

[From Caleb to his brother Thomas]

Elk Neck, Cecil County, Maryland, 8th Oct. 1833

{ You must make every allowance for my delay.
It is now a full month since I wrote this before
I am able to send it. }

My Dear Thomas:

I received your ponderous but truly brotherly letter of the 31st of July, in September. I read it with feelings of unmingled delight. I had almost become skeptical of your existence so few and far between were the accounts from you. That you did not know where to write is, to use your own words, passing strange. You knew I went to New York. I never wrote. I had left it so that you had no certain knowledge of my absence from that city but through the vague report of some scribblers – very questionable intelligence. Allow me, however, to congratulate you, to pay my respects to one of the votaries of fame, to one who is determined that if laurels will not come he will catch them and bind them round his brow. I did intend to write to you immediately, but I must plead a carelessness of writing arising from a perfect want of anything cheering to write about. This must excuse me. I determined to write to you so soon as I could be calmly settled. Now that this, thank God, is accomplished, I will write. You must not suppose for a moment that I never thought of you. No such thing. What! To give up thinking of one of my dearest brothers! Do you imagine that I am a savage! That the mere circumstance of my leaving home would preclude me from the genial flow of brotherly feelings. I write thus because there seems to be a sort of doubt in your letter as to what I really am. I give you credit for your elaborate instructions, but I hope you do not think that I am the same thoughtless, good-for-nothing, lukewarm soul I have been. I have altered my course of action, my course of speaking and my course of thought. My whole intellectual system had suffered a revulsion, not indeed for the worse, but I trust God for the better. Your letter will exercise a salutary influence. I thank you for it. Let me here observe, (without a tinge of adulation I say it) that your conduct while at home extended its influence even to me. I saw you struggling with adversity, unsupported and alone. I thought, why could I not do the same. I wanted the decision which characterized you and I resolved to imitate it. It is only now that it is beginning to operate..

You must have been sadly misinformed about my real situation while in New York. I found it a walk of thorns, of insult and of want. But I never shall tell all about it till I tell it orally. I have been a twelvemonth from home. It has seemed a century. But here I am compelled to pause. The sad and sorrowful events which have taken place there must never exercise a darkening influence on my mind. The first intelligence of death in our family struck me like the thunderbolt across the eagle's wing – a sudden paralyzation of recollection, or rather the intenseness of the stroke palsied my heart. Then with vivid brightness did the truth slowly glare in upon me. It is enough you know you feel it. So do I. It should cause the few of us that remain to draw closer to one another in the circle of affection.

I am in America – that Eutopia¹ of all my hopes, wishes and desires. I do not find it the golden region of happiness that some have painted it, but I do find it, in the fullest sense of the word (at

¹ - Var. of "utopia."

least this part of it) to be one of abundant plentifulness. One need not be at all afraid of starving. Here labor and industry meet an ample reward. The labour of the head is not, however, so generally successful as the labour of the hand. The former may rise through uncommon gifts, but the latter is always sure to prosper. Any man, let him have common sense, let him have the slightest degree of shrewdness, and he will be successful. Money is the grand object here (as it is every where) but there seems to be more of intrigue, more of cunning to obtain it, and more caution, more carefulness to retain it, than elsewhere.. If I were asked my opinion of their education, I would say that they are in general uninstructed. There are particular exceptions and great colleges are founded and founding, but the great mass of the Republic are not so enlightened as those of Great Britain.

You ask me if I would give you encouragement, you would decide at once on coming here.² I will give you encouragement. But do not leave a good situation to come here to look for one, or if you can get one, do not forsake the chance. The population of Ireland must be and is dense. Here it is very thin. A man of any natural talent and education is sure to raise himself in the esteeming qualities of the people. New York, like Dublin, has its thick population and there are naturally changes taking place in every branch of commercial enterprise. This throws open a chance of coming into one of these situations. When obtained they are often permanent, but to succeed is a mere contingency. Permanency is the main thing to be desired in any situation. This is often at the chance of any young man by a proper disposition of his character. You are steady. They have a real respect for such here. There are so many vagabonds, drunkards and the like, they are glad when they meet with a young man of morality and sobriety. You are such, and I have no doubt would succeed in settling yours self comfortably here.

My expressions of gratulation³ were premature in the former part of this letter. I did intend to reserve a part of this sheet for the sole purpose of expressing my great delight at the spirit of adventurous resolve that prompted you to become an author.⁴ It has given me unequivocal joy – it has indeed.

You must forgive me if you see anything like confusion in the arrangement of this letter. I write just as things occur to me. I cannot bear to make a job of a letter. It has the decided tendency of making me dull.

You have been particular about yourself. Let me say something about myself. I am not in New York now, nor a clerk either. I am in a better place and a better business. I am a pedagogue, a schoolmaster, a teacher of the “young idea how to shoot.”⁵ I got a letter from James⁶ while in

² - Thomas eventually immigrated to Australia.

³ - 1. (now rare) A feeling of happiness and satisfaction; joy, especially at one's good fortune; 2. (archaic) The expression of pleasure at someone's else's success or luck; congratulation.

⁴ - Thomas E. Lanktree, *An Analysis and Chronology of English and Irish History Carefully Corrected to the Present Time: For the Use of Schools and Young Persons* (Lanktree's Chronology) (John Cumming, Dublin, Ireland: 1833). See <https://www.abebooks.com/book-search/author/thomas-e-lanktree/>.

⁵ - James Thomson (September 11, 1700 – August 27, 1748), a Scottish poet and playwright:

Spring (1728) ([https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/James_Thomson_\(poet\)](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/James_Thomson_(poet))):

Come, gentle Spring! ethereal mildness, come.

The negligence of Nature wide and wild, / Where, undisguised by mimic art, she spreads / Unbounded beauty to the roving eye.

New York, informing me that if I were out of a situation, he could procure me one. I was just at that critical period unemployed, so I hastened to embrace his proposal. I commenced operations and although my school is not large, my life is infinitely more to my disposition. I have to begin with the very first principle of all learning, viz., the alphabet. I have got some of the stupidest blockheads that ever existed. That is a necessary consequence of teaching. All your advices therefore with regard to my employers is useless at present, for I am my own master now as well as the master of others. I do not think I shall remain long here. If they do not give me a better school, I shall then look for a primary school which is paid by the State and where I will receive 300 Dollars per annum. If you choose to accept one of these, you could easily procure one and very few situations in any town will be worth more. You can think of this. Be assured however, of succeeding in this country. I long to see you here. Why, it would be the most rapturous sight I ever saw. Jos. [Joshua] is full of the notion. Why, why is time wasted? Come, come the moment spring appears. You are not coming to where you have no friends, no relations. It will be like a home for you to be near Sam and James and me. If you can by any human probability, urge Jos. to go with you, bring him along. You will rue coming by yourself. Yes, you will. A brother with you is invaluable. I had to do everything for myself. I seldom saw Sam. Seldom did he come near my berth. I was sick 14 days and ate little or nothing during that time. You may be seasick and you need some person to care for you. You see, I look for it as a thing of course. You must, with Sam's assistance, succeed in New York. He moves in an elevated sphere; has extensive influence with publishers. Be sure to bring with you plenty of letters of recommendation and as little of the "circulating medium" to keep you in case of failure. This is distant however.

Often do James and I converse about you. A short time previous to his receiving your letter, we were conversing about you as we went along. James spoke harshly, not crossly, about you. I defended. At last, said he:- "Thomas is a shitepoke." (This is the name of a water bird here.⁷) "I deny it," said I. Not long after, he received your letter. He was reading when I approached him. He held it out to me, laughing and said, "Thomas is not a shitepoke," and then followed his encomiums on your letter. I must advise you if you are thinking of coming here, to bring plenty of flour, potatoes, eggs and butter. You cannot have too much of these. If you have, you can dispose of them for other necessary articles.

Two-thirds of the people in this country are Methodists.⁸ I have been at a camp meeting here. This takes place once a year, generally in summer, or the "fall." It is truly a wonderful place and far surpasses in mental excitement anything you can conceive. The people assemble from far

Base Envy withers at another's joy, / And hates that excellence it cannot reach.

But who can paint / Like Nature? Can imagination boast, / Amid its gay creation, hues like hers?

Amid the roses fierce Repentance rears / Her snaky crest.

Delightful task! to rear the tender thought, / *To teach the young idea how to shoot.*

An elegant sufficiency, content, / Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books, / Ease and alternate labour, useful life, / Progressive virtue, and approving Heaven! [Emphasis added]

⁶ - James Hope Langtree, my 2x great grandfather.

⁷ - The Oxford Dictionaries: any of a number of birds of the heron family.

⁸ - I believe Caleb refers solely to the area near Baltimore, since the dominance of Congregationalism in New England would still have overwhelmed the Methodists.

and near. They bring tents and pitch them in the form of a circle. Meeting generally lasts a week and is exclusively devoted to acts of religious worship. There is no speech or language, my dear Thomas, that could adequately describe the marvelous effects produced. The morning is devoted to prayer; the forenoon to preaching, and in the evening comes on a scene of rapture and excitement and happiness which no description, how able so ever it may be, could describe. It is not till the prayers begin that you would see anything remarkable. “Then the triumph and the trance begin!”⁹ The blood of eighty years is roused to the energy and the flow of youth. Limbs that have borne the burden of half a century are thrown into all the attitudes of a rope dancer. They have a sort of singing which is admirably calculated to fire the mind. It consists of a rhyme of “Glory, glory,” and “Hallelujah,” repeated rapidly, which has the most astonishing effect, – clapping of hands, beating of benches, jumping up 3 feet high, with other extravagant demonstrations of bliss, form one of the most indescribable scenes you could possibly witness. The colored people, too, exceed the utmost bounds of disorder. They throw themselves into the most unimaginable and ungovernable madness. Prostrate, they will war cry and yell and hollow beyond idea. It would afford you a very apt illustration of that Babel, or confusion of tongues mentioned in the Scripture. There is moreover a place railed in like a sheep pen, so yclept,¹⁰ in which all that are penitent go to be prayed for. Here a sort of desperate agony is visible in every countenance; the eyes burned with weeping, the hair disheveled, perspiration rolling profusely, the bursting veins – all this seems to be agonizing to enter in at the straight gate!¹¹ Whether it be the right one is the question. Secluded as they are here from the world of eruption which animates more populous places, they preserve something of a primitive simplicity of manners. The whole country round is related by marriage, or otherwise, so that they form a kind of compact of relationship, and a marriage is a sort of era. A vast variety of opinion exists here as respects religious affairs. Universalism is prevalent.

There has been a book published here called “Domestic Manners of the Americans,” by a Mrs. Trollope.¹² This is a complete burlesque upon them and is keen and caustic. Have you seen it?

⁹ - Thomas Campbell (1777–1844), poet, From the “Pleasures of Hope” (<http://www.bartleby.com/library/poem/1153.html>):

UNFADING Hope! when life’s last embers burn,
 When soul to soul, and dust to dust return!
 Heaven to thy charge resigns the awful hour.
 Oh, then thy kingdom comes! Immortal Power!
 What though each spark of earth-born rapture fly
 The quivering lip, pale cheek, and closing eye,—
 Bright to the soul thy seraph hands convey
 The morning dream of life’s eternal day—
 Then, then the triumph and the trance begin,
 And all the phoenix spirit burns within!

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¹⁰ - Var. of “yclept,” archaic: “by the name of”

¹¹ - In Christianity, apparently a reference to Matthew 7:13-14,

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the
 gate and broad is the road that leads to
 destruction, and many enter through it.

But small is the gate and narrow the road that
 leads to life, and only a few find it.

¹² - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestic_Manners_of_the_Americans:

It is a great triumph to foreigners for it does certainly expose some unmannerly practices, amongst which the chewing of tobacco is most universally prevalent. James chews constantly. Abominable you say. So do I. It will give you an idea of this when preachers preach with a quid in their mouths and spit boxes are necessary appendages of the drawing room.

New York is a noble and splendid city. 250,000 inhabitants roll through it everlastingly. The stages, carriages and steam boats are all of the grandest description. The City Hall all built with marble looks magnificent. It is for New York that you must direct your course. Enquire for 219 Broadway and if Sam be not there, they can tell you all about him.

I really felt an elevation of happiness when I read of your determination. It was an instant sunshine through my heart. It opened up a fresh spring of hope and ambition. Silence was freezing when I found no letters were coming from home or you. I did think it looked like neglect, but as soon as I recognized your well-formed characters, my mind heaved and swelled with emotion. I cannot tell you my ecstasy. I had a great desire to be rightly informed of the truth of a statement I had heard about you. In a letter I received from Sam was the following clause:- "Thomas is married to a lady in Dublin, with 2000 Pound fortune!!!"¹³ This intelligence produced a wonderful effect upon me. I laughed. I fell down, and exclamations of applause and wonder fell by turns iron my lips. Your letter undeceived me most woefully, not a syllable about the marriage. Oh, no, it would have been among the first things you would have told me of, but when you did not, I arrived by decrees at the conclusion that you are yet a young bachelor. You might easily guess that you and all the rest of you form many a conversation among us. Indeed I wonder I could have stayed so long away from home, young and green as I was. I wonder at it.

There is no place in the world where a small capital could be laid out so advantageously as here, where I am. There is a small farm of 100 acres I have in my eye, with a house which will require much repairs, and good, cleared arable land. It is all perfectly level and well fenced in. 300 Dollars would purchase it fully. I wish I could raise it. Now if you could raise 70 Pounds, it would do, which is exactly 310 Doll. 80 cents, which would more than suffice. If you could scrape anything from the publication of your book, it would serve you to bring to this country. At all events, come here. Believe not the stories of this being a golden country where any fool will prosper. You have sense enough to know that the idle are hated every place and the

The book created a sensation on both sides of the Atlantic, as Frances Trollope had a caustic view of the Americans and found America strongly lacking in manners and learning. She was appalled by America's egalitarian middle-class and by the influence of evangelicalism that was emerging during the Second Great Awakening. Trollope was also disgusted by slavery, of which she saw relatively little as she stayed in the South only briefly, and by the popularity of tobacco chewing, and the consequent spitting, even on carpets.

Her views were understandable for a number of reasons. It had been only 15 years since the United Kingdom was at war with the United States and the earlier American Revolutionary War was still remembered; as her own views on church, politics and social values were overtly conservative, she did not feel at ease with much in American religion, government and culture; and while in America she was unhappy as a result of financial and marital difficulties.

Her concluding sentiment:

"A single word indicative of doubt, that any thing, or every thing, in that country is not the very best in the world, produces an effect which must be seen and felt to be understood. If the citizens of the United States were indeed the devoted patriots they call themselves, they would surely not thus encrust themselves in the hard, dry, stubborn persuasion, that they are the first and best of the human race, that nothing is to be learnt, but what they are able to teach, and that nothing is worth having, which they do not possess."

¹³ - The only marriage on record is that to Hannah Byrne in Dublin, 26 Sep 1848.

industrious are sure to prosper. You know enough of self-exertion and that is everything. But I would ask a question:- What is it you intend to do? Have some definite plan in your head and follow it and you must succeed here.

My dear Thomas, I was prevented from sending this letter on to New York as soon as I intended. I began it on the 8th of Oct. and it is now the 27th. Really you must excuse. The modes of communication are so difficult that intelligence travels more slowly than at home.

I am about to spend my "Hallow Een" with James and Mary Jane at North East. You must think of me at Christmas. This is the season for game and I am often shooting squirrels, an animal at home I would have thought a curiosity. Opossums we catch at night with dogs. My time is spent agreeably upon the whole. I pay 1½ Dollars for board and the people generally send me as many children as makes up for that. It comes hard upon me to clothe myself. They are so dear here. Therefore I advise you to bring plenty of them and plenty of linen shirts. Books of all descriptions are cheap. I am about to collect my money for this quarter just ending, and dear knows it will be a hard matter. I have failed in my expectations here; consequently it will be a little more than 10 Pounds, clothe and feed myself. I am so sorry I cannot help my respected parents. God knows I would do it were I able and may He assist me to do so. Do not be shy in writing to me. Information from home forms a delightful subject for mediation. I have been so long about this letter, I must finish it and post it off.

Never change the letter "k" in your name, nor neither will I. Sam has already done it through a spirit of pride, but be you firm. Jos. says he will never change it either.

The fever and ague is raging about me but thank God I have escaped anything of it. Direct to me as follows: Caleb Lanktree, Elkton, Cecil County, Maryland, and send by New York packet, not merchant ships. I suppose President Jackson is no stranger by name to you all in Dublin. Politics occupy the people very much here. They are all in fact, red-hot politicians. Farewell, farewell. God bless us both.

Caleb Lanktree