

To His Excellency Lt. Gen. Sir John Cope Sherbrooke, K.C.B.,
Lieutenant Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over H.M. Province
of Nova Scotia and its dependencies, Vice-Admiral of the same,

Sir,

In stating the following particulars for the consideration of Your Excellency it may be necessary to mention that the Grammar School of Pictou since its commencement has been under my direction. On entering upon this employment I conceived it to be my duty as far as possible to fulfil the intentions of the Legislature by encouraging a taste for education and affording every facility in my power to the acquisition of learning. At the commencement of the school the importance of a liberal education was little understood in Pictou. On this account few were at first disposed to confer it upon their children and fewer to make those exertions which the beginning of such an institution unavoidably required. For the same reason several things devolved upon the teacher which ought to have been done by those who were receiving the education. Our first school was built at my own expense. As yet I have also provided stoves, fuel, and other necessary articles without remuneration, and even the greater part of the books used by my first classes were of my own providing. Existing circumstances required that these things should be done by me both as inducements to parents and that the education of the scholars might be carried on with regularity. It may be also stated to Your Excellency that for the encouragement of learning the school fees were fixed at a very low rate and for the same reason they have been very rarely demanded. A parent's inability to pay tuition money has never prevented him from gratifying his wishes in the education of his child. Under all these circumstances the profits of the school have never amounted to the original sum allowed by the Legislature.

It may be further stated to Your Excellency that the means which have been used to promote the prosperity of the school have not been altogether without effect. A taste for education is gradually diffusing itself among the inhabitants of Pictou. The number of students is now usually from thirty to forty. Of these some belong to remote parts of the district. The school is also attended by pupils from distant parts of the Province and from Prince Edward Island. A considerable number to whom it has afforded the means of education have already entered into different lines of employment with the prospect of becoming respectable members of society, and the improvement of many of the pupils at present attending does honour to their application and genius.

Still, however, several arrangements might be suggested to Your Excellency which, could they be effected, would afford additional facility to the teacher and advantages to the scholars.

In the month of January last our schoolhouse was burnt during the night, by which means I lost many valuable books which cannot be easily replaced, and a great part of those belonging to the scholars were also destroyed. This event enables me to point out to Your Excellency how much the existence of the school for a few years has promoted sentiments favourable to education. At its commencement

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few would have been willing to contribute to the building of a house, but when it was burnt down such exertions were made to replace it that, though the accident occurred at a season unfavourable to building, a new one was erected in the course of a few weeks.

The funds provided for this purpose, however, have not proved adequate to the undertaking. Considerable expenditure will yet be requisite before the house can be a comfortable place of education.

It might also be proposed for the consideration of Your Excellency how far it would facilitate and promote education were a standard edition of the various classics attached to the school as books of reference. The inaccuracy of the common school copies frequently proves a source of much trouble to both teacher and pupils. Such a measure, therefore, would be a saving of time and labour.

It may be further stated to Your Excellency that a little library attached to the school as an additional means of education would be followed by advantageous consequences. Your Excellency is aware that the duty of a teacher does not merely consist in instituting into the minds of his pupils the rudiments of knowledge, but also in giving the mind itself a bias favourable to further improvement. It is thus that education proves a useful introduction to the real business of life. This end, however, cannot be easily effected by the ordinary exercises of a school, because whatever assumes the form of a task is usually irksome to boys. But could the scholars have access to a few books of amusement and miscellaneous information adaptable to their capacities, it would give them a taste and imperceptibly impress upon their minds the importance of an education. It would also tend to produce habits of thinking, and it is unnecessary to prove to Your Excellency that on account of the early influence of early habits it must be always important to give youth a bias to mental improvement. An arrangement of this kind is the more desirable because, in the present stage of society in the Province, boys are almost completely excluded from such inducements to learning. Could a small sum be devoted to this purpose, a trifle collected quarterly or annually from each scholar would repair accidental waste and also procure such additions as might be afterwards necessary.

Should these hints for the improvement of this school coincide with the views of Your Excellency, the prompt attention which you have uniformly paid to the interests of the inhabitants of this Province induces me to believe that Your Excellency, out of the money at your disposal for the advancement of religion and good morals, will grant such assistance as circumstances may seem to require.

I have the honour to be,
with very great respect,
Your Excellency's most obedient
and most humble servant,

Thomas McCulloch