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Gilmore, Eliza OH (Mother), 10/22/1853

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West Point, N.Y. Oct. 22^d 1853.

My dear Mother,

How happens it that so unusually long a time has elapsed since I have received a letter from ^{you} (in propria persona). (Sunday morning) I wrote the above lengthy Epistle yesterday before the Mail came - something called me off. When the mail came it brought a letter from you, Charlie & Sallie in one. I get a long letter from Charlie a day or two previously. He wrote me of his new experience & new hopes. I am much rejoiced at the good news. I have hoped that such would be the result, upon him of the favorable influences under which he has been situated at Kent's Hill. It has been my wish that one of us three boys should take the ministry as a profession - and if Charlie continues on in the way he has begun with a clear head & a good heart the lot may fall to him. I rejoice at Charlie's step - for many reasons. It is an earnest of his success & safety among the many vicissitudes to which his early life is eligible - a shield will be found in his religion against the temptations to which he will inevitably be exposed. The first requisite of a clear mind is a good heart. Difficulties & unfavorable contingencies under which many a virtuous youth - breaks down will be insappreciated to man his equanimity of spirit or turn him aside from duty. A grand object will ever be before him

usefulness - which is embodied in the service of his God & his
fellow men - an object that will cheer away despondency -
lighten ~~some~~ ^{some} toil - and cast a halo of happiness around
his heart, whilst bending his energies to the attainment of
something worthy of an immortal mind. Then, the hereafter -
Eternity! Who can calculate its immensity! Who is able in
his thoughts to balance the scale an ~~eternity~~ ^{eternity} of
Bliss against an Eternity of ~~misery~~ ^{misery}? It is indeed a consoling
thought, whatever may become of me, my brother is in safety
both here & hereafter. - I have now just returned from
Church and from listening to another of the series of sermons
that our Chaplain has prepared especially for us. The first
^{of the series} was Profanity - the second the want of respect for the Sabbath
the 3^d Drunkenness or dissipation - the fourth & fifth. The
character & influence of the Theater - and the day the sixth.
He treated of Skepticism among young men, the causes which
lead to it & foster it. It was a most excellent sermon. But
the speaker's eloquent appeals seemed to me "to waste their
sweetness on the desert air", for the general attention & interest
of his young auditors waned exceedingly. We begin to count the
months before graduation - and look forward to it as coming, but to
us impatient Oh! how slowly. A few days ago a young man who
graduated last year William Smith of Ohio, paid us a visit. He was one
of my best friends in the last class. He went into the Artillery
Corps & joined the 12th Co. that was stationed at Portland.
After he got there he did not remain long before the company
left Portland for N. York, to prepare to set out for California,

Every single step that you have taken since my father's death has tended to promote the welfare & prosperity of your children. They now stand fair - have not run into excesses & extravagances; and though your heart may occasionally tremble with anxieties on their account and the tears flow that they must be far away; yet have they pierced your heart with deep & lasting sorrow - does not their promise, now & then, give you pride & pleasure? It has been a deep & settled wish in my heart to foster peace & happiness in our family relations. I have treated my new father with frankness, candor and affectionate regard. I believe I never in my life have departed from the respect due from a son to a parent. I called him father & gave him my confidence from the commencement. Howland and Charlie have followed my example, and am I not now glad? He has returned me the good will I gave and I feel a respect, a confidence & an affection for the ^{kind} old gentleman who bears the name of father that I feel for no other man.

He has peculiarities, who has not? Eccentricities - these are the distinguishing features between man & man - but honesty - uprightness & integrity we do not always find. I never could bear ~~the~~ that the opinion commonly entertained with regard to step-fathers & step-mothers should prove correct when applied to our family. There is no more need of unkindness, contention and animosities in these secondary relations than in any other. A will & a heart can accomplish anything. I always rejoiced to see you peaceful & happy with father.

Warren was well when I heard from him last.

and I trust almost always it has been so. Where the sympathies
and general currents of thought do not run parallel, and
when suffered to go forth they clash, we must try to
find other congenialities, and with the Christian's spirit we
may. Balard Alger has not always treated you as he ought,
and as he would have done had his mind not run wild &
been early biased by prejudice. I know if I was with him I
could get at the good elements in his composition & make
him love or esteem me. But my mother as you would tell
me under similar circumstances or exposed to similar trials
be not discouraged. Kindness & good will must conquer in
the end, and even if it does not, one has the sweet consciousness
of having done one's duty. Rokand's training has been dreadful
his mind has run to waste - no enlargements by useful
studies & wholesome companionship; he has brooded over
his situation and imbibed false notions from works of
fiction, till it would take the lever of Archimedes to raise
the settled gloom from his spirits. I perceive that what little
he got of the world in his California expedition rather infused
into his heart false estimates of what is praiseworthy in
character or in men, than prompted a true gentlemanly spirit.
Had he been under other influences in the beginning & all along
his uneventful course, the pride of being a man of some
importance, of attaining to the good opinion of those with whom
he came in contact might have thrown off any natural
predisposition to despondency. I always shall feel a deep
interest in him for with him are connected many happy
incidents of my boyhood. Remember me to him kindly - to father & to
all - Mr. affectionate son O. Howard.

in obedience to the recent order for changing the location of our troops. He was all enthusiasm. He found an excellent field for doing good in the Army. He had caused Bibles to be distributed to all the men of his company. He told me how much the men liked him, the means he took to gain their confidence & goodwill, the trials he had with some of them in his endeavors to do equal justice to all &c. - He is a smart, active & upright Christian young man and will do well anywhere. He was an active member of our Bible class here all the time he remained and in fact was instrumental in founding that institution, so alive to all things else at West Point. This little class has been of great benefit to me, and I am happy to say a source of much real pleasure. I have been doing the best work a little better in my studies & drawings than for a few weeks previous. You will see that I got quite a goodly number of devices last month & this. The history of them I will give some time hereafter, but will not fill up my letter with an account of them. I shall try not to get any more this year; but it is difficult to calculate probabilities here. I am sorry to hear that the brethren & Mr Barrows cannot agree. I thought he was the man to suit all hands & to keep up union. I tell you seems pleased with his school - I presume he likes the huskings about as well - for boys always love good times. I am sorry

indeed for much insight. I hope your fears will not prove true.

He has rather over-taxed his energies as well as his purse probably in his rail-road exertions. It must please him too as well as father to see the Cars full - over-loaded. You say that you will have to depend on me to hear from Lizzie. By this I understand she is rather lax about writing, and I do not wonder she is so for she has been sick - has sat up but very little since Rowland was there - her cough she says she cannot get rid of. - What will become of the poor child I know not. I fear the worst & hope for the best. Her journey to New York I fear has been rather detrimental than otherwise. You say dear mother that you have changed much & look upon your responsibilities differently now compared with what you did ten years ago - You are incapable of feeling as you once did - I do not understand you precisely - I would have your regard what you have done in its proper light - all has been done with high & pure motives, and in the Providence of God all has turned out well thus far. I would not have my mother unhappy - I think she will say there is no need - This world is full of sorrows, perplexities & unpleasant occurrences. It cannot be helped, but we must conform to our situations, & recollecting if we choose for consolation amid all reverses that this life is but a short space at most, and higher and purer joys are in store for those who act uprightly when "the sands in ^{their} ~~our~~ glass have melted and the wheel at the cistern has ceased its turning."