

**Addressed to:** (Joshua Johnston, Stromness)

**From:** John Urquhart

Niagara October 10<sup>th</sup> 1783

Dear Father,

I received your agreeable letter of date 19<sup>th</sup> March last which acquaints me with the welcome news of you and all friends being well, as also of the birth of my young son and heir, called John. I am happy happy to learn the satisfaction my young family affords you though at same time cannot but be sensible of the great charge they have and at present must be to you. But the God that knows your good disposition will render you that happiness your deeds deserve for life and will put it in my power to make a retaliation some time or other.

Since my arrival in this part of the world I have been close confin<sup>d</sup> to business, having not been 20 miles from home since I came to Niagara, so that I am deprived of rendering you that satisfaction your letter requires with regard to curiosities or fossils. But as I am next Spring to return to the Indian country and do a little business for myself, with advise of my present employer (who is to assist me to that purpose), I hope to have it in my power to render a minute account of some curiosities which will certainly entertain you with regard to the inhabitants here. Their appearance when dress<sup>d</sup> would afford a man of penetration both myrth and sepeculation, but for me (who was but the mild Hyllandman), I was afraid for many days to venture myself out of doors. But when reconciled to approach them, I was made to understand that I was nearer connected to them than I expected. Upon the interpritor's acquainting I was a Scotchman, they begg<sup>d</sup> to let me know that they found one more of their lost tribe and gave their hollou, which if heard by the Gremsay men wou'd make them jump over Hoy Head. In trading they are the most justest of mankind never doubting but the Sowaanas (as they call us) will do them justice. On their arrival with their product, they deliver the whole to the merchant and will remain two days in the place befor they trade, never has the least idea that their property will be hurt. (This is what a Hyllandman would not do to his parson, and I believe he should not). This unhappy war (and us back xxxxx) has hurt them much, being furnished by Government with cloathing and provision but intirely deprived of their natural life such as hunting and living on woods (?) when they feed on the best of victuals.

Our provisions has depopulated them much, brought decays and fevers amongst them which they formerly were unacquainted with. But now they will be happily restor<sup>d</sup> to their former state, a happy people befor the luxury of the Europeans cam amongst them. It's what's most remarkable the prisoners they have during this war taken that they preffer staying with them rather than return to his country again. When taken by them they immediately strip<sup>t</sup> of his cloathing which they cut to pieces, cut his ears and bore his nose, poles his hair and paints him all over so that befor they take him to any fort he will in every shape be the Indian. A month after I cam to this place, I have seen them take a

young boy to this fort with his fay<sup>rs</sup> & moy<sup>rs</sup> and his two sisters' scalps hanging about his neck, which wou'd shake any heart to see it. Many other curious manovers which I at present will ommitt. But as I am to be better acquainted I hope next fall to write you more particulars which I hope will accompany some curiosities.

I am requested by a Captain David Betton who commands this lake (of Ontario) to be in the kindest manner recommended to you and to Mrs Johnston and family and begs you to enquir after a sister of his that lives about Houton or Cava if she has any children (I mean boys) that intends coming abroad, to write to him next year and that he will do for them and hopes you will be the writer of the letter and give him the news of the plans. I am verry much obligated to him since he understood I have been a little acquainted in the Orkneys having dinned with him often on board his vessel when he wou'd be highly entertain<sup>d</sup> with the little news I could give of the Orkneys. I have inclosed to May a small bill on London which I hope with the rest of your goodness you will assist her to forward for acceptance. Though it is small I hope it will be look<sup>d</sup> on as the widows mite, as not greate wages is given here the first year to a quil driver. By a letter from Jack all friends at Quebec was then well. I hope they continue their former good correspondence with you. My best esteem to you & Moy<sup>f</sup>, Sister Holly, Kitty, Jeany, Bettsy, Mrs Mackay & family, hoping they will be kind to my young family, & remain your grateful son in law

John Urq<sup>t</sup>

Compl<sup>ts</sup> to Mr & Mrs Falconer, compl<sup>t</sup> William Halcrow Esq<sup>f</sup>. I hope he will write me