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**John Murray and William Smeal to  
 James McCune Smith**  
 15 June 1837

James McCune Smith's service on the Glasgow Emancipation Society's Committee of Management placed him in close contact with society cosecretaries John Murray and William Smeal. They, in turn, respected Smith and recognized that his presence in Scottish antislavery circles demonstrated black intellect and ability and refuted commonly held racial stereotypes. After completing his medical studies at Glasgow University, Smith prepared to sail for New York on 4 May 1837, but the captain of the brig *Canonicus* refused to allow him to board. Murray responded with a strong letter of protest to the captain and joined Smeal in leading an effort to insure that Smith would not be further prevented from sailing because of his color. Before he finally sailed, the two men wrote him a 15 June letter expressing their feelings about his pending departure. The following evening, Smith's friends and fellow students honored him with a farewell dinner party at the Tontine Hotel in Glasgow to express their contempt for American racial prejudice as most recently demonstrated by the *Canonicus* incident. Minutes of the Glasgow Emancipation Society, 29 February, 1, 15 March 1836, Cash Book of the Glasgow Emancipation Society, 20 February 1834, UkGM; CA, 9 September 1837.

Glasgow, [Scotland]  
 June 15, 1837

Letter from the Committee of the Glasgow Emancipation Society, to James M Cune Smith Esq. M.D.

Dear Friend & Brother;

When you are about to leave our shores, and return to your native country, we cannot deny ourselves the gratification of tendering you a formal testimony of our esteem—in addition to all the common evidences of affection and respect for you, which it has been our privilege to give, during our intercourse for several years past.

When you first appeared among us, the circumstance was in a high degree calculated to excite our sympathy on your behalf, that a young man should be found seeking, in the Institutions of Scotland, those intellectual accomplishments which he was refused an opportunity of acquiring in those of his native land, on account of his complexion not suiting the taste of a prevailing party of his countrymen. Our first feelings towards you, Dear Sir, we acknowledge were chiefly feelings of compassion. But, after a brief acquaintance, you became the object of sentiments

much more honourable to yourself. We felt ourselves called upon to esteem you for your virtues, and to admire you for your intellectual powers and attainments: and from the contemplation of your character, we acquired additional ardour in the work of delivering your kindred from the oppression of men, few of whom, we are persuaded, equal you in whatever dignifies and adorns human nature. We did not, indeed, require to be convinced for the first time, that the man of *Colour* is possessed of all moral and intellectual capabilities in equal measure with the white; but you made the doctrine less a matter of abstraction to us, and impressed us with the sight & the consciousness of the present living reality.

When we were struggling for the Emancipation of our own fellow subjects, we felicitated ourselves on gaining you as a Member of our Anti Slavery Committee; and we assure you that when you appeared on our platforms, and moved or seconded our Resolutions, the demonstration given to the Citizens of Glasgow—how much of a Scholar's taste, how much of an Orator's eloquence, how much of a Patriot's zeal, & how much of a Gentleman's courtesy & bearing may be found associated with a *Coloured* complexion—was productive of the happiest consequences, in stimulating the Abolition zeal of our population. Our West Indian fellow-subjects are deeply your debtors: but your own countrymen are more so; since not a little of the fervour of many among us, in the enterprise against American Slavery, is to be ascribed to the circumstance, that the insulted and oppressed of that land are the Kindred of James M Cune Smith.

You leave us, Sir, with our earnest prayer on your behalf, that God may bless you abundantly: that He may prosper you in your profession as a Physician: but especially that He may counsel, strengthen, and protect you in your patriotic efforts for the deliverance of your brethren, *and ours*, from ignominy, sorrow, and oppression.

We perpetuate our brotherhood, by enrolling you as an Honorary Member of the Committee of the Glasgow Emancipation Society; and, with the love and honour of brethren, bid you farewell.

Sign'd in name & by appointment of the Committee,

John Murray<sup>1</sup>  
 William Smeal<sup>2</sup> Secretaries

Minutes of the Glasgow Emancipation Society, 15 June 1837, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

1. John Murray (?–1849) was a Scottish-born customs official, who spent his early adult years in the West Indies. After a decade as a carpenter on St. Kitts, he returned home a convinced Evangelical and an opponent of West Indian slavery. In 1833 he joined William Smeal as cofounder and cosecretary of the Glasgow Emancipation Society. Murray was highly regarded for his organizational and ad-