



Austin Families Association of America  
Archive Document Series  
The Dall-Tardy Letters  
1 December 1851 - Charles Dall to Clara Tardy

Letter dated 1851 December 1 from Charles Dall<sup>1</sup> in Toronto to Clara Tardy in Mobile

Toronto Dec 1st 1851  
Canada West

Clara, My dear Sister . . .

You have seemed to be much with me in spirit of late. I received a Mobile paper the other day from your dear Ball<sup>2</sup>, implying, I trust, that you were all well. Twas in return, as I took it, for one I sent you a short time before. It informed me that Mobile was still your home: a fact about which I had begun to entertain some doubt, as so long a time had elapsed since I had any word from you. How long it is, dearest Clara, since I wrote you. I am wholly unable to say; so the fault of silence may be wholly mine. It shall be mine no longer . . . I infer that Ball is doing better in business than heretofore, or your old plan of going to N. York would have been carried out. Do write soon and tell me just how you are.

I know your loving, sisterly heart desires to know how things are going with me & mine. In general, very pleasantly indeed. I commenced my second year in Toronto the Sunday before last and am encouraged by seeing additions to my congregation from month to month. My Sunday morning service commences at eleven. For nearly a year I have been following a regular plan of morning sermons. I have undertaken to give the four gospels in harmony; i.e. the whole of the Saviour's life in course; partly in the way of exposition; partly of description & scenery painting history; partly by way of doctrine; & partly of home thrust application of the truth to the wants, the sins, the trials of my people's daily life.

I wonder when I think of it why I did not take up such a course long ago; and why all preachers of Christ do not feel it their first duty to present the life of Christ in its fullness; its parables, its discourses, its conversations, its miracles, its actions & sufferings, its trials & its triumphs. Be assured I find it an undertaking which, So far from being "a weekly task" I enter into with the highest enjoyment. If I ever doubted whether I had or had not made a mistake in choosing my profession I doubt it no longer. My work is my continual joy—better to me than meat & drink.

The course I speak of will extend itself through at least 3 or 4 years; and it happily centers my thoughts on a work, which, if well accomplished, will be a legacy to my children. To continue my "account of myself:" I meet with a Sunday School of 50 or 60 bright & happy children—(you know of old my love to children) every Sunday afternoon at 2½ o'clk. With them I am going through the Sermon on the Mount. I am now on the Beatitudes from each one of which I draw its great lesson of duty, & illustrate it by facts & incidents in the life both of Jesus & the apostles. This narrative form of Scriptural instruction "takes" happily with my youthful audience & I am often tempted by their eager eyes & quiet attention to talk beyond my self prescribed 15 minutes.

Our society being somewhat new, I am, naturally enough, a little short of efficient co-laborers. Still the few I have are true as steel and the prospect of more in due time, is fair. My second service (of the Pulpit) begins at half-past six PM. Here, I am free to choose my subject from the pointing of providence in my daily walks & from the great questions that agitate the public mind. My subject last ev'ing for instance was "The Creed of the Church" & on the preceding Sab ev'ing it was "Religious Education." Before dismissing the congregation I regularly bid them "to the pastors" house to meet socially after eving service. This works admirably; and brings the people, (a dozen or more of whom never fail to come to my little parlor to talk together an hour or two) into an acquaintance with each other, which is a great good.

My weekday work goes on like clock-work as you may suppose. I rise (at this time of the year) always before daylight; kindle my fire, and do my share in dressing my boy Willie & feeding my girl whose nickname is Lillie. He is six and she is two. He reads as well as I nearly, & is a devourer of story books of course. She prattles quite articulately about all sorts of matters & things, and as you will readily suppose a living and loving light & joy.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Dall was a son of James Dall and Henrietta Austin, biological aunt of Clara Austin Tardy. After the death of Clara's parents when she was a young child, the Dalls "took her in" and became her foster parents. She referred to them as "Mother" and "Father." Charles Dall was said to be Clara's favorite "brother."

<sup>2</sup> Clara's husband Balthazar was often referred to as "Bal" or "Ball."

Both the children have just parted acquaintance with the whooping cough—which as today is the first day of winter, we are very glad to find it gone.

My Carrie who has a day boarder now – and is as you know the *ne plus ultra* of good housekeepers is up as early as I & seeing to matters down stairs. Our boarder by the way is a delightful friend - one of the most intelligent young men in Toronto. We took him in, because he was in poor health & was alone — at least “he had no mother to bring him milk, no wife to grind him corn”. He has not been with us two months yet & we are gladder every day to have him with us. He is one of the most efficient trustees of our church, (lately a prominent Methodist) - But to [go] on with my every days work. I saw all my own wood; and that is no slight work where there are four fires to feed.

So I go at it directly after breakfast which I needn't say is preceded by family devotions. After sawing, splitting & piling for an hour I take basket on arm and go to market, i.e. once in 2 or 3 days; my butcher always sends up my provender. The meat & fish markets of Toronto are very fine. You are aware that Toronto is the capital of a thriving province and that it is a finer city by far, as to elegant buildings, than Mobile. By ten oclock or so I am at my writing every day & give my afternoons to visiting my people; reading to the sick & occasionally or preaching at the jail. My evenings are chiefly given to reading—& so time flies flies flies with me.

Clara Dearest, I wish you would in your next give me a daguerreotype of your home as I have now of mine. I think a friend of mine Rev. Charles T. Brooks of New Port, R.I. is to preach to the Unitarian chh in Mobile this winter. I hope you will make his acquaintance. He is a fine, affable young man—with a fine wife and several children. Now our best love to you & your Henrietta & the rest and to Ball & Jane<sup>3</sup> & all the dear ones.

Your brother

Charles

All our Baltimore & Boston & Lynn friends are comfortably well by last accounts. When shall we have a visit from you? Austin<sup>4</sup> is just gone to housekeeping in St. Paul St., Baltimore. Tis hard to think of him as a father.

[On the outside of the folded letter, no envelope, is written:]

To

Mrs Clara Tardy  
Care of Ball Tardy Esq.  
Mobile, Alabama  
U States

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<sup>3</sup> Jane Richards Austin, sister of Clarissa Honey Austin, married Mark Springer and lived in Mobile.

<sup>4</sup> Thought to refer to Austin Dall, brother of Charles.