

LETTER

Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658)

to Elizabeth Saint John (c. 1616–), his cousin

Ely, 13 October 1638

I thankfully acknowledge your love in your kind remembrance of me upon this opportunity. Alas, you do too highly prize my lines and my company. I may be ashamed to own your expressions considering how unprofitable I am, and the mean improvement of my talent.

Yet to honour my God by declaring what He has done for my soul, in this I am confident, and I will be so. Truly, then, this I find: that He gives springs in a dry barren wilderness where no water is. I live you know where—in Meshec, which they say signifies *Prolonging*; in Kedar, which signifies *Blackness*. Yet the Lord forsakes me not. Though He do prolong, yet He will I trust bring me to His Tabernacle, to His resting-place. My soul is with the Congregation of the Firstborn, my body rests in hope. And if here I may honour my God either by doing or by suffering, I shall be most glad.

Truly no poor creature has more cause to put himself forth in the cause of his God than I. I have had plentiful wages beforehand, and I am sure I shall never earn the least mite. The Lord accept me in His Son, and give me to walk in the light—and give us to walk in the light, as He is the light! He it is that enlightens our blackness, our darkness. I dare not say He hides His face from me. He gives me to see light in His light. One beam in a dark place has exceeding much refreshment in it—blessed be His Name for shining upon so dark a heart as mine!

You know what my manner of life has been. Oh, I lived in and loved darkness, and hated light; I was a chief, the chief of sinners. This is true: I hated godliness, yet God had mercy on me. O the riches of His mercy! Praise Him for me—pray for me, that He who has begun a good work would perfect it in the day of Christ.

Salute all my friends in that family whereof you are yet a member; I am much bound unto them for their love; I bless the Lord for them. And that my Son, by their procurement, is so well. Let him have your prayers, your counsel; let me have them.

Salute your husband¹ and sister from me—He is not a man of his word! He promised to write about Mr. Wrath of Epping, but as yet I receive no letters. Put him in mind to do what with conveniency may be done for the poor cousin I did solicit him about.

Once more farewell. The Lord be with you.

Thomas Carlyle, ed. *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1845), I:141–142.

¹ Oliver Saint John (c. 1598–1673), barrister, married Elizabeth Cromwell as his second wife on 21 January 1637/1638