

Letters to John Alexander Cameron

The following letters were written to John Cameron by his brother, Peter Cameron, and brother-in-law, James Cameron.



John Cameron

Kanocheegan

February 11, 1854

Dear Brother and Sister;

We received your letter and happy to hear that you are in health and still alive. We thought that you both were dead. We are all well, but myself. I am not well since the new year, but I am getting better. I was vomiting blood and the doctor was advising me to go to the Collnies and I have a great wish to go to America as you are there and I hope that I will be there ere long if I had what would bring me there. I spent a great deal with doctors. I will be getting ready as well as I can till your letter comes and will see what your advise will be to me and what will be needy to bring there. I hope that I will be away when your letter comes if its God's will. Times is better hear than ever you saw. James Cameron is in Ayshir and has a good place. He has four sons, James, Alexander, John, Peter. Archy Cameron has four Duncan, Catherine, Ann, Floray. I am glad to hear that you have been so fruitful in a Strange Country. Malcolm is with James Cameron. Duncan has a place in Ayrshir. He was unwell for some time, but he is better and able to keep a place.

Sandy is in Strachurr. I was with the same master as I was when you left. Father is working in a wood with horse. Mother is frail, but alwise rising and going about. There is a great change in this Country. Provisions is very dear hear. Father's address to you, "I come through a grait deal since you left. I lost 45 pounds by a person witch did not pay." He is carting wood to the Duke, but small wages. He has his health, but cannot stand the work he use to do. Father wants to know what you are doing and what the name of the place is, and he tell you to be mindful of writing. He is still in Kanochreggan, the Turners in name hase the ____.

You will be expecting a letter from all your brothers and I will write to them. Neel Dure Dreshek is died and theres a son of his were drowned. Duncan McCallum that was at Santgens went to Australia and is doing well. Mother wants you to send some of the hair of the children and write their names on it. They are telling you to be mindful and your Creator and Saviour.

Hellen McCallum that was at Gaven died. Cousin Malcolm McCallum that was at Oban went to Australia. You will send home the nature of the Climate, the Coldness of the winter, and the warmness of the Summer; and what kind of clothes wood be better to bring there and what would be the best Seaport for me to go to.

I will now conclude with Father and Mother's love to you all, as for me I hope that I will be there soon.

*I am your well wisher,
Peter Cameron*

P.S. It is of no consequence whether the Bank Draft is on the Glasgow or Edinburgh, for the Banks at Inverrary will cash it here for there is Bank orders from Australia that is cashed here regularly so that you need not be particular where it is made payable - the Banks here are The National Bank of Scotland and the Union Bank of Scotland, and the Draft can be cashed at either of them altho it is made payable either in Glasgow or Edinburgh, but you will of course send the Draft to me and I will get it from one of the Banks here.

January 24 1855

Dear friends we were sorry to hear that you were unwell but I hope by this time that you are all well. We are in ordnery health. Mother is bad with a cold and Father; but they are allways going about. I am under bad health and at home. I would go to America but I am afraid I might become a birden upon you and therfore I cannot go. We wrote to day before we got the last letter. We got a newspaper you sent. Malcolm has listed in the Scotch Fusillers Gards and he is in London. He will go in Spring to the seat of war if not sonner. You will write what you are doing. We did not understand what you were working at. You will send some of the Childrens hair in the next letter. Hellen and Archy is well. Floray and James is well. Sandy is well and Duncan is well. He is near Kilmarnock, a gamekeeper. Trade is very dull in this Country and the provitions is Dear. The meal is £14 the bale and other provetions dearer than that. Floray has a Son named John for you. I am going to see James this week. Be shure and write soon. If I will get my health and you Shared I will go to America. You will let me kno what is the price of woln clothes the yard and Cotten. Mother tells you to rember your Creator and Redemer and he will help you in a Streng Country. We got the three pounds you sent. I hope you have not left yourself scant of monney. Mind yourself for fear what come this way. I will now conclude with our love to you all. I am your affectionate Brother,

Peter Cameron

November 2, 1855

Dear Brother;

I address you this few lines which I should have done long before this time, but I hope you will excuse me. Dear brother we are all very sorry for the loss you have had in losing your Dear wife. The littel children will miss their dear mother; but we must put up with the Crosses of this world. It is the Lord that gave and that taketh away. We must bless his name. James wrote you most of the news. I have been hear since I wrote you my last letter. I am sometimes working at driving and cutting wood and watching game. I am not sore rought, but I am as sore as I can for I am very weak at times. My breathing is very stiff. At times

there is great pain in my left side but does not continue always. I have reason to be thankful that I can shift for myself. Father and Mother is wonderful well, but by course of nature they are allways getting weaker. We are doing all we can to keep them comfortable. Father is always working at days labor. We did not hear from Malcolm but wonce since I wrote you and that was shortly after I wrote you. We do not know where he is but I think he is at the seat of war; but pray that his soul may be saved for Christ's sake. He left some debt to pay. James owed him £3 and some odds, but he left more than that. It is no end to tell you of it all.

*Archy Cameron and Hellen is well. He left the herring fishing. He is working days labour. I think he will be pinched enough to keep his family for provisions is so high this year. The herring fishing did not do well this two or three years back and he stopped it. Sandy is with the same man this four years back. They pay sheep for the half of his wages. He is a tall strong fellow. As for Duncan, James mentioned him in his letter. Dear brother I wood like very well to go to America, and I think I wood be there before this time if my health wood permit, but I must content myself and trust in the Lord and be thankful for the mercys he is bestowing on me, but if I thought I wood not get worse I wood go yet, but then if I was getting worse then I would become a burden to you. I might get better by going there. I would like to go for to be company to you as you have lost your dear wife and in a strange land if you was to take ill or did not prosper what wood become of your little ones. I wood go faster on that account if I could help you. I think Archy and Hellen wood go fast if they had money. I do not know but what you will see us all go yet if you and us will be spared if the Lord sees it proper. James has got a very good place. He is very well off and so is Duncan. He has a room and 1-15 per week and so had Malcolm, but he did not keep it. Poor man, he was saying in his letters he repented the way he had behaved. There is rumors of war in Scotland between America and them, but I hope there will be nothing of it and I think it will end in nothing. I will send you a newspaper next week. I will write you in the course of a fortnight for fear this letter will be lost. Since I am so long writing you give us the news of America and tell us the best time of the year to go there. I hope this will find you and the littel ones well. I must now end my letter with my kind wishes to you. May God be over you and guide through this life and forever. I remain your affectionate brother.
Peter Cameron*

November 20, 1855

Dear Brother,

As Peter has wrote you a long letter at last I expect he will have given you all news of interest, but I have not seen his letter; but I will take the opportunity with our sending you our best wishes to self and family and assure you that we all sympathize with you for the loss you have of late sustained. The loss must be severe anywhere, but more so in a strange land, but very shortly we must all follow. There is no exceptions, but may we by divine aid assisting us be prepared to meet it, whatever time the Lord may see proper to call us.

We are glad to hear from time to time of your prosperous condition in the present world. I hope it may still so continue. We must seek for daily Grace as commanded. Your mother was here all the month of August. She is of course not strong, but she holds up well. We had a letter a few days ago and they are, I am thankfull to state, all well. Your Father is jobing away at laboring work, but wages are very small at Inverary and everything very high. Meal is very high every place this year Meal £1..3 per bale. Butter 1/2 per pound. That is here and this in counted a cheap place. We assist the old people _____ us and keep them as comfortable as possible. I left Inverary and came here a keeper 4 years past at Whitsuntide last. Beside the game I have now charge of improvements and everything on the property. I am kept very busy

but not heavy work. A good deal of listing and _____. Peter is with me this some months and I will keep him some time yet. He is not fit for every place, but I can look over a thing another would not do. Duncan was with me one winter, but I got him in with the same Gentleman in another place at 15 per week. He is very busy. He drives the cows, watches the sheep on the pleasure ground and does anything necessary about the house. I had Malcolm another winter, but poor fellow he behaved very bad and got another good place after and left it to be a soldier. I don't know where he is now. We have 5 of a family now, 4 boys and a girl, James, Alex, John, Peter, and Catherine and is thankful the same, all about at present. I need not enlarge as Peter I hope has given you all details. But we will be very happy to hear from you and give me a description of America, what you really think of it candidly, and may the blessing of God attend you is the affectionate wish of your sincere relations.

James Cameron

P.S. Flora desires me to say that you are to send her a little of your children's hair as a remembrance.

_____ 21, 1857

Dear Friends,

I got your likeness from Mr. Tomkins and was glad to learn that you were all well. I am not very strong nor ever will I do think. Father and Mother is as you may suppose getting frail. Mother is very much so. I have not seen Father this 3 years. Mother was through this summer seeing us all. The likeness is most beautiful. How glad Father and Mother will be to see it.

Duncan is married last May to a woman belonging to Stirling. I think a good deal of her. She served with me here and it was here that he got acquainted with her. James and Flora is coming on well He is still with the same master and I have left that nearly 2 years ago and came to this place, but it is still with the same man. I am undergardener. Duncan has left this place and got a place near Glasgow as Coachman. Malcolm is at home. He got his discharge. I would like to see them write. When this comes to your hand my kind love to you all and God bless you all.

Your affectionate brother,

Peter Cameron

Knockshinnoch, New Cumnock

Ayrshire, Scotland

March 19, 1859

Dear Brother,

Should this seral ever reach you I beg to ask pardon for being so very long of writing you. Many a time I resolved to do it, but always something or other come in the way which prevented me, and now as I don't know when any of your brothers wrote you, I don't know where to begin with my news, but in case you have not heard, it is my painfull duty to inform you that your Dear Brother Peter departed from this worldly scene on the 18th of November last. He had grown a very strait quiet steady man. He came here to assist me for a few months, and afterwards I got him in with the same mater at a place near Kilmarnock halfway between here and Glasgow, and has been there for nearly three years as a general servant. Duncan was there also when he went but Duncan left some time after and Duncan is now at

Kirkintullock. He is a coachman, is married and has one son. In October last Peter engaged in another place to be gardener, but about the time he should have entered his new place he died. At 7 weeks before he died he took a vomiting of blood which returned every 4 or 5th day till it quite exhausted him. His mother was here seeing Flora at the time he took it. Flora was not well, his mother went and quieted him at the time. About 3 weeks after he took ill he went to Glasgow to the Doctors there, from there to Duncans at Kirkintullock where he died. Hellen and Sandy arrived the night before to see him die along with Duncan and Mother, but he was dead the night before Flora got there. Duncan took the Corpse to Inverary. It was a terrible fog on the Clyde at the time and the boat could not sail the appointed day and your poor old Father sat on Inverary quay all night expecting the boat and got a severe cold which has not left him yet, and is not well since, although working a little with the carting about Inverary. They stop in the town of Inverary and your poor mother is also very silly but she has been long frail. I miss poor Peter very much. He was a friend indeed and was always here by first train if any of us were unwell and his loss was much mourned by his fellow servants, but we hope that although our loss it was Peter's gain. I am happy to state and it must be very gratifying to you that he died very composed and resigned to the Lords will and gave good evidence of having found an interest in Christ. Even long before his trouble, his mind seemed to be turned to things unseen. May the Lord grant us grace to do likewise. We know not a day or an hour may bring forth. We are ever at the graves mouth and a minute may consign us therein.

Dear John, I must now tell you about how I am situated. I left the Duke as you will have heard, 8 years ago and came here about 34 miles south from Glasgow by railway. I am still in the gamekeeping line, but the last 3 years I have the whole charge of the property, both gamekeeper and land steward, lands, also drainage and all improvements. I lay out between 3 and 400 pounds a year for work. I have a man in winter to watch the game. I have a very comfortable place, but a great deal to do at times. The proprietor does not stop her or anyone to look after me, except about twice a year. I shoot the most of the game myself and send it to them. But I am sorry to say that Flora my wife, your sister, has not been stout this 12 months past. About this time last year she took seriously ill with dysentery and has not been so well since. At that time our youngest child, a nice little girl, was ten months old, it had to weaned and it took a similar trouble to the mother, and it did not get rid of it, and died in July last. It died in Hellen's at Strachur. As Flora and the child was not about, Hellen was very anxious that Flora should go home for a change of sea air, and Hellen came here and took Flora and the child with her. They were only there a week and had not got across the Loch to Father's when the child got worse and died. I had to post out and get it buried there. A great grief to us all, but especially to Flora and in her not being stout, but let us not repine at the doings of a Just God, He giveth and He taketh away, let us bless His name, and be thankfull that He has not taken them all from us in death with us assenting to our blessings. We have 5 healthy children left if its the Lords will to spare them and us. The 4 oldest boys and the youngest is a girl 4 years old by June. Flora is always moving about but sometimes not very able. The three oldest boys are at school, James the oldest, Alex the second, John the third, a fine smart boy, Peter the fourth, a pretty boy, and Catherine. I may say I have two cows here and a very good house, but how long is uncertain as Gentlemen are very changeable, although I have a kind master as yet.

Archibald Cameron, Hellen's husband, is still in Strachur. They have a cow and he works on the same farm. They have 6 of a family, 3 boys, 3 girls, nice children. They are all well. Sandy is shepherd on the same farm, but I had a letter from Sandy today and he tells me he has given up his place and intends to try some other work. If he does not fall in with a settled place before August and is well and here I will engage him to assist me during the winter as Duncan and Peter did, and will try to get a place for him afterward as I did with them. Sandy is a tall very good looking young man, the bravest of all the family, and remarkably clean, steady and well behaved. Duncan is also very steady and carries a first rate

character and has a good place. Both are very kind in helping their parents, and Peter when alive was a dutifull son and helped them greatly. Arch and Hellen cannot have a great deal more than the necessities of life as the wages are very small there and victuals is very high here this few years, but they are happy, which is better than luxury without happiness.

As for Malcolm, he has not behaved quite so well, but is doing, I hope, better now. He was also here with me a winter 6 years ago. He got to be couchman afterwards with some Ladys near Ayr. He listed out of there to be a soldier in Scotch Fusilier Guards through drink. He was at the Crimea, but Sebastapol was taken two days before he arrived. After the Ropian war he got his discharge, being rather undersize. He is now working with a Gentleman near Helensbaugh at Resneash, but I have not seen him since he listed, as he knew I was very much displeased with his conduct, but I learn he is doing better now. I have never got Father to come to see us, although your mother has been many a time. She thinks nothing of coming all the way alone, altho she is very frail, and I am afraid will surely not be able to come again. I may say that Flora had just went by railway with mother the length of Peters the day he took his last trouble. Mother was on her way home, but she had more to do before she got home. It was sore on mother to take Peter with her a corpse. Peter got your family likeness. I saw him as he was ne'r the man to go for it. We had it for some time, but your mother has it now. The man promised to write before he left for America again, but he did not do it and Peter heard he was away. Flora was going to send you some stocking and spoons for the children, but the man was away. I suppose you have no thoughts of visiting your native country and seeing your aged parents before they die. We may all die before them, but nature will soon bring them to the grave. The expense no doubt will prevent you.*

Now my Dear John should this find you as I sincerely hope it will, and that in health and all your family. I hope you will write me, as soon as possible, and forgive me for my neglect, for it was not but what I had good mind of you and now if you can read this hurried seral, that you will percieve that I have endeavored to give you all the news although painfull that I could. I may say that meals are high here but trade and work has not been so good for a number of years. Meal is the only thing reasonable - 36/pr lease potatos 20/ pr bale Butter 13 pr lb cheese 8/ pr lb, ham & mutton 8 pr lb.

Your Aunt's people in Glasgow are all well so far as I have heard. Her son is steward on a steamboat. I mind of nothing else. We have had very stormy wet weather this two months. Write how you are getting on and how work and wages looks with you, also send your right address. Flora unites with me in best respects to you and family.

*I am Dear Brother,
your truly,
James Cameron
Gamekeeper
New Cumnock, Ayrshire
Scotland*

**Likely Rosneath near Helensburgh in Argyllshire (formerly in Dunbarton). Rosneath Castle was owned by the Duke of Argyll.*