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## New & Notable

EMILY DICKINSON

When Thomas H. Johnson and Theodora Ward were compiling their definitive *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, Cambridge, 1958, only one such manuscript could be located at Princeton. There were six main institutional repositories of the letters, some belonged to individuals, many were missing and others had been destroyed. It is now our grateful pleasure to inform *Chronicle* readers that Mrs. John Pershing has presented the Library two notes of the poet, and plans to make more donations from her extensive collection.

According to Mr. Johnson and Mrs. Ward one of our notes was sent, probably with a bunch of flowers, to Mrs. James S. Cooper, mother of a law partner of Emily's brother. It formerly belonged to Orton L. Clark. The message in six lines is simply, "How strange that Nature does not knock, and yet does not intrude!" In what is probably Emily Dickinson's first letter to the first Mrs. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, written in the spring of 1876, perhaps eighteen months before the latter's death, the poet expressed nearly the same thought: "Who knocks not, yet does not intrude, is Nature." The fear of intruding in the lives of others persists throughout the letters and is given abundantly poignant voice in the one sent to Higginson at the time of the death of Mary Channing Higginson. "I had feared to follow you, lest you would rather be lonely, which is the will of sorrow—but the Papers had spoken of you with affectionate deference, and to know you were deeply remembered, might not too intrude."

The other note presented to the Library by Mrs. Pershing is particularly welcome since Mr. Johnson and Mrs. Ward could not find the original for their edition of the letters. It has appeared in print only in MacGregor Jenkins' *Emily Dickinson: Friend and Neighbor*, Boston, 1930, and in the Johnson and Ward edition. The manuscript differs in punctuation and capitalization from the Johnson and Ward text. The note was sent to Mrs. Jonathan L. Jenkins, wife of the pastor of the First Church at Amherst.

He held the post from 1866 until 1877, and returned to help officiate at the funeral of Emily Dickinson in 1886. According to Johnson and Ward it is said to have been sent with pussy willows.

Nature's Buff message—left for you in Amherst. She had not time to call—You see her Father and my Father were Brothers—Emily.

—E.E.C.

CIVIL LIBERTIES IN PRINCETON, 1835

In the late summer of 1835, not long before Commencement (which was held 30 September that year), an undergraduate sat down in his room in Nassau Hall and wrote a letter to a relative in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Preserved we know not how or where through the years, this letter turned up recently in the stock of an autograph dealer, and was purchased and presented to the University by Dr. Thomas M. McMillan Jr. '13 of Philadelphia. The dealer had penciled in one corner "Remarkable!" It is not only a remarkable letter, but an extremely revealing historical document. We print it *verbatim*.

Princeton, September [postmarked 10] 1835.

Dear Rod

I received your letter of the 5th of August last Monday but have been hindered from answering it until now on account of having two letters to write, one home, and the other to Sally Benezet. We have some little news here that will be interesting to you. Last Friday evening as some of the fellows were walking out nigger lane [Witherspoon Street] they saw a white man in a nigger house and upon inquiring, found him to be an abolitionist. When they came back they mentioned it to the fellows at the gate, some of whom made a motion, which was seconded, put to the meeting, and carried magnanimously, that they should go down there and Lynch him. It was no sooner said than done, they immediately marched there in a body called out the black the owner of the house, and asked him if there was not a white man within; at first being frightened almost to death he answered no, but upon being more closely questioned said yes. He had scarcely said it before Tommy Ancrum and Judge rushed into the house siezed the abolitionist by the throat and dragged him

out taking away his papers they found that he was an agent for the Liberator, the Emancipator, and a parcel more of those infernal publications. The sight of these cursed papers exasperated the assembly (for some of the town's people had now joined them) to such a pitch that they began to cry out "Lynch him," "kick him out of town," "kick him to death," "hang him," tar and feather him. They certainly would have inflicted some greivous punishment upon [him] had he plead so hard that he overcame them with pity; he said he had a wife and family in Philadelphia and that it was for their support that he had undertaken this agency. On hearing that he had a family Judge who had been one of his most violent persecutors became his warmest advocate and said that no one should hurt the man unless he did it through him. They told the old fellow that they would let him go upon condition that he renounced abolition and swore by all that is holy he would have nothing more to do with it. He took the required oath and promised he would leave town directly, but they, to be more certain of his going and to have a little more fun with him, said they would accompany [him] to the end of town. They took him beyon the last house of the village, on the road leading to Phil. and letting him go told him to heel it for his life. Those who were there say they never saw a man run so fast before he soon got into a woods close by and they lost him. That you may not be astonished at his running so fast, I will just mention again the different kinds of punishment they threatened to inflict upon him if they caught him again; "tar and feather him," "tar and feather him and set him on fire," "put him in a hollow log stop up both end and heave him in the canal," "Lynch him," (which you know signifies thirty nine with the cowhide, tard and feathered, put in a canoe in the middle of the river without oars or paddle, and sent adrift) "hang him." Whilst they were deliberating what they should do with him, the red headed nigger that lives at Hollises came up and wanted them badly to hang him. The poor rascal was frightened almost to death but I think he got off very well. Inquiring about him in town the next morning the learned that he was a single man, and that he came from N. York instead of Phila. Spencer's father was down here the other day to settle his son's accounts. He

found a bill of about one hundred dollars at Cpt. White's twenty three shillings of which he paid, another small one of 180\$ at Van Doren's nine dollars of which he paid alleging as an excuse for not paying the rest, that the articles his son got were foolish things and that the store keeper had no business to let him have them. You may tell Ham there is not much probability of his coming back this session as Henry has turned Kilgour out of 51 and uses it as his study; Kilgour rooms in 53 with Tayloe. Commencement will be held in the back Campus immediately back of the prayer hall among the batteries and poplar trees. They are to have a large canvass awning which will cover about 1500 people. If you are back here on Saturday, that you may hear the Dr. [President Carnahan] bachelareate on Sunday it will be time enough. Some of them are beginning to come back already. Commodore Taylor has been to the falls of Niagara and Trenton and to Quebec or Montreal, he has been back three or four days. I suppose Papa has gone down by this time when he returns you will see the new carriage give me a description of it when you write. I think you had better come over here to commencement you might bring the horse and carriage over if no one else intends coming and keep it here. I am very much obliged to you for sending the papers again. If you do not come over to commencement I shall expect you to be ready at the stage office on Friday to accompany me to Easton. It is getting late I must quit. Give my love to all.

I am Your's affectionately

Gilbert R. McCoy

Write soon.

The author of this letter was Gilbert Rodman McCoy of Martin's Creek, Pennsylvania, who received his degree in 1837. Biographical information is lacking concerning him, but it is known that he took an M.D. at the University of Pennsylvania in 1840, and died in 1883. The recipient of the letter was Gilbert Rodman Fox (A.B. 1835), who became a lawyer in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, and was for fifteen years clerk of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. His mother was Margery Rodman, daughter of Gilbert Rodman of Edington, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Because the two men had the same given name, we assume that their mothers were both daughters of Gilbert Rodman, and that the correspondents were cousins.

By way of annotation, it should be said that at that period of the college history, by reason of the complete lack of other *divertissement*, it was normal in pleasant weather for the students to idle at the college gate of an evening. *The Liberator* was William Lloyd Garrison's famous weekly anti-slavery newspaper. *The Emancipator and Republican* was published in Boston at that time; like *The Liberator*, it espoused extreme abolitionism.

The Princetonians mentioned can all be identified. Thomas James Ancrum of Camden, South Carolina, was a member of the Class of 1838. On 29 March 1836 he was suspended for "going to the tavern without permission" and on the 27th of June he was dismissed at the request of his guardian.

Hilliard Means Judge of Winnsboro, South Carolina, was in the Class of 1837; he was dismissed 4 April 1837 for pointing a pistol at a college officer, but the faculty later relented, and he received his A.B. in 1840.

Ambrose Spencer Jr. '37 of Canandaigua, New York, had been dismissed from Princeton on August 19th for having been intoxicated and having grossly insulted a college officer. His father, who dealt so cavalierly with the town tradesmen, was the distinguished New York state lawyer and politician, John Canfield Spencer (Union 1806), a former Congressman, and later Secretary of War and Secretary of the Treasury. It should be added that Ambrose Spencer's younger brother, Midshipman Philip Spencer (Union 1843), was involved in the *Somers* mutiny in 1842 and was one of the three hung at the yardarm.

Thomas White and John Van Doren were local merchants and trustees of the First Presbyterian Church.

Ham was Hamilton Meredith of Doylestown, a member of the Class of 1836. He did return, but on 14 January 1836 he was "directed to leave College and return home, in consequence of generally disorderly conduct, and improper conduct in the recitation room."

Professor Joseph Henry was using 51 North College (Nassau Hall) as a study; the student he had turned out was James McIlhany Kilgour of Rockville, Maryland, a member of the Class of 1837 in good standing who was obliged to leave college when his father was killed by runaway horses.

John Tayloe of Georgetown, D.C., was also a non-graduate of '37.

Commodore Taylor was probably John Winthrop Taylor of the Class of 1835 and M.D. Pennsylvania 1838. He became a surgeon in the Navy and was later Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. It may be that he came from a Navy family or that early naval interests earned him his nickname. His trip had carried him to Trenton Falls, one of the scenic resorts of the time, north of Utica, New York.—M.H.T.