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Letter From Richard T. Greener

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5237 Ellis Avenue

Chicago

August 2^d, 1914.

My dear Friend:

Your letter of the 24th I anticipated before I had opened it. Of course I had known for the past year the hopeless condition of your dear wife, and it had caused the same delay in answering your former letters that I have experienced since the receipt of the telegram and the confirming letter.

Had I known in time, I should have come on, and have been present, as was my desire. As it is, this is the third attempt to write you. Words seem so inadequate, and our friendship has been so long and without any alloy, you and your wife having been so interwoven in my own ^{life} that I confess myself utterly unable to put into type or even script, what my heart would dictate.

I wish I could have seen her! If she looked beautiful, as you say, in her casket after the long struggle and suffering, it was the beauty and the sweetness which she has always manifested in her exceptional and unique life.

She always loved flowers, and I well remember her delight, during the summer vacation she spent at Columbia with her cousin, Harry Purvis, how she went into raptures over some of the beautiful gardens which at that time adorned our city.

Her life was loving and beloved, because she always gave so cheerfully of herself, her thoughts, and her kind offices to all of her friends, without looking for return; always gracious, always natural, and always smiling. Those of us who have had a long advantage of her acquaintance can never forget her. We shall miss her, as well as you, and her presence will be with us among the sweetest of life's memories.

In my telegram you noted that I said that I condoled with you and commiserated your loss. "Condole", "commiserate". Yes, for I could not sympathize. Few, too few husbands could sympathize with such a loss, not having known those kindnesses, interest, appreciation, and helpfulness, such as she from the boundless resources of her heart, was able to give.

It is a great source of satisfaction, as I look back, to think that I saw her in her young womanhood, busy in the crowded Anti-slavery bazaars, flitting here and there among all of the noted celebrities of the time, always attracted and attractive, although I had not then the honor of her

acquaintance. In memory those stirring ^{scenes} of Music Hall are always associated with her presence. Yes, in memory she is there, with Mr. Garrison, Phillips, Mrs. Cheney, Mrs. Livermore, Cady Stanton, Frank Sanborn, Dr. Clarke, and Emerson. Then there is the period of her service down at Port Royal and Hilton Head, and those charming descriptions of her life there, which should go into a volume. Then there are those rare cameos of hers, on "Sumner", and "Whittier", and "June", which I consider the choicest bits of poetry contributed by the race. I can never forget my debt of gratitude for the article she wrote for The Christian Register on the work we were doing in the South Carolina University, in which she criticized the article written by the Superintendent of Education of Virginia, Mr. Ruffner, for Scribner's Monthly, circa 1873.... I did not know for a long time, indeed, have only recently learned, that Principal Washington was brought up and trained to hand by Mrs. Ruffner, but I did know that it was the assurance from Gen. Armstrong in starting Hampton, to Supt. Ruffner, that no such attempts to teach the higher education to Negroes would be allowed or countenanced at Hampton!!!

Fortunately, I have saved her article, written about the University of S.C.; I have, as a precious souvenir of her kindness, a large scrap-book filled with clippings on Sumner's

life, services, and character; also a series of stereoscopic views of Sumner's house, the individual rooms, the pictures, busts, etc. *which she wrote about,*

She was my faithful assistant in the Sumner High School at the beginning of my stormy career in Washington. She was present on a memorable occasion when the great Senator brought the Marquis de Chambrun to visit my school. I took occasion to call out one of my pet pupils, a handsome little black boy, since distinguished as the first ~~Harvard~~ colored class day orator at Harvard. He recited Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. I can see now the thrill of delight which spread over the countenance of your dear wife, as Mr. Sumner sat with rapt attention, and at the close sprang to his feet, as the Marquis was applauding, and said, "My dear Professor Greener, I was at Gettysburg and heard Mr. Lincoln deliver that wonderful Address, and let me assure you, he did not do it better!"

Elementary Myfan!

I cite these instances to show why I feel I have a right to stretch out my hand across the space, and clasp yours, in silent appreciation of what has been removed from you, not lost, for a little while, for the memory of such a woman is an aroma that pervades forever the person who has enjoyed the privilege of breathing it.

I need say no more.

I am always
Sincerely and truly yours,

Richard L. Greener