

Key West, Nov. 29th [18]52

Dear Lottie

Your last epistle was received amid the hurry and bustle of our departure from the island for a short tour upon the main land, and as I have been ever since untill [*sic*] the present time on the move have not had an opportunity of replying to your last. I suppose you have all wondered at my long silence and perhaps thought me negligent, but I can assure you I do not deserve the charge. We arrived here last week and the first mail leaves here on the 30th and though much annoyed with my domestic affairs I hope I shall find time to start a letter on its way to you. The servant girl I have had living with me for the last year, has been obliged to stay at home, her mistress requiring her services, and I have not yet suc[ce]eded in getting one to take her place, at present I have no assistance but a black boy of 10 or 12 years of age and I find my time in great demand, and in addition to the cares of kitchen and house I have a cow in the yard which of course requires milking and feeding daily, the milking I do myself though it requires more strength of hand and arm than I have. I milk over two quarts every morning, it is more than we can use. I wish you were here with me to drink some of it. I suppose you would like to know something about my travels and how I enjoyed myself.

We left K[ey] W[est] in a small schooner of about 20 tons, with of course very poor accommodations, had head winds all the way, and I was very seasick, were seven days on the way, a distance of 250 miles, a steamboat can travel it in 26 hours, on the seventh day we reached Tampa or Fort brook [Fort Brooke] as it is called on the map, if you have an enlarged map of Florida you can trace my route all the way through, it was our intention to leave the same day for the country, but Ossian found some difficulty in hireing [*sic*] a good horse, we had our own carriage with us, and did not start untill next morning about six o'clock, the first day we rode all day long through the pine woods without any thing particular occurring, and by night our horse and ourselves were well tired, and glad to find shelter for the night which we did about eight o'clock, having traveled 38 miles since morning. To you who are accustomed to traveling by locomotive power, this will appear a slow way, but I can assure you it is quite fast for Florida for the country people never make their horses travel out of a walk, and they cannot walk more than 20 or 25 miles per day. The house we stopt [*sic*] at for the night was a log pen with two rooms in it, and a small room put up in the yard separate from the main house for the accommodation of travelers, after waiting an hour for supper to be cooked and trying very hard to eat enough to s[a]tisfy our hunger we took possession of the lodge in the yard. There we found a tolerably comfortable bed, the cleanliness of which will not bear the best examination, and undressed and laid ourselves down to sleep. Ossian I believe slept tolerably well at least when I would let him, but I though very tired could not sleep, because owing to the musty smell the feathers of which the pillows were made compelled me to lay upon my back the whole night and I cannot sleep upon my back, the instant I turned, my nose came in contact with the odour [*sic*] from the pillows, and I could not stand it. This was our first night. I arose the next morning and prepared to start again, we found our horse so jaded he was not able to travel any farther and Ossian tryed [*sic*] very hard to hire one from the man we stopt with, but could not succeed in hireing, could

only borrow one to go five miles farther, with the expectation of getting one from the next neighbor. We started with this poor prospect before us, and in addition to our other discomforts there was every prospect of a severe rain storm coming on, our carriage had a top which would protect us from the rain, but it made every thing appear gloomy in such a barren unsettled country, about 10 o'clock we reached the next house, and there we hired a gentle mule which was soon harnessed in and on we went. 2 o'clock we passed through a village called [Fort] de Soto, the county cite [seat] for Hernando county, stopt at the principal boarding house and called for dinner, we sat down to the table which had upon it salt beef, fried in tallow & the tallow as hard as candles ready for burning, a dash of homminy [*sic*], corn bread made without salt, and coffee without milk, you can guess how much I eat. They charged 25 ct [?] per meal. We paid our fare and proceeded on and traveled on till eight o'clock which is 2 hours after dark, and that evening it was dark truly. The we[a]ther had continued stormy and of course the night was dark we could not see the road and we were much afraid of loseing [*sic*] our way and it was a part of the country Ossian had never traveled before and did not know what state the roads might be in, the last two miles we travled [*sic*] that night. Ossian was obliged to get out and walk ahead of the mule, to keep the road, but at last, when I was almost despairing of reaching a house we discovered a light faintly glim[m]erring through the trees, it was a welcome sight to weary travelers, for we knew it to be the residence of some settler, and we knew we could find food and shelter for the night, though perhaps very plain, under the circumstances we were glad of anything. We found them very poor people, a man and his wife and five children, the oldest a girl of 9 years of age, the husband and father sick in bed with the chill and fever, their residence consisted of a log house all in one room with a fireplace and three beds in it, she prepared us some supper, and by this time I stood much in need of something to eat for I had eaten nothing that day. I had been wishing all day for a tumbler of milk but had not succe[e]ded in getting it, after entering this temporary home, Ossian took a survey of the premises and discovered upon the table two large pans of milk and came to me with the joyful news and whispered it in my ear to comfort me, in case there was nothing I could eat I could drink a [*sic*] plenty of milk, and it did comfort me. I was delighted at the prospect of having as much milk as I could drink. Supper was at length announced and soon dispatched and then preparations made for bed, here also the beds would not bear inspection and what was worse than all she made her sick husband get up out of his bed and take another [*sic*] and put us in the one he had left, and when I laid down in it, [it] was hot from the fever the man had, and the flies were so thick we could not rest a minuit [minute], so we did not get any sleep that night. [We] had travel[e]d 31 miles that day. We arose very early and the woman prepared us some breakfast and we started on, they informed is [us] it was 12 miles to the Withlachooshee river [Withlacoochee River] which we wanted to cross, as the first tirm [term] of court was held in Levy County some distance beyond this river, we reached the ferry about 12 o'clock, crossed and enquired the distance to the next house, was told it was 2 ½ miles, and there we could get a good board and clean lodgings. We proceeded on of course, and in a short time was there, we found a nice tidy old widow lady with one little boy and a negrow [*sic*] man, the owner of the farm. I was well worn out by this we had come 84 miles to this place in three days time I can assure you and begged Ossian to let me stop and rest and as the horse was tired down to hire a horse and proceed on with out me, he reluctantly consented to do it and as soon as we got our dinner, had his horse

saddled and started. I enjoyed myself as well as I could under the circumstances. I had a clean comfortable bed and a plenty of what was good to eat, plenty of milk and fresh butter, buttermilk and clabour [?] all of which I am very fond. Ossian was absent one week, had traveled 70 or 80 miles farther held court and returned got me and started right back again, the same route we had come, as far as the place where we hired the mule, there we stopt [*sic*]. I was to stay there by express invitation during the session of court in that county, they were very kind, hospitable [*sic*] and of a more intelligent gentle class, than others I have discribed [*sic*] to you. The courthouse was five miles from here, and Ossian rode back and forth every night and morning, there were two females in the family and and [*sic*] I enjoyed myself very much untill I was taken with chill and fever, a disease which is very prevalent at this season of the year. My chill came on every other day, after I had my second chill as court was over Ossian determined to proceed on as quick as possible to Tampa where the air was more healthy. We started on my well day and hoped as I had taken large doses of blue pill and quinine that I would miss it, we took a different[t] route home and found better lodgings, the first night found very genteel people and good accommodations. Started the next day and about nine o'clock I felt my chill coming and the nearest house 25 or 30 miles of[f]. The chill was a pretty hard one lasted about 2 hours, and then came the fever and that lasted untill night, it was very hard to bear, sitting up in the carriage, about 2 o'clock we came to a house and I went in and threw myself down on the first bed I could see, and layed [*sic*] there untill about 4 o'clock when I wrap[p]ed myself up well and proceeded on to the next house, 7 miles farther. We reached it at dusk and stopt before the door and gave the usual salutation, "can I get accommodated for the night." ["]Don't [k]no[w], mighty bad chance, we are not prepared for taking travelers.["] Mr. Hart replys [*sic*] ["]my wife is sick and she can't travel any farther tonight, we will put up with anything.["] ["]Well, I'll do the best I can for you. I can make you a pallet on the floor,["] and this is a sample of the questions and replys of almost every house we stopt at, we stopt there and she made a pallet on the floor and there the fleas were so bad I could not rest, that night I got no sleep and we got up and started two hours before day light, and reached the town of Tampa between ten & eleven the same day, there we found comfortable quarters and kind friends to welcome us. I soon recruited and got rid of my chill and fever, and during my stay there enjoyed myself very much, made some very pleasant acquaintances, rode on horse back every afternoon and I did enjoy it very much. At this town court lasted nearly two weeks. I was almost sorry that the time had come for me to return, though I had often thought of my snug quiet home, and perhaps wished myself there sometimes, yet at Tampa I enjoyed so much being a stranger and receiving the hospitality and kindness and at[t]entions shown to strangers. But an opportunity offered and duty compelled us to take advantage of it, for the opportunities are not very frequent, and these little sail vessels are the only means of getting to and from at present. We are hoping to have a line of steamers some day. We left Tampa on Sunday afternoon and arrived at Key West the following Saturday at noon. I was quiet seasick coming back as there was a heavy swell and a pretty hard wind blowing. We found our house and yard just as we had left it, and right glad we were to reach it once more, it seemed only the more dear, for a two months absence, the trees and flowers and garden had grown some. You will think perhaps strange that I could leave home for such a trip as I have just described to you, but there are more pleasures in it than you think, if I should attempt to tell you every thing all the

little amusing incidents and varieties [*sic*] of people and circumstances I passed through, it would fill a dozen of these sheets. I have nearly [*sic*] glanced at a few of the most prominent though there were some disagreeables [*sic*] it is true, yet I enjoyed very much, the change of scenes, change of heat and climate were both pleasant and beneficial. I get very tired of the monotonous life we live here upon this island, it is the same thing year after year. Ossian is compelled to go every spring and fall and I would always prefer going with him if I could. I cannot bear to separate from him, for I feel uneasy all the time he is gone. He has been in excellent health all the trip and is so still, our court comes on a week from tomorrow being the first Monday in December, and then he is up to his eyes in law. I expect first thing we know he will be Judge, he is rising [*sic*] fast in his profession and daily gaining the respect and esteem of the people. Dear Lottie I think I am writing you a very lengthy letter, or as Col. Hart calls them, a book, but I hope you will feel interested and read it through patiently and answer speedily. You can form no idea of the pleasure it gives me to receive long letters from you or Em, and of the disappointment when they are short and when they do not come. I hope you will write me lengthy and particular about yourself and every member of the family and everything at home, and in return I will endeavour [*sic*] to make my letters as interesting as possible to induce you to write to me often and long. Tell Emma I received hers some time ago, and she did not wish me to consider it as an answer to my last to her. I have not, and am waiting very impatiently for the answer, and hope it will come soon. I was informed by a gentleman from Jacksonville that Aunty's house and lot there sold for [\$2,500 / \$250 - \$500 ?]. I should like to know the tenor of her will. I want you to tell Ma to send me out anything she pleases. I suppose Mr. Gordon will have left before this reaches you or I won't wish the silver sent my him, if you have not sent it, make up a bundle of the quilts and anything else you choose and put it on board of some one of the twenty vessels that are constantly running between here and New York, and it will reach [*sic*] me in due time. I have been on the point of sending home for a bonnet this fall but have not done it yet, and I fear it is to[o] late in the season. I am still wearing the same one sent out 2 years ago, and I think it time I had another though this is good and very clean yet. We look for Mr. Gordon next boat which will be here on the 10 of next month and he will board with us again, he seems quite like one of the family. I shall expect some letters from home if nothing else. Since I wrote you last I have received a present of a very handsome guitar, a fine instrument with a sweet tone suited for the voice, and some choice pieces [*sic*] of music. I am just as much in love with it and more since I have got so fine a guitar of my own, if you send out a bundle, I wish you would select some few pieces and send me. Tell Ma Aunty told the truth when she said I peiced [*sic*] the quilts. I do not think she had a single quilt, but I peiced more or less of, but one or two is enough for me. Now Lottie I hope you will be content with the length of this letter, and write very soon and as long. I hope Pa & Ma and all the rest are well, give my love to all and for your self except [*sic*] the warmest love that can flow from a sister's heart, and believe [*sic*] me ever

Your own affectionate
Kate

Transcribed by Nicole J. Milano, University of Florida, 2009