

Nov. 29th, 1866

MY DEAREST LIZZIE,

Yours,

Byron

Nov. 29th, 1866

My dearest Lizzie,

Miss Lizzie J. Clay
Houston
Texas

Yours,
Byron

The originals of these letters, plus envelopes, were among Meda Renton's papers. I've tried not to edit. Byron wrote the word 'and' as 'an' with a flourish at the end. So I left it as 'an'. He also tended to omit punctuation at ends of lines. I've added it make reading easier. Otherwise, I've tried to copy as accurately as I could.

Margaret R. Chesney
Christmas, 1982

Nov. 29, 1866

Office Sub-Assistant Commissioner,
Bureau of R., F. & A. I.,
Houston, Texas, March 22, 1866¹

Mon Amie:

Please accept this book, the only thing anywhere near suitable I could find at any of the stores.

Read you note over several times, was rather puzzled I must confess by the words "partially" an "conditionally" However I "accept the situation " an "will fight it out on this line if it takes all summer.

Thank you for your frankness an your kind words

Your - - - - - ?

B. P.

Austin October 5'/66

Amiga Mia

How is the nest of feminine radicals over the bayou? Is the piano thumped on at all spare moments? etc. etc.

I arrived here wednesday morning after a very tiresome journey.

Your little parcel with its contents was thankfully received at the time an duly swallowed an I felt much the worse for it.

You two really seem determined to poison me in some way or other. The cakes or the wine or more likely both, disagreed with my internal economy very much. In fact I was unwell when I left Brenham, an then riding all night in a seat with two others in an old rumbling stage coach which went jerking an bowing, an jolting an twisting, over stones, through gullies, across logs, against trees, - was enough to make one sick without a preparation of sweet cake an sour wine. I am afraid that, through that miserable night, my thoughts of the thoughtful donors were not of the pleasantest description. The position was uncomfortable enough without any aggravation. To be condemned to sit bolt upright all night, back against a strap an the bottom of the coach crowded with feet so that I could scarcely find a resting place for the sole of my foot an not daring to move them for fear of losing

¹Printed letterhead.

them entirely in that apparently inextricable mass of legs an feet which seemed to fill up the whole of the bottom of the coach. In fact I could have sworn that every passenger had a double allowance of pedal extremities an sometimes after dozing a little I became perfectly bewildered an could not for some time find my apparently missing extremities, but was obliged to make a careful search before I could find a pair that I could conscientiously claim as appropriate. Well the long weary night passed at last an early in the morning we arrived at La Grange. Here we rested a few hours. I fortified myself with a couple of doses of "Extract of Ginger" managed to eat a little chicken an we went on an after being bumped about all the "long long weary day" reached Bastrop late in the afternoon, got a good supper an started about sundown for Austin, which we reached at four oclock in the morning. I assure you I lost no time but threw myself on a bed which was shown me an was soon wrapped in the arms of "Murphy"(!)

I have a remarkably distinct recollection that I did not rise much before dinner time. Then went an relieved Col. Pratt.

Now that I am started I could write another sheet but time fails an the breakfast bell warns me that I must close. Now write often; don't wait for an answer to every one. Tell me all the news an send me a "Telegraph" when there is anything interesting to me. Give my regards to Miss G., Mrs. & Mr. B. an others, including yourself.

I will write again Sunday

Yours Byron

Austin Oct 14'/866

My dear Friend (English)

This morning I trudged down to the P. O. an was well rewarded for my ante-breakfast walk by getting a box full of letters an papers an among the letters two from you. Most of this quiet Sunday I have spent in that pleasant room stretched out most luxuriously in a rocking chair with my feet comfortably elevated on another chair, a pile of newspapers an wrappers on each side of me, a gentle breeze flowing through the open door, birds twittering an.

fluttering in the shrubbery that shades the doors an windows. Didn't I enjoy it? Many thanks for the picture. It is like you yet unlike. I half believe it is a picture of some other "kla". You are mistaken about my having any other picture of you. This is the first I ever had the good fortune to possess. I hope when you are taken again you will give me one of the new.

Who is the silly busybody that is spreading the report that we are to be married on the 17th of Nov.?

It must be very annoying to you to have such reports in circulation. I am sure that I have never given anyone the slightest grounds for such an absurd story. I hope you will believe that I am not in the habit of speaking of such things to anybody an would not even if such an event was to be.

Sperry wrote me a few lines from Galveston. He told the truth about the question he asked me an my answer. It happened when you were at Dibble's about the time we had that conversation or (to use a French term) "eclaircissement" I believe: I very much regret that I shall not see him for I think he is a fine young man an esteem him highly. Don't you?

I think you ought to value him more highly than you do any of your gentleman acquaintances in Texas because I think, yes I am sure he is more worthy of your regard than any of the Captains, Lieutenants etc. among your friends.

You say you want to have a talk with me. You will soon have an opportunity; probably some time next week for M. Welch tells me that he received a letter from Col. Pratt saying that he would be here about the middle of this week to relieve me. By the way, Mr. Welch is going to Houston this week on a visit. I wish it was so that I could get off with him. I should have preferred to have stayed here longer; it has been such a relief after the turmoil of the last month in H. to have such a calm an quiet feeling of tranquility as I now enjoy. "Rest for the weary soul" - But I shall soon have to gird on my armor an go again into the field: bid adieu to the bracing air of the hills an descend into the relaxing atmosphere of the flat prairies. O, if there were only some other means of locomotion than that horrible coach. If it were not for my my baggage I should be tempted to go a

foot, or by a mule at least. But there is one thing certain, I shall profit by experience. No one need send me a lunch of sweet cake an wine or anything of that sort. If they do, out it goes through the window.

At any rate I shall expect to be in Houston by the last of next week. "Deo et Buro volente." C'est la derniere ligne.¹

I received a letter from Miss Quaiffe a few days since enclosing a picture of her brother. I congratulate you on getting the rents refunded.

Good night and pleasant dreams, -She sleeps; her breathings are not heard. In palace chambers far apart, The fragrant tresses are not stirred, That lie upon her charmed heart.²

What a "femme terrible" Mrs. B. is. It is a great pity that such intellect an energy as she possesses should be made worse than useless by her perverse wrongheadedness and impracticability. What an amount of good she might do if she could only be guided by the dictates of common sense. Candidates for matrimony: you that think of linking your lives for weal or woe with the strong minded female. Pause reflect, before you take the irrevocable step; ask yourselves the question, "Dare I place my hopes of life long happiness on such a frail basis as the love of a strong minded woman, a woman who has lectured, worn bloomers or still worse pants, advocated womens' rights, an done other horrible things." Strong minded women should have weak minded husbands. Otherwise look out, stand from under, When Greek meets Greek etc. etc. etc. -

Well I have bitten the pen holder for some time, trying for an idea. It don't come. I think I will look into your letters, read them over for the third time. Perhaps I may get a little inspiration. I want to fill out this whole sheet instead of cutting it in two.

¹God and the Bureau willing. That's the bottom line.²

²originally written in the margin. Envelopes & paper were small, and all space was used. Almost none of the letters closed before the end of the page.

In your first letter you spoke of that Jessamine. I was thoughtful enough to save it an have it now, well pressed (not against my heart), but in my diary. I did not let that farewell kiss grow cold on it I assure you but transferred it without delay. I am afraid Ekles will become disgusted if you treat him so cavalierly. Remember you have but a few friends. Do not throw away wantonly the opportunity of making more, when you can, that is if you think they will be worth the having.

Monday evening 15th. A lady in the next room is working away at "Old Folks at Home" in the most lugubrious an hesitating style. There are two young ladies who torture me almost daily trying to play an sing. One can sing nothing but "Thou art so Near an Yet so far" an "Annie Laurie", an such playing an singing. No time, no touch, no taste, no anything. Sings an plays out of tune shockingly. The other's piece de resistance is "no one to love etc." It would be utterly impossible for any one with music in his soul, to love her after hearing her murder that song once. An now must come infliction no. 3, a new lady boarder, married, who whines, an thumps out that Old Folks at Home in the most excruciating manner. I sometimes wish that the folding doors were solid masonry six feet thick.

Never mind there is little consolation in the thought that miseries have given me something to write about.

How does Honey meet that black-guardian of the Telegraph. It seems to me that sheet grows fouler an fouler every day. I wonder how any one with any self respect could go an cause such an article to be written about anyone else. Do you intend to throw off your allegiance to the Bureau entirely? Be careful. My regards to everybody but you, and to you I will say. - It is quite warm up here Mademoiselle.

Yours Byron

Austin Oct 19th/66
9 oclock P.M.

Ma chere amie

Yours of the 15th I received today. I prize your

letters most highly am much disappointed when a mail comes without bringing something from you: I won't say how often I read them over for that would only elicit an incredulous sneer from you, but do say that I shall read them just as often as I want to an as there are no fires in the stoves an fire places (the weather being quite warm) I shan't dispose of them as you request, just now at all events. You are really the only correspondent I have and I set a higher value on your letters than I do all the rest besides. But, Lizzie, I beg you do not write any more such cruel ones as your last. You may not believe it, but you said many things which cut me to the quick. I know you have only too good reasons an grounds for many of those merciless sarcasms an stinging words you showered upon me, but have a little mercy.

Perhaps, if I could open to you my whole heart, you might be a little less severe. If I could only show you the conflicting influences, at work, the double fears an inclinations, pulling in different directions, - the regrets for the past, the circumstances of the present, an the anticipations of the future - you might possibly pity me, an pitying, spare me.

But it is not my nature to be confiding. I never could open my heart to any one, nor probably ever will, for such constitutional moods grow stronger with time. The longer I live the more I distrust my ungenial, selfish, nature an feel that I would never make a cheerful companion or constant friend to anyone. - Well I think that is enough about my miserable self. I am glad to hear that you are in such good health an spirits. I feared that your two schools would wear you out.

Col. Pratt will not return an my calculations about being in Houston next week are all upset. When they will send someone here to relieve me I do not know or care. Since I have been here I have not spent a single evening away from my room an my acquaintance with the boarders, especially the female part is limited to a morning salutation at the breakfast table. Although I could have formed a great many acquaintances, an pleasant ones too, among the numerous Union people here, - thinking that I should only stay three or four weeks I have avoided making

acquaintances. Mr. Welch left here yesterday for Houston an Galveston an I intended to have written you by him but unexpectedly went out into the country the day before and did not return in time to write.

I shall feel very much obliged for those Rancheros, when they get here. Pray don't carry out your threat to stop writing so often. Indeed I never wrote so many an so long letters in so short a time before, in my whole life. If you curtail your correspondence I shall have to try an get the widow to fill up the vacuum caused by your defection. So be warned in time. Perhaps I may add something more to this tomorrow before the mail goes out, so good night, an God bless you,

Byron.

12 oclock midnight. I have just been sorting over my letters, putting yours by themselves. Getting them ready to burn? (what a hassle). Reading some of them. But must go to bed. Again good night

Be

Office 20th

Mein Liebhn

I find that I shall not have time before the stage starts to write more than a few lines. I managed to fill up one sheet last night an then went to arrange my stock of private letters. Found about two thirds of those I have are from you. There are enough of them to start many a fire on the cold frosty winter mornings that we may soon expect. If they should be burned they would end as we shall with all our high hopes an aspirations in ashes.

However I don't intend to obey orders. I intend to mutiny. I think I can do it safely as I am a long way off. You may have me tried prefer charges against me for "Conduct unbecoming an Officer an a Gentleman." You may find me "Guilty" an Dismiss me but I shall still refuse to carry your orders into execution. I defy you! ! ! !

Who was the person Miss Watson was to be married to an who served her such a villainous trick? I received a letter from Wardenbrook a few days since. He does not seem to get along as well with De Gress as he did with me. So the Dr. has really left. I began to think that I should see him before he got away.

The weather today has a wet look. The clouds are thick an dark an the wind is rising. Well time is up. Here comes a colored woman who wants me to go an see a poor woman a cripple whose husband after living with her for 22 years has shamefully deserted her. O these men. I will close, seal, an carry this to the P.O. as it is on my way, so once more,

"Good bye a "God bless you"

Yours Byron

Austin Oct 28th/66
Sunday

I received your letter, mon ami, this beautiful Sunday morning, an after reading it over twice, think I will begin an answer at once. I am surprised to hear that the Dr. is still in Houston. I had supposed that he was well toward the North Pole before this. I was on the point of writing to Wheelock to inquire of him if the Dr. had delivered over to his care my baggage as he promised to do. Dr. also promised to write when he got to Galveston. How pleasant it is - not a sound to be heard but the rustling of the leaves as they are stirred by a gentle breeze, an far off faint bursts of laughter from some happy, playing children who evidently have no Puritanical notions of the sanctity of the Sabbath. While the rest of the households were at church I went into the parlor an played over a part of Mozart's masterpiece, Don Giovanni. What a beautiful thrilling melody an harmony, there is in it. I know it did my soul more good than the best sermon I could hear in Austin - infinitely more. Ah: there is no pleasure more pure than that given by music. Especially I love instrumental music; there is a vaguenes about it, exciting the imagination which to me is one of its chief charms. This charm is wanting in song for there you are tied as it were to the sentiment of the words. But while listening to instrmental music you can let your fancy run riot, picture in your imagination all the feelings evoked by the changing shades of sound which express what words ever fail to do.

-- Well this is really a cold chilly morning indoors although the sun shines brightly an the birds are singing gally outside. I am beginning to count the months until next May when I intend to start my trip to Europe. It is a project that I have had on my mind

for years but never before have quite seen my way towards its fulfillment until lately. Now I think I see my way clearly and have fixed the time to start and intend to carry out this cherished project of years next spring. No doubt I shall be disappointed when I get there. The ideal picture I have for so many years drawn in my fancy will prove to be too highly colored or totally false. It is always thus. The more we long for and anticipate the pleasures we seek the less satisfactory they are and the less pleasure they really give us when they are in our possession. That is true in many cases at least in my experience. Perhaps it is owing to my peculiar temperament. At any rate if I am disappointed and undecieved, if I shall fail to enjoy the trip as highly as I now expect, it will have one good effect I believe - to make me contented to remain at home. You ask about Miss Campbell's school. She has at least 150 scholars day, and a night I think. She is doing extremely well and seems to be afraid that Mr. Wheelock will think she is doing too well and will send another teacher to this place and so lessen her profits. I tell her though, that she need not be apprehensive on that point for I think there are plenty of places where there are no schools established at all.

In the Office 30th ..

Well, the mail goes out soon and what more do I have to write. There has been no one in yet this morning but there is no telling how soon some black phiz will peer through the door and inquire, "Is de Buro heah?" That reminds me to ask you about Wiley. How is the poor fellow getting along? My office is off the main street, a little way up a hill crowned with a church. My neighbors seem to be blacksmiths principally and from morn until eve I have a free concert of Opera (uproar?) music on all sides of me. Their selections from the Opera however are limited, being confined almost exclusively to that favorite "morceau" from Verdi's *Trovatore*, i.e. the Anvil Chorus. However there is nothing unpleasant about the continual clang, clang to me. I rather like to hear the sharp ringing of the anvil as the sturdy smiths hammer away. It speaks of thrift and industry. I hear nothing farther in regard to being made Asst. Supt. of Schools. I wonder how Honey is getting along with his schools. When Mr. Welch gets back and he is expected the last of this week, I suppose we shall hear all about it. If Miss Watson goes to Bastrop she will be a near neighbor of mine, only 30 miles off. I am sorry that you are so

troubled by vermine of different kinds. I would recommend Lyon's Rat Exterminator, an Flea Powder.

Remember me to Miss G. an other inquiring friends.

Yours truly

B. P.

Austin Nov. 29th, 1866

My dear Lizzie

I received your very voluminous epistle this morning an was sitting quietly an cosily by a comfortable fire in my office when Mr. Welch came along an invited me to go to church an hear a Thanksgiving sermon by a Union man. I had just commenced to read your letter the second time so folded it up an went. The congregation was small but the sermon was an excellent one an I wish Southern people could hear more such discourses; it would be profitable for them. I have returned, re-read and read again your good letter. You speak in such a way in regard to Sperry that I begin to think that you are engaged to him. Is that so? If not, why should you fear that he would be jealous if he knew that you were writing me, an what does this sentence mean, "-yet really I've no business to write in this confidential style unless I do to him." Do you expect the congratulations of your friends? - Talk about jealousy I don't think he would feel any mor than I do at this moment.

There is only one person in the world to whom I write confidential letters an when she gets other confidential correspondents, she must drop me from the list for "I can bear no rival near the throne."

When I sat down to write I thought I would indite a long letter but what you mention in regard to your visit to Lucie has so affected me that I cannot. I never can forgive myself for causing you so much pain an sorrow, What a dolt, fool, yes villain, I was to act so. I knew that I should regret it some day, but that devil I have in me prompted me to do it. I only wonder that you will have anything to do with me. Why don't you hate me? I should feel relieved (I believe) if that was the case. But there is this consolation, that by my fickleness I showed how totally unworthy I was to possess the priceless treasure within my grasp, an you may well congratulate yourself that matters turned out as they did; for it is better, "to bear the ill's we have than to fly to those we know not of."

Nov. 30th.. No mail again today. How annoying it is to

live in such an out of the way place an depend on stages for intercourse with the world beyond; half the time behind a day or two. Well I do not expect to live many years in Austin. Capt. Wright sent me one of his cards also. He has my best wishes for his future happiness an prosperity.

Just read over the first three pages of this letter an think I must have been somewhat stirred up at the time of writing. Have come to the conclusion that if I had waited until today I should not have written a portion of it. But let it all go as it is for it shows my feelings when I wrote it, an you can take it at any valuation you please.

You wish to know something about Nettie. In the latter part of '59 she came to the little town of Morris in Illinois near which I was living at the time, to teach school. She was a perfect stranger to every one except the family of my partner, who had known her in Amherst, Mass., her native place. Of course I became acquainted with her soon after her arrival an found that I had a great interest in the cause of education. She came at rather an unfavorable time an I did what I could to assist her, an finally she had quite a flourishing school. I became more interested in the teacher than I did in the scholars an finally we were married. Our wedded life was peaceful an happy an I never had reason to regret my simple blessedness. But then came the old, sad, sad, story. Her health had not been good for years, an going to Washington to take care of me after I had been wounded at Fredericksburg she caught a severe cold, which brought on a severe attack of pneumonia, from the effects of which she never recovered, but fell into a rapid decline an died in a few months. She had one of the most amiable dispositions in the world, an was loved by all that knew her. She was about your heighth an had blue eyes. Now is your feminine curiosity satisfied? No? Of course feminine curiosity is never satisfied. Well when I look over this page, what I have written seems very cold an formal. Well if I sit down with my feelings at boiling heat, somehow or other the process of committing those feelings to paper exerts a refrigerating influence an the words drop from my pen, perfect icicles. did you ever have the same feeling? Not so much if at all. Your words an thoughts do not freeze while being transferred to paper. They seem to come out warm from the heart an retain the original warmth so well, that they quicken the pulse an heat the fancy of those that read.

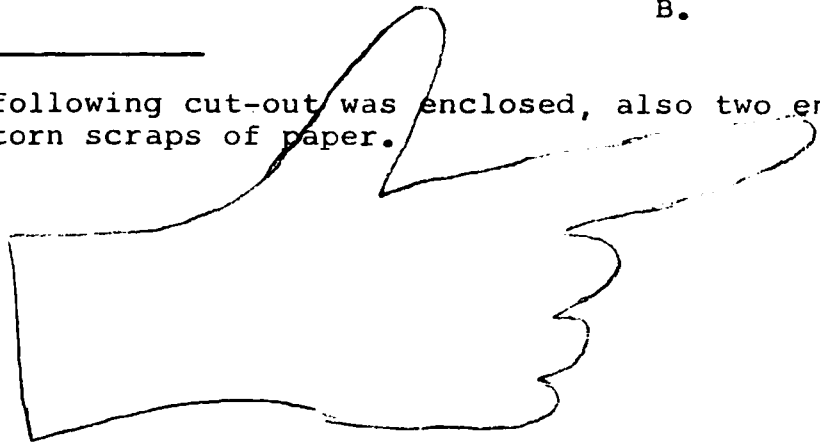
I have heard nothing yet in regard to my stay here although I may get some news by this mail which ought to have been here this morning.

I suppose that Mr. & Mrs. Welch will soon go to Galveston. I shall be sorry to lose them. They are the only people I visit here. As this letter can not go out 'till tomorrow morn I think I will wait an see if there is anything in the mail that will probably be here before that time. Saturday Dec. 1 -- no mail yet an none expected before tomorrow. What a beautiful place to live in if one has interesting correspondents. Mr. & Mrs. Welch leave this morning I am sorry to announce. They go by Columbus an will not go to Houston at all on the way down. I don't think that I shall care about acting as agent again in Houston an probably would not be sent there at any rate. If they do not give me something to do in Galveston I would prefer to stay where I am until I go away. People are coming in an I must close abruptly.

God bless you amiga mia

B.

The following cut-out was enclosed, also two enclosures on torn scraps of paper.



1. 'Tis the gentle witching hour Love
that the heart responsive swells
To the music of the heart Love
To the fairy merry bells

2 I begin to think true men are jewels -
(& opposite side of sheet)

I believe you not care for "thanks" - well "Mon cher frere" I joyfully accept your kind offer - Capt. Jo has been very kind to me. I prize his friendship highly.

L. C.

I guess his hopes have often been bright & more attractive to him without doubt-

Austin Dec. 7th 1866

My dearest Lizzie,

I mean henceforth to call you so, for you are the dearest object on the face of the earth to me. Since leaving Houston my feeling for you has been growing stronger, until I can now with truth say, Dearest I love you and love you only. Day by day you have been winding yourself around my heart until I feel that it is gone but shall not mourn over its loss if in exchange I can get you. Then my loss shall be my gain. Every day you are becoming more necessary to my happiness. Can you trust your life long happiness in my hands? Can you take me with all my imperfections for a companion through life? You ought to know enough of me by this time to be able to say. I don't think that I can or have played a part, pretended to be what I was not, but deeply conscious of my own unworthiness I would scarcely dare to hope for a favorable reply only that I know that love glorifies and sanctifies its object and lifts it up to heights where else it could never tread. Wherefore I hope. I am poor, depending upon my own exertions for a livelihood but labor for the woman I love would always be a pleasure.

Poverty though often a bitter cup can be made sweeter by mutual love.

Now dearest, you ask me in your last letter to advise you what to do.

Generally it is the one who listens to the confessional who gives the advice but in this case the matter is reversed. Now in the case you return a favorable answer to my suit I will advise you as follows and in that case I shall expect you to follow my advice. If you reject me then do as you please. Well then, just supposing that I have the right given me to impress my will strongly on you and insist upon its being followed. I would advise you not to think of going into the country to take a school or of going on with your present school after Christmas. I would also advise (see how disinterested I am) that we quietly get married as soon after New Years as possible so that you can assist me. Really my duties have become so arduous that I feel I must have an assistant. Besides there is my French. I want to acquire the Parisian accent. I can't hold out any great inducements but will promise to share all profits of my office

with you. At any rate if you give me the right to decide I shall most certainly decide against your taking any other school, that is unless you take a select white school, limited to, say, one pupil.

You may find that one pupil will give you a great deal of trouble sn he may be so unruly that you may be sorry you undertook to improve him. Then in the Spring or when we get ready we can wend our way North an you will not need (I hope) the Dr. for an escort. You say that you will have to leave the Benchley house on the first of January. Don't you think in case you take my advice into favorable consideration that you could stay a short time with Mr. Welch or Mr. Honey until I could get down there. I expect to learn in a few days whether I am to stay here or not. I have written to Sinclair an then Welch is going to find out. I like Mr. W. very much, much better than I do Honey; Don't you?

Now dearest let me know as soon as possible your decision. I need not say how anxiously I shall wait an watch for a "white winged messenger" from my darling, or how long the days will seem until I receive it or how my hands will tremble an heart beat as I open it, hoping yet fearing for my fate. I am sorely tempted to get on the stage an run down to Houston to know everything from your own lips. How little can be expressed by pen or paper. A glance a touch can contain more than reams of note paper will hold.

I am beginning to be very anxious to see you. "O that it were possible after long days of grief an pain pain." "To feel the arms of my true love round me once again." But hold I am afraid that I am rather too fast. I had best wait an see what your answer to this will be.

Do take my advice into serious consideration an follow it. You know that I am older an you ought to follow the advice of your elders. But whatever course you do take May God bless you

May I sign myself, Yours
Byron Porter

Austin Dec. 21, 1866

Dearest,

Two letters by this mail. This explains why I received none last mail. Getting letters from you is the only pleasure I have here an when they miss so often as they have lately my disappointment is sore. I wrote today to Hd. Qtrs. asking for a leave of absence for ten (10) days for the purpose of visiting Houston on important private business. So I think you may possibly see me in Houston in the course of a fortnight, that is if the leave is granted. If it is not I shall either resign or take French leave an go anyhow in spite of the Bureau or any other man.

Evening. I do not like the idea of your going out to Richmond at all. It has always had the reputation of being a bad place, a rendezvous for ruffians an full of hard cases. Then I intend to come down an see you an have a good long talk with you as soon as I can. I shall urge upon you the necessity of taking a small white school.

I can hardly tell you what I mean. You speak of getting something to do where we can be employed together an be together. Now I have no idea of living a la Hardenbrook, when I get married (That is at first at any rate) so I am coming to Galveston as soon as I can get away an I am determined to find out something definite in regard to my remaining in the Bureau. If they keep me here during the coming season I am perfectly willing, that is provided you consent to come too, for this is a very healthy place an although out of the world somewhat, is on the whole as desirath a place taking everything into consideration as can be found in Texas, an the duties are not very hard. I should have considerable time to study French etc. If they do not put me in a good place I shall resign an go North, if I find nothing better to do. I understand that hereafter we are to have a mail six times a week instead of three. I hope this will be true.

I got a letter from Mr. Welch today. He has through a mistake forwarded my trunk to me. He says affairs are very much mixed up at Hd. Qrtrs., all anxious an expectant, waiting to see what will be done next.

Now darling I hope you will soon be able to lay

that aching head against my heart an keep it there as long as you want to, an place it there as often as you wish. An as I hope you will not often be troubled with the headache I hope you will promise to lay it there often when it does not pain you. An I most ardently wish that it could lie there this very moment an stay forever. Do you read that last sentence "doubtingly"? Well if you do I shall not attempt to dispel your doubts until I can get my arms "around you once again," an then your head will have to lie there whether it aches or not. Those good night kisses will all be exacted an many more. I have been so long now without one that I shall not be satisfied with a few. I have often thought of those summer evenings, on the porch of the "Benchly mansion" when

"We stood tranced in long embraces
Mixt with kisses sweeter, sweeter,
Than anything on earth."

An how I shall be counting the hours until I shall see you once more an wish

"For the hand, the lips, the eyes,
For the meeting of the morrow,
The delight of happy laughter,
The delight of low replies."

Thanks for your Christmas greeting. I wish you a "happy & merry Christmas," with all my heart an hope that the next Christmas may be a happy one for us both an find us united an enjoying it together by our own fireside among our friends, somewhere or other in this wide world. If it was only convenient now I would buy you a present an send you, a stick of candy, penny whistle, trumpet or something of that sort. But those things can not well be sent by mail. But then I have an idea: Just suppose me to offer myself as a Christmas present, heart & hand. Will you accept? - I know that the articles are not new, & have been somewhat worn, but then you will perhaps be better able to judge of their real value as household furniture. 'Tis getting close on to 12 midnight an I must close for the night an will try an write a little more in the morning. "O that I might see the dearest in my dreams."

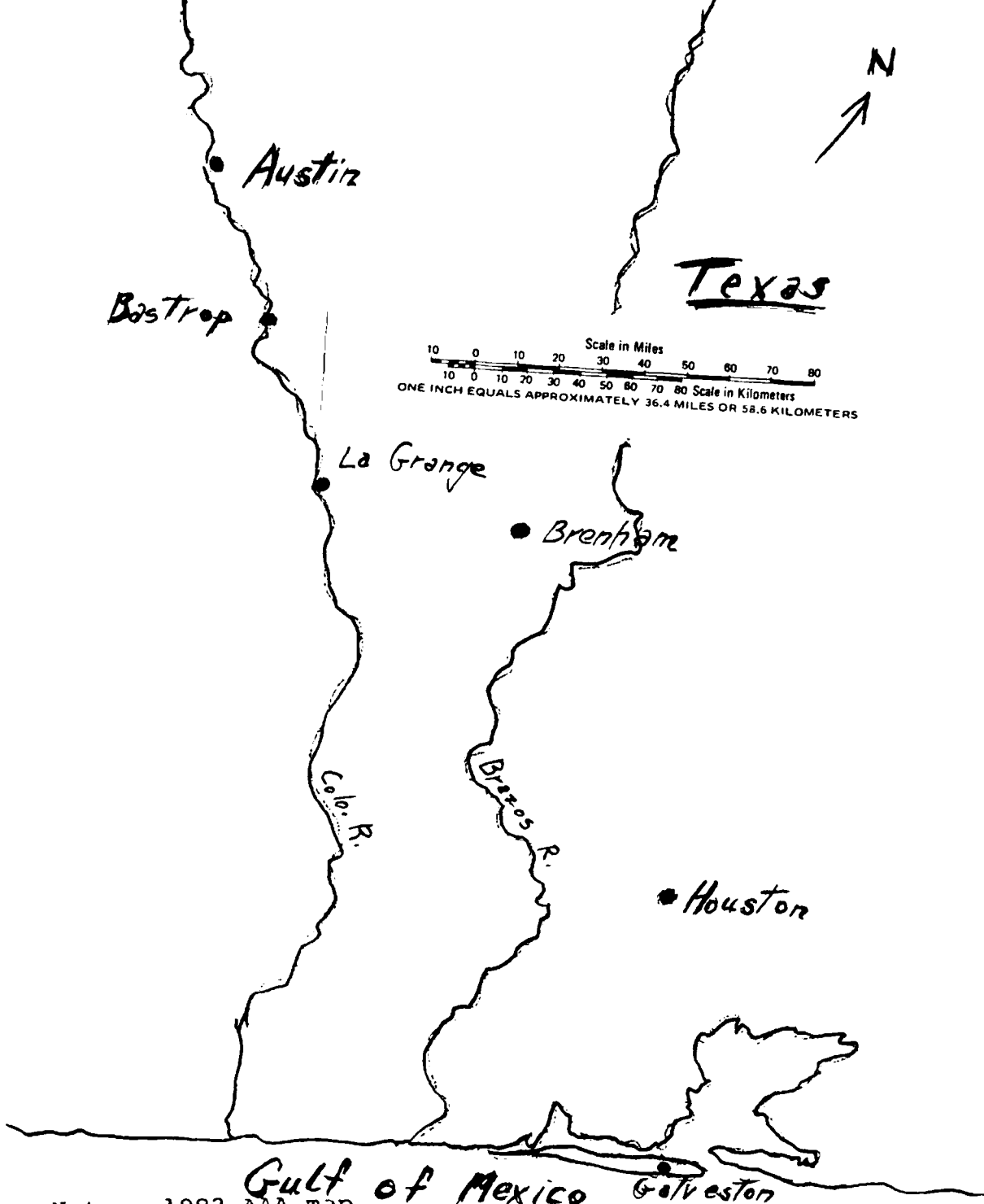
Sat. Morn. Warm an pleasant. I am here in my office, no visitors yet so I will add a few words to

this rambling epistle. Just as I had got so far in popped two or three darkies an as this is Saturday I may expect a plenty of them soon. Now my dear Lizzie, don't stop writing because I am coming down. I will tell you when to stop. I will give you warning before I start.

You must try an drive away all the aches from your head an heart as soon as possible.

Hoping that we may soon meet face to face, I remain

Ever yours
Byron



Note:

1982 AAA map
gives distance Houston to Austin as 163 miles &
driving time as 3:14

from Meda Renton's Genealogy

Byron Porter
b. 5/18/1831
D. 1/18/1881
m 1 Nettie Shumway
d. 4/22/1863

m 2 Elizabeth Freeman Clay
b. 1/6/1845
m 1 1/9/1867
m 2, 1883, Frank O. Savin
d. 10/28/1922
(daughter Faye)

(sister Dorothy Clay Davis)

²Ralph Porter
b. 3/8/1871
m Stella - 2 children
Velda & Maxine

³Rose Porter
b. 11/25/1874
d. 8/20/1876
"membranous croup"

¹Maude Porter
b. 11/11/1867
m. 3/26/84
d. 12/16/1918

John Blair Menardi
b. 5/16/1859
d. 5/25/44

James Lewis Renton
b. 1/22/1889
m. 9/16/20
(siblings George & Alan)

Meda Menardi
b. 3/11/89
(siblings Harold, Margaret
& Blair)

James Menardi Renton
b. 11/28/1921
m. Nancy Beth Buell
8/28/1947

Margaret Montgomery Renton
b. 6/4/1923
m. Robert William Chesney
12/20/44

Robert Renton
b. d. 1926

Ralph Renton
stillborn 1927

"Rock of ages cleft for me,"
Thought ~~fully~~^{easily} the maiden sung:
Fell the words unconsciously
From her girlish gleeful tongue;
Sang as little children sing;
Sang as sing the birds in June;
Fell the words like light leaves down
on the current of the tune, -
"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

"Let me hide myself in thee;" -
Felt her soul no need to hide, -
Sweet the songs, as song could be,
And she had no thought beside;
-----by care,
Dreaming not that they might be
On some other lips a prayer -
"Rock of ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,"
Twas a woman sung them now,
Pleadingly and prayerfully;
Every word her heart did know.
Rose the song as storm tossed bird
Beats with weary wing the air,
Every note with sorrow stirred,
Every syllable a prayer -
"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

Lips grown aged sung the hymn
Trustingly and tenderly,
Voice grown weak and eyes grown dim,
"Let me hide myself in Thee."
Trembling though the voice and low,
Rose the sweet strain peacefully
Like a river in its flow;
Sung as only they can sing
Who Life's thorny path have crossed
Sung as only they can sing
Who behold the promised rest, -
"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,"
Sung above a coffin lid;
All life's joys and sorrows hid.
Nevermore, O storm-tossed soul!
Nevermore from wind or tide,
Nevermore from billow's roll,
Wilt thou need thyself to hide.
Could the sightless, sunken eyes,
Closed beneath the soft gray hair,
Could the mute and stiffened lips
Move again in pleading prayer,
Still, Aye still, the words would be,
"Let me hide myself in Thee."

Maud Porter

Laramie. Dec. 7/82

(age 15; 2 yrs. after her father died)

More from Meda Renton's genealogy:

... Capt. Porter, Asst. Adj. Gen. of Volunteers reported wounded in the Battle of Fredericksburg, Va., shot through the right lung by enemy's gun.

... Lizzie Clay - Daughter of Rev. Daniel & Mary (when Mom died, she was still trying to connect them to Henry Clay) has ancestors validated all the way back to 1565. Well, Lizzie "took a Mississippi River Steamer, ... ship over to Galveston ... teachers had government protection ... were escorted to and from school and whenever they left their quarters by U. S. soldiers."

... You guessed it - escorted by Capt. Porter who was now mustered out of the service, but retained in the service of the "Freemans' Bureau".

... Records show that Byron was pensioned in 1868 because his war injuries had "weakened his constitution and very seriously impaired his health ... a teacher of music when his health would permit."

... Maude was born in Lizzie's parents' home in Prairie City, Ill., then the family moved to Springfield, Mass. Then they moved to Laramie. Byron died when Maude was only thirteen, but had already taught her to be an accomplished pianist & violinist.

... Maude & J. B. were married in Laramie. Then they travelled by stage to Buffalo, Wyoming, "a frontier town of some 600 inhabitants and 19 saloons." Maude's piano, brought in by stage, was the first one in town. Until it arrived, she practiced on the kitchen table without the help of keys. J. B. was a Civil Engineer specializing in surveying, doing (according to a Mining Co. exec., some 30 years later) "the finest presentation of data that he had ever seen." Prior to that time, J.B. had been a Capt. in the Spanish-American war.

And from Byron's 1864 diary:

June 18 Rebs. left their lines in front of us before daylight, - our skirmishers moved up -- horrible sight in rifle pits - dead and wounded piled up - advanced over the plain on the opposite side and thru the woods,

→ later played in L.A. Womens' Philharmonic Orchestra

→ formed lips at the foot of a slope. There, - by a case
shot in the right side, a gold pencil in my vest
pocket saved my life