

New Orleans  
April 10<sup>th</sup> 1867

My dear General,

Since I met your mother & sister here in Feb. & March, and learned your whereabouts, I have been promising myself to inflict you again with one of my paper bullets [?]. Like myself you have changed base, hoping [to benefit] thereby, and I sincerely trust you may be [successful]. I was gratified to learn you were [healthy?], able to work & hopeful of your being able \*\*\* make a living for yourself, your noble [wife, and those] rising young ones upon whom is to [be laid?] a burden heavier even than we have had to bear.

Such has been the condition of the country and the river for the past two months that no one can look to the future with any confidence. I trust you have not been among the sufferers, tho' an escape in the alluvial country has been an exception. Such is getting the want of confidence in our ability to longer to control the waters of the Miss valley, that capital is being withdrawn where it is available, and no inducement short of a minor's usury will induce the few who have any to risk it on country paper. A mortgage from the country is regarded as only so much waste paper.

With the abolition of slavery our whole levee system fell. Proprietors cannot possibly afford to keep up their levees now, even if they could command the necessary assistance. But negroes hired as laborers refuse to do the necessary work, and as often refuse even to watch the levees, as formerly. The question then arises, how is this to be remedied? And it is a very difficult one to answer. Our states are impoverished, and have not the ability if they have the disposition. From the general government, we judge from the past there is slight hope of relief. But [if] either or both could & would furnish the means, [then what?] a gigantic scheme it would be, and what [gates?] would be opened for fraud & [co\*\*\*. The?] system of production known to us can[not serve?] to support such a scheme, and it really [seems?] to look as if the great valley was to be given [up?] for years to come. Not only are the new levees built unable to stand the floods, but the old ones are growing worse for want of care and attention, and are frequently giving way.

This state of affairs has produced the most gloomy effect here, and our strong men, especially those who came in with Yankee capital, are drawing out of business – most of them heavy losers in the last two years. Hardly a day passes but some case occurs, and many will be most happy to end their troubles by availing themselves of the Bankrupt act [Bankruptcy Act]. This will open up the way for new men in this business, but on new principles. The old system of heavy advances by merchants to planters is now abolished; and can never be renewed. Such business will hereafter be carried on more on the cash principle, and supplies only will be furnished planters on such terms that they can be had from the dealers. Commission merchants, then, will be the agents of planters for transacting their business in the city instead of planters being the agents of merchants in the country for raising cotton. It will in time be a more healthy business, and greatly more satisfactory to the planter & factor's character, and not his capital will then \*\*\* & command business, and there will be [a lot?] less swindling on both sides.

My friend encouraged me to go into such a business. In the beginning [I had to?] appeal to my old confreres to aid me. I am considering the subject & feeling of many of

my old soldiers \*\*\* if they are disengaged. Should the encouragement be sufficient I shall launch my back & try my luck.

I am now employed in the city Water Works in a subordinate capacity, with a salary that pays my board only. But this is better than many are doing, and I am hopeful. With politics I have nothing to do & see nothing to encourage me to do so in future. Mrs. B. is not with me or would join in sincere regard to you & your family,

Very truly your friend,  
Braxton Bragg

Transcribed by Christopher A. Baker, University of Florida, 2008.