

U.S. Barque Gemsbok

Key West

Florida

Feb 4th, 1863

Dear Friend Esther:

I received a letter from you yesterday dated Dec. 23rd 1862 and I will now answer it as well as time and place will permit. I have written you two letters since we left Boston but I see that you make no mention of having received them. I suppose that they must have been miscarried. This letter leaved me well and I hope that it will find you and all the folks enjoying the same great blessing. I was very glad indeed to get a letter from home especially so kind a one as you sent.

It cheers one up considerably to know that the friends at home think kindly of him when he is away and that he will not always be in the same society that he is now. I am glad to learn that the folks are all well and I hope that they will continue to enjoy this great blessing, health. You say that you were at school when you were writing to me. Oh, how I wish that I could have been there studying and playing at turns and having a good time generally. I suppose that I can never be a school boy again, although I would like to very much.

You say you think that I have forgotten you all at home. Such is not the case I think often of you all and nothing gives more pleasure than to hear from you and the hope of again being with you.

You say you have not forgotten me and your letter is sufficient proof to that effect and I thank you kindly for sending it. Please give Ellen by thanks for her love sent to me and tell her that I send mine in return. You may kiss all the girls in school for me and tell them that I would do the same if I was there. I can't understand how you can be lonesome at school especially when you can have a Christmas or some other holy day once in a while. My Christmas was probably spent very differently from yours. There is no such thing as skating out this way the weather never being cold enough to freeze. We had no amusement during Christmas day but at evening we had plenty of fiddleing [sp] dancing and all sorts of sports and a small display of fireworks. Tell Hathe [sp] that I send love in return for hers. I thank you for wishing me a merry Christmas and may you live to

see many happy New Years. I find some good sentimental verses in your letter which I will take pains to keep.

When we left Boston we went direct to Port Royal S.C. [South Carolina] and then to Bulls Bay in the same state where we layed [sp] some two or three weeks and then went to St. Simons Georgia in which place we stopped only two or three days and then went a little further south to St. Andrews Bay in which place we layed [sp] some time. St. Andrews Bay is in the most southeastern part of Florida. There were plenty of ducks and other wild game there but we were not allowed to shoot them although the officers had them once in a while. We next went to Turtle Harbor in East Florida where we have been laying ever since until last Wednesday with the exception of about a weeks time which it took us to take the soldiers from the wreck of the Sandford and convey them to this place and get back to our station. We got in here last Thursday afternoon and have since been engaged in clearing the vessel of ballast and takeing [sp] in coal. It is said that we are to be a store ship for Wilkes squadron but nothing certain is known. We having taken no prizes as yet this cruise and are not likely to. It is said that the Rebel steamer Alabammas [sp] is at last [...] in she being in Kingston Jamaica [sp] and the Vanderbilt along side of her. Tell all the girls that I would like to hear from them and tell "Joe" that I would like to have him to write to me.

To flourish in my native [...]

To blossom round my cot

To cultivate a little flower

They call forget me not

Though oceans wide between us roll

And distant be our lot

And should I never see thee more

Dearest! forget me not

Esther I have one favor to ask and that is for you to be kind enough to send me your miniature. I will send you mine if I can get it taken which I may have a chance to do if we go to Havana.

From your friend

William H. Hendrick

(to Miss Esther P. Goodspeed)