

Q
M1579wJ

378.771
cu

The Miami Bulletin

SERIES VIII.

SEPTEMBER, 1909

NUMBER 3

HISTORICAL ADDRESSES

Delivered by the
ALUMNI

In Connection with the

CENTENNIAL COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

OF MIAMI UNIVERSITY,
JUNE 12-17, 1909

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY MIAMI UNIVERSITY

And Entered at Postoffice, Oxford, Ohio, as Second Class Mail Matter

The Centennial Address

By HENRY MITCHELL MACCRACKEN, D.D., LL.D., '57.

Chancellor New York University.

In 1899, when Miami University for the first time celebrated her birthday, she told us, and we believed her, that she was seventy-five years old. Today, after ten years, she again remembers her birthday and tells us that she is now one hundred years old. A story is told in Boswell's Life of Johnson that the Doctor was asked by a lady how he came to blunder so badly in a certain definition in his dictionary. Instead of making an elaborate defense, as she expected, he at once answered, "Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance."

Miami University was not ignorant in 1899 that her college teaching through professors began only seventy-five years before, in 1824, not counting the six years of the Latin Grammar School which had been carried on. But Miami apparently was ignorant, and I am sure most of her alumni were ignorant, that her public teaching as a body corporate really began in the year 1809, when fifteen citizens became a corporation under the name of Miami University. We thank this celebration for teaching us that through a full hundred years Miami has been a power for education and righteousness.

February 17th, 1809, this corporate body began. The mere announcement of this fact to the public constituted the first course of instruction in the name of Miami University. This pledge by the state, of a college, though not fully executed for some years, perhaps went as deep and wrought as mightily upon men's minds as has any course of instruction in any succeeding year in the hundred years of Miami's existence.

Who were the students that received an intellectual stimulus from the fact that a college was incorporated and that its board of corporators was at work? They were the pioneers of southwest Ohio. They were of near a dozen different national stocks, but mainly non-English Puritans. They were largely of Scotch and Scotch-Irish blood, like most of the early graduates of Miami. Out of the twelve names of alumni of the twenty-five classes from 1826 to 1850, who are still alive, ten are Scotch or Scotch-Irish, from McCaughan of 1837, to John McCampbell Heron of 1845, and Andrews Brooks of 1850. Many graduates were of Welch blood, like Chidlaw, Thomas E. Thomas, and Senator Pugh. Others were Huguenot, like the Montforts; or Dutch, like Schenck and Groesbeck; or Palatinate Germans, like Shellabarger and Kumler; or they were of English Virginia blood, like President Benjamin Harrison.

I am naming these early graduates to show what was their lineage. But it was not the graduates whom I meant when I spoke of the earliest pupils of Miami a hundred years ago. It was rather their fathers and their grandfathers. They also received instruction from Miami, though pioneer conditions never permitted them a college career. Of these students of the year 1809, I name twenty citizens in the first Board of Trustees. No man gets more education out of a college than a receptive member of its governing board. Only two of the first twenty trustees of Miami claimed a college diploma. Of thirteen whose birthplace is known, twelve came from Pennsylvania, Virginia and New Jersey, four from each, with one from the north of Ireland. They were as a rule rugged pioneers. There were also "mute inglorious" pupils of Miami in the year 1809. Among them was my own great grandfather, Major Samuel Wilson, and my grandfather, 'Squire John MacCracken, both of them living at that time on their farms in the southeast angle of this County of Butler. To them was also given a certain benefit of educational kind by Miami University. An impact was made by the establishment of a college upon the minds of that first generation, which, through them, deeply affected their children and their children's children.

Miami was the offspring of the highest intellectual aspirations of a fusion of protestant races, mostly of Puritan training, thrown together upon the Ohio frontier. This is the thought I would have fixed in our minds this Centennial Day. Their fathers in large numbers within the century and a half from 1625 to 1775, had become exiles from Europe for conscience's sake. The century and a half before the Revolution was a persecuting age in many lands of Europe—in England, in Scotland, in the north of Ireland, in France, and parts of Germany. Every one of these countries sent congregations of sturdy protestants, who opposed the established religion of the land, in great shiploads to America. They brought their pastors with them.

The sons and grandsons of pioneer immigrants had little except their church connection to save them from decline in both scholarship and morals. The church did not save all of them—for example, the mountaineers of eastern Kentucky and Tennessee. Fifty years of utter neglect of school will sink a family into a class of illiterates. Southwest Ohio was determined not to permit scholarship to perish or even to decay. The first Americans exalted scholarship. When George Washington, a self-educated scholar, retired from the presidency, the people chose presidents for the next quarter century who were all of them college graduates. The people wanted scholars for leaders in church and in state. Miami was an expression of the want.

A picture of conditions a hundred years ago is given in the names that were chosen—Miami and Oxford. The state legislature made the choice. Evidently, as politicians, they wanted to please all the people between the two rivers, the Great Miami and the Little Miami, by making use of the name "Miami," the most popular name of that time. But they thought it important to add a scholastic element and hence the name of Oxford. They meant well, but they would have avoided a double anachronism if they had rather given to the raw village the wild Indian name of Miami and reserved the name Oxford for the college which stood for the trans-

mitted knowledge of the ages. Considering that the first three presidents of the college were Scotchmen—Bishop, Junkin, and McMaster—they might better have called the college Edinburgh or St. Andrews.

I have insisted that Miami began to give college instruction in the year 1809. A year later she had a formal professor or officer at work who extended the educational influence of Miami all the way to the Atlantic Coast. She appointed Rev. John W. Browne, who had been a preacher at Paddy's Run in Butler County for six years, to go as an agent to the eastern states. The Commission named him "A missionary to solicit and receive donations for the use of the institution." The Scotch caution of the trustees was evinced by their promising to pay him \$50 per month and expenses provided he collected it. It thus appears that before Miami was fifteen months old, she appointed a missionary to the eastern states. I was glad to find that not only did the missionary collect his salary and expenses, but he realized in cash, part of which went for apparatus and freight on books, more than \$1,000, besides securing by gift fully a thousand volumes to start a library. The story of this missionary work, which continued through the whole of 1811 and the larger part of 1812, when it was interrupted by war, proves that the missionary's work was educationally a great success. He did mission work at Washington with President and Vice President, with members of the cabinet and of Congress. Most of these, from President down, accepted gratuitous instruction. Only the Ohio Senators, with its one Congressman, that grand pioneer, Jeremiah Morrow, who had been chairman of the Committee which chose this township of Oxford, paid for the missionary lesson each to the extent of \$20. The adventures of Browne as a missionary are fascinating. No subscription missionary, to my knowledge, has excelled him in telling of his sad misses and his good hits. He visited most of the original thirteen states. He got \$10 and two books from old John Adams, at that time out of the presidency for over ten years. I wonder if those two books are still in yonder library.

When the missionary tried the Mayor of Albany, he was warned that there was a city ordinance forbidding the circulation of a subscription book without a vote of the city aldermen under penalty of imprisonment and fine. Like a hero, he answered: "I came to beg and beg I must." He relates that the Mayor smiled, gave him \$10 and wished him success. I am sorry to say that he obtained not so much as a smile or a dollar from Philadelphia or New York, being advised to reserve those towns for a more propitious season, which failed to come on account of the outbreak of the war of 1812.

I have told this story because it presents vividly how a hundred years ago was the day of small things. Near two years of a strong man's life went into that mission to the east. It was almost a tragedy because his travels broke his health. It did not break his spirit for he resumed the arduous toil of a frontier pastor and in that same year, 1812, going to preach in the County of Clermont, lost his life in crossing the Little Miami.

It is plain why a college was not opened till twelve years after this in 1824. It was opened quite soon enough to meet the demands of students. The first five classes after opening averaged only between ten to eleven graduates. Let me give a picture of a student entering nine years after the opening, as it is told by his roommate, who was also his cousin. He says: "John remained at home till past early manhood conducting the farm for the support of his sisters and aged parents. Not till his thirtieth year could he fully seek the knowledge for which he had long thirsted. Appropriating for his education \$260.00, he packed his linen in a couple of handkerchiefs and set out on foot from Greene County for Oxford where he entered subfreshman. Here in five years by strict economy and often teaching a school for three months, he completed his course with the class of 1838. During four years of his time he kept bachelor's hall, being determined to succeed without help from any friend. I am not mistaken as

to the funds at his command apart from his earnings, for the matter was often talked of by us." This picture of how a student lived is a picture of the college course of my own father. Himself a graduate at near forty, he swung to the other extreme when he insisted that his oldest son should graduate before he was seventeen.

The most extended promise in the Scriptures seldom reaches beyond the third and the fourth generation. I come here today representing the fourth generation of my own blood that have been blessed by Miami; the first two, pioneers of this county, the last two born in this county, myself born in this town of Oxford. I bring a tribute of sincere praise and gratitude. Miami never brought anything but unmixed good to us and to ours. Yet Miami never graduated a large class. Never but once did she go above forty, which was the class after my own. Her classes have fallen as low as three or four. The average of her college classes is not above fifteen. If Miami's class had ever fallen to a single member, I suspect she could have answered like the lioness in the fable about her offspring: "Only one, but a lion." Time forbids my telling of the sons of Miami, yet I will venture an anecdote in half a dozen sentences.

A few years since, when John Morely, who is now a conspicuous member of the British Government, was about to leave New York, a dinner was given him on the eve of sailing by Mr. Andrew Carnegie. He planned to have two or three representatives of authorship, journalism, education, science and the like. It proved there were fifteen guests selected on this plan. It gave me, as a son of Oxford, a gratifying moment when looking about the table, I found that one-fifth of the fifteen guests were graduates of Miami. It was a mere accident, but it is one among numberless accidents of a much more important character which have shown that not seldom when a representative place is to be filled, a son of Miami has been chosen to fill it.

The atmosphere today is full of criticism of the college. A corporation has been chartered in New York City with \$300,000 of stock, for the investigation and reorganization of American colleges. What per cent of the stock is water and what per cent wind, has not yet appeared. The college is wounded in the house of its friends, when President Eliot, advertising over his autograph his "five foot shelf of books," allows himself to say: "The faithful and considerate reading of these books will give any man the essentials of a liberal education." If he is right, why maintain a college at Havard merely to give the **nonessentials** of a liberal education. Diseased conditions in our colleges are rankest in big colleges, which are also favorites of fashion. From these they spread, like insects from infected trees. The President of Princeton says: "So far as the colleges go, the side shows have swallowed up the circus and we in the main tent do not know what is going on and I do not know that I want to continue under those conditions as a ringmaster." Here in Miami, I trust the main tent is still the main show. My cure for the malady that afflicts the overgrown college I offered on this platform eighteen years ago. My address was printed by Miami and has this sentence: "The large college which first sees its way to dismissing all its students of its college of arts save the 250 best, will be a greater benefaction to American colleges than Fareweather himself." I have not changed my view. But I would agree that several colleges of like size, each with a distinct faculty, might be cared for by the same corporation side by side.

Miami's college classes today are as large as they ought to be. Supported by the state, Miami has an opportunity for making her undergraduate college an ideal college, restricted perhaps to a hundred freshmen, with a graduating class made up by the survival of the fittest. By its side the normal college also ought to be limited to earnest students. President Benton commends himself to us as the man to organize Miami as

a college of elect students. America has had enough of "elective" students. What the college of America now wants is elect students. New songs are continually made by college boys. A new song is needed for the college corporation and faculty and it ought to picture the ideal college, as Bernard of Cluny pictured the ideal church—as the "home of the elect." The college today needs the ideal, which, I have said, was the ideal of the founders of Miami a hundred years ago, long before a single brick was laid. It was to be Miami, the offspring of the highest intellectual aspirations of chosen people thrown together upon this Ohio frontier.