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James B. Finley Letters

8-28-1841

Letter from John McDonald to James B. Finley

John McDonald

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Samuel Ponce	100
David Kizer D	50
Jacob Argabright	50
Jacob Kibler D	200
Samuel Meator D	100
David Kibler	100
John Pichport	100
Adam R Bruner	100
Chas Morris Jr	100
John Hazard	500
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Paid	2 50

Rev James Bradley Finley

Forwarded by
Rev Mr. Marley

Col
John McDonald

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Poplar Ridge, near Saltsville, Prop county, Ohio
August 28th 1841

Dear Sir

Five counties, to wit. Franklin, Pickaway, Ross, Pike and Scioto, have formed a literary society, named the "Logan historical society." One object of the society is to erect a monument to commemorate the memory of the illustrious Mingo chief "Logan;" and secondly to collect materials to form a history, giving an account of the settlements, doings, and character of the early pioneers of the west. This work if well executed, will be an interesting desideratum in our western literature. The executive committee of this society consist of fifteen members; that is three from each county. The labor of compiling from documents will be considerable, but the labor of original composition will be much greater. Who would you suppose this learned committee propose to engage as principle editor to perform that herculean labor: you will be surprised when I tell you, that ^{it} is your humble servant. I am not yet determined whether I will engage in the work or not.

What strange Metemorphosis occasionally ^{takes place} in our world. An old boatman, a hunter - a soldier in time of war - without any of the advantages of what is generally termed education, turns author after he is sixty years of age is a phenomenon not met with every day. What strange changes takes place in our march through this life of uncertainty, toil, and trouble. That a special providence appears to direct our course, is almost demonstrated in my own wayward life. Had not providence sent you to me, I certainly would not have been an author. you spurred me on ^{to} the attempt, and Bishop Morris published my scribble and puffed me a little, thus encouraging you led me along, from being the most timorous man that ever appeared before the public as a writer, till I have acquired some confidence in my abilities and tact in composition. When I began to write should I happen to take ^{a thought} about what the public would think of ^{my} essay, it would throw ^{me} into a tremor more painful, than ^{would} the Indians war whoop.

The character of man is a phenomenon to himself. change his circumstances and the man is changed. Faithful biographical history ^{is the picture} of man himself. write the history of any other animal and you have the history of all its specie under all change of circumstances: on the contrary men in all ages varies his char-

Character according to circumstances; therefore the history of man is always varying and develops ~~it~~ ^{himself} in new aspects and features in almost every age.

Not having any particular subject for a letter, I therefore write you a letter ~~shelter~~ ^{to} let you ^{know} I never forget an old friend. Give my respects to Messrs Elliott - Hamline, Scrive - and Swormstead. I feel great ~~feel~~ ^{gratitude} to them for their kindness.

David Reed and Mr Marly stand very fair with us. Marly preaches as much hellfire as is necessary to frighten a little; but he spends more of his strength in conciliating, persuading, and coaxing the unruly wild colts to enter into green pastures, where ^{they} will feast on sweet herbage which will render them immortal.

Remember me to Sam Clark and Pat Will Morrow; I wish them a prosperous journey through this world, and a happy resting place in their transition. My wife desires to be remembered to you and ^{to} Mrs Finley. My children and grand children in this part of the country enjoy good health, and a good name among their fellows; this is a great comfort to me - they all respect you.

When your conference closes send me a few lines by D Reed.

I remain as ever your friend.

John McDonald.

Rev James Broadly Finley.

P. S. A word about the "Ladies' Repository." This ^{is} an excellent work, labored to excess. In my opinion it is rather grave and philosophical for its title. Many of its contributors are evidently men of science, and of extensive knowledge of the human heart. It is difficult to point ^{to} any one article that we would ^{wish} altered: yet upon ^{the} whole it lacks that interesting playful, innocent witchery, which takes hold upon the affections and sympathy of the common man: there are some exceptions.

Mr Hamline's address on the occasion of the death of Gen Harrison was composed in the right spirit. Devotional pieces of lighter shades would ^{have} greater effect, in turning the heads and hearts of the great mass to tread in the paths of virtue and morality; then would all the solemn ^{and grave} admonitions that death heeds ever gave rise to.