



Austin Families Association of America
Archive Document Series
The Dall-Tardy Letters
12 January 1842 - James Dall to Clara Tardy

Letter dated 1842 January 12 from James Dall in Baltimore to Clara Tardy in Mobile.

Spring Vale Jan'y 12th 1842

Think I to myself just now, its some time since I wrote to my beloved Clara, perhaps she would like to hear a little chat about home and quondam friends. So whether a duty or a pleasure, I commence talking to you My Dear, thro' means of that "divine art which speaks to eyes and paints unbody'd thoughts," altho' at a distance of thousands of miles. We all feel interested in your well being, & hope your troubles have in some degree passed away, & left your mind as calm as a summer zephyr. & that your future career may lay thro' flowery paths, and by the side of murmuring rills if not "still waters."

Perhaps you would like me to talk of some local matters? or about family, or things going on in our whereabouts. Well begin then with Uncle Charles¹ family, from whom we heard this morning, saying they got home from here t'other day in safety. The vacation of his school during the hollidays gave us the pleasing society of the ladies, who staid a few weeks. Miss Hen. w Miss Emily & Henry, they have long been looking for favorable acc'ts from their father. deferred hope!

[?] Yr' Uncle Charles' Henry is sick, tho't to be measles. Aunt Ann is delicate in health, from accumulated cares probably. Your good mother is now near me, serving. She is not strong as I could wish, Mrs. Whitridge is troubled with weak eyes, also. Louise is gone to school & has a good preceptor. Joseph is with Mr. Whitridge in the store, advancing tow'd manhood rapidly. Austin has joined his employer in business, & took leave 2 or 3 days, since for Boston & Lowell, Providence, & other manufacturing districts to procure consignments of goods suitable to his demands.

For myself I'm giving you a family sketch; while Michael has gone to the city for supplies. There, will that suffice? No, the Miss Bucklers have been breaking up housekeeping, to remove to a house in St. Palls St.. Wm. their brother went out in the Cincinnati, a large East India ship, as supercargo, & requested his sisters to go to the city. Thus we are loosing (sic) one of our most interesting neighbors, in this valuable family...

We hear frequently from our Boston connexions. My aged mother yet survives in a very emaciated condition, failing gradually. Wm. my brother has been made councilman & poor John is under homeopathic regimen. You doubtless hear much talk about fiscal affairs, specie payments by the banks, & other delightful topics which crowd on us like the ghosts in Macbeth, or the weird sisters, conjuring up chimeras dire! This noise has full chorus hereabouts - "Times are bad." says echo & re echo: but I must find something amusing to say to you.

While I think of it, let me say Mother receives the "Christian Register & Boston Observer" & thinks you w'd be pleased in perusing it. The articles furnished by Charles describing the interviews he held with Jos. Smith the Mormon High Priest, are published therein. Tis a religious paper, filled with reading articles, very few others. Indeed I suppose Charles² our son is now in yr place and you may have heard him preach the glorious gospel of Christ.? If so, don't blame me for saying I envy you the opp'ty. He is our most hopeful branch of the family tree, & we expect to be favored by his presence among us, before the lapse of many weeks.

There was a Mr. Crocker from New Bedford, a friend of Mr. Whitridge, passing on to New Orleans, a week since & I scribbled a line to Charles, which presume will reach Charles. I notice the preaching of Ch'rls at Quincy SW spoken of in the last "Register." Soon after his arrival in yr place we expect to receive some interesting memo's from Ch'rls giving us some idea of his notions ab't Mobile. & the prospect he has of healing the wounds made by a former preacher. I feel utmost confidence in Ch'rls moderation & prudence & freedom from sectarian peculiarities. Please mention us most affectionately to Charles if within your circle.

Dr. Whitridge's little family dined with us on Christmas day in co. with Uncle Charles, the Miss Austins & the rest. We had a very agreeable day. The Dr's lady, you perhaps are aware, is in a delicate predicament. & the important crisis is daily expected to occur! Some say TWINS! If so, I hope they'll not be as celebrated as the Siamese! But the good Dr. w'd soon clear up such a case. One clip w'd soon set them free from too close companionship. But you & I must keep all this secret & you shall hear of the grand announcement in season. I sh'd

¹ Charles E. Austin, brother of Clara's biological father Horace Austin, an Episcopal minister who lived in Baltimore.

² Charles Dall, described as a saintly man, a Unitarian minister, who was Clara's favorite (adopted) brother

've been in the dark had I not seen the lady in our family sewing on some little shirts & asked if they were preparing on their own account? Ans: there is no such good news.

Hitherto the winter has been quite mild & many beautiful days, altho' snow falls often, the sleigh has been only one day in service. Wm. Whitridge says tis not all hail but all rain in New Orleans. I hope yr health has not suffered & that you will get strong enough to make an eastern tour the approaching warm season. I give all the privileges of your kind invitation to come to the South, to my son, the Rev'd. He can amuse you & is so much more interesting that I'm confident you'll be the gainer by this change. tis s'd I fill my letters with morals & swelling words, etc. but you'll not say that of me this time I'm sure.

Tell your "gude mon" I wish him every happiness in the revolving years, in which sentiment thyself I included sincerely. & you are cordially included with all the interesting friends & connections we can claim around you. May consenting spring shed her own garlands on yr heads. . .

"Honored be Woman! She beams in the sight,
Graceful & fair like a being of light.
Scattered around her, wherever she strays,
Roses of bliss o'er our thorn cover'd ways:
Roses of paradise, sent from above,
To be gathered & twined in a garden of love.
Woman commands by a mild, soft control,
She rules by enchantment the realm of the soul:
As she glances around, in the light of her smile
The war of the passions is hushed for a while:
And discord, content from his fury to cease
Reposes, entranced on the pillars of peace."

JD