

Letters sent by S. S. McCutcheon to Kenyon Library
are bases for this article. Stanton went to Kenyon with
A. J. McCutcheon
J. W. P.

Reprinted from the *Ohio State Archaeological and
Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 3, July, 1951

EDWIN M. STANTON AT KENYON

by WYMAN W. PARKER
Librarian, Kenyon College

Stanton, the secretary of war in Lincoln's cabinet, is still a controversial figure. Stanton, the youthful school boy, is even more elusive, but recently-located early letters written in college and in the years directly afterwards have cast more light upon the picture. The letters give an impression slightly at variance with the published reminiscences of his contemporaries, but such were tempered by time and the fact that Stanton was already a public figure when the anecdotes were printed. The two sources together give a consistent and reliable picture of an engaging youth working out his oats preparatory to settling down to a great career.

The letters document Stanton's residence at Kenyon to September 1832 and substantiate his deep regret at not being able to continue college. Thus these letters have cleared up part of the chronology of Stanton's early life, which has been so variously reported by his biographers. Opportunity is taken here to restate from contemporary sources what is authentically known concerning his college days in order to correct the misstatements and inaccuracies of existing Stanton biographies in the hope that this will be of service to future biographers. There is no good biography of Stanton, and students of history need a critical appraisal of him not only because of his position in history but also because of his relationship to Lincoln during the critical period of the Civil War.

The years at Kenyon College came at an impressionable period in Stanton's life and exerted a positive influence upon him in respect to politics, religion, and marriage. His political allegiance changed at this time, and those views especially important in regard to secession and nullification which he gained as a northern member of the local debating society were those to which he cleaved in his administration of public office. The acquaintance he made in Kenyon, a sectarian college, with Episcopalian doctrine was later to determine his choice of a church. His first wife, whom he loved so dearly,

had lived in Gambier, the village supported by the college, and it is likely that he first met her in the college community. Surely they shared an active interest in the recently founded college and village when they were courting in Columbus at the home of a Kenyon trustee. Later their son was to graduate from this college, and Stanton himself during the crowded war years showed his affection for it by returning to Gambier, where he visited his sister, who was then a village resident.

When in Kenyon College, Stanton was popular with both faculty and students, being a student leader at least in contending with the established order. High-spirited and original, he undoubtedly was involved in more pranks than have been recorded. His readiness for fun was matched by a daring that must have made him a campus favorite. His sense of justice was not intimidated by the restraints of local laws which must have been irksome if not unreasonable. When too deeply involved, as in the case quoted below¹ of Bishop Chase's "borrowed" horse, he readily faced up to his duty, although his tears before the bishop may be suspect.

Stanton's interest in young ladies as shown in these letters was not unusual in a young man of his spirit but was balanced by an avid interest in books and in omnivorously dispatching them. He was evidently none too strong, for he was frequently sick during this period; but he obviously did not favor himself, for the letters show that he was as ready for a night out courting or carousing as he was to sit up with cholera victims in the midst of a great epidemic. His views of Columbus society reported in the fourth letter were naturally colored by his current interest in girls and by finding few boys in trade who could match his ready intelligence. His first business contacts in a large city resulted understandably in some disillusionment. This formative period must have been a turbulent one for Stanton with an ever-present threat of cholera, the disappointment of being unable to continue college, and some frustration in getting under way for his professional law studies.

One must admire this lad's courage while observing him in the process of growing up. On his own at an early age, he had no easy planned life ahead. Passing through a difficult adolescent period,

¹ P. 236.

he made a happy and profitable time of his college years. His love of fun and ready wit gained him many lifelong friends from this period. It took courage to write, "Time and I against any two," as Stanton did on September 27, 1833, in reporting that his guardian bade him stay in Columbus rather than return to Kenyon as he desired. This fortitude was rewarded, for in the next letter four months later Stanton happily asserts his guardian's wisdom in requiring him to return to Steubenville for the law training he wished.

His letters exhibit a racy attitude which is distinctly modern and not a little amazing in a day when most students' letters were devout and austere moral. It appears from lack of any evidence to the contrary that Stanton did not take much interest in the parochial extracurricular activities at Kenyon. However, the active part he took in the debates at Gambier and Steubenville exhibits a genuine interest that is definitely directed toward his subsequent career. The last letter to his schoolmate McClintock, although not improved in schoolboy repartee, shows the distinct purpose, lacking in the earlier letters, of a man who has already found his profession.

Stanton had but a year and a half of formal college education. Upon his father's death, when Stanton was but thirteen, he was apprenticed to James Turnbull, who conducted a prosperous bookstore in Steubenville, Stanton's birthplace. For his first year of work he received \$50 in addition to the privilege of continuing his studies at the Rev. George Buchanan's Latin school. In 1831, after three years in the bookshop, Stanton expressed a desire to receive a college education before deciding upon a career, and Turnbull evidently temporarily released him from his contract. Daniel Collier, Stanton's guardian, advanced the money necessary for college. Therefore at seventeen Stanton left for Gambier, Ohio, to attend Kenyon, one of the four colleges then in Ohio. Tuition at that time at Kenyon College was \$70 for the full forty weeks of the academic year, but unlike today the sum included board, tuition, room-rent, fuel, and light. There were at this time an estimated six hundred students in the thirteen colleges west of the Alleghenies.

Stanton arrived at Gambier for the beginning of the summer session, or second semester, on April 21, 1831. Beginning the fall term as a sophomore, he attended the full year from November 4,

1831, through September 5, 1832. These were critical years in the college, as Bishop Chase had returned from his travels in behalf of the diocese and the college to administer an autocratic rule. The faculty, accustomed to self-government in his frequent absences, understandably enough were rebellious, and printed letters were exchanged.² At the time of the Ohio diocesan convention held in Gambier from September 7 to 10, 1831, the bishop made an indignant address to the convention concerning "the rash act of these gentlemen" who presented him with "a threatening letter."³ As a result of the trustees' attempt to mediate and draw up bylaws for the government of the faculty, the bishop resigned, before the convention adjourned, not only from the college which he had founded with funds collected in England in 1824 but also from his diocese. All of this furor could not have been kept from the students and must have furnished exciting conversation.

Awe of the bishop did not prevent Stanton, who was then described as "young, bright, and ever ready for fun and frolic,"⁴ from borrowing without permission the bishop's favorite horse, "Cincinnati," for a night's excursion some miles into the countryside to visit a young lady. It is related that the freshman Stanton and S. A. Bronson, a sophomore (later theological professor, trustee, and president of Kenyon), rode double on the animal to visit the Douglass sisters.⁵ The exhausted horse was found next morning in the stable by the bishop, who was irate and promised the severest punishment for whoever had abused his beloved animal. Heman Dyer, a theological student and principal of the Kenyon Grammar School, knew Stanton better than any of the faculty and spoke in his behalf when suspicion turned his way. Dyer urged that Stanton go to the bishop and make a clean breast of it, which he did. Upon asking Chase's forgiveness, he was pardoned, but not until both were reduced to tears in contemplation of Stanton's plight: his widowed mother and the lot that was before him. Dyer does not

² Circular, Gambier, July 14, 1831 (autograph signature: Phil^d Chase); *Letter to Bishop Chase*, Kenyon College, July 25, 1831 (printed signature: "The Professors of Kenyon College").

³ *Journal of the Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Ohio* (Gambier, 1831).

⁴ Heman Dyer, *Records of an Active Life* (New York, 1886), 69.

⁵ Frank A. Flower, *Edwin McMasters Stanton* (Akron, 1905), 28.

mention that this expedition was undertaken to visit a young lady, but this omission may be explained by the circumstance of the Rev. Heman Dyer's marriage to Miss Almira Douglass of Gambier the following year. Certainly this expedition was consistent with Stanton's own interests as expressed in his letters.⁶

The institution that Stanton attended had slight resemblance to the Kenyon College of a century later with its many solid gothic buildings. Old Kenyon, the first American example of collegiate gothic, was the only permanent building standing in 1831. The center section with walls four feet thick at the base had been erected by English stone masons brought from England by Bishop Chase. Its graceful spire had been sketched by Charles Bulfinch, an architect of the national capitol, at the time Bishop Chase was in Washington in 1828 attempting vainly to secure additional lands for the college from congress.⁷ There was an overflow of students from the dormitory's three-decker built-in berths,⁸ resulting in a statement on December 16, 1831, in the weekly newspaper, the *Gambier Observer*, that no more students were needed for the college or the grammar school until additional accommodations had been completed. Rosse Chapel, the other existing stone building started by Chase, had only the basement completed and roofed over for the frequent use of religious gatherings.⁹ There were also on the hill ugly frame buildings for farming and for housing college students until Old Kenyon had been prepared for occupancy. "Old Seventy Four," named from its unflattering resemblance to a ship of the line, at this time was used by the younger grammar school students and was notorious for its many discomforts. There were still standing rude log cabins occupied originally by the bishop's family, the workmen, and the earliest students when the plateau

⁶ Dyer, *Records of an Active Life*, 258, relates that when Stanton introduced him to President Lincoln and his cabinet, Stanton said, "Mr. President, allow me to introduce to you my friend, the Rev. Dr. Dyer of New York. He was my early friend in college, and stood by me when I needed a friend."

⁷ Richard G. Salomon, "Philander Chase, Norman Nash, and Charles Bulfinch, A Study in the Origins of Old Kenyon," *Historical Magazine of the Episcopal Church*, XV (1946), 209-213.

⁸ George F. Smythe, *Kenyon College, Its First Century* (New Haven, 1924), Appendix II.

⁹ Both these earliest buildings have been burned to the ground (Rosse in 1897, Old Kenyon in 1949) and restored exactly in exterior lines.

was but a wilderness in 1827.¹⁰ The enthusiasm of the students had been directed by means of a "Horticultural Society" toward making an extensive garden to supply the commons table with fresh vegetables. These gardens, just off the college center path, were protected by high board fences from the many roving pigs of the college farm. It was no doubt in these gardens that a professor observed Stanton procuring potatoes for personal consumption. As recalled by college-mate Bronson, the professor called out, "Stanton, those potatoes belong to the college." "So do I," answered Stanton and continued digging, which appeared to settle the matter.¹¹

The religious discipline of the college was strict, and attendance at daily morning and evening prayers in the chapel was required of all, in addition to "every exercise of public worship" on Sunday.¹² This discipline made an impression on Stanton, for he came to college a Methodist but subsequently joined the Episcopal Church. Kenyon, like many other colleges in 1831, experienced religious "revivals" through the spontaneous interest and increased seriousness of the students, which led in midwinter to additional services held in the college halls. These meetings were conducted by the older theological students and were responsible for inducing additional men to go into the ministry. Dyer in describing two of such periods while he was in Gambier says the interest was so great on one occasion that all college exercises were suspended for one or two days.¹³

There were other worthy causes which the earnest student could embrace then. The Colonization Society was celebrating its fourth anniversary in 1832, the Missionary Society had been founded the previous year, but the older Temperance Society of Kenyon College and Vicinity was the strongest of all, with one hundred and sixty-seven members. Indeed, fifty members of the latter formed a society for total abstinence from tobacco, having been so moved by the Rev. James McElroy's closing remarks before the Temperance Society on February 22, 1832, which were devoted to proving the use of tobacco as little less injurious than intemperance in drinking.¹⁴

¹⁰ Smythe, *Kenyon College*, Chapter XII.

¹¹ Flower, *E. M. Stanton*, 28.

¹² *Kenyon College Catalogue* (Gambier, 1831-32).

¹³ Dyer, *Records of an Active Life*, 56.

¹⁴ *Gambier Observer*, March 9, 1832.

The local weekly paper is crammed with moral tales of the fate of drunkards, long reports of the American Board of Missions, and an occasional article on cholera, which was beginning to assume epidemic proportions in some of the larger cities. It is not likely that Stanton was concerned deeply with groups devoted to such specialized interests, although he inquires later with affection about many of the faculty leaders of these societies. Cholera in less than a year was of chief import to him.

The administration was not unsatisfied as to the state of the college, reporting, in public answer to the late president's printed accusations of disorder and insubordination among the students,¹⁵ that some few instances of disobedience such as happen in most institutions had occurred in the four or five months since the bishop's departure, but "that at no previous period has greater propriety of deportment, or more rapid proficiency in their studies been exhibited by the students generally."¹⁶ The above pranks probably included the expulsion in midwinter by the students of an unpopular tutor. Stanton was the leader of a ruckus in the dining hall by which the poor tutor, upon being bombarded by all sorts of breadstuffs, was informed of his regard by the whole student body and driven out of the hall. He soon left the college entirely and the faculty dropped the matter as being too complicated to solve. Dyer explains that the tutor had betrayed the confidence of the students, and Stanton was determined that this two-faced dealer should be punished, law or not, and was willing to suffer the consequences. Dyer goes on to say, "This was a marked trait in Mr. Stanton's character, and no doubt had much to do in shaping his future career. His innate sense of justice made him restive under the restraints of the forms of law."¹⁷

Kenyon, like most other colleges of the early nineteenth century, had an active literary society. The Philomathesian Society, founded by the students in 1827 in Worthington, Ohio, just before the college moved to Gambier, was an active society meeting weekly. The society proudly maintained a library and guarded jealously the

¹⁵ "Bishop Chase's Defense of Himself Against the Late Conspiracy at Gambier, Ohio, in a Series of Letters to His Friends," a supplement to the *Western Herald and Steubenville Gazette* (final letter dated February 9, 1832).

¹⁶ *Gambier Observer*, March 2, 1832.

¹⁷ Dyer, *Records of an Active Life*, 71-73.

rights to its use. Debates among members at each meeting were scheduled in advance and were frequently open to the faculty. Compositions, orations, and forensics were also regularly scheduled for each of these Friday evening meetings. Nullification was being hotly discussed throughout the nation, and the opposing views must have been presented often under various guises at these forums. Kenyon, an Episcopal school not far from the Mason-Dixon line, drew men from the South as well as the North. During Stanton's last year in Gambier twenty-seven out of the sixty men in college, were from southern states. In 1832, because party spirit was running so high, permission was secured from the faculty to form two societies from the Philomathesian to resolve the society's difficulties. Twelve men resigned, taking their proportion of the library; but losing the toss of a coin for the society name, they became the Nu Pi Kappa Society. These men were all from Maryland and Virginia except Charles Sigourney of Hartford, Connecticut, a stepson of Lydia Sigourney, the American Mrs. Hemans.

Stanton was elected to the Philomathesian Society on February 17, 1832, in the first semester of his sophomore year.¹⁸ As the numbers of northern and southern men were then nearly equal within the society, a system of pairing was observed in the election of new members to the society that semester. No candidate who could not "define his position" was admitted in the struggle for predominance between the factions.¹⁹ Stanton was the last of the hotly contested candidates who was voted membership. Of nine students who acquired Philomathesian status that semester, five resigned before the end of the next term when the split occurred.²⁰ That Stanton appreciated the honor of election there can be little doubt, for shortly thereafter the secretary was directed to present the thanks of the society "voted to Mr. Stanton for the handsome present made it of a Record Book."²¹ The new book had a gold-stamped red-leather label bearing the legend "Presented by E. M. Stanton," which may have been supplied with the volume, for the secretary was only

¹⁸ Philomathesian Society, Minute Book, 1827-1832. Kenyon College Library.

¹⁹ Peter Neff, *History . . . of the Philomathesian Society* (Gambier, 1853), 6.

²⁰ Philomathesian Society, Minute Book, April 1832-1848 (leather label on cover: "Presented by E. M. Stanton"). Kenyon College Library.

²¹ *Ibid.*, May 18, 1832.

directed to record future proceedings in the new book and to preserve the old volume which was but three-quarters filled.

Joining Philomathesian as a northern supporter was an important political decision in Stanton's career, for his father had ardently advocated Adams in the struggle with Jackson in 1824, and Stanton may be presumed to have been in accord with his father's principles in 1828. However, in 1832 he "went over to Jackson," in the words of a Whig squire of Steubenville. Intervening were the years at Kenyon and membership in the Philomathesian Society. Bronson remembers Stanton in his Columbus office in 1833 introducing him to a southern man by saying, "Here is 'Father' Bronson. We fought the South together at Kenyon, and whipped."²² Always thereafter Stanton was an enthusiastic supporter of the cause of the Union and the maintenance of its authority.

Stanton did his share in the society, serving on several committees in minor capacities. His two scheduled debates, as one of two men defending the affirmative in each case, were evidently not distinguished performances, as the negative was favored in both decisions. His only other debate during the short period he was active in Philo was when he substituted for an absent man on the affirmative. This, interestingly enough, was a typical wrangler's question of the day, which several years later would be of much more intimate concern to him, "Does the life of the agriculturalist conduce more to happiness, than that of the lawyer?" This must have been a better performance, as the society voted for the affirmative.²³ Stanton acknowledged the value of his Philomathesian membership by saying in an address before the society some years after the Civil War, that its exercises with their free discussion of public questions had helped him in forming his opinions in after years.²⁴

Stanton was elected secretary in the annual elections at the end of the term, but as he left college shortly afterwards, he never

²² George C. Gorham, *Life and Public Services of Edwin M. Stanton* (New York, 1899), 16.

²³ Philomathesian Society, Minutes, July 13, 1832. A. T. McClintock, later a lawyer, to whom four of the Stanton letters hereafter quoted were written, was one of the men who presented the negative argument of the above question.

²⁴ "Stanton at Kenyon," *The Kenyon Collegian* (Stanton Number), XXXII, No. 14 (May 1906), 158.

served. A temporary secretary has added a signature for Stanton to the minutes of this meeting of August 31, 1832. In November Stanton was voted the impressive vellum diploma of the society, which must have graced his room in Columbus shortly thereafter.

Stanton is known to have been an omnivorous reader to the detriment of his success as a clerk in the book shop in Steubenville, for Mr. Turnbull is reputed by his son-in-law to have been somewhat annoyed by Stanton's neglect of customers because of his absorption in a book. "He consumed every book in the store."²⁵ He undoubtedly left his personal books to the Philomathesian Society library upon taking up business in Columbus. The *Catalogue of the Library, and Names of Members of the Philomathesian Society of Kenyon College from Its Formation in 1827 to 1840* (Gambier, 1840) lists him as a donor of four titles, but strangely enough does not list him as a member. This is only in part corrected in the 1853 catalog, which makes two errors in listing him as "Edward M. Stanton, of Steubenville; not heard from; was a member of College about 1830; left before graduating."²⁶ Still in use in the college library are the former Philomathesian library copies of the British Classics edition (New York, 1809) of *The Spectator* in ten volumes and Hale's *History of the United States* (New York, 1827), with his signature as well as "Edwin M. Stanton, No.———" on each title page.

At the end of his sophomore year in September 1832 Stanton left Gambier to return again only as a visitor. He was bitterly disappointed not to have been able to complete his course in the college which Bishop Chase had romantically termed "the Star in the West."²⁷ From Steubenville Stanton went to Columbus in mid-October to take charge of a branch book shop and stationery store for Mr. Turnbull, in whose Steubenville book shop he had spent three years before college. His next year, that of the great cholera epidemic in the western states, was spent in Columbus. There he

²⁵ Flower, *E. M. Stanton*, 23-24.

²⁶ Neff, *Philomathesian History*, 50.

²⁷ Philander Chase, *The Star in the West, or Kenyon College, in . . . 1828* (Columbus [?], 1828), in which Bishop Chase relates his disappointment in the house postponement of a bill passed by the United States Senate March 28, 1828, granting a township of free land to Kenyon for private sale. He turned this pamphlet into an appeal to the country at large for each reader to send a contribution of one dollar to the college. This enterprise, which may have been one of the first mail campaigns in America, was fairly successful in bringing funds to Kenyon.

attended sessions of the state legislature and made Trinity Episcopal Church his place of worship. The Rev. William Preston, then a trustee of Kenyon and rector of Trinity, undoubtedly took Stanton under his wing. Stanton fell in love with Mary A. Lamson, an orphan, who was living with her brother-in-law, the Rev. Mr. Preston, during this year. Mary's father, the late William K. Lamson of Columbus, had been head clerk in the Gambier college store, and it is probable that Stanton first met Mary in Gambier. They soon became engaged, but the couple waited to marry until Stanton completed his law studies. They were married by the Rev. William Preston in his house at Columbus on December 31, 1836. Stanton began the study of law in Steubenville with his guardian, Daniel L. Collier, in January 1834. He passed his examinations in 1835 but being under age was not formally admitted to the bar until 1836, when he commenced practice at Cadiz, Ohio. After a term as prosecuting attorney of Harrison County, he returned to Steubenville to become a partner of Judge Benjamin Tappan in 1839.

The following letters written by Stanton, with two exceptions, are now in the manuscript collection of the Kenyon College Library. They were presented to the library by Gilbert S. McClintock, a grandson of Andrew T. McClintock, to whom the letters are addressed. A. T. McClintock, later a prominent lawyer of Wilkes-Barre, attended Kenyon for three years from 1831 to 1834. McClintock remained one more year at Kenyon than did Stanton, and it is chiefly during this period that Stanton wrote for news of the college. The originals of the two letters to Stanton's guardian, D. L. Collier, are in the possession of Gideon T. Stanton of New Orleans, E. M. Stanton's grandson, who has graciously given permission to publish all the letters below.

Gambier July 21st 1832

Mr. Alexander J. Beatty²⁸
Steubenville, Ohio

Dear Friend

Your letter of June 28th was duly rec'd, but contrary to my usual custom I have delayed answering it: yet as I am generally punctual, you will of

²⁸ Probably a fellow clerk in Turnbull's Steubenville book shop. See letter of September 14, 1833, below.

course grant pardon for this single neglect. The fact is, between ill health and hard studies, not to mention a little—of——ahem, I have scarce breathing time.

I am really very sorry that you have determined to withdraw from the contest with Wilson, for Maria. There may be some little selfishness, in my sorrow, for though I disclaim anything like *particular feelings* in that quarter, yet I was certainly very much pleased, and would rather see her in the possession of one of my friends, than such a *paste-tub* as Wilson. I am in chase of a petticoat,²⁹ what success I may have, God only knows—but if I fail, it shall not be from want of exertion on my part.

I went to see her, a few evenings since, and enjoyed myself so well, that I took no note of time. About one o'clock I started for the college which was three miles from the girl's house—but fortune which had hitherto been favorable, deserted me—I lost my way, and after tramping all around the country, periling my neck in divers ways, reached home about four in the morning, cold, wet, and tired. The cold, and fatigue, threw me into a fever, which confined me several days. So much for love—rather expensive, don't you think so?

We spent our *fourth*,³⁰ much to my satisfaction, though we had no valiant guard to parade the hill, shewing their "thews and sinews," and choking themselves with dust, for our amusement. Your "admirable corps," doubtless played the devil with the Wheeling ladies, and made themselves "very sufficiently" ridiculous, by traveling so far for an exhibition not of their strength but weakness.

They had a splendid celebration, I am told at Mt. Vernon,—no less than three orations (all stolen from the Columbian orator³¹) a dinner and a ball, beside which, every man, woman and child were drunk as a fidler's [*sic*] bitch.

Our Faculty, through fear of Cholera, have prohibited bathing, and almost everything else but studying—would to God they may prohibit that shortly.

Miss Story, and Eliza Osborne are married it seems, they had better be so than wait until the Cholera comes. "They may marry and be given in marriage but the flood will come" says Bishop Chase and the ladies

²⁹ This might be one of the daughters of Archibald Douglass of Gambier, a Scotchman, then superintendent of the general business affairs on the college domain. Dyer, *Records of an Active Life*, 76.

³⁰ Commemorated in Gambier by a meeting of the Colonization Society. "After divine service, an interesting address was delivered by Professor J. Kendrick. The Report of the Managers was read by Mr. H. Dyer, the Secretary. The funds in the Treasury amounted to \$39.00, and a considerable number of new subscribers were obtained." *Gambier Observer*, July 6, 1832.

³¹ Caleb Bingham, *The Columbian Orator* . . . (Boston, 1797). This book of strongly patriotic and deeply religious selections made by a pioneer textbook writer was frequently reprinted. It was the best-known book of its kind for a quarter of a century and was especially popular in district schools.

had better kick the bucket, married women, than maids, for having experienced both conditions in *this world*, the'll [*sic*] know which to choose when "born again" in the next.

You will please write soon, and inform me how the fourth was spent in Steub, whether you had an oration and dinner, who prepared the one, and delivered the other. If the oration is printed please send me a copy.

Scott³² is well, he and I are still rooming together, he sends you his respects.

I must bid you good-bye ever praying that "perfect tranquillity may be the general tenor of your life, that you may have good digestions[,] serene weather" and whatever else Heaven may please to bestow.

Yours affectionately
Edwin M. Stanton

P.S.

My respects to Maria.
EMS

Kenyon College Aug 18th, 1832

D. L. Collier Esq.
Steubenville, Ohio

Dear Sir

Knowing that your attention was constantly occupied by your business, I was unwilling to trouble you unless absolutely necessary, and have therefore delayed writing until now.

The session has passed thus far very pleasantly, but will close on the fifth of next month when I shall want some money to pay my bills, and defray my expenses home.

If it is your intention that I should continue here another session, I might perhaps remain during vacation.³³ But I think there would be no advantage in so doing, as my boarding would cost the same as in "term time" & the Professors not remaining on the hill I should be perfectly idle. Besides, the college library would be closed, and the students all gone.

My bills have been nearly the same this, as in former sessions, to settle which, with about ten dollars to bear my expenses home, will be all the funds necessary.

Should there be any probability of my not continuing another session, please let me know in order that I may make the necessary arrangements.

Yours most respectfully
Edwin M. Stanton

³² William B. Scott of Wilkes-Barre, a sophomore and Philomathesian member.

³³ Vacation extended for eight weeks after commencement, the first Wednesday of September.

Steubenville Oct. 10th, 1832
 [Notation on cover: "E.M. Stanton,
 answered, Oct 16, 1832"]

Mr. Andrew T. McClintock
 Kenyon College
 Gambier, Ohio

Dear McClintock

I reached home Wednesday about two o'clock, after one of the most fatiguing, wet, disagreeable, and *altogether damnable* rides, that ever poor fellow had. I never expect to pay, the debt of gratitude I owe you, for accompanying me to Millersburg;³⁴ but if I should have the good luck to be an influential member of the Court above, you may depend upon my efforts for your salvation.

My hopes of returning to Gambier, were very sanguine when I reached home; especially as I know I could obtain money on loan, for the mere asking, which in fact I did; but I found it so difficult to wring a release³⁵ from Turnbull, and even when he had granted a churlish assent, my well beloved guardian made such a violent opposition, that I abandoned all hopes,—renewed my engagement, and shall set out next Monday for Columbus.³⁶

This I consider an absolute sacrifice of myself[:] soul, and body,—an utter destruction, of all hopes and expectation, which I one [*sic*] cherished, for it has probably not escaped your observation, that I had some "dreams of future greatness"—but they are gone,—dispersed, vanished, like the "baseless fabric of a vision." I shall henceforth be regardless of life, fortune, character, everything, and shall continue to live on, from day, to day, objectless, hopeless, without end to be reached, or design to be accomplished,—being literally [*sic*] "nupt in the bud" I shall go on cursing and being cursed.

The fact is McClintock I believe in the maxim that says a short life and a merry one is the better. In consequence of which belief, I have commenced drinking, rowing and swearing, and am rapidly approaching the "kingdom to come," at least as rapidly as such a course of life, will admit.

Yesterday was our election day, but it went off altogether too quietly; without fight, or quarrel—a curse upon such tameness of the "sovereign [*sic*] people"! Part of the Clay, & part of the Jackson³⁷ ticket, carried so that the result was not decisive of the strength of either party. I wonder

³⁴ Forty miles northeast of Gambier en route to Steubenville.

³⁵ From his contract to work with Turnbull, who had temporarily allowed him the freedom to go to Kenyon.

³⁶ To take charge of the Columbus branch of Turnbull's book store and stationery shop. He received \$250 per year and the privilege of sleeping in the store.

³⁷ The national election in which Jackson was reelected. Final results must have pleased Stanton, for it was at Kenyon that he "went over to Jackson."

how the Revd. Thos. Rigdan came out? I want you to write me immediately at Columbus so that I may receive your letter on my arrival! The trunk *you need not forward*, until you hear from me again. Give my love to John Blackburn,³⁸—my respects to Dyer & wife,³⁹ and my *curse* to Phelps Hoey⁴⁰ & Co.

You must excuse any incoherency in this my epistle as I was up all night and engaged in what has very little tendency to arrange one's thoughts.

But dear McC I am your most humble friend.

Edwin Stanton

Columbus Nov 2d 1832

[Notation on cover:
 "Kindness of Mr. Matthews"]⁴¹

Andrew T. McClintock
 Kenyon College
 Ohio

Dearly Beloved

My trunk, thanks to your kindness, reached here last evening, as also what was more welcome,—your note.

I have now been in Columbus two weeks, and during that time became [*sic*] somewhat acquainted with the good folks, "what" dwell therein. Taking all things into consideration, I like the place pretty well. It affords advantages for forming acquaintances among the great men of the day,—of becoming acquainted with the proper method of doing business; learning how to cheat, and avoid being cheated, besides the various usages of the world.

So your perceive my dear friend, that there is every facility for becoming "quite, a clever sweet, accomplished villian [*sic*]."

The business done here, though trifling or even contemptible in comparison with some places, appears immense, to one who has dwelt any length of time at Kenyon, and whose habits are so steady & feelings so quiet, as mine.

The young society,⁴² is large, though not exactly to my taste. The majority of the young men, are impudent, ignorant self sufficient counter-jumpers—a class peculiarly obnoxious to me.

The females form rather a more respectable body, those with whom I

³⁸ John Blackburn of Cincinnati, a junior.

³⁹ Heman Dyer, principal of the grammar school, married Almira Douglass of Gambier September 12, 1832. *Gambier Observer*, September 28, 1832.

⁴⁰ Edward M. Phelps of Woodbury, Connecticut, a senior and Philomathesian member. William A. Hoey of Dublin, Ireland, a junior and Philomathesian member.

⁴¹ Dorance Matthews of Columbus, a sophomore.

⁴² Compare the famous opinion of Cincinnati society of these years held by Mrs. Trollope. *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (New York, 1832).

have become acquainted, appear modest sensible & well informed, though by no means remarkable [*sic*] for personal charms. You can readily imagine with which I shall principally associate.

My situation is very pleasant, I have a great deal of time for reading, and board in a family⁴³ with which I am highly pleased.

The Old folks, are intelligent, hospitable, kind and in short just such folks as you would like. Their daughters—they have four—though not handsome are very agreeable.

You have doubtless heard Minor⁴⁴ speak of a Miss Kelley, in high terms of commendation, I have become slightly acquainted with her, and found she was all he described her.

I was at a party, the other evening at Espy's, a relation of Woods⁴⁵ to whom indeed I was indebted for the invitation. I enjoyed myself pretty well, but was somewhat disgusted with the affectation of the ladies, and bored by the dullness of the men. By the way, at those small parties you will discover the true characters of the individuals who compose them.

I shall go to Kenyon the moment I learn of the arrival of Sparrow & Clarke or either.⁴⁶

The enclosed note, you will hand Clarke *immediately on his arrival*.

Write soon.

Yours affectionately,
E. M. Stanton.

P. S. Give my love to Blackburn.—should Woods say any thing about the party tell him I was charmed with it. My respects to Mrs. Smith Mrs. Kendrick do Denison do Fitch.⁴⁷

Stanton

⁴³ That of Dr. Howard, a "steam doctor," whose daughter Anna died of a very sudden attack of cholera at the turn of the year. Stricken at 2 P.M. she was buried before Stanton's return that evening. It is reported that Stanton engaged the help of two friends and proceeded to dig up her grave to make certain that she was not alive. This act was recognized and commented upon at the time as showing heroic courage and was evidently in line with his good reputation in Columbus. Flower, *E. M. Stanton*, 30.

⁴⁴ Possibly John L. Minor of Columbus, Kenyon 1832.

⁴⁵ Henry Woods of Columbus, a freshman (earlier a grammar school student).

⁴⁶ Thomas Sparrow of Gambier, then in the grammar school. His older brother, William Sparrow, a professor of divinity, was acting president of Kenyon from Bishop Chase's departure in September 1831 until Bishop McIlvaine took up residence in July 1833.

Robert D. Clarke of Brownsville, Pennsylvania, a sophomore.

⁴⁷ Professor John Kendrick (philosophy), the Rev. George Denison (mathematics), and the Rev. Chauncey W. Fitch (language) had all been married during this last (September-October) vacation period. That three of the six men of the faculty seized this first opportunity after the Chases departed is probably a tribute to Mrs. Philander Chase, who was known as a very domineering person. The faculty was notoriously ill-paid in Bishop Chase's time, so bachelor status may have been the result of family collusion. Professor Sparrow had previously married Mrs. Chase's sister, who was presumably acceptable. The three newly married professors upon petition were given increases in salary by the trustees at this time.

Columbus Sept 14th 1833

D. L. Collier Esq
Steubenville, Ohio

Dear Sir

As my engagement with Mr. Turnbull has nearly expired, and I have made no new arrangements, I should be pleased to know in what manner you think I can best dispose of myself for this next year. I have always, as you are aware, been looking to a Profession for my future support, & the Law, has had my preference. Previous to commencing the study, however, I should—with your approval—like to spend another year at Kenyon. But it is not only impossible for me to do so now, but I am not able, even to commence the study of a Profession. The salary which I receive, is so inadequate, that what shall remain over my expenses, will be next to nothing.

The idea was held out, when I engaged with Mr. Turnbull, that my compensation was greater than that recd by Beatty,⁴⁸ and Mr. Turnbull, was well aware, that my expenses must not only be much greater than Beatty's, but as the whole charge of the store devolved upon me, my duties would be more arduous. Yet Beatty receives \$250 beside \$36 for extra services. From this, I think that the advantage of me has unfairly been taken. But as I've formed acquaintances here, & the situation is in some respects pleasant, if Mr. Turnbull will make any thing like an equitable bargain, I am willing to remain another year. You will however please make what arrangements you think best, you are in all these things the best judge, & to your opinion I shall of course gladly submit.

About four weeks since, I had an attack, of what is here called, malignant fever. I had the night previous sat up at Mr. Howards. It commenced with diarrhea, which continued with cramps of feet, legs, & hands, for about six hours. I am now able to attend to business, but my health is far from being restored.

By a letter from my sister, I learned that the house⁴⁹ had been sold. I know not what arrangement was made with regard to Mother, but hope that she will not be compelled to leave until another house shall have been procured, nor in any other wise put to inconvenience by the sale. If it is not too much trouble, I should like you would see Mr. Turnbull, & make immediately arrangements as to my remaining. I wrote to him a short time since; you will please ask him whether he recd the letter as I've had no reply.

Yrs.
E. M. Stanton

⁴⁸ Probably Alexander J. Beatty, to whom the first letter in this series is addressed.

⁴⁹ The house was sold October 31, 1833, and Mrs. Stanton went to visit relatives in Virginia. J. B. Doyle, *In Memoriam, Edwin McMasters Stanton* (Steubenville, 1911), 21.

Columbus Sept 27th 1833
 [Notation on cover: "E. M.
 Stanton ansd. Oct. 17, 1833"]

Mitchell⁵⁰ & McClintock
 Gambier, Ohio

Dearly Beloved:

I have delayed answering your kind & sympathising [*sic*] epistle until I should be able to give you more cheering information, than in my last. This, in some respects, I can now do. No case of Cholera has occurred since Saturday; the presumption is, that it has now left us. Business is improving, and the town has assumed a much better appearance. John L.⁵¹ was recovering, but through imprudence had a relapse, so that, even now, he is barely able to move about his room. His family are in a very afflicted condition. Secretary Kirby⁵² (his brother-in-law) has been very ill for some time, and since Sunday his recovery has been looked upon as extremely doubtful. I have been busily engaged, ever since my return, in attendance upon John & Kirby, and am now most thoroughly jaded. I watched all last night with Kirby & left him this morning somewhat better,—though not materially so.

My own health has been good, saving that I had nearly died a week since in a debauch, but through the vigorous exertions of my friends, escaped with a slight fit. The following night, I was attacked with very alarming symptoms—of Cholera; from that also I escaped, by strong and timely measures. From these circumstances, I have been induced to "forswear sack and live cleanly"—for the present.

Soon after my return from Kenyon, I wrote Mr. Collier; informing him of my desires and feelings. The sum and substance of his reply was:—"remain where you are." For this I was in some sort prepared and had taken measures for acting independantly [*sic*] of my much loved guardian, but the death of Judge Campbell⁵³ has entirely disconcerted my plans. Thus you see my dear friends, that with me, "the time is out of joint"; I am nevertheless content,—and have merely to say with Sir Walter, "time and I against any two."⁵⁴

Yrs truly
 Edwin Stanton

⁵⁰ Probably Joseph Mitchell of Steubenville, a freshman (earlier a grammar school student).

⁵¹ Probably John L. Minor of Columbus, who had graduated from Kenyon in 1832. See note 44 above.

⁵² Moses H. Kirby was the secretary of state of Ohio, 1831-33.

⁵³ John Wilson Campbell was a judge of the United States Court for the District of Ohio from 1829 until his death in Delaware, Ohio, September 24, 1833. A former prosecuting attorney, he had been a member of the state house of representatives in 1810, 1813, and 1815, and a congressional representative (Democratic) from 1817 to 1827.

⁵⁴ Various attributed: Charles V of France (c. 1380); a Spanish proverb, Arbuthnot (1712).

Steubenville Jan 30 1833⁵⁵

[Notation on cover:

"E. M. Stanton ansd"]

Mr. Andrew T. McClintock
 Kenyon College
 Gambier, Ohio

Friend McClintock:

Time and again I've determined to write you but circumstances have hitherto prevented my so doing.

Last November, I left Columbus and returned home; after knocking about for a month or six weeks doing nothing, I set me down to read Law. My desire was to study at Columbus, and I strained every nerve to accomplish that object. I failed, and thank God for it. It was put into my head, that to read with Swan,⁵⁶ or Judge Tappan⁵⁷ (who expected to leave here) would be much to my advantage; and *having fallen desperately in love with a young lady of Columbus*⁵⁸ I thought my whole future success, nay my very existence depended on my going there. My guardian was wiser than I: so here my term of probation will be passed.

Both Swan and Tappan it is true are more eminent than our Lawyers. But their very eminence would be an objection; for they are old and independent, and would have but little time or attention to bestow on their students. While our lawyers on the contrary feel their reputation or at least their interest concerned in the improvement of their ["students" erased] pupils. Steubenville besides, has other great advantages for Law Students. The Bar ('tho Goodenow and Wright⁵⁹ have left it) is still respectable. Living is cheaper than in any other town of its size in the whole Western Country. A great many young men have already studied here, so that a *regular system of instruction has been adopted*. There are now five persons studying—one of whom is *Cummings* who used to room with Dav Davis.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ This is obviously misdated. McClintock's copy of his answer to this letter, mentioning "your letter of Jan 30th" and replying that the Philomathesian Society was flourishing "tho not under the 'fostering care,' as you suppose, of Doct. Davis," is dated "Kenyon College Apl. 12, 1834."

⁵⁶ Judge Joseph R. Swan of Columbus, a circuit judge.

⁵⁷ Judge Benjamin Tappan of Steubenville, United States District Judge of Ohio in 1833. Stanton formed a partnership with him in Steubenville in October 1838 just before Tappan's election on the Democratic ticket to the United States Senate, where he served from 1839 to 1845.

⁵⁸ Mary A. Lamson, whom he married.

⁵⁹ John Milton Goodenow, a Steubenville lawyer, resigned because of ill health from the supreme court of Ohio in 1830. He moved to Cincinnati in 1832, where he was presiding judge of the court of common pleas in 1833.

John Crafts Wright, a Steubenville lawyer, served in the Ohio Supreme Court from 1831 to 1835, when he moved to Cincinnati.

⁶⁰ John D. Cummings of Indiana County, Pennsylvania, an irregular student at Kenyon, 1831-32.

David Davis of Newark, Delaware, graduated from Kenyon in 1832. Leader of the Lincoln forces at the Chicago convention of 1860, he was Lincoln's appointee to the supreme court (1862-77) and the family's choice as administrator of Lincoln's estate.

We have a "Lyceum" that meets every Saturday night. The exercises are Lectures on Chemistry and other branches of science, Literature & History with *regular debates*. Every Monday evening the "Atheneum" meets. The principal object of this society is *debate*—in connection with it is a reading room and *library*. Tuesday and Friday evenings we have *law examinations*. And it is probable next month we will establish a Moot Court, (a sort of sham court of justice conducted on the principle of regular courts) in which law points and supposed cases will be argued. One of our Lawyers has *the best library west of the mountains* which is free to every student. My own dearly beloved guardian is admitted to be the most systematic and business [*sic*] lawyer in the state. He is now at Washington City attending a case in which he has been retained.

Now not more than one fifth of these advantages could possibly be had in Columbus, and that attended *with three times the expense*. Then my dear Mc you will congratulate me on having had others to think for me instead of being left to my own whims and fancies.

Did I not know your intention of returning to study your profession in Pennsylvania I would urge upon you the propriety of coming here. I have been in every principal town in the state, and have conversed with many well acquainted with the subject, and their opinions confirm my own observation, *that no place in the West holds out half so many inducements to the student at law*.

It has been a long while since I heard from Gambier—but saving yourself and one or two others it has now no longer any interest for me. You, I suppose, are pursuing the "even tenor of your way"; in other words studying like the devil. The Philomathesian under the "fostering care and benign influence" of Doctor Davis,⁶¹ is doubtless flourishing. The Doctor himself, no doubt, already carries "fate and physic in his eye" and looks ardently forward to the time when he shall go forth in his might, armed and equipped with *puke and clyster*.⁶²

⁶¹ Edwin H. Davis of Hillsboro, Ohio, in college 1831-34, where he was also known as "Ned, the Mound Digger." A graduate of Cincinnati Medical College in 1837 or 1838, he practiced in Chillicothe, Ohio, from 1838 to 1850 and then taught at the New York Medical College until 1860. He was the author with E. G. Squier of the first of the Smithsonian Institution's Contributions to Knowledge, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (Washington, 1847). The Kenyon College Library owns a handsomely bound copy of this folio containing a gold-tooled leather presentation label inscribed "Philomathesian Society from E. H. Davis." This work is still of summary value to American archaeologists because of its accurate surveys and descriptions of mounds now long plowed under. A Swiss archaeologist, A. Morlot, in the *American Philosophical Society Proceedings* for 1862 (No. 68, p. 111), declared it to be as "glorious a monument of American Science, as Bunker's Hill is of American bravery."

The oration Davis delivered on "The Antiquities of Ohio" at the Kenyon Commencement, September 4, 1833, interested Daniel Webster, then traveling in the area, and his encouragement stimulated Davis in his determination to continue these researches. *Dictionary of American Biography*.

⁶² Vomit and enema.

How are all the folks? Dyer and his wife? Kendrick and ditto? You will write to me my dear Mc and tell me all about yourself your past deeds your future plans and prospects; and believe me ever my dear friend.

Yours most affectionately
Edwin M. Stanton

Many of Stanton's friends and associates in later life were Kenyon men. He is quoted, certainly not exactly, as having said more than once, "If I am anything I owe it to Gambier College."⁶³ His son, Edwin Lamson Stanton, was valedictorian of the class of 1863 at Kenyon and was said to have graduated with the highest honors in the history of the college. After graduation E. L. Stanton and George T. Chapman, a Kenyon graduate and professor (1860-63), went into the war department as secretaries. Earlier Secretary Stanton had appointed his sister Pamphyla's husband, Christopher P. Wolcott of Akron, first assistant secretary of war. Wolcott, a Kenyon man, worked himself to death⁶⁴ in this office, which he served but a half year from July 1, 1862, to January 1, 1863. During the war years, to rest from his grueling daily schedule, the secretary in laxer times came to the quiet of Gambier. Here he visited his widowed sister, Mrs. C. P. Wolcott, so unobtrusively that the neighbors did not know of his presence.⁶⁵ When his two nephews, Darwin Stanton Wolcott and W. Merwin Wolcott, were in college after the war, Stanton attended a Philomathesian Society meeting and spoke most affectionately of the college and of his college days and companions.

Kenyon in 1866, then granting honorary degrees in absentia, voted the degree of Doctor of Laws upon this distinguished son whose name led all Kenyon honor rolls of men serving their country. The following gracious letter is preserved in the library files:

War Department
Washington City
July 23, 1866

⁶³ Doyle, *E. M. Stanton*, 20.

⁶⁴ Professor P. W. Timberlake of the present Kenyon College faculty, who as a youth attended his great aunt Pamphyla's funeral, has kindly supplied this family legend. See also, Flower, *E. M. Stanton*, 20, 367.

⁶⁵ W. B. Bodine, *The Kenyon Book* (Columbus, 1890), 286.

Charles Short, Esq.
President of Kenyon College

Sir

I have the pleasure to acknowledge your favor, informing me that the faculty of Kenyon College has conferred upon me the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws.

Nothing could be more grateful to my feelings than to receive such a token of respect and distinction from the Institution of Learning, from which the most valuable part of my education was received, and which, appreciated with the happy remembrances of youth, has always been the object of my respect and veneration.

I pray you to communicate to the Faculty and accept for yourself my sincere thanks.

Your Obedient Servant,
Edwin M. Stanton

Two other communications preserved in the college archives came from Stanton and are entirely in his hand. One, dated September 4, 1866, is to President Short presenting to the library copies of the *Annual Report of the Secretary of War* for the years 1861-65. These, still an integral part of the library collection, together with the report for 1860 are beautifully bound in six volumes in green morocco with elaborate gold tooling. The final letter, dated March 11, 1868, in the midst of Johnson's impeachment trial, says that he finds it will be impossible to address the alumni of Kenyon College "by reason of indispensable engagements" and closes by wishing prosperity to the institution.

Andrew Carnegie in this century has perpetuated Stanton's relationship to Kenyon. In 1906 Carnegie presented \$25,000 for the Carnegie Scholarship Fund, the income to be used "to enable such students as Stanton to continue their studies. He was compelled to leave before graduating for lack of means. This fund is to enable the College to provide what may be needed for exceptional students under similar conditions."⁸⁶ Carnegie related his pleasure as a young telegraph messenger boy in Pittsburgh in receiving a nod of

⁸⁶ Andrew Carnegie to President Peirce, May 11, 1906. Treasurer's Office, Kenyon College.

recognition from Stanton, whom he saw frequently.⁸⁷ Subsequently Carnegie went to Washington as right-hand man to Thomas A. Scott of the Pennsylvania Railroad, who was assistant secretary of war in charge of military transportation.

Carnegie had earlier expressed his admiration for Stanton to Kenyon by a gift of \$50,000 in 1904 to endow "The Edwin M. Stanton Professorship of Economics." This came to the college through the offices of the late Senator Mark Hanna, who himself had erected a dormitory at Kenyon, accompanied by a letter of explanation from Carnegie's private secretary as follows: "When Secretary Stanton, as Secretary of War in Lincoln's Cabinet, organized victory, Mr. Carnegie was assistant manager of all Government Railroads and Telegraphs for some time at the beginning of the War, and had known Secretary Stanton in Pittsburgh and saw a great deal of him at Washington."⁸⁸

The festivities at Gambier on April 26, 1906, were overwhelming when Carnegie came to deliver an oration on the life of Stanton. A special train came from Cleveland in addition to Carnegie's. Mr. Carnegie's own party included Richard Watson Gilder, editor of the *Century Magazine*, and Col. J. J. McCook, Kenyon 1866, who concluded the public ceremonies by presenting the college with an oil painting of Stanton by C. P. Filson of Steubenville that now hangs in the college library. Three bishops assisted at the ceremonies, which were also attended by Lt. Edwin M. Stanton, grandson of the famous secretary. There was a special "Stanton Ode" composed by Canon Watson, a "Carnegie Yell" by the assembled students, and a glee club rendition of the prowess of the attending celebrities sung to "The Pope." An inspection tour preceded the main ceremonies in Rosse Hall, a reception by Bishop and Mrs. Leonard was held directly thereafter, and then invited guests returned to Rosse Hall, where banquet tables, decorated with small silk American and Scotch flags, had been prepared. Toasts and speeches from all dis-

⁸⁷ Andrew Carnegie, *Edwin M. Stanton, An Address . . . on Stanton Memorial Day at Kenyon College* (New York, 1906), 5.

⁸⁸ James Bartram to President Peirce, March 14, 1904. Treasurer's Office, Kenyon College.

tinguished guests plus glee club selections managed to extend the banquet from 3:00 P.M. to 5:30, when Carnegie entrained for Canada.⁶⁹ Carnegie's own speech reviewed Stanton's career and lauded his stand for the Union, placing his services to "rank in value with those of the foremost early fathers: Franklin, Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln. No lower place can be assigned him than in that circle. Washington must ever stand alone—father among these worthy sons."⁷⁰

⁶⁹ *The Kenyon Collegian* (Stanton Number), XXXII, No. 14 (May 1906).

⁷⁰ Carnegie, *E. M. Stanton*, 7.