

March 29<sup>th</sup>

1819

I have written so lately, & so often my dear Mother, that if I were like other people, I should have nothing more to say, but my pen like my tongue, runs faster than is quite compatible with the comfort of my friends. From your complaining of not hearing from me, I conclude that my letters must mismanage. For in the three weeks that I have been here, I have written ten times to the different members of my family. I have recorded every thing that could possibly interest, & I fear a great deal that could not interest them, & yet I get no credit for my exertions.

Aunt Hackley is still confined to her bed, but is able to sit up <sup>in her easy chair</sup> ten or fifteen minutes at a time; her complaints appear to be debility. She is in good spirits & receives a great many visitors. To answer your questions about the school or rather spirit of which you speak, I have not perceived much of that illiberal spirit of which you speak. At least it does not appear to be exercised against me. The girls do not seem inclined to get acquainted with me, but I believe this proceeds merely from the shyness which boarding school misses ~~is~~ generally to feel towards young women, who cannot enter into their sports, or take part in the Sit. Hat which amuses them. I felt inclined to conciliate these girls who were thrown more immediately in my way, but there does not seem to be a single point of contact. The want of subjects for conversation is a difficulty not to be gotten over. Of books except their school-books, they either know nothing, or are afraid to speak, & we have no mutual acquaintances. I think the school under very good regulations. There is more order than I could have expected in so large an establishment. I have not seen the least appearance of ill-humor or heard any squabbling since my arrival, and this in a school of fifty seven girls, of whom forty are boarders. Aunt Hackley tells me that I see the school under great disadvantages, as her

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presence is necessary for the maintenance of the perfect order which she requires. of this I have no doubt, and it only increases my admiration of the spirit of method, and the genius for government which has always distinguished her, since from her sick bed, she maintains an exactness of discipline, which others would find difficult in full health and spirits. her assistants are excellent as assistants, but by no means capable of keeping up the necessary authority, without her presiding power.

Among the girls, I see no one whose society ~~would~~ <sup>would be</sup> ~~appear~~ <sup>would be</sup> of much value; I suppose that in the school there is the usual gradation of intelligence and stupidity, but the first <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>sufficiently</sup> ~~sufficiently~~ developed to offer any great resources. Eliza Woodward <sup>the first assistant</sup> is extremely valuable to Aunt H. She possesses good sense & piety & under the master-hand performs her functions, as well as they could be performed. but she is uninteresting in manners and conversation - conversation I should not say, for she seldom speaks but in monosyllables. She is a saint no doubt, & saints are the most tiresome people in the world. I like her sister Maria better; she will not stand so high among evangelical people, for she seems to have an aspiration after the good things of this world, & although cheerful & attentive in the performance of her duties, is not without some proneness to the vanity of the worldly minded. I believe it is this approach to something of my own nature that gives me a predilection in her favor - in associating with her I have not the same fear of "mingling strange fires, with the fires of heaven." Martha the third sister I should have pronounced, hopelessly stupid, or sullen, but I am told she is neither; so low to account for her obstinate & unamiable silence I know not. Virginia hath an insipid beauty is as lifeless in her manners as in her person; and I believe I like Elizabeth Dickett better than any girl in the school. She makes me laugh, & that is a great point gained. some of the girls have been to me little attentions that give me pleasure - they bring me flowers, & take such opportunities of obliging me as fall in their way. this manifests a friendly feeling, and it is always gratifying to be the object of such a feeling.

You must not imagine from what I have said that I suffer at all from ennui; I read, write, walk & walk alternately, whilst



an occasional visit to the other hill keeps up my intercourse with the fashionable world. I went the other day to dine at Col. Nicholas's intending to return home in the evening, but tempted by a gay party and a pleasant walk, I decided to drink tea where I was, I spent the night at Aunt Randolph's. I courted on Capt. Peyton's attendance, but her not knowing the need in which I stood of his services, went away early & left me to ask the escort of either Francis Gilmer or Col. Robert Nicholas. In this dilemma I chose the least evil, the man whom I had once known, to the wretched stranger, and accepting his offered arm, we walked, after ten o'clock, <sup>at night</sup> in darkness & almost in silence, to Aunt N's door, where seeing me safely housed he made his bow & retired. His conduct towards me is marked with such utter indifference, that I begin to think that time has removed every feeling even of resentment, or that, at any rate, if he has unfriendly feelings towards me, they are rather passive than active.

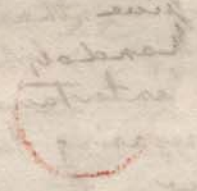
Aunt Randolph is in the midst of hurry and bustle. Yesterday, she entertained her boarders for the last time & to day she is preparing for a sale of her furniture which is to take place to morrow. The day after, she removes to Dr. Watson's where she will remain, until she can wind up her business, and leave Richmond, but as she has many visits to pay in the lower country it will be the month of May before she reaches Albemarle. I fear this is a very unfavorable time for the sale of her furniture. The distress for money is almost universal. The merchants are tottering or will be lately that he was engaged in commerce). if he has not failed, is in great danger. There is a report to day that Mr Richardson the son-in-law of Mr Dollard, is gone. I fear Aunt Randolph will be grievously disappointed, her expectations are too high; she talks of \$5000 for furniture which is all second hand & although she says that in the present state of things she does not calculate on more than half that sum. I suspect that even then she will be disappointed.

I have written as usual in the midst of confusion; if the girls come down my dear Mama send me some of the dresses that I left

to make presents of to the servants. my purple striped gingham  
I do not recollect any thing else, but it is possible you may  
find something. Aunt Hackley sends her love, give mine to  
the girls & to my dear Grand father.

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Mrs. J. M. Handolph  
Monticello.  
near Milton  
Albemarle.



I have this instant received Virginia's letter of the 26<sup>th</sup> which if  
I have time I will answer by express. Thank her for it my dearest  
mother & believe in the unalterable affection of your daughter.

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