

June 4
Virginia

Dearest family, both natural and otherwise,

Enclosed find a painstakingly rendered transcription of the most recent missive received hence from my beloved younger brother, presently serving in the CSA forces as the most recent episodes of unpleasantness between the North and the South continue. Happily, during these altogether sad times, he is accompanied into battle by my nephew, who is apparently contemplating some kind of transition into a fine botanical specimen. I always felt he was a shady character, but am glad he is at last settling down and establishing roots which, I am sure you will agree, is a fine improvement on his wandering ways. My brother's branch of the family is indeed strange, dare I go out on a limb to voice the thought???. No doubt persons of scientific bent will be intrigued.

I am painfully aware of the fact that as a family geographically disbursed out of a combination of necessity and economic realities, we find ourselves somewhat straddling the line between northern and southern sympathies, and that wherever we are led to settle, each of us must take the responsibility for our own choices. My brother is correct - dear sweet Ms. Teresa and I remain Marylanders at present, as do our two fine sons, and the youngest daughter, fair Emily, whose presentation to society is in the offing for this autumn. You may have heard that John has purchased a parcel of land and settled outside of Boonsboro, just north of Antietam with its picturesque crooked lane, pleasant creeks, and peaceful bridge. And as you are also aware, our three elder daughters and their families have been led to settle around Charlotte, NC. As the saying goes and as we must never forget - blood is thicker than water. (On a somewhat related but analogous topic, I recently heard of someone suffering from "too much chlorine in the gene pool" - not a commentary on the present missive, or cast of characters, simply a stray thought, perhaps from some future time since the

meaning of the terms is unclear to me at present, but which struck like a chord, or a bolt from the blue when I wrote the last sentence - but I digress....)

As the gray headed patriarch who with bowed shoulders takes on the burden of responsibility for the moral guidance and direction of our fine family during these troubled times, I shall set aside time to ponder, compose and transmit a suitable reply of gentle encouragement to my dear brother. In the meantime, however, I did want all of you to receive the latest news of our (apparently incarcerated for cause) kinsman. I encourage you to communicate with him, perhaps sending him some FILES of your correspondence that he may seek FREEDOM, from the oppressive CHAINS of confinement caused only by a love of things not actually heretofore belonging to him. A small transgression I am sure, and one that we can all forgive given his noble and musical heart. I anticipate that Tim and Matthew, with a few of their close friends, will be visiting our locality in early July. They will be coming up Shenandoah valley on the way to some kind of rendezvous, as I understand it, near Gettysburg. We look forward to their visit, and to time around the campfire as they relate the exciting stories of their recent travels.

Blessings to all you all,

Your esteemed Father, Brother, Uncle and Friend

Bruce Saunders

