

3-1-1939

# Thomas Wingate Todd. An Appreciation

W. Montague Cobb

Follow this and additional works at: [http://dh.howard.edu/soci\\_fac](http://dh.howard.edu/soci_fac)

---

## Recommended Citation

Cobb, W. Montague, "Thomas Wingate Todd. An Appreciation" (1939). *Department of Sociology and Anthropology Faculty Publications*. Paper 56.  
[http://dh.howard.edu/soci\\_fac/56](http://dh.howard.edu/soci_fac/56)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Digital Howard @ Howard University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Department of Sociology and Anthropology Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Howard @ Howard University. For more information, please contact [lopez.matthews@howard.edu](mailto:lopez.matthews@howard.edu).

**Cobb, W. Montague**

**1939. Thomas Wingate Todd. An appreciation**

**Am. J. Phys. Anthrop., v. 25, no. 1, Apr.-June**

**PRESS OF  
THE WISTAR INSTITUTE  
OF ANATOMY AND BIOLOGY  
PHILADELPHIA, PA., U.S.A.**

## THOMAS WINGATE TODD

### AN APPRECIATION <sup>1</sup>

In the services of the Presbyterian Church, if the impressions from an attendance over many years are correct, two types of religious expression are held equally essential for the proper tribute to Deity. The one is the Sunday service in which the minister leads a formal worship. The other is the Thursday prayer meeting in which any member of the congregation may testify as he feels moved, according to his lights, and in his own manner.

In the tribute we now pay to our distinguished late President, your Committee sense a parallel, suggested by the similarities in pattern between the brief careers of the Great Physician of Nazareth and the physician who was taken from our helm. He too could save others, but himself he could not save. We wish, therefore, to supplement our official resolutions with a simpler appreciation, in token of those numberless and varied individual expressions which spontaneously appear, whenever the work of a faithful physician comes to a close. So by your leave, I shall say a few words about Thomas Wingate Todd as I knew him.

It was my privilege to enjoy the scientific counsel, the friendship and the example of Professor Todd from September, 1930, until his sudden and painful death on December 28, 1938. This eight years was an experience of that rich quality which can be expected but once in any lifetime and for which I am deeply grateful.

Professor Todd was gifted with a mind of great natural capacity. By his own efforts and through his associations he obtained an excellent training. These assets he applied with unflinching and devoted industry to all that he touched throughout the 26 years of his scientific endeavors in America. To his original 'five talents' he added many fold other five, to the great profit of science and of his fellow man.

The endless adventure after truth furnished for him an all sustaining wisdom and understanding. Not finding as a young man opportunity in his native land for the full development of his interests, he pioneered to a fresher field when the chance presented itself. In the country of his adoption again, he did not find, ready and at hand, the materials or the community philosophy which he conceived essential to his labors. So with great patience and unsparing expenditure of his own amazing energies, he assembled the materials and financial resources and he cultivated the public attitude which were but the necessary background for the larger objectives to which he had dedicated himself.

The quality of his vision and accomplishments are concretely manifest in his publications, in the collections and library which he built, and in the laboratory

<sup>1</sup>Read at the Tenth Annual Meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, The Wistar Institute, Philadelphia, April 5, 1939.

which he organized and directed. These units he coordinated in such manner as to hold in constant focus on the problem of human betterment many interpenetrating scientific disciplines.

In so doing he brought into being a new anthropology concerned with the nature of quality in human beings and how that quality might be nurtured and enhanced. His approach was fully modern in its methods, which entailed integrated dimensional, radiographic, biochemical and physiological analyses. It was advanced in its concepts, being built upon a vast knowledge of the anatomy of living and extinct mammals and men. At the same time, his approach was logically evolved from the results of the preceding century of investigations in physical anthropology.

The limitations of the concept of race, particularly in its hierarchial implications, became apparent to him very early. His unrestricted thinking ranged at all times over the whole mammalian class in directing his studies and interpretations of human phenomena. In this way he came to attach basic significance to structural pattern and to seek the roots in the mammalian stem of the several patterns as they appeared in man. But structural complexes have in turn their own developmental patterns which must be known for the appraisal of developmental progress. With both the nature of structural pattern and its manner of unfolding established, factors which favored or retarded growth and maturation might be studied clinically and experimentally. Thus the teaching of all organic evolution was brought to bear upon the many and varied researches undertaken for a comprehensive charting of the course of normal growth and development.

When the child has become a man, however, the potencies of prime and decline must be realized, so the studies of growth were being continued into investigations of ageing. The life span was covered. The interest could be thrown upon actual life processes.

The significance of a laboratory organized and equipped as was his, was important to Doctor Todd. Under one roof he had assembled collections, literature and facilities for the study of the human organism in any phase from conception to senescence, in the living and in the dead. Easily accessible also were the materials for satisfactory reference to phyletic background. Here was an institute for the assessment of human condition, available for the guidance of the development of the young to the full realization of capacities and the eventual guidance of the mature and advanced in years in the conservation of powers. Here those interested in improving the future of mankind could survey in one vista man's complete organic past and present. Here was a laboratory of the medicine of the future built, equipped and functioning.

But would men see? What of occasions when immediate detail might overshadow basic approach? After the leader what? The response was always clear and sure. One cannot hope to see too far. One checks oneself and forges ahead and hopes. Precious energies are not to be wasted in controversy. Rebuttals and refutations need appear only as incidental inclusions in the reporting of new positive findings. Criticism is unworthy of voice unless constructive in intent and statement.

It is important though, that new workers be broadly schooled, that collateral and continuation lines be investigated, that doubters settle their fears for themselves. For these purposes the complete resources of the laboratory must always

be available. Here was the circle that took in all. In the whole were conception and execution which in time will be recognized as greatness.

Doctor Todd was one who moved others by example rather than precept. His day began at five in the morning and ended at midnight over as many years as his associates have knowledge. When a new demand was made upon his time, it was his custom to take an additional hour from his brief period of rest. The multitudinous duties which burdened his latter years were not of his choosing, but were borne without comment because he believed this necessary for the proper progress and morale of his organization. He never transferred chores to others merely to smooth his own way. He never permitted others to cooperate in human experiments in which possible danger had not first been determined upon himself.

To all that he felt worthy he gave freely of himself and of his substance and his touch fired with inspiration. In addition to his scientific genius, there radiated from him a humor and a zest for beauty wherever found, with never a touch of the sordid.

The unpredictable vicissitudes of life he met and traversed in due stride. It inevitably happened that the strain of his pace told even upon his rugged constitution. As the signs of wear began to show themselves, he increased the power of his strong will to hold the flesh in its place and developed original therapeutic rationales of astounding efficacy. Only on a few occasions of particularly marked depletion did he permit himself brief interruptions.

In all of this he was always giving to others without much thought for himself. His personal needs and desires were simple in keeping with his interpretation of life.

If he had wished to secure the yield of his great endowments for his personal gain or for the prolongation of his days, he could easily have done so. It may not be given to us to understand fully why he poured himself out so unremittingly, but it is not in our province to judge, for the measure which is meted is returned again.

He did his duty by his work, his family and his country. He was constant in all of his loyalties. He justified his talents, his instruction and his trusts. He fought the good fight. He kept the faith.

In that larger sense in which it was written that he that loseth his life for his fellow man shall save it, Professor Todd's life and works require no meticulous appraisal. They speak completely for themselves, and those who run may read, according to their own perceptions and sensibilities.

His favorite maxim was, "Carry on!" If they follow this who have profited, and in time to come will profit, from his spirit and his labors, there can be no doubt, that though he be dead, yet shall he live. We take solace in this thought at Eastertide.

W. MONTAGUE COBB  
Howard University