

# TRANSCRIPTION

## Charles Doe Wrote to His Family, 22 February 1850

Danville Feb. 22<sup>d</sup> 1850

Dear Brother & Sister.

Mary Virginia will be 7 years old 12<sup>th</sup> of March, & Sally Allen 8 years old 27<sup>th</sup> June. They are both "powerful" large & fat, & possessed of an unusual musical talent. Sally will already turn any simple tune, after hearing it two or three times, & can give a half doz. negro melodies, & nursery rhymes. This talent is undoubtedly an inheritance of the Allen's— I had a notion to claim it as a peculiar trait of the Doe's but as only a very few of our family have developed their natural power in this art, & as every Allen is a musician, & as if this claim was established it would be the only Doe characteristic which Mary & Sally have yet shown. I dropped that pretension immediately. Sally talks everything very well. On the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup> of this month, as I came in to breakfast, Thomas' countenance seemed to bear a very remarkable expression of comfort & gladness, & little Sally immediately explained these unusual symptoms, by rolling her eyes mysteriously, clapping her hands, & asking me if I had seen her little sister in the bedroom. I suspected however that she had received sundry directions from her Pa, about informing me of the coming of the third native Doe in Virginia. Thomas showed the most becoming satisfaction proper on an occasion of such increased responsibility. The name has not yet been given, & it is desirable that it should soon be fixed upon, so that she can more easily & conveniently be made the subject of conversation & correspondence. Martha is the only name yet mentioned. Sarah requests mother to forward one for consideration. Aunt Kathy daily reports all well.

A black, belonging to one of the doctors, staying two or three nights with Thomas' negroes, was taken sick, & died here a fortnight ago. I had opportunity to see how slaves are treated in sickness & death. This one was a valuable one, Worth \$800 or \$900, aged 30, engaged to be married soon, attached to his master & beloved by his master, & all the negroes. He was sick but 5 days, was attended by his master & two other doctors & watched by 2 negroes constantly. He was laid decently in a plain black coffin, carried to the grave in a wagon, & followed by 60 negroes on foot in the road, his master on sidewalk before the corpse. The blacks had a prayer meeting at the house before starting, & again at the grave, conducting it wholly themselves. The ministers attend at their funerals when requested, but they are not generally requested. The whole ceremony was as solemn silent & impressive as I have witnessed anywhere. The graveyard is divided by a fence, one part being for whites, & the other for blacks. This separation in death would probably suggest to an abolitionist, or any one searching for unpleasant things connected with slavery, that the fence might not be so hereafter. There are but a very few monumental stones in the part of the whites, & none in the other, but the grass grows as green in one as in the other. Have attended an Auction, at which 3 negroes, mother, child, & a man were sold. All sales of negroes are attended by many traders, whose business is to cary them to the south, mostly to S. Carolina & Georgia & Alabama. They generally have a great aversion to going South, & consequently are in great fear at the sales, of being bought by a Trader. Those, whose sale I attended, were bought to live in the neighborhood & were satisfied, but it is far from a pleasant sight at first to see negroes sold, as most of them are, in this way. Knowing not what their fate may be, liable to be bought by a hard master, or sent South, their

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fear of the worst, & anxious suspense while about to be sold, tormenting them naturally timid, they form a scene on the block, which is hard to be understood without being seen. — There are generally services in 2 or 3 of the 4 churches, in the morning, at which very few blacks attend. In the afternoon, there are services in 1 or 2 of the churches only, & no whites are present at them, unless from curiosity. I went to the Methodist last Sabbath afternoon. There were three or four hundred blacks there, observing the custom of the whites, The women being on one side & in front of the middle of the church, & the men occupying the back seats & one side. There were 6 whites in the gallery— The minister preached a good sermon, with a few ideas peculiarly adapted & addressed to the special condition & duties of the congregation. Their advantages were contra[sted] with those of heathen millions in a very good manner. If he had gone into particulars, & shown how much better morally, mentally, & physically, they are than the free blacks in Africa at this day, & also shown how much superior their prospects are, supposing they remain slaves forever, to any natural expectations that can be formed of their native brothers in Africa, he would have done no more than his duty. The greatest difference between this & a meeting of whites, is in the singing. The music of the whites is shocking, but of the blacks the best I ever heard without instruments. The contrast of music in forenoon & afternoon, is greater than the difference of color in the singers. The black have almost universally good voices, quick ears, & great love for music. Not one of them knows a note. Their national instrument is the Banjo; some of them play on the violin. The whites play the Banjo a great deal, at least as much as northerners do the flute. But the flute is hardly known here. Thomas will go North in a fortnight, & stay at Somersworth longer than common. I shall probably get home by the time he gets there. Want to stop in several places & shall start before him. CHARLES

*Letter was Addressed:*

Mr. E. Ricker Doe,  
Boston  
Mass.

Cha<sup>s</sup> Letter  
Danville Feb<sup>ry</sup> 22<sup>d</sup>  
1850 To Eben

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