

Milton Wright Letter Transcription

Transcribed from Milton Wright letter on education, January 7, 1916, Box 3, File 15, MS-1, Wright Brothers Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University Libraries.

Dayton, Ohio, Jan. 7, 1916.

[page 1]

Dr Mr. [unknown, blurred out, possibly erased]

You wrote something about teaching. I do not know but teaching children by sight is as good for words as by letters. I taught all my children to read the first reader, except my daughter whom my second son taught. My youngest grandson was turned over to me after a teacher had taught him to guess at words! It was a hard job to break him from guessing. He is Ovrille's and Katherine's favorite (Horace) the boy in the picture I send. [Here? Horace?] is not often as fine a boy found.

I will give the history of two families in Layette County, Indiana, of whom I am one, and Rhoda William, of the other, remaining. March 1, 1840, we moved [next neighbor?] south of Thomas Stephen. He was a portly, good-looking man, and his wife a better looking woman. Stephen was a prosperous man, a Primitive Baptist man. He had [page 2] six daughters and two sons. His oldest daughter at 17 years became my older brother Harvey's wife, he then 23. These died in Rush County, he aged nearly 86, and she aged 85 years old. Mr. Stephen always kept a barrel of whiskey in his house, but was never known to be intoxicated. Of the liquor, he partook daily in small quantities and gave his children a dram each day. No doubt, the children all continued after their marriage to drink at home, which some of them visited daily, my sisterinlaw especially. Except the youngest son, never was any of them drunk. He died a year or two ago a frequent drunkard. They were uncommonly good-looking, and smart to learn, and gifted otherwise. But all the girls married off without affliction to me, although as a boy, I fell deeply in love with his third child, a daughter I always much admired--still do. But I could never think she was the right one for me.

My father's family in 1840 consisted of four sons and one daughter, she the middle in age. My oldest brother esteemed the most gifted of us all, with one years school, and help at home, [page 3] became a schoolteacher, and died in triumph in 1842, as he was preparing for the ministry. His triumph, I shall never forget. It was he who gave me my start in algebra, and went half through without assistance. I remember his dying counsel yet. Harvey, my second brother, was eight years older than me. He joined the Primitive Baptist Church after I joined the United Brethren Church, though he began to preach before I did. He was quite an orator, and was pronounced to have no superior in the church, in the funeral sermon, by the able editor of the Primitive Baptist Church in Indiana. My sister, four years older than I, married and

Transcribed by Elizabeth Brown, Director, 40L. Items in [brackets] are best guesses; brackets also show page numbers of the original handwritten document.

died in 1868, leaving ten children, all married now and still living, all having good families, though one is himself somewhat intemperate. My younger brother was the best man I ever knew. He was an able United Brethren preacher, though so slow in utterance as to weary many. He left three children all are doing well. He died in 1868. His widow, a good woman, married again, has another daughter, both widows, now living together. She was always my sister.

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Now for some reflections. Mr. Stephen was a man of fair speech. He prospered greatly for many years, but at last fell into a melancholly state of mind, paid \$500.00 to trade back a farm for which he was abundantly able to pay, and imagined some one was seeking his life. After a year or more, he gradually recovered from this state, and told me of his delusions and the great misery he was under. Harvey had traveled with him, and his delusions had worn off. He had totally quit the use of whiskey during his delusions. He, later in life, fell into a similar spell, and died.

I taught school in his district and his son Martin went to school to me. Mr. Stephen's children--probably for Harvey's sake--at school showed me reverence, especial. [Aud? Kid?] Martin, six or eight years old, from being one of the most mischievous children, behaved like a saint. I took him and carried him in a class of spelling of two letters to spell off the book in the back part of the spelling book, all in six months time, [page 5] unlike the rest of the Stephens, he was slow to learn, but he kept in his class though he fell behind the brightest scholars. It was during this six months that he obtained all the learning he ever had. When I married in 1854, he refused to join his fellows, to give me a [chiviri?] at my [?infair?]. So I went without one! Who was responsible for his drunkenness, he or his father who taught it him?

But Harvey had two children who for a short time before their death inherited Stephen's insanity; John, Harvey's faithful son, and Harvey's noble daughter who ended life with a pistol, who carried her [kitshen? kitsheu?] with a storm. Their mother was a warm friend of mine. She was not insane.

My father was a very intellectual man, though slow of speech, and largely reticent. In 1833, he banished liquor from his house, and raised us all without it. There was not a drinking man among his children. His sons were uninterested.

When I taught in Andersonville in 1852, a very intellectual doctor sent his son to me. [Henry?], his father told me, had gave several terms to school, but could hardly pronounce at all. I taught him three months [page 6] and had him spelling off the book nicely in three syllables. He succeeded to his father's practice in medicine, at Wabash, Indiana.