

**CORRESPONDENCE OF THOMAS
EBENEZER THOMAS: MAINLY
RELATING TO THE ANTI-SLAVERY
CONFLICT IN OHIO, ESPECIALLY
IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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THOMAS EBENEZER THOMAS

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Correspondence *of*
Thomas Ebenezer Thomas

MAINLY RELATING TO THE
ANTI-SLAVERY CONFLICT IN OHIO,
ESPECIALLY IN THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.



PUBLISHED BY HIS SON.

1909

"The truth, which in our case, has been the suffering truth, has certain paramount rights; among these, the right to assert itself to be the truth, and to have always been the truth."

—E. D. MacMaster.

"The true life of a man is in his letters. . . . Not only for the interest of a biography, but for arriving at the inside of things, the publication of letters is the true method. Biographers varnish, they assign motives, they conjecture feelings, they interpret Lord Burleigh's nods; but contemporary letters are facts."—DR. NEWMAN to his sister, May 18, 1863.

The notes in this volume, mostly biographical, are written by ALFRED A. THOMAS.

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PREFACE.

The reason why these pages are now put in print appears below :

"PROF. ALFRED H. UPHAM,
MY DEAR SIR:

I recall the meeting of the Dayton Miami Alumni, when you came last, and read a few pages of what some one prepared to publish for the coming Centennial in June. You should have come first; for we all wished to hear what you had no due time to read. I want a copy of the few pages you read; it touches matters that I have long had an interest in. I may mail you some information relating to the subject, or print and send it to you.

With much respect, I beg to remain,

Very truly,

A. A. THOMAS."

February 17, 1909

June 12-17, 1909

2011-6-12
28.

The Centennial of Miami University Oxford, Ohio

The Joint Committee on Arrangements, Representing
Trustees, Alumni and University Faculty

Chairman, A. H. Upham, Oxford, Ohio
Secretary, E. S. Hartlow, Hamilton, Ohio

April 22, 1908.

A. A. THOMAS, Esq.,
Dayton, Ohio,
Dear Sir:

I send you a copy of the chapter to which you referred so kindly in your letter. The entire MSS. of the book is now in the printer's hands, and I hope that the completed work will measure up to the idea you have formed of this first chapter.

Very truly yours,

A. H. Upham."

The completed publication of the Centennial Committee of Miami University I have not seen: all presumptions are in its favor. Most of what appears in its Chapter I, on "Pioneer Days," is well enough; but through the concluding pages there runs a vein of ridicule; and they

present, I submit, no fair picture of the character, quality and record of the first three Presidents, and of two of the Professors of the first twenty-five years of the University's life.

"At the head of the list stands the somewhat rawboned and ungainly figure of President Bishop." * * * He had many friends, high cheek bones and friendly eyes. Both he and President E. D. MacMaster, later, had "the mantle of authority stripped from shoulders not yet stooped with age," and because they could not maintain discipline. * * * Prof. William H. McGuffey had "two passions which consumed his young life,—the preaching of the gospel and the education of the child-mind." He was "a cold, unapproachable man who wanted his students to drill every morning in public oratory at 5:00 A. M." * * * He wore "a stove pipe hat and a solemn suit of shining black bombazine; and the Dartown congregation that he supplied, were impressed by the glassy sheen of his garments."

When Doctor Scott returned from "Carey's premature project of the Farmer's College," "Ben Harrison was in his train when Doctor S. gathered about them a circle of demure and bewitching maidens." * * *

"At this time, the extreme abolitionists were lifting up their voices throughout the land. A part of them in the Presbyterian church demanded the immediate exclusion of all slave-holding members. Doctor Junkin demurred. He was a staunch union man, and personally opposed to slavery, but he believed that emancipation should come by slow and gradual process, based on a scheme of deportation. In a session of Presbytery, he expressed himself succinctly in a few well-chosen words requiring some ten hours in their delivery and at once a new enemy camped at his gates. A man who took ten blessed hours to prove that slave-holding Southerners would find their names recorded on the Book of Life was not fit custodian of their children's characters, said the abolitionists. The allied opposition was too much for Doctor Junkin and he withdrew."

"At Miami, Doctor Junkin was succeeded by an ardent abolitionist, Erasmus D. MacMaster." * * * "He was a very painful preacher, and his ponderous antitheses and periods searched the heart of weighty questions as they deliberately rolled from his tongue." * * *

Troubles followed. * * * "But now the work was ruined, the student body scattered, and the institution crippled. The splendid spirit of Doctor MacMaster was broken for the time, and he retired from the University. With the brilliant, popular and prosperous administration of President Anderson, Miami entered on her second quarter century of active life, secure, efficient, optimistic. Pioneering days were done forever."

I have condensed from various pages, but the reader will have the official publication, to test or verify the substantial accuracy of my quotations.

"Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God has given thee."

That is a commandment to be remembered by more persons than escaped Presbyterians like me. On Centennial birthdays, it should be remembered by quasi-public corporations for educational purposes.

Thomas E. Thomas was graduated at Miami in the class of 1834, after having been there five years. In 1802, his sons prepared for publication, with notes written by them, what appears on the title page of this volume. It had an introduction by the Rev. S. F. Seovel, D. D., then President of Wooster University.

The MSS. was laid aside "for the ninth ripening year:" then it was considered by his sons and grandsons, and the conclusion reached not to publish. "Everybody is dead, and the sons and daughters do not care for such matters."

This chapter on "Pioneer Days" made me open and read that box of dusty papers. Dr. Thomas's sons have published no book and do not know how to edit one. But Doctors Bishop, MacMaster, and Scott, and Professor McGuffey too, were my father's friends: I feel I hold a brief to their memory, and now is the time to print it.

Only a third part of these MSS. and letters are here published. The reader who cares for Miami only must excuse a somewhat awkward presentation of matter prepared for another purpose. Material for an adequate history of the anti-slavery conflict in the Presbyterian Church, and of the early days of Miami University too, still exists in the homes of her early graduates: and here is some contribution for the use of whoever in the future, will come, able and ready to tell the story.

The awkwardness above confessed lies in part in inability to exclude closely interwoven matter which does not relate to Miami University. As I rely also much on the testimony of my father, a few additional letters of his are given, of use here only to exhibit his character as a witness, and competency to express an opinion.

The liberty has been taken, also, to add one or two brief letters to Dr. Thomas from his mother. Some may think to do so is impertinent; that when they see a tree-top, they know all about it, regardless of what soil its roots run down into.

*These "Notes", written seventeen years ago, in so far as they mention contemporary living persons, are not up to date. This is necessarily so, for my brother, the Rev. John H. Thomas, is dead, and I am not up to date myself.

I know too little to criticize Miami University during the past twenty years; but enough to believe it is doing creditably a most practical work, and in fulfillment of the high aims of its founders. Dr. Benton is a worthy successor of Miami's early presidents; and his faculty and helpers deserve the respect of all who have inherited a love of Miami. That the compiler of this Centennial memorial should fall into some error is the fault of those who have withheld data needed to give true lines to the picture. Only one side of a contention has been told: it was as if a case half argued had gone by default. Dr. Junkin's biography by his brother is the authority generally at hand, and the story of the Seminaries by Dr. Halsey, is as fair as possible, when he omits what he wished had not been done or said.

In fact, at an early date, no small group of friends realized the consequence of these conditions: they met at Oxford and deputed Dr. Thornton A. Mills to give an address on Dr. Bishop, and my father to

write his biography; Dr. T. did his task well: my father gathered inadequate but salient material: I hold a crumbling memorandum sent him from Crawfordsville in 1855, by Rev. John Thomson, founder of Wabash College, who gathered with filial hand, in bound pamphlets, Dr. Bishop's many publications, during twenty years in Kentucky; the paper ends thus:

"May the Lord prosper your endeavors to keep the grace of God shed upon that man from being forgotten as if hid under a bushel.

Your brother in the best of bonds,

John Thomson.

P. S. Opportunity to send the books sooner failed; and I had to wait to get some person going that I could trust. It would cost fifty cents to send the books by the cars."

If one now can read between the lines of these letters, "*res angusta domi*," he will learn in part why the writers did not make due publication of what they knew justice to their memories might require in years to come.

ALFRED A. THOMAS.

Dayton, Ohio, May 1909.

In 1892 Dr. S. F. Scovel wrote an introduction for a publication of this Correspondence. As over half of the letters are not now printed, I take the liberty to append these paragraphs only, of what he wrote.

PART OF INTRODUCTORY NOTE
BY DR. SCOVEL.

There are two elements in the book, the biographical and the autobiographical, the one in the notes and the other in the letters. It is high praise to say that the first is worthy of the second. Evidently no pains have been spared to bring together most valuable information concerning the authors of the correspondence, and to supply side lights wherever necessary. The judgments expressed, for which the author of the notes is responsible, are worthy of attention even from those who might be inclined to differ here or there. They are, in general, as kindly meant as they are decided. The book would be much less useful than it promises to be without these addenda.

1. We need wait no longer for the perspective of time. Nearly sixty years (1834-93) is time-distance enough. The main results are now so plain we cannot mistake the outlines of judgment concerning those whose travail of soul had so much to do with the latter birth of great events.

2. The period covered by this correspondence imparts to it a unique interest. Earlier the work here related could not have been done. Later would have been too late. A little away from the actual pioneer work which had either been already accomplished or was being carried forward by others, these actors were called to the noble task of moulding a sentiment which should be able to resist the gathering force of avarice stimulated by gain and then re-enforced by fundamental misreading of our national Constitution, and by deplorably mistaken exegesis of the Scriptures.

3. No one can read this volume without being touched with what he must read (mainly between the lines and by fewest hints) concerning the self-denial with which every step of the anti-slavery propaganda was accompanied. The money seemed *all* to have a pro-slavery ring about it. Small incomes and young families made plain living with this high thinking. But even so, generosity and justice went hand in hand. To help students, to hold meetings, to print appeals, to sustain journals, to attend Conventions—the money to do all these things was found by some means or other. And this was done for years and done when a far different thing and the more comfortable thing might have been done.

4. Never were better illustrations furnished of the perplexities of good men as to methods. Common aims do not bring