

Canada, and therefore a good place to begin.

NOTES

- ¹ Tom Marshall, "Macdonald Park", *The Silences of Fire* (Toronto, 1969).
- ² Greater detail about Haliburton's life and career up to his departure for England in 1856 may be found in Desmond Pacey's *Creative Writing in Canada* (Toronto, 1952) and Carl F. Klinck's *Literary History of Canada* (Toronto, 1965), which contains an excellent essay by Fred Cogswell.

- ³ V. L. O. Chittick, *Thomas Chandler Haliburton ("Sam Slick"), A Study in Provincial Toryism* (New York, 1924), p. 179.
- ⁴ John Matthews, *Tradition in Exile* (Toronto, 1962). For more about Sam and his place in an American tradition, see Chittick's "The Hybrid Comic" (*Canadian Literature* no. 14).
- ⁵ Chittick, *Thomas Chandler Haliburton*, p. 342.
- ⁶ Ray Palmer Baker, "Introduction to *The Clockmaker*" (New York, 1927). I am indebted to Mr. Baker for his expression of the idea that Sam and the Squire represent two aspects of Judge Haliburton.

THOMAS MCCULLOCH

Marjorie Whitelaw

IN A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE appended to the New Canadian Library edition of *The Stepsure Letters* (the only item of Thomas McCulloch's writings easily available today and now generally held to be the first work of Canadian satirical humour), there is a comment by John A. Irving that McCulloch is one of the least known of the great nineteenth-century Canadians. This is still true, though since that 1960 issue of *Stepsure* there seems to have been a growing appreciation of McCulloch and his achievements and an apparent wish to have more understanding of the man behind the work.

A copy of the one portrait of McCulloch known to exist hangs in the old high school of Pictou, his former home. It shows a very Scottish face — large nose, long upper lip, straight determined mouth, steady eyes. In many a minister of the day such features would add up to an expression of stern spiritual purpose, but McCulloch's gaze is steadfast rather than stern. The expression is open, fully-developed, as indeed many Scots faces

are, with nothing closed-in or parsimonious to its emotional range. The mouth quivers on the edge of laughter. Underneath the portrait is his name, and the words: "Child of Scottish Heart and Mind."

When I first looked at the face and read that brief and perhaps romantic phrase, I had a sudden impression of a powerfully attractive and interesting character. That early impression has not altered — in spite of the revelation of strong and not always sympathetic Presbyterian overtones to McCulloch's career — and for me he continues to project the essence of the true Scots intellectual, in whom the heart is partner to the mind.

McCulloch's writings, which were voluminous, grew almost entirely out of the circumstances of his life and his work. Except for *Stepsure*, the writings are almost unknown today, but the life and work are well known enough.

He arrived in Pictou from Scotland in 1803, en route for Prince Edward Island — a married man of twenty-seven with a wife and small family. He had been, as

the phrase then went, "missioned" to Prince Edward Island by the General Associate Synod in Glasgow, a Presbyterian group which had seceded from the main body of the Church of Scotland for what appear to have been radical political reasons. It was late in the year and travel across the Strait of Northumberland was dangerous; McCulloch was persuaded to remain in Pictou with his family for the winter, and in the event they stayed there for almost thirty-five years, until they moved in 1838 to Halifax where McCulloch became first principal of the newly-opened Dalhousie College.

When McCulloch arrived in Nova Scotia, there was one college only in the province: King's College at Windsor. The buildings were ramshackle, the teaching was uncertain, but this colonial institution was pure in heart. Modelling itself on Oxford and Cambridge, it accepted only those students who adhered to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.

This single fact was responsible for the direction which McCulloch's life took in Nova Scotia. Fairly soon after his arrival he began to work for the establishment of a college in Pictou which would not only train Presbyterian ministers but also provide a liberal education for non-Anglicans desiring to enter the professions. Four-fifths of Nova Scotians were not Anglican; the fifth who were included, of course, the authorities and the official class in Halifax. McCulloch's long years of battling on behalf of the Academy caused Pictou to become known to this establishment group as a centre of radical anti-government opinion, and the Academy's right to exist became one of the most contentious and cantankerous political issues of the day.

The Governor, the Earl of Dalhousie, played a major role in the affair. He was a Scot and, though no admirer of McCulloch's brand of evangelical-radical

Presbyterianism, he could see very clearly that the College at Windsor was incapable of meeting the colony's needs. A couple of years after his arrival in 1816, Dalhousie was proposing the establishment of a non-sectarian college, based on the principles of Edinburgh University, and in the end this is what happened in Pictou, with McCulloch becoming the first principal.

McCulloch's agitation was to have results far wider than the mere launching of a colonial college. The battle for the Academy was fought most frequently in the field of public finance. The elected House of Assembly would vote a grant; the appointed Legislative Council would veto it.

McCulloch [says John A. Irving in the afterword of the New Canadian Library edition of *The Stepsure Letters*] was apparently among the first to realize that the will of the people meant nothing when it was in conflict with the views of the irresponsible Council. Once he was convinced that educational progress was impossible under that kind of government, he began to speak and write against the whole system . . . Long before Joseph Howe began his work [for responsible government], McCulloch was teaching the people of Nova Scotia the new ideas which were ultimately to change their whole system of government.

Very few facts are known about McCulloch's early years in Scotland. He was born in a tiny hamlet in Renfrewshire, near to the growing industrial town of Paisley. His father was a master block printer in the textile trade. His eldest brother was in business in London and Lyons, the French textile centre. Another brother became a surgeon. Thomas attended Glasgow University, taking a medical course as well as subjects more closely related to life as a minister. After Glasgow, he went to Whitburn, the theological college of the Secession Church, and, on being licensed as a minister, was called to the little church at Stewarton,

near Glasgow, where he continued to study literature, Oriental languages and British constitutional law, all to the subsequent benefit of Nova Scotia. From Stewarton he went in 1803 to Pictou. In 1799 he had married Isabella Walker, daughter of another—and well-connected—Secessionist minister; it seems to have been a happy marriage with a loving family life. Some letters from Isabella to her grandchildren have survived; they show her to have been an affectionate and well-read grandmother, for she recommended books, discussed her husband's work in natural history and expressed an enlightened concern over the prejudice against the Micmac Indians that was developing in Pictou. One may assume that she was in full sympathy with her husband when he battled for the Academy.

The times through which McCulloch grew up were eventful: he was born in the year of the American Declaration of Independence, and the French Revolution had its influence on political opinion in Scotland during the years when he was at university. The works of Rousseau, Voltaire and other savants of the French Enlightenment were widely read by Scots, while Scottish universities were enjoying a prolonged period of intellectual enquiry and literary flowering.

All this influenced McCulloch's later work at the Pictou Academy, where he taught classes in Greek, Latin, Moral and Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and, I think, Hebrew. As a Glasgow graduate he was much interested in the developments of modern science, and in order to raise money for the Academy he would travel through the Maritimes giving public lectures on these wonders—the first of their kind to be heard in the region. In Pictou he also established the first scientific laboratory east of Montreal.

Many linear feet of McCulloch papers lie on the shelves of the Public Archives

of Nova Scotia; his pen was prodigiously, tirelessly, incessantly busy. He wrote sermons, articles and editorials for newspapers; he produced an exhausting continuum of letters, memorials, petitions and pleas on behalf of the Academy. He wrote a treatise against Popery, another in favour of a liberal education. He published *The Stepsure Letters* serially in *The Acadian Recorder* during 1821 and 1822, and wrote a pair of cautionary tales of the moral and spiritual hazards of emigration to Nova Scotia, *William* and *Melville*. There is as well a much longer and unpublished work, "Auld Eppie's Tales", which seems to me both more revealing of McCulloch the man and more suggestive of genuine talent than most of the other work.

It is not in fact easy to get a clear picture of McCulloch the man in that mountain of manuscript. It is true that a very dull biography (*The Life of Thomas McCulloch, D.D.*, Truro, 1920) does exist, written by his son, the Reverend William McCulloch, who based it on his father's papers. But William's idea of the proper way for a clergyman son to write about a clergyman father merely cloaks McCulloch in respectful Victorian piety. Only in the excerpts from McCulloch's letters are there occasional tantalising flashes of a pawky wit and a vigorous mind. I like, for example, this little vignette of Nova Scotian high society as McCulloch saw it when he came to Halifax in 1830 to give his first series of scientific lectures. He seems to have gone from Pictou to Halifax by ship.

It was not so bad as going to be hanged, but I found it by no means comfortable. I was going to the very focus of power, and enmity, and my unsubdued spirit felt that I was going because I could not stay at home. In Halifax there had never been any public exhibitions but of players and showmen and I really felt as if I belonged to the vagabond race. A bear and a few dancing dogs would have been suitable companions to the

mood in which I entered into our gay and dissipated metropolis. To mend the matter, when my apparatus on two carriages was moving along the street, some wag gave notice to our Collector of Customs . . . that a great cargo of smuggled tea had just come into town, and instantly I had a Custom-house officer at my heels . . . At the solicitation of Councillors, the Admiral, Commissary-General, and other grandees who dine after six, I lectured three days a week at eight in the evening. In the compass of twenty-one lectures I managed to squeeze together a mass of the finest experiments in philosophy and left my audience as eager as at the commencement of the course.

William McCulloch prepared the biography in his later years and left it to his daughters to publish it after a suitable delay, when there would be no-one alive "whose feelings might be painfully excited" thereby. The Misses McCulloch accordingly had the book privately printed in 1920, some 77 years after its subject's death. But I have been told that before publication a worthy person at Pine Hill Theological College in Halifax went through the manuscript and blue-pencilled anything that might make McCulloch appear less than saintly. I can give one example of what may then have happened. William McCulloch quotes from the interesting account which the naturalist Audubon gives of his visit to Pictou in 1833, when he called on McCulloch. "Professor McCulloch," Audubon actually wrote in his journal, "received us very kindly, giving us a glass of wine." And, later, "I was handed three pinches of snuff by the Professor, who loves it." These damaging details of wine and snuff are omitted from the fragment of Audubon in the published *Life of Thomas McCulloch, D.D.*

McCulloch's own style when he wrote for publication often adds to our sense of having to search for the real person behind the minister. One wonders whether, consciously or unconsciously, he wrote what he thought might be expected of a

Presbyterian minister. This is particularly true of the two moralistic tales, published in 1826 in Edinburgh under the title *Colonial Gleanings: William and Melville*, where a high religious note is struck on almost every page. For example, William, a young man whose Scottish parents are of modest means has determined to emigrate to Nova Scotia.

To the parents of William, whose sole ambition was to exemplify that religious and peaceful life whose brighter prospects are beyond the grave . . . his determination was a dreadful stroke . . . With the fire and ambition of youth, he was about to launch into a world of snares, where the warning voice of religions might not be heard . . . The grief of his parents, and the prospect of separation, had wounded him deeply; but the fairy dreams of ambition bewildered and perverted his mind. He felt firmly assured that he would never forget his parents nor their worthy example; abroad, he would retain his integrity; and when he returned to cheer their declining days, he would return both a wealthy and a religious man.

The same sort of note is often struck in *The Stepsure Letters*, for in creating his character, Mephibosheth Stepsure, to satirize the life of Pictou, McCulloch makes him the ideal settler: unfailingly thrifty, prudent, hard-working, moderate in his pleasures and strong in his piety. And, of course, he prospers accordingly. But his neighbours are frequently spendthrift, slovenly and in trouble with the sheriff. Stepsure is more than a bit of a prig, which McCulloch was not.

It is also possible that McCulloch wrote what he hoped would sell, for he was usually writing from an urgent need of cash, and at too much speed. Writing to his friend James Mitchell in Glasgow on the 24th June, 1828, he remarks:

In the first place providence has placed me in circumstances in which I shall be forced almost alone to fight with the powers that be and if I cannot contrive something in the way of authorship to help me along in the mean time I must either starve or run off long before the battle is fought.

Secondly Tom [his son] still has a wish to turn to trade and I have no way of assisting him but by my pen.

And later in the same year (29th December) he wrote also to James Mitchell referring presumably to his unpublished collection, "Auld Eppie's Tales."

My story is not as well polished as I wish. The cause of this you can easily guess. Three volumes were written in a year in addition to my daily tasks. I have endeavoured to make them as amusing as the little time which I had for thinking would admit . . . I mentioned to you formerly that one object which I had in view was to do a little to help my son Thomas into business. About that I am now more anxious than ever and must therefore earnestly entreat you to lose no time.

There is in fact no record that McCulloch was actually paid for the original newspaper publication of *The Stepsure Letters*. However, in 1822 he tried through the Mitchells in Glasgow to sell *Stepsure* to booksellers in Scotland, without being successful. It was only in 1862 that *The Stepsure Letters* were issued as a volume, and then in Halifax.

Of "Auld Eppie's Tales", of which he appears to have been speaking in his letter to James Mitchell, McCulloch had written earlier to Mitchell's father, the Rev. John Mitchell:

I have begun with the days of popery and intend to carry on through three volumes without meddling with anything but popery and the progress of Lollardism in the west of Scotland, not forgetting a due quantity of witches, kelpies and other gods whom our fathers worshipped. I want Crawford's History of Renfrew most sadly. Indeed I cannot do without it. I have laid my scene . . . where I was born and need to know every place and person. I expect also to have a great deal to do with the Abbey and Abbots of Paisley.

He followed this letter up by asking James Mitchell in the letter of the 24th June already quoted to observe discretion regarding his plans for the book.

I have undertaken a business for which I have strong suspicion that Sir W. Scott going before me I am ill qualified and which were it not a sort of vindication of our ancestors and their support of civil and religious truth I would account not very clerical . . . The present is the commencement of a series of stories which will extend to the revolution of 1788.

McCulloch first considered Blackwood in Edinburgh as a possible publisher for "Auld Eppie's Tales", saying that William Blackwood had been kind to him (Blackwood had sent a donation of books for the Academy), but some sort of difference must have developed between them, for early in 1828 McCulloch wrote crossly to Mitchell.

About writing for his magazine I have only to say that I regard it as a very bad book and except in the expectation of helping to render its texture more moral I do not do it. I think I could give him for a few years a series of essays that would be generally read, but not being yet a hungry author ten guineas a sheet is no temptation.

So Blackwood does not appear to have been very interested in "Auld Eppie's Tales", but seems to have offered McCulloch other work in connection with *Blackwood's Magazine*, which he turned down. However, Blackwood evidently kept the manuscript of the tales, for in December 1833 McCulloch was still asking James Mitchell to retrieve it. At the same time he enclosed a story for submission to William Oliphant, who had published *William and Melville* in 1826. Oliphant seems to have paid thirty guineas for *William and Melville*, and McCulloch suggests that for the new work fifty guineas would be a proper price. He obviously hoped Oliphant would accept the manuscript, for once again he planned to give the money to his son for his business.

I mention these details of literary finances because they go some way towards demonstrating that *Stepsure* and McCulloch were in fact two very different per-

sons. Over and over again in his letters McCulloch states that he has chosen his path in life quite deliberately, that had he not stuck to his principles and to the Secession Church he could have been much more prosperous. He has done what he believes to be the Lord's will, he has worked very hard, and it has not brought him material success. If Stepsure is a perfect illustration of the Protestant ethic in successful practice, McCulloch represents something else entirely, and it is possible that in *The Stepsure Letters* he is not only satirizing the improvident and spendthrift, but also the unduly prudent and thrifty, those whom the Scots call the "unco' guid". Pictou had a good supply of these godly ones, and very irritating they may have been to a man with as deep a perception of life as McCulloch.

When *The Stepsure Letters* appeared in 1822, McCulloch wrote to Mitchell in Glasgow that "No writing in these provinces ever occasioned so much talk." Certainly many people in Pictou must have been angry when they perceived themselves, at least in part, in some of the caricatures. Even I, knowing only a little of the Pictou of those days, can speculate on possible likenesses. Saunders Scantocreech, the Scotsman who is always damping down the fun and confidently calling on the Lord to approve his actions, contains elements of the shrewd, grasping and pious James Dawson, father of Sir William, later principal of McGill. Then there is Mr. Solomon Gosling, whose father had left him very well-to-do, and whose daughters, having learnt to paint flowers and play the piano, left the household to the black servant wench. When things went badly for Mr. Gosling (not content with farming he had tried his hand at trade) and he had to go to live with the sheriff (who ran the debtors' prison), he was wont to remark that the country did not deserve to be lived in; it was fit only for Indians and emigrants

from Scotland. Could Mr. Gosling have been derived from some member of the Harris family, who kept a negro servant, who had come not from Scotland but from Pennsylvania, and who were among the founding families of Pictou?

To a modern reader, *The Stepsure Letters* decline in effectiveness as they proceed. In the earlier chapters, McCulloch had both fresh material for satire and a valid general situation to base it on. Take, for example, the character Jack Scorem, chasing after quick and illusory profits in the lumber trade. During the Napoleonic wars, Pictonians could hardly bother to look after their household animals, so eager were they to cut timber and (apparently) to drink up the profits, while their newly cleared land reverted to bush. But the lumber trade was subject to very erratic fluctuations, and McCulloch was not the only one to believe that the settlers would do far better in the long run to work towards establishing a productive agriculture. Pictou itself was a small and unimpressive place which lacked most amenities and McCulloch could see all too clearly the effect on the community of those citizens who were not content to put in the years of pioneer hard work and build up a strong basic economy, but who instead dreamed of getting rich quick, nor did he spare his derision of those among the newly prosperous who desired to be genteel as well and no longer to dirty their hands. In his strictures on negligent farmers, McCulloch was supporting the work of John Young, who wrote under the pseudonym of "Agricola" and who was anxious to promote in Nova Scotia the improvements in farm methods then being put into general use in Scotland.

One cannot question the effectiveness of *The Stepsure Letters* in their own day, especially since they originally appeared in weekly parts. Where the present-day reader finds them tedious is in their monotony of treatment. The same situations

are repeated over and over again. The unhappy weaklings end with deadening inevitability in the debtors' prison, and as Stepsure prospers, he becomes more irritatingly sure of his own virtue. Yet, if Stepsure's viewpoint is self-satisfied and hyper-critical, it is never sour, and on every page there are lively observed comments and observations often blossoming into good humour, earthy and devoid of primness. The letters contain an immense amount of information about how people lived in those interesting times and in terms of their period they are written in a style pared down almost to the skeletal.

McCulloch's standard plot turns up again in *William and Melville*. Both young men are immigrants to Nova Scotia, basing "their hope of happiness upon the acquisition of wealth in foreign lands", and both come to sticky ends through ignoring those principles of religious and moral behaviour which should protect a man from the dangers of strange lands. But there are interesting indications that in these stories McCulloch was trying out a larger idea, and moving into the areas of Scottish history which were of great importance to him.

Though the tales of William and Melville are separate, there had been early connections between the two families. Melville's great-grandfather possessed a large estate "at a time when Scotland groaned under Prelacy and arbitrary power." He was an easy-going gentleman, and indulgent landlord, who hoped for favours from the Duke of York if he aided the king. Which king? We are not told, but it may have been Charles II, whose brother was Duke of York, a Catholic and later, as James II, the last of the Stuart kings.

To prove his zeal for the government, Melville's great-grandfather takes William's great-grandfather captive and carries him to Edinburgh, where "for the testimony of Jesus" he is put to the tor-

ture "till the blood spouted from the legs of the prisoner and the marrow oozed from his bones" and is then consigned to the Grassmarket prison, where his horrified betrayer visits him and humbly begs his pardon.

Against this background of a cruel past, McCulloch follows the two young men to their various dooms. The paths they take are somewhat different. William's family inherit the civil and religious truths represented by the Presbyterian faith and the democratic principles it embodied and encouraged in government, and William sins in forgetting the religious and ethical principles his father has taught him.

When he reaches Halifax after leaving Scotland, William finds work easily, since he is a skilled tradesman. He earns far more than in Scotland, and, after being made foreman, he marries his master's daughter. He inherits the business, but finds it not so profitable as he had expected, since his master has neglected it. In his turn, becoming absorbed in public affairs, William also neglects the business, and his downward path begins at this point. He forgets to write to his parents; he conducts his business in taverns. He becomes slovenly in appearance and soon loses trade to competitors. Despair brings him low, and when a letter from his father arrives and it is being read to him, he cries out in mental agony and dies. But he dies repentant.

Melville is a little more political in tone. We are, for example, introduced to one Andrew Welwood, a weaver with "a rooted abhorrence of the whole race of the Stuarts, as the enemies of the Church of God, and the authors of those innumerable evils under which Scotland had groaned"; among the evils is the martyrdom of William's great-grandfather, here fully described. After that occasion, Melville's great-grandfather takes to drink and we are not surprised to read that he dies from falling off his horse. His estate

is gradually impaired, and in the end there is nothing for Melville to inherit but the family name.

Melville has graduated from the university; he has a cultivated mind, prepossessing appearance, pleasing manners. He decides there is no way to retrieve his fortunes except by emigration. Arriving in Halifax, he soon finds employment and after various trials he is successful in business. But his life seems to lack direction and purpose. One day, wandering in the countryside, he comes on a rustic cottage inhabited by a father and daughter who have retired from the world to live the Christian life. Melville falls deeply in love with Elizabeth, the daughter, but though she reciprocates his feelings, she rejects him; there is no community of religious sentiment between them.

Melville goes to the West Indies on business, where he suffers not only from indulging in well-known West Indian dissipations but also from a tropical fever that affects his health and abilities, leading to business losses. He returns low in morale and health, to find Elizabeth dying of consumption; Melville also declines and dies, a repentant Christian.

It all now seems, I suppose, mawkish sentimentality, but in their time *William* and *Melville* were apparently regarded as expressions of religious truth and excellent illustrations of the perils awaiting young immigrants in the worldly ambience of that notorious seaport, Halifax. At least, they are written in good, straightforward English, and they include some interesting comments on Nova Scotia as it appeared to the emigrant in the early nineteenth century.

Though a passenger from Britain be aware that he will see a great deal of wood in Nova Scotia, the continuous succession of forest which almost everywhere exists, rarely fails to give his mind an unexpected shock. He had pictured to himself a diversity of lawn and grove which would cheer and delight: his eye meets tree towering above

tree, till the horizon terminates, not the succession but the view . . . From the immense solitudes of the forest, therefore, his mind shrinks within itself, and feels as if it stood alone in the midst of the earth. Nor is a nearer approach to the coast at all calculated to remove these saddening impressions. Rock appears piled upon rock; and where a tree is interspersed, it is the hemlock or spruce, upon which the occasional visitations of the spray have conferred the aspect of old age . . .

It is interesting and curious that in *William and Melville* there is no mention of Catholicism, for McCulloch felt strongly about what he regarded as the fallacies of that religious attitude. It is true that his two works on Catholicism (*Popery Condemned by Scripture and the Fathers*, Edinburgh, 1808, and *Popery again Condemned by Scripture and the Fathers*, Edinburgh, 1810) seem oddities today. But one must remember that this was still the period of the long struggle for Catholic emancipation—a battle that seems almost forgotten now. In Scotland (and at least in theory in Nova Scotia), Catholics still lacked the right to conduct schools, to celebrate marriages or funerals in public (such a religious service had to be performed privately in the house.) A Catholic could be a barrister but not a judge of the High Court.

In England such laws were an expression of the national determination to give no opportunity to the Catholic Stuarts or their supporters to have another fling at seizing power. But in Scotland the Presbyterian feeling was older than the Reformation. When John Knox brought the Protestant Reformation to Scotland, he had a situation in serious need of reform; the mediaeval Scots Catholic church had fallen into a most ignoble state of corruption. To Presbyterians in Scotland in the early nineteenth century, Catholicism meant not only the temporal and alien power of the Catholic church, which they feared, but also a kind of irrational, illogi-

cal philosophic fallacy, indeed a heresy, adherence to which could be as damning to a man's soul as any other sin.

Catholic emancipation was a liberal cause, the retention of the penal laws a conservative one. *Blackwood's Magazine* in Edinburgh published article after article stating the case against emancipation, and these arguments revealed deep-burning fires of bigotry and prejudice. But in *Popery Condemned* and *Popery again Condemned*, McCulloch does not argue for retention; he restricts himself instead to a half-amused, any-fool-can-see-this discussion of various points of Catholic superstition and dogma; one can hear far greater and uglier prejudice expressed by Edinburgh street orators even today. He discussed such matters as the supremacy of the Apostle Peter, the temporal authority exercised by the Pope, papal infallibility, and so on. And it was this level of criticism of Catholicism that formed the basis of the major part of "Auld Eppie's Tales", which he wrote in the late 1820's, after a trip to Scotland.

There is a problem about this work. Dr. D. D. Harvey, former Provincial Archivist of Nova Scotia, has written that in "Auld Eppie's Tales" McCulloch "attempted . . . to counteract Scott's unsympathetic treatment of the Covenanters in *Old Mortality*." And there is in fact an unfinished manuscript by McCulloch which deals with the Covenanters. Over the years this manuscript has become somewhat disarranged, and when I searched through it I could find no evidence that the tale of the Covenanters had ever been completed. The one complete story in "Auld Eppie's Tales" — as long as a medium length novel, handwritten and fairly difficult to read — is in fact the work on the Abbots of Paisley to which McCulloch referred in his already quoted letter to the Rev. John Mitchell in January 1828.

It is a curious tale, and the opening

structure is very awkward; the first narrator, returning to the district after many years, encounters an old friend who in turn narrates one of the tales Auld Eppie used to tell the children. Yet once McCulloch gets into the story itself, it contains some of his best writing.

Perhaps this is because, in "Auld Eppie", McCulloch is going home, home to the countryside he knew as a boy. This, however, does not prevent him from being realistic about what has happened to that countryside; he tells how the river has become industrialized, the water kelpies have gone from the stream, as has the grist mill, and a "huge unclassical cotton work monopolised its waters." But he retains his feel of the country, as when he writes of Jock Slater, one of the characters, that "no boy in the school knew so many birds' nests, or when paddling in the river could put his hand under a stone and pull out a trout with equal dexterity. At snaring a hare too he was a perfect adept."

The story deals with the Abbey, with the machinations of a rather wicked adherent of that establishment curiously known as Sir Hughie, with the imagined bewitchment of the Lady of the Manor, perhaps by her servant Mansie. In this story the gentry speak standard England, but the country folk speak Scots. A good example is the scene in which Killoch, a local farmer, warns Mansie against consorting with the Devil, of which she has been accused; Mansie suggests that he come with her to discuss it with the Devil, who resides — Killoch supposes — in a pocket of the river glen called the Spout.

"Deil though he be," says Killoch, "I'll gie him ae mouthfu' that he'll no get ower. We'll tak the evangel wi' us, and lang afore we had read it through, if he be na' off to the Red Sea, as Sir Hughie says, he'll be off to a place that's ill to bide in. Nae deil e'er stood before Jesus Christ; and he'll be

a stout ane, that ventures to face his evangel."

Never was there day less in unison with deeds of darkness. The sun, diffusing his glories in a cloudless sky, looked down upon the Glen, which smiled in all the loveliness of nature. The hawthorn and birch perfumed the air with their fragrance; little birds carolled upon every spray, and the mellow notes of the blackbird and thrush, re-echoed through the Glen. Killoch, as he ascended after Mansie, felt the harmony of nature, but he was ill at ease within; he thought that, but for the devil and the church, the whole world would be a habitation of peace.

... Before him, Mansie moved onward without apparent reluctance, but this, so far from affording him relief, proved rather a matter of uneasiness. As an evidence of the obduracy and hardihood of witches under the power of the devil, it showed him that he was about to engage in a contest in which, judging by appearances, the probabilities of victory were on the side of the enemy. Had Mansie discovered symptoms of terror and contrition, he would have been much better satisfied . . .

They approach the glen; Killoch's knees shake when he finds that it is pervaded by a strong and disagreeable smell of burning. Then he hears the sounds of sawing and hammering and, to his surprise, the Devil seems to be amusing himself with a song. He advances bravely, saying to Mansie:

"Stand back. Ye'll meet wi' nae skaith, if I can help it. It's no for the like of you, to

daur the devil: but I hae a call to meet wi' him, and, wi' the help o' God's word, I'll let him ken that Jesus Christ cam to destroy the works o' the deil."

Killoch, therefore, with the scriptures in his hands, placed himself before Mansie; and, pushing aside the bushes, ventured into the Glen . . . What he wanted in courage, he endeavoured to supply by haste. Saying to himself, it is God's work, he hurried onward; and, at last, found himself amidst a goodly company of gypsies, or tinklers, as they are commonly called; some employed in the manufacture of horsespoons, and others in the fabrication of brotches, crosses and several other trinkets.

"Gibbie Graham, Rabbie Marshall, and the hail o' you," said Killoch, "what brought you here? Dinna' ye ken, that for your ne'erdoweel gates [ways], the king long syne commandit you out o' the kintra?"

"We ken that weel," replied Gibbie, "but we hae nae other hame, and canna gang awa'. We like the Glen and a' that belang till't. Ye're a gude landlord, Killoch; ad we've no ill tenants: ye mauh say naething about us: we may do you a gude turn yet."

"Weel, weel," said Killoch. "I'm glad that Mansie has nae waur deils than you to deal wi'."

And McCulloch tackles the absurdities (as he sees them) of the Catholic position with the same blend of sardonic humour and deep seriousness, which it seems to me goes far beyond anything in *The Stepsure Letters*. Perhaps indeed an undiscovered treasure is there in "Auld Eppie's Tales".