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James B. Finley Letters

2-24-1849

Letter from Thomas Coke Wright to James B. Finley

Thomas Coke Wright

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Get hope points the road to Heaven

When true pleasures flow

In this world of tribulation

Passing too & so
Heaven has taught us resignation
Long time ago!!
S M

Did you ever receive a newspaper containing a list of murders committed in 1847 with my remarks on it written for the New York Tribune. I sent you the paper, but believe you were attending conference at the time at Pittsburgh.

I have kept another list for the last year and will arrange it for the press as soon as I can find time. I thought I would keep a list last year to see if the return of so many soldiers from Mexico might not make a difference. The number of murders is much larger last year than the year before.

Wm Lloyd Garrison
Chaplain of P
Boston Aug 24

Wm Lloyd Garrison
March 49

Olivia Oh Feb 24/1849

Dear Sir

I had intended to write a sketch of Hammett's life - giving some of the incidents of it from the time he became clerk in a store in New York up to his death. Giving the particulars of the robbery for which he was sent - his pursuit and capture - conduct while in prison - remarkably engaging and almost successful attempt to break out of one of the strongest jails in the U.S. - his trial and personal deportment while it continued - his speech addressed to the judges when about to pass sentence on him - its wonderful effect upon the court and spectators - his conversation and behaviour on his way to Columbus. The Sheriff took me along at Hammett's request and I sat by his side all the way up and was watching his countenance when he caught the first glimpse of the penitentiary. And also to publish his letters to myself and the Sheriff - two of them contain nearly 13 pages of foolscap. The last letter to me was dated August the 19th 1848 which was in answer to one I wrote him giving him some account of the terrible murders committed there and how much they had operated against obtaining signatures to a petition for a reprieve. All of which I was going to publish in some popular newspaper in its department communications as it would be too long for one. But I will cheerfully and willingly hand over my letters to you. Your paper is the very place for them of all others. If I were in your place I would not miss having his speech in my book for \$20.00. It is a gem of eloquence - I doubt if Senator Lewis himself could have produced a more decisive effect. Judge Sumner and like a child and others were affected to tears. The court hall which is 46 feet square was filled to a perfect jam. Notwithstanding the aggravated nature of his offense still if it could have been put to vote it was thought a majority would have voted to let him go immediately. I wish you would inform me how much you can find room for about him in your book. I believe I will go to work and write out for you all I know about him for you. That is provided you could get it inserted. I was one of his counsel with whom he first consulted, though I did not appear for him in court. I advised him to plead guilty and threw himself on the mercy of the court. He told me afterwards he was sorry he had not done so. My curiosity was much excited to learn how the robbery was effected fully believing he had an accomplice; and though it was a sore subject with him which he did not like to talk about, yet he communicated all the particulars to me from the time the temptation first entered his thoughts. First and last I was with him a good deal - he appeared grateful for my kindness and to have formed for me a personal attachment and was more communicative to me than to any other person about him. Have you ever seen my letter to him. I would like for you to have it. If I mistake not it contains a description of

of the terrible scene which took place here on the night of the murder. May be a quotation from it might be inserted in a foot note. It seems to me that such an astounding murder ought to be put on record some where. More exertions have been made, more time and money spent and a larger reward offered to detect the perpetrators than ever I heard of in the U.S. but all in vain.

With regard to Mother's poem which you had and lost I knew of but one chance of obtaining a copy of it and that is only a chance. A citizen of this place has a box of old papers amongst which is a file of the paper it was published and may be the literary man may have spent the 1¢ which contained it. Should I find it could you not have it republished in the Christian Advocate. You may find some more of her poems in The Gospel Trumpet published by Messrs. Hinkle in Dayton.

There was a man in Virginia by the name of Benjamin Goodrich or Guthridge. He had served an apprenticeship to all the vices of the times and was an adept. An avowed Deist a contemner of religion and enemy to preachers whom he threatened with violence. Swearing gambling fighting & all kinds of debauchery seemed to come naturally to him.

He used to carry a manuscript about with him for which he said contained all the ingredients for making a Methodist - preach which he claimed as his own composition. He would read it out of doors at meetings to scoffers and black guards.

Mother put a stop to his fussing by writing the following which drew such a faithful likeness even to his age for he was precocious in depravity that all who saw it knew the original immediately. It was as follows: he wrote.

Take one peck of self conceit
Two gallons of haughtiness, three draughts of disobedience to parents
ten scruples of idleness and a few bitter apples of revenge and
as much foolish vanity as will cement them all together,
make it into a large loaf of ill breeding bake it in the oven
of forwardness break it into small pieces of evil communication
put it into the cask of debauchery, pour on water of lying,
secure all with the thick heading of highmindedness, leaving
open the bung of slander that it may work out the froth of
persecution let it stand 19 or 20 years and it will be fit for
the use of all of prodigal modern infidels."

It rained much ^{gave} ~~long~~
laugh at his expense and much satisfaction by to many persons
who debated his conduct and abhorred his principles.

You must have
the goodness to excuse my not answering ^{you} ~~you~~ by return of mail.
I am county Auditor of this county and am constantly liable

to frequent interruptions that some times I don't get to
finish of a letter in two or three days from the time of beginning.

Since I commenced this I have seen the former Sheriff
who was in when Hammulton was in jail - he says he has another
letter from ~~it~~ him which you may have. I have been promised
the last letter he ever wrote of ~~it~~ ~~can~~ be found. It was directed
to Messrs. Howard & Newbitt - From all three some extracts might
be made tending to show what sort of a man he was. But the two
long ones to the Sheriff and myself containing an account of his change
for the better are elegantly written and might nearly all be
inserted if you have room. There will be 4 letters in all of the one
I speak of can be found besides his revised speech which you ought to
have by all means. The postage will be considerable. How would
it do for me to send them to R. F. Howard Esq. our representative.
He was Hammulton's main counsel and made a powerful and
elaborate speech in his defense. I do not know whether it would be
contrary to rules to send them to him or not. I suppose of course there
is an allowance made to members for postage but whether it
extends to any thing that does not concern them constantly I do not know.
(You can inform me.)

I shall look for an answer soon and will
promptly attend to your directions.

I remain with sincere regard
your friend

Thomas Coke Wright

The following is a copy of the last song Mother ever wrote not long
before she died. It shows how deeply her spirit was ~~how~~ ^{how} affected with
the loss of her children.

Near the brook with pebbles bedded
Where the poplars grew
There we lived when first we wedded
Long time ago
We left Virginia hills & fountains
Long time ago
And wandered over the lofty mountains
To the pleasant Ohio
Young and cheerfull when we started
Long time ago
Now we're old & broken hearted
Disturbed with pain & woe
Friends and children both ~~of~~ have left us
Lurch in death so low
And of joy it hath bereft us
Long time ago