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John Kean to Susan Kean, April 14-18, 1788

John Kean

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1788

Berkshire April 14th 1788.

This is the place where I have settled Silk at & where I am now come to dispose of a quantity of stock which to me is useless or rather unprofitable - Silk has got wheat, oats, barley Indian corn, pease, beans, flax & hemp growing pretty well & if he keeps his health I dare say will do very well - I give him a share of the Cattle, sheep horses & hogs he raises & also the poultry I have stocked the place with two Mares, six Cows, twenty sheep, three sows - besides ducks, fowls Geese & turkies -

I left Beauport yesterday at three o'clock and came here about sunset - the distance is fifteen miles & a ferry of a mile wide to cross so that considering all things I think I performed wonderfully well especially as I rode on horse-back -

My poor orange trees are fallen a sacrifice to the cold - but my pear, apple, peach, fig, Pomegranate, Mulberry & quince are very flourishing so that my love we shall not be absolutely destitute of fruit when we come to Carolina -

My fellow citizens have thought proper to appoint me one of their representatives to the convention for ratifying or rejecting the new

constitution which is to meet the 12th May, so
~~that~~ it will not be until the very last of
that month or may be in June before I shall
fold to my bosom my dearest Susan, but her
comprehensive mind will readily suggest the
propriety of this delay altho it may be very
disagreeable to her which I can assure her it is
to me -

18th

I have not been able as yet to dispose of all
the stock I want to part with but have sold about
£300 worth -

I have also been detained here by resurveying
this tract of land which I mean to dispose of all
but the piece on which Silk is settled - there
will be about 2000 Acres for sale which I value
at £3000 & have allotted to make payment
to the people in England -

My being detained here is unlucky as
I am afraid Wilcox will have sailed before I
return & I should wish him to be the bearer
of a letter for my Susan because I believe she
would be certain of receiving it -

The dull sale of Indigo has been very
detrimental to me - the greater part of my last

years crop is still on hand & this is the case with many who are indebted to me & as I shall leave the State in so short a time the chance is very much against my receiving them. for I find without you are present & pretty urgent with your debtors they will put you off until they get rid of their more pressing creditor - indeed this country is in a very distressed state as it relates to money matters & I have my doubts whether it will not affect the immediate adoption of the Constitution.

I have been out with the surveyor every day & altho I do not bear fatigue very well yet I do tolerably - a small cough still hangs on me & I apprehend will be my constant companion through life - however I hope the best -

I now sit writing at a window where by stands a peach tree on which the peaches are nearly as big as the end of your thumb. and the figs which are a few yards off are as big as the end of mine - while your fruit trees I suppose are hardly blossomed yet; but every blessing has its alloy - the warmth that forwards

the fruit engenders musketoes, ticks, sand flies &c which are numerous & troublesome—

I have wasted ten years labour of sixty negroes on this place in cultivating the article of Indigo which was not adapted to its soil— great part of this to be sure was in the war & policy would not permit vigorous exertions or a removal to better ground— it is this that has thrown me so much in debt— for the products not exceeding the expences of the plantations— my own expences naturally accumulated into debt & to remedy the evil I was obliged to purchase lands better calculated for profit which increased the amount of that debt— but I have now accomplished what I aimed at the gradual removal of my negroes from a place to which they were attached & fixing them upon lands of the first quality for the production of Indigo so that now I have but two things to fear the want of proper seasons & the failure of demand & consequently of price for the article— but if I have common fortune I have a right to expect the annual produce of my estate will be six thousand pounds of Indigo which on a common valuation will bring £1200 Sterling—