

Spade Ranch
Donley Co. Texas
Dec. 24th. 1880

Mrs. J. F. Evans
Sherman, Texas.

My Own Precious Little Darling,

Yesterday I wrote you and at town finished in brief after receipt of your three good letters, the last under date of 10th. & now I must have a more satisfactory chat. Though I cannot do justice to my appreciation of them, or half express the pleasure your good words give. If you did not talk to me so much as you would wish when I was at home, I always feel when I am away that I have failed to impress you with the love I have for my little pet, and that you are dear to me for your own precious self, & that the brief years of our union so blest to me have passed all to fast & while they have drawn you nearer you are still my own little baby, and that even when time shall crown you with white I cannot think of you otherwise than as the same little one to take in my arms & call baby, as loving and confiding as in the earlier days, learning by then to trust in full my love, & to entertain no doubt of my intire devotion _____. I have lamented often, that the fates & circumstances cast me so intire in business molds, that I too frequently have left it for those to whom I am most devoted to interpret my actions, instead of laying aside business cares & letting words of the share they have in all my thoughts & of the plans I have for their happiness. For I shurely care but little for the honors of the outside world, my efforts are with the purpose to place you & our darlings in the most favorable circumstances that may be. But my baby believes me that I have treasured up all her dear words & that I would today take her in my arms & kiss away every care. And now, dear, I must tell you more of how I find this part of the world. This is the first clear day for seven. & the snow fall's _____ on the ground 8 to 10 inches begin to melt. Our country as you have learned is broken & many a pretty stream runs through its hills. I find our camp three miles North of the Saltfork of Red River & that far from the mounth of Saddlers Creek one of the finest clear strong running streams in the west, but located on Glenwood 1 mile from Saddler (a branch of Saddler, bright sparkling & beautifull as its name, here & there into a mountain lake, is gravel bedded & bordered with timber, while a mile farther up the valley (1/2 to 3/4 mile all the way) is covered with timber, & grapes in their season & wild plums still abound. The hills rise on South side in irregular form, not generally abrupt, but broken into hundreds of mounds, mostly grape covered, except near the summits where frequently the ridge is bordered by a few feet of bluffs where _____ (_____) grass bottomed run up the ridge & dividng form the various hillocks -- down the valley from the "Castle" 1/2 mi. & 1/2 way to Saddler the dividing ridge terminates in one or more _____ loaf _____ and the valley's come together, & it is here a mile wide. Then up & down Saddler to scenery is repeated on a somewhat grander scale, though not as picturesque. Our Castle as stated is one mile above the mouth of the stream, 1/2 mile from terminus of the ridge, & is 1/2 way up the ridge on west side, cut back into a little nope (16 X 18 ft in clear) with which the roof is nearly even, a small yard leveled in front, facing the east, & overlooking the valley, with a fine view of bordering ridges and whether the hills & valley are clothed in verdant green, sombre brown, or snowy white, as today, with here & there the tall wavy grass _____ scene must ever be a picture of romantic beauty, such as the interior couties no where afford. But beautiful as the land was in grass & spring blossoms it is all to me more attractive today. And I think my darling would find it so.

Excerpt from a letter written by John Fleming Evans to his wife, Elixabeth Peyton Evans on December 24th, 1880, from Spade Ranch, Donly County Texas:

" I must tell you more of how I find this part of the world.

This is the first clear day of seven & the snow fall's (?) on the ground 8 to 10 inches begin to melt. Our country as you have learned is broken & many a pretty stream runs through the hills. I find our camp three miles North of the Saltfork of Red River & that far from the mouth of Saddlers Creek one of the finest clear strong running streams in the west, but located on Glenwood a mile from Saddler (a branch of Saddler, bright sparkling & beautiful as its name, here and there it spreads into a miniature lake, is gravel bedded & bordered with timber, while a mile farther up the valley (1/2 to 3/4 mile all the way) is covered with timber, & grapes in their season & wild plums still abound. The hills rise on each side in irregular form, not generally abrupt, but broken into hundreds of mounds, mostly grass covered, except near the summits where frequently the ridge is bordered by a few feet of bluffs where (? ? ?) grass bottomed run up the ridge & dividing form the various hillocks-- down the valley from the "Castle" 1/2 mi. & 1/2 way to Saddler the dividing ridge terminates in one or more sugar loaf peaks & the valleys come together, & it is here a milewide. then up & down Saddler the scenery is repeated on a somewhat grander scale, though not as picturesque.

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Well our room is more than comfortable. Three sides & the roof admit almost no air, & the front is close except door & window, while our fire place is good & dry in the wall & the chimney comes down as well, through the hill & is built above ground at the top. The walls & floor are dry as chalk & inside arrangements convenient. On the range we have three other houses not as large but comfortable, and our boys well clad & fed are quite as jolly as in the Spring days, and all appears to be in fair trim. Though the fearful weather has greatly mixed cattle & we will have quite a quantity of cattle to get from our neighbors as well as to be able to share a good many.

Mr. Mertz had been here a few days before my arrival & left today. His cattle are 20 miles down the river & he is undecided as to where he will put them. He is not disposed to accept my terms, & I cannot agree to divide authority with him or give up any part of our range & I do not believe that he will force us to open antagonism. Expecially as he protests that I did not understand his purpose as to the McClelland range last year & that he had no purpose to overreach me, & that his action in regard to lease of the Barkers land was taken from other information, & not knowing it to be the same I was after. Though he tells me he has had better fortune getting through than I heard."

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Well baby you are 26 . How time has sped & how lightly it sits upon your brow. My darling is fairer, dearer, & younger to me than in the days when first I met her. She has grown to be my baby indeed, and may she never older grow. All bids well for you to be spared for years to the babies & myself, and if you do but care for yourself I have no doubt at a ripe age mother's happy face will tell of a good & usefull life crowned with plenty (if success but follow our efforte & sacrifices).

Well tomorrow ushers in Chrimtmass & may it be a merry one to you & the merry laugh & happy faces of our Roy and Guy bring sunshine to our home.

This will perhaps be in time to bear New Year greetings, & a happy one may it be to you all.

Ask Guy if he can "hear the chicken crow"

I will write Roy & Guy soon.

Christmas Clarendon

Baby a happy day to all.

I have been at camps two or three times disturbed & now finish here, at Mr. Parks where I have invitation to dinner. They are comfortably fixed & I find them always ready to make me comfortable.

The weather still hold on cold & this morning brings a slight snow. ^{ph}

I trust Ma has arrived & that you indeed have a pleasant time. Tell Roy to kiss Guy for Papa, & and to give love to Mother & Auntie. Mr. Mall sends a box to Guy & ring to Roy. And now baby love to all & home when you write & I am always your devoted husband

J. F. Evans

Christmas 1880