

To Eliza Johnson [Louisville, Ky.]¹

Washington City

March 27th 1863—

My dear Eliza,

It is so difficult for me to write² I am almost deterred from now trying after having commenced— I desire to know how your health is— I am kept in suspense all the time in reference to Some one of the family— Col Stover telegraphed that your health is about the same and that Mary is not well—³ I have heard nothing from Robert & Charles since I left Nashville —⁴ I hope all is right with them— Martha and children I fear I shall never see them again—⁵ I feel sometimes like giv[ing] all up in dispare! but this will not do[.] we must hold out to the end, this rebellion is wrong and must be put down let cost what it may in the life and treasure— I intend to appropriate the remainder of my life to the redemption of my a[d]opted home East Tennessee and you & Mary must not be weary, it is our fate and we Should be willing to bear it cheerfully— Impatience and dissatisfaction will not better it or shorten the time of our suffering— I expected to have been back some time ago, but have been detaind here by the Govmt—⁶ In the event Genls Rosecrans & Burnside fails to redeem East Tennessee this spring or summer I [am] making arragements to have a force raised to go there this fall— My matters are now nearly arranged and will leave in day or so for Louisville— Things do not look in Tennessee at this time as would like to see them; but must take them as they are— I would like to see the confederate Army driven back before you and Mary goes to Nashville, but by the time I reach there we will see more about it— You have no doubt seen that there are more troops being sent into Ky and the intention is to send them from there into Tennessee unless they are beaten back by the Rebels which I do not think will be the case— However we must wait and See the result— Washington is about as usual as far as I have seen, nothing more than common— The weather since I left you has been uninterruptedly bad— I have scarcely had a well day since reaching the north; aboniabile cold, with horseness, sore throat and a bad cough— I have been speaking and exposed to some extent which has kept it up— I hope you are gain[ing] strength and some flesh— I trust there is nothing serious the matter with Mary and that she will soon be well again— Tell Mary she must devote much of her time and attention to the instruction and train[ing] of her children⁷ and say to them that the're grand father thinks of them evey day and prays for their future happiness— You must tell Andrew that his father's hopes rest upon him now [196]

Washington City
March 27th 1863

My dear Eliza,

It is so difficult for me
to write I am almost deterred from
even trying after having & I am sure
I desire to know how you feel & if
I am kept in suspense all the time in
reference to some one of the family -
Col Stover telegraph that your health
is about the same and that Mary is
not well - I have heard nothing
from Robert & Charles since I
left Nashville - I hope all is all
right with them - I hope and
childhood I shall never see
them again - I feel sure I
am going all up in smoke - If he were to
succeed and learn as he can there is
nothing that he wants that I can
procure for him, but what he shall
have - Say to Col Stover that I
received his despatch and will try
and have it attend to &c - I hope he is
filling up his Regiment -

Give my love to all and accept
for yourself the ^{best} wishes of a devoted
husband's heart -

Andrew Johnson

The only surviving example of "a devoted husband's heart—" Courtesy Library of Congress.

[197] and that he must make a man of himself, he can do it if he will and I expect it of him— If he will only educate himself he has a destiny of no ordinary character— when I get to Louisville I shall expect to find that he has made considerable progress in writing as well as in his books— If he will be a good boy and learn as he can there is nothing that he wants that I can procure for him but what he shall have— Say to Col Stover that I received his despatch and will try and have it attend to &c—⁸ I hope he is filling up his Regiment—

Give my love to all and accept for yourself the best wishes of a devoted husband's heart—

Andrew Johnson

¹ Addressed to “Mrs. Andrew Johnson care of Col D. Stover Louisville, Ky—”

² Probably the combination of his now chronic arm problem and his current indisposition made letter writing a chore.

³ Johnson’s son-in-law had been keeping him informed about the health of his wife and daughter Mary (Stover’s wife) since their arrival in Louisville on January 13. In early February Stover wrote, “Mothers health has improved very much since she come to this place. Mary and the children are well.” Stover to Johnson, February 8, 1863, Johnson Papers, LC.

⁴ The governor had left Nashville for Indianapolis, by way of Louisville, Monday morning, February 23.

⁵ Martha Patterson and her children, Andrew J. (1857-1932) and Mary Belle (1859-1891), were in Confederate-controlled Greeneville.

⁶ Summoned to appear in March before the Buell Commission, the governor finally gave his deposition on April 22. He was discovering that a month-long northern trip designed to combine speaking on behalf of vigorous prosecution of the war and consulting with Lincoln and Stanton about Tennessee conditions required more time than anticipated. See Donn Piatt to Johnson, March 18, 30, 1863, Misc. Lets. Recd., Dept. of the Ohio, RG393, NA; Tels. Recd., Vol. 42 (1863), Sec. of War, U. S. Mil. Tel., RG107, NA; Telegram from Donn Piatt, January 11, 1863; Deposition to the Buell Commission, April 22, 1863.

⁷ Lillie M. (1855-1892), Susan Drake (1857-1886), and Andrew Johnson Stover (1860-1923).

⁸ Not found.

Cite as: *The Papers of Andrew Johnson Digital Edition*, ed. LeRoy P. Graf, Ralph W. Haskins, and Paul H. Bergeron. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2020.

Canonic URL: <https://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/AWJN-01-06-02-0160> [accessed 02 Dec 2025]

Original source: Volume 6, 1862 - 1864