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Gilmore, Eliza OH (Mother), 03/28/1854

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West Point N.Y. Mar 28. 1853

My dear Mother.

I have spent much time in writing to Delle and I fear I will not have time enough to finish a letter to you this evening. (Mar 24 Monday). I did not finish my letter as you perceive. I took up my Moral Science and read over my lesson in that, and it was too late when I got through to write unless I sat up late and I had a very long lesson in Cavalry to get before breakfast in the morning. I presume you wonder that I should study at all on Sunday

I do not. I sometimes read over a lesson in Moral Science as this a book especially fitted for the sabbath. It has a two fold effect. It sets me to reflecting upon proper themes, and renders me more familiar with my recitation for the morrow. I received your last letter and was very happy to get it & pleased to find it so long. I have engaged some of my clothing of the Carter Taylor. He is an honest man and I know him. He can fit me better than a stranger. For these reasons I decided to let him make my outfit. I carried my full length coat to be altered into an officers coat, was measured for a uniform coat. I got ^{uniform} pants & riding coat & pants and vest. I might have done without the Citizen suit

but I thought it would be pleasant to travel
in - I do not care to attract too much attention.
where such elephants as army officers are seen,
and besides such drivers & coachmen think the like
of us either immensely rich or overburdened with
generosity. I shall now wear my shirts - mostly
with linen bosoms. The officer generally wears
his coat open except when on duty. I would like
two or three without bosoms. My shirts have
taken to crumbling - they just naturally drop to
pieces. All but four or five. I got one that
Kantland left at Berkshire that I have kept
dark about, and made of much service, taking
an especial pleasure in wearing it, from its not
being mine. You must not wear the cotton cloth
by letting the shirts reach to my knees, as Prof. Church
says. All superfluity is useless, out of place and therefore
inconvenient. I may say in this connection, inexpedient or
better uneconomical. I shall wear standing collars.
I have a pattern that I will send you - perhaps
you may think I had better buy them. You need not
attach any collars to the shirts themselves. The
socks you can consult your taste. I have enough
such as they are to supply the demands of
a benevolent society for almost any length of time.
but they need darning. You always furnished me
yarn but I never saw him able to keep a darning-
needle, and in its use I cannot boast of any skill.
You see I don't always anticipate living singly, and would

now regard it good policy to spend precious time in learning
a profession in which I am so soon to be superseded. I would like
a watch closed on both sides by a case - similar to the
hunting watch. These are very common. They do not get
dirty - so quick as the open watches - and their crystals are
not so liable to get broken. I would rather have one
with a white face - than one with a colored or a golden
face. I have written for an army trunk - it will cost
as much as 25 dollars. It is rather high but is made
for our use particularly, very strong & very large. When
I asked you if I should remain in the army - I did
not think you would let the question trouble you.
I thought I would ask you to learn what might
be your feeling or judgment about the matter. A
young man is responsible for the manner in which
he adheres to the counsel of his mother - in all respects
so where it bears upon his private character - and she
may be responsible for the particular bent her
early ~~to~~ instruction may have given his mind - but
it cannot be her province to follow him through
life and direct every step - as she did, in nurturing childhood.
It may be beyond her capacity especially if she has
never been called to mingle much in the big world.
And even if she has the power, she knows that her
son must sooner or later learn ^{of practice} "a measure of self-
dependence - think for himself and act for himself.
It matters little what is ones profession. He has tempta-
tions to do wrong in all. And if one is more conscious
to a vicious course than another, so much the more

is the call for purposes strong in rightness - and
principles that every little allurement cannot
shake. I do not pretend that I am proof against
temptation - but I feel that I am as safe from
extreme vice - from becoming a reprobate, in
the army as in the law. We are apt to form
erroneous notions respecting trades & professions - It has
been said that a lawyer cannot be an honest man -
that an American officer cannot be an upright
~~and~~ & conscientious man. It is false doctrine. The
Centurion who came to our Saviour - to plead for his sick
^{servant}
~~son~~ - who said that he said to the men go & be ye
& to another do this & he doeth it. Thus likening Christ's
power over diseases - to his own absolute authority over
his command - this same Centurion & soldier received one
of the highest compliments our Saviour could bestow -
He did not reply to him - Get thee gone thou murderer
of men! or go and lay aside thine office which covers
thee with guiltiness & crime. No. He says of him - I have
not found so great faith, no, nor in Israel. It is
possible to be a good man anywhere by the help of
our Creator & Saviour, and possible to be a bad man
anywhere - yes, even in the bosom of a virtuous community -
where an oath would excite a shudder, and where a lie or
a swearer would be cast without the pale of social protection.
Four eggs may lie in the same cozy little nest - the same
white shell appears upon each. You gather them up - you
exchange them at the store - they go from hand to hand -
without the least suspicion that one is rotten - I need not
apply the simile - Good night - Give my love to all: yours affectionately
G. H. Howard