

“MY CHILDREN IS MY OWN”:  
MISSOURI, SEPTEMBER 1864

*Spottswood Rice to His Children  
and to Kitty Diggs*

Spottswood Rice escaped from a Missouri tobacco plantation and enlisted in the 67th U.S. Colored Infantry in February 1864. He wrote to his children and to Kitty Diggs, the owner of his daughter Mary, from Benton Barracks in St. Louis. F. W. Diggs, Kitty Diggs’s brother and the owner of Rice’s daughter Cora, sent both of his letters to Major General William S. Rosecrans, the Union commander in Missouri, on September 10. In an accompanying note Diggs professed his loyalty to the Union and wrote that “to be thus insulted by such a black scoundrel is more than I can stand.” Rice was eventually reunited with his daughters.

---

My Children I take my pen in hand to rite you A few lines to let you know that I have not forgot you and that I want to see you as bad as ever now my Dear Children I want you to be contented with whatever may be your lots be assured that I will have you if it cost me my life on the 28th of the mounth. 8 hundred White and 8 hundred blacke solders expects to start up the rivore to Glasgow and above there thats to be jeneraled by a jeneral that will give me both of you when they Come I expect to be with, them and expect to get you both in return. Dont be uneasy my children I expect to have you. If Diggs dont give you up this Government will and I feel confident that I will get you Your Miss Kaitty said that I tried to steal you But I’ll let her know that god never intended for man to steal his own flesh and blood. If I had no cofidence in God I could have confidence in her But as it is If I ever had any Confidence in her I have none now and never expect to have And I want her to remember if she meets me with ten thousand soldiers she will meet her enemy I once thought that I had some respect for them but now my respects is worn out and have no sympathy for Slaveholders. And as for her cristianantty I expect the Devil has Such

in hell You tell her from me that She is the frist Christian that I ever hard say that aman could Steal his own child especially out of human bondage

You can tell her that She can hold to you as long as she can I never would expect to ask her again to let you come to me because I know that the devil has got her hot set againsts that that is write now my Dear children I am a going to close my letter to you Give my love to all enquiring friends tell them all that we are well and want to see them very much and Corra and Mary receive the greater part of it you sefves and dont think hard of us not sending you any thing I you father have a plenty for you when I see you Spott & Noah sends their love to both of you Oh! My Dear children how I do want to see you

*September 3, 1864*

---

I received a leteter from Cariline telling me that you say I tried to steal to plunder my child away from you now I want you to understand that mary is my Child and she is a God given rite of my own and you may hold on to hear as long as you can but I want you to remembor this one thing that the longor you keep my Child from me the longor you will have to burn in hell and the qwicer youll get their for we are now making up a bout one thoughtsand blacke troops to Come up tharough and wont to come through Glasgow and when we come wo be to Copperhood rabbels and to the Slaveholding rebbels for we dont expect to leave them there root near branch but we thinke how ever that we that have Children in the hands of you devels we will trie your vertues the day that we enter Glasgow I want you to understand kittety diggs that where ever you and I meets we are enmays to each orthere I offered once to pay you forty dollers for my own Child but I am glad now that you did not accept it Just hold on now as long as you can and the worse it will be for you you never in you life befor I came down hear did you give Children any thing not eny thing whatever not even a dollers worth of expencs now you call my children your property not so with me my Children is my own and I expect to get them and

when I get ready to come after mary I will have bout a powrer  
and autherity to bring hear away and to exacute vengencens on  
them that holds my Child you will then know how to talke to  
me I will assure that and you will know how to talk rite too I  
want you now to just hold on to hear if you want to iff your  
conchosence tells thats the road go that road and what it will  
brig you to kittey diggs I have no fears about geting mary out  
of your hands this whole Government gives chear to me and  
you cannot help your self

Spottswood Rice

*September 3, 1864*