The Letters of Elizabeth Rigby, Lady Eastlake

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Letter to John Gibson Lockhart  

Edinburgh April 6. 1849

Dear Mr. Lockhart

I had intended writing to you, at all events, today, for I was unwilling to quit my old name without once more assuring you how grateful I feel for all the kindness I have received from you under that familiar appellation. I hope the new one may fare as well in that respect.

I cannot tell you how much pleasure you give me, & I am sure Mr. Eastlake also, by your very kind gift. You could have bestowed nothing on me more valuable & acceptable. I only quarrel with its munificence, which is far too great.1 There is no gift I have rec.d on this occasion which has given & will always give me so much real gratification. You must only add to its value, if you have not done so already, by writing your name & anything else you will in the first volume of the novels, & also in that of the Life. If you have dispatched them already to Fitzroy Square without this indispensable enhancement I shall bring the two volumes one day myself to you, & compel you to fulfil my request.

It is not a light or an easy thing to leave a happy house & a dear mother, especially when the delusions of youth are past, but I believe that I shall be happy, & feel that if I am so, Mamma will be so too.

I remain dear Mr. Lockhart with much regard

Yours most truly & obliged

Eliz: Rigby

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1. Presumably a gift of the complete works of Walter Scott.

Letter to Mrs Acton Tindal  

7 Fitzroy Square

July 14. 1851

My dear Mrs Tindal1

I have too long delayed not only returning as I now do your most interesting M.S. but also writing to you which I was longing & intending to do before I received them. I have read & reread, & lingered over particular passages with that sad pleasure which the tone of your writing always excites in me – & which proceeds from something deeper than mere gratified taste. I have been in the country with my husband for a few days – at quiet rural village inns. I took your packet
with me for solitary enjoyment, as my London life just now gives too little opportunity for such, but I had left your letter behind. “The Infanticide” made the deepest impression on me — witness many a tear — & now that I reread yr letter I find that it is also one of your favourites. You have such a rapid grasp in sketching events — on, on, you go — knowing so perfectly what to touch & what to omit. And yet though the Infanticide moved me so deeply I can hardly say there is one among these pieces that does not. “The Picture” is a beautiful summing up of a life. The Hymn to the Martyrs of Truth & Science is to my view exceedingly fine & tho’ I mention our sweet departed one’s name last it is only because that piece lies deepest of all in my heart. I can hardly judge how it may strike one who did not know her, but I am very sure that you conjure her up irresistibly to those who do. I would like when you come to town to ask you to let me send that piece to Lady Howard Douglas — the gentle unselfish mourner, who adored the wondrous being she yet has found grace & power to resign un murmuringly into her Maker’s Hands. Thank you very much for trusting me with these precious papers. But I have much to thank you for, dear Mrs Tindal, sweet gifts have you sent me, when not only they, but the kind interest & sympathy which prompted them most welcome.

Ah! your sweet line “If ye love can ye wish them back again” was ever in my thoughts — a comfort to me. I hope I have given my sweet lifeless babe un murmuringly to Him, a sinless soul, a bright link between the regions of light & this soiled earth, on which I may hold in my upward passage. I hope I am content, but you need not to be told of those yearnings which sometimes will interrupt the perfect sacrifice of the will & affections. I am thankful to say I am well again & I have our house full of dear guests — a sister & niece from Russia — one long separated from her native land, & now returned to speak of scenes of girlhood 20 years ago, more than of anything that happened in the wide interim — also my dear mother is here & another — or rather two other sisters coming & going. I rejoice to here that you are coming, but will not keep yr M.S. so long, that is to the 18th lest you shd want it before leavg home. I shall venture to bespeak a little of your’s & Mr. Tindal’s company during your stay in London, & in the hope of soon meeting.

Believe me dear Mrs Tindal
Your’s very truly
Eliz: Eastlake

1. Henrietta Euphemia Acton Tindal (née Harrison) (1817–79), poet and novelist. She was the wife of Acton Tindal (1811–80), Lord of the Manor at Aylesbury and a close friend of Austen Henry Layard who was elected MP for Aylesbury in 1852. Mrs Tindal was a contributor to Ainsworth’s
Magazine, for which she wrote on Old Masters, Dutch and Flemish painters and Albrecht Dürer in 1848. She published two volumes of poems, Lines and Leaves in 1850 and Rhymes and Legends, published posthumously in 1879. She sometimes wrote under the pseudonym ‘Diana Butler’, the name under which she published her novel, The Heirs of Blackridge Manor (1856).


3. Elizabeth gave birth to a stillborn daughter on 4 June.

4. Gertrude de Rosen, visiting from Estonia, was present at the birth.

Letter to John Murray  NLS Ms.42175

7 Fitzroy Square
March 8 1852
My dear Mr. Murray

Many thanks for your liberal cheque – I return you the receipt signed by us both. I have nearly completed all I have in hand of Waagen, but have no idea how much more there is to do – nor how much there will be to undo. This morning I spent at the British Museum following the course of priest as he describes them – which is a very interesting journey.

I hear from one of my cousins that Mr. Dawson Turner’s pictures will be sold at Christie’s in the beginning of May, which will be a pinch to me, and how much more to all of them. Believe me dear Mr. Murray Your’s most truly

Eliz Eastlake

1. Enclosed with receipt: ‘London Mar 8 1852. Received of John Murray Esq the sum of fifty guineas for the entire copyright of two articles in the Quarterly Review nos 158 and 166 – respectively and entitled “Music” and “The Art of Dress” and I hereby promise a further assignment if required. C.L. Eastlake Eliz Eastlake’. The payment was to both Eastlakes because a married woman’s earnings belonged to her husband.

2. Gustav Waagen (1794–1868), art historian and Director of the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin.

3. Elizabeth had undertaken to translate Gustav Waagen’s Treasures of Art in Great Britain, being an account of the chief collections of paintings, drawings, sculptures, illuminated mss etc., 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1854–57) and Galleries and Cabinets of Art in Great Britain (London: John Murray, 1857). See Frank