

MARTIN McLEOD AND THE MINNESOTA VALLEY¹

As the winter of 1836 settled down upon Minnesota, a struggling band of adventurers broke a lonesome path from Lake Superior to the Red River of the North. Their leader, James Dickson, had visions of a fantastic kingdom somewhere in the West over which he would rule. His motives and objectives faded away with the wild obsession that possessed him, and now little is known of his chimerical project. Among his followers was one Martin McLeod, a young man of twenty-three who had given up his clerkship in a Montreal store, bade farewell to home and friends, and turned his face toward the hope-filled West. Day by day as this youth sought rest from the battle with the trail, his numbed fingers found time to record the stages of the journey or his reflections on the strangeness of fortune. His memorable diary reveals little of the motives that influenced him and his comrades, but it is filled with the spirit of conquering endurance that carried them through the wilderness of the Chippewa.²

With the close of the year came the end of the Dickson schemes and soon the members of the expedition began to scatter, leaving the Red River colony, where they had rested for several weeks. McLeod, accompanied by two of his comrades and guided by Pierre Bottineau, the famous guide of the Northwest, started on February 26, 1837, for St. Peter's at the mouth of the Minnesota River, a journey of "750 miles . . . on foot." Though it was necessary in the snowy

¹ Read at the Glencoe session of the eighth state historical convention on June 14, 1929. *Ed.*

² Grace L. Nute, "James Dickson, A Filibuster in Minnesota in 1836," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 10: 127-140 (September, 1923); Nute, ed., "The Diary of Martin McLeod," *ante*, 4: 351-439.

wilderness for McLeod to trust Bottineau implicitly, his observing eye continually tested the accuracy of his second guide, Major Stephen H. Long's map. This he found was "very incorrect." His party's course skirted the Coteau des Prairies, leading southward toward Lake Traverse. The trip was desperate enough under normal winter conditions and McLeod "found it exceedingly cold sleeping out after having been in a house for two months." Unaccustomed to snowshoes, he dragged wearily along, literally leaving a trail of blood in the snow as the thongs chafed his blistered feet. After having faced death from drowning, from freezing, and from starvation during the weeks spent in reaching the Red River, McLeod was sensitive to the dangers that still confronted him. On the first of March he and his companions found a group of starving Red River hunters huddled in a shanty. These they generously supplied from their own meager stock of pemmican. McLeod at once indulged in the ominous prophecy that before Lake Traverse should be reached their benevolence would be matched with fasting. Less than three weeks later he recorded: "Out of Provisions obliged to kill one of our dogs. Dogs meat excellent eating."

One of McLeod's companions, a Pole named Ignatius Parys, had stubbornly refused to trust himself to the unfamiliar snowshoe. As he struggled along, barely able to keep in sight of the others, he, too, sensed the impending dangers before them and feared that "he would perish in this journey." On March 17, while west of the Red River and about sixty miles from Lake Traverse, a terrific snowstorm overtook McLeod and his companions at a most inopportune moment. Bottineau, the guide, was in pursuit of a deer. McLeod was leading the way across an open plain closely followed by Richard Hayes, the fourth member of the party, while Parys was two miles behind. Each man was obliged to fight his way alone through the blinding, clinging, wet snow and across the prairie toward the wood on Rice River. Near

the river McLeod stumbled into a ravine and while clambering out found the dog train buried in a snow bank. The trees, which he finally reached, afforded him almost no shelter at all. He could make no fire. In desperation he dug a hole in the snow and rolled up in a blanket and a buffalo robe rescued from the traineau. His wet clothes began to freeze. All night long the storm roared above him, and the wolves howled near by. When welcome day finally dawned, Bottineau came up safe and sound; Hayes was lost; Parys was found with his legs hopelessly frozen. Bottineau and McLeod made a shelter for Parys, left blankets and provisions, and hurried on to Lake Traverse for horses with which to convey their disabled companion to a physician. Though weak and sick, McLeod painfully followed his guide forty-five miles on March 21, arriving at the trading post on Lake Traverse at dark. Bottineau went back to rescue Parys, but returned with the sad news that the body of Hayes could not be found and that Parys had died from exposure.

The survivors soon started on the last part of their journey. McLeod's record shows that on the way down the Minnesota River he met several men with whom he was later to be intimately associated in the fur business and in the development of the territory and state of Minnesota: Joseph R. Brown, in charge of the post at Lake Traverse; Joseph Renville, Dr. Williamson, and Gideon H. Pond, at Lac qui Parle; Louis Provençalle at Traverse des Sioux; and Jean Baptiste Faribault at the Little Rapids of the Minnesota River. Such was McLeod's introduction to this region.⁸

Minnesota in the early days held out little hope of fortune except through the fur trade. For two years McLeod worked in the employ of Benjamin F. Baker, a trader near Fort Snelling, learning the rudiments of the business through this

⁸ The foregoing account of McLeod's first journey into the Minnesota country is based on his diary, *ante*, 4: 351-439. The original manuscript diary, his correspondence, some fur-trade ledgers, and a few miscellaneous papers are in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

apprenticeship. The restlessness that had brought him from Canada still drove him on. By the close of 1840 he had been several times in St. Louis. The first four months of 1838 he traveled in Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin. The summer and fall of 1839 he spent at La Pointe, the winter at St. Croix Falls. During these years he was seeking more favorable employment, for he received letters declining his services at the Red River settlement and with the upper Missouri outfit.⁴

All that McLeod saw and heard of other regions did not draw him away from the alluring valley of the Minnesota that had so nearly taken his life in the late winter of 1837. In October, 1840, he started for Traverse des Sioux to spend his first lonesome season on the wintering ground. Under the guiding hand of Henry H. Sibley he equipped and coaxed and threatened the improvident Indians, gathering in furs with a skill that did credit to him and to his master. He shifted from Traverse des Sioux to Big Stone Lake in 1843, and in 1846 to Lac qui Parle, where he remained until he established his home at Oak Grove, a few miles west of Fort Snelling.⁵ His continued connection with Sibley during all this time, in spite of occasional strained relations, is convincing evidence of ability and character.

McLeod's correspondence of the forties, particularly with Sibley, reveals him going tirelessly up and down the valley region, urging the Indians to get more furs and buffalo robes, and scheming to outdo his rivals, particularly the clever Joseph R. Brown. One marvels at his hardihood, but understands all the better how he survived the terrible trip of 1837. In March, 1847, he and a companion were overtaken near the Pomme de Terre River by a sudden snowstorm. They were "out four days without an ax, kettle, or even a tin cup."

⁴ McLeod's diary, *ante*, 4: 421, 434; Robert Logan to McLeod, May 4, 1838; Kenneth Mackenzie to McLeod, September 22, 1840, McLeod Papers.

⁵ McLeod's diary, *ante*, 4: 422-435.

In December of the same year he had an even more hazardous experience. A letter to Sibley tells of the incident.

In crossing a plain 15 to 20 miles through snow a foot deep, with loaded trains, we experienced a furious *poudre* storm in which we came nigh to perishing, horses and all. Two of the poor animals, and one of the men—who was carelessly clad—presented a pitiable sight, when near dark we were fortunate enough to strike upon the head of a ravine of the Coteau, where we found wood, and dug our 'campment in the snow four feet where the horses remained during the night, half buried, eating the tops of trees placed before them. One more such a day and we would have had to abandon our horses to perish in some snow bank, a fate which would have befallen some of ourselves, also in all probability. The succeeding day however, tho' cold was clear and calm; with our weary hungry and snow encrusted animals we wended our way slowly down the ridges of the Coteau crossed a plain of 15 miles, and reached the shelter of the trading house at Big Stone Lake before dark.⁶

Though McLeod's hardihood came to be a tradition throughout the valley, it did not become commonplace in the eyes of his fellows. Small wonder that in 1859, when plans were being made for an exploring expedition to the Rockies in search of gold, the *Glencoe Register* urged the appointment of McLeod as leader, describing him as "one of the most able men in the state . . . capable of enduring more fatigue than any man we know of . . . just the man to lead an enterprize of this kind."⁷

Evidently the temporary character of the fur trade was apparent to McLeod from the first. It was neither this feature of the trade, nor the hardships endured, however, that made it a source of discouragement for McLeod. It was the treachery of the credit system. In 1847 Sibley made an effort to eliminate the evil by drawing up a new contract with McLeod and others, covering the Upper Sioux Outfit. But

⁶ McLeod to Henry H. Sibley, April 1, 1847; January 3, 1848, Sibley Papers.

⁷ *Glencoe Register*, April 16, 1859. The appointment was given to Colonel William S. Nobles.

try as a few traders might to destroy the credit plan, its use continued. McLeod carefully instructed his agents not to use the system, only to receive letters from them later explaining how credit had been extended to a thieving Indian in order to get him away hunting, to another who was starving, and to still another who otherwise would trade with a rival.⁸

Year after year McLeod would write to Sibley about the good prospects for the trade, but usually a later letter would report that he had collected but a small number of furs and robes. A thousand forces blocked the way to success. Only the knowledge that his old home promised less kept him from returning to Canada, as indeed he was urged to do by friends and relatives there. Energy and methodical practices could not offset the risks of the business. And yet, though he constantly lost money, as did the other traders, he kept advancing in responsibility and influence.

Continued loss drove the traders to seek some way by which they might save themselves, for the fur trade was failing and could not be permanently revived. Though no direct advantage could possibly come from a land cession by the Sioux, recognition might be secured for real and fanciful claims against them. Sibley confided to McLeod that there was nothing to do but "bring about such a state of things when the treaty is made as to recompense us at least in a measure for the sacrifices we have made." He had earlier stated that the treaty would be "our sole chance to secure our claims and to place the poor Indians in such a position as they should occupy" — a somewhat ambiguous statement, it is true.⁹ When the long expected treaty of 1851 was finally negotiated, the traders eagerly gathered together to seize whatever fragments might fall to their lot. If this treaty was iniquitous, it at least had the blessing of the

⁸ Contract dated September 6, 1847; D. R. Kennedy to McLeod, February 17, 1851; January 13, February 22, 1852; January 29, 1853; Antoine Renville to McLeod, March 5, 1851, McLeod Papers.

⁹ Sibley to McLeod, December 16, 1849; May 19, 1851, McLeod Papers.

missionaries. Their claim for eight hundred dollars as payment for cows killed by the Indians was carefully guarded by McLeod, the chairman of the claims committee, although he was obliged to reduce the amount of many less modest claims before he could crowd all the estimated losses below the acceptable total.¹⁰ But no matter how much the original claims were pared down, the traders were largely indebted to McLeod for what they got. The treaty, however favorable it was to the traders, was only a temporary solution of their difficulties. In June, 1853, Sibley was seeking a way of escape from the fur trade and not long afterward McLeod was getting out as fast as delayed accounts and extended credits would permit.¹¹

Throughout the whole period during which McLeod was associated with the Indians in the fur trade, he showed conflicting emotional attitudes toward them. At one time they were "dark and turbulent tribes," at another "damned rascals," and again they were simple children of the prairie. The missionaries, however, constantly linked the names of Sibley and McLeod as friends of the Indians and of the missions, as well they might. Probably no one had more influence with the upper Sioux than McLeod. He knew them all and they trusted him. In 1853 a document was signed by thirty-eight Indians petitioning that McLeod be made Indian agent, instead of some stranger or person in whom they could not place confidence. Various comments by the missionaries to the Sioux regarding the attitude of McLeod toward the Indians suggest that this petition reflects genuine feeling.¹²

¹⁰ A "Report of Committee" on claims, signed by McLeod, Louis Robert, and Joseph R. Brown, is in the McLeod Papers for July, 1851.

¹¹ Sibley to McLeod, June 4, 1853, McLeod Papers; *St. Anthony Express*, June 2, 1855.

¹² McLeod to John H. Stevens, January 20, 1857, Stevens Papers; Jonas Pettijohn to Samuel W. Pond, January 12, 1850; Stephen R. Riggs to Pond, March 22, 1850, Pond Papers. See also a list of Indian hunters in the McLeod Papers for 1841, and a petition dated January 15, 1853, in the same collection.

The political development of the territory caught the interest of McLeod as the fur trade had done. By nature introspective and retiring, he presented a strange figure among the candidates vying for popular support. Yet he was also far-sighted and public-spirited, and he was therefore a logical participant in political debate. All that was necessary to overcome his inclination was a little encouragement from those who trusted his intellectual and idealistic guidance. When the territorial legislature assembled in the fall of 1849, McLeod found himself a councillor for the Democratic party, representing a large area west of the Mississippi River. For four successive terms he was a member of the council, and in 1853, his last term, he was elected its presiding officer.

The mere enumeration of McLeod's more significant legislative services reveals his wide interest and keen insight into the needs of the territory: As chairman of the committee on schools he prepared the fundamental Minnesota bill on education, his most important service. The chairmanship of this committee was bestowed upon him in recognition of his own high degree of education — self-secured in large part — and of his advocacy of the principle that schools would attract only the best type of settlers. He presented to the council, in accordance with a suggestion in a message of the governor's, a memorial to Congress for a grant of one hundred thousand acres of land to endow the state university. When the bill authorizing the university was passed, he secured the adoption of a clause stipulating that it be located at St. Anthony. When a county was being formed on the west side of the Mississippi, he moved that the name "Snelling" be stricken out and "Hennepin" substituted. He submitted a memorial to the president asking that the name of the St. Peter's River be changed to "Minnesota River."¹³ Many

¹³ *Minnesota Pioneer* (St. Paul), September 6, October 11, 1849; February 6, 7, 1851; Minnesota Territory, *Council Journal*, 1851, p. 84; memorial dated March 4, 1852, McLeod Papers; W. H. Mitchell and John H.

other issues received his support, for example, bills providing for the building of roads and prohibiting the sale of whisky to the Indians. Private individuals constantly besought McLeod to secure appointments or to introduce some bill.

The dry, condensed legislative records printed in the newspapers of McLeod's day reveal little of the fervor and skill with which he promoted his work. His bill for the reapportionment of representation in the territory aroused keen discussion during the session of 1851. James M. Goodhue, editor of the *Minnesota Pioneer*, was impressed with the vigor of McLeod's defense of the measure and printed enough of the proceedings to enable the reader to picture McLeod at work in the legislature. "Look at the debate," he wrote. "Those who stir up Martin McLeod will find that they have 'waked up the wrong passenger.'" The minutes of the session reveal McLeod as conciliatory on minor points, but firm on the principle of apportionment based on the census. In his speech on representation he discloses, by quoting from Edmund Burke, his own ideas about a statesman's responsibility: "Government's a practical thing made for the happiness of mankind, and not to furnish out a spectacle to uniformly gratify the schemes of visionary politicians. The business of those who are called to administer is to rule and not to wrangle."¹⁴

In 1853 McLeod did not intend to run for reelection to the council, but some of his friends induced him to consent to his nomination. His rival, Joseph R. Brown, outgeneraled him — a bitter pill to swallow, for though he was sometimes outwardly friendly toward Brown, he really had been an enemy since the earlier days of fur-trade rivalry.

Stevens, *Geographical and Statistical History of the County of Hennepin*, 24, 25 (Minneapolis, 1868); Edward D. Neill, *History of the Minnesota Valley*, 274 (Minneapolis, 1882).

¹⁴ *Minnesota Pioneer*, March 20, 27, April 3, 1851. The reapportionment bill was passed by the council, but near the close of the session it was stolen from the desk of the clerk of the house.

Political defeat gave McLeod an added reason for a trip back to Canada to see his parents. As early as 1851, while in the council chamber at St. Paul, he had drafted a letter to his mother. In it he told his people for the first time of his family—he then had a son nine years old.¹⁵ He did not tell, however, that his children had Indian blood. In 1854 he went back to his old home, L'Original, near Montreal. As a result of the visit his three brothers and one sister, as well as a few friends of the family, settled in Minnesota. How many others emigrated as a result of his persuasion one cannot say.

However important these facts may be, they are not as truly characteristic of McLeod's interest in Minnesota as his schemes for the development and settlement of the territory. During the forties he was not very firmly attached to the land. He had left Canada in the first place partly because of disappointment in love, partly because of love of adventure, partly because of economic pressure, and partly because of political dissatisfaction. The hurts of love were in time assuaged, he had had more adventure than he had dreamed of, the illusion of wealth had faded from his hopes, and in 1848, when the revolutions in Europe gave promise of political reform even in Canada, he wrote to Sibley, "Then farewell to the *prairies* of the west and to the Fur trade."¹⁶ Yet he did not return to Canada. Something held him; it was the development that followed in the wake of settlement.

As early as 1839, or possibly 1838, McLeod was planning, with Lieutenant Daniel Ruggles of Fort Snelling, to build a town on "the point" at the east end of the Seventh Street Bridge near Fort Snelling, if the military reservation should be reduced in size. The town was to be called St. Peter's. A sketch was to be lithographed at St. Louis, lots were to be

¹⁵ A draft of the letter is in the McLeod Papers for February, 1851. Later correspondence does not show that it ever was sent.

¹⁶ May 17, 1848, Sibley Papers.

sold, and a hotel was to be built. Nearly twenty years later, in 1857, Ruggles, who had become a captain, wrote from Fredericksburg, Virginia, asking that his rights in the city of St. Peter's be protected. McLeod had to write him that unfortunately by that time the development of St. Paul and Minneapolis had made their town of St. Peter's quite unnecessary.¹⁷

About 1849 McLeod became associated with James MacIntosh of Iowa. Together they bought some lots of Franklin Steele and dreamed of fortune and ease. MacIntosh urged McLeod to give up the fur trade and to improve and manage his property, as he was doing in Davenport. Their occasional correspondence reveals an abounding faith in the future of the Twin Cities — and a great dearth of capital. How much property McLeod had at that time is not known, but at least he held St. Paul and Minneapolis lots, and as soon as the Indian title was removed, some farm land at Oak Grove.¹⁸ Yet his chief interest was not in the future of the cities. He looked to the plains and valleys. He was encouraged by the settlement taking place in the Minnesota River region. He saw the valley alive with immigrants and claims making. The aspect of the country was changing fast. Cabins were going up everywhere, hundreds of them on each bank of the river. It was expected that coal would be found in workable veins. Soon the Minnesota Valley would be a land of Canaan.

After his return from Canada in 1854 McLeod was even more thoroughly committed to the fortunes of Minnesota than before. As long as he had had to depend largely upon the fur trade he had a wavering loyalty to the land of his adoption. Now he threw all his energies without reserve into the program of development. Early in 1855 McLeod and his friend,

¹⁷ Ruggles to McLeod, June 10, 17, 1839; June 30, 1840; September 29, 1857; McLeod to Ruggles, July 17, 1840; an undated draft referring to Ruggles' letter of September 29, 1857, McLeod Papers.

¹⁸ MacIntosh to McLeod, November 5, 1849; August 13, 1854, McLeod Papers.

Colonel John H. Stevens, started out from Minneapolis, as guides and advisers for a small number of eastern homeseekers, to find land suitable for farm settlement a little farther away from the Minnesota River than most of that which was being taken at the time. The group traveled in a wagon through Hennepin County, the growing towns of Chaska and Carver, and the Big Woods, and camped one night at Tiger Lake. At noon of the following day they reached the knoll five miles east of Glencoe where the Indians "perform the buffalo," as they said, and where they were accustomed to gather before starting out on the hunt and upon returning in the autumn and winter seasons. In the afternoon of June 11, 1855, McLeod and his party reached the present site of Glencoe and decided to put down "their stakes." On the occasion of the first anniversary of the settlement McLeod told the story of the trip and added with justifiable pride: "This, then, was the commencement of what has since become Glencoe." Only a few days before, the county bearing his name had been organized and officers appointed by the governor.¹⁹

During the succeeding years McLeod worked with tireless energy for the development of Glencoe and the surrounding region. Among the enterprises that he furthered in behalf of the town and county were the railroad bond issue, a triweekly mail route from Shakopee to Fort Ridgely, and the establishment of Hamline University as a non-sectarian institution and of a state agricultural college at Glencoe.²⁰ But the times were not propitious. The panic of 1857 swept over the state like a blight. Credit disappeared, business was stagnant, markets were closed, forced sales were held, and hope was almost gone.

McLeod sought money in Glencoe, in St. Paul, in Minneapolis, and even in Washington, D. C., but others, even more

¹⁹ *Henderson Democrat*, June 5, 1856; *St. Anthony Express*, July 5, 1856.

²⁰ W. W. Phelps to McLeod, April 18, 1857; February 24, 1858, McLeod Papers; McLeod to Stevens, June 30, 1857; January 23, February 5, 1859; E. M. Wilson to Stevens, July 21, 1859, Stevens Papers.

desperate than he, had already drained the available deposits in those places. For a year after August, 1857, he advertised all his land in the *Glencoe Register*, but not one of his more than a thousand acres nor one of his three hundred town lots could he sell. Not only was the sale of land an impossibility, but titles were sometimes conflicting and legal proceedings necessary. And to cap the climax brothers and relatives were in even more desperate difficulties than himself. With true fraternal loyalty he gave them what assistance he could, knowing full well that he was being dragged down all the while.²¹

Late in 1858 McLeod wrote plaintively to his brother John at Glencoe, "I am almost disheartened about my own affairs — have borrowed — and have continued to borrow — until that dubious course — of bad import — 'is dried up' and yet there are debts hanging over me, like the sword of Damocles. *No* property can be sold for money *now*. My only hope is for the spring. The general *feeling* is (but what reliability is it founded upon) that spring will usher in more of the root of evil, and better times." He complained of an old malady — an unusual thing for him to do — and added, "I expect it will finish me yet in a hurry."²²

In the midst of the panic of 1857 McLeod was encouraged to run for delegate-at-large to the state convention. His defeat as a candidate for this honor was not his heaviest burden. He knew he was not a politician — at least he told his friend Stevens as much. Perhaps his defeat by Brown in 1853 had partially convinced him of it. What burdened him most was his inability to carry out his plans for land development. He needed cash or credit for town improvements that would attract settlers. And in St. Paul, John S. Prince, an attorney, was incessantly reminding him that his old debts incurred in

²¹ Stevens to McLeod, February 19, 1858; McLeod to John McLeod, April 7, 1858, McLeod Papers; McLeod to Stevens, January 1, 1857; July 10, 1859; Phelps to McLeod, January 15, 1857, Stevens Papers.

²² McLeod to John McLeod, December 28, 1858, McLeod Papers.

the fur trade had not been paid.²³ McLeod had apparently invested all his money in his town projects, hoping later to meet his obligations and to have money to spare. His dreams of flourishing towns rapidly passed away and in time were forgotten. Glencoe alone of the town sites he was interested in flourished, though here and there a weather-beaten survey stake with the name of Martin McLeod carved upon it testified to his faith in and hope for the valley.²⁴

This was a sad conclusion to many years of active work. McLeod had long believed that Minnesota would become "a magnificent state with great and diversified resources, leading to boundless wealth, and all the mighty results which follow in its train." For several years he had been writing in just such vein about its prospects. In 1850 a man living in Beardstown, Illinois, who had clerked with McLeod in Macnider's store in Montreal in 1836, read his articles in the newspapers and was induced to write inquiring about Minnesota. A former St. Paul friend wrote asking McLeod to write a series of articles on Minnesota for a Dayton, Ohio, paper.²⁵ In many newspapers of the state his letters and articles — all written in confident assurance of the future — were published.

As the depression of the late fifties closed down upon him, McLeod became more and more silent, not because he had lost faith in Minnesota, but because he could not assist in its promotion. He turned to reading for refuge and comfort, as had been his lifelong habit. The books he had collected during twenty-five years were his constant companions. Byron and Scott were great favorites; he read also Xenophon, Shake-

²³ John S. Prince to McLeod, December 27, 1856; July 21, 1857, McLeod Papers.

²⁴ The writer was told by Mr. Sheldon Stone, living near Cedar Lake in McLeod County, that when he settled there in 1871 several of Martin McLeod's survey stakes were to be seen on the old site of Cedar City, where the farm owned by Mr. Alfred Mills now is located.

²⁵ McLeod to Stevens, January 20, 1857, Stevens Papers; Luther B. Bruen to McLeod, March 2, 1850; Henry Atrill to McLeod, September 10, 1850, McLeod Papers.

speare, Dickens, and others. Some books he had carried with him while with the Dickson expedition in 1836, others he bought through friends or received as gifts. The following titles suggest the breadth of his interests: Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, Pollock's *Course of Time*, Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, a biographical dictionary, Crabb's *Synonyms*, Williams' *South Seas*, Alison's *History of Europe*, Prescott's historical works, Lamartine's *History of the Girondins*, a history of Braddock and his defeat, a history of Louisiana, and a history of England in nine volumes.²⁶

These were his enduring friends. In fact he seems to have enjoyed the comfort of human intimacy only in a few instances. To Stevens alone did he reveal himself at all fully. At one time his children stayed at the Stevens home in Minneapolis while going to school. Though long associated with Sibley in business and politics, and though they had many common interests, McLeod always showed evident restraint and sometimes coolness toward him. A sensitive pride and a knowledge of his own weakness barred McLeod from a friendship that he would otherwise have sought. He once wrote to Sibley saying:

I have an indistinct recollection of having said something to you, which has left a painful reflection on my mind that the expressions may have hurt your feelings. If you believe in the saying that "in vino veritas" you may have taken it for granted that I thought what I may have said. Whatever that was, I beg now to declare with heart felt sincerity and truth that since I first knew you twelve years ago, to this day, I never had cause to *think or feel* that you were other than a man of the most honorable sentiments.²⁷

What dignified and distant humility is revealed in this apology!

²⁶ Sibley to McLeod, May 19, 1849, McLeod Papers; McLeod to Stevens, June 3, 1859, Stevens Papers. Frequent references to books occur in McLeod's diary and in his correspondence. At different times he read the *Living Age*, the *Eclectic Review*, *Harper's Weekly*, and some English newspapers.

²⁷ McLeod to Sibley, October 12, 1848, Sibley papers.

Gradually McLeod drew within himself, denied the comfort of having consummated the tasks of his choice. The outside world seemed to move apart from him. Once he had met discouragement with the phrase "Richard will be himself again." He could no longer do it. His debts were too heavy. His plans for his children's education could not be carried out. The death of his brother John plunged him into deep despair. On November 20, 1860, he himself died, a lovable, but strange and distant character.

The words of McLeod's youthful reflections seem now as a prophecy of his end.

What is the life of man! 'Tis but the shadow of an existence, yet in that shadow of a shade how much is comprised. How few there are who can look back to the bright days of their youth—the sunshine of life—and feel that their dreams of renown & splendor or the more virtuous desire of domestic happiness approach realization. All life is ideal, and our very existence is but a dream.²⁸

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²⁸ Written on November 11, 1836, at Sandy Lake, when McLeod was on the way to the Red River settlement with Dickson's band. See his diary, *ante*, 4: 438.



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