

*J.W.A. Nicholson*

*Rev. J. W. A. Nicholson, former ~~mission~~ minister at Liverpool, a good friend & a dedicated member of the C. C. F. J.W.A.*

Leitches Creek Station, C.B.,  
Oct. 31/42.

My dear Raddall:

After spending a goodly part of last night in your companionship and talking over in imagination and in dreamland conversation so many problems, I felt that today in the sober language of reality I must write this letter. I think we were on board ship and I was trying to persuade you to write a story on several of the Cape Breton conditions. There is one that impressed me before but made a still greater appeal on this visit, namely the rural depopulation. Unfortunately I cannot help you very much with incident or happening of the kind that lifts a tale into the region of romance. But at any rate this note will tell you that I often think of our walks together and that I often regret that distance makes it impossible for us to continue those rambles. I find it more difficult than ever to take my walks for exercise purely, so that I suffer for omitting them so frequently.

I have been here for about three weeks and may be here for a few more ~~too~~ my permanent address is still the same, 69½ Coburg Rd., Hfx. Here are samples of the desertion from the farm that impresses me. After leaving Liverpool I spent a week-end in Baddeck Forks, C.B. where I preached my first sermon. An old gentleman spoke to me after the service and said that since I had been there before nearly 50 farms had been deserted, --- and that out of an area of not more than 150 farms. Here I come across the same thing. In two of the communities where I preach there is just a remnant of the earlier population. My chauffeur tells me that once there were seven brothers, Beatons, who settled in the primeval forest there in 1827. A rather unique monument tells the tale of the settlement and of the first preacher coming to them in 1837. The memorial stone is perched on a cairn from which the preacher addressed the assembled audience in the open. It is right beside the present road and only a few yards from the present church. These seven brothers carved out their homes from the woods, reared large families, built their roads, schools, churches, etc, and made a rather comfortable livelihood for those days. Now there are only a few families of all names left and these will be gone within another generation. The land is rough, rocky, not fitted for modern farming, unable to compete with modern farm production on a commercial basis in more fertile and remunerative areas. Tho near a large centre of population it will dwindle and disappear from the list of settled communities. It becomes practically impossible to support schools and churches, maintain decent roads, and the equipment of a respectable neighborhood. The young folk who stay are under a great disadvantage. I might add that many of these folk speak good Gaelic still, to my great surprise. They have sons and daughters toiling in the mines and industries of the Sydneys and off in the Canadian and American cities, to say nothing of the hundreds of their kind now serving in the war. In so many of these settlements it is a matter of deserting the area or enduring degeneration. Many of these folk have good ability and in proper surroundings would give a good account of themselves. I dined in a small lumber camp in a glen where there was an outfit of seven persons carrying on winter and summer, cutting in winter and ~~hauling~~ hauling; in summer they did the sawing and shipping by truck. That's the picture.

A rather singular reversal of fortune came under my notice at a recent funeral. One of the wreaths was a very beautiful piece of artistry, done by an aged woman to whom this was a necessary source of livelihood. She was a descendant of the titled family whose head was Sir Yorke Barrington.

This has lengthened a bit. But it gets last night's dream experience off my mind. I suppose the big story of the Canadian Yankee will soon appear. I am looking forward to its arrival. I hope you are enjoying your deliverance from the prolonged labor of producing it. Best wishes for continued success. Kind regards to your good wife and bairns. How I would like one of those Friday afternoon walks to Milton and back again. Sincerely, J.W.A. Nicholson.

69½ Coburg Rd., Halifax, N.S.; July 4/45.

My dear Raddall:

I had such a good time at camp under your own and Brenton's tutorship in the wild that I cannot stick it out in the city. I am off in a day for Antigonish (North Lochaber) to a clerical camp (Rev. & Mrs. Grant's formerly of St. Matthew's Church here but now of Westmount, Montreal, said to be the wealthiest United Church in Canada.) I may be able to wangle a few dollars out of the visit and thus help to save the soul of a clergyman living under such perilous temptation from the world the flesh and the devil.

It was one whale of a time up yonder in the woods and by the lake, and best of all in such enriching comradeship. It did my soul good, or whatever in my rough carcass passes for a soul. Let us hope it has some kinship however far off with the Soul of all things great and good. Now I shall try to continue in regions where "Loafing is a recognized occupation." I may even help to make it more respectable, who knows?

I have been making enquiry about hemlock groves. The chief forester tells me positively that the government has actually purchased such a grove adjoining the sanctuary. Further on my way home while visiting the Wickwires I met the Smarts of Caledonia who told me of a very fine grove owned by her Douglas Brothers somewhere on the road to the Mersey Paper Camp. I think I must take another trip when I come down to organize the County for CCF. The inspiration of such a grove will fortify me for grappling with the forces of evil incarnate in the old system and its allies in the old parties. BUT...

Ten thousand thanks for all your kindness. It is beyond my feeble powers of expression. It would take your own literary expertness to find fit phrases for description... Best wishes for the Breadmaker and bakers.

Shall look for you next week if back again.  
Sincerely, J.W.A. Nicholson.