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Title: Letter from Montgomery Sellers to Augustine Birrell

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DICKINSON COLLEGE,
CARLISLE, PA.

DEPARTMENT OF RHETORIC
AND THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
MONTGOMERY P. SELLERS

Sept. 16, 1911.

Hon. Augustine Birrell, M. P.
London, England.

Dear Sir:

I address you concerning a matter of considerable interest to me, and I trust not unworthy your attention. In your life of William Hazlitt, p 10 (English Men of Letters Series), I find the following: - "The elder Hazlitt during his stay in Philadelphia preached assiduously in such pulpits as were open to him, but in the matter of Unitarianism the States were not yet the Land of Freedom. Calvinistic orthodoxy was still installed in Church and College; and subscription, the bondage of the spirit, was as much the fashion as in the old country. The presidency of a College at Carlisle, with a stipend of £300 a year, was offered Hazlitt, but on those terms of slavery. His reply was that he would sooner die in a ditch than submit to human authority in matters of faith."

The "college at Carlisle" evidently refers to Dickinson College, founded in 1783, the year when the Hazletts visited Philadelphia. As I am at present collecting data concerning the early history of the college, I write you seeking further information, if possible, concerning the incident quoted from your life of Hazlett. No historian of Dickinson College has noted the facts you give in regard to the offer of the presidency of the college to William Hazlett the elder, and it would be of much interest to know who made the offer, and under what conditions the offer was made, and also the full text of Hazlett's reply.

It may be of interest to you to learn that today Dickinson is a flourishing institution of liberal tendencies; that Conway Hall (preparatory school), the gift of Andrew Carnegie, was named by him for his friend Monrose S. Conway, a graduate of Dickinson; and that the college has been placed on the list of accepted institutions by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

I trust that I am not presuming in addressing you and that I am not too bold in hoping for a reply. With very high regard for your work both literary and political, I beg to remain,
Yours very truly,
Mary Perry Sellers.