company demanded my presence. —

I have mailed to you 17. letters giving a daily account of all I could glean of interest to myself or you. 12. of them I infer have reached you, & earnestly desire the remainder may be perused by the only, one I can permit to scan my every thought I cannot thank you as I ought, for the privilege of addressing you, nor cease to revere your integrity towards myself. — “It is like the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land —”, sheltered by love, the ties of kindred, & friendship are fast loosening & my heart knows but one spot where it rests in “content absolute,” — To ‘love thee, & wait, is the dearest privilege of my life — I think I am not selfish, If I know my own heart, to share your darkest hour, were dearer, than the brightest — for then I could lavish my heart’s tenderness upon its idol unchidden [sic] while, were you basking in the smiles of prosperity I must ‘keep silence’, lest I intrude & mar your joy. —

Would that you could for one moment feel as high a throb of joy, & gratitude to God for his care over you as I did, learning from your own pen, that you were well, & now so comfortably circumstanced, — and filling so honorable a station, & I know it will be honored by you — I rejoice also to learn your good opinion of Gen Price — & will hereafter try to do him justice in my heart, & when I am called upon for an opinion of him, — I doubt not your cool reason will detect many a wrong opinion in my letters, Not wilful, [sic] believe me, but hastily formed & womanish

Permit me to reiterate that Mrs. Easton, Aunt Love, & Henry Clay are far kinder to me than I deserve — & to go there is like going home, — My last letter from Mrs. Sibley was very kind & affectionate, She left us for New York Jan 31st & I look for her home the last of June, During her absence Our “first table” has increased from 4 to 10. & the School from 1 to 10, I try to fill the part of housekeeper, as well as teacher & find that as my need has been, so has been my strength & ability As soon as I can, I will dispatch a journal letter in continuation, my last I mailed the 3^d inst — & sent Via Leavenworth — and my 16th the 4th of April a day previous to your last date before us. —

I have received no letter & but one message from you, since you left Leavenworth, It was in yours to Mrs. S. dated Jan’y 31st and to Aunt Love & Mrs. E. I am indebted for that — The Major gave them, the letter to read, & they told me I was remembered. — I am not disheartened and doubting, that you have not written me, according to your promise No dear Alton, — I, know you, cannot wrong me, and that my

truth, & fidelity to you, will receive it [sic] full reward.— My letters as they reach you will tell you all, about myself, and I shall continue to send by the southern ____ [route?] until orders to the contrary come -. My next I shall try to mail about the. 1st of June when a year will have lapsed since you left — From the state of affairs at present I have little hope of seeing you for many months, but your improved condition will make the time pass less anxiously, than since you left — Things in my own family are quiet, and quite as well as I could hope, You are always affectionately remembered.— I cannot tell you what a satisfaction it is to me, to learn of your being comparatively settled, that I may think of you in a “Local habitation,” and I shall be with you in heart, home by ____, [the word “home” is uncertain and there appears to be a missing word after the word “by”. It was written and underlined by Eliza, but somehow rubbed out.] love & labor here, cannot chain the thought, & I have no sympathy with the “world of St Charles,” & have not made a visit since you left, [here Eliza inserted a lengthy addition which reads as follows:] except to Farmington, of which you have had a full account __ myself & I have reason to infer, from others which facts _____ disturb me as I know the truth will eventually prevail. — [A tear in the page makes several words impossible to read, including the first half of “disturb” which is made out by context. It seems clear that the missing word before “disturb” is intended to indicate that Eliza is not disturbed the gossip. Now begins the main text again.] & find I am far happier living as I do, than when subject to their intrusions, — Mr. & Mrs. Smith are house keeping, & leave not means, unemployed to conciliate me, I am not stubborn but I do not seek them, — & my good name is so restored, that Even Mr. Bell, of Boonville, would gladly secure my services at double the wages I have here. — But I shall not leave here as long as I feel that I am preferred as a Teacher, & welcome as a lady.— and the school is sufficient to warrant my not becoming a burden to your good sister, — Mrs. Lee & family are here and I have the opportunity of “rendering good, for evil,” to her & have had it acknowledged, & I have not neglected your cause with her, though I have touched it with a delicate hand. With the Major there is something wrong still, which I pray God to remove, & shall not hesitate to fulfil your request when the proper time comes -

My dear friend,—I have a “world to say to you,” & no words, & no opportunity God bless you continually My dear Alton — Believe me through all changes only thine, and happy only as I know you are so — Your Eliza.

[At the bottom of the following page is a note that was apparently added by Eliza after the letter was concluded:]

I have opened my letter to tell you, what should have been first — Mrs. Sibley enquired very anxiously after you in her last letter, the 25 of April — I doubt if the Major has sent her a word about you — However she will learn when she comes that she is first in her brothers heart — & I love you, that it is so , she is devotedly attached to you & “love only, is the boon [?] for love,” I want any [every?] body to love, and appreciate you as I think you deserve - — God bless you Dear Alton —

[In the center of this page, the envelope or back of a sheet was apparently photocopied; it is labeled in large letters:]

Alton

[and in fainter letters, it appears to read:]

18 May 17 1848

[At the top of the page, another message is written upside down, or copied that way:]

Your draft was duly received & applied to your wish, & Mrs. Easton told me Mrs. S. drew \$100, to go her journey – She wrote the Major for money, & I offered her \$50, which offer she thanked me for, but said it was unnecessary I think the Major sent her some, which she rec'd ere she answered me,—

You promised I might send you something May I claim the privilege, will you tell me what it will be acceptable – I do not mean a trifle, some thing or things of value May I have that little pleasure dear Alton – What is all I have when not shared with you? You will not deny me — I can accomplish it so none but you shall know the source – How anxiously I shall wait the acknowledgement of this package. —
Dear Alton do I trouble you? forgive & think kindly of your Eliza.