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Letters and Correspondence

Paul Turner Sargent

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## Paul to Sam May 31, 1937

Paul Sargent

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**P to S May 31, 1937**

**Dear Sam,**

**The shank of the Spring is about over. At the o'clock in the morning the thermometer now stands at 86 degrees, and has been this way for about a week. Must have been near 100 degrees yesterday. A cool wet spring has quit suddenly and it looks as if dry and hot was in store for us.**

**The corn is just about all in the ground and most of it up. Some few fields large enough to plow. Only the laggards are planting now. This weather will sure make it rip.**

**Have about the best lettuce I ever raised, nearly a foot high and right in taste, and ahead of everyone else here in Hutton so far as I know. Plenty of rain, and a south slope is the reason. Am trying a few new plants. One is the dasheen, a tropical plant that has a tuber and the tops can be used for greens. The tuber is said to be better than potatoes. Will grow where grow overflows. Another is a shrub called bush celery, said to bear every year. Also a climbing tomato.**

**That DeSota car is probably as good as the best so far as engine performance is concerned. Automobile engineers can't add much to what they already know in that field, but they can use finer upholstery and other refinements of that kind. The overdrive is the only advance—be last five years, and it isn't so new. It will no doubt save in many ways. Now we will look for you and Opal back on a visit this summer.**

**I have had a bit of luck in pictures this spring, since first of May. The last week in April some friends of mine in Charleston brought a Chicago woman here to studio. She bought a \$50 picture and will take my Hollyhock screen when I get it ready at the same price. Am making a \$50 picture for Ike Miles of the old Miles homestead from photographs. In Chicago a large snow picture of mine sold for \$350. I will get 75% of that in installments. This snow picture is one I made looking west toward the woods but by wood house. Has a team, sled, two men, my dog, women with snow piled high in foreground. Probably as good as any I have made judging by opinions of other painters. It is 48 inches long. I worked on the idea more than**

**ten years with different canvases and this was the final result, painted in a short while after all the fumbling.**

**Have just finished with an exhibit in Urbana in a grade school.. Sold over \$25 with prospects of others larger. That is the extent of the increased sales so far. Anyhow I invested in a new summer suit (light gray). The first new one in four years or so.**

**A man in Urbana liked my desert pictures made from the sketches I got with you the day at Indio. It is the best of my desert pictures—painted in a more simple way than I usually get. Will let this man try out this picture in his home.**

**I will try to get some pictures off to you folks before long.**

**Yesterday I painted in a garden of iris at the college. It was the finest color in flowers I have seen since I left California. Close to a half acre of them, in all colors and thick masses.**

**You can now get Permanent Pigment colors ground in stand oil. For ordinary painting they are no advantage as with thick paint the oil content would be increased too much and likely come to surface in years and yellow the picture. But it has its advantages in painting thinly. A woman here turned down a picture of river because she said the paint was too rough, couldn't see it in her house. So I am thinking of making a similar composition using stand oil paint in a smooth ground and see if she likes that any better. There are so many kinds of people to deal with one needs to be clairvoyant to know what they want.**

**Since writing the above I laid this letter aside and there it rested a week. Will try to keep it by me this time until it is finished.**

**In the forepart of this letter I spend a good deal of space telling about the hot dry weather. Early in week cloudy rainy weather came along and have had several showers and last night a regular frog drowner got here. We are well soaked now. The biggest corn is 60 in. high and plowed once. It looks very favorable for a big crop. While some is late not as bad as other years. A few dry days and these tractors can do a lot. The farm without a tractor now is the exception to the rule. Mostly they are those high wheeled spidery legged ones like the FarmAll. Saw a man planting corn with one alone.**

**The experts say a big grasshopper crop is due this month and people are making preparations to poison them. As yet I haven't noticed any great number. There will be some cherries and peaches and apples look like a bumper crop. I have two small gardens north of house. One where the old henhouse stood so many years. Should raise something there.**

**I am working on the paint boxes but not yet in tangible form. Made one but don't like it—too heavy. Will try again. The planing mill did not use the proper lumber I wanted --he had walnut. They have too many ideas of their own when working for others. Will get some others sawed at Mattoon. I have heard where I can get sheets of aluminum to use for a palette. Some of these days a whole paint box of that will be possible. Would cost \$15 now.**

**I am about ready to ship my screen to the woman in Chicago and then will have enough to pay the second section of my taxes. If I can first have some sales after I get these necessary expenses off my hands, there might be such a thing that I would take a trip to Tennessee late in summer or fall. Last fall a man was here who runs a school at Cumberland Gap, Tenn., and offered to furnish me free board and lodging at the school if I would stay there awhile and paint, and instill into the students some appreciation of art and open their eyes to the picturesque country in which they live. He said he would write this summer in regard to the matter. My luck will be no money at hand when the time comes.**

**In the morning work commences on the car, reboring and general overhaul. It runs very well now except that it lacks power and uses much oil.**

**It seems to me that the war in Spain has reached the point where there will be other developments. The rebels will no doubt attempt to bring in other countries to save their face in case of defeat, which appears likely. I can't see France or England letting Spain go to the Italians and Germans. France certainly won't stand for Germany holding Spain and this leaves two frontiers to guard with only one now. And England I think can't gain by Italy being there and up against Gibraltar their important base. If Italy attacks any Russian supply ships I think Stalin will**

**use a heavy hand also. If they were as touchy as in 1914 a general war would be on now but they remember the world war and are not as anxious to get into it—except Italy and Germany and with them it may be trying to get all they can by bluffing the other countries who don't want war. Sooner or later I think some one will make a false move and the big killing will be on. Japan no doubt has an understanding with Italy and Germany. The Japs will rue the day they start war. Russian will just about blow and burn their concentrated population into the sea. Nowhere in the world is the population so dense and so easy to blast to kingdom come. And what can the Japs do in return? Nothing to use the planes against except a thinly settled Siberia and fortifications that are well guarded. They can send an army and navy but that won't get them anywhere while the Russians destroy the country behind them.**

**Guess I have written enough.**

**Sincerely,**

**Paul**

**Much cooler weather now.**

**p.s.**

**Just now picked up a letter of yours here on table written Christmas. You asked about a poem by Kenyon Cox. Here it is. Kenyon Cox was a painter and I was in his class at Art Inst. awhile. He also wrote books and poetry.**

**The Gospel of Art.**

**“Work thou for pleasure: paint, or sing, or carve**

**The thing thou lovest, though the body starve.**

**Who works for glory misses off the goal.**

**Who works for money coins his very soul;**

**Work for the works sake, then and it may be**

**That these things may be added unto thee.”**