University of Virginia Oct 27, 1850

Dear Francis:

I received your letter of the 20th inst. on Tuesday last, & was exceedingly pleased, it being the first and only time I have heard from home since I left. Mammy was right when she said that I must have taken the commencement of my letter from one of old Jacob Moneys to Papa. That was the very place I got it from. I was sorry to learn that the Major was not enjoying "that same blessing," but hope that he is by this time. Tell him that he must not open his eyes too wide, but be like Lewis was about hearing when Linda told him about picking his ears, he replied, that he did not want to hear too much & so he must not want to see too much.

You wrote me that John May intends to start to Alabama in a short time, a piece of news which would be exceedingly pleasing to me if I had the money he owes me. He might go to the "Old Harry" for aught that I care, and I believe I would subscribe a little to carry him there, a sinking Polecat. Tell Brother Bernard to do the best he can for me about the money, I do not know what to advise him about it.

You wish to know all about the University, ladies &c. I am pleased with the Institution, but, can tell you nothing about the ladies. To give you some idea of what I know about them, I will inform you that there two living...
in the house at which I board, niece of my old hostess, Mrs. Fitch, neither of whom have been, though I have had repeated invitations from Mrs. Fitch appear in the portrait as a visitor. The truth is, I have no time to see anything except my books. My dear choice of expenditure is in that fashion staying at as Mrs. Bibb's, I would like to see her a bit, but really have not time. I have been to preaching once only since I have been here. I went to the chapel at the morning on last Sunday night, saw some ladies but not very pretty ones. Professor Harrison's daughter is to be married next month to a Mr. Bostwick. The handsome lady I have seen since I have been here is the wife of one of the Professors I don't know which one. I have seen her riding two or three times. She was at service in the hands of riding shoes and cap I have seen, and each time seemed to be riding a trotting race on what it called a "gentle mare." They have good singing at the chapel. Professor Harrison's wife & daughter sing well & a good many of the students are good singers, besides which they have an organ to save the time which adds a great deal to the music. I have no time to go to preaching, all the time I have to write letters is on Sunday & if I go to preaching I will write no letter, so I must either give up one or the other & possibly both. The use of refrain when running time comes. On last Sunday the questions arose between several of the students whether it was right to study on Sunday, and at night when I went to preaching the text was "Remember to keep the sabbath day holy," and the sermon was directed principally to the students about studying on the Sabbath, he said that anything mean for the purpose of advancing a man in his profession was tolerable, and consequently prohibition by the Bible. I have no settled opinion as to whether it is right or wrong for a student to study on the Sabbath, as any man who pretends to no religion if he is not studying he is apt to be doing something worse. I make no point always in doing two things both of which are wrong; the one will protect me the other will not. Provided they are both equally sin and to me the most which will protect me most and I think that would be the course of most persons. If they would only be candid enough acknowledge it.

Billy Henry has left the room in which I stay for what cause I do not know, we are perfectly friendly notwithstanding. He comes into my room frequently & I like him very much. He is very free with me. He is a good Christian boy & I shall hardly be able to come home, though I will see about that. Christmas comes. I would like exceedingly well to partake of your Christmas tree, though they are brought in here every day by peeks and bobs which can be bought for six cents per foot. We have "apples from top to bottom," I have come in with my winter supply. I bought a barrel for a dollar, which will last me four or five times.

Yours as ever,

James L. Austin