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Letter to Mary A. Stevens, ca 1837

January 30

Oliver Winn Stevens

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Walthourville Jan'y 30th 1837

My dear Mary,

More highly than ever do I appreciate the privilege of conversing with my dear friends, when unable to speak "face to face". And I cannot think of spending an hour more profitably as well as pleasantly than in writing a short letter to you.

Be assured, dearest M., that the circumstances that unfolded themselves during my late visit to you, have had a tendency to strengthen if possible the chord of affection, and to endear you four-fold to my heart.

Although I was before persuaded that you had undergone a change in your feelings, yet now I can draw my ^{own} conclusions from my own personal conversation with you. And is it not reasonable that one, who professes to love the Savior, should be conscious of a strengthening of the ties of affection and of friendship for the dearest object of his heart, when he learns that she loves that Savior? I am more and more convinced that we have kindred spirits, that there does exist a congeniality of sentiment and feeling.

But Mary, what enjoyment can this world afford without religion? Can the pleasures of this life, if indeed they be pleasures, can the vanities of time which so often allure the thoughtless and giddy crowd, and which, in their nature, directly tend to alienate the soul from the only proper object of our regard and adoration; can these afford satisfaction to the immortal mind? We have tried these things; we have seen their insufficiency to make us happy; and, blest be God, have betaken ourselves to a higher hope.

I trust we have found, that "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths, paths of peace." Yes, there is true happiness in the reflection that Jesus Christ is our elder brother: that we do love him who loved us so much.

There is true enjoyment in the thought that we are, in some little degree, answering the great end of our existence in this world: and that after these clay tenements of ours shall be mouldering in the dust, we have a building of God eternal in the heavens, "that blissful abode,

Where the rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains
And the mountide of glory eternally reigns"

It seems to me, that the christian need not be deluded, need not be mistaken in regard to his

hope. We are never at a loss to know whether
we love an earthly friend; we rejoice in his
society; we love to think of him; and we love
those that love him because they love him.
Jesus Christ is the ground of the Christian's
hope: if we love him we will delight to visit
the closet; love to read and meditate upon his
word; and love the company of Christians.

From the feelings you expressed to me, my dear
Mary, I must hope that you do enjoy the sweets
of religion; that, like Mary of old, you have chosen
that better part. When therefore seasons of darkness
beset your mind, do not despond or despair
of hope. Every Christian has his seasons
of doubts and fears: and remember that
there is a throne of grace to which the vilest
sinner may resort and find acceptance and sal-
vation through the merits of a dying Savior.

Since now you have an interest at this throne
of grace, let us not forget one another there: and
may he that "sticketh closer than a brother" be
your friend indeed. May he strengthen your faith
and brighten your hope for heaven: giving you
clearer evidences of your acceptance with him, and
grace to pursue, with delight, the path of duty, though
it should be beset by crosses and trials: and giving
you so full that it is sweet to obey his commands.

My sincere regard to your mother
As ever your very affectionate friend
C.M.S.

Of course you will answer this by the first opportunity
and, I trust, will open your mind more freely in re-
gard to your experience, ~~and~~ in respect to what appears
to be duty in your future course. The great point is to
find out what duty is and when that is ascertained we
should at all hazards pursue the ^{best} that duty points out.

Miss Mary A. Stevens

Palmyra

But I know that you will take no step without careful de-
liberation and reflection on the consequences that may ^{follow} result.

Of course I should not wish to influence you in any way.
Let the word of God be your guide in all matters of this na-
ture; that cannot err.

You must not expect me until you see me; of course I
shall come as often as prudence shall dictate, and very business per-
mit.