

The BOOKER T. WASHINGTON Papers

Olivia A. Davidson Washington
to Mary Elizabeth Preston Stearns¹

Tuskegee, Ala., April 11, 1887

Dear Mrs. Stearns, I sincerely trust you are stronger than you were when I last saw you. So often I have thought of your feebleness then — resulting from your fall.

I hope too the winter has not been too severe for you. It has seemed an unusually long & severe one to us.

Just now I am writing you about a matter over which I have spent much thought. Perhaps you know of the summer training course (physical) for teachers to be had at Harvard this year under the direct supervision of Dr. Sargent.²

For some time past I have felt that Mr. Washington's present mode of life is unfavorable to his health.

He is not as strong, physically, as he was two years ago, and I am sure it is due to his close application to his work. I fear his nervous system will begin to show marks of overwork if he does not have some relaxation. All his summers heretofore since the school was organized have been given almost entirely to the school work. This five weeks of physical training under such wise auspices it seems to me is the thing he needs. I want to provide it for him myself, and this brings me to the point of which I would speak to you. Some months ago that excellent man, Dr. Wm. Curtis³ of Westboro⁷ died leaving among other bequests \$500 each to this school and myself personally. This money will be paid I presume sometime this year. The estate is in the hands now of the executors. But it may be some months before it is settled and in the mean time I am sure there will never come a time when there will be just such a need of it as this. Does it seem indelicate or not in good taste for me to be planning in this way to spend the money before I receive it. I am sure you will understand my feeling about it. I shall be so happy to have it to spend in this way — in saving my husband perhaps from Gen. A's⁴ condition — or at least from getting to the point where his work for the school will be much less efficient than it now is. I expect you have already concluded that all this is but a prelude to a request, as it is. Mrs. Stearns I want to ask you to let me have the money necessary if this bequest is not paid in time. The 5 weeks' term