

Murray of Auchavaich (Achvaich)

24th October 1887

My Dear Brother,

Since I wrote you last I have, along with my brother Alexander, visited Sutherland by ship. We left Helensburgh on 13th September via Crinan Canal passed Oban and reached Fort William the first night when we stayed in a hotel. We reached Dingwall the second night and remained there all night and visited Strath Peffer next morning, a beautiful spot with several very large Hotels to accomodate the visitors from all parts of the Globe. The scenery we passed through in the Western Highlands was very fine indeed and Alick diverted us by telling us of the incidents when he passed through in 1845. What magnificent steamers they have now on the route. We reached my sisters on the afternoon of the third day and found her and her husband well and apparently comfortable. We went that night to Kaily to Drumdivan and had a long crack with Sandy Gunn, wife and two daughters and two sons. The oldest daughter in Service in Edinburgh. Sandy is very comfortable, his family doing the heaviest part of the work. They were looking well and they were so kind and so pleased to see us. Next day we went to Dornoch and the day was held as a Holiday in honour of opening a Golfing Club House and competing for prizes. We saw there a very large number of our friends. Sandy our Cousin is looking very well. He is very white in the hair now but as straight as a rush and he was well pleased to see us and a lot of us met in Munro Inn (now McGunns). The Mrs. of the house Williamina Munro (now Mrs. Gunn) is very stout, rather a good looking woman. They have two nice children, a boy and a girl and not likely to have more. We spent the day very pleasantly in Dornoch among our friends. The following day being Saturday we visited Auchavaich and drank your health on the hearth stone of our Fathers house. Although a ruin yet it was there. Joy and sadness filled us there. Also visited the ruins of Uncle Donald's which is kept as a Smithy by the Tenant in Uncle Sandy's. We called there. The tenant is a Mr. Fraser from Rogart who was at Lenfluich after the Macdonalds. He has the three lots and pays £40 rent and owing to the low price of cattle has too much to do. We got great kindness then as I formerly

knew the family. We passed from there to Strath Auchavaich and saw old Sandy McIntosh and our cousin Janet McIntosh. Both failing very much and are striving to make a living of it. From there we crossed the Hill to Toroboll and saw Auchfading, Auchinal and Torboll, the scenes of our forefathers and of our youth at Torboll. Got a drink of kindness from Sergeant Hugh McIntosh, who is bordering on 80 year of age. We passed Ardnashurn and Ceushnacrarink. Saw a Sutherland and a Mathieson, the young generation - the old people are all dead. We reached Birichin wearied about six o'clock. Sandy Murray and Sandy Gunn meeting us and had a jolly tea.

Next day: We went to church and heard a Gaelic sermon. Left on Monday for Rogart and spent a night with Cousin Donald at Morness. They have a nice farm. Arable and hill and they are very comfortable and they were very kind indeed. Both getting old of course. Son and daughter at Home, working very hard. Donald is quite supple yet and able to work. They were enquiring for you all. Next day we went to Linside Croy to see there Mrs Brown and her son. They left Lairg and got a better farm near Invershin. George Brown drove us up to Rosehall when we saw our Cousin Donald, the Blacksmith. The only one living of that family, he seems to be very comfortable. He has a large grown up family. He also was so glad to see us and was very kind. Next day Sandy had to leave for Glasgow and I remained three days longer about Dingwall, Strath Peffer and Inverness where I had several friends to call on. The weather was delightfully fine and we enjoyed ourselves well. I had a first class pass free for the whole journey which added considerably to my comfort. We had one of the warmest and driest summers seen in the Country since 1826, the year of the Short Corn. In some places it was very short the year. Prices are very low at present. The load of meal in Caithness only 24/- buttle. Very low and rents coming down. Politically we are in a bad state Ireland in a blaze and Mr. Gladstone encouraging them to assist the Coercive Laws of the present Government. He is making a high bid for power. One thing certain, Ireland must get (although to her ruin) Home Rule and let them fight it out themselves. The strength and wealth of this country are wasted to keep her right and yet a failure. Great preparations all made for the Glasgow Industrial Exhibition and everything possible done to make it a great success. Houses in this quarter will be let at a premium and no doubt it will help the Firth of Clyde. What magnificent steamers ply now in the Firth. There are four Queens in Summer. The Columba - Iona - Ivanhoe and Lord of the Isles. Four floating Castles. What comfort

and advantages. I must conclude with kindest regards to yourself and family, James, John and Hugh and their families. On perusal you might hand this letter to James. I will be writing him soon. My wife, Bessie and George are very well and we have every reason of thankfulness. I will be so glad to hear from you with all the news from that quarter. So wishing you a good New Year.

Yours truly,

D. Murray

Mr. Robert Murray
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Otago.