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7-10-1831

## Letter to Mary Sibley from William Russell, July 10, 1831

William Russell  
*St. Louis, Missouri*

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Oak Hills, St. Louis county, Mo. Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July 1831

My esteemed friend,

Having never had very full conversation with you in relation to my little daughter now in your charge, in whom I feel a great interest and under great obligations for your & Maj. Sibley's kindness, in taking her into your family, and charge of her generally: (For no other place any where in my knowledge would have been so entirely satisfactory to me).

The reason that I now write you upon this subject, more particularly then to Major Sibley, is that you have the troubles of my little daughter's charge, more immediately than he; and as she becomes older, this relation will not be diminished. Though I feel equally grateful, and under the same obligations to each. Another reason that I now write you is, that I am desirous to pay you quarterly, such equivalent as money can, in such case, be so considered for the boarding, lodging, house room, etc. of my daughter Ann and for your personal interests in \_\_\_ her present and future welfare! Money I know cannot entirely pay such obligation; but such part of it as can be, I most conscientiously think should be paid in money. Leaving myself only indebted for that part which money cannot pay. And the reason too that I direct this letter to you is that I have more hopes of your connecting that I pay in money, that part which money can pay, than I would have from Major Sibley; and as the larger half of the charges, troubles etc. cares about my little daughter will be upon your hands, I hope that you will agree to receive payment in money for such part as money can pay, and that Major Sibley will not object to it. If even he refuses to receive it himself, then let it be yours. This would relieve my feelings some. I know there may be other means to balance accounts in some degree, besides counting dollars. But in every sort of case, I greatly prefer, that there should be an agreed upon price, and fixed day of payment, for any and all sorts of calculable considerations, (as this is) or obligation that money can pay. Then I owe a certain sum, it is due upon a certain day, and on that day you have a right to demand it, and I am bound to pay. That this far it is all plain business.

This prefaced, I will presume that you agree to receive payment as I propose. The, that you may be the better judge of my views and wishes as to my little daughter's education, raising and improvement while she remain with you. I will pay separately for all her schooling, (whether taught by you, or by others) that I will furnish her a bureau to hold her clothes, also a bedstead etc. Mattress, (a chair she has) and her shoes, bonnets, combs, etc. Also, and at all time, the materials for all and every description of her other clothing for everything proper as necessary for her to wear. Also, all her books & stationery of every sort, excepting boarding, lodging, house room, etc. Which I depend on Major Sibley & you to furnish.

If Major Sibley & you, both, upon knowing the disposition of my Ann, continue disposed to oblige me in \_\_\_ her education, it is my purpose to keep her entirely with you (except to go one in the time to see her mother. Perhaps next April) until her education is as far completed as there are schools at St. Charles to accomplish it. I intend, if I live, to give her as good education, both useful and ornamental, as I find she has the capacity to receive to advantage, That unless there are continued schools at St. Charles, suited to give the education she is prepared to receive, then I may find it necessary on that account, to take her to some other school.

From the commencement, and as long as my daughter remaining with you, I must solicit your kindness, in improving her mind at home and in everything that is good and useful. I feel more concern

for her morals and improvement of mind and strict source of honor and propriety in all things, than for her school learning. It is also my desire that when she is not at school, a portion of her time may be employed in some sort of domestic industry, to make habit of industry and of care easy and familiar to her. I do not object to a little play provided it is with good little girls, and at appropriate times and places: but for the most part domestic industry is the better recreation. As fast as she is capable, I desire that she learn to make her own clothes. And to sew generally, as well as knit, during part of the time she is not at school. And when she improves in sewing, I will furnish her suitable materials to work upon and for herself to improve in the finer sorts of work. But sewing and knitting is not all. She becomes capable, and is not at school, I wish her to be occasionally in every sort of domestic industry necessary to be done in and about a neat and well kept house.

It is also my desire that she be taught to be particular, at all times, and in all places in her personal neatness and cleanliness. Particular in care of her skin, and of her hair, as well and in neatness of wearing her clothes: to establish a uniform habit of continual neatness of her person, clothes, skin, hair etc.

Her manners, her pronunciation, her walk, and some of her gestures require improvement, but I am not capable of advising how it should be done. She often, when talking fast, does not articulate distinctly or well, which makes her tone of voice sound badly. This may possibly be improved in learning to read, or by advice otherwise. When she learns to read, I wish her taught to pronounce in a clear, distinct, and somewhat bold tone of voice.

As I doubt the usefulness of reading amusing and entertaining Novels at all, I would not desire my daughter to read such, before her education is finished, if ever. It attracts the mind to much as I think, from more useful learning. I object too, to much of the fashionable southern and western education of girls, in pushing them forward, or permitting them at too early an age, to leave the flock of happy, little girls, to make a show in what is supposed, more splendid, social, or fashionable society. I will be proud how soon my little daughter acquires all the intelligence, and improvement of mind, and all the learning, useful, domestic, and ornamental, that she is capable of. And as a little girl (no matter what size) to practice and improve upon it, until she arrives fully a discrete and mature years before she desires to leave the \_\_, of happy little girls. I approve of her going to church at any age or size. I would not object to her being one (with suitable company) of children's balls, or parties. I may probably incline to have her taught dancing as a part of her education; but if I do, it would not be with a desire, that she should ever be at a public ball, (other than childrens, and then in company with a suitable advisor). Nor at a theatre (if ever) until she fully arrives at an age of sound discretion.

One of my reasons for so much detail in in this letter, is to put on one paper my present views and wishes, as to the raising and education of my little daughter, and to state what part of it, I expect to do or furnish, or pay for without your aid, and that you may see what part of the troubles, cares, etc. I desire to inflict upon you. That you may be the better judge, and better able to say, how much a year (payable quarter yearly from the time you received her) I am to pay you for the boarding of my little daughter, her lodging, house room, etc. and for your care and trouble improving her mind, habits, manners when out of school, in all things that you consider good and useful, and your care, diligence and tuition to her, in the useful and necessary branches of domestic industry and sewing, and needle work etc. as she becomes capable of acquiring such learning. And your care, in encouraging her to continue neatness in her person and dress and carefulness of her skin, hair, clothes and advising her

how to improve her manner, her walk, her pronunciation etc. And particularly, to be always polite to others; and how to behave politely, and respectfully to others whom in company, or at table, etc. For all this I wish you to fix a price, and write me, by mail, the result soon as convenient. I hope you will not decline it. I am desirous to pay, what you may think a liberal price; and will then still, feel under all the obligation for your kindness, that I could so, if I paid nothing. Your fixing a price will relieve me some so far as money payment can go to satisfy such obligation, that I will feel much better I this way, than if I was not allowed pay some sort of equivalent in money. I will expect your answer.

Your respectful friend,

Wm. Russel

Mrs. Mary E. Sibley