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Letter, Henrietta Swisshelm to Elizabeth Mitchell [July 23, 1883]

Henrietta Swisshelm

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Henrietta Swisshelm to Mrs. Henry Z. Mitchell, July 23, 1883.

[Mitchell MSS. -- A.L.S.]

1883 [written in pencil]

Monday July 23rd

Chicago

Dear Aunty,

I got mother here yesterday in a rather scattered condition. She seems quite well in every way but is most "monstrous" weak. She was very uncomfortable during the journey, said she felt as though her insides were loose & mixed up & rattling around like a gallon of water in a barrel. We would not have come so soon, but I got sick myself from the malaria, & did seem unsafe to stay another day. Mother might have known she could not have lived in such a place. Charley King has piled the manure on by the ton, till it is so rich & rank it does not know itself. Then he pulls up cart loads of weeds & leaves them to rot in piles, & all the refuse tops of the vegetables he sells are thrown out to swelter in the rain & sun. Besides his barn yard is worse than the Chicago stock yards & his pig pen enough to pol[1]ute a county, & then he is a Dutchman which means he is a pig himself. But then he has been a good tenant, the only harm he has done, was to cut down that big maple tree. Mother told him, if ^{he} [sic] it would bring back the tree to kill him & put him into the hole left after the stump was grubbed out, she'd do it. I can see her say it. I am sure he shook in his boots, & thought maybe if he was in that hole, the tree would be brought back some how, & that the experiment would be likely to be tried. Fortunately he leaves this winter, & the place will be sowed in grass & rented for pasture hereafter. Mother declares she will go back next April & get it thoroughly renovated I tell her the only possible way to

get the back porch cleaned is to burn it up, the house too for that matter. But mother will keep control of it herself after this & rent half the house, & try & get enough out of it to pay the taxes, & there seems to be no trouble to get tenants. Swissvale never did look so beautiful to me. One reason perhaps is that the season has been so wet, that the foliage is so dense & the grass so green. The maple trees are as solid & symmetrical [sic] as a huge bowl, only they are so full of lights & shadows. The view up the meadow from the north window is delicious. Even Charlies turnip patch couldnt spoil it, & when it is in waving green grass & dotted over with lowing herd, I shall hire some one to write poetry about it.

We expect Jean tonight, with Mr Smith, then I wont have to meet her at the train. It was too bad I missed Sis. She was here two hours & a half, that is at the depot. Ernest was home yesterday, but starts to Detroit tonight, & perhaps he leaves before Jean gets here. Yesterday was fearfully hot, but today a lake breeze refreshes us. We had such a pleasant visit from Dr Walton before I went away, & I was glad on his account that it was as cold as greenland while he was here. If you ever want beef extract get Valentines. It is delicious, & love to Uncle.

Henrietta.

[Addressed:] Mrs H.Z. Mitchell

St. Cloud

Minn.