

Clifton Grove, March 17th 1854

My dear Parents,

Yours was received on Wednesday and I hasten to reply. You may imagine that the very thought of seeing you filled me with joy, but there are circumstances which surround us, and which I feel due to you as well as us to explain, some things that we feel must be changed before you come in order to make a visit pleasant. We ordered a stove some time since from New York, hoping to receive it and be installed at our own housekeeping (a proposition of Mother Williams) by this time, but we hear nothing from Luther or the stove. I do feel that we must see you very much. I want your council particularly, but under the circumstances I do not feel at liberty to make friends of mine guests at Mother's. I feel quite sensitive enough at being here myself. Ben feels badly and is mortified. Up to the time of our marriage his mother had yielded everything on the plantation to his control, with the understanding that he should have all made above support. This has been so since his return from Albany. But since his marriage he says she is entirely changed and I think evidently regards my coming an innovation. Perhaps you will be inclined to blame me, but if to remain silent during provocations and doing all that I could do to discharge y duty, and not trusting alone in my own strength, but looking for it from the "fountain of strength" be wrong, then I have erred. There is one thing that to me throws like on the whole matter, although Ben is hardly willing to allow it.

A Southern lady generally receives a number of servants as her marriage dower. I have no doubt that Mother had looked forward to her son marry such an one and time adding to the rather small number of hands (Sister Mary having removed about twenty last spring, they being her portion) and leaving about the same number here, which are not sufficient to work so large a farm. Then, too, I can look back and see wherein I have erred. Had my wardrobe been plainer I would have pleased her better. But I do not imagine that she is wholly destitute of kindness to me. I have received favor's from her, but Ben's marrying seems to have turned her against him. She proposes for him to attend the business this year, divide profits next fall, then each attend to their own 250 acres are his now, the rest not until she is through with it. Of course we have no fault to find. Her proposition is fair and she has a perfect right to do with her own as she chooses. I do not covet or wish it. For this Summer we shall set our own table. We expect the stove daily. As soon as it comes will let you know, so you will postpone your visit till the middle of April or the first of May? when I think we could your visit pleasanter than now & when we can talk these things all over. But do not imagine that these things will beggar us, we have enough to support us & lay up some every year, so that unless reverse should overtake us we need not borrow trouble on that score in which he owns a share & renting his land here, as he does not like to reverse any of his hands from his turpentine land, the income from that land being much larger than from the plantation & he would have to in order to make a farm to any advantage. His most

valuable farming Hand is now sick with Dropsy & will probably never be any better in attending to her I find I can be useful also in sewing.

But enough of this, we will talk it over when we meet, do not imagine that these annoyances make me regret my marriage, I have a very kind Husband, and one who I feel will ever do all in his power to make me happy & I sometimes think these things have made us like each other all the better. Your last was accompanied by a letter from Emily Shays. I wrote to her not long since (I think the 3rd of March) so she must have received it after she sent hers a few days.

I was sorry to hear that you were neither of you well, in regard to this journey you must both judge of your own strength, much as it would gratify me. I should do wrong to urge you to take this journey, if you are not able- yesterday it was oppressingly warm, & we have had several real July days, in our garden we have peas, radishes, beets, cabbages, & corn all up, plums are out of blossom, the peach blossoms giving place to fruit & leaves crab apple trees in blossom & others soon will be. The oaks are beginning to show their leaves in the yard the jonquils and narcissus and hyacinths are through blooming, but we have globe flowers, lilacs, flowering almond, honeysuckle, and yellow jasmine in plenty, these last named vines grow wild in the woods. The Dr. says we must have some cool weather yet, & he think you may come with safely till the middle of May. But you must use your own judgement.

The Dr. hated to have me write this letter, but I told him I had told you everything & I know you would not love us less for dealing frankly now & I know we should not any of us enjoy the visit as well as you waited. Company disturbs Mother Williams & her ways are so entirely different from what I have been used to, that it seems quite impossible for me to help her. We are hoping to hear from Luther & Lucinda daily, unless the stove and box that we have sent for come within a few days, we may not yet get them until fall, as the creek is fast falling and will soon be too low for flats to come up from New Berne.

Love to all & much very much from Daughter Sarah & her husband

Don't you want to give me a pair of candlesticks? Ben wouldn't like that if he saw it.