



Austin Families Association of America
Archive Document Series
The Dall-Tardy Letters
11 August 1852 - Charles Dall to Clara Tardy

Letter dated 1852 August 11 from Charles Dall in Toronto to Clara Tardy in Mobile

Toronto, Canada West
August 11th, 1852

My Dear Sister

The receipt of a newspaper from your kind Ball not long ago, - in return for a Canada paper from me, - satisfied me that you were still residents of Mobile. I delay not therefore to write, as I had done, because of the impression that you had sought a home elsewhere. I need not say how often I have thought of you during the many, (I was about to say long months—but press of work makes the months fly, -) during the many months that have elapsed since I had direct word from you. I have wholly forgotten whether I wrote you last or not, though I think that my waiting for a reply to my last may come in, among the causes of my delay. I shall delay no longer, my precious Clara; feeling sure that you know “brother Charlie too well to suppose that with him & you it can ever be “out of sight out of mind”.

I imagine that your idea of distance & mine differ a good deal. If I had gotten no other good, from wandering about the world, than the conviction of its being a very small place; and that the distances between friends dwelling on it is not great, at the farthest, - I sh'd say that I had not traveled in vain. I think of you as being at less than half an hour's distance from me; - less than half an hour's ride on the telegraph wires would really put us into direct tête-à-tête. The fact that your words would come to Toronto whenever you chose to speak through the wires) in the hundredth part of a second; (in fact would not take that time for their journey) - is to me a substantial comfort, a daily pleasure.

Well now dearest Clara how are you? And how is your Henrietta and how are your other children? Do write me soon and draw me a picture of yourself & them & Ball. I was going to say speak of nothing else. But I must hear from my “Temperance” Cousin Henry Austin¹ & his brother William. Also from dear Janie² & her children & Mrs. Morand & Lodo & Gus. How are they getting along? Don't fail to tell me particularly about Henry. Do you attend Mr. Hamilton's church yet? & does his preaching quicken & strengthen you as of old. What are our Ball's prospects in business now? And how much of outward comfort is the Sovereign Disposer allotting you? Your life & chief joy, of course, is in your children. Do they continue as full of intellectual & religious promise as ever? (interrupted!) . . .

I return to you after an hour or two's interruption, Sister; and, as I have questioned you closely about yourself will now, as one good tell deserves another—answer your “tell” prospectively by telling you about “me & mine”. My excellent & faithful bosom friend, my Carrie, is in Boston; having my boy Willie with her. Being a good deal run down — and hoping much from the sea air after a year's residence in Canada West, my beloved has gone to spend some two months with my Boston friends & with her own family at Lynn nearby. I hear that she is gain'g though slowly. Willie is decidedly stronger for his journey though pretty stout before. For his age (7 this month) he is an insatiable reader, devouring all the books, fitted to young ideas, that he can lay his hand on. I have thought that he clung to it too closely & rejoice that his mother felt able to take him with her to the East. Our little girl is very stout, built very hearty. She will be 3 years old in September. With the help of a devoted daughter of Erin, her nurse, I take charge of the fat rogue, who is “nuts” to me all day long. How I love my royal girl Lillie needs not to be told.

Now for myself. I left a small & for the most part narrow minded country parish at Needham (a dozen miles out of Boston) at the close of the year 1849. During the year 1850 I preached in various places in several states, say Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts, New York. More than once during that year I seemed very near to a settlement. I have had great reason to thank the All Wise & All Kind that I did not fix either at Bucksport (Maine) or Troy (New York); as I have now a position every way more desirable. In November 1850 I was about starting to do a winters preaching at the rapidly rising town of Cannelton on the Ohio River when I rec'd a telegraphic message to come to Toronto, the capital city of Canada West or what in our old geography was called upper Canada. Here I

¹ Thought to refer to sons of Charles Henry Austin, biological brothers of Clarissa.

² Jane Richards Austin Springer, sister of Clarissa, who also lived in Mobile.

found a small but increasing circle of really intelligent men, ready to make any reasonable sacrifice to sustain me in a comfortable home, and (as things are valued according to their cost) who are the most attentive of hearers.

If Canada West were one of the U. States — as it is sure to be one day) it would be considered (as it now is) one of the largest & best-landed states in the union. Not one-third of the land is yet cleared of timber—but what is cleared, is said to present the fairest exhibition of wheat-raising farms in the world. Toronto is about the latitude of Portland but has a milder & more even temperature than Boston. It suits my health & that of the children admirably well. In one word I am both busier & happier than ever before in my life—my wants being few are all supplied; & love & generosity are the leading traits of my people—we have a splendid young city of the size of Mobile and I am the only Unitarian preacher in the land.

Love to Ball and your dear ones from y'r

brother Charles

[On the outside of the folded letter, without envelope, is the address:]

For

Mrs. ClaraTardy
Care of Ball Tardy Esq
Mobile
Alabama

U States