

From Mrs. Silliman to My Dear Brother

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Warrensburg Johnson Cty

My Dear Brother,

The very fact of this application [*text stricken through*] contains, must convince you of the necessity of it, I cannot describe our situation[.] I will not harrow your heart, by a description of the horrors of it. I will chiefly confine myself to telling you, that now, near my 80th year, I am suffering for the necessaries of life; & the causes of it; & if it had been occasioned by any acts of our own, or brought about by extravagance, I I never could make it.

I am likewise helpless & require constant care. I had a parylisis of the left side, was considerably affected, partially lost my speech; 6 months ago, I sat by the window with my hand spread out on it[,] a very large & heavy one. the spring broke, it fell with all its force on it and injured it to such an extent, I have lost the use of it. I cannot feed myself, dress, or undress, and have to be waited on altogether; & to add to the trouble a little Negro girl, who Oscar brought, gave \$650 for purposely to wait upon me 6 years ago, & gave her absolutely to me, was enticed off by the Soldiers, they encamped on our premises, were constantly around our door, & from the time they first came, they never ceased importuning her to go to Kansas, till 2 months ago. She ran off. She came back in a few days, but she was so demoralised I would not take her. 4 years ago, I was offered \$700 for her.

This place is now swarming with runaway slaves, what is to become of them we cannot foresee, they are, a great evil; all those who have returned to their masters, are, refused, they will not take them back again; we have a woman left, with two children, that will not leave. [Anni?] has 3 children, the eldest of which was 4 years last August, the negro womans 2 [MS. illegible] under that age making 5 children, is one family but little [*text stricken through*] 4 years

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years of age, from that cause, alone I find it to be impossible to have the care I require.

my trials are very great, we have 12 in family, we find it very difficult to feed so many. Oscars situation is pitiable, we have tried to struggle thro, without asking the aid of any one till he can resume his profession some time[.] it appears to be a vain attempt, tho' he perseveres with all his energy & tries to keep up his spirits & hopes. Yet his hands are tied completely, he is in no business, living on what he had laid up: he was exempted from drafting, as not being "able bodied," caused by an internal injury; no collection can be done, not a civil Officer, Sheriff or any other dare fulfill the duties of their Office, the civil law has to give way to Military, Mo[.] Court has sat since the commencement of this war, from no source can the least amt due be collected; could it be, he has enough due in this county, from clients, to support his family 8 years.

There was a branch of the Union Bank of St[.] Louis, establish[ed] here, he was one of the Directors, & the Attorney, he owned \$1500 in stock he had laid by for an emergency, the bank was broken up & driven off, when the Soldiers came here. now, he can neither obtain his fees, & it is impossible to tell when he can; the President of it, when in operation, was here last week. he told him, he would use his influence to have his fees paid him, \$850, by individuals, who had had an interest in the bank, when in operation. he came to learn what he could in relation to the bank for the future benefit of its stockholders. I think it will be established again, at some future day, that Oscar will not finally lose it, & that he may possibly sell it a discount, in the Spring which he surely will, if in his power, the bank will go into operation on the place when it resumes, he can then make it up.

He drew rent for 3 small houses, one for \$150 a year, the others, 60 each[.] they were taken possession of to quarter the Soldiers: he owned \$4500 worth of law books, & two Offices[.] the soldiers were quartered in the Offices; the books, safe & furniture scattered, he is County Attorney, has been 12 years, there are \$1500 due him, nor has been during the war.

Johnson, is a Secession County, there is not a lawyer left in it but Oscar[.] 7/8th of the males of this county wen[t] off into the Army, & left their families scattered, most of them going

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back to other States to their relatives, some on foot carrying their little children, the others following with their bundles in their hands, women driving an Ox team, with what little furniture they dare to stop long enough to tumble in, to flee for their lives from the bushwhackers. There were 8 shot down 14 miles from here, in cold blood[,] who were just starting for the east 4 or 5 weeks ago, one of them was a man aged 73, & a lad of 12 years. That, you may rely upon as true.

Many of those persons, who have left this part of the country, supplied us with provision to pay for business my son had done for them, which we now lose the advantage & comfort of, he is now engaged in defending an Officer, a Federal Capt. Jackson, before a Court Marshal, for disobedience of orders & older charges. it has, & will employ him ten days. it must be gratuitous on his part, [MS. illegible], but he would rather dispense with compensation, than sit idle in the houses, which he has to do The chief of the time, with his book in his hand. he has not physical strength to do any labor, he cannot engage in any business, as there is none done in the place but trafficking a few dry goods, & other indispensable articles.

provision is very high, we just make out to live from hand to mouth, we drink rye[,] Coffee[,] and Sassafras tea, sweetened with the Shorgam molasses. we can not even afford potatoes; we had a large fine garden every year, raised an abundance of vegetables, both for summer & winter. the soldiers stripped every inch of plank on the place to make floors for their horses to stand upon[.] we had a fine bearing orchard, of the choicest fruit, apples, pears, plumbs, peaches, nectarines, [MS. illegible] cherries with all other smaller fruits. they left it bare, exposed to the road, it was bearing fruitfully. They left it open to the horses & cattle, scarcely a tree is left, but an inch of fence round our premises of 7 acres of beautiful ground

with a large grove of 300 trees back of the house, they cut every tree down, pulled down a \$500 stake[.] He, even burned the gates, they burned our carriage house, wood & [MS. illegible] house & all our other outhouses. they took our Carriage & harness, that Oscar bought on my account, took our carriage horses, & our dear little boys ponies, matches, so gentle a child of six years old could ride them, & so many other depredations, I would not tire you to read them.

our little boys have not been to school since the war commenced, there is none kept, nor preaching. The churches, 4 good ones, made use of by the Soldiers, their horses or themselves. Our children have been entirely barefoot ever since the first of April, they just put on shoes, that they got themselves by riding the soldiers horses to water, they keep them on our lots [MS. illegible] near here. I put up little pens for them near us [MS. illegible] their camp 150 tents are on the lots we live on & it would be very

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humiliating to me be employed so, if there was any other way. it is not that they are not fitted for higher employment, it is because there is no other & it is better to do that than suffer or ask help from others[.] we have inculcated their doing any thing, that is honest & necessary, & that does not expose them to bad companions. they have procured a little hand wagon, which they draw themselves. I have furnished all the wood since shortly after the war commenced; better, or more promising children, never lived[.] [MS. illegible] the eldest, reminds me strongly of his Grandfather.

my dear brother, it is hard for me to bear all this in my last days. I try to be resigned, & "say Gods will be done." I fully believe that al[^l] these trials are for the best, & as such we ought to bear them. These evils I trust will all be remedied, after peace is made & Oscars difficulties & privations will end. his profession will soon obtain him a comfortable support for his family, he is considered the best lawyer this section of country. the Judgeship of this District was twice offered to him, he has the confidence of the public as an honest & successful [advocate?][.] would have been a sacrifice to have accepted it, his profession avails him, in regular times, \$3000 % annum.

this place has become the head Quarters of this District, Genl Brown is the commanding Officer. the telegraph is in operations here, the Rail Road extends now, but 24 miles east from Warrensburg, is coming on rapidly, by the 1st of March, it will be completed to this place, they are pushing it with all their powers. Syracuse is the terminus. Johnson is considered the 2nd best county in the state, a fine agricultural body of land. after the completion of the Railroad, & peace is again established, the county will fill up again, it will become more prosperous than ever.

in this county he has 7 fine farms of 160 acres, unimproved prairie land, he will put some of his property on market as soon as the Rail road brings purchases in. it was a fortunate location for him, before the war, having acquired property rapidly, but very much the reverse during it, but 6 families are now in the place, who were here before the war. They have fled at different times for their lives, on the report of bushwhackers, or Jayhawkers coming into the place,

the families now in it, are Union families from the country, who came in for protection [MS. illegible] the troops & took up their residence for the time being, in the houses of those who left them.

I passed such a night about 2 weeks since, as I never wish to know again, about 10 o'clock, we had all retired to bed, the lights all out, & still as the grave, rapidly & constantly commenced, appeared to be approaching[,] Oscar jumped out of bed[,] came to us & told us to get quickly up, lie right down on the floor, under the beds, neither speak nor move, the balls whistled by, & against the house, we did not dare speak, nor breathe, lay there till we saw a bright light shining in the window, which we discovered to be a house on the next lot but one, a large fine frame house, which was burnt to the ground with every thing in it, the inmates fled under cover of the night to the woods.

[written upside down at top of first page]

I am very tired of this war, I want to end my days in peace, how I do want to be with you in your "Happy Valley," as I call it, I know of no other place where we could find it. but let us go where we may, it is literally true we must go in a road wagon, drawn by Oscar. the horses are all pressed in the service, & carriages taken from their owners.