

This letter to Leith, an area on the outskirts of Edinburgh, represented a high point in Dr. McCulloch's career. Peace, contentment and success abounded. The Pictou Grammar School provided him a means of economic security and Pictou Academy was a virtual reality. In it are found McCulloch's views on the educational and economic opportunities of the day. The period, however, also represented a juncture in McCulloch's fortunes. For from the founding of Pictou Academy in 1816 until his acceptance of the presidency of Dalhousie University twenty-two years later, the detractors of Pictou Academy would give him no peace. As such the letter is a unique example of McCulloch in a period of quiet and reflection. *Note by Allan Dunlop P.A.N.S.*

To Rev. W. Culbertson of Leith

Pictou July 10 1816

Rev. Dear Sir

Some time ago you made me very glad by your friendly letter. I had long thought myself forgotten by all my Leith friends. To Mr. Hart in particular I have written once and again unprofitably. I cannot believe him changed but I imagine that he is engaged in more important business. At a time when I had few friends and in great need of many, I experienced his worth.

But to proceed to the principal topic of your letter, that is, respecting your sons emigration to this country. I shall state to you my sentiments as shortly as possible and let yourselves be judges. I am averse to encourage any young person to emigrate to America. Young people go abroad with ideas which can never be realized and almost uniformly feel the pangs of disappointed expectation. I speak from experience. It was several years before I could persuade myself that my situation was preferable to that of my brethren at home. Now, except to see my acquaintances I have no wish to return. There are difficulties to be endured of which a person in Britain can have no conception & it requires considerable experience and knowledge of the world before he can fairly estimate the counterbalancing advantages. Your son has chosen a line of life which in every country is laborious and it is not less so in America. Learning is in its infancy and although considerable exertions are used to cherish it, it is still in a very low state. The splendid ideas which the numerous colleges in the States may perhaps produce in your mind are entirely visionary. A president for example must be a jack of all trades and drudge in his office like a shop-keeper's apprentice, and with respect to professors our brother Mr. Shaw, when on a visit here, informed me that the professor of rhetoric in the college of Philadelphia was

2  
AHP

employed in the useful labour of teaching a part of his pupils the powers and values of the a b c. With respect to what is usually called Academies, they are frequently the copies of your parish schools. Americans are a showy race and a teacher in order to succeed must advertise like a mountebank. The northern states I believe are well provided with grammar schools, that is Scotch parish schools. To the teacher of such you may easily conceive that the income and expenditure are nearly equal. At present I am satisfied that a teacher going to America, that is the States, could have no encouragement. Trade is bad with you but in the States they are miserable. With respect to this country it may be observed that the desire of learning is creeping in among us. Our Legislature afford it great encouragement. Whenever the inhabitants raise £50 for a teacher, government adds £50. A few years ago also they established a Grammar school in every county with a salary of £100 to the teacher beside school fees, and £50 for an assistant when the number of scholars exceeded thirty. Yet some of them have not succeeded, principally I believe, for want of proper teachers. I conduct the one in Pictou which contains from 40 to 50 scholars. Of these I think about 27 are learning Greek, Latin & French, the rest English, writing & Arithmetic, and mine is at present the most celebrated school in the province. Still were I to give my opinion I would say that it presents tolerable prospects to a young man of moderate views. There is no British colony improving with such rapidity as this and learning bears a proportion to other things. To give you an idea of our progress it may be observed that 10 years ago a great part of the road from Pictou to Halifax, which is 100 miles, had never been cast up. You would have accounted it almost impassable. But two years ago I could go over 53 miles of it in seven hours and I frequently ride the whole in a day and a half. Everything else is improving proportionably. I would not willingly send my son to a town in the States. Drunkenness is the reigning view in towns among old & young. If your son be disposed to come here I may state for his information the following particulars. Sometime ago a trustee of one of the grammar schools asked me to recommend a teacher. This or another might still be procured. My neighbour Mr. Mortimer informed me lately that two of his acquaintances would give a family tutor £70 & board and an acquaintance in this district told me two days ago that he and his neighbours had offered £100 for a teacher & could not get him. If your son be disposed to come this way you need not doubt my disposition to advise and assist.

I have little ecclesiastical news further than the contents of our last memorial. We never had better prospects nor greater need of preachers. We have now also a distant prospect of providing these for ourselves. We have got an Act of the Legislature incorporating us to found a college or Academy in Pictou. It must receive the royal assent

MGI  
2  
RHP

before it be valid but of this we have little doubt. It was sent him strongly recommended by the Governor. It is a very popular Act and we expect that considerable exertions will be made in many parts of the province to accomplish the design of it.

With respect to family affairs I may add that I have now eight children & we have food and raiment. I undergo considerable fatigue but upon the whole enjoy a degree of worldly comfort and also of respectability to which I could never have aspired in Britain. Few ministers who ever came to this country have endured greater hardships or experienced more of that opposition which attends the gospel, than I have. Yet hither to the Lord has helped. I cannot say that the gospel is flourishing here but it is gradually extending its influence. The number of communicants are more than tripled and every person of the least respectability attends public worship.

You & Mr. Duncan are going to prophecy but really I can give you no help. Although I tried to pull the beast by the tail I never studied the revelations so as to have any correct view of their scope.

Remember me most affectionately to Mrs. Culbertson. I often reflect upon the time when she & I tabernacled together when she clipped my hair for me to humanize me a little. I am not without hope of employing her again. I do not think that she will find me much changed, only I am rather older and I hope too have rather less vanity. Pray tell Mr. Hart that I would be glad to hear from him by Capt. Munro.

Yours affectionately

Thomas McCulloch