

Mary Todd Lincoln to James Orne

Frankfurt am Main, Germany, February 4, 1870.

Autograph letter signed, 6 pages.

Frankfurt A Main

Feb^y 4th 1870

Hon James H. Orne

My dear Sir

When I wrote you on yesterday so hurriedly & nervously, I believe I did not explain to you, that I was sitting up for the first half hour, in ten days, having been prostrated by quite severe illness. I have been suffering very much this winter, by what my physician pronounces to be inflammation of the spine, brought on he says, by great [2] mental suffering. He has been engaging me all winter, to go south, and he was more than usually importune on yesterday, after I wrote you. I might as well speak candidly to you & tell you the real – & painful truth, that of course with my present reduced means, it is utterly impossible for me to do so. On yesterday, when the D^f was so strongly advocating the change of climate to me & even went so far as to say, that if I remained in this damp climate until spring, he would not answer [3] for the consequences, and I might then be unable to walk. As it is, for the last three weeks, the burning pain in my back, is such that I am unable to move only from chair to chair. I am not able to have a waiting woman & I suffer greatly often, for the least attention. With my small means, I can only lodge in second class boarding houses, the horror & humiliation of the situation to me, surpasses any thing you can imagine. I had to suggest on yesterday to the D^f that traveling was very expensive, and his reply, [4] kept me awake, most of the past night. In the most respectful & solemn manner he said, “Madam the whole of Germany, is watching with the greatest solicitude, to see the wife of the great & good man, rendered more comfortable & placed in the position, by her country, which of right belongs to her – as his widow.” I give you, dear M^f Orne, the very words – do you wonder, that I wish to make my escape, from such surveillance, as it involves, the country, so beloved by us all – & subjects it to criticism – if justice is denied me – for the whole world acknowledges [5] the unpareled services of my dearly beloved. And yet you, with

your great, good heart will acknowledge, that so far as the Cruelly Martyred President is concerned – those services have been unrewarded. His family, was very precious in his sight & could my husband see me placed – as stern – hard necessity forces me to be – even the charm of His Heavenly house, would be dispelled. While all other – have been so richly rewarded – the loved wife, of the man, who died in his country's [*inserted: service*] has been left to shed the tears of bitterness & live in poverty – broken hearted [6] I am going to speak very plainly with you. I want by the first of March – for fear the words of the physician, may be fearfully realized [*inserted: that I will be unable to walk*] – to get away from here – to a milder climate & place myself in the hands of a Medical Man who can relieve my great bodily pain – All this, I cannot do without the [*strikeout*] [*inserted: money*]. We have so many noble hearted men in our loved land – who will I am sure, no longer see me, hearing in addition to my overwhelming sorrow – so much mortification of spirit – I live in a room without a carpet, where in former years, I would not have placed a servant, yet with continual sickness, preying upon me. My expenses have been great. Through your great influence cannot you have me by the ^{1st} of March [*inserted: means to*] have my affairs here settled, & [*written on top of page 1:*] means given me even if a few thousand to go home. Whilst hundreds of thousands are so lavishly bestowed upon others which pleases me greatly to see done. will not the remembrance that President Lincoln, was the head of all & cause something more to be done to ameliorate my most unfortunate condition. If I could be benefited by the [*illegible*] mention Please write me on receipt of this – your candid views [are greatly appreciated.] [*written on top of page 3:*] You will kindly consider this letter private save for the eyes of a few of your particular friends,

M.

Please address care

Phillip, [Nicoll], Schmidt

Frankfurt A

Main