



Transcription of the correspondence of Sarah Chase, April 20, 1861-1913 (Box 1, Folder 9).

This handwritten correspondence is in the collection of the American Antiquarian Society (Catalog Record 271341).

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April 20, 1861 Sarah Chase to her father

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Philadelphia, 4th mo. 20th '61

My dear good Father,

I write in some haste to make a request of thee. Will thee please send me by return of mail, thy consent to my going South with the nurses?

I feel fully prepared in every way: Thy consent only is wanted, and I depend upon it.

Do not be anxious-if I go-for I shall be no more away from thee than I am here: and Death may be as near when I sit quietly at home, as any where else.

I have enjoyed this life and have no fears for the next. Danger is always near though we may not always see it.

All last night I dreamed most pleasantly of Home.

No one out of the family need know of my going. I shall write again when I receive an answer. I must go---and I trust (you) will give the desired reply.

Farewell dear Father

Farewell! --

My love to all

Please tell Mr. Loring - Music Store - that he can put the money in the Saving's bank wh. he receives for my guitar - I told him how little I had used it - but have feared in thinking about it - that he would think I had used it more than I have so it is important that he should be told - that the reason of so old string was that a friend who use to play gave them to me -

[The note appended at the bottom of Sarah's letter is from her brother, Pliny Chase, to their father.]

Sarah Chase to Eliza 1864 (no transcription)

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November 18, 1864 Sarah Chase to Fred W.G. May

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Office Ass't Quartermaster & Supt of Contrabands, Norfolk, Va. Nov. 18th 1864

Dear Mr. May;

This is the first moment I have felt it right to take hold of a pen, since my return. Now, while waiting a conveyance to a farm, I must tell you that I have not to wait till next week for my Thanksgiving; for that began a fortnight ago—the moment I set my foot on old Virginnia shore—and that it has not ended yet. I cannot tell you how happy I am to be back at my post. Until within a very short time of my return, it really seemed doubtful if I should be able to resume my labors in this harvest field; for each day found me more weary, instead of refreshed, but once again I have the happiness of proving my favorite “All earnest hearts shall have their dreams fulfilled.” Would I could run in and tell you all I have seen and heard since my return; and answer all questions, but to report in ink would be impossible, from the nature of the case. We returned to find a general confusion and folding of hands; and we took hold at once, apportioning work to new hands, reconstructing, newly organizing, and making a general review of work done in our absence so that every moment has been painfully crowded, and not one day has been half long enough for what I desired to put in it—where so much is to be done I feel I must stop for nothing until every hand is at work; consequently I have not obeyed the dictate of my heart, and reported at once to the sacredly dear and good people of Leicester Hill. Though diligently working, and to some purpose, the details of wrongs righted, change of officers, of school policy, ect [sic], would not interest outsiders, I think, enough to make it worth while to report. There are now in town ten teachers each from the Educational Commission, Am. Miss. Society, and National Freedmen's Ass. Each society having its mission house and (excepting us) a housekeeper; the schools are graded & each teacher has about fifty pupils—a Normal School has just been created from the most advanced in the other schools; and Miss Kennedy, lately of New Berne, a fine woman, has charge of it. Each teacher is to have a thorough knowledge of the familys of her pupils, and report cases of sickness and suffering to us for investigation—no giving orders on our stores for things needful. All things to whatever person in the Dept, are put in the common stock of our two stores in Norfolk and Portsmouth. Two ladies in each keeping thorough business accts and allowing nothing to go out without an order signed by L. or S. E. Chase. All who come to us personally are visited, and their cases carefully considered before anything is done for them. It is a cause of rejoycing that we have got the clothing so well organized—now we have only to contend with the unwillingness of the teachers to properly investigate Another good thing for the people is the Industrial School which will soon be in operation, under Miss Smiley, and lovely Quakeress of much executive ability from Philadelphia I am inexpressively thankful to the good Lord for sending her—for heretofore I have been unable to get cooperation in the plans I have had from the first—of teaching the people to help themselves. I have always given much attention to mending and making and urged others to do the same. In the day, I have not had time to think, but in the long silent hours of night, I have often thought of the Leicester Hill nobles—and my heart has ached to dictate many pages of this

Southern Life for them but my Greek-ruined eyes can do nothing by night, and can rarely do duty by day; even if they are not with the body, hither, thither and yon. Thrice have I locked myself up for a half hours talk, but in vain. “Miss Sarah, the overseer of the Bradford Farm is here with his cart and wants to know if you can't go out there,” ect [sic] or Rat-tat-tat on the

door—as I am about to seat myself “Who is there?” say I. “One,” feebly is answered. “Who is one?” “Me, why you nows me Miss Sarah,” and as she speaks I open the door and “One” is an old blind man, a young woman with a sick child and two boys. Thus far it has been much as I feared, when I hesitated at the proposition wh was wholly unexpected to me, when at your house. I never doubted I could work enough; my heart is too deeply interested to attempt it if I did not feel competent—but I feared I could not satisfy my conscience and answer the demands of any society; or rather be able to do what I should earnestly desire myself to do, i.e., to write fully and freely. I should be unhappy if I left one or the other undone. I sometimes think I will limit my labor, and concentrating my effort more, be able better to systematize my time—take more comfort and time to record the day’s history. Then I think it is far truer and better to take what is sent, and make the best of it rather than to seek what is most agreeable. Our reception camp—The “Rope Walk” is nearly empty—no large party having been brought in since early Summer. A good man and his wife came in one day bringing a sweet faced granny with them—all enthusiastic, and eager for work, & full of cheer though the clothes they had on their back in their hands were all they had in he World to start with. “Have you any children?”—said I to the old woman “No honey—no I hasn’t—and yet missus I has; fourteen children I’ve raised and hugged in dese old arms; and sometimes I tinks I feels de little hands on my cheeks—but deys all gone—I don’t know whar dey air—and if I was lyn stark dead out yonder in de corner, dere wouldnt be one to bring me a cup of water.” You desired me to tell what was needed; but as every want we have can be met in one way and another, I think it would be as well to forward what you collect and think best to make. Cooking utensils are the only things I would specify. We cannot get enough. If each housekeeper could send the extra pots and pans or even stove lids (to bake the universal corn cake on) they would contribute much to the health and comfort of these people... . One good thing you could do with no expense, but time—relieving your houses and benefitting the refugees at the same time—That is: glean every library of books that are not wanted & send to a committee who will throw out books that never were or will be read & forwarding books of instruction, story books, and only such books as would be useful to the Refugees. These could be packed with the pans and kettles the spaces filled with yarn or any thing else. No school books needed except for reference. One very important need of these people we have just met by establishing a Saving’s Bank for them. Heretofore they have almost been forced to spend their money—having no where to keep it. Many a time have they brought money to me,—saying, “Buy me something wid dis, please ma’am.” “What do you wish?” “Oh anyting you likes ma’am” or “Whatever it will get,” or “something pretty” they say. One nice auntie said—“I wants you to buy something for yourself honey—it does me so much good to see you I’d like to give you a stocking full,” and when I explain the importance of providing for the rainy dayect. [sic] they would say “but sugar I’s no whar to keep my money—and if I ties it in de corner of my apron, I might lose it, or get it stolen from me, and I can’t go myself to spend it”—or some equally good reason they give for wishing to get rid of money, if they chance to be encumbered by it:—but I have easily persuaded them to be prudent in the face of the new responsibility of their condition—and have been begging for a bank from the first. Col. Kinsman did not go fast enough to suit the workers in this Dept, so Lucy was invited to petition Butler to put Maj. Carney in his place, which good thing was this day effected so God and man favor the cause in this

Department and it must prosper—Full of Hope—full of happiness—only asking for strength to labor I am with high consideration for your Committee and ever best wishes for you & them—your coworker. Sarah E. Chase

January 23, 1865 Sarah Chase to Fred W.G. May

Sarah promises to take notes on her conversations with the freedmen so that she can transcribe accurate accounts in her reports. The letter includes several poignant stories about women's reactions to the loss of their children and of life under slavery; it closes with the lyrics of a spiritual.

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Norfolk, Va, January 23d, '65

On my return from the country I received your kind letter, Mr. May; --for which I thank you cordially-- Much as I enjoy letters, I do not want anyone to feel obliged to write to me -- though an occasional word, from one or another of the good people, will do me more good than I can tell; and I shall be only too glad to answer any questions or explain anything, when desired. I will send in some scraps every month in lieu of the vocal discussions I would so much prefer; -- when face to face I could get the advice and encouragement I might need. I shall never trust my memory in relating conversations--but copy verbatim, from notes taken at the time--

We are feeling badly at losing Butler-& confident that he will be reinstated;--if not here, loving my whole country as I do, I will be resigned and congratulate the State, which, at our expense, gains the best protector Uncle Sam could offer; trusting that his wisdom is more needed there than here. His genius has so admirably arranged affairs in this Department that I cannot imagine a retrograde motion in any part of it; and so do not share in the general apprehension that his successor will put stumbling blocks in our way: for if one is not interested in the elevation of the colored race through their humanity, they must be through policy; it is so evident that everything done to help the Blacks is a benefit to the Whites -- And then--how can we fear for our Navis Niger while the same Captain is at the helm, who built her (you might almost say;) and has piloted her through worse seas than she will be likely again to encounter.

No one can see Capt. Brown without feeling that he has a remarkably comprehensive intellect and wonderful executive ability. I will not let the possible Future impede the action of the Present; but patiently will work; --trusting for the west.

A noble looking woman, telling me her sad history this morning, said --" xx Dats five children Ise got, gone to Heaven, tank de Lord! I knows what dey are; deys free, deys awful free: but deres four I knows nothin tall about dats worse dan dead. One--my little Nellie--de only one dey lef me--(cause she peared so delicate dey tought she couldn't be raised) I brought her wid me-- and tought I'd take a heap of comfort by her--in my old age--for she was right smart peert and

allers pleasant. On de boat, comin she peered well an sprightly and was amusin a sick child was dare, and she said to her "I ain't goin to lie like dat--Rose--when Ise sick--I'll die right away;--an de next mornin--at de first hen chicken crow I woke up hearin her prayin good and mighty--(She was only six yars old honey) and she prayed constant till last cock crow at broke of day. When she stretched out her arms little wid "Don't ye hear me--Good Lord?! Kiss me--mother" and she was gone--I couldn't think she was dead missus--no--I couldn't lieve it--she looked so noticeable and pretty--I kep goin to her whar she lay and listenin; and once or twice I tought I saw her stir and was goin to call her--but somethin said--'hush! she's dead', den I looked to de Lord and went bout my business--x--But it hurt me worse when dey carried her off to her little grave and I wanted to foller her dan it did to see her die -- But I went soon as I could and put a stick at her head and at her feet and tied a piece of one of her little frocks on it -- den I could tank de Lord for takin care of her -- x I lived on Clairmont Farm--Lady-in Charles City: my owners made a heap out of us --poor cattle: peered like de worser de overseer to us, de better massa like him. We got to be in de hor shed in de cold dark ob de mornin huddled togedder like sheep to keep warm -- so to be ready to start work at sunrise. Come sunrise, come overseer; and de hoes chop, chop, choppin. He meets anybody on de road comin, --neber speaks--neber looks at em--but when dey gets to dere row--out comes de broad strop wid de awful buckle onto de end ob it--and off goes de close stark naked--and--Oh Lord! de pore creeter! I'se had many of dese pore backs to tend to and many of my feeler servants could show you dis day de marks of dese owful stroppins. De minister (Peter Level) use to preach de white folks all smooth and nice--as if dey couldn't offend de Lord--and at de end he preach to servants and tell dem "Mind your massa & missus! as de Bible tells you to--Do jus as dey tells you for de Lord commands it--Don't break open de barns nor de hen houses; don't take anything longin to your owners but always do jus as you tinks your massa and missus wants you to do--den praps you'll get to Heaben's kitchen." We didn't like dat--We believed de good Lord had a better place for us if we lived as well as we knew how--

A sweet voiced blind woman--caressing her bright little girl--sat in the chimney corner--a sympathetic listener; --and the tears flowed down her cheeks as she heard of little Nellie's death--'Dey tought I'd no feelins when my children died'--said she; 'cause I didnt cry: but dey wouldn't give me time to tend em but kep me hard at work, so I couldn't get a chance to give em a drop of cool water in dere burnin lips: --so when dey died I couldn't shed a tear--bad as I felt--cause I tought--now deys whar dey'll get taken keer of. x I'se served em (the Southrons) all my life--honey! for nuffin--and now I'm got old and blind and crippled doin for dem--cause I'se no account now to dem dey turns me off onto government--rich as dey is--cause dey grudges de little cornmeal I'd eat in de few days dats lef me --But I tanks de good Lord de Governor (=ment) cares for me, and lets me have my child.

Why, missus--dey said youd come wid horns to hook us, --and would harness us to carts and cannons and drive us like horses--and cut off our right arms--and drown our children;--get all de work you could out of us widout feedin us, and den sell some of us to Cuba to pay for de war--and put de rest on a boat and blow it up in de ribber--I couldn't lieve all dat--Dey couldn't do me worse day Ise already suffered--I told me--Whars all my children--all you sold away? De Norf people can't hurt me worse dan dat." And her voice was most touching as she spoke; and her face was eloquent.

Here is a quaint 'Hyme' or 'Praise' which I once heard sung in a log cabin, crowded with earnest devout people--a feeble fire flickering on the hearth--a tall slender woman holding gracefully above her head a torch of light wood, which shone on the faces and the curious objects about the room--making a most striking picture--The swaying motion of the body and the music are necessary to a clear idea of the effect of these 'Himes'

You must watch the Sun

And see how she run.

Cho. For I hope for to get up inter heaven--

For Ise afraid hell catch you

Wid your work undone.

Cho. For I hope ect

Says my guide-oh;

I hope Ect

Says Judas oh--

Cho

Says old warrior oh--

I hope for to get up inter heaven.

If I had died when I wa young

Cho. I hope ect.

I shouldn't have had this race to run Cho.

If I had died when I was young

Chorus--

I shouldn't have sinned as many has done Cho.

De prettiest ting dat ebber I done

Cho.

Was to seek de Lord when I was young.

Cho.

Hopefully, happily and earnestly

your

S.E.C.

Care Capt. O. Borwn A. 2. M.

[Note: Although their meaning is unclear, the x's which appear in the transcription above are part of the original letter.]

Sarah Chase to home April 18, 1865

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Richmond!! Va. April 18th

Richmond Hurray!! Then Peace—thank God Though much exhausted with my morning task of governing and teaching (oral and with the black board) my little school of one thousand and twenty-five children, who but a few days ago were slaves—I will try to give you a few hints of my work since I last wrote. It is useless to wait longer for leisure and freshness for writing One of the first women of Richmond was your representative ; myself, who said a year ago, on Good Friday, she hoped to thank the Lord on the next Good Friday—in Libby Prison—for Freedom: which hope has been fulfilled. Although the officers and newspapers say truly that no one can get to Richmond, unless ordered—and such multitudes are waiting in Washington-Norfolk and at Fortress Monroe for passes; our party (Prof Woodbury, who superintends our Norfolk schools, Hannah E. Stephenson, Lucy and myself) through intimate acquaintance with the leading officers here, got passes to come at once, to organize the work in the beginning of the new regime—and constantly and

diligently have we labored through the day; and in the night I have thought for coming time. Government can only give us leave to work, but by ourselves we have got the field and labor organized in less than ten days, in a manner that gratifies and surprises us. Never have I attended committee meeting more dignified and to the point than the many we have appointed with the leading men in the colored churches. At our first meeting a noble looking and most intelligent deacon started up suddenly saying, “I felt frightened for a moment seeing more than five colored people together”—it being the law here that more than five must never assemble without a white man was authorized to sit with them. Not long ago, the white man they employed to sit in one of their Sunday Schools stepped out on an errand and was detained a little, and the whole school with its teachers was carried to jail. White ministers were saddled on their churches who understood the “dutys of servants to masters” and no one was allowed to use a book even if able—the instruction in the sabbath school was oral. I saw the first black man in a Richmond pulpit and heard from him a sermon that lifted me up to heights my spirit seldom reaches. The colored people of Richmond are far more intelligent and thrifty than any I have met with in the South—and though the laws against learning have been so strict, many can read and a large portion know their letters and spell a little, having been taught by the poor whites secretly and at exorbitant rates. The work in this Department begins under more favorable auspices than any other, having the experience of the others, ect ect. In their meetings after congratulating them on this new blessing from the Almighty, I tell them of the responsibility that comes with it urging them to be constantly watchful that they show their gratitude & prove their worthiness by doing their best in all things And I think the older ones fully comprehend this. We have already enrolled over two thousand pupils and expect to nearly double the number before long. As soon as our teachers come up and the schools are turned over to them, I shall open employment offices and get manufactures under way—it is too soon yet—and most too soon for schools. The officers sent their wives passes to come up and had to telegraph them not to come. So of course the teachers cannot come

for it is not yet safe. I have heard many threats, and these impetuous people are every day shooting or stabbing someone, so I want no one to come until these people are convinced

they are under Govt. The delay is no disadvantage to the little ones, who can be taught to sit still & how to give attention, en masse—their brains can be roused and put in working order by general instructions and exercises, so that when they have their books and teachers they can make a better beginning and I feel that these mental gymnastics I give them will always make study easier for them. I have talked with them in all the churches and met them outside where they weep over me, call down blessings on my head, shake my poor hands so they keep lame so I can hardly hold my pen—as I pass some caressingly take hold of my raiment while some push back the crowd All this I well know is not for me but for “de good Norf people.” And how much I wish these same good North people who have prayed and worked for the people here could join with them in their songs of joy and thanksgiving, as it has been my privilege in this, their day of jubilee. I have opened books in the different churches with headings of occupations where I register names—and soon expect to find very advantageous in getting work. The colored people will need little help except in helping themselves. We are not going to make beggars of them. Will you please consult with your Society in regard to getting a box of straw & materials for braiding—and yarn & needles & other materials for manufacture. If you can learn through correspondence from what place & most advantageously these & other materials can be procured & send to the Society in Boston at my desire they will pay, if you will attend to it. I shall be most grateful if you can give a contract for work of any kind or send any plans or materials. You will forgive the writing in consideration of my tired, shaken hand, and also inasmuch as I am using the pen and holder that Grant used just before he left his headquarters at City Point for Richmond. One Monday I was in our Capital, the next Monday was in Jeff Davis’s—in [illegible] Thursday—the slave pens and Libby. I have thanked God for this day. Oh I am so happy I know not what to do God help me to work as I wish—faithfully & effectively. Full of hope and most affectionately, Farewell, S.E.C.

Sarah Chase to Mrs. May May 25, 1865

Expresses the fear that "the negro will suffer more in this coming year of peace than in any he has during the war." Explains: "I had the satisfaction of lowering rents, restoring property, and adjusting difficultys in several cases, but many colored people have bought property without having taken any papers—and there is no way of getting it back from the whites who have taken it. Tells the story of "Aunt Aggie" to illustrate the problems faced by the former slaves. This same story also appeared as "The Story of Aggie Peters," in the Worcester Daily Spy and reprinted in unidentified newspaper, in 1865.

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Norfolk, May 25th 1865

Dear Mrs. May;

You see we are Home again once more. The Richmond schools are flourishing finely; but Negro affairs are miserably conducted now; but very soon Col. Brown will take all Virginia into his part of the "Bureau" and then things will go as nearly right as possible:—yet I am confident that the Negro will suffer more the coming year of Peace, than he has during the War :—and no organization can shield him from all the in-justice he will be exposed to from the vengeful Southrons. It is surprising how many ways the F.F.Vs have of venting their spite on the Freedmen; we saw much of it while in Richmond. But the fetters are broken forever! Thank God; And we must be patient in the necessary confusion of the change. I had the satisfaction of lowering rents, restoring property, and adjusting difficultys in several cases, but many colored people have bought property without having taken any papers—and there is no way of getting it back from the whites who have taken it. Bold robberies were of daily occurrence. In broad day light I saw a well dressed Confederate snatch a watch from a colored man, in passing ; and in getting it away, the white man cut the black man's head with something, so that the blood ran freely, and the man was partially stunned—the highwayman ran, and our soldiers wouldn't run after him Several of our men have been shot on guard; and three were killed—and they have reason to fear the Rebs. Our soldiers as well as the Johnnies plunder the houses of the poor blacks continually—so the colored people feel it is neither safe to go out or remain at home. The cry of "murder!" often came up from the hollow below where we lived where are congregated most of the poor of the city—and looking out, we could see the people running from their houses, & the soldiers running down the hillsides in many directions, after the thief who would soon get lost to sight among the houses or hollows.

In one house I went where a woman lived miserably with her large flock of little ones, and "no one to do for em but me missis, an I finds work very hard to get—an I wont beg of Uncle Sam—as long as I can get work." Her house had been most thoroughly searched—even the beds were ripped for greenback—finding nothing of value but a half dollar that was laid away for rent—and many poor women flocked around with tales of their frights and robberies.

The Richmond people colored are far superior to any I have yet encountered, and a very little help of the right kind will advance them in a short time to an independent position. Work and justice is all they ask—and if societies would organize work; they would benefit the race more than any other kind of help.

One early morning I was much surprised by the appearance of Aggie Peters a nice old Auntie from Norfolk—who kissed my hands and wept for joy. "Why Auntie, how did you find me?" said I. "Find you, honey—why there aint a corner of the Earth where you could hide so I couldn't find you dare if I want to look. Ses I to myself one day—I wonder if now Babalons fallen (i.e. Richmond) I can ever get any of my property back to give my children—for 'taint long before I shall go up yonder, (die) an I went up to tell you all about it, and they said they were in Richmond, so I comes right up"—and then she told her story in wonderful language speaking of her wrongs so touchingly—and dwelling on the injustice to the race, as if her moral sense was more aggrieved than herself ; and her eloquence was most touching and remarkable, as with streaming, uplifted eyes & clasped hands she pictured the relations of her race to the North & South—the Lord's purpose in the War—what the North had done for them and what they owed the North.

Though 65 years old Aggie has the best figure in the city, a most dignified bearing and step as elastic as a young girl—with fine manners. "I allers shows my manners and never once forgot." Her perfect faith and love of her Creator kept her cheerful and courageous through everything. A free woman: she was allowed to do business for herself—owning a house—grocery—"hack and span" & donkeys & two keerts (carts) hiring negroes and taking pains to get those who wished to buy their freedom—giving them a part over what they paid their master. She bought her husband and a man who was anxious to get his freedom sooner than he could pay his master & let him work to repay her :—after a visit to the North she was thrown into prison immediately on her return and was examined and cross examined before some "sharp hard looking judges" who wished to know all she saw or heard of the North & her views thereon (I have seen many who had the same experience). She was banished with the threat that would be taken to the whipping post if she returned & kept in jail until sold. The colored man was so faithful in the charge of her property she gave him all he made in the two years after he paid for himself—& with this money he had bought himself. a little place and he had a great name for being a steady, good man with white & black. Without any warning he was taken off the hack while driving & put into jail, with an order that no man white or black should see him; and carried away in irons the same night for the Southern market; and no one can tell where he is. One of the leading citizens, though pro-slavery, knows the partys and testifys the truthfulness—he tried to see this man knowing him to be so honest and good—and wished to get him out of jail, but the wicked white man who stole him was artful enough to secure his prey by forbidding any mortal to see him ; and hurrying him off.

All of Aggie's property was stolen from her and she is very anxious for justice sake it shall be got back—"give it to the Union when you get it if I am gone—I've got plenty for my small wants—the Lord has been so good to me giving me plenty of work & strength and I've raised my children to do for themselves. When they first threw me in prison I was all down discouraged—thinking whats the use, if a person works hard and always shows their manners & behavior ; and does as clearly as they ken what they ought—and comes to this the same as them that does bad; but presently the Lord shone in the room; and I felt as happy and easy as a baby; & I prayed and sang all night: they come and tried to stop me; I felt I ought to sing praises—but in the morning they tied me to the whipping post to take it out of me : but when I got rested I began again."

I know not what I have written from Richmond to you and what to Miss Stephenson. I sent to "Mrs Denny N.E.F.A. Soc. Leicester" in one of Jeff. Davis's envelopes about twenty bills of sale, I captured in a Negro auction room; and wrote some incidentals on the back of each—for distribution in your society; and one letter to Mrs. May and one to Mr. May from R. Forgive my poor eyes for such scrawls. With love to Wde and high regard to Mr May and yourself.—S.E.C..

I have a quantity of Confed. money I wish to convert into a flag for the R. schools. Can you suggest a fair or a firm who would buy it—or a curiosity broker? How I wish I could have been at the last A. S. meeting. Shan't you band together for the elevation of the Negro? An Employment Society or something of that nature. Could you get some one to learn where at best advantage could be bought a box of material for straw braiding—and could you suggest some manufacture we could undertake on a small scale in Richmond this Summer or Fall. We shall

probably remove to R. ere long. I cannot say when. I would be glad if you could form some scheme of work to suggest to me to undertake in Richmond.

June 4, 1865 Sarah Chase to Fred W.G. May (no transcription)

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June 12, 1865 Sarah Chase to Fred W.G. May

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Norfolk June 12th 1865

Eureka! Eureka!

Dear Mr. May,

I am happy to say—that safe to its hum—the barrel has come! ... It is not to be opened at present; but will probably be taken to Richmond soon—to give employment to some needy ones—whom I shall pay in money; giving the articles where they are essential and there is inability to pay. I go to Point of Rocks on the James tomorrow to see if it is a suitable place to establish Homes for the Aged-indigent and orphans There are about fifty log barracks there—(Butler's Hospitals) and it is a very pleasant—and for the neighborhood—a healthy locality. As soon as it is abandoned by the Army, I propose to take charge, in which case I cannot get home this Summer. But as yet no ones plans can be definite in this Dept. Genl. Howard is very popular, and all have faith in Capt. Brown's fitness as Commissioner for the State of Virginia. I should like to be able to give our work in Richmond as soon as possible. I do not want the North to do any thing for these people that we can make the South do for them So I shall do my best to get them to put the colored people into the charitable Institutions already established now while our army is here, trusting the habit once established will be kept up. They of course would not do so themselves, for years to come—ect, ect, [sic] reasons self evident. I wish you could have seen the bright little boy who has just left me, and heard his glowing account of “our garden you helped us to, Miss Sarah” and “how much we sell from it Oh Miss Sarah—wes so happy to be livin in the country, whar theres plenty to do for all hands and is so much pleasanter & healthier than the dirty city.” I bought some nice fresh berries which he picked, “right smart soon” in the morning and engaged soft & hard crab for tomorrow dinner...

S.E.C.

Sarah Chase to Fred W.G. May July 17, 1865

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Richmond, July 17th, 1865

My good friend, Mr. May: Your letter of the 6th is just received,—and with much pleasure. You may believe all the statements that have appeared in the Northern papers (up to date) about the abuses of the colored people The Tribune of the 15th copies a letter (from Lucy) from the Commonwealth:—making complaints thereupon The men who were hung on lamp posts were rescued from the mob. It was necessary to put Norfolk under Martial Law again:—and with Col. Brown and Genl. Terry at Richmond—affairs appear well on the surface in both cities But for the Bureau I dread to think where we should be now.... If I take the Chimberaso Hosp. barracks—on a table land—above the boat landing—at Richmond I shall hope to carry on many trades, for men and women. I do not wish to leave until my Fall work is mapped out—for I wish to start things; and put some one in charge, while I renew my strength in the blessed North; but finding it impossible to do so, and the hot weather depriving me of strength to do much that I would like to—I shall turn my face homeward the last of the month:—and when sufficiently rested should most gladly spend a day with you. I am only here for a day—on business for the people: and a fine spectacle I witnessed yesterday As we lay at the wharf a transport of Colored Troops landed close by, making as fine an appearance as they marched into town as any troops I have ever seen:—and for the three hours they waited on shore they were as orderly as any group of gentlemen could be. “Tis as much as we can bear to have the Yankees here:—but we’d rather die than have the nigger troops here” is the language of the people:—so the feelings of the citizens who met these troops as they were returning from Church—can better be imagined than expressed. Col Brown ordered them in to do guard duty. With ever best wishes:—and a feeling that the hardest struggle is yet to be:—but full of hope Yours truly S.E.C.

December 1, 1865 Sarah Chase

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Savannah Wharf on “a stack” of boxes barrels & trunks

Dec. 1st 1865

Dear Mrs. May; Since I saw you, I have been almost like a bag of the wind at no time sufficiently settled to report on “Winter plans.” The last six weeks of our vacation were to have

been given to pleasant recreation, and farewell glances into beloved house-holds in the northern cities, but a crying need for someone who knew the lay of the land, to found a family in Norfolk made us turn our steps that way, instead; where we took a large empty old house (but two doors from the one we occupied last season) and fitted it up for the teachers. The day after we arrived, we reopened all the schools belonging to our family, and held them in a large church three weeks till other members came, teaching regularly and faithfully all who were ready to come to school. The schools are never full till Winter—all working, who are able, as long as they can get “jobs”; many selling cakes and candies about the streets. Each day the stragglers came in—and all took hold, with a good will, to learn. Mr. Banfield was the young man sent out by the society to be gentleman of the house, and we three worked together in converting the dismal, deserted old place, into a pleasant home. As soon as the family came, we gave over the schools, and opened two large schools at the Rope Walk, (the Refugee Camp)—of which we had general supervision. I wish you could have seen our grotesque, wild, lawless menagerie of a school, the first few days, when it seemed as if the little “fliberty gibbets” had arms and legs by the dozens; and all seemed to have more than the lawful number of tongues the third day, saw an orderly and most interesting school; and I could hardly believe it had any relationship to the first days gathering. These schools we held while we remained; taking care of the old women’s home, in addition;—and fitting them up for Winter—visiting the families of the sick and needy and attending to the wants of all old & extremely destitute people, in the time not given to the school. The enthusiastic welcomings of the people on our return, were most touching as well as gratifying. They told us they knew we were coming back; though we had told them we certainly should not when we left. “Wese been a praying for yer,—and prayin you might come back to us; for you knowd our ways and trials as if you was of us, always; and peared like we could tell you, and you could understand & do for us, as no one else could” said they. “Teachers are wanted in Georgia—only men—it not being agreeable, proper, or safe for ladies Who’ll go?” We reported ourselves as ready to start any time at a days notice & Nov. 20th Mr. Banfield, Miss Ellen B. Haven (of Portsmouth N. H. one of our family and a particular friend of ours) Lucy & I took the overland route for Savannah. Nine toilsome tedious days of tortuous terrible travelling brought us to this lovely (all but the dirt) city. I marvel much that we are here alive—travelling as we did, day and night—the wheels getting on fire—axles breaking, frequent fording and occasional collisions—the roads, engines and cars, so much out of order. Most grateful too am I to be thus far on the road. Our final destination I know not, the agent of the State being in the interior and not answering our telegram (wh. probably do not reach [him?]) The negroes here are quite enterprising, there being eight thousand in the place. They have formed an Educational Ass. and support several schools. It is refreshing to find only blacks in this state instead of the many shades one sees in Ya. Though there are many poor of course, there will not probably be much suffering in the city, the climate is so warm; and I think they will make out full as well for food as the poor class in most cities—this Winter. In the interior there is supposed to be much suffering though particulars arent yet known.... In our journey we had a fine opportunity to learn the feelings of the people of the South. Always travelling at a very slow rate, we overheard many instructive conversations. The Negro is the universal subject of conversation; the better class accept the result of the war, as inevitable and seem determined to make the best of it—only the lower classes grumble about the spilt milk, fretting and fuming like

thoughtless children. Savannah is ravishingly lovely: all the streets are very wide—running entirely across the city, dividing it in squares, like Phila. a broad strip of green, with trees on both sides, runs through the centre of the streets—which also have shade trees over the sidewalk. High in the gardens hang the golden oranges, sending their sweet perfume afar, and drooping over the full blooming Camilla [sic], which gladdens the eyes through the Winter. Our journey hither was over Sherman's track but it chanced that we passed or stop at the principal points in the darkness of night. "Eberyting is disregular dese times" Though some things are higher than ever, most things are lower : Our travelling expenses were tremendous, but this place & Charleston are over stocked with goods; so many things are cheaper & most are quite as low as in the North. Our soldiers & officers are reaping golden harvests in the shops & hotels for awhile in these two citys. Food is more reasonable than could be expected & meats are particularly low—chickens .75 pr. pair mutton 10 cents a pound. Oranges are five cents a piece, a severe winter a few years ago having killed the trees—though others were immediately planted—there are only enough for home consumption, those in market are brought here, except the wild sour oranges wh. are only fit for preserving—these are a cent a piece. We loaded ourselves down with shot at Ft. Sumpter for the benefit of our nieces and nephews. We are toting them round with some difficulty hoping some day to deliver them. I write now—not knowing where or when I shall be settled. With heart's best wishes for the friends of Leicester Hill Goodbye S.E.C.

February 5, 1866 Sarah Chase to Sarah R. May

Sarah reports on her schools in Savannah and Columbus, and persecution of Union supporters by Confederate sympathizers, observing " I can more easily conceive of the Lion and Lambs lying down together, than of a union of the North and South." Yet, she also confesses "No mortal is happier than I am in my work; and my success is fairly intoxicating."

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Columbus, Georgia

Feb. 5th 1866

Dear Mrs. May;

When I last wrote we had just opened a school at Savannah. There were already several schools opened there and Col. Sickles was administering the affairs of the Bureau in a most admirable manner, so it did not seem right to tarry in that charming city, though we could have found enough important work to fill every moment. Wishing to work where there was the most need (there being so many places where nothing has been done for the Freedmen, and where they are sorely persecuted), we came here, where a school house, built by the soldiers, had just been destroyed by the citizens and the feeling is intensely bitter against anything Northern. The affairs of the Bureau have been rightfully mismanaged here; and our Govt has been disgraced by the

troops who were stationed here. Now the troops are withdrawn, and the people are chafing at the presence of the Bureau and “a few pious and enthusiastic N.E. school marms:” “both must be cleared out of the place,” says the daily press.

We have never seen any discourtesy in any of the citizens, but we know that we are generally discussed in circles; and many plans are proposed for “getting rid” of us.—We have glorious schools in full blast - And I am so satisfied with the work here that nothing in the world could make me wish to be in another place, or doing anything else. In my own day school and night school, I have 140 pupils, who have made truly wonderful progress, in the five weeks I have been teaching.

How much I wish you could see my school! A more earnest, fine looking set of scholars could not be found—than I could show. Wouldn’t I like to grace your Academy Halls with their presence, giving the good people a chance to talk with them and hear their varied experiences. I find the people here more tidy and thrifty than in any place I am acquainted with— though many are intensely poor—and there has been nothing given them from the North, they are always tidy, cheerful and hopeful, ever anxious to improve. “How I wish I were rich!” For the first time in my life I say it, for I have so much need of money here. We are too far from the North to make it worth while to send any boxes here—the expense is so great—but I ought to have a purse to get an occasional flannel, or drug or splint for a broken limb or piece of bedding for some good old soul, who has “raised eight children for missus, as if they were my own; and nussed master so well, the Dr. said I saved his life ;—and now I’m too old to work— I’ve turned out to die like a dog.” Though I have a liberal allowance from home-the expense of living is very great; and no individual purse is long enough for the absolute needs— One dollar note is worth more to me, than a bbl which cost many dollars and much time; for with it I can get the one thing needful for the moment, - which perchance might save a life ;—and forty bbls might not furnish. Accounts of the use made of monies sent would be returned.

There are a number of colored people in this place who are very well off—and they cheerfully bear their burden of the new dispensation, but in a population of about 8 thousand they can do little. I shall organize mutual relief societies in the Negro churches (Baptist and Methodist) as soon as possible. Large numbers are working for their food alone; and the white people tell them that they are not free yet. Across the river, in Alabama, several Negroes have been shot because they were free!

Union! I can more easily conceive of the Lion and Lambs lying down together, than of a union of the North and South. In all the counties around here, the Union familys are suffering shameful persecution, and the people do not hesitate to say that those who favor the North, shall not live in their communities. We have now with us a family who fled for their lives from their plantation— fourteen miles out—They have never owned slaves & always been loyal; and consequently the neighbors have been killing their cattle and taking their farming utensils and doing many things to make them leave their place. A few nights ago, a regular armed force from the county round threw out guards around their house, and surrounded it for the purpose of killing the whole family—but finding one of the sons absent, withdrew to decide whether to postpone it for another time or not—in the delay a part of the family escaped to the woods.

Such things are occurring the whole time; but it does not do to write North about them; for if they get in print, it gives encouragement to many communities who are ready to go and do

likewise. Now the military courts are withdrawn I see no alternative for Southern Unionists, in many parts of the South, between constant persecution, and going North--

No mortal is happier than I am in my work; and my success is fairly intoxicating. -- I give no thought to the hatred of the whites, knowing how useful it is my good fortune to be, to the blacks--and how truly they love me. We lose so many letters through the mail--I have no reason to think those I mail, will reach their destination--consequently I can not feel much inspiration in writing. Our letters are probably opened, by order of the secret societies, to see that we write nothing that they are unwilling to have known at the North.

Should any money be sent, it must be in the form of a check on a N. Y. bank; as money which has been sent from my family, has failed to reach me. Please have some one tell me if you receive this--With ever best wishes--

With ever best wishes—singing at the plough.

S.E.C.

A crowd are waiting around my table for me to drop my pen--

March 9, 1866 Sarah Chase to Fred W.G. May

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Columbus, Ga. March 9th '66

My good friend, Mr. May:

Your February letter is just received. Letters come to hand now, to my full name; Columbus, Georgia. Policy, for a while, protects us from practical demonstrations of the bitter hatred that is felt for us. A leading Secessionist has probably stopped the “plots” against us, by demonstrating the injury it would be to the place, if the citizens killed or mobbed us. Many individuals have sworn to shoot us, when they get a good chance. I am just recovering from a serious attack of inflammation of the lungs, which was the result of parting with some underclothing which I thought some one needed more than I—and that immediately. So I have not much strength for writing. While sick, I would sew & write for and advise with my friends most of the time. Oh! I must tell you how useful that Leicester woolen bbl. has been. Having promised to attend to it myself & having had so much trouble in its first coming (it arriving too late for the season it had to put away for this Winter) I attempted to bring it with me but I shant tell of the expense or trouble it was in getting here—it had to stop in Savannah and was not able to reach here till last month. The moment it arrived, I cut many garments; & the next night many poor, old and extremely worthy people, blessed “Leicester hill” for the comfort they had in their flannels. Under one blanket is a pleasant faced man, without any legs, who has “no kin in the World.” I shall set him up, with a

street corner stand, next week: —where he can sell bonnets & cakes, which poor colored people will make who cannot leave their home duties to sell. Another blanket is over a very much afflicted young woman and child, who was brought in from the far country, and dropt in the street, with “Now go to your friends—the Yanks—I cant be feedin you no longer.” Two are over a very old couple, who had to sleep in their day clothes, with only a piece of tenting over them. I have made some sacks of the flannel, for the sick and aged to wear when they sit up in bed—in our cold hospital Many thanks to Mrs. May for her letter—any news is so welcome If I was not too busy to worry—our new President’s course would torment me exceedingly. If I have not lost the use of my lungs for public speaking, I fear I cannot keep from it, when the heat drives me from the South often find myself lecturing here, and my subject so absorbs me I do not think of myself at all, or of the audience, “sub rosa.” I see by your letters that you have never received a very long letter I wrote soon after we got here. Lucy is killing herself with work—as usual—and is highly satisfied with her field. The moment our “amicable” relations to these whites is made public—our usefulness here ceases So we do not let any statement be published Those know who ought to know about it The ex Provisional Gov. of his own accord—never having met any of us, told the citizens we were “real ladys—and however they felt, any indignity offered to us would harm the city unspeakably.” The flannel and blanket are not all gone. Have confidence in my simple address. I know it will be safer than any other. With you I will trust that a Fr. Bill [Freedmen’s Bureau] will yet pass. I always talk self dependence to the people, and strive to show them how to “go alone,” & help each other. The Bureau we found, made cruel contracts, and was only useful to the whites—no redress could the blacks find—enough that an investigation was requested; which resulted in the appointment of a new officer—a young and good man who means well. I can only say I know there will be no intentional wrong doing on his part. The Pulpit and Press are the only partys who openly insult us—giving the citizens leave, as it were, to do anything they please to rid themselves of our pestiferous presence. Never mind, never mind! No one more contented or happy than I Health is all I ask—that I may carry out my plans Our grand night schools are closed by the Govt, on account of small pox I can’t feel reconciled to it—though I shall keep all my men at work—the women in their homes and shops—coming to me occasionally to give lessons We tell our scholars to report all cases of sickness ect & then we investigate. Last week I got a woman out of the woods who was living with her child—her feet frost bitten & she having nowhere to go. Today we find shelter for an infirm old man who had scooped a hole in the hill side to crawl in at night—when well he tried hard to get “some kind of work Missus—but everybody says no! you’re too old to do anything—and wont let me show em what I can do.” Trials are perplexing on every hand—but God reigns, With ever best wishes— Farewell [Sarah]

April 2, 1866 Sarah Chase to Fred W.G. May

Sarah explains her concerns about using freedmen's societies to aid the whites, reports how a slave was shot on a local plantation for asking to be treated as a "man," and describes attempts to band freedpeople together to support a hospital.

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Monday April 2d

Dear Mr. May,

Your welcome letter, and the money, came duly to hand. Lucy paid for the bbl. with other "contraband" freight we brought, with money she had for the purpose. In regard to "mixed schools," I regret that I am obliged to say, not what I think, but what I know; id est, they are an impossibility. I feel confident they would be of no benefit to the blacks in Md. Va. N. C. S. C. Ga. and Ala., consequently I cannot see how they will work well, in any part of the South. No one is more anxious than I that the Southern whites should be elevated; but my life is consecrated to the blacks.

Since all are friendly to the whites, there is a certainty that their cause will not suffer. If the few friends of the Freedmen continue in their special field, I think they will be far better satisfied, in the end. Enough will be done for the whites, with-out the combination, and far less for the blacks, will be accomplished through it than is now. I think no one who has been in the field could differ from me. How long it took the enlightened North to make the experiment of mixed schools a success! I am not sure that they could yet be pronounced successful except in a few districts. Think how much the South is behind the North in civilization, and how much worse the feeling is between the whites and the blacks! Wishing well to all mankind, I have much desired to see a movement for the elevation of the Southern whites: (though I feel it no duty to take part in the work, their being plenty of people for it) and have had this matter on my mind throughout my Southern life and have talked Education and Industry to them whenever I have met them; and on my own responsibility urged them to go to the "Yankee Schools," knowing what a benefit it would be to the blacks, to be thus associated with the whites they are to have dealings with in future. But though the parents were "wishing their children had the advantages the Niggers were enjoying" they usually "would rather they'd die than go to school with the Niggers" or they said : "I never will get so low as to have my children learnin with nigs."

No matter how strict the rules, and wise and kind the teachers plans, for the comfort, and rights of the black scholar; the feeling of the whites expressed or not—will keep the sensitive African away; though he would willingly bear cold, hunger, and whippings if need be—to "get a little larnin." I know L. agrees with me, for she made no dissent, when I was talking on the subject last eve.

We spent yesterday on a Plantation in Ala. assembling the 75 "hands" and teaching and talking to them, giving them books and slates and showing them how to help themselves and each other. The overseer on the adjoining plantation shot a slave for saying, "Please massa, do not whip my

son so—he is a man—and will work better without it." The Overseer escaped punishment because "the nigger gave him sarse."

The day I recd. your last I took my portfolio to write; but ere I dipped my pen "Please Miss could I get a letter wrote? 'Its seven years I've been tryin to write back to my kin in Charleston – but I never could get the fifty cents to pay de [?] folds for a letter. Seven years ago I was sold away and I hain't seen no kith nor kin since dat day; and I don't know if any of dem be livin' But tank de Lord! Hes very kind to me – I tank him dat I liv to see dis day – and de children all goin to school and folks callin dere wives + dere children dere own – Thank God! Thank God! we never an be thankful enough! I wonders if my children is enjoin dese privileges! – I hopes dey is" – and late at night, my ink, my paper and my time had gone with the twentyseven callers and their business – which was for most of them – of much importance) these came in the time I was not in my school. I miss Army privileges unspeakably.

There are so many I want to send to their kin. Georgia is the state where I suppose more than in any other you find large numbers of persons who are far from any kin.

Schools—most flourishing—Fine weather for all—particularly the poor. Small Pox continues to rage. L & I went to the hospital to see if the patients were properly attended to but surgeon would not admit us. We have ordered a colored person to report any thing out of the way & what is needed—sure that in some way we can meet any demand. We banded the colored people to take care of their hospital—but they are so fearful of small pox the committee will not work "until the scare is ober." I shall have a meeting this week to talk with them on Health Economy ect and will make them [?] take hold.

With best wishes

S.E.C.

October 23, 1866 Sarah Chase (no transcription)

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October 28, 1866 Sarah Chase (no transcription)

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October 1866 Sarah Chase to Fred W.G. May

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Dear Mr May Through flame and flood and shipwreck I come to report. Our baggage (valued at a thousand dollars and uninsured) and the vessel which took us from Boston are a cloud in the horizon. I need not tell how this all happened, as the papers have probably told you that “Theo D. Wagner was destroyed by fire & no lives lost” * I have not reported for a long time for there has been nothing definite to say—and now I can only tell that we hope to work in Charleston this Winter Deo Volente. I came home, all worn out from last years (untold) hardships;—and have had a season of agony in my chambers, from which I have made two or three attempts to be among people, but always regretted it. I kept waiting to see or hear from some of you, or to be well enough to go up to call though determined to get out if I got well enough—of course I had to wait until the way was plain. I accepted a call to Charleston hoping to be ready when the time came—and most well, I started on Saturday for my field of labor—with a happy heart grateful that the good Lord was permitting me to go to my people again—forgetting my summer of pain & confinement in my joy at the prospect of being again at my work. I spent the morning before we sailed, enjoying Bradford’s Iceberg—and it seemed indeed a reality as I gazed. How soon we realized the near wreck, and the far blazing ship! I was never more calm—happy and useful—and I am as thankful for this sublime experience as of any in my lifetime. It is such a satisfaction to find that one can do just as one would wish and to feel that your calmness and control may have been instrumental in saving lives. What pleasant thoughts and visions came to me as I took the last drop into uncertainty The women behaved perfectly well & worked with the buckets till taken off except four ignorant women & the children who were frantic—together with one of the mates who kept up a volley of panic exciting cries, “We’re all lost!! Bilers will burst in a minute, and not a sail in sight” ect! At the first cry, I rushed to the buckets, and cast water to the last. The women formed a line and passed buckets constantly. Not till after we knew we could not save the ship did the welcome sails appear; but they had not a breeze, & our only hope was in the possibility of our boiler holding out till we could reach them. We put on full steam & rushed our flaming bark upon them When we had been put off in the small boats, and reached the bark, the sailors said, “You’ve come to a poor place; we’re a wreck ourselves; and out of provisions.” (She had lost her galley, cabin, provisions & some rigging, in coming from Cuba, in the recent gale.) On deck, songs of thanksgiving welled from our hearts—and only our good fortunes presented themselves to my mind. Then I thought how little the loved ones at home were thinking of our surroundings, or how cold, wet, hungry & tired the absent ones are! The only moment of anxiety was when I was helping a little child down the side of the boat to a young mother—with a babe in her arms Now the cold morning reminds me—I have nothing to make myself warmer—That this time we had all our wardrobe with us, except one good dress apiece & some common small articles, all contained in one drawer at home Any other time we have been out we should not

miss what we had with us. "Wenever had our wardrobe so complete & in such order, and how nice it is to have so many garments that will serve us our life time !" we said, as we were packing. This tough climax recalls the many pecuniary losses that have attended our whole Southern campaign—which we had till this ignored (together with the loss of health, risk of life & atmosphere of hate & contempt) in the entire satisfaction of our work. The last time we went South I had a carpet bag containing our united valuables & money stolen on the journey; this time there in the trunk (what we have left) for safe keeping. Thank God—all right! Deo Volente we take the next chance for Charleston, & when we get there though we can borrow linen and shoulder covering until our familys help reaches us If I live, I must work among my people again—this Winter, for I fear the Southern people will soon have some effectual way of keeping us out of their country. With heart's best wishes to the Leicester friends Hoping all is well with them.
Adieu

November 1, 1866 Sarah Chase to Fred W.G. May

Recovering from the effects of a shipwreck suffered while she and Lucy were traveling to Charleston to take up their posts for the winter, Sarah refuses the money offered to help her replace the possessions lost in the wreck, insisting that she could earn a salary if she needed one. Posing the question of whether it would be more useful to the freedmen to work elsewhere and use the money to send someone in her place, she concludes "that a truly interested person can accomplish more directly than through any agent."

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Nov. 1st. 1866

Dear Mr. May--

I beg you to have no monies raised for me--

If my own father could not supply my wants, (as he is too glad to do,)--I would accept some of the many salarys offered me--I could have fifteen hundred dollars tomorrow as Supt. of a room of women in a Hosery milly near N.Y:--and I have questioned whether I could accomplish more good for the freedmen, by making much money, with my own hands--and sending an agent to my people--but I felt (am I mistaken?) that a truly interested person can accomplish more directly than through any agent.

I thank you most heartily for your sympathy and kind expressions,--

This delay is all that troubles me--now--

We hope to be in the field in 10 days, from now=shall not wait for outfit--but taking a few essentials--shall leave orders for the rest to follow us, when ready--

As I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you face to face--once more,--in a few days,--I will leave many things to say till then.

You ask what to bring--Letters--would delight me.

Not to appear ungrateful--I would accept the temporary use of anything in the way of housekeeping--bedding or textbooks that you should send to Freedpeople near Charleston. --The work & exposure of our experienced unfits us for any immediate exertion & it proves to be most fortunate we are forced to rest by lack of the desired opportunity of being transferred to another vessel for our brig--Please give my heartfelt thanks to all well wishers; and love and thanks to [?] and for her kind letter--
I think I have told you we are each to have one of the "model Charleston Morris schools"--
Hoping to see you ere long--and anticipating much--your sincere friend--
S.E. C.
When I am settled I want the pleasure of a share in the testimonial to our friend Garrison--
This delay is [cutes off]

December 7, 1866 Sarah Chase, likely to Fred W.G. May

Confides that she had feared she would not be strong enough to do the work and writes with delight: "as soon as I laid my hand to the plow--strength came: and I anticipate a good season-- May the Good God bless my undertakings!" Also describes challenge of keeping order among 215 students accustomed to being ruled by physical punishment.

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Charleston, S. C.

Dec. 7th, 66

I cannot tell you, my good friend, how truly I appreciate your sympathy of heart and hand--
Please give my hearty thanks to your committee, for their thoughtful kindness--telling them also, if you please--that after the unfortunate, delays of accidents, sickness and the failure of making connections in the journey--

I am, thank God! at last with my people --- and hard at work with my school of 215 (registered) with four assistants --

Thus far, school duties have taken all my time: -- my scholars are of the lowest class -- and very hard to controll. Accustomed, as they are to rough treatment, they do not appear to consider any command obligatory unless accompanied by a blow; and as my conscience will not allow the looked for blow -- it is exceedingly exhausting to keep the order I will and do have. I could not write to you before, as I feared I should have to resign--not knowing that I should be equal (to the fullest extent) to the work--until I had made a fair trial--Nothing would keep me from the work; but I should think it my duty to work as a private, unless I was equal to all my desires. But to my great joy--as soon as I laid my hand to the plow--strength came: and I anticipate a good season--May the Good God bless my undertakings!

The necessary comforts of my chamber are a constant reminder of Leicester friends: and who can say how much is added to the strength for each days conflict by the sweet remembrances? With all good wishes, & best respects--your teacher-child--S.E. C.

December 29, 1866 Sarah Chase to friends

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Charleston, S. C. December 29th '66 A happy New Year! to My good friends of Leicester Hill Hoping your Christmas has been merry; I trust the New Year will bring you God's richest blessing. December's work is almost done; the time has been mostly occupied with school, and its duties and I think I now understand my ground pretty well. I had been anticipating the "Holidays" as a time for mastering my position, by acquainting myself with the home life of my children and had refused several tempting plans, that I might do so, but—sickness prevents, and I must plan, pray and hope for the New Year—in my chamber. A few of my scholars I have visited and helped to find work: —and have helped and visited a few old people. Charleston abounds in the latter; in the street you see a great many sawing wood or selling at corners:—and I have learned, by inquiry, of a great number past work: I have a long list, to visit when I can, of people near and over a hundred: Many of these will be turned into the street on New Years Day, as the white people "can not have them in their yards." Genl Scott (in command; and also, head of the Bureau) is very efficient in his duties, and will rent a house, as soon as found, for these and will build a permanent Home as soon as land suitable is found. In the cold, leaking, tottering quarters of a handsome house near us, I found two women crouching and shivering over a few chips smoking in the fire place, each wrapped in a piece of Yankee blanket to which they were mostly indebted for the little comfort they had; their clothing underneath being extremely worn and thin. They were 95 and 103! years old had; worked hard all their days; and had "plenty of children in the World—some whar! If they only knew whar they'd take good care of de mudders. De folks in de big house has got only de house to eat and drink and war except what sewin de ladys kin git." From a woman who came in I learned the people in the house let them stay there and gave them weekly rations of meal and the poor neighbors give them now and then a bit. Govt, gives no rations now (Tis right, I think) and if it did, such feeble old souls could not go for them or cook them—and the Home will be the place for them. I shall speak in the different colored churches about it, helping them organize committees to sustain it. I changed their bed to the warmest corner away from the "leakings"—engaged a woman to stop up the chinks, and after doing a few other things for their comfort, left them, wondering how many old people there were more blest than these in temporal things, and as blest in spiritual. Both loved the Good Father and were sure of His loving kindness: and their faces glowed with happiness while they spake of Jesus and Death. I wish you could visit the "Orphan's Home" and adopt a goodly number of the little ones. They could save so many steps, make such capital waiters, are such inexpensive luxuries. It seems such an easy way of doing good—and the benefit would be mutual They are of

all sizes, ages, and descriptions. I think you would wish you could take several instead of wondering if you could take one. Please consider this matter for yourselves and others. Please think if you now some one who needs a pair of little feet to run, and recommend them to send to Mrs. Pillsbury for them. Govt will forward them. Couldn't some member of the Society draw up a convincing encyclical letter, for the use of a Comm, who shall get all the "orders" they can—and will send for a number at one time? Another chance to make one's heart warm—by giving toward a land site for the Orphanage to Mr. Tomlinson, Supt. of Edc. for S.C.2—a life long practical Abolitionist and a fine man. If we can get the land while the Bureau lives—Govt will build the house—and then the Charlestonians will maintain it. Mrs. Pillsbury is the right person in the right place. I wish there were more mothers as faithful to the little ones God has given them—as she is—to these human waifs. I have been greatly blessed in my four years of Southern life and anxiously and prayerfully anticipate the fifth. Hope with me—that I may see right, act well, and accomplish much in this rich field of labor. With best wishes Farewell S.E.C. I am well but my sister is very ill—with something like Lung Fever.

1866 Sarah Chase to Fred W.G. May

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Dear Mr. May— Another month of hard and not unsuccessful labor is accomplished. In that time, I have entered the hearts—of all—and the homes—of many of my children. With few exceptions, I find the parents hardworking; very poor, and exceedingly "anxious that the children should get lernin," and willing to make any sacrifice to that end. When I began visiting children, my escorts failed me, day after day, with remarkable forgetfulness, as I thought: but it afterwards transpired that they could not conceive of anything that should bring the teacher home, but a complaint which would bring them a "good strappin." But I found my way alone, to the—first—dismay and—final—delight of the little ones; who reported to others the "nice visit," and how glad "de mammy was to see" me;—so that a great eagerness, sprang up, for a visit; and escorts are only too ready. The children as well as parents are anxious through the first call, for the expected complaint, (!) or the request for money, (!) and it is truly amusing to see their relief, when it dawns upon them, that 'tis because I am interested in their welfare, that I have sought them out.

Most ardent and grateful letters come to me from my Georgia friends. Some write for me to find their lost ones—and I trace them, to "a gang was taken away de firs year of de war—missus; and dey wouldn't let nobody know whar to"—or to the Grave; or to their homes;—as was my good fortune to do, last week;—when I found the aged parents and the brother and sisters of a nice, smart woman, who wrote us from Columbus, that she knew not where one of her kin lived; and felt little hope; but wanted the satisfaction of trying to hear of them. There are seven congregations of colored people in this city; most of them,—large and flourishing And, to most

of the people, going to Church is their highest pleasure. One church, built and paid for by freedmen, is as pretty, and home like, as I have ever seen. It is crowded three times on the Sabbath, and three times in the week with the most orderly well dressed people; who give surprising amounts of money in the constant collections that are taken there. This church has 5000 members and a fine Sunday school of 800. I had written this far, when your letter came; and I have been waiting to report the arrival of your "goods" which have just arrived—the evening of the 14th. Just what I want, and in perfect order.

The orphanage (cold.) is not to buy a place. It is thought best to concentrate efforts towards buying a site for a permanent school for colored people. Anyone sending contributions will receive a receipt from Mr. Tomlinson, Supt of Education of S.C.

Returning from school, I met a colored woman, with a bucket of oysters on her head, walking rapidly, and gesticulating drolly, as she exclaimed—"Never mind! Never mind! Bucra tief de pint from me—and dough Ise poor enough he hurt his self de most Never mind! he tief from me—I pray for him No! I wont put de police on em & I wont trouble em myself I just give em to God—Poor Buckra. Live honest! Die right!" She exclaimed impressively. After I got her to tell how the white folks stole her measure—I asked her if her feeling was not vengeful. "I don't tink so, missus. Ise provoked to see em do so mean, but ever since my mammy died I'm resolved to meet her in glory I promised her I would & I makes myself comfortable tryin to do right." I met a very feeble old colored woman, miserably clad, in a drenching rain, a few days ago and asked her where she was going etc. "de shop, missus, to buy half a pint of lasses & half a pound of flour, to make cakes to sell—to get something to keep me and my little grandchild. Wese alone in de world, with no friend but God." The poor people pay unreasonable rent for miserable quarters—and have chills & fever much—from stagnant water about their places; I show them how to drain and put things to rights about their homes.

Last week I heard three colored boys examined in Latin, who have gone this week to "Oberlin." It was very interesting to see them,—and find how thoroughly they understood what they had learned:—they were truly promising boys—leaving out their hue. Many hundred people have sailed from here to Florida—the past month I longed to go with the poor people—I fear they must suffer much—they are going in too great numbers & without sufficient arranged plans If I live another season—I mean to join them I am truly glad to have opportunitys for colonization, for those who desire it;— but the needful wisdom for management is so rare—I can't but feel much anxiety But the right man will appear at the right time:—he always does. And though there are many clouds around, here there rays of light break through The day after "Nasby" shows that the North ain't education up to its principles—Philadelphia street cars admit blacks— in faith that all things work together for good.

March 22, 1867 Sarah Chase to Fred W.G. May

Characterizes reactions of whites and blacks to the prospect of the freedmen voting, describes the night school for adults and the students' reaction to a discussion of moral questions, and concludes: "Oh these are glorious days--! And I thank God that I live in them--How grand it is to see a great Nation struggling for principles rather than power or wealth! as I read the earnest

faces, listen to the glowing words or answer the eager questionings of these men--I feel that I am witnessing the birth of a great nation."

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Military District [?]

3-22d '67

Dear Mr. May

Are the people up in the States as much interested in our doings as we are in theirs?

You cannot imagine the mental maelstrom you have thrown us! into which And who can say where our wrath, pride and policy will lead us? It looks very much as if 'we' should have to let the N_g_r vote; but if he does he shall vote as we tell him to do:--we haven't kept him ignorant for naught:

Political equality does not imply social equality: if it did, I should be in danger of having some drunken white man at my fireside, courting my daughters! said a black man last night.

Our field is full of promise now; and our hearts are full of grateful joy. On the first of March we consigned our little ones to worthy hands--and took up the colored youth of the city and those in the prime of life--for whom nothing was being done--we organized a night school (free) which is now put in the hands of two colored women who are to call it theirs--we giving aid and counsel--The people old and young are most enthusiastic at this opportunity which I have long felt they should have--I have a class of most promising young men to whom I am teaching book keeping:--giving them a trade you see. I also aid them in the direction of their specialty--among them is a prospective organist--a minister a statesman --ect--All are bound to use no liquor, tobacco or wicked words. They take advice so gladly, and are so anxious to improve in every way! "I can't give up Saturday evening--" said one--"though I play for the choir to practice--I'm sorry for them--but I cannot afford to loose a lesson--I never can learn all I ought--I shall tell them that I get through my work so late--and then have to get paid off--and then have to go to market." But those would not be your reasons for not being with them' said I. But 'twould be the truth--for I have to do those things'--Ah but 'tis the spirit and not the letter said I--illustrating and explaining fully what constitutes a lie:--they listened most attentively and thanked me "kindly for taking so much interest--to explain such things--we have much to learn--we haven't been brought up to see moral points sharp--but we are anxious to."

We also have a day class of fifty adults who are learning the common English branches including Book Keeping, Philosophy Natural and History--A number of this class are fitting for teachers; --hoping they will be ready to take some of the classes in the Morris School in the Fall. The orphans and 'aged' are in grateful possession of your 'clothing' --with the exception of a few very thick garments and some of the flannel, I doubt not, will ere long--comfort some needy one--"I shan't go to school no more after you leave us"--said my fond children. You say you love me?" Yes! Yes!! You must wish to please me?" "Yes indeed!" Then you'll go to school--be as good as you can & learn all you can--I told them to come to me freely--let me know of any trouble they or other folks have--and though no more a teacher--they feel I'm ever their friend. Every group of men on the street--white or black--are full of discussion--if white, I wish I could be in

broadcloth, long enough to take part; & if black I drop a passing word to their surprise--or stop and have a good talk--Oh--these are glorious days--! And I thank God that I live in them--How grand it is to see a great Nation struggling for principles--rather than power or wealth! As I read the earnest faces, listen to the glowing words or answer the eager questionings of these men--I feel that I am witnessing the birth of a great Nation--With congratulations! Farewell
S.E.C.

July 11-19, 1867 Sarah Chase to Fred W.G. May

Expresses her disappointment both that illness had prevented her from participating in the "reunion" at the festival held by the New England Educational Association, and that she had not "staid a little longer with my people--after our schools were closed, to look after the improvement clubs, societies etc."

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Philadelphia

7-11-'67

Illness alone detains me.

Death alone

can end my labors--

I wrote this telegram--Dear Mr May--to send to the Festival;--but as none of us knew where it would find any one--that day;--not knowing where it was to be held;--it was not sent. We fully intended and were exceedingly desirous to be present;--but when I reached here I found I could go no further--but took my bed and kept it till yesterday; when I came to my brother Thomas's to complete the rest--As soon as I can bear the journey, I shall go home--The Summer heats with accumulated fatigue, quite conquered me--at the close of the term; and we took the Mammoth Cave and Harper's Ferry on our homeward route; hoping to gain more strength and color to meet the loved ones at home with--than if we went directly--

And it did us much good--I think--besides the pleasure we found in it;--and I know had I got home any time previous to the 11th I could not have taken part in any festivities small or great. Now that I did not have the satisfaction of being at the reunion--(which we the more desired, as we have never been able to be at one--; for the first year we taught through the Summer and have not been able to leave the South any year in season until this year) I regret I had not staid a little longer with my people--after our schools weir closed, to look after the improvement clubs, societies, ect. I had started and to work in many would satisfying ways that I thought of and longed for. Thanks for the tracts which I doubt much will accomplish something--How I will tell when we meet and all else you may wish to know--I have not strength to write more than that my last experience has been most satisfactory--and my one thought now is, how to get strength for the next campaign--

The growth, and the coming wisdom, and the promise of the infant Nation is wonderful:--and the old do behold it, and are convinced--that the Lord is doing these things--
Ever yours
S.E. C.

August 24, 1867 Sarah Chase

Sarah resigns from her work with the freedmen for health reasons and pronounces herself "most weary, but most happy."

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Worcester August 24th

1867

My dear friend;

My frail

bark is stranded – if not wrecked – and

The Master

Builder only knows if it can sail the seas again. I am very anxious to see you when you come to town – As I am ill you will have to tell the girl that I said I could see you.

One day I tried to walk to Charlie's's office, and just as I felt my last drop of strength was going I met your good minister – but so faint + weary was I --- I hardly said a word or to – I shall send you no messages, this Summer – to be misunderstood – hoping to see you myself – When able I shall be most anxious and glad to meet my good friends of the Hill – My physician says I must go to the Seashore – as soon as I can – “No disease but entirely worn’ out – he says Lack of strength alone – has delayed my writing – and I have been hoping to see you – thinking you might have heard of our being at home – and sometimes came to town – Perhaps you will think it best not to repeat ‘till after an interview – but we have resigned our connection with the Society

–

With hearts best wishes – and highest

regards

truly yours –

most weary and most

happy S.EC

July 1870 (no transcription)

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1873 (no transcription)

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May 7, 1874 (no transcription)

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1913 (no transcription)

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