

**LETTER OF R.C. WATERSTON TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL
BOARD: INCLUDING
LETTERS FROM ALDERMAN GAFFIELD,
GEN'L SHERWIN, JOHN B. BABCOCK,
WM. H. MORIARTY, AND OTHERS**

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Letter of R.C. Waterston to the Members of the Boston School Board: Including Letters from Alderman Gaffield, Gen'l Sherwin, John B. Babcock, Wm. H. Moriarty, and others by Robert Cassie Waterston

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ROBERT CASSIE WATERSTON

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LETTER

OF

R. C. WATERSTON

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE

BOSTON SCHOOL BOARD,

INCLUDING LETTERS FROM

ALDERMAN GAFFIELD, GEN'L SHERWIN, JOHN B. BABCOCK,
WM. H. MORIARTY, AND OTHERS.

RELATING TO

CHARLES M. CUMSTON

AND THE ENGLISH HIGH SCHOOL

BOSTON, JUNE, 1873.

BOSTON:

ALFRED MUDGE & SON, PRINTERS, No. 34 SCHOOL STREET.

1873.

BOSTON, June 20th, 1873.

To the Members of the School Board: —

GENTLEMEN, —

As the time may be greatly occupied when we next come together, I will venture respectfully to offer, in the form of a letter, a few remarks, for which I earnestly beg your candid consideration.

I shall express simply that honest conviction which is the result of personal observation extending through many years, in connection with which the testimony of others shall be offered, all of whom have had special opportunities for forming a judgment worthy of respect, — each individually of great weight, but collectively demonstrating, as it seems to me, beyond a question, that Mr. Charles M. Cumston, the present Head-Master of the English High School, is both an able and efficient teacher.

Twenty-five years of experience as an instructor in that school have exemplified his persevering devotedness to its best interests, — and such expressions of respect and affection as are here presented, coming from such various sources, give ample evidence that he has not only gained, but continues to hold, the esteem and good-will of those who have been under his care.

That he has offended certain persons is quite true. Among the multitude of pupils who have come under his care (of every style and type), it is hardly to be supposed that he should not, at times, have given offence. It is not always easy to criticise or reprimand, without being misjudged. Among the many teachers who have been associated with the Head-Master, some have felt annoyed (over-sensitive, it may be), they have felt indignant if not always commended. A

position more difficult to fill, can hardly be imagined. That a few, both among past pupils or the present staff of teachers, should feel aggrieved, is not, it seems to me, a matter of wonder. The only surprise is, that any human being should ever be able to escape such occasional results.

Having known Mr. Cumston for the past ten years; serving, through that time, as one of the committee upon the High School, and having been, within the past two years, President of the High School Association, I have been brought into near and somewhat intimate relationship with Mr. Cumston. During all this time, I can truly say, I have never seen anything, in his conduct or conversation, which has not gained for him my regard; nay, more than this, his whole deportment has been that of a consistent gentleman; and his remarks — well-considered, judicious, and wise.

In relation to the school, I have witnessed no neglect of duty, nor any lack of readiness to perform personal labor for its benefit. I never asked him to perform any duty which he did not do with cheerfulness and alacrity; or observed any one act which did not reflect honor upon the school.

I never saw anything unjust, or indicating petulance or arbitrariness. In speaking of the Pupils, he never uttered one word of harsh judgment. In allusion to the Teachers, he spoke with personal consideration; and in referring to the gentlemen of the Committee of the School board, he uniformly mentioned them with appreciation and respect.

If, therefore, I am called upon to express a judgment, growing out of personal relations to Mr. Cumston, for the last ten years, it must be in his favor. I should be false to every sentiment of justice and honor, if I did not affirm this in the most unqualified manner.

In addition to what I have personally witnessed, I have been in the way of hearing the opinion of a large number of

graduates, and those opinions have been almost uniformly in Mr. Cumston's favor. The fault-finders — are few; while his friends — are many.

At the semi-centennial celebration of the establishment of the school, 1,200 graduates met in 1871; and last winter, at the annual meeting of the High School Association, a larger number were assembled than on any previous year. On each of these occasions, Mr. Cumston was honored as the Head-Master, by every mark of gratifying consideration. This is mentioned because it shows that under Mr. Cumston's administration, there has been no abatement of interest in the school, but on the contrary, a very decided increase. Many past graduates were thus brought together, and various classes represented, thus offering a good opportunity to form an accurate estimate of the existing feeling in regard to the Head-Master.

Let me here give one or two letters from such Representative Graduates.

TESTIMONY OF ALDERMAN GAFFIELD,

*Recently Chairman of the Committee on Public Instruction,
and late President of the High School Association.*

In a letter I received from him within a few days, he writes: —

"BOSTON, June 21, 1873.

"I am very glad there are good men who are ready to stand by my friend, Mr. Cumston, at the meetings of the School Board. My connection as pupil of the good old English High School, ended in 1840. Mr. Cumston was therefore never my teacher, but my interest in the school has never ceased. I have frequently visited the school as a member of the Committee on Public Instruction, and as an

officer of the High School Association. From my own observation, and from personal interviews with pupils of the school, I have always had the opinion that Mr. Cumston was a very successful and a very faithful teacher. I have often been highly gratified in listening to the words of past pupils, who have paid a high tribute to his fidelity, and to his deep interest in their welfare."

He concludes by expressing strongly a wish that the committee "may continue in his present position, one who for so many years has labored diligently to advance the best interests of the school."

Such is Mr. Gaffield's view of Mr. Cumston, based upon personal observation and his intercourse with others, of such extended character as to form a testimony of great authority.

LETTER FROM JOHN B. BABCOCK,

Chairman of the Executive Committee of the High School Association.

"BOSTON, June 20th, 1873.

"MY DEAR MR. WATERSTON,

"I desire to say a few words to you in behalf of the English High School, of Boston, with which for years I have been thoroughly familiar, and in which I feel the most devoted interest. I have, to-day, brothers, sons, and nephews, who have been educated there, and being myself a graduate of the school, you will not wonder if I take pride in that institution.

"I am glad to offer my support to the present head-master, to whom I was first introduced by Mr. Sherwin while Mr. Cumston was sub-master in the school. My connection with

the High School Association brought me into yet closer knowledge of the man and his abilities. His remarkable executive power is fully attested by the high standing the school has taken and maintained while he has been at its head. That he is a superior teacher, hundreds of Boston boys and men, who have been under his instruction, are only too happy to assert.

"As chairman of the committee of arrangements, having charge of the semi-centennial celebration of the English High School, my duties led me to an extended correspondence with graduates, covering the entire existence of the school, from 1821 to 1871. During several months I was in daily intercourse with those who had passed their years under the instruction of Mr. Cumston. Letters from hundreds of those pupils proved that he was almost universally esteemed.

"I do not hesitate to say that Mr. Cumston, in the estimation of those who know him and who understand the wants of the school, consider him as the right man in the right place. That, all things considered, he is the best available man for the position he holds. The school under his supervision has not only retained its high standard, but has been constantly progressive.

"With the accumulative testimony in his support coming from the real lovers of the school, I am clearly of opinion that Mr. Cumston holds a position to-day which he is amply able to fill in the highest interest of the school and the citizens of Boston.

"I am, dear sir, very truly yours, etc.,

"JOHN B. BABCOCK."

Mr. Cumston held for some twenty years the position of sub-master under Mr. Sherwin. They taught in harmony. Mr. Sherwin would not have allowed a teacher to be so long associated with him; in whose ability and character he had

not implicit confidence. I knew Mr. Sherwin well through a portion of this time, and I never heard him express one syllable of dissatisfaction. I have conversed with his son upon this subject, and he informs me that his father always had confidence in him as an excellent teacher. But General Sherwin was himself a teacher in the school, and knew Mr. Cumston personally as an instructor. I have received from him within a few days the following letter:—

TESTIMONY FROM GENERAL THOMAS SHERWIN.

"BOSTON, June 21, 1873.

"MY DEAR SIR,—From the expressions of esteem which come from hundreds of pupils who have been under Dr. Charles M. Cumston's instructions, and from long personal acquaintance with him (a portion of the time as an associate teacher in the English High School), I cannot doubt that he has been a FAITHFUL, ABLE, and SUCCESSFUL INSTRUCTOR.

"NOT ONLY GOOD SCHOLARSHIP, but MANLINESS and HONOR characterized the classes under his charge AT ALL TIMES. My confidence in his honesty of purpose, and fitness as a teacher, cannot easily be shaken.

"Of his success during the four years he has held the position of head-master, none can speak with so much propriety as those of the High School Committee, who have watched and guided the course of the school with earnest and unremitting care for many years, and I rejoice that yourself and your associates, who are identified with the growth and honored position of the school, find it your duty, as it must be a pleasure, to report that the English High School is fulfilling well its important work, AND THAT THE HEAD-MASTER is WORTHY of the distinguished position which he holds.

"I am sir, very respectfully,

"THOMAS SHERWIN."