

Biographical Background:

The Thomassons were a family of cotton-spinners from Bolton who had successfully built up a thriving business during the nineteenth century. John Thomasson, who died in 1837, left one son Thomas (1808-76). He became President of the Bolton Liberal Association, and in the middle years of the century a good friend and benefactor of Richard Cobden. His son John Pennington Thomasson (1840-1904), married John Bright's niece, Katherine Lucas, the daughter of Samuel Lucas, editor of the radical Morning Star (1856-69). J.P. Thomasson became a noted local dignitary and philanthropist, Liberal MP for Bolton from 1880-1885 and freeman of the borough in 1902.

His son was Franklin Thomasson, born 16 August 1873. At nineteen he was made a manager in the family firm, and three years later he married Elizabeth Lawton, daughter of an American named Caleb Coffin.

He tried several times, unsuccessfully, to enter parliament for different constituencies but was eventually successful in winning the seat for Leicester for the Liberal Party in a by-election in 1906. By this time the Tribune was well under way. The Liberal daily newspaper ran from 15 January 1906 until 7 February 1908.

His parliamentary career was uneventful, cut short by the collapse of the Tribune, and he continued to sit in the House of Commons until he retired in 1910.

Franklin Thomasson commanded the 25th Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment during the First World War and died on 29 October 1941.

Samuel Lucas, born in 1811 to a Quaker family, was a British Journalist and abolitionist. He married his cousin, Margaret Bright, in 1839.

Lucas was a great supporter of abolition and attended the World Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840. He also supported the establishment of secular schools, an interest he shared with Richard Cobden, and was active in the Anti-Corn Law League, which had been founded by Cobden and John Bright.

In 1856, Bright and Cobden created the newspaper the Morning Star and appointed Lucas as editor. Lucas became heavily involved in the running of the paper as managing proprietor but illness eventually forced him to hire a sub-editor, although he continued to oversee the paper very closely. Under his leadership, the Morning Star took a strong anti-slavery line and was the only national paper to support the Unionist side from the beginning of the American Civil War.

In 1859 he became editor of the newly established Once A Week, a weekly illustrated literary magazine. Lucas died on 15 April 1865, living long enough to receive the news of the end of the American Civil War and slavery in the United States.

Custodial history:

Donated by Barbara Platts, Jersey, November 1983

Description:

This collection contains one large volume containing over 90 letters, believed to have been collated by Elizabeth, first wife of Franklin Thomasson. Correspondents include Richard Cobden, Leigh Hunt, Thomas Carlyle, William Gladstone, Lajos Kossuth, Benjamin Disraeli, Robert Dale Owen, Edmund Yates, George Brown, Charles Pelham Villiers, Lord Charles Russell, Martin Farquhar Tupper, William Howitt, Thomas Milner Gibson, Sir John Pakington, Francis P. Cobbe, Charles Darwin, Basil Wilberforce, Henry Ward Beecher, Florence Nightingale, Ellen Terry, John Bright, Joseph Chamberlain, John E. Gorst, Sir Eldon Gorst, Reginald McKenna, Joseph A. Pease, Walter Runciman and Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Many of the letters are of a political nature and provide an insight into the political friendships of Franklin Thomasson and Samuel Lucas. There is also some personal correspondence. Other records include a Thomasson family pedigree and an article entitled 'Franklin Thomasson and the Tribune: a case study in the history of the liberal press, 1906-1908' by Alan J. Lee.

Extent: 1 volume & 2 items

Access conditions: Access will be granted to any accredited reader

U DX163/1

Bound volume containing a collection of 93 letters believed to have been assembled by Elizabeth Lawton Thomasson (nee Coffin), first wife of Franklin Thomasson. Includes an introductory note about the Thomasson and Coffin families. Some of the letters are dated only by day and month, not by year. A number of envelopes had been removed.

1803-1912

The letters are:

- 1) N. Fraser Lovat to Lucas, 1 Feb 1803
- 2) N. Fraser Lovat to Lucas, 12 Feb 1807
- 3) Duke of Westminster to Mr Gardiner, 17 Jun 1834
- 4) Mrs C.A. Cobden to Mrs Lucas, relating to a visit to Mrs Cobden's, 11 Jun (n.y.)
- 5) R. Cobden to J. Lucas, 25 Jul 1860
- 6) Apophthegm by Danial O'Connell, 'written for Miss Hannah Lucas', 24 Feb 1844
- 7) Leigh Hunt to Samuel Lucas, relating to his illness, 16 May (n.y.)
- 8) Leigh Hunt to Samuel Lucas, relating to his work, 22 May (n.y.)
- 9) Leigh Hunt to Samuel Lucas, relating to a visit to Lucas', 25 May (n.y.)
- 10) Leigh Hunt to Samuel Lucas, relating to tickets for an assembly, 28 May (n.y.)
- 11) Leigh Hunt to Samuel Lucas, relating to the Lucas' visiting Mr Hunt's, 31 Jul (n.y.)
- 12) T. Carlyle to Samuel Lucas, gives his excuses for not being able to attend a meeting, 3 Dec 1849
- 13) Justin McCarthy to Samuel Lucas, relating to the Morning Star, 7 Apr (n.y.)
- 14) Justin McCarthy to Samuel Lucas, relating to Mr Gladstone's letter to the Morning Star, n.d.
- 15) W.E. Gladstone to the Editor of the Morning Star, relating to an earlier letter of his to the Morning Star, 6 Apr 1865
- 16) With letter below from W.E. Gladstone, n.d.
- 17) Press cutting from 'Pall Mall Gazette' relating to a letter from W.E. Gladstone to the Morning Star, n.d.
- 18) Louis (Lajos) T. Kossuth to Samuel Lucas, thanking him for his support, 11 Mar 1860
- 19) Louis (Lajos) T. Kossuth to Samuel Lucas, relating to a letter he had forwarded to the Morning Star, 12 Mar (n.y.)
- 20) Benjamin Disraeli to the Editor of the Morning Star, relating to an announcement made in the Star, 5 Dec 1860
- 21) Robert Dale Owen to the Editor of the Morning Star, relating to a published book revised by him, 28 Aug 1860
- 22) Edmund Yates to Samuel Lucas, 1 Mar [1861]

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U DX163/1
Continued

- 23) George Brown to Samuel Lucas, his apologies for not being able to come to dinner, n.d.
- 24) C.P. Villiers to Samuel Lucas, n.d.
- 25) D.L. Evans to [Samuel Lucas], thanking him for his comments in an article about him, n.d.
- 26) Lord [Charles] Russell to Messrs. Lucas and Box, relating to a visit to Messrs Lucas and Box, n.d.
- 27) Martin F. Tupper to the Editor of the Morning Star, relating to the American Civil War, 23 Oct 1863
- 28) B.W. Noel to the [Editor of the Morning Star], relating to an article about his book in the Star and articles in the Star on the American Civil War, 29 Oct (n.y.)
- 29) E. Desmarest to 'Madame', written in French, n.d.
- 30) J.C. Hall to [Samuel Lucas], 15 Jun (n.y.)
- 31) William Howitt to Samuel Lucas, 3 Mar 1863
- 32) R.M. Mikes to [Samuel Lucas], relating to the American Civil War, 2 May (n.y.)
- 33) Garnier-Page to Madame Samuel Lucas with translation by E. Desmaret, compliments to Madam, 14 Oct 1869
- 34) W.E. Forster to Samuel Lucas, relating to a lecture by a Mr Beecher, 8 Oct 1863
- 35) W. Ewart to Mr Poulton, apologies for being unable to attend a soiree, 10 Mar (n.y.)
- 36) W. Ewart to the Editor of the Morning Star, relating to his illness, n.d.
- 37) Professor F.W. Newman to Mrs Samuel Lucas, declining an invitation, n.d.
- 38) J. Stainfeld to Samuel Lucas, thanking him for his cheque, 2 Jan 1865
- 39) G. Smith to [Samuel Lucas], relating to a letter he sent to the Star, 16 Dec 1863
- 40) L. Czartoryski to Samuel Lucas, relating to troubles in Poland, 21 Oct 1863
- 41) Thomas Milner Gibson to [Samuel Lucas], to arrange a meeting, 12 Dec 1864
- 42) Sir John Pakington to the Editor of the Morning Star, asking to publish a letter that was originally enclosed, 14 Feb 1865
- 43) Louis Blanc to the Editor of the Morning Star, asking whether the Morning Star would like to use a Mr Erdan as their Italian correspondent, 24 Sep 1864
- 44) Louis Blanc to the Editor of the Morning Star, asking to publish a letter that was originally enclosed, 17 Oct 1864
- 45) Thomas H [O'Malley] to Mrs Lucas, 19 Jun 1865
- 46) Minister of the United States to Mrs Samuel Lucas, note of thanks, n.d.
- 47) Mr Motley to Mr Lucas, relating to the taking of a photograph of Mr Lucas, 4 Jul (n.y.)
- 48) J. Fraser, Bishop of Manchester to Mr Lucas, relating to a petition, 28 Jun 1871

Hull History Centre: Thomasson Family Papers

U DX163/1
Continued

- 49) Lord Lawrence to Mrs Margaret Lucas, relating to a petition, 24 May 1870
- 50) Francis P. Cobbe to Mrs [Bright], about her illness, 10 Mar (n.y.)
- 51) Francis P. Cobbe to Mrs Lucas, n.d.
- 52) [Lo---] to 'Madam', 3 May 1872
- 53) Charles Darwin to unknown, relating to an [article] he had not already read, 3 Nov 1873
- 54) Lord Derby to J. Thomasson, relating to a petition, 10 Mar 1873
- 55) Lord Selborne to J.P. Thomasson, relating to the presentation of a petition to the House of Lords, 25 Mar 1875
- 56) Unknown to Madam, 22 Mar 1878
- 57) [F.W.] Huxley to John P. Thomasson, thanking him for his letter, 21 Mar 1876
- 58) Rev. James Fleming to Madam, acceptance of an invitation to preside over an annual meeting, 13 Apr (n.y.)
- 59) D.W. Farrer to Madam, unable to preside over an annual meeting, 10 Apr (n.y.)
- 60) Sir Thomas Bazley to Mrs Lucas, relating to a meeting of the [Good Templars], 22 Apr 1878
- 61) Sir Thomas Bazley to Mrs Lucas, relating to their travel arrangements, 30 May 1878
- 62) Canon Basil Wilberforce to [Mrs Lucas], asking for a donation towards the Teetotal Bay in the nave of St Mary's Southampton, 2 Mar 1878
- 63) Appeal for a bay in the nave of St Mary's Southampton, for the exclusive use of teetotallers, n.d.
- 64) Henry Ward Beecher to Mrs Samuel Lucas, left his umbrella at the Lucas' house, n.d.
- 65) Florence Nightingale to Mr Thomasson, about a rehearsal of a [play] and the purchase of tickets, 6 Jan [1903]
- 66) Alice S. Green to Mrs Thomasson, apologies for being unable to visit, 7 Jul 1909
- 67) Ethel Snowden to Mrs Thomasson, about a potential visit, 24 Apr 1908
- 68) Ellen Terry to the Editor of The Tribune, thanking him for a night of entertainment, 17 Jun 1906
- 69) Ellen Terry to Mr Choate, thank you letter, n.d.
- 70) [Aunt Tillie] to Franklin and Bessie, thanking them for their letters, 1 Sep 1897
- 71) John Bright to Thomas Thomasson, relating to the death of Cobden, 2 Apr 1865
- 72) John Bright to Thomas Thomasson, about political affairs, 13 Apr 1873
- 73) W.F. Butler to Mrs Thomasson, relating to books Mrs Thomasson had sent, 17 Oct 1906
- 74) Elizabeth Butler to Mrs Thomasson, about a visit of her [daughter's] to Mrs Thomasson, 18 Sep 1909
- 75) J.A. Fisher to Mr Thomasson, 31 Mar 1900

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U DX163/1
Continued

- 76) J. Chamberlain to J.P. Thomasson, about the enfranchisement of single women and widows who own property, 21 Dec 1883
 - 77) John [Misley] to [J.P. Thomasson], relating to the Bolton Liberal Association, 2 Oct 1880
 - 78) [F. Morley] to Mr Thomasson, 4 Aug 1903
 - 79) R.L. [Morant] to F. Thomasson, about a book the Thomassons' had lent him, 1 Oct 1910
 - 80) William Archer to Mrs Thomasson, 8 Nov 1908
 - 81) Harold Cox to Franklin Thomasson, typed letter about the Preston [election] result, 24 Jan 1910
 - 82) John E. Gorst to Sir Eldon Gorst, letter of introduction for the Thomassons' to Sir Eldon Gorst on their visit to Egypt, 12 Jan 1909
 - 83) Riden [Caunton] to F. Thomasson, sorry that the new Parliament will not include Mr Thomasson, 29 Jan 1910
 - 84) Lord Northcliffe to F. Thomasson, typed letter, apologies for not meeting at Fishguard, 25 Nov 1909
 - 85) Reginald McKenna to F. Thomasson, letter of thanks, 26 Jan 1910
 - 86) Joseph A Pease to F. Thomasson, typed letter relating to the Saffron Walden [election] result, 27 Jan 1910
 - 87) Walter Runciman to F. Thomasson, relating to his subscription, 9 Aug 1909
 - 88) H. Campbell-Bannerman to F. Thomasson, about the demise of The Tribune, 11 Feb 1908
 - 89) Augustin [Minell] to F. Thomasson, typed letter relating to 'the great Education controversy', 12 Dec 1906
 - 90) James Bryce to F. Thomasson, about a potential article about 'The Promise of the Century', 3 Nov 1905
 - 91) James Bryce to F. Thomasson, 12 Jul 1905
 - 92) F. Storr to Mrs Thomasson, relating to a lecture he had written, 6 Jun 1912
 - 93) Felix [Morchales] to Mrs Thomasson, originally enclosed a copy of a magazine entitled Concord, 23 Jun 1912
- 1 volume

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| U DX163/2 | Photocopy of an article entitled 'Franklin Thomasson and the Tribune: a case study in the history of the liberal press, 1906-1908', by Alan J. Lee, University of Hull, from the Historical Journal, Vol. XVI, No. 2, 1973 | 1973 |
| 1 item | | |
| U DX163/3 | Thomasson family pedigree (1663-1874)
Large printed poster of the Thomasson family tree, provides brief biographical details of key members and short paragraphs on the related families of Bancroft, Coffin and Bright. | 1981 |
| 1 item | | |