



Letter to Achsa Johnson of Worthington, Ohio from E.A. Leonard, No Date

Subject: Description of illness [perhaps consumption], medical treatment, religious beliefs when confronting death

[Handwritten, script]

Dear Mrs. Johnson,

When I came home I did not dream it would be this long before I would write. But I yielded to circumstances and you know how time flies. I hope you remember I told you I had applied to Dr. Blymyer [?] (before I visited you) that he prescribed for me and I acted the baby so that he got out of patience and said he would not bother with me. And you advised me to go to him again as soon as I reached home which I believe I promised to do. But Blymyer is a man I fear. So I lost my courage and went to my school taking with me nothing save domestic remedies. But those did not do and I (perhaps rashly) applied to Dr. Sampsel. [?] This offended Dr. Blymyer and ended my home at his house. Not that he told me so but he treated me so coolly and of course I could not stay. This cost me trouble. Oh! how much. But I am thankful it is all in the past. And now I will tell you the reason I did not visit. At my school I taught every other saturday and come to town to get my proscriptions changed the intervening one. So that all the time that was left poor me was nights, mornings and sundays and then the absorbing object was rest. I thought of you almost every day and commenced visiting several times and then would delay till I would think I would not be so tired, but the time would find me tired again. And also while I was deciding about remaining at Dr. Blymyers I did not know what to write. When my two months ended they offered to give me another dollar per month if I would continue. Anything for money so miserable as I was I commenced another month. But with it commenced the fall wether. [sic] I was exposed too much before but now I was exposed to rain almost all the time till the last two weeks I taught. I was troubled so to breathe & coughed so violently that I sit in the rocking chair almost every night. And just one week before my school was to close I was taken with a fever and was obliged to give up teaching and consider myself an invalid. I rented a couple of rooms and Nellie and I commenced boarding ourselves. I intended to go to school when better. Dr. Sampsel being absent I sent for Dr. Blymyer. He checked my fever & recommended two fly blisters with plaster for the distress in my lungs but did not say he could do more. But that my lungs were in desperate condition, that if I lived it would be by the best of nursing but he would not be surprised if I did not live longer than spring, and that we must send for Ma immediately who was then at Marietta. When Dr. Sampsel came to see me I thought he did not know how I had been exposed, that he had always encouraged me and he would not. When he had sounded my lungs I asked him if they were worse. Yes was the answer. I then asked him if I could be cured but he seemed to evade that question. Oh! Mrs. Johnson you cannot imagine how I felt. It was such a dark dark time. I look back upon it with perfect horror. I had one attack of the hemorage [sic] of the lungs which frightened me dreadfully and I raised consistently large quantities of mucus [sic] with a substance resembling the lungs. But just then Dr. Sampsel began tending me faithfully. The fact is he had no chance before and it is a wonder the medicine did not harm me instead of otherwise. He now

told me he should use his best efforts and I must mine. And for the first time I felt every word he said for I had trembled not a little at the idea of death. I commenced drinking tea, water, inhaling tar & taking powder drops etc. Going through gymnastic exercises every morning and evening shoulder braces. I tended all these pretty well for me, and began to improve rapidly till about two weeks ago the Dr. told me I was past danger. All I had to do was be very careful, attend strictly to my proscriptions and in the course of months I would recover my health. This was joyful news and I do not believe anyone save Dr. Sampsel could have helped me so much. I would advise everyone with diseased lungs, bronchial tubes or chronic diseases of any kind to apply to him. I believe him to be the best in the state. This I know is extravagant but I have such faith that I do not believe anyone else could cure me. You cannot know how grateful I felt. For when everyone was saying by word look and action that I must die he came and brought hope. This reconciles me to Dr. Blymyers displeasure. As to my personal prospects I do not know that I have any. We have an upstairs room comfortably furnished and a basement Crooks [?] to do our work inn. [sic] I have been very comfortable as yet and have no fears for the future. Six months ago living as I am now with no prospects of gain I would have been so retched. [sic] But supposing my life near its close I had many a reconing [sic] with the past. And I found it filled with vanity dreams. I feel like recovering my illness as a deserved judgement. [sic] When I joined the church I know my heart was changed. For I never spoke without first thinking whether it would be approved by Jesus. I never allowed myself to think for any length of time without first deciding whether it would please Jesus. I was contented with my lot because assigned to me by my creator. If in trouble I would go to Jesus for comfort and strength and know I would receive it. I do not mean to say I lived so all the time but generally. But it was not long till I fell from this state of duty and turned to the world to drowned [sic] my conscience. And ever it seemed to me I have lived under a mountain of sin for no difference how much I pleaded that my life was as good as other girls yet I know I owed a debt of supressed [sic] love to God that I did not pay. And this made me wretched. I was wrong myself and therefore imagined everyone and everything wrong. Sometimes the thought would strike me that I did not used to be so under more discouraging circumstances but I would settle the affair by thinking I was then younger and could not realize so well. And then I thought myself so near death it seemed as if the scales fell from my eyes. I saw myself in all my sin and the world in its insignificance. Would that I would never forget it. Ma talks of my going to school when able. If providence permit I shall be very grateful for that is my great desire. I can not help it. But be my future as it may I am determined to be contented. I have not made either of the winter dresses I received at your house yet. Being ill I did not think it safe to spend anything for the trimming but I often look at them and think of the givers and hope to enjoy wearing them next winter. Ma and Nellie have both had the putrid sore throat. Nellie was dangerous but is slowly gaining strength. I do not believe you will read all of this. I never had the gift of writing short letters.

My love to all

E.A. Leonard