

Evergreen Oct. 1, 1883

My dear M. Darden

I have long deferred acknowledging your very interesting letter because I wished to write a great deal than a dry formal acknowledgement. It has been my wish to live over again in reminiscence some of the stirring scenes of years gone by xxx to in yours of years when you were a child and I too was young, in the first flush of manhood. But for the moment I must suffer disappointment, and I must write hastily or not at all. It is I suspect t a common expectation that when life is protracted beyond the period of vigorous labor declining years will be a period of mental and physical leisure, with time for frequent reminiscence, for garrulity about former scenes and for pleasant memorandums chastened and corrected by the wiser judgment of gray hairs. Such is not my good fortune. I work harder; have fewer moments for recreation and for society than at any period of my former long life. I should be delighted to take a run to Columbus, have a day with you; but alack and alas, I can't find the time. I took the Prairie Flower for a year; was very well pleased with it; feel a sincere interest in the success of W. Winkler in her noble enterprise; but my dear friend, I xxx when in Houston renewing my subscription . _ I will do so on my next visit. The stirring incidents that clustered around Admiral Baudins visit to Texas have all the freshness the dewy, rosy freshness of youth in my memory. Of course your memory of those times must be most vivid_ your father's house was the head quarters of the festivities and courtesies which made Admiral Baudins visit a grand fete. The Admiral was on his return to France triumphant from the successful bombardment of Veza Cruz. He came to with his fleet off Galveston ostensibly enough as if it were a visit of pleasure, a mere repose by a run on land from the restraint of ship-board. Undoubtedly it was a mission by order of the French government to examine the political condition and prospective future of Texas. France had then in consideration the acknowledgement of the Independence of Texas. Subsequently I saw a good deal of the Admiral in Paris. He had a kindly memory of his visit to Texas and I was indebted to him for many valuable civilities.

Your notion of writing sketches of earlier times, of the leading men of Texas of that period strikes me most favorably. Your notices would be read with liveliest interest. What glorious, life inspiring times those were. And I will add confidently what grand men the leaders of Texas were at that period. If I were asked what is the most striking and enduring characteristic which survives in my memory of those men, I should say that of personal independence and eminent leadership. However unlike so many of the spewed outgrowth of caucuses.

I regret that want of time forbids my working with you in your worthy purpose. But you do not need my aid. Time and my prosaic life have filled my mind_ its poetry is worn away long years ago. You have retained the freshness of your fancy and you wield a graphic pen.

I am obliged to draw this long letter to a close. I will write to you in a few days about Willie Lee. It is best for him to remain as he is until I write to you.

I hope you will not imitate my tardiness in acknowledging your handsome letter. And apropos of writing your pen ought to supplement handsomely your income. What has become of the lady your cousin whose acquaintance I have long wished to make? _ Tell me all about yourself, your health, your business affairs. Ever with kindest regards undiminished.

Your old friend

Ashbel Smith