

THOMAS DAY'S LETTER TO HIS DAUGHTER, MARY ANN DAY

TEACHER TOOL 5: THOMAS DAY'S LETTER IN ORIGINAL FORM

The following is the full text of a letter Thomas Day sent to his daughter, Mary Ann, when she was a student at Wilbraham Academy in Massachusetts in 1851 with her brothers Thomas and Devereux. We have tried to be faithful to punctuation and spelling used by Day. The spelling and punctuation in this letter reflect those that were common when the letter was written and the fact that words often were spelled as they sounded to the particular writer or speaker.

Milton, N.C. 21 November 1851

My Daughter,

We are in Rept of your Letters regularly & glad to hear from you, we are pleased to Know you are well and to hear of your satisfaction in your home—& hope your religious Enjoyments may continue a comfort to you & consolation to the Brethren with whom you associate.

The time is drawing to a close when I hope to meet with you Again—& I hope Your return to Milton may be a source of Comfort to you notwithstanding The obscure residence You may have here—you inquire how long before I leave & also observe you cant—see how I have lived so long in Milton—I can tell you it will not be verry great while before I hope to leave Milton—and I can also tell you I have long since learned to Enjoy my life in a higher circle than depending on human society for my comfort or happiness—My pleasures are placed in hope beyond this world—My highest pleasure is in discharge of my Every day duty as nearly as possible.

You have read in the scriptures how the two first Brothers Cain & Abel Enjoied Each others Society and how also the Patriarch David loved—his Beautiful son Absalom—& you se Absalom with an army craving his fathers blood—you se the modern time—net work society also—how frail the Affection of Friends—how deceitful —well you must love the lord thy God with thy whole heart—soul & strength & thy Neighbor as Thyself—but all the time Worship God only.

I am perfectly satisfied as regards Milton—I came here to stay four years & am here 7 times 4 I love the place no better nor worse than first day I came into it—My mother & many other unavoidable incomberances has held me here and I am as busy as you Ever se an Old fellow trying to work my way out—& as happy in doing it as I shall Ever be any where—No doubt—my great concirn at this time & will be is to get some sootable place for you and your Brothers—us all—to settle down—I want you to be in some place whare your turn of feelings and manners can be well met with associates—& I fully Expect to affect my purpose if I live long Enough.

You some time ago mentioned your regret at having attempted to learn Music—I want you to persevere in the practice of music and in all other accomplishments that may be useful—or Gratifying to you & to your friends in your intercourse through life.

The Mind is verry much like any piece of Building or workmanship it requires many members sootably arranged to give proper gracefulness and semitry to a building in like manner the Mind requires cirtin accomplishments to give that sootable Ease—necessary to its refinement—Music

has a happy tendency to soothe the unregular & bad Pashions of our nature. I want you to learn Music well—to learn all other Branches well that you have taken—learn to walk well—to stand Erect—learn to feel free & to feel well & easy—learn to wear a free & Easy Expression—and never forget the Modesty and Gentle Caution so necessary in a Lady to give her an independent and unquestionable Character.

Much has been said in your favor since you have been at Wilbraham—if you have done right and acted deservingly it has been Just what you owe to your self & to your Creator and to the world—of corse you know we are all gratified to hear favorably from you—& I hope you will Ever regard your Character more than your life—and it is well for young Ladies to be verry cautious particularly when well spoken of be Ever on your Guard in all respects—A Good character is of Great Vallue. Consequently it requires much attention to retain it—The Higher The character the greater the responceability—the more is Expected of that character or person—& consequently the more you have to learn & to know—to meet the Expectations & wishes of your friends.

All this is nothing hard to do—the way to keep out of Evil is never to get into it—I wish that all persons knew the worth of True Female Virtue & the Blessings of Female accomplishment—how much better is a Lady prepared to stand crosses—Loss—affliction—poverty when she has a good character & Good information than is one ignorant of the Vallue of any & Every thing Even her Own Boddy & soul—what a blessing is true Piety to a young Lady—Bracing her infirmities & preserving her mind from Extravagant desires. How many Beautiful young Ladies are lost to all usefulness by a lack of proper information—There is now a perfect Waste of human flesh here in this verry way the young Ladies come into Villages to School—They learn a little of one thing a little of another and a little on the Piano—They return to their country homes knowing nothing but a scoff at persons who they think inferior to themselves & with nothing in their heads but foolish pride. They enter upon life they know how to Dress their Bodies according to fashion and all is done. They cant—Write—they wont read—They are something they cant tell what—They Keep Clear of Poor people & follow after rich people—& so they go & such children they raise here are Just such as could be Expected from such parents.

I have been truly sorry to hear Devereux health in such a precarious fix—I hope he will remain still till he is better or so perfectly well as to be able to attend to Business. I wish you use your persuasion with him to get him to stay at Wilbraham till he is perfectly well—I have written to him to that affect if his constitution wont stand the cold I want him to come home tho would rather he would work in Boston till next summer—at which time I will then see him I conclude for the Best.

Nothing but Religion is the theme in Milton now—The Greatest revival I Ever Knew in the south 95 or 7 persons in Milton profesed conversion. There came an Englishman originally a sailor But now a Baptist Preacher—he hase been Preaching Every night & day for one month & his meeting has resulted in the profeshion of the above number—I truly hope they may be faithful to the End.

Your mother is still quite well but complaining a little—She wants to se you very badly & so do I—but I am not allowing myself to get very uneasy till the time comes—I intend to get you a Piano and am in hopes you will learn to play on the Guitar so as to amuse yourself while traveling perhaps on the Broad Ocean.

Sofrona Jeffryes is dead Nathans Daughter—Miss Hawkins has not been here this year—Miss Esther Fair is thinking of moving again from No. Durhams—Mrs. Patey Smith is still moderately well—and remembers you as usual—Nothing new in Milton worth attention—when you come home you must expect cool Comfort so far as human intercourse is concerned—Thare is nothing here but to make a little money & that but little to induce us to stay here—Tho with all this you will Enjoy yourself well as any whare for a while.

I have mailed a check to Mr. Raymond for about \$285—which is to meet your Expences & a part of Devereux Tho not Enough for Devereux & not wanting him by any means to leave Wilbraham till he gets well I want to send him some money & must by the time he will be able to go.

The check to Mr. Raymond comes on Tuesday mail. Your mother sends her love to you & says she is going to send you a Christmas Gift.

From your Affectionate Father
Thos Day