



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

Letter dated 1842 July 12 from James & Henrietta Dall and their daughter Henrietta in Baltimore to Clara Tardy in Mobile¹.

Baltimore, Spring Vale
July 12th 1842

Well, My Dearest Clara,

How are you getting on in this wide but troublesome world? I have some time intended writing a sheet to your address merely to tell you how things go here; that we have just had a very pleasing sketch of Charles' whereabouts & his near friend Augustus in their London lodgings at the west end. But I must talk to you ab't things nearer home at first, as they may be more interesting to you.

Around our domicil we have lately made many what we call improvements. Such as new spring house with additions to ice house &c. 5 or 6 mechanics to look to, has absorbed part of my attention lately: wh'ch will be an excuse for not writing before this. We heard particulars of you from Mr. Jennings. Poor fellow was robbed of his clothes & money by some rogues in Georgia. His visit to us was quite satisfactory & pleasing, as he had such an intimate acquaintance with you, & y'r good husband. Charles², our beloved son, always speaks of you and the kindness of y'r B'r T with deep sense of grateful feeling. This makes me feel thankful to you both. What is more acceptable to a parent than kind offices tow'd their children when in need or far from home & in feeble health? It made a deep impression.

You probably receive letters from Augustus by like opp'ys that we do from Charles. The steamers via Boston have each bro't and taken out our mutual interchanges of good feelings. Our last, land on June 17th from Charles & he says Mr. T and himself will put off for Manchester, Bristol, So. Hampton, Paris on Monday June 20th, having just taken their passports from his Ex'y Gov Everett minister at London, who had been very kind & polite to them, giving them free access to the Houses of Lords & Commons where they had seen & heard S'r Rob't Peel & others hold forth in lengthened speeches. We send you newspapers occasionally & receive B'r Tardy's Pr Curt [?] but it contains little of interest to anyone not in trade; perhaps you find a little amusement in ours?

This Hymn to the Great Father of Rivers is from the Spanish & may interest you? I think it sublime. I sh'd like to traverse the Mississippi! Father of Waters, from far mountains wending, solemnly dost thou come, thru' the dark wilds bending, coursing the western plains, where olden silence reigns, linking the mighty mains, leagues long descending . . . Sire of the silent streams. River of wonder! Glory wide o'er thee gleams, and thy waves under! That glory olden heard, oft hath the spirit stirred, bolder than spoken word & louder than thunder. O, mighty water, when old time was o'er thee, thou wast as mighty then, no flood before thee! . . . Beautiful Belle Riviere! Fairest of Daughters! Seeking far wavelets clear, "Big Drink" has caught here. On! in majestic prime – On!

Well, Dear, what more can I tell you? Don't you tire from reading such prosy epistles as this? Your good husband would, for he is as concise & brief as anyone I know in his correspondence. I w'd rather pay \$5 postage than send him such a letter. But this is the only way I can tell you my thoughts: while you are so far away from us. Don't you remember the bygone days, when you used to waltz so prettily with some of the beaux? I'm sure they were not blamed for experiencing much palpitation of heart! How could you be so cruel toward your numerous and interested admirers? But those days are gone! Gone! & with them many of our fond & cherished associations! Which we then thought were permanent! So goes the world! Which must soon end, with its temptations & hopes.

Don't you want to hear ab't Uncle Charles³ & his little ones? Well I'll tell you a little of their wherabouts. The folks, I mean Austin & Mother last Sunday morn'g made a trip "to the forest" to hear Uncle Charles preach. & they liked him very much. Aunt Ann is feeble & serious since the decease of her sister Miss Jane Buckler, who was buried ab't 2 weeks ago. She died in consumption. The "fair Texans" make their home at Charles' yet. Hoping ag'st

¹ They apparently did not know the Clara's first child had been born 9 days earlier, and had already died.

² Charles, son of the Dalls, was apparently traveling in Europe in company with Jean Auguste Tardy, brother of Clara's husband Balthazar. The trip apparently was paid for by Balthazar, a successful businessman in Mobile.

³ "Uncle Charles" is Charles Austin, brother of Clara's father Horace Austin. Charles was an Episcopal minister and school master living in Baltimore.

hope almost. Henry Austin⁴ is our frequent guest he is in a grocery store in the city & looks & does well, he had a letter yest'rdy fr'm his Aunt Holley say'g much by way of good advice (but in low spirits herself.) The idiotic son is at large again but the necessity is apparent of his being speedily returned to the asylum. The little folks at y'r Uncle Charles' are quite comfortable, little Willie is a bright chap of 3 yrs of age, often surprising them by his precocious observations. Henry & Nancy are [illegible word] in appearance. Nancy is a polished young lady. Henry is intended for a farmer (in Texas perhaps.) Jane & Mary are little girls of very lively manners, say Mary, Jane very sentimental. Now I'll talk to you about our own Joseph. He has written home repeatedly, sometimes to Mr. Whitridge as the Capt. has been quite ill & not able to do it himself.

Joseph being his amenuensis. He will be, perhaps, within 100 miles of Charles, in Italy, but there is no probability of their meeting. Joseph arrives at Malaga, thence to Palermo in Sicily, thence to Messina & perhaps at Leghorn. We expect his arrival in ab't August in New York. You probably hear of Mr. Aug. Tardy's course & you are aware that he & Charles have serious intentions of visiting Rome! We're indebted to your good B'r T. for putting them in a way to enjoy so much. But for him I think 'tis doubtful if our son w'd've undertaken such an extensive & important tour. It will remain a momento in our minds, of the kind interest y'r kind husband has repeatedly taken in our family.

The "glorious fourth" passed off with brilliance in town. I did not favor them with my attention. We had our parson here to pass the day, but I was present in the temperance meeting in our immediate vicinity; also the Sunday School where I was pleased & edified. From what I have obliquely understood these must be stormy times in y'r family and "a God send" is to be expected now & then in married life. Y'r Dear Mother has bro't eight living souls to this terrestrial sphere, it can't be such a terrible task to bring one! is it? "I reckon" you are a judge o'er this? or very near one? Excuse this anecdote. "You've heard it before," haven't you? Dear Daughter, for so I delight to have the priviledge of calling you, accept my affectionate love & regard, & give also a large share of it to y'r esteemed "better half" & remember us very kindly to all the members of y'r family. All of whom we most highly respect. Write soon & tell us all your good news. We hope you may have a happy time, which is the anxious hope & prayer of

Father

My dear Clara,

It is a very long time since I have written to you, & in fact of late years I have been so out of the habit, on account of weak eyes, that it has become quite an exertion, & I generally commission Mr. Dall or Henrietta, thinking a letter from them will be quite as acceptable, but I am unusually interested about these times, to know how you are, & you must not delay to let Mr. Tardy give us the earliest information concerning your health & the health of the little stranger. It was highly gratifying to see Mr. Jennings, he passed a day with us & seemed quite well acquainted with you all, he says he will take his wife with him when he returns, which no doubt will be a pleasant addition to your circle. Mr. Dall has mentioned that Mr. J. was robbed & he has lost but little money, & seemed to think most of the loss of his [page torn] miniature, the trunk & most of his clothes were left by the roadside. You speak of excessively dry weather, we have had excessively wet weather, seldom a day for the last two months without rain, indeed the whole season has been cold & rainy, we have had but a very few warm days. You would be quite surprised to see Louisa, she is almost as tall as myself, & would amuse you if you were here with quite a complicated piece on the piano. She remembers you & would be delighted to see you. But I must close as Henrietta has a word to say. I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing your husband as you intimated.

Give my love to all who take any interest

In your Mother

My dear Clara,

⁴ This may refer to Charles Henry Austin, biological brother of Clara Tardy. The father of Henry and Clara, Horace Austin, had a sister Mary Phelps Austin who married a Rev. Dr. Horace Holley and lived in Lexington, Kentucky.

I received your letter by Mr. Jennings the day after mine to you was sent to the office, and as your letters are equally interesting to us all we have concluded to send you a joint letter in reply, we have delayed writing hoping each day to hear some good news from you. I hope you are feeling quite happy, at this time. At the time Mr. Jennings' trunk was robbed your letter containing the hair was broken open, under the impression that it contained money, I presume. I hope none of the hair was lost. I received four parcels, that of your father and two brothers, sister & mother. I would have the bracelet made immediately, but you desire me to wait until you enclose a lock of your husband's hair. I think I can get a handsome bracelet made for six or eight dollars. You do not say how I am to send it to you, but I [page torn] some opportunity will offer by the time it is ready.

Father has informed you of our having received several letters from Charles. They appear to be engaging themselves very much & have received much attention. They talk of returning the last of October, when I hope we shall have the pleasure of a visit from Mr. A. J. Tardy. We expect Joseph will come home in August. My friend E. Morrison has been passing the last week with us. You know I went to Portsmouth, N.H. a year ago to attend her wedding. Her health is miserable, always complaining & suffering. Following your example, when I see such trouble I quite rejoice at my own independence. Do let us know as soon as practicable, how you are. Be assured, no one takes more interest in your welfare & happiness than your sister

Henrietta